

HEADING SOUTH: 12 TOP SPOTS FOR SNOWBIRDS

MotorHome

Travel, Tech, Lifestyle – For the RV Enthusiast

November 2017

EXCLUSIVE

FIRST LOOK

WINNEBAGO'S GAME-CHANGING INTENT 30R

WATER-HEATER
MAINTENANCE TIPS

**FALL
FAVORITES**

YOSEMITE
NATIONAL
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Photo opportunities abound in California's Yosemite National Park, where nearly 1,200 square miles of natural wonders await exploration (see page 22).



Three new RV-specific navigational devices from Rand McNally make getting to your favorite campground or destination easier than ever. **Pg. 18**

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ON THE COVER

Winnebago's fully loaded entry-level Intent 30R features most of the amenities of more expensive Class A's, but with an MSRP that won't break the bank (see test on page 42). Photo by Bob Livingston.



By Kristopher Bunker



Photo: Mercedes Morgan Photography

The Art of Community

The initial attraction for the RVing lifestyle may be an overwhelming sense of wanderlust to begin with, but after you find your paradise, set up camp and enjoy the sights for a bit, another, equally important aspect no doubt pops up: community. Like any other passion or hobby, RVers find that nothing beats enjoying the activities we love like experiencing them with others who feel the same as we do. Whether it's a campfire at dusk, a daylong hike beginning at dawn or a weekend excursion to explore the countryside, things are much more satisfying if we have others with which to share them.

And with the snowbird season in full swing, it's this sense of community that becomes more and more prevalent among RVers. Because snowbirds flock to warmer climes for months at a time, it's more important than ever to discover a destination that not only provides all the amenities, entertainment and activities you'll need, but also one that fosters a sense of fellowship and camaraderie with the other motorhome owners you'll encounter at your home away from home. Think about the neighborhood surrounding your stick home: life is so much more fulfilling when you click with your neighbors than when you merely tolerate each other.

The same goes for motorhome owners, snowbirds or otherwise. When everybody shares the same interests, things go much more smoothly.

That's why we've rounded up some of the top snowbird-friendly resorts across the region of the country

known as the Sun Belt. As you'll read in "Homeward Bound," the featured resorts and communities offer so much more than just full hookups and a picnic table. In fact, some even offer the opportunity to purchase a residence — complete with RV garage — so you're guaranteed a vacation spot (or new permanent dwelling) year-round. Turn to page 32 for more.

But the sense of community goes well beyond where you park your motorhome for the winter, for the weekend or simply just for the night. You don't even need to leave your motorhome to find a group of like-minded adventurers eager to share their stories, experiences, top motorhome products or even favorite restaurants.

MotorHome's growing online community is a great way to keep up

with the latest in all things RV, and offers the opportunity for others to hear your voice in a safe, moderated environment. We post many of our popular columns, features and departments to allow our readers to exchange ideas and comments on the magazine's content. And, if you're looking to become a DIY master craftsman, our YouTube channel (which we share with our sister publication, *Trailer Life*) features dozens of how-to videos on many of the everyday tasks of the modern motorhome owner, and continues to add content even as we speak. Check out the graphic on this page for the addresses to our popular Facebook, YouTube and Instagram pages.

Finally, you can always log on to www.motorhome.com for industry news and the latest in motorhome products. We're in the process of updating the site for a more user-friendly experience we're sure you'll love. And while you're there, subscribe to our monthly eNewsletter.

It's easy to feel like part of a community when you own a motorhome. Whether you're on the road, at a resort community or just surfing the web, let *MotorHome* magazine show you the way. **M**

“*MotorHome's* growing online community is a great way to keep up with the latest in all things RV.”

Contributors | November



Morey Edelman and his wife, Ruth, are adventure-loving RVers who travel six months a year in their 2017 Winnebago Sunstar. They are continually amazed at the sights they encounter while on the road.



Ann Eichenmuller is a Virginia freelance writer who loves exploring the country with her husband, Eric, in their Minnie Winnie. Ann is the author of the novel *Kind Lies* (www.hightidepublications.com).



Larry MacDonald is a Canadian freelancer who sold his “sticks and bricks” and travels full-time with his wife, dog and cat. He writes about their adventures on his website www.landyachting.ca.

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Do you have a security system installed on your motorhome? If so, which brand is it, and are you happy with the results?

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



High-Tech Security

I installed a Videofied wireless video alarm system with all doors, windows and external storage doors covered with a contact sensor. I installed two internal and two external video-clip cameras in the RV, as well as one internal and two door video-clip cameras in the trailer we pull.

The system is completely armed when in storage so that if someone approaches the RV or trailer, the external video-clip cameras send a short video to me and the central station for viewing. If someone opens the doors, windows or external storage cabinets, the alarm siren goes off and an alarm message is sent to the central station about the breach. The internal video-clip camera sends videos to central station and me, giving visibility of activities inside the RV or trailer during the alarm. Having visual confirmation of an alarm speeds up police response.

When the RV is being used on a trip, we arm both the perimeter and internal video-clip cameras when we leave the RV behind for an excursion or dinner. We arm the perimeter without

the internal or external cameras when we are sleeping in the RV. We only arm it at night if we are concerned about the area we are staying in.

When the RV is being worked on at a service provider, we program the system to set itself in the evening and disarm itself in the morning. In this manner, it is protected overnight while in the shop's storage area.

We love this system because it is as mobile as the RV. It works on lithium batteries that need replacing every 12-16 months, therefore long storage durations are not an issue and it does not drain the RV battery. The system is turned on and off by a key fob or wireless keypad. The connection to central station is via cell service; so as long as you are in an area with cell service (minimum of 3G), you will always be connected to central station.

Due to the central station requirement, this system is only sold through certified dealers. We bought ours from Perimeter Protection (www.perimeterprotectionusa.com), which preprograms and ships nationally. This system only took about five hours to install.

Kenny B. | Placentia, California

OEM Alarm

Our 2012 Sunseeker is built on a 2011 Ford E-450 chassis. It has the standard Ford factory automobile-style security system in the cab. That's been plenty for us. Once we went to dinner and left our dog in the motorhome. In minutes, we got a call from the RV park manager, telling us our alarm was going off repeatedly. A neighboring RV had their dogs outside, and our 25-pound dog's jumping from seat to seat as he barked at those dogs had triggered the alarm.

George R. Woodside | Via email

Wireless Bargain

So far I haven't felt the need to install a traditional security system on our RV. Although I have a wireless device that I picked up from Harbor Freight for less than \$20 (batteries not included), it was designed as a driveway warning alarm. With the use of hook-and-loop fastener, you can temporarily attach the transmitter externally and the receiver inside the coach will chime when the signal is broken.

This can be particularly helpful if you are camping where you may have concerns of an unwanted visitor, be it

Featured Letter

Bark Alert

We travel with a 120-pound German shepherd dog as our security system, and park in all kinds of places. We've had no problems so far.

Dave Waatti | Kalispell, Montana



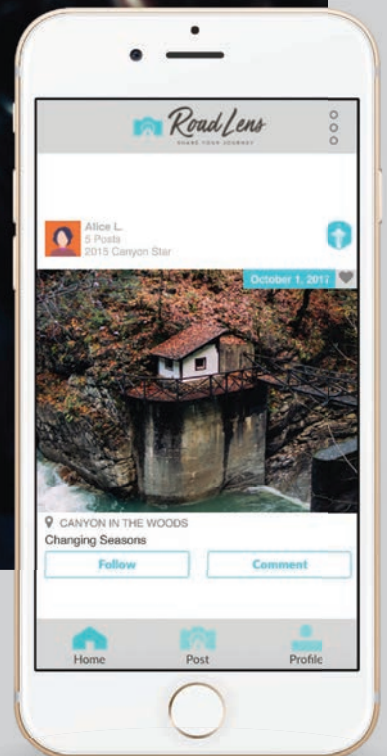
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bear, Bigfoot or otherwise. It can also be positioned high on the RV pointing downward keeping a smaller signal footprint or place the transmitter away from the RV such as tied to a tree or table and pointed back to the rig, this can eliminate false signals from the wind blowing the trees.

Jerry on Route 66 | Via email

Two-Buck Fix

In September 2010, several motorhomes in our RV lot were broken into, and numerous items were stolen. A pry bar was inserted into a slide window, opening the lock so they could slide the window open. Once inside they opened the cabinets, cupboards and bedroom closet doors looking for prescription drugs, electronics and anything they could sell.

We were lucky: The only items missing inside were a wristwatch, two walkie-talkies and about \$30 in quarters. Unfortunately, they found the key to our basement doors and took a large, full toolbox and an electric drill. Our homeowner's insurance policy covered our loss, less the deductible.

I looked at security systems and determined no one would hear them in the RV lot. So, I went to Home Depot and purchased 10 feet of 3/4-inch PVC pipe for \$1.68. We now have seven windows that have a section of PVC pipe placed in the window groove. The windows will not slide open, even when they're unlocked.

Dan Mathews | Oceanside, California

Stick It to 'Em

I simply got a few ADT Security stickers and put them on the doors and windows. We had our Class C in a storage unit for more than two years, and no one touched it.

Roy Owens | Pennsylvania

Viper Pit

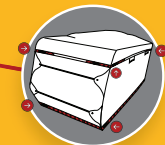
After an expensive break-in (mainly door and frame damage), we installed a Viper Security System and it has worked well. It's not easy to find a car alarm/sound system installer to work on a motorhome. We found one and it was not too expensive, at around \$200.

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Lake Weir Living, Circle 119 on Reader Service Card

It includes vibration sensing and has warning chirps for small vibrations. Lots of features can be programmed, but are mostly unnecessary. As with most of these, a very small amount of current is drawn (which can add up).

Robert Flemming | Draper, Utah

More Power

I just had a Banks PowerPack installed on our 26-foot Class C motorhome, which is built on a 2016 Ford E-450 Super Duty chassis with a 6.8-liter V-10 engine. I had considered the PowerPack a few months ago; however, after reading the August "Power Up" article, I looked at it again. It happened to be on sale, discounted \$300, with free shipping so I purchased it.

The garage that performed the installation is 50 miles away from our house so I towed a 4,600-pound Tacoma on a 2,600-pound, 16-foot tilt trailer behind the motorhome to the garage and then towed the trailer home behind the Tacoma. The trip to

pick up the coach with the PowerPack installed was the reverse of dropping it off, and my comparison so far is in driving the motorhome while towing 7,000 pounds. I am impressed! There is a noticeable power difference in town and on the highway with less downshifting when driving through the foothills of Colorado. I can't wait for our next trip through the Colorado mountains without a tow vehicle to see how it performs.

