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November 2016

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Mesa Arch in Utah's Canyonlands National Park is the perfect frame for a stunning sunrise (see page 24).



Dinghy Special: Everything you need to know about flat towing, including valuable information, helpful hints and a roundup of necessary hardware. Pg. 44

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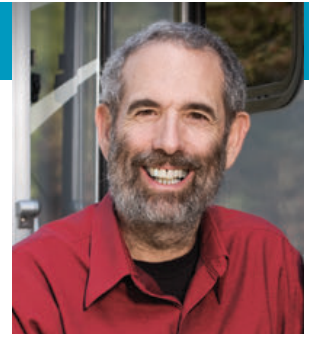
A 1985 Airstream Classic 345 undergoes an extensive makeover and becomes the perfect home base for an upcoming cross-country adventure



ON THE COVER

The luxurious Foretravel ih-45 sparkles at Lake Naconiche Park in front of Lake Naconiche in Nacogdoches county, Texas. The smooth ride of the ih-45 makes for an enjoyable and easy drive, and impressive, upscale interior appointments await owners once they arrive at their destination. Photo by Chris Hemer.

By Bob Livingston



The Future's at Stake

By the time this magazine gets in your hands, most of us will be ready for a conversation around the campfire about anything other than the election. The next administration/congress and state legislators will be challenged with a large number of issues facing this country, so it's not unusual for so many people to be fired up about the outcome. As motorhome owners, we have very specific concerns that will hopefully be acted on positively, so we can continue enjoying a lifestyle that pumped \$50 billion into the nation's economy last year.

One of my pet peeves, and I'm certainly not alone, is the condition of our roadway infrastructure. Every time I hit the road, I complain about the crumbling highways and the collateral damage they are doing to our motorhomes. This a hot-button issue for RV owners. While we pay our fair share through higher fees and taxes, most of us are underutilizing the roadways based on the average miles the typical motorhome owner travels each year.

The common cry revolves around the diversion of tax money to other programs, neglecting the roadways until it's too late. Most of these problems are relegated to individual state transportation departments, and even though federal funds were allocated to help the states repair the roads, it's debatable whether it was enough to make a difference in resolving the problems. I believe it's critical, moving forward, that

rebuilding and repairing our roads, bridges and tunnels becomes high priority, and that tax money earmarked for improvements and repairs not be diverted. The system just needs to be transparent and trust restored, especially if new taxes are imminent.

If you're a full-timer and are no longer employed — and not old enough to qualify for Medicare — health insurance is becoming a big issue. Most of my younger full-timing friends cannot find good policies that will provide health care out of their home state. These people have been forced to pay higher premiums for fewer services, which is a risky proposition. This is a topic that will, no doubt, spark energetic debate; let's hope the politicians can fix this one, although I'll hedge my bet.

The direction of the country's energy policies could have a major impact on how we travel in the future

and the overall health of the RV industry. Lower fuel prices have been a breath of fresh air for motorhome enthusiasts, but don't expect that to last forever. There's no chance our dependence on petroleum products will end anytime soon, so it's important that the next administration be open-minded in keeping our oil flowing and fuel production high, while being sensitive to our environment.

Despite lower gasoline and diesel costs, RV owners have embraced fuel conservation, even though uninformed onlookers might think otherwise. Every RVer I know has curtailed aimless meandering and pinpoints travel plans to keep the miles down. We may be tempted to revert back to old habits, but it's prudent for all of us to stay the course.

One way of saving fuel costs, of course, is to use a small dinghy vehicle once you're set up in an RV park. That's why we've devoted a large amount of space to dinghy towing (page 44). Here you'll find information on just about every aspect of dinghy towing, from setting up the vehicle with a baseplate and tow bar, to staying safe on the road.

As RVers, we're 9 million strong and can certainly make a difference. Let's not miss our opportunity. **M**

Contributors | November



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



Bobbie Hasselbring is an award-winning travel and food writer and editor of www.realfoodtraveler.com, which covers authentic food and travel. Bobbie owns a 2003 Jayco Greyhawk SS Class C.



Kevin Livingston grew up in RVs. He worked alongside his dad, Bob Livingston, as soon as he was old enough to hold tools. He lives in Reno, Nevada, and enjoys the technical side of the RV lifestyle.



Angela McLaughlin and her husband, Andy, have been married for five years and have been living full-time in their motorhome for more than a year. They love exploring new places together with their pets.



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



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

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If you travel with a pet, which pet-cleanup products have you found to be most successful for use in your motorhome?

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

Prevention is Key

My wife and I have been traveling by motorhome since 1984. We usually have at least one dog and one cat travel with us. We have never had an accident or a need for a cleaning product due to our pets. We have heard friends' horror stories about their pet incidents, but so far we've been lucky. We attribute our success to the training and routines we established for keeping cat boxes clean and available, and taking breaks for the dog. We do sightsee, and we are not slaves to our pets. If dogs are allowed at attractions, we will take him with us. Cats are somewhat self-contained as long as their litter box is kept clean and accessible, and dry food and water are available. We keep the RV warm or air conditioned when we leave, depending on the expected temperatures.

When dogs are younger, they need breaks more often than older dogs. Housebreaking works the same for

an RV as well as in a house. We have used on-site kennels a time or two if we plan to spend extended time at an attraction, but we are usually back within a reasonable time.

For human-caused accidents (food, drink, etc.), we use Folex Instant Carpet Spot Remover. It doesn't leave a residue like some cleaners.

Ken and Debbie Burkett
Chino Valley, Arizona

The Big Three

We have traveled with our cats for more than 14 years in Class A motorhomes. Our pets have been around the lower 48 states a few times, as well as in many parts of Canada and Alaska. Our present coach is a 40-foot Class A diesel pusher. We love our pets, and any cleanup chores should be quick and easy. The three most important chores with cats are their food and water, their grooming and their litter box.

Fresh food and water are a must. To prevent any water and/or food spills from getting on the floor or carpets, we purchased an inexpensive rubber welcome mat and cut it to size for the area where the food and water dishes are kept, making cleanups a snap.

Proper grooming is another must, as cats shed constantly. We brush them at least once each morning and sometimes two or three times a day, depending on our schedule. The best brush we have found is a Furminator-style brush. And to clean up their beds, or pet hair on the furniture, the best product we have found is the Pledge Fabric Sweeper for Pet Hair, which, unfortunately, is no longer available. It is a hand tool with two half rollers that trap hair between them. They were designed to be disposable, but we learned how to take them apart, clean and reuse them, which we still do.

Fresh cat litter is the final must.



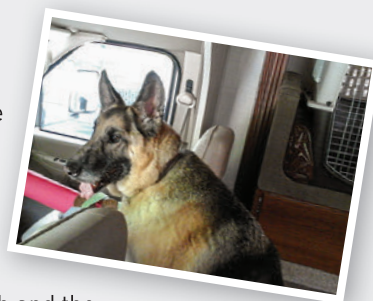
Featured Letter

Good Shepherds

My husband and I travel with our two German shepherds in our Fleetwood Tioga Class C motorhome. We sacrificed our dining area to make room for their two enclosed crates (where they ride), and the crates contain some of the dog fur, but not nearly all of it. To help with the pet-related mess, we purchased indoor/outdoor carpet to cover the carpeted areas, and also the entry to our motorhome to protect it from the fur and muddy paws. The carpet tucks just under the slides and stays in place beautifully. A canister-style Electrolux vacuum fits neatly between the

seat and dinette, and the attachments go beneath the sofa. We vacuum frequently and, when needed, use Arm & Hammer baking soda to help freshen the coach and the carpet. We could take out the carpet and hose it off if needed, but have not had to do so thus far.

Lori and Bob Phillips | Via email





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P.O. BOX

One of the most important features is that it clumps quickly. We don't have any odor issues, as the odors not only depend on the litter brand but also the animals' breed and diet. We use a large tote as a litter box and we clean it out at least twice a day. If you leave a cat box dirty for too long, the cat will find someplace else to do its business.

Dick and Sandy | Near Buffalo, New York

Muy Fabuloso!

Keeping your coach clean and neat while on the road is as important as keeping your residential home clean and neat when you're at home. In both cases, it helps us to keep our 9-year-old cocker spaniel, Maggie, clean and neat too. We have a backpack with Maggie's shampoo, brush, ear medicine, eye wipes, body spray, waste bags and towel. When she sees the backpack being packed, she knows it's road-trip time. I keep the backpack in the storage compartment next to the entry door to the motorhome. Maggie's cleanup routine is part of my dumping of the gray-water tank routine, which is about every three days. Keeping the motorhome clean takes a Swiffer, a Dyson and our favorite all-around soap, Fabuloso.

Bob Lopez | Plainfield, Illinois

Miracle Worker

I have never traveled without pets, as I used to train and show my dogs in herding, agility and obedience. I have had carpet or linoleum in my RVs and prefer smooth floors to carpeting, as all of my dogs are longhaired. Next year I plan to retire and travel with the dogs, a cat and a parrot. Two products I always have on hand are Nature's Miracle Stain & Odor Remover (a liquid), and Nature's Miracle Skunk Odor Remover (which I pray to never need personally but carry it because I've used it before and found it to be fabulous). Nature's Miracle also makes special items for laundry and cat issues, but I've found with the basic Stain & Odor Remover, my life is wonderful on the road. For upholstery cleaning, I use Chem-Dry aerosol can cleaner and have been very satisfied with its performance.

I also carry and use cleanup bags for my dogs, as well as for cleaning up after other folks in order to help keep parks and the places we stay clean.

Teri Cline | Bath, Michigan

It's Magic

I think the best carpet cleaner is Blue Magic Carpet Stain & Spot Lifter. It's sold in the automotive section at Wal-Mart for about \$4. It removes pet messes, as well as blood and red wine, easily. I always have a can in the motorhome, as well as in my home.

Karen Sparks | Lake View, New York

Kids 'N' Pets

The best product that I have found to clean up pet messes, kid messes, blood messes, etc., is Kids 'N' Pets Stain and Odor Carpet and Upholstery cleaner. This product removes any and every kind of stain. It's fabulous! I will not be without it.

Sandy Love | Orofino, Idaho

Long-term Checklist

We are getting ready to take longer trips in our motorhome, and are planning to be on the road for several months at a time. We would like to know how other RVers get their home base ready prior to a long trip. There are the standards, like stopping the mail and newspaper delivery, but what are the other things RVers do to keep their home safe, and maybe even save some money when they are gone for months at a time?

Kenny and Karen Parish

Murrells Inlet, South Carolina

Question of the Month

If you frequently take long motorhome trips, what advice can you offer other RVers who plan on doing the same? What steps do you take to get your residential-home affairs in order? And, do you have any tips/tricks that could help out the bottom line?

Send your comments to:

MotorHome, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036; or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com

ESCAPES

Pleasant Scent ➡
Meguiar's Air Re-Freshers are designed to neutralize foul odors and leave your rig smelling clean. [pg. 12](#)



11 ROAD FOODIE | 12 WHEELS & GEAR | 14 CROSSROADS



The Fall of the Confederacy

Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park honors the series of battles that were turning points in the Civil War

By Neala McCarten

The site of crucial battles in the Civil War, Chickamauga and Chattanooga National Military Park opened to the public in 1895, becoming the first national military park created in the United States.

The focus of the battles was for the city of Chattanooga, Tennessee, called the "Gateway to the Deep South" for its strategic importance as a rail and telegraph center into the heart of the Confederacy. The Union army was defeated at the Battle of Chickamauga, and was pushed back into the city of Chattanooga. The Confederacy didn't anticipate reinforcements from Union generals Ulysses S. Grant and William T. Sherman, and the Union soldiers rallied and defeated the Confederate army in Chattanooga two months later. That victory became the start of Sherman's attack on Atlanta, Georgia, and his famous "March to the Sea."

The park provides an excellent and even-handed video on the importance of the battle and the cost in human

suffering and loss. Ranger-led tours are available, and you can also explore the park on your own using the park's app. There are 1,400 monuments and historical markers stretching across the battlefields. At the tour stop for the Wilder Brigade Monument (No. 6), climb the tower for a panoramic view of the battlefield as it currently appears. The nearby plaque tells the story of the infantry brigade of Colonel John Wilder and his men as they fought the Confederacy on the battlefield.

Several visitor centers and battlefields make up the larger military park, including Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge.

Five miles from the park is Holiday Travel Park (800-693-2877, www.chattacamp.com), with 170 full-hookup sites, free Wi-Fi, laundry facilities and a pool.

For more information about the military park, call 706-866-9241 or visit www.nps.gov/chch.

By Bobbie Hasselbring

Baldwin Saloon and Brussels Sprouts

I love eating at a place with a sense of history, and the Baldwin Saloon in The Dalles, located in Oregon's beautiful Columbia River Gorge, certainly fits the bill. The Baldwin began its good-food tradition in 1876, when brothers James and John Baldwin ran a restaurant and saloon. With its location next to the railroad and near the busy Columbia River, the Baldwin Saloon became the community's gathering place.

After the Baldwins, "Dr." Charlie Allen operated a saloon here. An interesting man who was never a real doctor (he had sold eyeglasses), Allen had iron medical insignias cast into the building's facade.

In later years, the building served as a steamboat navigational office, a warehouse, a coffin-storage site, a state employment office and finally a custom saddle shop.

It took nearly a year for Mark and Tracy Linebarger, the current owners, to restore the Baldwin as a restaurant and bar, and the Baldwin Saloon reopened its doors in 1991.

For 25 years, the saloon has been a destination for foodies and history buffs. The old building's original brick walls and fir floor are complemented by rich mahogany and golden oak booths and tables, beautiful turn-of-the-century oil paintings and an 18-foot-long mahogany back bar with large, scrolled columns and an original mirror made in the early 1900s. A piano player nestled on a ledge above the dining tables tinkles the ivories on an 1894 Schubert mahogany piano.

The food at the Baldwin is impressive. They make everything in-house — from pillow-soft bread to luscious



Top: The 18-foot-long mahogany back bar features large columns and an original mirror with stained-glass accents. Above: Parmesan-crusted halibut is a favorite, especially with Brussels sprouts on the side.

sausages and desserts. We dined on fresh halibut with a Parmesan crust and tender prime rib that was cooked and seasoned perfectly. We also enjoyed the delicious side of Brussels sprouts, available when in season.

A few years ago, Mark turned chef duties over to executive chef Tammy Huffman, a graduate of Le Cordon Bleu College of Culinary Arts. Huffman grew up in The Dalles and used to babysit the Linebargers' children. For Huffman, running the Baldwin is a dream come true, and she'd like to own the place someday. "The Baldwin has so much history, and Mark has created a level of excellence that I'm honored to continue," she told us. For more information, call 541-296-5666 or visit www.baldwinsaloon.com.

Got a favorite historic restaurant?

Email bobbie@realfoodtraveler.com with "historic" in the subject line.

BALDWIN SALOON SAUTÉED BRUSSELS SPROUTS

During fall, Brussels sprouts are a tradition on many tables. These edible buds have been around since the 13th century, and recently they've gained favor with chefs who have discovered that roasting or sautéing the tiny cabbages brings out a beautiful sweetness.

Cooking time: approximately 10 minutes

- ☐ 12 ounces Brussels sprouts, sliced in thirds
- ☐ 4 ounces clarified butter (more if the sprouts soak it up)
- ☐ 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- ☐ 2 teaspoons chopped garlic
- ☐ 1-2 cups white wine
- ☐ 4 ounces Parmesan cheese, shredded

► Heat sprouts over medium heat in clarified butter and salt. Allow the Brussels sprouts to sit on heat for 1 minute without moving. Toss after the Brussels sprouts start to brown and continue cooking until they are golden brown, then add garlic (if you add the garlic too early, it will burn).

Add white wine and cook until the sprouts reach the desired tenderness. (I cook mine just barely past al dente; if sprouts need further cooking, add more wine or they will burn.) Top with Parmesan cheese.





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Match Maker

Few things turn as many heads as matching the painted graphics on your motorhome with those on your dinghy vehicle. The key to accomplishing the perfect custom paint job is finding the right artist with the skills to create and the know-how with automotive paints in the right facility. Dave "Letterfly" Knoderer has been hand-painting images and décor since 1971, with 20 of those years exclusively serving the RV industry. After visualizing the design, and drawing the concept right before your eyes, the dinghy vehicle is painted using the same color used by the manufacturers, and protected with the same acrylic urethane clearcoat found on European luxury sedans. Knoderer also creates hand-lettered inscriptions, gold-leaf monograms and airbrushed murals on the backs of motorhomes. Letterfly offers his services during the winter months at ArtPark near Tampa, Florida; contact the company for pricing.