Be prepared to have a hard time finding a garage to do the installation — Banks helped me with that — and be prepared to spend something approaching the cost of the PowerPack for the installation. Despite the increased power in our motorhome, we are looking at a 1,400-pound, 14-foot trailer and an older 3,500-pound, four-cylinder Jeep Wrangler to make traveling that much easier.

Mark Thrailkill | Via email

Editor's note: *We received a large*

amount of responses to our July Question of the Month, regarding getting around upon arrival at the campsite. We even posted extra submissions on our website at: <http://www.motorhome.com/rv-travel-news/web-exclusive-october-p-o-box/>.

Well, the letters keep pouring in, so here are even more of the comments we have received:

Get Your Swag On

One of your readers asked about getting around without a tow vehicle, and I'd like to share what I got for my birthday, as we rarely have a dinghy vehicle with us. I wanted an electric scooter, but one that was lightweight and easily brought into our Class A for when we are on the road. After a lot of searching, I decided on the Swagtron SwagCycle E-Bike, which is a folding electric bicycle with a 10-mile range, a collapsible frame and a handlebar display.

Having just returned from Fort Myers Beach, I can say I am so glad



I got it. It's portable and light enough that we can easily bring it into the motorhome and lay it on the bed while we are on the road, yet sturdy enough for a 200-plus pound person! I had a blast riding it into town each day to go out to eat or grab something at the market. Based on the sizes, weights and prices of other electric scooters, I am very pleased with my Swagtron SwagCycle!

Julee Ellison | Crittenden, Kentucky

Class B Solution

We have a beautiful Leisure Travel Vans Unity TB. We hope to never need to tow a car, but we do have two great Elby one-speed electric assist bikes. They not only assist at different levels in lieu of gears, they also have a push-button speed control that will take you up to 20 mph with no pedaling. With our aging knees, it seemed like a good way to go.

We carry them on a hitch-mounted bicycle rack made by Thule (Easyfold

9023) that is the only one we found that could take the weight of two electric bikes. It rides rock-steady, and we keep the rear camera pointed at the assembly, just in case.

With a backpack or panniers we do just fine for most of our local travel needs. Based on factory information and online reviews, we are supposed to get at least a 50-mile range, which covers about anything we want to do.

Craig Margo | Via email

Two Solutions

I retired two years ago and started the RV lifestyle seasonally traveling from spring to fall. Thus far, we have hit more than 30 states and circled the Great Lakes. Our favorite sites are the state parks, which have everything we are looking for (hiking, fishing, golf and larger campsites).

The downside to the Class A lifestyle is that once we are parked, we are parked, unless we walk or bike to nearby activities. As of yet we are not

towing a vehicle, but sometimes find it handy to rent a car when we are in the private parks so that we can visit some other attractions.

Last year we purchased an electric bike made by Daymak and bought a carrier for the back of the motorhome. Daymak makes numerous models to suit just about any needs. I chose the Eagle model because of the extra-wide tires, bigger suspension and seat for two, in addition to the rack trap on the front and rear. I outfitted a milk crate for all my fishing gear on the rear carrier that is attached with bungee cords for quick removal.

The bike allows me to throw my golf clubs on my back and head to the course in the morning, or head out to the camp store for groceries. This model is 72 volts and plugs into the RV when a charge is needed.

The other campers love it since it is super quiet (too quiet really, as you can startle people who are walking), so you don't disturb anyone in the early

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Jayco Entegra, Circle 118 on Reader Service Card

morning or evenings like most gas bikes would.

So far, I am very impressed with the bike. It does weigh 200 pounds, so it is a little cumbersome to load and unload, but the process becomes easier every time we do it. I bought an aluminum carrier with a ramp that easily slides on and off the hitch receiver that came with the motorhome. Another positive is that being an electric bike there is no

license necessary to operate it in most provinces and states.

Frank O'Doherty | Aurora, Ontario, Canada

Going Down

We have owned all kinds of RVs over the years, but have enjoyed our motorhomes the most. We are interested in knowing why so many RVers are downsizing and what constitutes the choices they make. For us,

going from a Class A Itasca Meridian to a Class C Coach House Platinum makes sense — at this stage in our lives, we are looking for quality and reliability in a small motorhome. But for other motorhome owners, they might choose something else. What drives their decision? I would like to know why people choose one motorhome over another when downsizing.

Thomas Francis | Via email M

Florida Grande, Circle 114 on Reader Service Card



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Question of the Month

For those who have downsized their motorhomes or are looking to do so, what were the deciding factors? What benefits (or disadvantages) do you see in owning a larger versus a more compact motorhome?

Send your comments to:

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Southwestern Soak

Visit New Mexico's Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Spa and Resort for a rejuvenating dip in mineral waters

by Mary Zalmanek

Native Americans who considered the waters of Ojo Caliente sacred gathered here for thousands of years. The Spaniards found it in the 1500s while on their quest for gold and the Fountain of Youth. In 1868, Antonio Joseph built the first bathhouse, making Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs one of the first natural health resorts in the country. Since then, the spa has undergone major improvements while maintaining its Old-World charm. The resort has a variety of lodging accommodations, including an RV park with sites nestled among cottonwood trees.

Located an hour north of Santa Fe, New Mexico, the hot springs have a unique combination of four mineral waters:

lithia, iron, soda and arsenic. More than 100,000 gallons of sulfur-free, geothermal mineral waters feed 11 pools, including the new Mud Area. These waters are believed to relieve digestive problems, depression and symptoms of arthritis, and benefit the immune system and several skin conditions. My perfect day at Ojo Caliente began with a hike along one of the trails on the 1,100-acre property — followed by a soak and massage — and ended with a delicious, farm-to-table meal at the Artesian Restaurant. There's a 3-acre farm on-site, confirming the resort's commitment to health and wellness.

For more information, call 800-222-9162, or visit <http://ojocaliente.ojospa.com>.



Above: The Cliffside Pools are filled with a combination of iron and arsenic mineral waters, believed to be beneficial to blood and immune systems, to provide relief from arthritis and stomach ulcers, and to heal a variety of skin conditions. From far left: Celebrating its 150th anniversary in 2017, Ojo Caliente Mineral Springs Resort and Spa has 11 pools, a full-service spa, 48 lodging units, an RV park, restaurant, gift shop and numerous hiking and biking trails on 1,100 acres. Tana and Brandon Renner relax at the RV park after enjoying the spa.



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By Bobbie Hasselbring

Grilled Holiday Artichokes

During the holidays, we always make some traditional dishes, but I like to find something to add a new “wow” to the table. This year, my holiday menu includes grilled artichokes, an easy yet elegant dish.

In most places in North America, artichokes are available year-round. While there are more than 140 varieties of artichoke, only about 40 varieties are grown commercially and, in this country, the most common is the globe artichoke (aka the “French” or “green” artichoke). The name “artichoke” comes from the northern Italian words “articiocco” and “articclos,” meaning pinecone, referring to the vegetable’s multiple leaves.

Artichokes, natives of the Mediterranean and the Canary Islands, are members of the thistle group of the sunflower family. The part we eat is the plant’s flower bud. If you don’t harvest artichoke buds, they blossom into big, violet-blue flowers.

Artichokes are easy to grow, but they need space, as they spread out about 6 feet and grow up to 3-4 feet tall. One plant will produce multiple artichokes for 5-10 years.

If you’ve never enjoyed an artichoke, you may wonder how to eat them. They’re steamed or boiled until the stem and center are relatively soft, and the leaves pull out easily from the center. They can be eaten hot or cold. To eat, pull off outer petals one at a time. Then dip the fleshy base of each petal into sauce (often mayonnaise) or melted butter; pull through your teeth to remove the soft, pulpy petal portion. Discard the remaining petal. Continue until all petals have been removed. Then spoon out the fuzzy center at the base and discard. The bottom, or heart, of the artichoke is entirely edible. Cut into small pieces and dip into sauce.

And mark your calendars for next June, when Castroville, California — the heart of the state’s artichoke universe — holds its annual artichoke festival June 2-3, 2018 (<http://artichokefestival.org>).

Have a favorite artichoke recipe you’d like to share?

Email bobbie@realfoodtraveler.com with “Artichoke” in the subject line.



Above: A single artichoke plant will produce several artichokes each season for 5-10 years.

GRILLED ARTICHOKES WITH GRILLED LEMON MAYONNAISE



This recipe, a family favorite, is adapted from celebrity chef, Emeril Lagasse.

- ☐ 4 large artichokes
- ☐ 1 cup olive oil
- ☐ ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- ☐ 1 tablespoon garlic, chopped
- ☐ 1 tablespoon parsley leaves, chopped
- ☐ ½ teaspoon salt
- ☐ ¼ teaspoon black pepper, freshly ground

Grilled Lemon Mayonnaise

- ☐ 2 lemons, cut in half
- ☐ ½-¾ cup mayonnaise

► Fill a pot ¾ full with water, add some salt and boil artichokes for 15 minutes, until bottoms are just tender and can be pierced, and an outer leaf pulls out easily. Drain and cool.

Cut artichokes into quarters and cut out the fuzzy center and inner prickly leaves.

In a bowl, combine olive oil, vinegar, garlic, parsley, salt and pepper. Add artichoke quarters and toss to coat. Marinate 2-4 hours, turning occasionally.

Preheat grill to medium-high. Remove artichokes from marinade and grill, turning until warmed through and slightly charred (about 5 minutes). Place on platter and serve with Grilled Lemon Mayonnaise.

To make the mayonnaise, grill the lemon halves, cut sides down, until charred, about 1 minute. Squeeze the lemon into the mayonnaise and serve with the artichokes.



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Freedom Roads

Xantrex has expanded its popular Freedom series with the launch of four new models. The new Freedom X models — two inverters and two inverters with a built-in charger — offer users a number of features including extended surge for motor loads, faster transfer time for quick transition from shore to battery, a huge wiring bay with quick-connect AC terminals and an easy-to-read onboard LED display. Xantrex says design of the new Freedom X series' improved climate protection means the inverter will provide full output in temperatures ranging from minus 4 to 104 degrees Fahrenheit. All models include an internal 30-amp transfer switch and can be hardwired or installed with the optional GFCI outlet. Plus, the models with the built-in charger (X2000, XC2000) add power share, power factor correction, temperature compensation, dead-battery charging and custom charge algorithms for Li-Ion applications. All models meet UL458 regulatory standards. MSRPs range from \$440-\$775.

Xantrex | 800-670-0707, www.xantrex.com



Push It

Newmar Corp. celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2018 (as does *MotorHome*), and has kicked off the festivities with a bang with the introduction of the 2018 Newmar Ventana Class A diesel pusher. Built on the Freightliner XCR chassis, the Ventana is equipped with aluminum wheels, Comfort Drive steering control and recessed fuel tanks with crossover to fill from either side. Inside, solid-surface countertops, Flexsteel furniture, glazed cabinetry and a pillowtop mattress are befitting of a Golden Anniversary, as are the recessed LED lights, top-shelf interior and exterior entertainment features, whole-coach water filter and standard 8.0-kW Cummins Onan diesel generator. Each of the 14 Ventana floorplans has been outfitted with a double-bowl stainless-steel sink and chef's faucet in the galley, to go along with a sleek recessed cooktop. Most Ventana floorplans include a versatile sofa bed in the living area, while dinette choices include a Comfort Booth or desk/dinette combo units. MSRP starts at \$271,570.

Newmar Corp. | 800-731-8300, www.newmarcorp.com

Show Me the Way

Rand McNally has announced a lineup of three new RV-specific devices designed to make traveling the country easier than ever. All three devices include Rand McNally's navigation designed for 11 types of RVs and conventional automobiles, and also feature lifetime maps and millions of RV-friendly locations and amenities, according to the company. The OverDrive 7 RV (MSRP: \$399.99) combines advanced navigation for RVs, a full Android tablet, voice assistance, a built-in dash cam, hands-free calling and texting, music streaming and more. The RV Tablet 70 (MSRP: \$299.99) comes with a built-in dash cam and a video-input option for adding a rearview camera. As a tablet, it can be used to browse the web, check email and play games. Travelers can also manage and plan trips with the built-in TripMaker app and on-board Road Atlas. The entry-level RVND 7 GPS (MSRP: \$199.99) is equipped with RV-centric points of interest, campgrounds and exclusive trip content.

Rand McNally | 800-275-7263, www.randmcnally.com/RV



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ESCAPES CROSSROADS

Lubbock, Texas

Gliding Into History

The Silent Wings Museum in Lubbock, Texas, tells the story of the little-known U.S. Glider Program, which played an important part in World War II. From 1942 to 1944, Lubbock was home to the majority of American glider pilots, and it was there that they received their flight training. The mission of the combat gliders was to deliver infantry, heavy weapons, ammunition and medical supplies to Allied forces. This usually meant landing behind enemy lines, often at night. The combat glider pilots knew that the flight into battle was a one-way trip, and once the towrope was released, there was no turning back.

One of the exciting features of this museum is a restored Waco GC-4A's glider, the main plane of the program, and one of only five still in existence. Other exhibits include aircraft, photographs and various equipment.

For more information, call 806-775-3046 or go to www.mylubbock.us/departamental-websites/departments/silent-wings-museum/home.

— James Richardson



Photo: James Richardson

Patagonia, Arizona

Birds of a Feather

Some of our bird-watching friends told us that next time we visited Tucson, Arizona, we should take a one-hour drive south, toward the Mexico border, and spend a few days at Lake Patagonia. We took their advice, and we're glad we did. This is one of the premier spots to see more than 50 species of birds in only a day of observation.

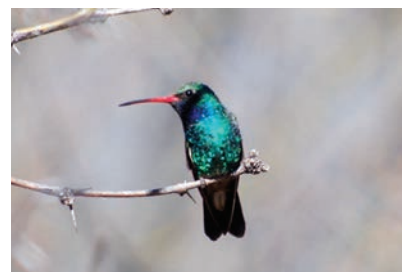
Arriving at Patagonia Lake State Park, we secured a nice campsite, grabbed our binoculars and headed to the visitor center. We picked up the long checklist of birds that can be observed in the park and started walking the paths along the lake and Sonoita Creek. We knew we were in for a great birding adventure when a roadrunner crossed our hiking path as we set out.

To further our birding experience, we signed up for the pontoon-boat tour the next morning on the 265-acre man-made lake. Led by a birding expert, we saw many of the feathered visitors to this lake out in the middle of the Arizona desert. We didn't fish, but word had it that

large-mouth bass were biting, and a rainbow trout or two could be caught. Boats can be rented at the park's marina.

Patagonia Lake State Park has 105 campsites, most with 20/30-amp or 50-amp service and water hookups. Many sites can accommodate a 40-foot or longer motorhome. When reviewing the site map, note that many campsites have ramadas with picnic tables.

For more information, call 520-287-6965 or visit www.azstateparks.com/patagonia-lake. — Morey Edelman



Photos: Morey Edelman

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Hiking to Sentinel Dome results in panoramic 360-degree views of some of Yosemite's best, including El Capitan.

The Majesty of Yosemite

America's third-oldest national park continues to inspire awe and wonder year-round

By Morey and Ruth Edelman

Yosemite, located in Central California, is always mentioned as one of America's great national parks. We had passed through Yosemite before, and had done some of the usual touristy things — a walk to view Yosemite Falls, a stop at the excellent visitor center, dinner at The Majestic Yosemite Hotel — but this time we decided to really experience the park. We began by reading John Muir's book, *The Yosemite*, and then we headed out to the park for a weeklong stay.

It was late October as we drove in to Yosemite from the west via California Route 120. We passed through the park's Big Oak Flat Entrance and pulled into Hodgdon Meadow Campground, which is located about 45 minutes northwest of Yosemite Valley. Although this campground is not particularly RV-friendly — with only 34 of its 104 sites suitable for RVs — a very helpful campground host greeted us and picked out a suitable site for our 30-foot Winnebago. Between the

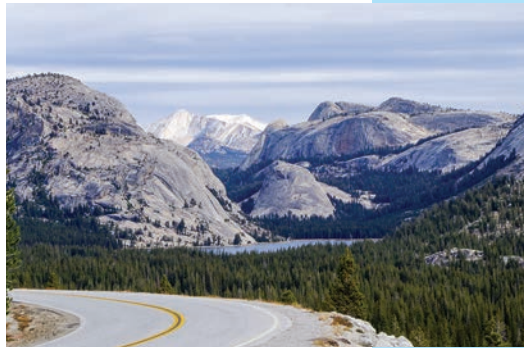
trees and the unlevel sites, our host did a great job of helping us get situated. We did see some larger motorhomes, but wouldn't recommend this campground for motorhomes longer than 36 feet. Once set up, we pulled out the park information provided to us at the park's entrance station and began making our plans.

Because the Hodgdon Meadow Campground is near the Tioga Road turnoff, we decided that our first day in the park would be spent driving along Tioga Road. We headed toward Tenaya Lake — between Yosemite Valley and Tuolumne Meadows — and had no problem driving our motorhome up to that point along the road. We found most of the viewpoints along the way to be RV-friendly. Looking down at Yosemite Valley, more than 3,000 feet below, we experienced the first of many "wows" to come. At Tenaya Lake we hiked the loop trail around this beautiful alpine lake. Then we drove back to the Olmsted Point viewpoint where we walked to the edge of the canyon and looked down again into the valley. We could see Half Dome, Clouds Rest and so much more. We decided to explore the valley the next



⬅ Shuttle Service

Free shuttle services are available throughout the park. Two shuttles serve the Yosemite Valley, one of the park's most popular destinations: Yosemite Valley shuttle, which operates year-round and provides service around eastern Yosemite Valley; and El Capitan shuttle, which operates from mid-June to early October and stops at El Capitan, Four Mile trailhead and the Valley Visitor Center.



From far left: The authors' 30-foot Winnebago proved to be an ideal mode of transport in most of the park; those with coaches longer than 30 feet may encounter some road restrictions. Tioga Road (closed from approximately November through May) is another location with "wows" around nearly every corner.

day and headed back to our campsite at Hodgdon Meadow.

The next morning, under a robin-egg-blue sky, we drove southeast along Route 120/Big Oak Flat Road. We passed the Merced Grove of Giant Sequoias, which is only about 4 miles from the campground, but we didn't stop — we were just too excited to get to the valley. Our first destination was Yosemite Falls — the highest waterfall in the park, dropping a total of 2,425 feet over three separate falls. It is awe-inspiring. Little did we know at the time that this was just the beginning of a series of unbelievable sights we would experience in Yosemite.

There are 10 campgrounds in the park that can accommodate RVs. None of the 10 facilities have hookups. Dump stations and potable water can be found at the entrance to Upper Pines Campground; as well as near Wawona Campground (summer only); and near Tuolumne Meadows Campground (summer only). If you are entering the park via Route 120 and require a full-hookup site, there are a number of private RV parks from which to choose, including Yosemite Pines RV Resort and Family Lodging (209-962-7690, <https://yosemitepinesrv.com>).

We chose Upper Pines Campground as our home base for the next six days. Even though the sites are close together, the views of the surrounding valley more than made up for the tight quarters. Sites were level, and thanks to the park information, marked for different length RVs on the website. We had plenty of room in our

chosen 35-foot spot. There were also a number of larger sites available for 40-foot and longer motorhomes. Make note that reservations are strongly recommended, particularly in the peak time of summer. Unlike most reservations for national park campgrounds on www.recreation.gov, there is not the usual six-month window for booking. Yosemite's reservable campsites are available up to five months in advance on the 15th of each month. These sites are in extremely high demand and are usually all booked within 20 minutes after they become available.

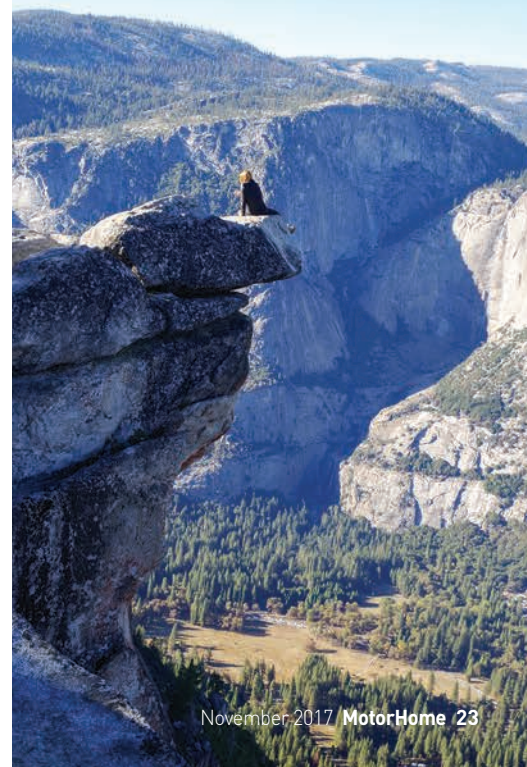
As noted, there are no hookups in the park, but all the campgrounds have restrooms with flush toilets. Showers are available at Half Dome Village, a short quarter-mile walk away. Half Dome Village also has a very well stocked General Store, a lounge (former activity room) with Wi-Fi (for a \$5 fee), and a pizza restaurant and snack bar. Cell service is very spotty in the valley; we found the best place for service to be in the vicinity of the park's visitor center.