Letterfly Pinstriping and Mural Design Services,
813-752-8063, www.letterfly.com

Tailgating King

KING has bestowed upon RVers the newest version of its DISH Tailgater Satellite TV antenna, the VQ4400. The enclosed-style portable DISH Tailgater weighs a svelte 8 pounds, features an integrated carry handle and comes equipped with a single-coax port to simplify setup, making it ideal for tailgating or for simply watching TV outside, under the stars. When paired with a compatible DISH HD Solo receiver (411, 211, ViP211k, ViP211z or Wally, sold separately), the Tailgater quickly and automatically scans the southern sky for the best HDTV signal. Users connect the provided coax cable from the antenna to a DISH receiver, then connect the receiver to the TV and follow the easy on-screen instructions. The Tailgater is compatible with DISH pay-as-you-go programming, or customers can add to their residential DISH service. KING also offers a handy carry bag (\$49.99) and a tripod accessory (\$99.99), both sold separately. MSRP: \$329.

KING, 952-922-6889, www.kingconnect.com



Uncommon Scents

Meguiar's is expanding its Air Re-Fresher odor-eliminator line with the introduction of Twin-Pack Marine/RV Care Air Re-Freshers. Rather than temporarily masking unpleasant odors, Meguiar's Air Re-Fresher is designed to work at the molecular level by bonding and trapping foul-smelling molecules to help eliminate the odor. To use, simply engage the one-time-use Air Re-Fresher's spray-valve system inside the motorhome with all windows and doors closed (and ignition sources off). After 15 minutes, open up the interior and allow the motorhome to sit for an additional 10-15 minutes before enjoying the new, fresh scent. The aerosol-dispersion technology also utilizes the motorhome's air-duct system to circulate the Air Re-Fresher's vapor throughout the interior to find and instantly neutralize unwanted smells. MSRP: \$15.99.

Meguiar's, 800-347-5700, www.meguiars.com



Hot View

Aqua View introduces the SHOWERMISER, a water-saving system designed to attach to the shower head in an RV and redirect cold water that's normally wasted (while waiting for the warm water to flow) back into the freshwater tank. The SHOWERMISER connects on the nonpressurized side of the freshwater system. You simply remove the shower head, attach the SHOWERMISER unit, line up and mark where the return line will be, and then drill only one hole in the shower wall through to the inside wall where the other plumbing is maintained. The return line is tapped into the nonpressurized side of the freshwater system. Once installed, the SHOWERMISER shows when the hot water has arrived by using color-changing technology (a pinkish pipe means hot water). MSRP: Starts at \$59.95.

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Oregon to South Carolina

The Great American Eclipse

We've been waiting more than 25 years for a total solar eclipse to cross the continental United States, and the wait is almost over. Mark your calendar for August 21, 2017, when a total solar eclipse will streak across the skies from west to east. This is your opportunity to view the sun's corona, since the moon blocks out the sun as it passes in front.

The celestial event begins at approximately 10:19 a.m. (PDT) near Depoe Bay, Oregon. From there, the path of totality travels across Idaho Falls, Idaho; Casper, Wyoming; Lincoln, Nebraska; St. Louis, Missouri; Nashville, Tennessee; Clingmans Dome in Great Smoky Mountains National Park; and then exits the U.S. at Charleston, South Carolina, around 2:36 p.m. (EDT). If you're on the centerline of this event, you will experience about 2 to 2½ minutes of darkness (the event will be visible as a partial eclipse across most of the country).

Try to find a place with clear skies for optimal viewing. Eastern Oregon and most of Wyoming have the highest probability of success. The day before the eclipse, recheck the weather and, if necessary, move to a clear-sky area. And be prepared with special viewing glasses, as looking directly at the sun without eye protection can be very harmful to your eyes.

For more information, visit www.greatamericaneclipse.com, a site dedicated to the rare event. For additional maps of each state that the eclipse crosses, check out www.eclipse2017.org — *Morey Edelman*



Photo courtesy Michael Zeiler

Mount Airy, North Carolina

Whistlin' in Mayberry

Andy Griffith's hometown of Mount Airy, North Carolina is, appropriately, home to the Andy Griffith Museum. The museum features hundreds of items from the life and career of Andy Griffith in movies, television and music. Mayberry — the town of his eponymous TV series — and its hilarious cast of characters were based on real places and residents of Mount Airy.

The museum includes items from "The Andy Griffith Show," which was highlighted by such memorable roles as Sheriff Andy Taylor (Andy Griffith), Barney Fife (Don Knotts), Thelma Lou (Betty Lynn, who calls Mount Airy home), Otis Campbell (Hal Smith) and Goober (George Lindsey). The majority of the items were collected by Griffith's real-life friend, Emmett Forrest, with some props for the show — in addition to those from the

popular Matlock TV series — donated by Griffith himself.

The museum opened September 26, 2009, during the 20th celebration of Mayberry Days, an annual festival with all types of shows, parades and special guests, including stars from the show and their families. Admission to the museum is \$6 per person.

Four miles south, you'll find Mayberry Campground (www.mayberrycampground.com), which is big-rig friendly and has full-hookup sites.

For more information, call 336-786-1604 or visit www.andygriffithmuseum.com — *James Richardson* **M**



Photo: Hobart Jones



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Southern Comforts

Greenville, South Carolina, is an up-and-coming destination combining small-town charm, beautiful scenery and a host of outdoor pursuits

By Pam Windsor

Nestled in the shadow of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Greenville, South Carolina, offers the natural beauty and charm of a relaxing Southern destination with a midsize-city appeal. You'll find outdoor attractions, a bustling restaurant scene, a bit of history and some unique experiences that make it easy to see why Greenville is quickly becoming one of the most-visited cities in the Southeast.

If you want a home base close to the downtown area, Springwood RV Park is less than 15 minutes away. All sites at Springwood have full hookups and concrete pads, and the campground offers free Wi-Fi. Because parking is in high demand in Greenville proper, you'll want to leave your motorhome at the campground and use your dinghy vehicle.

As you head downtown, watch for Falls Park on the Reedy River.

This 32-acre park — within walking distance of many businesses and restau-

Reedy River Falls flows under Liberty Bridge, which is 345 feet long and is supported by a single suspension cable.

rants — is just as popular with locals as it is with out-of-towners. People come here to walk, run, ride bikes, eat lunch, read books and just relax and enjoy the scenery. Be sure to take a stroll along the Liberty Bridge overlooking the Reedy River. This 345-foot suspension bridge offers a spectacular view of the falls below. The bridge is lit at night.

Biking is popular in Greenville, and you'll likely notice lots of cyclists all over the downtown area. If you don't have a bike of your own, you can rent one, along with other biking gear, at one of the local bike shops. The city of Greenville also has its own bike-sharing program and offers bikes-for-rent at various stations throughout the downtown area. You can pick up a Greenville B-cycle brochure and map at the visitor center on Main Street. It explains the cost, how to pay and the many different pick-up and drop-off spots. (Go to <https://greenville.bcycle.com> for information.)

Many cyclists come to Greenville with a goal in mind — to ride the 21-mile-long Swamp Rabbit Trail. The multiuse rail-trail follows the Reedy

GREENVILLE,
SOUTH CAROLINA

Getting There

Greenville, located in upstate South Carolina, is reached via Interstate 26 and U.S. Route 25 from the North (Asheville/Hendersonville), and Interstate 85 from the east (Charlotte) and west (Atlanta).

River north from downtown all the way to nearby Travelers Rest. More than .5 million cyclists, runners and walkers travel all or part of the trail every year.

The revitalization of Greenville's downtown district shows no sign of stopping anytime soon. You'll see numerous shops and businesses, as well as blocks and blocks of bars and restaurants offering everything from international fare to down-home Southern dishes. Every September the city holds its popular, ever-expanding four-day Euphoria festival highlighting dozens of popular chefs serving up some of their specialty dishes, along with music, events, wine, craft beer and more.

The craft-beer scene is booming here, with a growing number of craft breweries, some offering tours if you plan ahead. The popular Thomas Creek Brewery was Greenville's first, and you'll see its flagship Red Pale Ale featured in many local restaurants.

You'll also find South Carolina's first legal craft moonshine (homemade whiskey) distillery here. (Other distilleries have since opened elsewhere in the state.) Roxanne Fenten and her husband, Joe, opened Dark Corner Distillery in 2011. Roxanne said Joe, an engineer by trade who grew up in South Carolina, wanted to honor some of the state's history and heritage.

"He grew up in the 'dark corner,' which is the northeastern area of Greenville County. It's where most of the moonshine was made in South Carolina." She notes that when the distillery first opened for moonshine tastings, there were many naysayers.

"People were saying, 'You can't do this.' They had a preconceived notion of how bad moonshine was. You know, you can start your car on it or you can go blind drinking it."

Less than five years later, the distillery has expanded to a new facility and now produces a variety of whiskeys, including some with flavors like peach and butterscotch.

Along with the many unique shops you'll want to visit downtown, the Mast General Store is definitely worth a stop. It's set up along the lines of an old-fashioned general store and carries old-timey food items you may remember your grandmother having on hand, like stone-ground grits, honey, maple syrup, jams and jellies. It also carries nostalgia items, collectibles, home décor, toys, an extensive candy collection, clothes and travel items. You can browse for hours. As David Vinson, a store manager, explained, the parent company has opened similar stores in North Carolina and Tennessee — places where these items bring back a lot of



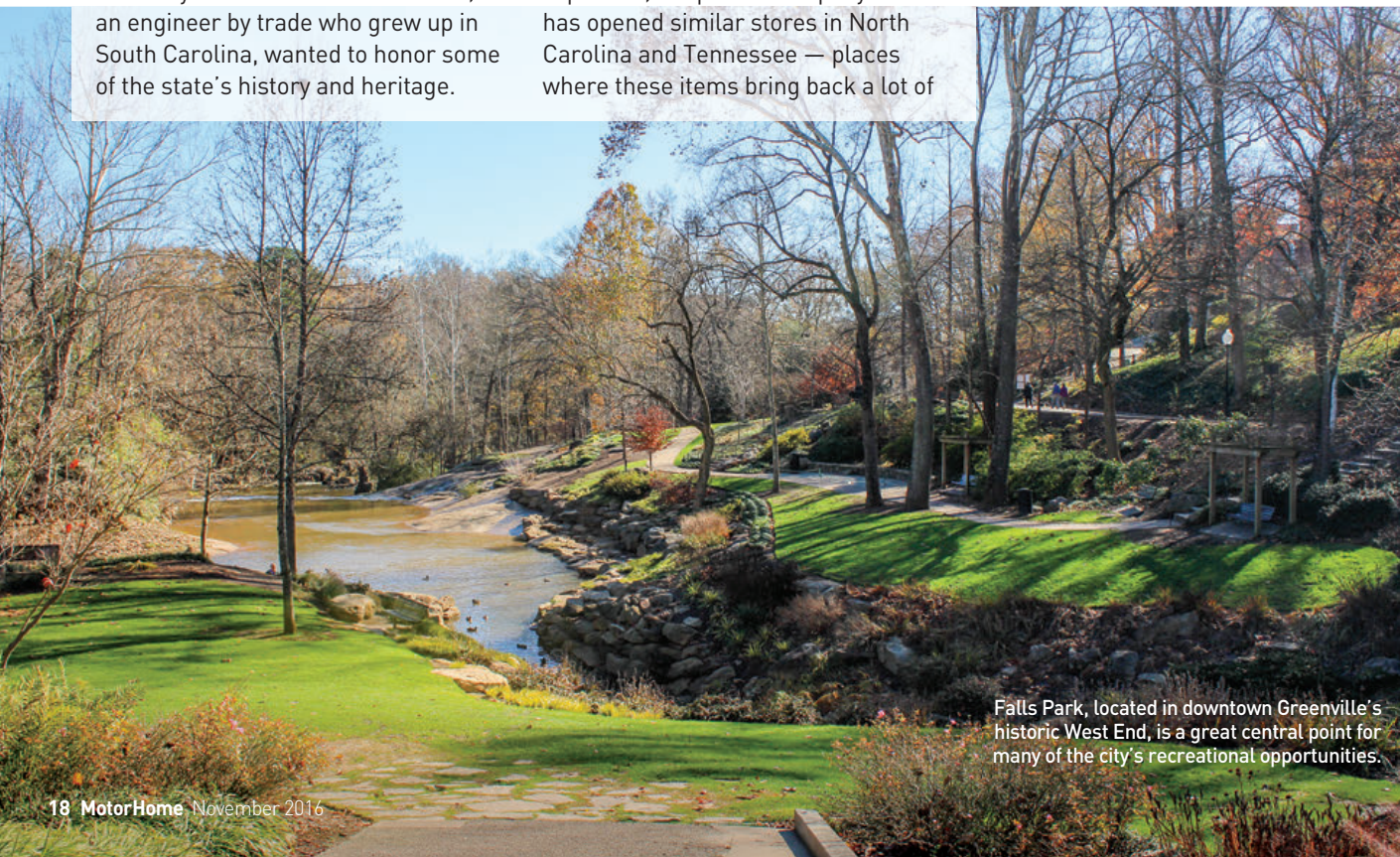
Above from top: Colobus monkeys, like this one at the Greenville Zoo, are born completely white. Zoo visitors will also encounter a variety of reptiles, such as this iguana, in addition to a number of exotic animals.

memories.

"Basically the concept behind it is they go into towns, downtown environments that are trying to re-establish their Main Street. They go into old buildings and refurbish an old building and they set it up and give it a general-store feel."

The building it occupies in Greenville housed a popular general store that opened in 1883.

Baseball fans will want to see the



Falls Park, located in downtown Greenville's historic West End, is a great central point for many of the city's recreational opportunities.

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GETAWAY

GREENVILLE, SOUTH CAROLINA

nearby Shoeless Joe Jackson statue and visit his museum (864-346-4867, www.shoelessjoejackson.org).

Shoeless Joe grew up in Greenville and showed a talent for baseball at a young age. He made it all the way to the big league, later to return home after being banned from baseball in the wake of the Black Sox Scandal. (Jackson was one of eight Chicago White Sox players accused of throwing the 1919 World Series in exchange for money from gamblers.)

The Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and Baseball Library is housed in the home where Jackson lived and later died (December 5, 1951), and is full of memorabilia. It was moved from its original location and sits across from the stadium where the Greenville Drive, a minor-league affiliate (Class A) of the Boston Red Sox, currently plays.

Museum director Arlene Marcley says Jackson has thousands and thousands of fans who are fascinated by the man who still holds one of the highest batting averages in Major League Baseball history. And most of those fans believe he was innocent.

"This was Joe's record in the 1919 World Series," she said, pointing to his statistics displayed on one of the museum's walls. He batted .375, which was remarkable, phenomenal. They were playing the Cincinnati Reds. He hit the only home run for both teams. He had 12 hits — a World Series record. How could he have done anything to throw it?"

Frank Alvarez, a baseball fan from San Bernardino, California, toured the museum while visiting Greenville.

"I think it's a great piece of history for the area to honor someone who should be in the Hall of Fame as one of baseball's best players ever."

The Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum is only open Saturdays from 10 a.m.–2 p.m., unless you call ahead and arrange for a special tour Monday through Friday. Admission is free.

Greenville is also home to the Museum and Library of Confederate History (864-421-9039, www.confederatemuseum.org). Director Mike Couch said the museum — which



Photos: Pam Windsor

Clockwise from above: Downtown Greenville exudes small-town charm and recently ranked among *Forbes* magazine's 10 Best. The Shoeless Joe Jackson Museum and Baseball Library highlights the legend of the controversial all star. Springwood RV Park offers 65 full-hookup sites and free Wi-Fi. The BMW Performance Driving School allows visitors to channel their inner NASCAR driver while piloting one of the company's vehicles.



Photo: Ian Curcio

has wall-to-wall firearms, uniforms, artifacts, documents and an extensive library — draws visitors from all over the world. Many come to get a clearer understanding of life on the battlefield, as well as what was happening at home during the war. Created by the Sons of the Confederate Veterans, the museum features many authentic items that were donated or are on loan from direct descendants of those who fought for the Confederacy. Admission is also free.

The Confederate Museum is just around the corner from the Greenville Zoo. This is a very small zoo that you can walk through at a leisurely pace to catch a glimpse of giraffes, lions, small primates, reptiles, birds and more.

And while you're visiting Greenville, if you have a need for speed, check out the BMW Performance Center in nearby Greer, less than 15 miles away.

If you call and make arrangements, you can even get out on a racecourse and drive some of their cars as part of the BMW Performance Driving School (www.bmwusfactory.com). Professional instructors are on hand and you'll not only have a good time, you're sure to leave with skills that will make you a better driver. Driving opportunities vary in terms of cost and availability.

From here, if you have plans to head to the South Carolina coast, it helps to know that Greenville/Spartanburg is approximately 200 miles from Charleston and about 250 miles from Myrtle Beach.