Over the next five days, we rode along the valley's bike trails, stopped at the visitor center, marveled at the art at the Ansel Adams Gallery, went to an evening program and video with Ron Kauk (a rock climber extraordinaire), and considered taking a four-hour class on digital photography. But all of this was nothing in comparison to our three all-day hikes.

It's hard to choose a favorite, but our hike to Nevada Fall and Vernal Fall, using the John Muir and Mist Trails,

was the best. Walking the half-mile from Upper Pines Campground, we arrived at the trailhead at Happy Isles. Well-marked trail signs pointed us to the John Muir trail. We hiked 2.7 miles on the well-maintained trail to Nevada Fall. We watched in awe as the water cascaded 594 feet down the granite wall. We then continued to Vernal Fall, watching our footsteps with the trail rocks. It was tough to keep our eyes on the trail when the vistas were so incredible. Arriving at Vernal Fall, we were again awed as torrents of water crashed over the upper rocks. We found a spot to sit and take in the view as we ate our packed lunch.

As we left Vernal Fall the plunging water had formed a beautiful rainbow in the mist. The



Right: Visitors to Glacier Point may feel like they're on top of the world, with breathtaking sights in every direction.

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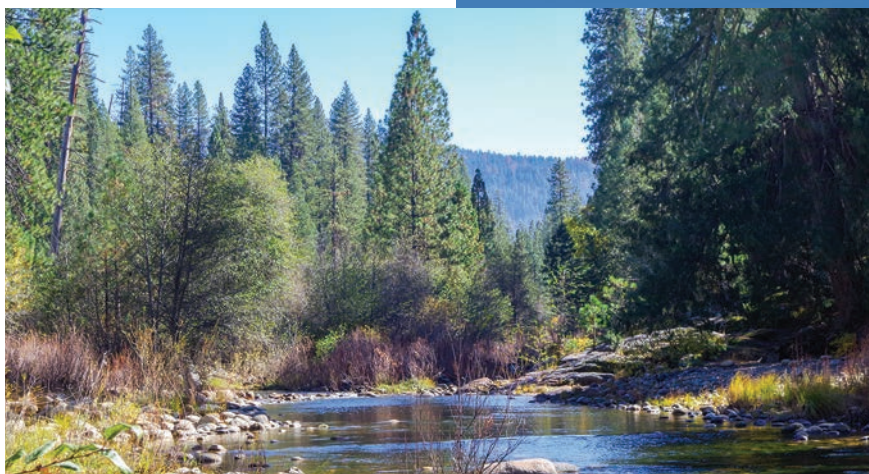
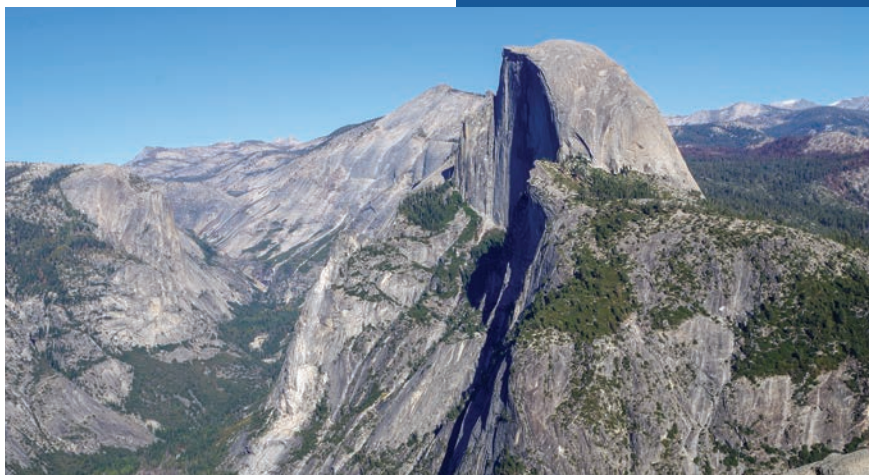
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900 steps back down were a little tough, but going down was definitely easier than coming up. Finishing the hike after 9 miles and a 1,900-foot climb in elevation, we headed back to our campsite. (If this distance is too great, you can break this hike up into two separate hikes of 5.4 miles round trip to Vernal Fall, and 2.4 miles round trip to Nevada Fall.) We then took some much-needed relaxation time on our return, sitting under the pine trees. As the sun set over the canyon's walls, we lit a campfire, watching the stars appear and reflected on this wonderful day.

To rest our bodies the next day, we elected the loop trail around Mirror Lake. This time we boarded the shuttle for the mile ride to the trailhead. This trail is mostly level, with great views looking up the valley as well as seeing the reflection in the lake. Once again we took our lunch and enjoyed sitting at the edge of the Tenaya River as it flowed by on its way to Mirror Lake. Completing the 5-mile hike, we felt good, and decided to take the park shuttle to the Yosemite Valley Lodge for dinner. Convenient shuttle service allowed us to keep our motorhome set up in camp, and to avoid the parking congestion at the trailheads.

For our third day of hiking, we headed to Sentinel Dome, 3,000 feet above the valley floor. We broke camp early and drove our motorhome up Glacier Point Road. In season, there is a park shuttle, but since we were off-season (much less crowds), it was either hitchhike or drive. Arriving at the trailhead before 10 a.m., we had no problem parking. There is a 30-foot vehicle length restriction past the Sentinel Dome trailhead to Glacier Point.

Once again, we loaded our backpacks and headed on a loop trail. Our first stop: Sentinel Dome, and its commanding views. The entire trail was 6 miles in length, but you could simply walk straight to the dome in less than 2 miles. What a feeling once we reached the top! The views of the valley, Half Dome and the surrounding landscapes were breathtaking! And yes, another perfect lunch stop; but we decided to continue on the trail,



stopping right on the ridge where we could look down on the spectacular Yosemite Falls, which proved to be an even better stop.

With the hike completed, we continued on the road to Glacier Point. Being 30 feet long, our motorhome just met the restriction, and we were pleasantly surprised to find many parking sites suitable for our coach. Up on Glacier Point, we felt like we were on the top of the world.

By the end of our week in Yosemite the park had become one of our favorite places. If a trip to Yosemite is in your future, plan to spend at least a week in the area, and we encourage you to hike some of the trails to experience firsthand what John Muir first encountered almost 150 years ago in this iconic, very special location. **M**

Top: Half Dome is one of the most recognizable landmarks in Yosemite. Middle: Yosemite is a great place for a picnic, and views like this serene setting are common. Below: Nevada Fall cascades 594 feet down a granite wall.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Yosemite National Park
209-372-0200, www.nps.gov/yose

SNOWBIRDS

This Canadian city in British Columbia oozes Old World charm and

Northern residents who pack up their RVs in the fall and head south, seeking warmer climes over the winter months, are referred to as “snowbirds.” My wife, Sandy, and I have been snowbirding from Canada for the past 10 years to resorts in the Sun Belt — in our case, at locations in Arizona and California. This year we decided to spend the winter in Canada, with the intention of answering the question: Is this a viable option to heading south?

Two areas within Canada are popular snowbird destinations: Osoyoos in the interior of British Columbia, and Victoria on the southern tip of Vancouver Island. We chose Victoria, British Columbia’s capital, because of its cosmopolitan ambiance and proximity to the ocean. It’s also said to have the mildest climate in Canada.

Since Victoria is on an island, you need to take a ferry to get there with your motorhome. From mainland British Columbia, the quickest route is BC Ferries’ Tsawwassen-to-Sidney (Swartz Bay), dropping you off a half-hour north of Victoria. From

Washington, the Black Ball Ferry Line runs from Port Angeles to downtown Victoria. The ferry offers service year-round (except for two weeks in January) and has a 14-foot vertical clearance for motorhomes. Sailing time is 90 minutes. Washington State Ferries run from Anacortes to Sidney once daily in the fall and spring, and twice daily in summer. The trip is approximately three hours long, and there is no service during winter.

While a dozen or so RV campgrounds are available in the area, we prefer Fort Victoria RV Park, located about 20 minutes from downtown.

When we contacted the park in mid-November, their 120 transient, full-service sites were nearly full. Fortunately, a friendly staff person was able to shuffle some later arrivals to accommodate us through April. More than half of our neighbors were from other provinces where below-freezing winter temperatures make RV living unbearable. Collectively, we might be considered a unique breed of snowbirds: those who escape winter’s wrath without migrating all the way to the Sun Belt!

Average temperatures in Victoria seldom get below freezing during the winter, and snow accumulation is rare. That said; the winter of 2016-17 was the coldest and snowiest in 20 years. Dampness was our primary concern, evidenced by moisture and mold buildup on our windows and walls. To solve this problem, we purchased a dehumidifier which, together with two

The Parliament buildings include unique architectural features such as an octagonal copper dome, hardwood panels and marble columns.



IN VICTORIA

hospitality, while offering an abundance of activities for winter visitors

small ceramic heaters and our electric fireplace, allowed us to be comfortably dry and warm throughout our stay.

Getting Acquainted

Whenever we arrive in a new city, we take a bus tour to give us the lay of the land. We also stop by the local visitor center to find out about “must do” activities.

For our tour, we chose Gray Line’s double-decker British-style bus. This 90-minute hop-on hop-off excursion provides an overview of the city’s major attractions, beginning at the iconic château-style Fairmont Empress Hotel. From there, we meandered slowly through Chinatown, the oldest in Canada, and stopped briefly at Fisherman’s Wharf, Oak Bay Marina, Beacon Hill Park, Craigdarroch Castle and other historic or scenic locations. Running commentary provided a wealth of information about Victoria’s early days as a fur trading post and frontier town for gold seekers and coal miners.

Victoria has one of the most beautiful harbors in the world, with a well-protected marina and a walkway where buskers entertain to the delight of visitors and locals alike. In addition to our bus tour, we took a 45-minute boat excursion with Victoria Harbour Ferry. Our informative captain spoke about early uses of the harbor, including fishing, logging, shipbuilding, fur trading and even soap making. Once-fertile shorelines populated by First Nations are now chockfull of plush hotels, colorful float homes, commercial piers and terminal buildings. Passengers disembarking from seaplanes, ferries and cruise ships can enjoy this delightful city by



Above left: Fisherman’s Wharf offers visitors a variety of dining, shopping and touring opportunities. Above right: Fall at The Butchart Gardens features an explosion of colors across five distinct gardens, a Star Pond a piazza and more.



visiting waterfront attractions or by browsing through countless one-of-a-kind shops, boutiques and galleries in the downtown area.

In the 1920s, the city became a popular retirement destination, so much so that Canadian writer Pierre Burton unkindly called Victoria “the place where old people go to visit their parents.” No longer! According to the 2016 Canadian census, less than 20 percent of Greater Victoria’s population of nearly 370,000 is made up of retired seniors, which increases slightly in winter due to the influx of snowbirds. (“Greater Victoria” includes 13 outlying municipalities, while the city itself has a relatively small population of 85,000.)

At the downtown visitor center, I learned that during winter, Victoria’s three most popular attractions are The Butchart Gardens, the Royal BC Museum and the Parliament Buildings.

The Butchart Gardens

American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson said, “The earth laughs in flowers.” Nowhere is that laughter more

plentiful than at Victoria’s century-old Butchart (“Butch-art”) Gardens that delights more than a million visitors annually. In early spring, 55 acres of flowering bulbs — including tulips, daffodils and hyacinths — are showcased among colorful shrubs and trees, providing a kaleidoscope of colors. A self-guided tour allowed us to leisurely explore five separate gardens — the Indoor Spring Prelude, Japanese, Italian, Sunken and Mediterranean — each immaculately



Island Life

From mainland British Columbia, vehicle ferries run from Tsawwassen to Sidney, a half-hour north of Victoria. Stateside from Washington, ferries run from Port Angeles to downtown Victoria as well as from Anacortes to Sidney.

landscaped with an array of annuals, streams and fountains. Hard to miss is the tall chimney overlooking the Sunken Garden (remnants of a quarry) that provides a stoic reminder of the garden's past as a cement factory.

Snowbirds are doubly fortunate in being able to visit this National Historic Site during the winter holiday season. For five weeks, thousands of colorful lights and dozens of larger-than-life figurines representing "The 12 Days of Christmas" provide an awe-inspiring and magical experience. Our favorite was "The Fourth Day of Christmas," represented by four calling birds ... each with a cellphone! Lace up the ice skates and glide across the outdoor rink to the sound of seasonal music, or ride one of 30 hand-crafted animals on the indoor carousel. Finish up with a hot cocoa while listening to carolers.

Royal BC Museum

Established in 1886, this multi-story museum was rated by TripAdvisor as the best of 15 historical and art galleries in Victoria. We spent a full day learning about the natural and human history of Victoria and British Columbia. A First Nations gallery presents artifacts and information about their cultures and ultimate conflicts with European settlers. A separate gallery illustrates how British Columbia was shaped by pioneers, evolving into the economic and political structures of the 21st century.

Another gallery, with expansive life-like dioramas, highlights the impact of nature over the years, from the Ice Age to the abundant forests and changing river deltas of present-day landscapes. The interactive exhibits are fun and educational.



Above left: Surrounded by forest and ocean views, Pedder Bay RV Resort & Marina makes for a scenic homebase. Above right: Prince of Whales Whale Watching explores the Salish Sea in search of marine life, including, of course, ocean-borne mammals.



During our visit, we saw a temporary exhibit, "Terry Fox: Running to the Heart of Canada." Fox, who lost part of his right leg to bone cancer at the age of 18, intended to run across Canada to raise money for cancer research. In 1981, 21-year-old Fox dipped his prosthetic leg in the ocean at St. Johns, Newfoundland, commencing his "Marathon of Hope" run. He completed a marathon distance (26 miles) every day for 143 days while inspiring a nation with his courage, integrity and determination. Photographs, maps, videos and artifacts — such as his iconic Ford support van, prosthetic leg, worn out runners and his personal diary — capture a day-in-the-life of his run, his interactions with adoring fans and famous Canadians, and the heart-breaking end at Thunder Bay, Ontario, when cancer spread to his lungs. Although he died within a year, his legacy lives on in annual Terry Fox runs throughout the world, at last count raising more than \$700 million in Canada for cancer research. To quote

this true Canadian hero, "Dreams are made possible if you try."

Parliament Buildings

Directly across the street from the museum are the majestic parliament buildings, the seat of government in British Columbia since 1898. Guided tours provide visitors with details about the original construction and unique architectural features such as symbolic stained-glass windows, an octagonal copper dome, marble columns and hardwood panels. Our tour guide showed us the regally appointed Legislative Chamber, where elected officials meet to discuss proposed laws, budgets and issues that may impact their constituents. After our tour, we interacted with several video exhibits to learn more about famous Canadian politicians, entertainers and humanitarians.

Victoria has an endless variety of other activities for winter visitors. Whether it's playing tennis, pickleball or curling — or just delighting in the entertainment and cultural scene



The château-style Fairmont Empress Hotel was named a National Historic Site of Canada due to its cultural significance.

Thanks for the interstates, President Eisenhower.



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SNOWBIRDS IN VICTORIA

— there is something here for every RVer. “Monday Magazine” lists daily activities, ranging from folk music and Beethoven concerts to craft shows and beer festivals. For foodies, there is no shortage of restaurants, more per capita than any other Canadian city, from casual pub fare to elegant five-star dining. And as might be expected in a British-inspired city, afternoon tea is oh-so-popular — many restaurants offer a variety of teas combined with gourmet pastries.

To sample this tradition, we visited The Teahouse at Abkhazi (Ab-kazi) Garden and devoured three tiers of delicate finger sandwiches, quiches and pastries, all in an intimate dining room overlooking a beautifully landscaped garden. A choice of exotic teas is served in fine china pots and cups; with advanced notice, their regular decadent menu offers gluten-free and vegetarian options. Victoria, because of its many charming, whimsical and lovingly tended gardens,

is deservedly called the “City of Gardens.” Afternoon Tea at Abkhazi Garden provides a truly memorable experience for body and soul.

Returning to our question, would we consider staying in Canada a viable option to going south in the winter? We would indeed, at least in Victoria, given the abundance of activities available. And to our surprise and delight, we found the greenery, cool temperatures, and even the rain and snow a refreshing alternative to the barren desert landscapes and the hot, dry conditions that we typically encounter down south. Also, we enjoyed some activities that simply aren’t available down south, such as curling, dragon boating and making a snowman! Other nice touches included the presence of typically migratory birds — hummingbirds, robins and geese — and the springtime blossoming of cherry trees scattered throughout the city. On the practical side, our Canadian dollar was only worth about 70 cents U.S. this year, so we no doubt saved money by spending it in Canada. Conversely, one RVer from Montana commented that he was delighted with the purchasing power of the U.S. dollar. As he put it, “More bang for the buck!”

All things considered, snowbirding in Victoria was such a positive experience; we’re seriously considering hanging out with the nonmigrating flock again next winter! **M**

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Fort Victoria RV Park

250-479-8112, www.fortvictoria.ca

Royal BC Museum

888-447-7977, <http://royalbcmuseum.bc.ca>

The Teahouse at Abkhazi Garden

778-265-6466, www.abkhaziteahouse.com

Tourism Victoria

800-663-3883, www.tourismvictoria.com

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Homeward Bound

These top-notch RV communities and resorts provide snowbirds and long-term residents comfort, convenience and livability

Snowbirding is just one of the many wonderful perks of RVing. The ability to ditch the cold in search of the sun from the comfort of your own motorhome makes perfect sense, but finding the ideal location to set up shop for months at a time can be a daunting task. The 2017 Good Sam RV Travel & Savings Guide is jam-packed with more than 12,500 listings, but sometimes we need a nudge in the right direction to experience the best of the best. Sometimes, simply offering full hookups and pull-through sites isn't

enough; if we're going to relax and stay awhile, we need a true community, and a location that offers a variety of activities and amenities, in addition to convenient access to area attractions.

That's why we've compiled the list on the following pages of some of the top resorts/communities along the region known as the Sun Belt, which stretches from California to Florida and features moderate winter temperatures, desert landscapes and, yes, even some great places to hit the beach.

Alabama

Located in Orange Beach, Alabama, nestled in with the powdery white sands of the Gulf of Mexico, **Heritage Motorcoach Resort & Marina** offers snowbirds a unique combination: a full-service luxury motorhome resort and a marina offering boat slip rentals. But you don't need to own a boat to appreciate this quaint, peaceful community with 79 sites situated on cobblestone streets lined with gas lamps. At each site, "You'll either have a view of the

water from your coach or be just a few steps away," said Rob Willard, Heritage Homeowner's Association board member. And, the on-site accommodations make for a truly memorable experience. "There are so many things that make Heritage stand out, such as our private marina and amazing setting, but two things that I really appreciate are being on the second-story clubhouse porch around the firepit for the sunrise and the sunset over the water, and second is the amazing infinity pool

looking out over the water," said Willard. Once a visitor books an RV site (access to the coach houses or casitas not included), they are free to enjoy the resort, which includes a grand room with dual big-screen TVs and fireplaces, a fitness center and laundry facility, a dog-friendly private beach and a pavilion on the marina

Heritage Motorcoach
Resort & Marina



for relaxing waterside. But Willard said the stunning surroundings aren't all that make Heritage so special. "While I can't say enough about how beautiful it is here at Heritage, if you talked to any of our owners they would tell you that the people are the main reason they decided to buy here," said Willard. "The people in the Heritage community combined with the beautiful setting on the water, literally make this place magical." And, if you find you can't get enough Heritage, you can purchase a site for a vacation home, rental or even your year-round residence, complete with RV pad, full hookups and 100 mbps wired Internet.

Heritage Motorcoach Resort & Marina
800-730-7032,
www.heritageorangebeach.com



Arizona

With 14 RV resorts designed for active 55-and-older RVers, **Cal-Am Resorts** knows what makes its residents happy. "Our amenities are first-rate, well-maintained and constantly evolving to meet the ever-changing desires of the 55-and-older generation," said Felix Posos, director of marketing for Cal-Am Properties. "Some [of our facilities] include tournament-rated bocce ball, pickleball and shuffleboard courts. Many have grand ballrooms to host themed parties, dances and gatherings. Pristine softball fields are included in a number of our resorts and our pools, spas, fitness rooms and administrative facilities are of the caliber found at any high-end resort," said Posos. But apart from athletic endeavors,



Pala Casino Spa & Resort

Cal-Am makes sure its Arizona and California residents keep busy. "The core of our resorts are the activities teams," said Posos. "Their tireless work to plan and manage multiple events every day provides a host of opportunities for guests to build new friendships, try a new activity, relax and dance to live music at happy hour and build life-long memories." Plus, said Posos, the dining and entertainment are first-rate. "Cal-Am's food service team adds yummy flavors to our bistros and special events with Sunday brunches that whet the appetite while meeting a variety of dietary needs," he said. "And our Concert Series brings in the best acts suited for our audience. In 2018, we will be hosting Gladys Knight, LeAnn Rimes, The Lovin' Spoonful and more. The lifestyle at Cal-Am resorts really is like being on a cruise ship without the waves."