But Greenville is so much more than a stop on the way to the coast. With so much to see and do — not to mention eat and drink — Greenville has become a premier destination of its own, and is only getting better. **M**

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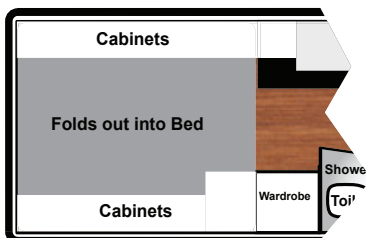
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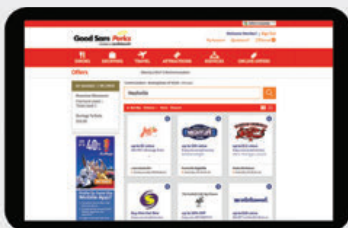
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A new money-stretching program rewards members for renewing their Good Sam Club membership. Called Good Sam Perks, the program thanks members for their loyalty by providing access to one-time deep discounts, two-for-one deals and frequent-value savings from big national brands, small-town shops and everything in between. The Good Sam Perks website lists participating merchants and discounts, and a smartphone app makes it easy to access mobile-redeemable coupons.

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REV IT UP IN ARIZONA

Good Sam picks up the pace in Phoenix this February

Good Sam Club members and RV enthusiasts will roll into Arizona's Phoenix International Raceway, February 23 through 26, 2017, to shop for RVs, browse the latest RV gear and mingle with fellow RVers at the inaugural Good Sam RV Super Show.



For those shopping for an RV, a fleet of new and used motorhomes, travel trailers and fifth-wheels will open their doors for walk-throughs. Merchandise displays will showcase the latest RV equipment and camping supplies.

Families can keep the young ones busy with a variety of activities from carnival rides and a petting zoo to a scavenger hunt. After dark, the Swing Tips and RealTones will perform nostalgic hits. Friday winds down with a movie under the stars, and Saturday ends with a bang at the fireworks show.

"While the Good Sam RV Super Show is not on the scale of a national Camping World/Good Sam Rally, it will incorporate many Rally elements," said Good Sam Club President Mike Siemens. "Good Sam members enjoy community as part of club membership,

and we are trying to preserve that benefit with events that combine a regional RV show with overnight camping, youth activities, educational seminars and entertainment for all. Our hope is for the Phoenix RV show to become an annual event and to recreate it at RV shows across the country."

Considering the bucket list of Southwestern attractions, the comfortable February temperatures, and the slate of activities and entertainment, there may never be a better time or place to shop for RVs and RV gear than February's Good Sam RV Super Show.

► Good Sam Club members get special deals on registration, dry camping and day passes. For details and to reserve a spot, call 866-838-5299 or visit www.goodsamrvshow.com.

IN THE BEGINNING The 50-year-old Good Sam Club and Camping World aren't the only companies commemorating major milestones this year. Beyond the centennial of the National Park System, two of the oldest RV brands still in business, Shasta (right) and Airstream, celebrate their 75th and 85th anniversaries, respectively.



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SO MANY ADVENT

The hardest part about a visit to Utah's Canyon

Our yearlong celebration of the National Park Service's 100th birthday here on the pages of MotorHome magazine may be drawing to a close, but we're not quite done yet. Our monthly Find Your Adventure series carries on as we direct your attention to a park with one of the widest variety of adventures — from mild to wild — to be had anywhere in the 400-plus units under the protection of the National Park Service.

.....

It's common to describe a particularly difficult dilemma as being between a rock and a hard place. Which is, somewhat ironically, exactly the situation you may find yourself in on your first visit to southeastern Utah's Canyonlands National Park.

If that sounds like a curious assertion with which to lead off a travel article, allow us to explain. You see, newcomers to Canyonlands are inevitably faced with a rather unique quandary: Namely, which of this rocky park's dozens of hard-core adventures you'll want to try first.

Decisions, Decisions

While it's true that virtually all of America's national parks have their adventurous side, the 527 square miles of Canyonlands National Park have long been known as a

serious playground for lovers of all things outdoors.

Part of the explanation for this popularity can be found in the park's diverse geography. In fact, the best way to wrap your head around this, the largest national park in Utah, is to understand that Canyonlands is divided into four distinct districts, or regions.

By far, the most visited part of Canyonlands is the northernmost section known as the Island in the Sky. With its proximity to both the go-for-it town of Moab and the jaw-dropping scenery of Arches National Park (definitely worth the detour), this large mesa is one of the two most easily accessed areas of the park and therefore a great place to start your visit.

The second most popular and equally accessible region of Canyonlands is known as The Needles. One look at the spire-like formations that are this southeastern section of the park's signature feature and you'll understand where it gets its name.

The Green and Colorado rivers play such an important role in the Canyonlands landscape that they can be thought of as part of the park in their own right. Consider for a



Mesa Arch is accessible via a short hike and is a popular site for sunrise photography.

'URES, SO LITTLE TIME

Canyonlands National Park is deciding where you'll start



Photos: NPS, Kristen Kearse; Utah Office of Tourism, Tom Till

moment that this part of southeastern Utah is an area where summertime temperatures frequently break into the triple digits and you'll begin to understand the appeal of exploring these two waterways.

While those meandering rivers take some effort to get to know, exploring them is a relatively straightforward matter compared to Canyonlands' most remote region known as The Maze. This compact area in the southwestern corner of the park has been described as one of America's 10 most dangerous places to hike because of its confusing terrain, lack of water and unrelenting sun, but dedicated seekers of solitude will find it offers just what they're looking for.

Adventures: Island in the Sky

There are only 20 miles of paved roads in the Island in the Sky section of Can-

yonlands National Park, but don't let that fool you. There's enough adventure here to keep you busy for days.

For starters, there's the short ½-mile trail to Mesa Arch. While that name might not mean anything to you, there's a good chance you've seen it in sunrise photographs, where the glowing stone span frames views of nearby Washer Woman Arch and the distant snowcapped La Sal Mountains.

There are the usual short hiking trails, like the ones to the meteor crater known as Upheaval Dome and the aptly named Grand View Overlook. But the Island's real claim to fame is the unpaved 100-mile track called the White Rim Road, which runs around the mesa's circumference just below the park's more touristy viewpoints.

There are two ways to experience the White Rim Road, and both are equally adventurous. Hardy mountain

Above from left: The Needles region was named for the colorful spires of Cedar Mesa Sandstone that highlight the area. This Green River overlook rewards visitors with the beauty of the desert. The verdant river corridors are a stark contrast to the hot terrain above.

bikers can explore it via pedal power (generally, three-to-four days). Or, for a less strenuous option, you can also travel the White Rim Road by four-wheel-drive vehicle (two-to-three days). Though you could conceivably do either route on your own, in both cases your best bet is to sign up for one of the organized multiday tours offered by a number of Moab outfitters.

Adventures: The Needles

As memorable as those adventures may be, The Needles region of Canyonlands National Park has its own unique diversions in store.

The fun starts along Utah State



Getting There

You will have to visit each district of the park separately, as no bridges or roads connect the districts within the park. To reach the Island in the Sky region, take U.S. Highway 191 to Utah State Route 313 (10 miles north of Moab) and then drive southwest 22 miles. To reach The Needles region, drive U.S. 191 40 miles south of Moab to Utah State Route 211 and continue roughly 35 miles west. The Maze is the least accessible region and requires a four-wheel-drive vehicle, as the roads are unpaved. To reach Hans Flat Ranger Station, take Interstate 70 to Utah State Route 24 south for 24 miles. A left turn just beyond the turnoff to Goblin Valley State Park will take you along a two-wheel-drive dirt road; continue 46 miles to the ranger station.

Photos: NPS, Kirsten Kearse and Andrew Kuhn



Above: Needles offers about 50 miles of challenging backcountry roads that require high-clearance 4WD vehicles. The 100-mile White Rim Road leads bicyclists around and below the Island in the Sky mesa top. The entire trip generally takes three to four days by mountain bike.

Route 211 before you even reach the park entrance station, with a stop at the roadside pullout for Newspaper Rock. While you may have seen ancient petroglyphs in other places, nothing can prepare you for the rock art explosion you'll find here. Highlights of this collection of more than 1,500-year-old drawings include wheels, strange footprints, horseback-mounted riders and a collection of beings that look like they've just stepped off an alien spacecraft.

Just a short drive down the road you'll come upon an area of cliffs known as Indian Creek, famous with rock climbers from around the world for the long vertical cracks that make for excellent hand- and foot-holds. You can simply watch these Spiderman-like athletes in action, or you try it for yourself with the help of folks from

any number of rock climbing schools in Moab, who'll quite literally show you the ropes and then teach you what to do with them.

Inside the park boundaries, be sure to check out the old cowboy camp known as Cave Spring Camp and the prehistoric ancestral Puebloan dwelling known as the Roadside Ruin. You can also take the approximately 11-mile round-trip hike to the confluence of the Green and Colorado rivers, where the sheer 1,000-foot cliffs offer uncommon views of both the intersection of these two historic rivers and the park's Island in the Sky and Maze districts.

Adventures: The Rivers

As for the Green and the Colorado rivers, which have done so much to shape Canyonlands National Park,

IF YOU GO

Here are some things to keep in mind as you plan your visit to Canyonlands National Park:

Logistics: First, you should remember that The Needles district is a 75-mile drive south out of Moab, making it actually a little closer to the town of Blanding. To spare yourself the long commute, you may want to consider splitting your stay between the two towns. There is no fuel or food available in the park, so fill up prior to arrival.

Outdoor Etiquette: Part of being a respectful visitor is knowing where you can and can't go. In hiking, mountain biking and four-wheel-drive operation, that means staying on marked trails and roads, lest you do long-term damage to the desert environment's all-important cryptobiotic soil crust. Note that ATVs, OHVs and UTVs are not permitted in the park, and all motorbikes must be interstate-legal.

Camping: Both The Needles (Squaw Flat Campground, 26 sites) and Island in the Sky (Willow Flat Campground, 12 sites) regions of Canyonlands feature primitive campgrounds with a 28-foot-length limit on RVs they can accommodate. The good news is that there are a number of commercial RV parks and BLM campgrounds available outside of the park; check out the *Good Sam North American RV Travel & Savings Guide* for more information.

Permits: Permits are required for all overnight trips in the backcountry. During the peak seasons of spring and fall, demand for permits frequently exceeds the number available, so it's a good idea to make reservations well in advance or go with a local outfitter.

Guides/Outfitters: To find a list of local guides and outfitters, check out the listings put together by the Utah Guides and Outfitters Association (UGO) at www.utah-adventures.com.

Canyon vistas abound in the park, which offers hundreds of miles of trails. Be sure to bring water.



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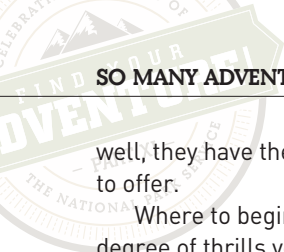
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SO MANY ADVENTURES, SO LITTLE TIME

well, they have their own adventures to offer.

Where to begin depends on the degree of thrills you're seeking. Above the Confluence, you can go for a relaxed flat-water float by raft, canoe, kayak or even stand-up paddleboard. No matter which craft you choose, these desert rivers will give you a chance to see this rugged red-rock country from a perspective very few Canyonlands visitors will ever know.

If, on the other hand, you're looking for something to get the adrenaline flowing, you'll want to focus on the waters of the Colorado below the Confluence. This 14-mile stretch is known as Cataract Canyon, home of some of the wildest whitewater (up to Class V rapids) in the western U.S., especially in the spring, where uncontrolled snowmelt-fueled flows roar down the narrow channel. You'll find multiple outfitters offering whitewater trips that will give you a taste of what Grand Canyon explorer John Wesley



Island in the Sky mesa sits atop sandstone cliffs more than 1,000 feet above the surrounding area.

Photo: Utah Office of Tourism

Powell experienced when he quite literally put this area on the map in 1869.

If you come down somewhere between the two excitement extremes, allow us to suggest a jet-boat excursion. These outings give you much the same laid-back perspective on the river as the tamer flat-water float trips with a few exciting moments like 360-degree spins thrown in for good measure, making them an ideal compromise for couples or families with different thrill tolerances.

Adventures: The Maze

Located west of The Needles, on the opposite side of the Colorado River, The Maze region is perhaps Canyonlands' toughest nut to crack. Getting to and through this remote, rugged part of the park requires more time and preparation, to say nothing of the proper rations and gear, in addition to advanced map-reading skills.

While it's certainly possible to travel through The Maze on your own, it's a much wiser move to go with one of the outfitters you'll find operating out of the towns of Moab and Blanding. Options range from guided four-wheel-drive expeditions and mountain-biking tours to multiday backpacking trips through this hot, dry and difficult-to-navigate terrain.

The amount of effort it takes to spend time in The Maze is directly proportional to the reward, however. Here, 100 miles from anything that remotely resembles civilization, you'll find a place tailor-made for those who truly want to get away from it all, even if only for a few short days.

A Good Place to Be

Ultimately, no matter which corner of Canyonlands National Park you decide to explore, you'll find yourself faced with more than a dozen different adventure options, proving conclusively that between a rock and a hard place is actually a pretty good place to be. **M**

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Canyonlands National Park

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MOTORHOME MENAGERIE



Here's how two RVers, two dogs, two cats and one bird set out to enjoy life on the road full time

Theo has to go potty, RIGHT NOW!" I'm scrambling to pick up our four-month-old puppy as my husband, Andy, tries to find a safe place to pull over on the side of the road. We are in Arkansas, driving our motorhome on the way to our next RV site. We take the first random exit ramp and I quickly slip on my shoes, fasten the harness and leash to Theo, and step into the ditch. He relieves himself quickly and we get back into

our motorhome, but not before I notice that he is upset. Our pit stop landed us on a fire-ant colony and they are biting Theo's tummy, leaving small, red welts in their wake. My husband and I brush them off of him, cringing as the ants turn on us, but we are soon back on the road.

This is just one experience we've had with our dog on the road, but it's one that may deter people from bringing along their pets in the motorhome. A lot of people choose to

Above: Angela and her husband, Andy, enjoy life in their National RV motorhome with the McLaughlin menagerie. The animals, from left to right, are Piper, Ellie, Theo and Lila. Pica, a sun conure parakeet, is resting on Andy's shoulder.

bring their pets with them on vacation, but not all would consider traveling with them full time, especially while living in a motorhome with the number of animals we have. In 2015, Andy and I sold our home in St. Paul, Minnesota, quit our jobs, and set out in our 1997 National RV Dolphin motorhome towing a 1988 Jeep Wrangler. At 34 feet long with about 300 square feet with the living-room slide extended, the two of us travel with two dogs, two cats and a bird.

We had many reasons for making the decision to full-time, but it boiled down to being sick of working 50-60 hours a week and hardly seeing each other. We spent most of our shifts dreaming of our next vacation, and it eventually hit us that this wasn't what life was meant to be. We looked down the path we were on, at how our life would be in 10, 20 or 30 years, and decided we didn't like what we saw. So, at the ripe ages of 27 and 28, we decided to retire.

Andy and I do not have children in the sense of human kids, but we do have pets; we consider them all non-negotiable members of the family. When we concocted the plan of traveling in a motorhome, we were faced with the obstacle of how to include our pet family into our new life. The thought of leaving our human friends and families in Minnesota was painful, but we knew that we could still be happy as long as we had our furry/feathered family members with us.

While shopping for our new motorhome, foremost in our thoughts was how to make it work with our pets. We quickly eliminated fifth-wheels, travel trailers and toy-hauler trailers because we could not easily ride with all of us in the cab of a truck, and I was not comfortable having our pets ride behind while towing, not knowing if they were OK or if something had slid out of place. After touring more than 50 motorhomes, we settled on our Class A National RV Dolphin. It was a perfectly manageable size with all the details we were looking for: nice countertops, partial hardwood floors and



The McLaughlin's camping spot in the bluffs of Iowa during the Halloween season.

space for our pets (not to mention that it was animal-themed, with dolphins everywhere). I was immediately in love.

We spent months preparing our home in St. Paul for sale, and while showing it to potential buyers, our pets stayed at my parents' house. It was hard to be away from our pets, even for only a few days at a time. We knew that we were making the right decision

to bring them with us on the road ... or at least we hoped it was the right decision. When our beautiful 1897-built home sold to a young couple, I was heartbroken at the thought of saying goodbye, but optimistic as we drove back to our motorhome that night. For the first time, the Dolphin was our home. I was filled with a mixture of terror, regret, disbelief and over-



Clockwise from above: Ellie and Lila enjoy their kitty crawl space, which is a converted TV cabinet. Pica hangs out in her mounted cage, which sets up in the windshield area of the motorhome so it doesn't take up any usable space. Theo and Piper relax after a long hike. When Angela and Andy leave the dogs alone in the motorhome, they set the thermostat to a comfortable temperature.

whelming excitement.

We saved up money over the next several months, living with the motorhome parked in my parents' driveway. I never thought I would move back home (and technically I guess I still hadn't), but this was the only way to make our dream of traveling come true. When we weren't working like crazy, we were getting the coach road-ready, and getting our animals accustomed to their new home. Our cats took the longest to adjust to the new scents and noises our motorhome made. The first time the water pump turned on, my cat, Lila, ran and hid for more than an hour. Eventually, with the help of a few treats, everyone started to come around. Once the calendar turned to October, we had quit our jobs, said our goodbyes and were heading off on the open road, unsure of where life would take us, but ready for an adventure.

We knew that the most difficult family member to travel with would be our bird, Pica. She is a sun conure that we hand-fed as a baby and who is now nearly 10 years old. She had been accustomed to a large cage and room of her own, so we weren't sure how she would handle the downsize. We were also concerned about the safety aspects of fumes from cooking and cleaning in such a small space.

After a lot of research, we ended up buying an acrylic birdcage. We could strap it to our dining-room table

“Our pets enrich our traveling experience by making us feel more complete while on the road.”

while we were driving, and mount it in the front windshield while parked. This meant that her cage would not take up any usable space while in camp, since the windshield can often be dead space in a motorhome. After more research, we purchased ceramic cookware and natural cleaning supplies. These, combined with proper ventilation, created the safe environment we needed to include Pica in our journey.

Our next concerns were the cats, Ellie and Lila, now 2 and 7 years old, who were used to roaming a two-story house with multiple litter boxes. Where the heck do you put a litter box in a motorhome? And, how do you make sure it doesn't smell like urine every time you walk inside the motorhome? Our answer was to place the litter box in a cabinet originally meant to be a clothes hamper, to remove the cabinet door so they had easy access and to switch them to Blue Buffalo's walnut-based litter, which cuts out the dust and is great for odor control. For entertainment (and to help preserve the furniture), we brought a small cat tree and corrugated cardboard scratching boards that we installed under our dining-room chairs.

We also include regular walks outside, with the cats on their harnesses. It took a little effort to get them used to their harnesses, but we wanted them to be safe outside. We found that the easiest way to do this was to let the cats wear the harnesses around inside the motorhome, just to get acclimated. We fed them their favorite wet foods so they would associate their harnesses with good things. When we take them outside, we typically just let them roam the area, dragging their leashes on the ground behind them. They don't normally wander too far or try to run, but the leash and harness are extra security that makes them easier to catch and bring back inside. If the leash catches on something, they still try to slip the harness, so we always stay close while they explore. After converting the old TV cabinet into a hidey-hole for them, we managed to complete our cat-friendly RV transformation.

Theo and Piper, our dogs, are wonderful travelers. Theo (or as Andy calls him, “Ted”) was only 3 months old when we left on our adventure, so he grew up only knowing life on the road. Piper, almost 5 years old, has always adjusted well as long as she has Andy nearby. She loves to explore with him, always by his side when he is around. With her, the biggest thing we've had to learn is to put the cat food away when we leave. After three broken dishes, we've finally learned our lesson.

The dogs are the easiest travelers — no surprises there. We haven't had any trouble finding campgrounds that accept dogs, but we do our research and call ahead to be sure. We always try to look for places that have hiking trails nearby, and since we don't like to be crammed in sardine-

Left: Andy, Theo and Piper watch the waves on a beach in Southern California. Regular walks and outside time are a must when traveling with pets, not only for potty breaks, but also for exercise and for everybody's overall well-being.



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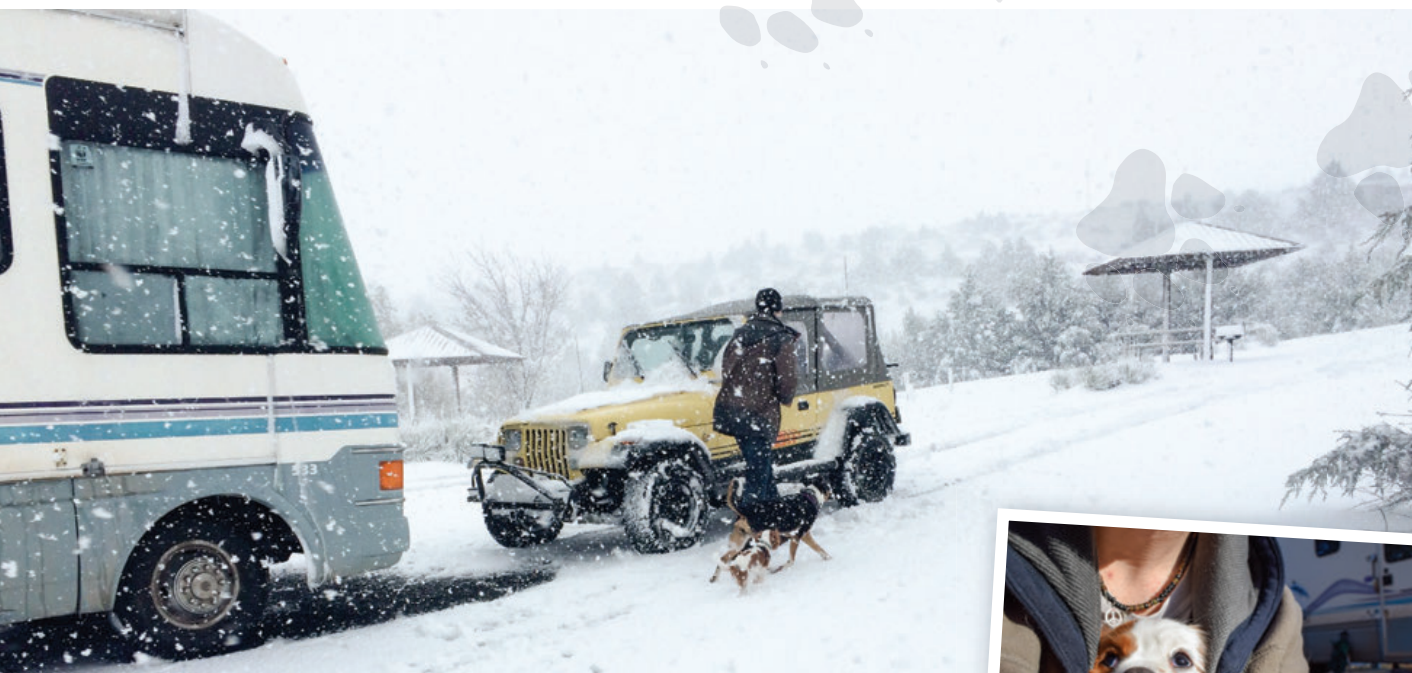


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Above: Caught in an unexpected snowstorm while camping in New Mexico. This was Theo's first snow experience, and he took to the white stuff right away. Right: Theo stays warm inside Andy's jacket. Theo has been a full-time RVer since he was 3 months old.



style like many RV parks, we tend to shy away from such places in favor of state and county campgrounds. When we do need to leave the dogs alone, we make sure to leave our motorhome nicely temperature-controlled and we put our little guy, Theo, into a crate so he doesn't get into trouble. Those innocent eyes don't fool anyone when you're staring at a pile of torn-up paper on the floor. As far as their routine goes, it is very similar to what we did in our house: plenty of outside time, but more than enough time for cuddling as well. Though easy to travel with, the dogs take up the most space out of everyone.

As in any motorhome, there is always the issue of storage. Finding room to keep dog food, cat food, litter, leashes, harnesses, medical supplies, treats, toys, kennels and bird supplies means giving up space initially meant for us. By far, our biggest challenge is keeping our motorhome clean. The upside of a small space is that it doesn't take long to clean; we just have to do it every day! After investing in an awesome vacuum — a Shark Rocket Ultra-Light — that is lightweight and

breaks apart for storage, we've successfully battled the fur-and-feather dust bunnies invading our motorhome.

We've learned a lot about ourselves and our relationship from this experience. Most of all, we've learned that what makes a peaceful home environment is for everyone to have their own space when they need it. Piper and Theo have separate beds, Ellie and Lila have their tree and cat-hole, and Pica has her cage and playpen. Andy and I can get away just by going outside for a walk.

Andy and I are thankful that we made the decision to travel with our pets, and we all have adapted quickly to life in a motorhome. Our pets enrich our traveling experience by making us feel more complete while on the road. Hiking and swimming with the dogs, bird-watching with the cats and sharing meal times and movies with our bird make it feel like a real

home. Our pets have been with us through wildfire scares in Oklahoma, unexpected snowstorms in New Mexico and rainstorms in Missouri that threatened to sink us into the mud, and they've been along down windy, slippery mountain roads when we weren't sure we would make it to the bottom. They may not have known the dangers we were facing, but they were there to comfort us afterward.

Though we gave up a life in Minnesota, we've created a new one on the road in our motorhome. With all of us together, each campsite or RV park feels like home. We get to travel with our family, exploring amazing places and meeting people who, like ourselves, want to travel with their pets. It's not only a possibility — it's the most fulfilling option for people who view their pets as family. **M**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Angela and Andy are currently residing as park hosts in Southern California. If you would like to follow them on their journey, and learn more about how they travel with their pets, visit www.thewanderingdolphin.com.

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Shock And Awe

Put reason and sensibility aside for a moment, and step inside the 2017 Foretravel ih-45, one of the most technologically advanced luxury coaches on the market **By Chris Hemer**

There's something about a 45-foot luxury motorcoach that seems to evoke emotional responses. First, there's shock: "Wow! How big is that thing?" Then, awe: "What a beautiful motorhome!" Followed shortly thereafter by dismay, sometimes even visible disgust, at the price tag. "Nearly \$1.4 million for a motorhome?! I could buy a really nice house with that!"

Indeed, you could. But then again,

a coach like this is intended to be your home, and an amazingly well-equipped one at that. Consider what it would cost to have your home built from scratch, then expertly painted, decorated and furnished to your specifications. Then, fit with the finest appliances, state-of-the-art electronics and audio/visual equipment, and you can see how it starts to add up — but that's only part of the picture. This particular home is also designed to transport you and your

family anyplace your heart desires in five-star resort comfort whenever you want. So, does all this justify a seven figure price tag? For most, no — but that's one of the reasons Foretravel Motorcoach of Nacogdoches, Texas, only builds around 18 of its bespoke ih-45 coaches a year. Step into one, and you'll instantly understand the appeal — you may even start a mental list of accounts and possessions that can be liquidated in order to cover the

ABOVE: Each Foretravel ih-45 paint job is custom and takes between 500 and 1,000 hours to complete. Among the changes for 2017 are a new front-cap design, new storage doors and a new basement design. Exterior television (not pictured) deploys from the rear of the forward slideout.



BELOW: Interior includes a new ceiling-recess design, Premier Ebony high-gloss laminate cabinets and contrasting furniture/countertops. Master suite features a king bed with nightstands and overhead cabinets. Television rises from large wardrobe area when it is switched on.



down payment. Do I really want to send Johnny to college? Nah, he can pay for it himself.

Established in 1967, Foretravel ranks as one of the original custom coach builders — and “custom” isn’t a word it takes lightly. Once the down payment is taken, Foretravel begins building your coach from the bottom up, starting with its own chassis, the Foretravel Travelride II. Aside from massive ¼-by-10-inch steel channel rails and ¾-inch steel tubing modules, the Travelride II features some pretty impressive equipment. Two outboard airbags per wheel on the rear and one per wheel up front with an HWH Active Air system automatically sense changes in direction and brake dive, and instantaneously increases air pressure to the

appropriate bags to keep the coach’s attitude flat. There is one massive air-actuated brake disc per wheel, including the tag axle. Motivation comes from a Cummins ISX15 diesel engine generating 600 hp along with a massive 1,950 LB-FT of torque, routed through an Allison 4000MHR six-speed automatic transmission with a somewhat unique feature: A hydraulic retarder that takes the place of a traditional engine brake. Foretravel claims that, in its experience, the retarder works better than an engine brake and is completely silent in operation.

Of course, at this price point you can expect nothing but the best mechanical systems as well, so Foretravel equips its ih-45 with HWH fully automatic leveling and hydraulic actuation of the

flush-mount slideouts. What makes this latter feature unique in a Foretravel motorcoach is what the company calls Fore-Slide technology, a multi-step process unlike anything you’ve ever seen in an “ordinary” motorhome. When a slide is deployed, a panel in the floor opens, then drops, and the edge of the slideout settles in. The panel then raises to meet the slideout edge, creating a perfectly flat floor. Foretravel artisans even design the floor tiles so that the seam is almost invisible. Once the slideout is in place, a pneumatic bladder around the circumference of the box inflates, creating an airtight seal that prevents light, dirt and even sound from entering. It all happens like a carefully orchestrated mechanical play, except there is definitely no drama

here.

Most of what Foretravel builds is to the customer's order, but occasionally the company creates a show model to demonstrate what is possible, which is the case with the test unit you see here. Industry wide, there has been an uptick in interest for models that have sleeping accommodations for kids — and while the market Foretravel plays in doesn't ordinarily get these types of requests, they've been coming in frequently enough for the company to build its own interpretation of a family motorcoach. And as you might expect, it takes the concept several steps beyond, with two lavishly equipped bunk beds amidships and two full bathrooms. Each bunk is equipped with its own window, flat-screen television, Blu-ray player, color-changing LED accent lighting and appropriate outlets for gaming consoles. And, because both bunks feature solid, sliding doors, each area is equipped with its own air-conditioning registers as well. It's truly a kid's paradise — in fact, you'll probably forget you even have kids until mealtime.

Directly across the hall from the bunks is a bathroom fit for a prince or princess. Behind the porcelain macerator toilet with pushbutton activation is hand-laid tumbled marble subway tile, while the countertop is backed with glass mosaic tile in complementing earth tones. The vanity is small, but well-equipped, with a quartz surface and a brushed-nickel residential faucet, plus three drawers and a medicine cabinet. The showstopper here, though, is the spa-inspired shower, with a tumbled-rock shower pan, matching subway tile, residential fixtures and a thick glass door. In either bathroom, or anywhere in the coach, for that matter, you get a truly residential experience even when you're not hooked up to a city-water connection. That's because the ih-45 is fitted with a monster of a water pump — a Headhunter Mach 5 that is about the size of a half-gallon bottle and generates up to 20 gallons per minute in almost total silence. It's complemented by a Headhunter Puffer

accumulator tank designed to eliminate water hammer and reduce pump cycling, as well as to store pressurized water for flushing the toilets. Truly, you can't tell the difference between pump and city connection — it's that good.

The rear master bedroom is separated from the hall and living area by a pocket door — and both this and the one that isolates the rear master bathroom are pneumatically operated. Push a button, and the door in question slides shut in almost complete silence. The bedroom itself is appropriately equipped with a comfy king bed with nightstands, a padded headboard, and overhead cabinets. At the foot of the bed is a large wardrobe in a slideout with his and hers cabinets for hanging clothes, and a chest of drawers. You won't notice the 40-inch LED TV until you turn it on, at which point it rises silently from the countertop.

The rear bath is similarly equipped to the guest bath, except there is a large cabinet next to the toilet that conceals a stacked washer/dryer. What makes this space unique, however, you may miss completely unless you've owned a rear bath diesel pusher in the past: There is no step up into the bathroom. Ordinarily, some clearance is required for the coach's monstrous powerplant just below the floor — but Foretravel engineers found that, by changing the fan-drive system, they gained enough clearance to make a flat floor throughout.

The main living space in the test unit was fairly ordinary by luxury-motorhome standards, meaning that it has everything you would expect in

WHAT'S HOT

Gorgeous paint job, new front-cap design, superlative driving experience.