Visitors to most Cal-Am properties are offered daily, weekly and monthly RV reservations, and you can visit their website to see which property best suits your situation. But if you truly enjoy what Cal-Am offers RVers, you can purchase a site at Montesa at Gold Canyon, Arizona, to make the property your own. Montesa is now offering larger homes with optional roof decks, plus optional storage pads adjacent to the home for motorhomes, making it a perfect spot for a snowbird adventure.

Cal-Am Resorts, Montesa at Gold Canyon
877-355-0580, www.cal-am.com

California

Finding a fun way to pass the time is an important part of the motorhome lifestyle. So, it only makes sense to consider a destination such as **Pala Casino Spa & Resort**, located in northern San Diego County, California. With a world-class casino just steps from an upscale RV resort offering 100 full-hookup sites, you can experience the best of both worlds. "The RV resort's location offers privacy and proximity," said Jack Taylor, manager of public relations at Pala. "Guests like the privacy and contact with nature in the Palomar Mountains and the proximity of 10 golf courses, the Temecula Wine Country and, if they so choose, the big city just 50 minutes away," he said. But that's not to say there isn't plenty of allure to stay on the premises. "Of course, the RV resort's own amenities — the heated swimming pool and two spas, the entertainment in the registration building, the privacy of the clubhouse for individual parties and the proximity of a full-service Las Vegas-style casino with 11 restaurants, A-list shows, a national award-winning spa and a fully stocked mini-mart just a shuttle ride away — make Pala RV Resort unique," said Taylor. But Pala also goes out of its way to make visitors feel welcome, something Taylor feels truly sets the resort apart from the rest. "The Pala RV Resort team's attention to detail and follow-up starts the instant a reservation is made [and continues]

all the way to a late check-out,” he said. “All guest requests are organized and monitored, from the booking of facilities and dinner/entertainment events at Pala Casino Spa & Resort, to the specific schedule for the free shuttle service to and from the casino. Additional amenities offered at the RV resort include access to five barbecue grills, two table-tennis games, two horseshoe pits and a fenced doggy park.” Plus, says Taylor, “Even with all the entertainment opportunities close at hand, the resort team’s creativity provides one-of-a-kind special events that last entire weekends, like Derby Day, Halloween, the Fourth of July, Santa’s Shindig at Christmas, wine pairings, tailgate chili cookoffs and even a luau. All events involve prizes.”

Pala Casino Spa & Resort | 877-946-7252, www.palacasino.com



Florida

Cypress Trail RV Resort

in southwest Florida allows snowbirds to enjoy the rewarding motorhome lifestyle with all the resort amenities they’d expect at an outstanding five-star resort, but without the high price. “We offer the best value for a comparable Florida RV community with so many activities, lot choices/sizes and accessibility,” said marketing director Amir Harpaz. This master-planned, gated RV community is conveniently located in Fort Myers off Interstate 75. Each RV site includes city-supplied water and sewer, hard-wired



Internet and basic cable. Additionally, this exciting 472-lot outdoor destination provides residents with a variety of special on-site features and outdoor amenities, including sidewalks throughout the gated resort with lakefront or back-in lots available. Residents enjoy the 12,000-square-foot clubhouse, heated pool, spa, tennis, tournament-quality bocce, pickleball and shuffleboard courts. Two large lakes are on-site, and Cypress Trail says it is south Florida’s only RV resort with certified nature trails in its own nature preserve. Cypress Trail is pet-friendly and offers special amenities for your four-legged friends. “Many residents really enjoy that we have a unique dog park and dipping pool so your dog can cool off from the Florida sun,” said Harpaz. There’s also a secure storage area with electricity for your RV, boat or other large item. Cypress Trail RV Resort offers a variety of lots for sale or use in its site rental program. Potential owners can choose from oversized lakefront, lakeview or private boundary lots, either pull-through or back-in, depending on the size of their motorhome.

Cypress Trail RV Resort | 239-333-3246, www.cypresstrailrv.com

With both rental and deeded lot ownership options, **Florida Grande Motor Coach Resort** in central Florida is a great place for the snowbird season and beyond. Featuring a total of 215 lots and located between farms and grazing cattle (you read that right), Florida Grande offers a truly unique experience. “I believe we are the only resort in Florida to boast cattle as our closest neighbor,” said Matthew Smith, developer at Florida Grande. “They mow our front 40 acres.” Apart from the unusual neighbors, that location features some other benefits. “Our community boasts a level of peace and quiet that is unparalleled,” said Smith. “The resort is bordered on all sides by farmland and is far removed from any traffic, congestion or crime. Yet, if you’re in the mood for a night of big-city entertainment, you can be in downtown Orlando or Tampa in less than an hour.” But the rural location doesn’t mean the resort is lacking in amenities. “The Florida Grande’s design was focused exclusively on motorhomes and the RVing way of life,” said Smith. “Everything from the extra-wide roads, oversized concrete pads, enormous lot sizes and staging area were designed specifically to accommodate motorhomes. We even

Florida Grande Motor Coach Resort



built an enormous clubhouse just to keep things consistent.” There are a number of site rentals available, some also including use of the Grande Suite, an optional add-on that can be selected by the owner during the purchase process. “Visiting our resort you will see how the owners in our community have made their lots unique with quality landscaping, outdoor kitchens, pergolas and, of course, our Grande Suites,” said Smith. “The 384 square feet of the [optional] Grande Suite gives our owners the opportunity to create their own space. Almost all have full baths and laundry, with their main uses varying from a grand dining room to relaxing living room or workshop.” Smith says the resort plans to complete Phase 2 of its construction over the next few years, which will include another clubhouse, a swimming pool and improvements to the Grande Suite design.

Florida Grande Motor Coach Resort
352-569-1169, www.floridagrande.com



Lake Weir Preserve, an RV community in central Florida, is your chance to own a home in a peaceful, majestic RV-centric setting where nature is more than an amenity. Lake Weir is nestled among scenic natural beauty but within easy reach of Florida’s big-name attractions. Lake Weir’s location — an hour from Orlando or the Gulf Coast — enables residents to enjoy the best of the Sunshine State. “We are, quite frankly, located in the epicenter of Florida,” said Neil Schuster, co-managing partner of Lake Weir Preserve. “Within an hour’s drive of all the attractions of Orlando and the beautiful

beaches of both Florida coasts.”

But perhaps even more important than the ideal location is the sense of fellowship found within Lake Weir. That feeling of community is why many have purchased a fully customizable floorplan featuring a number of home elevations. Full hookups in an attached RV garage for your motorhome makes necessities such as storage, maintenance and cleaning — as well as loading and unloading — as easy as walking through the door. “Our oversized lots of a third of an acre and larger are perfect for our custom homes featuring RV garages,” Schuster said.



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Apart from finding new friends and neighbors just a few doors down, residents at Lake Weir are afforded the opportunity to expand their flock of friends thanks to the amazing shopping, dining and entertainment attractions just minutes from Lake Weir Preserve. "Our residents love the proximity to The Villages, which is just 8 miles away," Schuster added. "But after a round of golf or night on the town, there's no better place to come home to than Lake Weir Preserve."

Lake Weir Preserve | 866-204-5506, www.lakeweirpreserve.com

Georgia

Crossing Creeks RV Resort & Spa offers upscale amenities nestled on 100 acres in the scenic North Georgia Mountains surrounded by the picturesque Coosa and Anderson creeks. "Crossing Creeks RV Resort & Spa is a great location to relax in the fresh mountain air," said marketing director Amir Harpaz. "It's also an outstanding place to view the varied fall colors for which the Blue Ridge Mountains region is known." The historic town of Blairsville is nearby and the resort is just a few hours away via a four-lane paved highway from major metropolitan areas in Georgia, Tennessee and the Carolinas.

Each site is equipped with full hookups and a large concrete pad suitable for motorhomes up to 45 feet long. The premium creek-side lots are designed with an enlarged patio to take advantage of the sparkling sounds of

running water while entertaining on the spacious outdoor living area.

At the heart of the resort is Crossing Creeks Village. The log-sided buildings include a welcome center and sales office, clubhouse, activities center, bathhouse and laundry, and spa and fitness center. The pool and hot tub are set in the center, as are the gazebo and the double-sided waterfall. With a dry sauna and steam rooms, two massage rooms and a gym in the spa, visitors can relax or be as active as they'd like. Professional massage services are available for separate consideration.

Crossing Creeks is also ideal for those without a motorhome who love the outdoor lifestyle. You can purchase a real log cabin and place it on one of the resort's spacious lots (which you can own or lease from Crossing Creeks). "You can [even] place both an RV and a cabin on the same lot," said Harpaz, who added, "This allows lot owners the opportunity to host family members and other guests who may not own an RV but still want to enjoy the lifestyle found in the great outdoors."

Whether you seek a peaceful retreat and the solitude of the Georgia Mountains or enjoy outdoor activities such as golf, kayaking, white-water rafting or fishing, Crossing Creeks is "an extraordinary mountain retreat and destination that's both affordable and accessible," said Harpaz.

Crossing Creeks RV Resort & Spa | 706-835-1111, www.crossingcreeksrvresort.com

Louisiana

Cajun Palms RV Resort in Henderson, Louisiana, offers more than 300 deluxe RV spots for snowbirds. The RV sites feature full hookups, 30- and 50-amp power and more than 70 channels of digital cable. Pull-through and back-in sites include 20 feet of space between each concrete pad.

Cajun Palms features a massive clubhouse with an assembly/reception hall with a beverage service counter, band/DJ stage and private bathrooms, and has an occupancy rating of 750. On-site offerings include two concession stands serving prepared food, a poolside patio, a second-floor deck overlooking the resort-style pool and kiddie pool — plus there's a second-floor bar with video poker. Other amenities include a workout facility, video arcade, movie theater, business meeting room and coin-operated laundry facilities. If that's not enough, there are water slides, mini golf, a convenience store and golf-cart rentals. There are also 25 cabins available for rent on site.

Cajun Palms RV Resort | 337-667-7772, www.cajunpalms.com

Mississippi

Having recently undergone an extensive three-year renovation, the new-and-improved **Sun Roamers** in Picayune, Mississippi, offers more than 150 RV sites with full hookups available, in addition to an Olympic-size swimming pool, laundry facilities, fishing, an exercise room and nature trails. Park models and cabins are also available. The on-site 6,000-square-foot clubhouse can accommodate up to 300 people and is equipped with a commercial kitchen, making it a great option for reunions or even small rallies. Plus, the resort is only 45 minutes from Mississippi beaches, historic New Orleans, Louisiana, and many local attractions, including casinos, fine restaurants golfing and amusement parks.