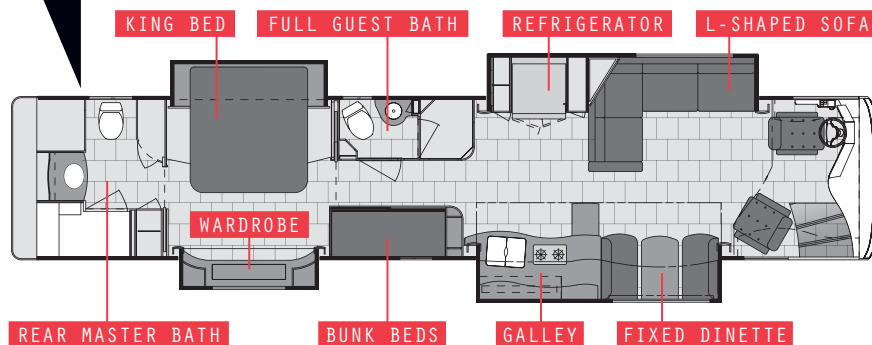
WHAT'S NOT

Too pricey for most.



a coach of this caliber. Top-of-the-line appliances, handmade cabinetry, quartz countertops and plenty of LED lighting made the inside of the ih-45 feel like a luxury high-rise apartment. But it's those small, sometimes invisible details that make the biggest difference. Multiplex panels to control the lighting are everywhere and are logically placed for the zone you're in — but even this technology is starting to become commonplace in the luxury RV segment. So, new for this year is iPad integration — where everything in the coach can be controlled and/or monitored through one of these popular tablets. To watch the two flat-screen televisions in the living area, for example, we first touched a button on the multiplex panel near the couch to lower the 48-inch unit from the ceiling above the cockpit. Then, we simply chose A/V from the tablet's main menu, selected the living-area icon and touched "TV." Doing so fired up the DirecTV box and turned on the main TV simultaneously. From here, we used the same menu screen to select "TV2" and then both TVs were on.

2017 FORETRAVEL IH-45





Galley features quartz countertops, two-burner induction cooktop, residential stainless convection microwave and stainless-steel sink with cover. Countertop extension is held closed by electromagnets during travel. Couch with extension has TV above for viewing from swiveling cockpit seats or dinette.

There are also icons for the bedroom and both bunks.

This is only a small portion of what the system can do. You can turn on/dim lights in any zone, raise/lower individual or all power roller shades, adjust the climate-control system (both A/C and AquaHot hydronic system, by zone) turn the water pump on/off, operate the generator, even dump the gray/black holding tank. You can also check the battery-charge level, monitor the six-security camera system (with DVR), change the color(s) of the infinitely

adjustable exterior LED light system, and more. How many times have you gone to bed at night and forgot to turn off a light or adjust the climate-control system up or down? With the convenience of iPad integration, you'll never have to do that again. Unless, of course, you forget to bring the iPad into the bedroom with you.

The coach's various systems can also be controlled by a single touch-screen panel behind a small door in the hallway, and it's easy to use. Categories are all laid out in buttons, such as

Climate, Water and Genset. Touch climate, and you can see what zones are currently activated (living room, kitchen, bed and bath), as well as set temperature and outside temperature. The home screen tells you, at a glance, what your freshwater and waste levels are, house and chassis battery voltage, even the performance of both legs in the 50-amp system (amps and volts).

Having so many systems in a relatively small space means accessibility for maintenance and troubleshooting is key. So, in addition to two



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Specifications

Chassis

Model	ih-45
Engine	Cummins ISX15
SAE Hp	600 @ 1,800 rpm
Torque	1,950 lb-ft @ 1,200 rpm
Transmission	Allison 4000 MHR
Axle Ratio	4.30:1
Front Tires	Michelin 365/70R22.5
Rear & Tag Axle Tires	Michelin 315/80R22.5
Wheelbase	304"
Brakes	Air disc, all wheels
Suspension F/R	Independent front suspension with HWH Active Air, two air bags/ Rear four air bags/ Tag two air bags
Fuel Capacity	200 gal
Fuel Economy	5-8 mpg (average)
Warranty	Powertrain 24 months/24,000 miles bumper-to-bumper, 5 years/100,000 miles structural

Coach

Exterior Length	45'
Exterior Width	8' 6"
Exterior Height	13' 2" (including roof A/C)
Interior Width	8' 5"
Interior Height	7'
Construction	Aluminum framing in floor and roof; steel framing in walls; vacuum-bonded fiberglass side walls; CosmoLite one-piece, UV-resistant roof; structural block-foam insulation
Freshwater Capacity	135 gal
Black/Gray Tank Capacity	145 gal (one holding tank)
Water-Heater	Aqua-Hot Hydronic
LP-Gas Capacity	N/A
Air Conditioner	(4) 15,000 Btu w/heat pump
Furnace	Aqua-Hot 600D Hydronic, 65,600 Btu
Refrigerator	25.8 cubic foot
Inverter/Charger	(2) 2,800 watt
Battery	(3) Group 31 12-volt (chassis); (6) Group 4D deep cycle AGM (12-volt)
AC generator	12.5 kW Onan diesel
MSRP as tested	\$1,359,800

Wet Weight

(Water and fuel tanks full, no supplies or passengers)

Front Axle	18,000 lbs
Rear Axle	19,640 lbs
Tag Axle	12,580 lbs
Total	50,220 lbs

Chassis Ratings

GAWR	
Front	20,000 lbs
Rear	23,000 lbs
Tag	14,000 lbs
GVWR	54,000 lbs
GCWR	74,000 lbs
ROCCC	3,780 lbs



Each bunk bed features its own sliding door, flat-screen television, LED lighting, air-conditioning registers, Blu-ray player and gaming-console outlets. The guest bath rivals the best spas with its workmanship and materials.



cavernous pass-through storage bays with power-operated slide-out trays, other baggage doors conceal neatly arranged electronics and plumbing. Control modules with labels for the systems they control in one. Nine batteries with textbook cabling in another. The water system, with the pump, accumulator, filters and winterizing valves front in center behind another, separate door. On the street side, you can easily see and reach anything in the Aqua-Hot system, and the utility center is obviously the result of experienced hands. It's crafted from stainless steel and features a residential chrome faucet and soap dispenser, plus integrated hose reels for the power cord and freshwater supply.

But as much as the ih-45 satisfies the senses when it is parked, its mission in life is to eat up the miles, day after day, year after year — and it works beautifully in this respect as well. A new Silverleaf glass dashboard is a great addition for 2017, working as both an instrument cluster and a very handy checklist. If all systems are go, they're all green; if the jacks are down or the shorepower cord is still connected when the ignition key is switched on, for example, these will be displayed in red. Once you get rolling, it will show a speedometer, tachometer and, because it's user-programmable, anything else you'd like to keep tabs on. Of course,

the steering wheel offers a tilt/telescoping function, and the driver's seat is an expensive Knoedler air-ride unit with multiple power adjustments. The front passenger's seat is power adjustable, offers a foot rest and is heated as well.

Release the air-operated parking brake, select "D" from the shift console, and you're off. The view from the windshield is vast and commanding, but comparatively short in height; the effect is like looking through a large car windshield instead of an office-building window. Appropriate, considering that the Foretravel ih-45 drives like a car. The steering is remarkably accurate, the braking, especially when combined with the Allison transmission retarder is superlative, and the cornering completely flat. Within 10 minutes, it's easy to forget you're driving a 45-foot motorhome. And the fact that the driving experience is almost completely silent should lay to rest (no pun intended) any concerns about driver fatigue after many miles and hours behind the wheel.

Yes, a coach like the Foretravel ih-45 is much more than just an RV. It's a traveling technological tour-de-force, a comfortable home, and a driver's dream. Now ... just how well is your portfolio performing, anyway? **M**

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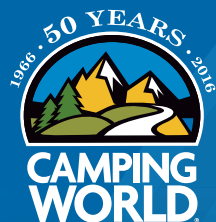


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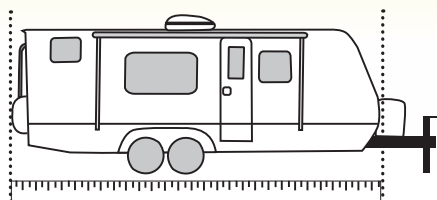
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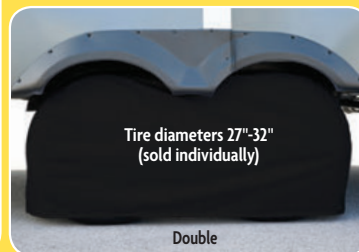
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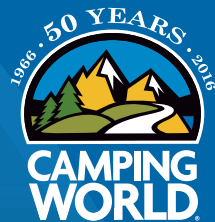
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DINGHY-TOWING PRIMER

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW TO GET YOUR MOTORHOME AND TOWED VEHICLE READY TO HIT THE ROAD

Let's face it; motorhoming is the best way to see the country. After all, you are able to watch the scenery roll on by from the comfort of your living room. Want refreshments? Need the potty? They're right behind you all the time.

But motorhomes do present a set of challenges as well: if you plan on touring after you've arrived at your destination, you have to pack everything up and drive the coach. That is, unless you're towing a dinghy vehicle.

The meaning of dinghy is the same whether you're in a marine or RV environment; taking a smaller, excursion-type vehicle along behind your larger, less maneuverable vehicle, such as a yacht or motorhome.

Dinghy towing has been popular for many years, especially since the advent of the modern, foldable, motorhome-mounted tow bar.

With the proper knowledge, equipment and vehicle, you can have a virtually effortless towing experience that will enhance all of your travels.

VEHICLE SELECTION

Here's something everyone who is considering flat towing a vehicle needs to keep in mind: not all vehicles can be flat towed, and not all of them can be equipped in the same way. Dinghy towing requires a specially designed baseplate, custom wiring, braking system and occasionally powertrain changes.

A baseplate is the main structural connection for a vehicle being flat towed. Manufacturers like Roadmaster and Blue Ox design brackets for almost every model of vehicle that can be flat towed. This list changes every year, as model year design changes require the tow-bar manufacturers to chase down the new models for a fitment process.

Selecting the right dinghy vehicle is essential. Each vehicle manufacturer provides a list of vehicles that can be flat towed to *MotorHome* each year for the dinghy-towing guide (April issue). Available online for a number of previous model years, the annual *MotorHome* dinghy guide is the



go-to resource for finding vehicles that can be towed, and what, if any, special instructions are required to make the vehicle flat-towable.

HOW MUCH CAN YOUR MOTORHOME TOW?

Before selecting a dinghy, it is essential that you are familiar with how much weight your motorhome can tow. The good news is that flat towing a vehicle puts a negligible amount of weight on the motorhome's rear axle and hitch receiver. However, some motorhomes are rated for very little towing, and occasionally a small motorhome may not have a receiver, and isn't rated to tow anything. This is where the homework comes in; once you have determined the motorhome's tow rating, you can start looking at dinghy vehicles.

THE BIGGER THEY ARE, THE HARDER THEY TOW

It may not be a hard-and-fast rule, but generally speaking, as the dinghy gets bigger, it becomes costlier, the hardware has to be heavier-duty, the fuel economy of the motorhome drops and it becomes even more difficult to find parking or get the motorhome towing the dinghy vehicle into tighter places. We recommend getting the smallest "towed" vehicle that will work for you. In any case, never exceed the tow rating or gross combination weight rating (GCWR) of the motorhome.

SELECTING THE PROPER HARDWARE

Setting up a vehicle is not an inexpensive venture and can cost well into the thousands of dollars for the

equipment and installation. So, researching the products you will need to flat tow is important.

TOW BAR

The first component that comes to mind is the tow bar. Tow bars come in a number of styles and ratings, and selection is based on the application and how much the buyer wants to spend. From personal experience, I can tell you that it's best not to skimp here.

The most economical tow bar is the basic solid A-frame type that bolts to the front of the towed car and connects to a ball-type hitch on the back of the motorhome. The problem with this setup is that it can be a challenge to connect to the motorhome, and the A-frame sticks up in the air while you're driving the car if it's not removed.

The preferred method in RV circles is to employ the motorhome-mounted foldable tow bar because this doesn't leave hardware on the front of the dinghy vehicle. With this type of tow bar there are two telescoping and articulating arms that unfold to connect to the bracket on the front of the towed vehicle. Once the dinghy is connected, its brakes are released, and moving either the motorhome or towed vehicle extends the arms into the locked position. The arms are unlocked to release tension so the arms can be disconnected.

The ratings on the tow bars vary, ranging from generally 5,000 to 10,000 pounds. Be sure to buy a unit that will handle your current and future needs.

BASEPLATE

The baseplate is the frame-mounted bracket that connects the tow bar to the towed vehicle. As previously mentioned, baseplates are custom designed for the most common towed vehicles, but tow-bar suppliers will design a plate for any customer's vehicle if the customer brings the vehicle to their manufacturing facility. It's generally better to match the baseplate with the tow bar; however, there are cross-manufacturer adapters available for certain applications.

Installing a baseplate can be a remarkably complex project requiring removal of much of the front end of the towed car, and is only recommended to be done by the most competent shade-tree mechanics. Most of the plates are bolt-on applications, but there are some that can require quite a bit of drilling, fabrication and fishing of bolts through small openings. Some specialized tools, like a torque wrench, various American and metric sockets and body-working tools may be required, as cutting holes in panels and grilles is not uncommon. When working on this kind of project, it's always a good idea to measure twice, cut once.

LIGHTING

Rear-facing lighting is required by law on every towed car. There are a number of ways of accomplishing this.

Strap-on or magnetic rear light kits connect to the back of the dinghy, and a cable is routed to the rear of the motorhome's trailer connection. While this can be the least desirable way to go — as the cable is exposed, can cause rubbing damage to the towed vehicle's paint and won't have an easy way to share the motorhome connection with a braking system — there are wireless systems available that mitigate most of these issues.

The other, more effective methods are utilizing bulb kits and diode kits. Bulb kits and diode kits use a similar wiring harness that is run through the vehicle to the rear,

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and both require removing elements of the interior of the vehicle for proper installation. Bulb-kit wiring is routed to the stop/turn/taillight assemblies and holes are drilled in them to install independent bulbs that operate separately from the vehicle's main harness.

A diode kit cuts into the stop/turn/taillight wiring harness in the rear of the dinghy, and is tied into the motorhome's circuit; the diodes prevent feedback from damaging the circuitry of the dinghy and motorhome.

BRAKING

Most states require that towed vehicles, like trailers, have their own brakes and emergency breakaway brake systems. But braking systems should be used regardless of size or law.

Whether the towed vehicle is a Fiat or a Ford F-150 pickup, stopping distances will increase, in some cases substantially. A braking system will not only make stopping the motorhome and towed vehicle shorter and thereby safer, but will activate the towed vehicle's brakes in the event of a separation, bringing the car to a safe stop as soon as possible.

Braking systems are available in a number of designs for different applications, and your dealer or Camping World can help you select the right system.

Standalone systems are popular because of their portability from one vehicle to another. They also require the least amount of installation time and are relatively easy to use. These systems sit on the floor of the towed vehicle and connect to the brake pedal by way of a bracket; 12-volt DC is provided to power the unit, and a breakaway switch is wired in.

Proportional braking is achieved by utilizing motion-sensing technology to sense the rate of deceleration and apply the appropriate amount of brake-pedal pressure to aid in the stop. There is no requirement to tap into the braking system of the motorhome, nor

do they power up the master cylinder. Removal of the system is easy, and the unit can be used across numerous towed vehicles.

Other systems are built into the towed vehicle and sometimes require minimal installation/setup time. These systems still have breakaway capabilities, and feature a built-in vacuum reservoir or pump which enable the vehicle's power brakes, requiring less force to activate the brakes.

However, most systems require extensive installation, and are very difficult, if not impossible, to transfer from one vehicle to another.

OTHER ACCESSORIES

In addition to the tow bar, lighting and braking systems, a flat-towed system will need safety cables or chains, an appropriate electrical cable (frequently a six-way to seven-way coiled cable) and protection, if desired, for the towed vehicle from debris thrown up by the motorhome. These can include cross-coach mud flaps or screens and car-mounted shields.

A storage bag is also a good idea for the chains and cables. A tow-bar cover helps keep the bar in good a shape and clean. In some cases, all these items are included in an accessory kit that is sold by the tow-bar manufacturer.

THE PROCESS

Hooking up a dinghy to a motorhome isn't particularly difficult. Each tow bar has its own procedure for connecting, which is included in its owner's manual, so becoming familiar with the manuals that come with it and your braking system are important.

There are a few things to keep in mind whenever hooking up a dinghy to a motorhome. First, always try to make the connection on level ground. A checklist should be used that covers all the steps in detail for your particular setup. Each towed vehicle is different, and may have different procedures for putting it in tow mode, like removing fuses, having the ignition in accessory



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mode, setting then releasing the emergency brake, etc. There's no single complete, ready-made checklist for this, so make one up yourself.

Speaking of steps, be sure to take your time and double and triple check everything, especially the first few times you tow. Make sure all safety cables and electrical cables are connected, hardware pins are secured, the transmission is set to the manufacturer's specifications for flat towing, the brake is released and so on. Some owners like to view the dinghy in their backup camera while towing to make sure both arms are locked, the front wheels are turning properly and that the tires are spinning and not locked up.

SPECIAL APPLICATIONS

On occasion, a dinghy can only be flat towed with a lube pump installed, or a driveline disconnect device engaged. A lube pump is designed to keep the transmission lubricated while the vehicle is being towed. While much rarer these days, if you have one, you will need to follow the directions carefully to avoid damage to your vehicle.