Sun Roamers RV Resort | 601-798-5818, www.sunroamers.com

Crossing Creeks RV Resort & Spa



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Nevada

If trying your hand at lady luck is in the cards this snowbird season, head to Don Laughlin's Riverside Resort & Casino in Laughlin, Nevada. The adjacent **Riverside Resort RV Park** offers a multilevel resort with some 740 RV sites, with full hookups, a dump station and laundry facilities. But the big draw here is no doubt the casino, which provides gamers with slots, bingo, keno, a sports book, poker and more. And, guests to the resort are afforded full access to the hotel/casino's amenities. "A complimentary shuttle will take you to our casino resort, which is right next door," said Diana Fuchs, director of marketing and entertainment. "The casino resort offers a 1,400-room hotel with 24-hour Nevada-style gaming, a 34-lane bowling center, a Six-Plex movie theater, two classic-car museums, a USS Riverside boat tour along the Colorado River up to Davis Dam, and weekly entertainment in our showroom, Don's Celebrity Theatre," she said. And visitors won't be lacking in dining options, as "We also have seven different restaurants to dine in, from our massive buffet to the famous Gourmet Room," said Fuchs. Plus, two swimming pools, two arcades and the nearby Colorado River ensure fun for the whole family.

But Riverside isn't content to rest on its laurels, as the resort has some

pretty significant upgrades on the horizon. "We are currently expanding our salon and day spa to give a truly resort spa experience," said Fuchs. "The Jean Jeffrey Salon & Day Spa will be opening in November, and we are also currently renovating our North Tower Bar planned to reopen in December. But in the meantime, we still have six other casino bars and four other lounge bars to choose from." And that's not all, as the resort has some additional adult renovations planned as well. "Our South Tower Pool will undergo a full expansion and renovation this winter, stretching out to the Colorado River and including fire pits, a round bar with amazing views, private cabanas and live music. Opening spring 2018, it will be a true resort-style adult-only pool experience," said Fuchs.

Riverside Resort & Casino RV Park
800-227-3849, www.riversideresort.com

New Mexico

Snowbirds looking to get their kicks in New Mexico should point their motorhome toward the new **Route 66 RV Resort**, less than 20 minutes west of downtown Albuquerque. Located just steps away from Route 66 Casino Hotel, visitors can enjoy 100 full-hookup sites with picnic tables and fire rings (some sites offering 100-amp hookups). There are also pickleball courts, horseshoe pits and a resort-

style pool with a cabana and slide, plus a community center and two dog parks. And, when you stay at Route 66, you are afforded access to the casino/hotel's amenities as well, including more than 1,300 slots, table games, a 500-seat bingo room, movie theater, nightclub and five dining venues. There's even a supervised hourly childcare facility and arcade for the kiddos.

Route 66 RV Resort | 505-352-8000,
www.rt66rvresort.com



Texas

Located just three miles from Austin's Lake Travis, **La Hacienda RV Resort & Cottages** makes for a convenient Texas Hill Country homebase. Fishing, skiing and sailing opportunities are just minutes away, and historic downtown Austin — famous for barbecue, antique shopping and its rich history and culture — is only a half-hour's drive. La Hacienda itself features nearly 350 full-hookup sites, in addition to a heated pool, recreation hall, nature trails and exercise room. A four-hole chip-and-putt golf course keeps duffers happy, and a 1-acre dog park will keep your four-legged friend's tail wagging. Fully furnished cottages are also available for rental. Other area attractions include world-class golf courses, shopping malls and outlets, museums and natural features galore.

La Hacienda RV Resort & Cottages | 888-378-7275, www.lahaciendarvpark.com 

Don Laughlin's Riverside Resort & Casino



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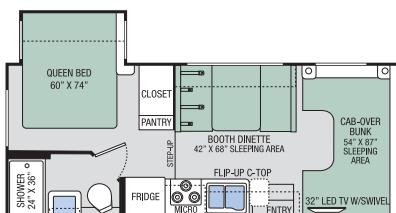
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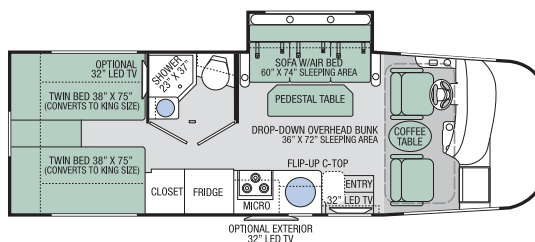
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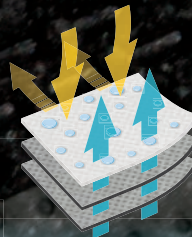
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Real Intent

Winnebago introduces an entry-level Class A that retains many of the bells and whistles of more expensive motorhomes — without busting the budget **By Bob Livingston**

Buying a Class A motorhome is a big decision, and it's not unusual for dreams and desires to outpace one's pocketbook. Luxury and convenience continue to drive prices up — and sticker shock is more prevalent than ever. Shop around; you'll undoubtedly find that even entry-level Class A's require a fairly high price of admission.

Winnebago, one of the nation's premier builders of motorhomes (and holder of one of the world's most recognizable monikers) has just introduced the Intent, a freshly conceived Class A earmarked at entry-level buyers who still want a decent level of pizzazz in a motorhome without sacrificing the necessary amenities — or smashing the bank account. We got an exclusive look and hands-on experience with the Intent long before it was announced to the public. And at \$120,000 (MSRP), it's destined to become one of the more affordable, fully outfitted Class A's on the market.

The Intent line will be comprised of only four models,

ranging in size from 26 feet, 10 inches to 31 feet, 10 inches. We tested the 30R, which spans nearly 31 feet, but that will be recognized as the company's "30-footer" in the line. It's built on a Ford F-53 chassis with a 16,000-pound gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) and, considering the relative light weight and short rear overhang, the Intent can be scooted around town with alacrity — courtesy of the power-to-weight advantage that gives the motorhome plenty of get-up-and-go.

Carving a big chunk of costs out of any motorhome takes some skill, and Winnebago has applied principles and procedures from its extensive line of Class A motorhomes to develop the Intent. Exterior lines mimic Winnebago's family history, and the injection of unexpected features in a motorhome in this price category gives the Intent project team bragging rights.

At first glance, it's not abundantly clear that the Intent is entry-level, other than the white exterior and simple graphics.

ABOVE: The Intent logo was left off to maintain secrecy at time of evaluation; the motorhome's white body has minimal graphics.



No doubt the absence of flowing, colorful striping takes some visual acclimation, but once the goal is deconstructed, the end result makes sense. For one, the single stripe on each side wall, cleverly infused with “subliminal” W’s throughout, means future maintenance of countless stick-on graphics commonly found on RVs will be curtailed. Settling on white with limited striping was a calculated decision. Winnebago cites studies suggesting that white is safer because it’s more visible, is easier to clean and has better solar reflectiveness, so technically it should stay cooler inside. White is a popular color for automobiles for the same reasons.

Interestingly, the only two options are the colors of the graphics: blue or burgundy. Pretty much everything else is standard, but the process is still in motion. As of presstime, the Intent team was putting the finishing touches on equipment and amenities, but remains focused on limiting options.

Inside, elements taken from the company’s Brave line reduced the time needed to bring the Intent to market and, for example, provided a strong foundation for the design and implementation of the dashboard. Here, simplicity is the theme, but ergonomics are a priority, and the results show.

The slideout on left side provides open space between the couch, dinette and galley. Four people can sit comfortably on the semi-wraparound dinette, and the couch converts to a bed for two. The galley is complete with stove/oven and residential refrigerator. Counterspace for meal prep is very workable.

Winnebago designers expended a lot of energy in the cab region of the Intent. Driver comfort is excellent and visibility is superb, attributed to the large panoramic windshield and narrow A-pillars, which limit blind spots, especially when turning. The aforementioned Brave-esque dashboard is free flowing and instrumentation is complete, and a new articulating stereo/backup camera makes it easy for the driver and co-pilot to view the screen without body gymnastics — the result of customer response to the old-style component.

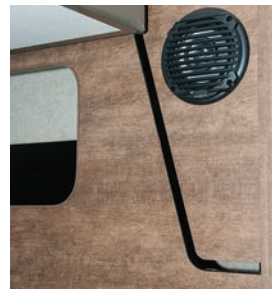
Missing are the customary ledges to hold food and drinks in the cockpit, which gave way to a unique table arrangement that mounts on a pole that can be planted between the seats. The table can be arranged in a number of configurations to serve the driver and co-pilot while on the road or at an RV park. The versatility is outstanding, and the table and pole can be stored easily in the rear closet, but adding a few cup holders would make the table even more practical when driving.

To further augment cockpit area

multitasking, newly designed integrated power tracks are used to lower and raise the StudioLoft bed above the seats. This cleverly engineered system is quiet and smooth, and all the hardware is concealed nicely in the interior side walls. No latching is required, and when down, the area becomes very private since there are no windows to cover. The bed, measuring 52 by 77 inches, is big enough for one adult or possibly two kids, depending on age, and the mattress is fairly comfortable; the ladder stores under the mattress.

Behind the cockpit, the floorplan is pretty standard fare for a motorhome of this stature. A faux wood floor that is very rich-looking is used throughout the interior. Visually, the living areas are much bigger than the specifications suggest. A large slideout on the left opens up the front section, providing a nice separation between the curbside galley and opposing couch and dinette. Three people can lounge on the couch, which converts to a double bed, and the dinette has a quasi-wraparound physique, which is roomy. The upholstery has a few retro touches and

From left to right:
The retractable bed above the cockpit seats stores neatly at ceiling level. The mattress support operates smoothly via newly designed tracks that are recessed into the walls.





Above: The windows in the rear bedroom provide excellent cross ventilation. The standard mattress is on the thin side, but storage capabilities throughout are expansive.

fits the scheme tastefully. The largest of the three TVs is hung on a wall in back of the rear dinette seat. It can be viewed easily from the front dinette or cockpit seats, but those sitting on the couch will have to twist their necks. The other two TVs are in the bedroom and outside galley (more on that later).

Once the cockpit seats are swiveled and the aforementioned table is in place, the area becomes quite comfortable for six residents — and even a few visitors. Considering that entry-level motorhomes appeal to younger families, the ability to satisfy the sleeping, eating and driving needs for mom and dad and up to four kids puts the Intent into a very favorable category.

Generous placement of cabinets, overhead and below the roomy galley counter, make this floorplan very ac-

commodating for preparing meals and cleanup. An unexpected pantry swallows up enough groceries for the family. The usual appliances are present with the exception of the residential refrigerator, which is less common in smaller motorhomes. A 1,000-watt power inverter is tied to a pair of Group 31, 12-volt batteries to keep the refrigerator running with enough wattage left over to power the entertainment equipment.