A driveline disconnect is a lever on the floor of the dinghy vehicle that is pulled to disconnect the driveline on an automatic-transmission vehicle. While also less commonly used today because so few new cars have rear-wheel drive and the resulting driveline, if you have one, make sure it's in the proper position for towing, and when you disconnect the car from the motorhome, make sure you re-engage the disconnect, otherwise the vehicle can roll away if the brake is released.

Some dinghy vehicles will have a special requirement, like stopping and running the engine for 20 minutes

every 200 miles or a similar procedure. Make certain you do this to avoid damage to the towed vehicle.

Once the dinghy is connected, be sure to do a walk-around to check the tow-bar connection, and that the lights and brake systems are working.

WEAR AND TEAR

Readers often ask if flat towing a vehicle puts undue wear and tear on it, and whether the dinghy accrues mileage while being towed.

The answer to both is generally no, however there are a couple of things to keep in mind. First, tires, shocks and brakes are subject to wear while towing. As with a trailer, sharp turns sometimes result in dragging the front end of the dinghy, which can result in accelerated tire wear and front-end alignment issues.

TOWING-EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE

Tow bars and associated equipment require very little maintenance. The bar itself is subjected to a lot of moisture and road grime. As a rule, wiping down the arms when you get to your destination and spraying some silicone lubricant on the moving or sliding parts will help keep them in like-new condition. Some tow-bar manufacturers recommend coating the arms with a light coat of multi-purpose grease to keep them working smoothly. On occasion, dirt and road grime can get past the seals and into the slide tube, causing the arms to become difficult to move. In this case, it may be time for a thorough cleaning and inspection. Blue Ox, for example, recommends having a major service every two years.

Other items that may need maintenance include the safety cables and electrical cables. The safety cables should be kept clean and rust-free, and

"ONCE THE DINGHY IS CONNECTED, BE SURE TO DO A WALK-AROUND TO CHECK THE TOW-BAR CONNECTION, AND THAT THE LIGHTS AND BRAKING SYSTEM ARE WORKING."



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should be replaced if the cable begins to fray. Like most trailer connectors, the six- and seven-way plugs and receptacles on the motorhome, dinghy and the electrical cables may become dirty and corroded, and should be cleaned to ensure a good connection.

PROS AND CONS

As with everything, there are pros and cons to flat towing, and these are worth considering before embarking on building out a vehicle for this purpose.

The most obvious benefit is the convenience of having a vehicle for touring and running errands when you've arrived at your destination. Especially in the cases of larger motorhomes, packing everything up for every little errand is a pain. If you're a full-timer, then having a dinghy is really a must. Another pro is that if your motorhome should break down, you have a back-up form of transportation.

Alternately, the initial expense to set up a vehicle for dinghy towing can be quite high, with a complete system in the \$2,000 to \$3,000 range with installation. For people who take shorter trips, renting a car can offset the cost of flat towing, and some rental-car companies will even pick you up at the campground.

It's also not possible to back the motorhome with a dinghy vehicle connected. If you get in a spot where you have to turn around, the dinghy has to be disconnected first. Avoiding such a situation becomes a matter of planning ahead when you drive, and keeping your eyes open down the road for situations that may require you to back up the motorhome. On occasion you may end up in an RV park with insufficient room to connect and disconnect at the site, or to drive around the park with the car attached. Again, that can be cumbersome, but once you get used to where you can and can't go with a dinghy in tow, you'll do great.

All in all, dinghy towing is a great convenience, and is pretty easy to do once you get used to it. Plus, you'll really appreciate having that second vehicle along.

OUTFITTING A DINGHY VEHICLE

SELECTING THE PROPER TOW BAR, AUXILIARY-BRAKING SYSTEM AND ACCESSORIES LEADS TO A SMOOTH TOWING EXPERIENCE

Dinghy towing, or flat towing, a vehicle behind your motorhome is a great convenience, and even more of a necessity for full-time RVers.

In order to go, though, you need the proper gear to set up your vehicle and coach. Gear includes the tow bar, accessory kit (which may contain safety cables, electrical cables, tow bar cover and more), baseplate, wiring kit and braking system.

When selecting a tow bar and braking system, keep future vehicle purchases in mind, and consider sizing your equipment appropriately. So, if you have a Honda now, but might move up to a Jeep 4x4 in a year or two, opt for a larger tow bar and perhaps a proportional braking system, so you can use them both with the new vehicle.

BLUE OX

Blue Ox offers four receiver- or motorhome-mounted tow bars, with capacities from 6,500 to 10,000 pounds; accessory kits; lighting kits; and braking systems. The company also offers a fuse-bypass-switch kit that allows the owner to disconnect a towed-vehicle circuit without actually having to pull the fuse. The company's baseplates and brackets are precision-made and feature a quarter-turn mount with a spring-actuated locking pin. Blue Ox tow bars have a three-year warranty, and the braking systems come with a two-year warranty.



The **Avail** tow bar is Blue Ox's premium offering. With powder-coating and exclusive gold badging, this bar offers smoother towing, improved turning radius and a tow rating of 10,000 pounds. MSRP: \$995.



The **Aventa LX** is a ball-in-socket design which, according to Blue Ox,

reduces component wear and offers a 360-degree swivel. Like the Avail, it features a tow rating of 10,000 pounds. MSRP: \$895.



The **Aladdin** bar is made of aluminum, which makes it lighter (only 37 pounds), but it still has a 7,500-pound capacity. Its three-axis swivel makes connecting and disconnecting easy. MSRP: \$995.



Blue Ox's entry-level receiver tow bar, the **Alpha**, is a functional, all-steel bar with a 6,500-pound capacity that still folds away nicely on the back of the motorhome, and will work well with a number of smaller towable vehicles. MSRP: \$745



Accessory kits, like the one pictured here, are needed to complete a setup of a tow-bar system. They may include a light-wiring kit, a six-wire electrical cable, tow-bar locks, a tow-bar cover and more.



Towed-vehicle braking is essential, and is required by law in most places. Systems like the Blue Ox **Patriot** proportional braking system allow effective braking and breakaway safety stopping, while still remaining economical and relatively easy to transfer from one vehicle to another. MSRP: \$1,395.

Blue Ox, 800-228-9289, www.blueox.com

DEMCO

Demco's Victory Series tow bars — the Commander, the Dominator and the Excali-Bar II — offer RVers a great selection of receiver-mounted tow-bar options, with capacities ranging from 6,000 to 10,500 pounds with a limited lifetime warranty. Demco has a long list of custom accessories designed to complete the dinghy-towing package.

All Victory tow bars have independent self-supporting arms, easy trigger-type release, a rise or drop male receiver and an adjustable towing angle. Safety cables with integrated safety cable retainers are included with every bar. The

company's baseplate and bracket system features a quarter-turn-style mount with a separate insert pin style lock.

All Demco tow bars feature a limited lifetime warranty for the original purchaser, and a free lifetime factory service program. By sending in a postcard to Demco, the company will respond with a Returned Goods Authorization number. Ship the bar, prepaid, to Demco, it will service the bar and repair or replace any bad components and ship the bar back free, plus include a new tow bar cover.



The **Commander** tow bar has a capacity of 6,000 pounds and weighs 41 pounds. MSRP: \$680.



The **Dominator** features a mix of aluminum and steel construction and has a capacity of 7,500 pounds. MSRP: \$1,125.



The **Excali-Bar II** is Demco's premium offering. With all-steel construction, it has the highest tow rating in the industry, according to Demco, at 10,500 pounds. The unit weighs 46 pounds. MSRP: \$839. Demco Manufacturing Co., 800-543-3626, www.towdemco.com

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OUTFITTING A DINGHY VEHICLE

ROADMASTER

Roadmaster's Classic and All-Terrain series, first introduced in 1986 and 2003, respectively, consist of four receiver-mounted tow bars all featuring a powdercoated exterior finish with stainless-steel inner components. The motorhome-mounted bars have a patented storage latch, which locks the tow bar in place easily on the back of the motorhome.

The company also offers a large assortment of brackets, braking systems and accessories, including seven lines of mounting brackets, and four different braking systems. Roadmaster products have a one-year warranty, which can be expanded to two years upon product registration.



The **Falcon 2** tow bar is the company's classic receiver-mounted option. Featuring a proprietary Autowlok tow-bar-storage lock, it has a 6,000-pound rating, which will handle a large selection of today's smaller towable cars and SUVs. MSRP: \$732.



The **Falcon All-Terrain** has the same rating as its classic brethren, but has the added benefit of all-terrain features, including its Freedom Latch, which allows easy release of the tow bar without straightening and aligning the tow bar. The bar also has built-in channel guides for the safety cables and electrical wiring. MSRP: \$958.



The **BlackHawk2** All-Terrain is a beefed-up version of the Falcon All-Terrain, resulting in a 10,000-pound capacity, which allows the towing of full-size trucks, Suburbans, Excursions and similar vehicles. MSRP: \$1,071.



The **Sterling All-Terrain**, Roadmaster's premier offering, is a high-capacity, lightweight tow bar, weighing only 35 pounds. The company states the bar is "the world's strongest aluminum tow bar with steel and stainless steel at every critical point to further ensure superior strength and structural integrity."

The Sterling comes complete with safety cables and power cord, routed through a central channel, and has an 8,000-pound capacity. The inner and outer arms are separated by urethane bushings to ensure proper operation and corrosion resistance. It also has many of the same features as the All-Terrain series of bars, including the Freedom and Storage latches. MSRP: \$1,143.



The **EvenBrake 9700** model braking systems are Roadmaster's

portable and proportional systems, ideal for those who desire an easily movable braking system that requires a minimum of initial installation. They feature a dashboard monitor that displays the status of the unit, and work with a breakaway switch. MSRP: \$1,556.



If you're looking for an invisible, convenient system for your towed vehicle, and one you plan to keep for several years, then the **InvisiBrake** system is a good choice. The system components are installed in the tow vehicle and require a minimum of connection and setup each time the vehicle is towed. While it is removable and can be transferred to a new car, the InvisiBrake requires three to five hours of installation time, according to the company. MSRP: \$1,080.



Roadmaster offers a complete line of accessories, and several different styles of mounting brackets for towed vehicles. The company also offers **Combo Kits** that include the necessary safety cables, locks and a storage bag. MSRP: \$234-\$361. Roadmaster Inc., 800-669-9690, www.roadmasterinc.com



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OUTFITTING A DINGHY VEHICLE

RVI BRAKE



A truly advanced proportional braking system, the **RVi Brake 2** is an easy-to-use system that not only features a wireless monitor and breakaway system, but will support the company's tire-pressure-monitoring system (TPMS) sensors, so the dinghy's tires can be monitored for pressure and temperature through unit's wireless LCD display. According to the company, the RVi Brake utilizes air pressure to activate versus an electric actuator, which makes it more responsive.

The system, which features one-touch auto positioning on the tow-vehicle floor, is easy to install and move from one vehicle to another. The company also offers a number of accessories designed for the system, including a fuse disconnect, dinghy-battery charger and a soft shell case for the lightweight main unit. MSRP: \$1,150.

RViBrake, 800-815-2159,
www.rvibrake.com

a single remote controller, mounted in the motorhome. The Stealth features a main unit that mounts out of sight in the dinghy vehicle, and an actuator cable is run to the firewall where a cable operates the brake pedal from behind. The Stealth is engineered to install up to five-times faster than other permanently installed units, according to Hopkins. Some vehicles require more teardown for installation, however, so don't be surprised if the installation of any permanent system requires more time or some customization.

MSRP: \$1,099.



The **Vantage Select** represents the company's new technology, which is said to allow for either proportional or full braking at the touch of a button. This means that it can be proportional, mimicking the stopping action of the motorhome, or it can "remove the entire weight of the towed vehicle when stopping." This is accomplished from the motorhome driver's seat via the company's wireless remote, which also indicates the operational status of the brake-control system, including diagnostic information. MSRP: \$1,499.

HOPKINS BRAKEBUDDY




The **BrakeBuddy Stealth** is Hopkins' permanent installation solution for those who desire a simple hookup with the added benefit of being able to control trailer and dinghy brakes with




The **Digital Classic** is Hopkins' original proportional system, and the newest version includes an LCD digital display that gives cues as to the correct setup of the unit. Weighing only 11 pounds, the company states that the Digital

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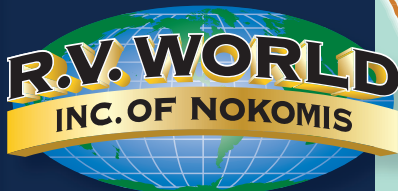
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Classic can be set up in minutes, with no hardwired connection to the motorhome. A wireless alert system is also included. MSRP: \$1,149.

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SMI MANUFACTURING



The **Air Force One** is the "safest and most secure way of using coach air for supplemental braking," according to SMI Manufacturing. The system "energizes the towed vehicle's power brakes through a patented process that does not require an electronic vacuum pump." The system has no wearing parts, and has a patented breakaway system that seals the motorhome's air supply in the event of a separation, which meets FMVSS 121 regulations, and the company claims that it is the only manufacturer that includes the components to comply with these regulations. The system, when fully installed, works seamlessly with the coach's air brakes, providing proportional braking force, and is completely invisible with no adjustments. Plus, the system is designed to fit and work with all towed vehicles, and comes with a five-year warranty. MSRP: \$1,249.95.



The **Stay-In-Play Duo** is an inertia-based system without the box. The system mounts under the hood, so it is basically invisible, and is tied into the vacuum system of the towed vehicle, activating a soft, power-assisted brake

pedal.

Activation of the brake system is safely accomplished by interpreting the brakelights of the motorhome and deceleration. Once the brain receives both signals it will apply the brakes proportionally as needed. The company states that this results in a seamless and immediate braking experience. The motorhome driver is notified of the brake-system activation by a light circuit attached to the brakelight circuit, so if the vehicle brakes are applied, the light is on, just like the taillights. The Stay-In-Play Duo has a five-year warranty. MSRP: \$1,099.95.



To compete in the portable braking system arena, SMI designed the **Delta Force** proportional, portable dinghy-braking system. What makes this system different, first, is the dual signal design. Like the Stay-In-Play Duo, it requires both a brakelight signal and deceleration to activate, making accidental activations much more unlikely. Second is the floor tether cable, which it shares with the Air Force One. The company found that many users of brake systems had an issue with the brake systems pushing against the seat, causing damage. SMI instead uses a tether cable attached to the firewall, giving a more secure and positive mounting fixture, according to the company. The Delta Force also features a wireless indicator for inside the motorhome that shows the braking status of the unit, including connectivity, braking effort, fault codes and activation of the breakaway circuit. The Delta Force has a five-year warranty. MSRP: \$1,199.95.

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SOARING INTO HISTORY

AFTER AN EXTENSIVE RESTORATION PROCESS, AN ICONIC 1985 AIRSTREAM CLASS A MOTORHOME IS THE PERFECT FIT FOR AN RVING COUPLE LOOKING TO HIT THE ROAD IN THEIR OWN SLICE OF AMERICANA

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

It is as close to flying as you can get in a motorhome.

Its smooth, futuristic aluminum body is based on a design by William Hawley Bowlus, builder of Lindbergh's *Spirit of St. Louis*. Nicknamed the Astrovan, it transported every Space Shuttle astronaut to the launch pad from 1984 until flights ended in 2011. It is not enough to call it a classic — the Airstream Class A is a piece of American history.

It was this history, as well as the unit's reputation for quality construction and durability, that drew Eray Honeycutt to the Airstream when he

began looking for a motorhome for he and partner Simon Yen in 2004. As the owner of a marine-repair company, Honeycutt had worked extensively on refurbishing older vessels, and he had lived on a classic boat for eight years. He saw buying an aging motorhome as the same venture, "Except one floats and the other has wheels, but the same knowledge is required to keep it going," he said. He was confident in his ability to take on a 30-year-old Airstream. It was just a matter of finding one.

Most people are familiar with the Airstream travel trailer developed in the late 1920s by Wally Byam.

The company did not introduce Class A motorhomes until 1974, when it debuted a line of "painted Airstreams" under the Argosy brand. These motorhomes consisted of both riveted-aluminum skin and galvanized-steel panels in the front and rear atop a Chevy P-30 chassis. In 1979 the Argosy line was discontinued and the company began producing the shiny aluminum-skin Class A under the Airstream badge. By 1989, aluminum as a building material had become cost-prohibitive, and Airstream began production of a traditionally styled, laminated-fiberglass Class A motorhome introduced for model-year 1990 called the Land Yacht (there were



▲ The Airstream shows off its shine at a rally in Wyoming.

The Classic Ride



Above: Two solar flex panels provide additional charging power for the batteries. The Airstream's dash has been updated with a GPS unit and a 7-inch color rearview monitor.

already Land Yacht branded towables in the Airstream family). As a result, there were a relatively small number of the iconic aluminum Class A's on the used market, and only a handful available to look at near Honeycutt's California home. This was prior to the revival of interest in vintage RVs, and the few he did see were in serious disrepair. Honeycutt remembers one in particular that had been stored for years in the middle of a field, and when he pulled the dipstick, it came out covered with grit. He wisely decided to pass on that one.

It took two years before Honeycutt found his 1985 35-foot Airstream Classic 345. Unlike the others that he had seen, this Airstream was basically in sound condition, though the original owner had neglected preventive maintenance.

"I had a lot of catching up to do," Honeycutt admits.

While the exterior of the motorhome polished up beautifully,

elements of the interior were worn and dated. Honeycutt knew he wanted to do an all-out restoration, so he developed a list of potential projects ranging from "got-to-change" items to "upgrades." His first step was pulling up the old carpet and replacing it with teak-like flooring. Honeycutt also stripped and refinished all of the woodwork, laying down nine coats of varnish in the process. In addition, he replaced the appliances and faucets, and switched all of the lights to LEDs.

While he was successful in doing much of the work himself, Honeycutt felt he needed the manufacturer's expertise for some of the major changes he and Yen wanted to make. In 2008 he made the trip to the Airstream factory in Jackson Center, Ohio. He was amazed to find that three of the five technicians who worked on his upgrades were the same men who had put his motorhome together more than three decades earlier, providing a

wealth of knowledge and experience. Among other upgrades, Honeycutt had the twin beds at the rear of the coach replaced with a junior queen, and also had an additional closet installed. In the bathroom, the shower floor was replaced with porcelain tile, the sink switched to stainless steel, and a sliding glass shower door was installed. The factory also replaced the aging striped patio awning and added additional awnings, all solid burgundy in color, to the rear- and streetside windows. Finally, the manual roof spot light was upgraded to remote control and the rear black-and-white camera to color/audio with a 7-inch monitor.

After returning from Ohio, the couple added left and right rearview cameras, and in 2011 they had the exterior vinyl decals replaced with paint, and the accent stripe repainted. They also added a satellite-television receiver and two flat-screen TVs.

Of all of the upgrades, Honeycutt recalls replacing the interior brushed copper hinges and handles as his least favorite.

SECOND TO NONE

If you are interested in owning your own piece of history, these classic aluminum Class A Airstream motorhomes can be found for as little as \$3,000, or up to \$50,000 or more for a well-kept unit. As with any significantly older motorhome, condition varies widely, and a pre-buy inspection by an experienced motorhome technician is a must.

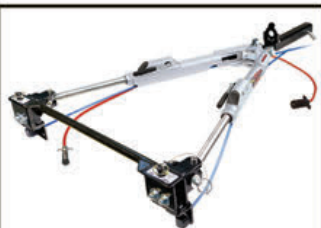
► New accent paint and a professional polish helped brighten the Airstream's classic exterior.





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The Classic Ride



Above: The refinished wood cabinetry helps give the Airstream's interior an elegant, rich feel.

"Eighty four handles, 168 hinges," he says with a shake of his head. "Can you imagine how long that took?"

Honeycutt notes that while the motorhome had become a "show-stopper" in appearance, it had an Achilles' heel — the original 454 Chevy engine with a three-speed transmission. Age had taken its toll, and it proved to be unreliable despite having extensive mechanical work.

"We were towed three times due to engine or transmission failure, even after repeated repairs and overhauls," Honeycutt says.

The only real solution was to replace it. In 2014 they had a new Corvette LS3 engine with a six-speed transmission, revised drivetrain and suspension system installed, all custom-designed for their coach, and all computerized. Their first trip after that major upgrade? The Grand Canyon. According to Honeycutt, the Airstream flew up the mountains with ease, even while towing their Honda Fit.

The renovation process finally came to an end last year, when the couple added dual forced-air furnaces, a Dometic climate-control system with heat strips and two 150-watt solar flex panels, and a new 600-watt inverter. Honeycutt can honestly say that the motorhome is now 99 percent reliable, from front to rear, left to right and top to bottom, and that there is nothing —

absolutely nothing — he would change.

"It took 10 years, three mechanics and a darn good bank account — with a martini, once in a while. But we got 'er-done!" he laughs.

Honeycutt and Yen plan to retire at the end of the year and are looking forward to enjoying the fruits of their long, and sometimes difficult, labor. Along with their two dogs, two cats and their cockatoo, they hope to undertake an extensive trip across the United States, eventually exploring every state.

While bringing a classic ride like this one back to showroom condition is fulfilling, as Honeycutt alluded, it isn't cheap. The initial cost of the motorhome itself was only \$24,500, a small price for a well-built, 35-foot Class A. But even with Honeycutt doing much of the work himself, he estimated that they have put more than \$150,000 into improvements — including \$52,000 for the drivetrain replacement. However, as Honeycutt points out, the work was not done all at one time, and they were able to use the Airstream for vacations throughout the renovation process. And it would be difficult to find a new motorhome with the same quality of construction and upgrades for a final cost of less than \$175,000.

Of course, they would also be missing out on the history of a true American classic ride. **M**

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61634/61952

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Family Fridge

With all of the bumps and movement that happen while on the road, we found that magnets didn't do a good job of keeping our family photos attached to the front of the refrigerator. To be able to display family memorabilia, I cut heavy drawing paper (similar in thickness and substance to construction paper, but perhaps even a bit thicker) to fit the freezer door on our motorhome's two-door refrigerator. I made sure to cut two pieces of paper that I could slip under the lip of the front of the door panels on both sides, and that overlapped in the middle a couple inches. I then printed a collection of family photos and glued them to the drawing paper. Now we always have a family montage when we travel.

Dennis Jauch | Tampa, Florida



Daily Grind

In the August issue there was a tip ("Grime Be Gone") that concerned a method of preserving and keeping the telescoping arms of the dinghy-towing bars clean. I have another suggestion. After each stop for the day, before I retract the telescoping arms and fold them away, I spray the arms with silicone and dry them with a microfiber cloth, which cleans and lubricates the arms. I am surprised by how much dirt the cloth picks up — dirt that would have been retracted with the arms and that would have built up inside the housing sheath. This buildup could eventually make it difficult for the arms to lock in place and retract after disconnecting the dinghy vehicle. The process takes only a minute, and helps protect an expensive item.

Bob Fornefeld | Scottsdale, Arizona



Wonderful

The outside shower in our motorhome's utility bay is difficult to use, and when it's removed it must be held in one hand, which makes washing both hands or other items awkward. I looked for a number of solutions and found that a 3M Command Strips adhesive-hook broom holder is perfect to easily snap the shower wand in and out. Using the adhesive hook on the inside of the utility bay door places the broom holder so that the water wand slightly extends over the door, while still allowing enough clearance for the bay door to close when the wand is removed. We can now easily wash off hands and sandy feet, and also get the dirty barbecue grill grates completely clean.

Nanci Dixon | Minnetonka, Minnesota



Reefer Restraint

For people whose motorhomes feature refrigerators that did not come with door locks for travel, I have discovered just the item. I found a multipurpose appliance lock in the child-safety area of my local home-improvement store. For less than \$6, they come two to a package. The brand I selected is Safety 1st, but other brands are available.

They work great on my motorhome's Dometic refrigerator.

Gary Phillips | Saint Cloud, Florida



Have an Idea?

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



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Wonder Mat

BedRug's TrackMat takes the place of a mechanic's creeper for those jobs that are hard on your back and knees

By Kevin Livingston



MAINTENANCE

Cost: \$35

Time: N/A

Difficulty: 1/10

No matter how much we wish we didn't have to bend over, get on our knees or crawl under vehicles, part of the motorhome ownership experience dictates otherwise. Reaching into exterior

compartments, especially those under slideouts, working on wheels and tires and even servicing chassis components while on our backs can be hard on our bodies. And then there's the soiling of our clothing. When was the last time the ground was clean enough not to imprint our shirts, pants, arms, legs and heads?

Mechanics use creepers to stay off the ground, but storing one of these bulky items can take up too much valuable space in storage compartments. And those of us who have built bulk to our bellies know what it's like to fit under a chassis riding on a creeper.

A viable alternative to carrying around a heavy and unwieldy mechanic's creeper is the TrackMat made by BedRug, purveyors of bedliners for pickups. Readily available at a budget-friendly price (\$30-40, depending on retail/online source) the TrackMat removes the weight, size and storage issues associated with standard creepers. The TrackMat is a 4-by-2-foot all-purpose utility mat in its open position, or it can compact to a mere 2-by-2-foot package when folded in half. The dark gray TrackMat is all American made from extra-resilient ¾-inch closed-cell foam, which is

When open, the TrackMat measures 4 by 2 feet, which is enough surface area to protect even larger people from the ground.

fused to be stain-, oil- and water resistant; 100 percent polypropylene fibers are used on one side.

Since the materials share similarities to life preservers, the TrackMat is incapable of absorbing water. It's also not susceptible to mold or mildew. The build properties represent severe toughness and ruggedness, and washing with water from a hose and products like Simple Green quickly eliminates any mess that might end up on the mat's surface without fear of damage.

During testing, the TrackMat was utilized for a variety of tasks in the shop, around the RV and even while working in the garden. The mat's ¾-inch thickness was good enough to keep rough surfaces from protruding into our backs while crawling under the chassis, and folding it to support our knees while checking tire pressure or accessing stored items in low compartments made the TrackMat almost indispensable. The cut-out grab handles make the mat easy to retrieve from storage, where it takes up very little space, and the integral "hinge" showed no signs of wear after folding and unfolding multiple times.

The TrackMat is so durable and versatile that I now keep one in the RV, garage and home — and I even keep one in my four-wheeler for those off-road adventures. And there's no reason to feel limited to using the TrackMat as just a creeper. As an all-purpose utility mat, you can get very creative with it. The TrackMat can be used to cushion shock when standing on a hard surface for a long time, while exercising or even coupled together for a makeshift sleeping pad for unexpected guests or pets, to name a just a few of its unbelievably handy uses. **M**

BedRug Inc., 615-847-0020, www.bedrug.com



[A] The mat is made of ¾-inch closed-cell foam that is resistant to stains, oil and water. The up side is made from polyurethane fibers. **[B]** Folded, the mat is 1½ inches thick and provides great cushioning for your knees. **[C]** Unlike a mechanic's creeper, which elevates the user and limits work space, the TrackMat stays close to the ground while providing enough cushioning to be comfortable. **[D]** Cut-in handles at the ends of the mat make it easy to tote when folded.

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Label Lament

After damaging his gasoline engine by using what he feels was an inadequately identified diesel-fuel pump, a reader turned to Hot Line for assistance. He wrote:



“ Last October I was traveling through Kansas and stopped at Casey’s General Store for fuel. I filled up at pump No. 1 and mistakenly put diesel fuel into my gasoline vehicle. I know that sounds stupid, but the pump I used had a gasoline nozzle on the diesel hose. After a large repair bill, I returned to the station and went to pump No. 8. I checked that nozzle, and it refused entry into my gasoline tank. I think some of my repair costs are due to Casey’s not having the proper nozzle on their pump. Any help would be appreciated.

Joseph Mann | Birchwood, Wisconsin

Hot Line sent Mann’s complaint to Casey’s General Stores Inc. Although the company was not able to assist Mann, we are publishing his case as a reminder to others to carefully read labels prior to pumping fuel. The company responded to Mann as follows:

I am writing in response to your letter stating you mistakenly pumped diesel fuel into your gas tank at our store in Kingman, Kansas.

Upon my investigation, I have found — per state regulations — a larger nozzle is not required for diesel fuel pumps; it is only required to be properly labeled. I confirmed with the store manager and she stated that the diesel grade is clearly labeled as required. Therefore, I must respectfully deny your claim and inform you that no voluntary payments will be made.

Mindy Brincks

Risk Management

Casey’s General Stores Inc.

Ankeny, Iowa

System Shutdown

Attempting to obtain a refund for an expense he believed was the responsibility of a service facility that had performed work on his motorhome, a reader sought Hot Line’s help. He wrote:

“ In April, I took my 2009 Tiffin Allegro to Cummins Atlantic in Spartanburg, South Carolina, to repair problems with the check-engine light and a high-pitched squeal that occurred when starting the engine. Cummins resolved these issues to my satisfaction at a cost of \$4,544. I am not complaining about the bill or the repairs; my concern is that Cummins failed to maintain shorepower to the coach, or to turn off the house battery bank switch, which caused the 12-volt DC system to shut down.

I contacted John Beaty, service manager at Cummins, and informed him of the problem. He indicated that he had no idea why this problem existed, so I took my motorhome to Camping World to have the problem corrected. They fixed it, and the cost was \$280.76. While Beaty has been cooperative, he has not offered to reimburse me. I have communicated my concerns to him verbally and via email, and I seem to be getting nowhere. I am asking Hot Line to please help.

Fred Smith | Roseman, North Carolina

Hot Line contacted Cummins Atlantic on Smith’s behalf. We heard back from both Cummins and Smith, who shared the following email from Beaty that concludes Smith’s case. Beaty wrote:

I discussed your situation with the service manager at Camping World, and she spoke with her technician. They both agreed that Cummins did not cause the issue. I was told that any time batteries get low, it is possible for this issue to occur. That being said, I have had discussions with my upper management and they agreed to issue a goodwill credit to you for \$280.76.

I am sorry for the amount of time that has passed during this process, but when we were told it was not caused by us, I had to approach this in a different manner. I hope that I have proven to you that we will do what’s right, and I hope you will give us the opportunity to serve you again.

John Beaty, Service Manager

Cummins Atlantic

Spartanburg, South Carolina 

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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By Ken Freund

Won't Shift and ABS Light On

Q The ABS light on my motorhome flashed as I started to leave home today. As I gained speed to about 5 to 6 MPH, a buzzer went off and the transmission would not shift; it remained in first gear. I cannot shift to REVERSE or NEUTRAL. I turned off the engine and restarted it and was able to shift to REVERSE and NEUTRAL again, but the ABS light flashed as a fault indication. Then as I gained speed to 5 to 8 MPH, the buzzer started and the transmission again won't shift. What is the solution? Is there a reset?

Andy Housley | Alice, Texas

A There is no "reset" unless you consider a repair a reset. It would be helpful if you included the year, make and model of your motorhome. However, I can provide some generic information. When you start out and begin to drive, the ABS computer "looks for" a signal from

the vehicle speed sensors, and if it doesn't "see" that, it illuminates the warning light and shuts down the ABS. That's because it requires a reliable signal to operate. This also sets a trouble code in the computer that should indicate exactly where the problem lies, and that can be read by a code reader plugged into the OBDII diagnostic port.

At the same time, the automatic transmission also requires a vehicle-speed signal in order to determine when to shift. Therefore, I believe the two problems are related by a shared common problem: loss of speed signals. Have a shop that's good with computer diagnostics check it out with a scan tool. It's very likely that your problem is caused by a sensor failure.



Motorhome Maintenance

Q We just bought our first motorhome, which is a 2003 Georgetown 306. It is on the GM Workhorse chassis, and has only 23,000 original miles. I don't know what engine or transmission it has. How do I determine what I have? Are there any specific maintenance items I should be concerned with?

John Bodine | Brooksville, Florida

A The chassis is powered by an 8.1-liter GM Vortec V-8 engine coupled to an Allison automatic transmission. This is a very common powertrain, and most RV shops are very familiar with them. Just as with any gasoline-powered motor vehicle, the engine oil and filter should be changed regularly, and all fluids and lubrication checked. Many people overlook changing the brake fluid and coolant every few years, so I will mention this as a reminder.

Some of the Workhorse chassis had problems with faulty brake calipers that dragged and/or

stuck. Also, the GM P-chassis and subsequent Workhorse chassis with the automatic parking brakes had a number of problems and should be checked over by a shop familiar with them. You can search for recalls online at www.nhtsa.gov/recalls.

One of the better sources of information (besides the booklets that came with the motorhome) is www.rv.net. There are discussion threads on all sorts of subjects related to motorhome maintenance and repair. You can also find the various manuals for sale on www.eBay.com, or you can just do an online search for "Workhorse motorhome manual" or something similar.

Fogged Double-Pane Windows

Q Almost all the double-pane windows in our 2006 Fleetwood Discovery have become foggy on the inside. Is there an easy fix (short of removing and replacing the glass) to clearing the glass in our unit's sealed windows?

Cathy Devins | Kelowna, British Columbia, Canada

A The good news is that the windows can often be repaired. There are a number of shops that perform this work. The bad news is, it typically requires window removal. Internal fogging is caused by a leak in the seal between the panes. Not all fogged windows can be repaired, and some must be replaced. If the windows are fogged white, the glass may be etched, which may require replacement. If only wet, then they can be cleaned and resealed. *MotorHome* published an article on replacing a fogged window in the June issue ("Motorhome Window Swapping").

Troubleshooting Solar Panels

Q I have a 1997 Fleetwood Southwind motorhome. It had a missing solar panel on the roof, and I replaced it with a smaller 15-watt panel. I'm hooking it to two 6-volt batteries in series. The batteries don't seem to be charging. What could be the problem? Under the hood in the fuse panel, I have power at the two sides of the center fuse (5A) when

checking both sides with the fuse out. I am going to pull the battery cables and check if I have power coming there. If so, should I just rehook them up and be done? Or do I need to install some sort of voltage regulator?

Ken Hughes | Via email

A With the solar panel in full sunlight, measure the output voltage, then place something opaque on the panel and take another reading, just to verify that you're measuring voltage at the correct wires. You should get full voltage on the first test, and nothing on the second. A solar panel in bright sunlight will produce significantly more than 12 volts DC, and could potentially overcharge the batteries. Therefore, I recommend using a charge controller. The original panel attached to Coleman air conditioners was very small and didn't require a controller, but instead had a "charge minder" light on the ceiling assembly. Panels that use a controller are much more efficient.

Replacing a Coolant Reservoir

Q We have a 2002 Itasca Horizon motorhome on a Freightliner chassis with a 300 IBS Cummins diesel engine. The coolant reservoir needs to be replaced. Does the technician need to get under the bed or can it be replaced from the rear of the coach?

Bill Franzen | St. George, Utah

A While without the VIN we cannot determine the exact position where Freightliner mounts the coolant reservoir, historically, it's positioned above radiator level, viewable and fillable from an open rear door. It is likely that the technician will have to access the back of the tank from under the bed to unbolt the bracket and to access the hoses, etc. You didn't provide the chassis model, but you mentioned the 300-horsepower ISB Cummins, so it's likely your motorhome is built on the X-Line chassis. You can call Freightliner at 800-385-4357 to get more information; make sure you have the VIN available.

Power Steps

Q I purchased a 2004 Itasca Sunrise motorhome and have returned from our first trip, so I now feel qualified to respond to Michael Lessard's letter ("Ghostly RV Steps," June issue). My steps extend whenever the door is opened. They stay extended when the step switch is turned off and the door is closed, unless the ignition is turned on. However, even with the ignition on, the steps will extend when the door is opened. This is a significant safety factor. I believe that the door switch is magnetic rather than a mechanical switch. Adjusting the clearance at the switch could be the only solution.

Chuck Erdrich | Auburn, California

A Thanks for writing, Chuck. A faulty or out-of-adjustment switch is the likely culprit. Most motorhomes have magnetic switches, but some older coaches may have mechanical ones. Regardless of the type, they must be properly adjusted in order to work satisfactorily.

Michelin Tire Recall

This is in regard to the "Tire Failures" letter from Kent Williams in the September issue about the Michelins on a Class C. I bought a used 1997 Triple E Senator 28D on a Ford E-450 chassis with brand-new Michelins on it three years ago. Subsequently, when looking for a possible upgrade to a newer Class C, I discovered that one dealer provided the benefit of its used Class C's being Michelin Recall Upgraded. Being inquisitive, I followed up on the "Michelin Recall Notices" and discovered the "new" tires on my unit were recalled. No doubt, as in many cases, the recall information chain was broken between the manufacturer, previous owner and dealer or supplier failing to, or being unable to, contact the current owner.

The Michelin LTX M/SLT225/75R16 has been a mainstay of Ford Class C OEM supply, and a lot of the replacement market. The new version replace-

ments provided for my RV are now designated as LTX M/S2LT225/75R16. Since many RVs don't cover a lot of miles per year, these older recalls are still significant for owners of Ford and other Class C chassis, and those owners should be alerted to the following information and recall for tires produced from the second week of 2010 through the 25th week of 2012:

Michelin US Recall: <http://www.michelinman.com/US/en/help/safety-recalls/ltx.html>

Michelin Canadian Recall: <http://www.michelin.ca/safety-recall.page>

Michelin Recall Letter: <http://www.odl.nhtsa.dot.gov/acms/cs/jaxrs/download/doc/UCM448217/RCONL-13T012-0123.pdf>

Gerry Walsh | Langley, British Columbia, Canada

Thanks for writing, Gerry. This recall covers a significant number of vehicles, and owners should check and verify if their tires are subject to this recall.

Dinghy Towing Methods

Q Where can I find the pros and cons of towing a car or SUV on the ground, on a dolly or on a trailer behind my motorhome?

Jay Garwood | Via email

A It has been a while since I have covered this topic in my column, so it's a good time to review. I'm just going to cover the major points, but there are also minor points that some folks might come up with. The main advantages of towing "on the ground" as you say, which is commonly called "flat towing" and is accomplished with a tow bar, is the simplicity, relatively lower cost and lightness of this method. *MotorHome's* annual dinghy towing guides list the vehicles that are approved by their manufacturers specifically for flat towing.

The tow bar can be stowed inside the vehicle or in a storage compartment, or left mounted on the back of the motorhome, depending on the tow-bar design. There is no need to

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



store or park a trailer or tow dolly separately, and you don't have to buy or maintain one, replace the dolly/trailer tires or pay for licensing fees, etc.

A tow dolly can allow a vehicle, such as many front-wheel-drive models (typically with automatic transmissions), which are not approved for flat towing, to be towed behind the motorhome safely without fear of damage to the drivetrain. Tow dollies are also available with brakes, which takes care of the need for an auxiliary braking system.

Trailers allow virtually any vehicle to be towed behind a motorhome, regardless of its drivetrain design or limitations regarding towing. For example, with a trailer, you can tow all-wheel-drive vehicles that must not be towed with their wheels turning (to prevent drivetrain damage). Trailers should be fitted with brakes sufficient to handle the weight of the vehicle carried and trailer weight.

Diesel Exhaust Fluid

Q Is there is a difference between the brands of DEF? There can be a big difference in price.

Pete Whitehouse | Clayton, Delaware

A That's a very good question, Pete. Because the answer is important to a lot of diesel owners, and the result of getting the wrong product can lead to very expensive problems, we'll take an in-depth look.

To begin with, let's cover the legal definition of diesel exhaust fluid (DEF). It must meet the guidelines established by the International Organization for Standardization, ISO 22241, which maintains quality requirements for DEF production, storage and distribution. To qualify as DEF, it must contain a urea concentration of 32.5 percent by weight. This concentration has a freezing temperature of 12 degrees Fahrenheit, the lowest of various urea-water mixtures. There are strict, low limits on impurities to ensure reliable operation of the Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) system, which controls emissions.

The ISO DEF standards also require that the water in the formulation be purified by distillation or deionization. Deionized water is critical to the manufacturing of DEF. The slightest amount of contaminants in the water or urea will cause the fluid to not meet the ISO 22241 specification. Elements such as aluminum, calcium, copper, iron, zinc, magnesium, chromium, nickel, sodium and potassium can all damage SCR systems.

Any product that doesn't meet ISO 22241 standards cannot legally be called DEF or sold as DEF. However, with growing demand, there will likely be unlicensed products that don't meet ISO standards but are still urea solutions. Agricultural-grade urea may contain impurities such as aldehydes and excessive levels of biuret, which damage SCR systems. Some failures may be immediate, while others might take from days to years.

In addition to meeting the ISO 22241 specification, only products that are licensed by the American Petroleum Institute (API) may be called DEF. To protect yourself, use only known brands of DEF that use pharmaceutical-grade urea. However, feel free to shop for the best price among these brands and container sizes, keeping in mind that DEF has a limited life. Containers should be stored in a cool place to ensure longevity.

For a searchable directory of API-licensed DEF products, visit www.apidef.org/directory.aspx.

Jeep Cherokee Towing Update

I read *MotorHome* regularly and have been watching the articles on the Jeep Cherokee "death wobble" that RVers have experienced. I would like to add to the story.

I tow a 2014 Jeep Cherokee behind my 2002 Fleetwood Revolution. After experiencing the wobble I tried calling Chrysler, to no avail. I was advised by other RVers to check with my local Jeep dealer and have a special wiring harness installed as provided by Chrysler to fix this problem. Since I was traveling in (continued on page 79)

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(continued from page 75)

Wisconsin, I went to a dealer I know and had the wiring harness installed, but I wish to report that this is not a complete fix.

To activate the harness, you need to install a 10-amp fuse, which is connected to the battery, and flip a toggle switch installed inside the center console in the car. I was told that this would keep the steering stabilizer on while the car was off and being towed.

I left Wisconsin on a trip to South Dakota. The battery went dead on the way. In my mind, once the battery was dead, then the steering stabilizer was no longer active either, since it had no power. Upon arrival in South Dakota, I struggled to gain entry to my car. I tried to re-engage the transfer case but was unable to. I had a small charger with me and after plugging into the battery, I was able to re-engage the transfer case ... or so I thought. The lights said it was reset; however, when releasing the car from the motorhome, the car began to roll. After additional struggles, I was able to get the transfer case reset. The same thing happened on my return to Wisconsin. Then, the check engine light began appearing on my dashboard.

I took it back to the dealer and was advised that there were many codes for this and all of them were related to the wiring-harness fix. I was also told that since the battery keeps draining to a dead point, a couple more times of that will ruin the battery and at best I will need to replace it or it may not start at all. I have to say, I did not experience the wobble again, but it has now created a whole new set of problems.

I am worried about the safety of myself and other RVers who might think that this fixes the problem. I would like to see Chrysler get further involved to get this handled. Any RVers who have gotten the fix, please be aware that it can cause additional problems.

Harvey Piette | Clermont, Florida

Thanks for your useful firsthand report on this modification. I am truly disappointed that Jeep doesn't step up and cover the cost of the auxiliary wiring

harness, since it is necessary in order to safely allow dinghy towing, which the company claimed these vehicles were capable of and approved for. I agree that repeated deep discharges of the battery will ruin it; sometimes you only get one chance. You can fix the battery discharge problem by installing a charge line from the motorhome to the Jeep. Not only will this prevent the dead-battery problems, but it will also provide power for an auxiliary braking system, which you absolutely should have for safety reasons. **M**

Have a Tech Question?

Contact our experts:

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



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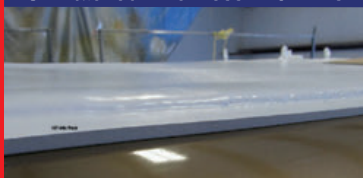
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Expect the Unexpected

A trip to Death Valley in California and Nevada highlights one of the best — and perhaps most surprising — aspects of motorhome travel

By Alan Rider

As we approach the Thanksgiving holiday, I've been pondering the things I'm thankful for. And in the process, a somewhat odd notion occurred to me: that I'm grateful for the predictable unpredictability of motorhome travel.

While that may sound like an oxymoron, think about it for a second. No matter what your destination, no matter how careful your planning, you can count on the fact that you're never quite sure what you're going to encounter during the course of your trip. Which to my way of thinking is a very good thing, indeed.

You see, our everyday routines are as unsurprising as the sunrise. Get up, go to work, come home, eat dinner and maybe watch a little TV before hitting the sack and starting the process all over again tomorrow. Just not a lot of excitement there.

Which is why we hop into our motorhomes and hit the road in the first place. More than anything else, I think we crave the excitement of not knowing — or at least not knowing exactly — what the days ahead might bring.

Take, for example, a recent trip we made to Death Valley, where we encountered, in turn, blinding snow, 60 mile-per-hour wind gusts, and an apocalyptic dust storm, all in the course of one 500-mile travel day. Sure, there were a few white-knuckle moments, but I can tell you

one thing for certain: these expected unexpected events definitely kept things interesting.

Here's something else we weren't fully prepared for: the beauty of Death Valley itself. For a place with such a foreboding name and inhospitable reputation, we were surprised by both the sweeping views and captivating details, from wind-rippled sand dunes to delicate wildflowers in patches of gold, purple, red and white.

We also found an unexpectedly welcoming atmosphere, thanks in large part to Richard Farabee, an unassuming guy with a quick wit and an earnest desire to help visitors get the most out of their Death Valley sojourn. Richard runs Farabee's Jeep Rentals (760-786-9872, www.farabeejeeps.com), an operation dedicated to making off-the-beaten-path parts of this approximately 5,270-square-mile

national park — we're talking about some of the really good stuff here — accessible to a wider range of visitors.

After Richard got us settled into a two-door Jeep outfitted with a cooler full of ice and water (plus a satellite tracking device for use in emergencies), we set off to explore Titus Canyon. This 27-mile gravel trail near the Nevada border climbs and winds its way through the rugged Grapevine Mountains and includes the ghost town of Leadfield, not to mention the last 1.5-mile section known as The Narrows, where canyon walls are less than 20 feet apart.

While the scenery was striking, the best part was the sense of solitude we enjoyed, something that's hard to come by in other areas of Death Valley National Park, where more than 1 million annual visitors rarely venture more than 100 yards from a parking lot. Combine that with the fact that much of the cool stuff to see and do here is located miles from the nearest paved road, and one of Richard Farabee's Jeeps becomes an ideal way to explore it all, sans crowds.

What you'll encounter on your own off-road expedition through Death Valley is hard to say. Ultimately, though, that unknowing is the whole point. A reminder that the one thing you can count on — thankfully — is expecting the unexpected whenever you head out to explore The Road Ahead. **M**

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Right: Wildflowers can pop up after rainstorms in Death Valley, which is the hottest, driest and lowest national park. Farabee's Jeep Rentals offers visitors a great way to tour the area.



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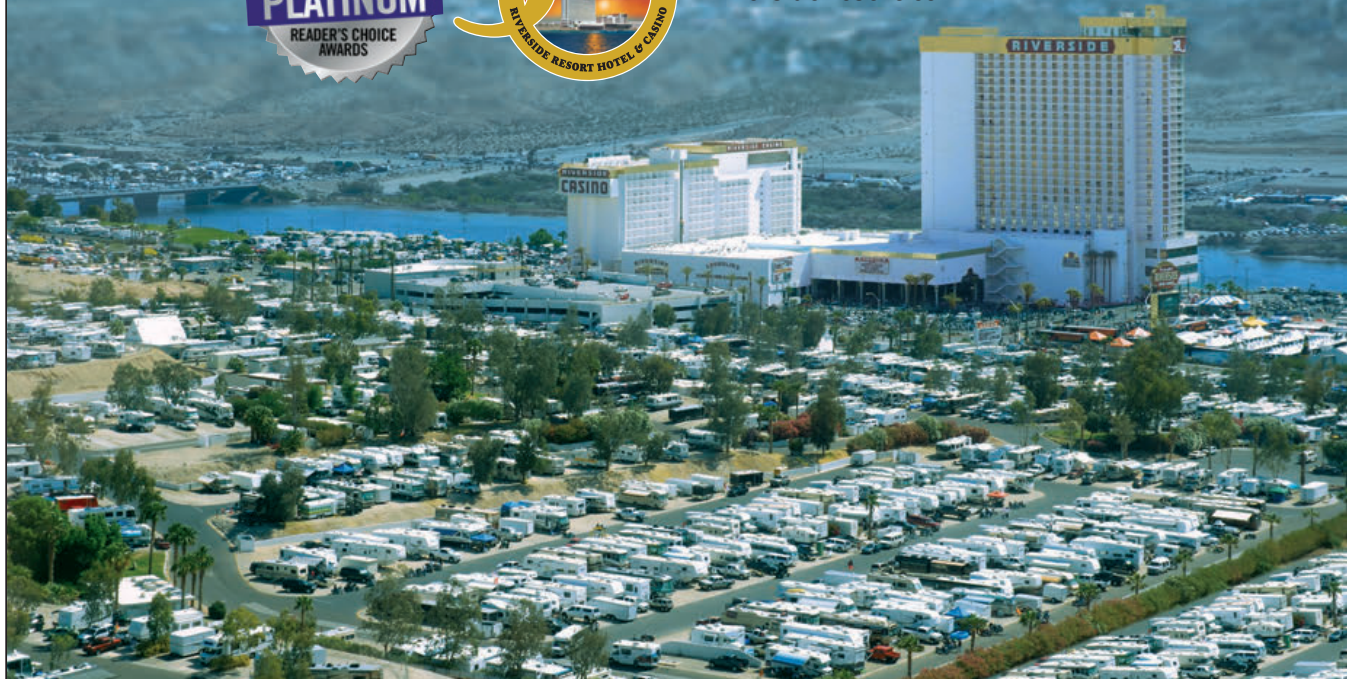
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