The split bathroom is another key element in this motorhome; it's practical and makes the best use of the limited real estate. On the right is a big shower with a skylight to expand headroom. A glass door is a plus, considering many motorhome builders in this category gravitate toward plastic. Across the hall is the private toilet room

WHAT'S HOT

Roomy interior for overall size, adjustable stereo/backup monitor, one-piece front cap with panoramic windshield, outside entertainment/kitchen, LP-gas storage

WHAT'S NOT

Baggage door latches, viewability of TV from couch, thin bedroom mattress



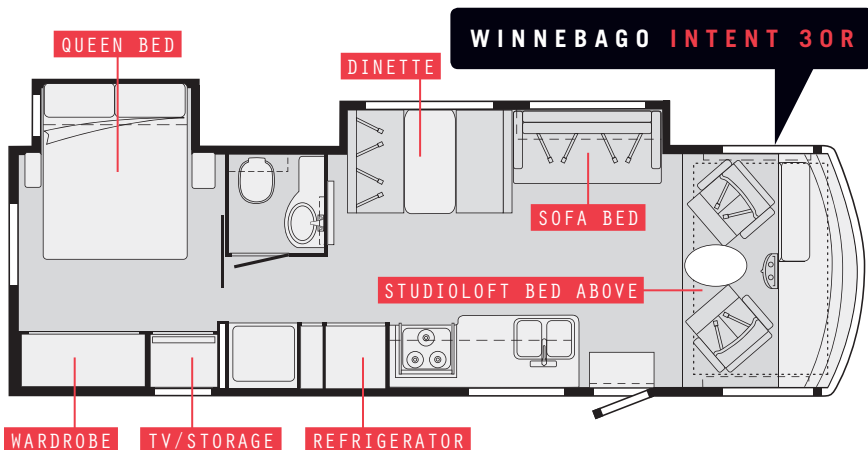
with all the essentials and a surprising amount of room. Here, there are plenty of cabinets and enough counterspace surrounding the oval stainless-steel sink for toiletries. When the door is fully open, the area is sealed off from the living area and creates a master suite encompassing the rear bedroom.

The bedroom is expanded by a slideout that houses the queen-size bed. While cozy, there is enough room to walk around the mattress, and nightstands are well placed to hold nighttime essentials. In each nightstand are USB and 120-volt AC power receptacles for charging or running electronic items.

To keep the bedroom straight-forward, designers elected to use a different type of decorative headboard, which may or not appeal to everyone. The mattress is on the thin side, but owners can easily swap it out or improve sleeping comfort with a pillow-top cover. Strategically placed windows in the slideout, right-side and rear walls provide good cross ventilation, which is highly desired by most owners.

The array of cabinetry, overhead and across from the bed, provides a tremendous amount of space for clothing and larger items. There's a roomy wardrobe with three closet doors and four drawers to hold folded clothing. A shelf below the TV is a great catchall for daily articles.

A walk around the exterior will reveal a number of features, some of which are uncommon in motorized RVs.



For one, LP-gas is not stored in the usual frame-mounted tank. Instead, two 5-gallon cylinders, commonly found on trailers and fifth-wheels, are mounted in a left-side compartment. The idea is to allow users to remove the cylinders for refilling without moving the motorhome. To make this system workable, a dual-stage, auto changeover regulator is employed to allow an empty cylinder to be transported for filling without interrupting the flow of LP-gas. Towable owners have been doing this for many years, and it works well. To make the system even more versatile, provisions are made to carry two additional cylinders in the same compartment. Doing this will increase LP-gas capacity to 20 gallons, and serve double duty by allowing one of the extra cylinders to be used to fire barbecues and lanterns, for example, without devoting valuable storage space elsewhere.

Exterior storage is pretty decent considering the available square footage. Two of the compartments on each side have shallow pass-throughs, which are suitable for storing flat chairs and other longer items (think fishing rods). You won't find slam-latch handles, but going with hardware typically used on towables keeps the

price under control. What you will find is a well-thought-out utility bay with 3-inch fittings for the gray- and black-water holding tanks, and a very large opening to allow the sewer hose to be routed into the compartment without struggling. Hooking up in an RV park is simple, sans complicated valving, and some of the connections, such as those for the cable and satellite TV, are on the outside wall. There is no gravity feed for filling the water tank, a feature that is headed for extinction in the motorhome segment of the industry, but there is a threaded cap on the tank that can be accessed inside for filling with a hose. Hatches are also provided for the sewer hose and the power cord. Batteries, commonly mounted under the entry steps in many Winnebago products, have been moved to a dedicated compartment for easy access and service.

At the rear, on the patio side, a large compartment door — held up with magnetic catches — leads to a well-equipped exterior kitchen/entertainment center. Here you'll find a sink, a small compressor-type refrigerator that can be set for cooling or freezing food, a pull-out shelf and a 32-inch TV on a swivel bracket that can be positioned to watch from the patio. There is also **(continued on page 66)**

Specifications

Chassis

Model	Ford F-53
Engine	6.8-L V-10
SAE Hp	320 @ 4,000 rpm
Torque	460 lb-ft @ 3,000 rpm
Transmission	6-speed Auto
Axle Ratio	4.3:1
Tires	245/70R19.5 LR G
Wheelbase	190"
Brakes	Disc
Suspension	Leaf spring
Fuel Capacity	80 gal
Fuel Economy	N/A
Warranty	12 months /15,000 miles

Coach

Exterior Length	30' 10"
Exterior Width	8' 3.5"
Exterior Height	12' with A/C
Interior Width	8' 0.25"
Interior Height	7'
Construction	Aluminum frame, laminated fiberglass side walls, foam sheet insulation, rubber roof, steel cab structure
Freshwater Capacity	51 gal
Black-Water Capacity	36 gal
Gray-Water Capacity	42 gal
Hot-Water Capacity	6 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	10/20 gal
Air Conditioner	15,000 Btu
Furnace	30,000 Btu
Refrigerator	7.3 cu-ft
Inverter	1,000 watts
Converter	45 amps
Batteries	(1) 12-volt chassis, (2) 12-volt house
AC Generator	4 kW
MSRP	\$120,000
Warranty	12 months/15,000 miles basic; 36 months/36,000 miles structural

Wet Weight

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

Front Axle	5,414 lbs
Rear Axle	9,122 lbs
Total	14,536 lbs

Chassis Ratings

GAWR, F/R	6,500 lbs/11,000 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	16,000 lbs/23,000 lbs
ROCCC	1,464 lbs (deduct weight of passengers for net cargo carrying capacity)
GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Gross Combined Weight Rating
ROCCC	Realistic Occupant and Cargo Carrying Capacity (full water, no passengers)



Clockwise from top left: Stereo controls and backup monitor screen have been configured to rotate for easy viewing. Side-wall striping has "subliminal" W's imprinted in a redundant pattern. Outside entertainment/galley center is equipped with a sink, flip-up counter, small refrigerator, 120-volt AC service and a 32-inch TV. In a unique move, designers relocated LP-gas storage from the standard frame-mounted tank to a compartment that can house four 5-gallon cylinders.

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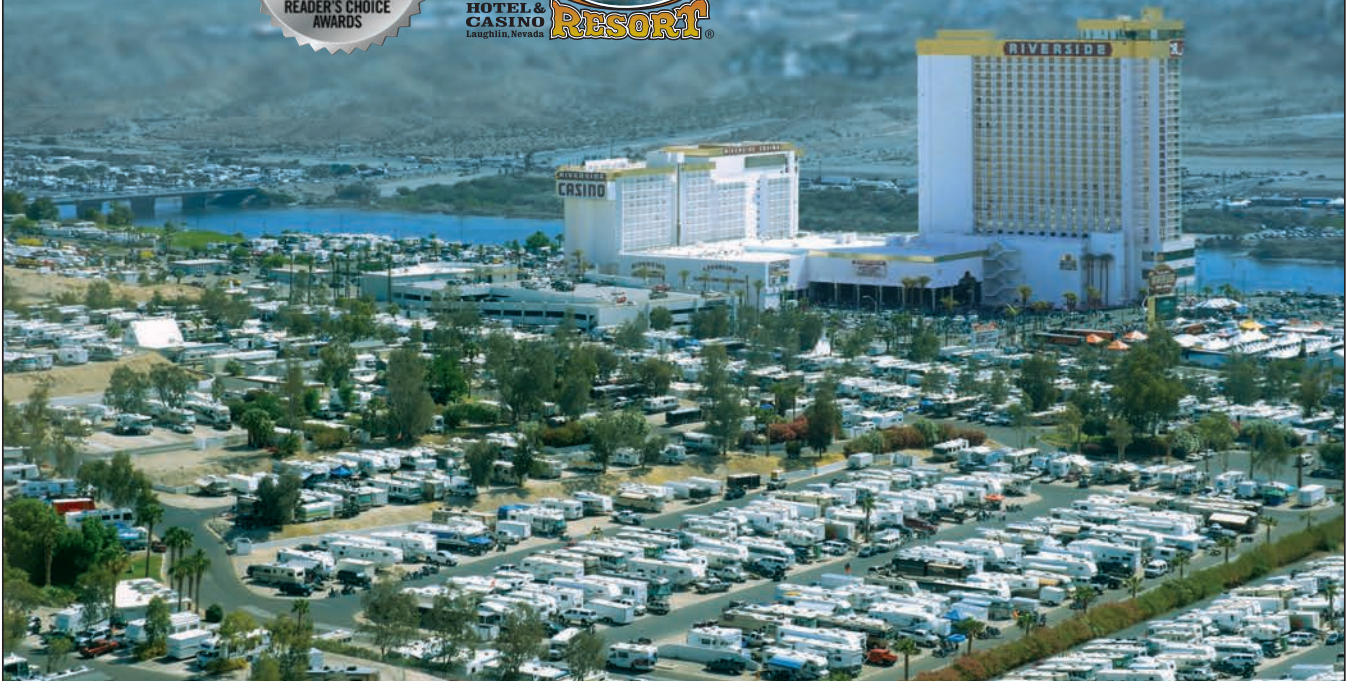
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By Chris Hemer

IN HOT WATER

Maintaining the conventional water heater in your motorhome takes only a few minutes each season, but can save you money and hassle down the road

“Residential” is a word we see a lot when reading about motorhomes. That’s because it’s really the only descriptor that allows those of us living in stick-and-mortar homes to relate to the various attributes of a contemporary home-on-wheels, not the least of which are the appliances. After all, modern conveniences are a good indicator of how livable a motorhome will be; without them, extended trips or full-time living would be very inconvenient if not impossible.

Chief among a motorhome’s key appliances is the humble water heater, which provides us the freedom to take hot showers/baths,

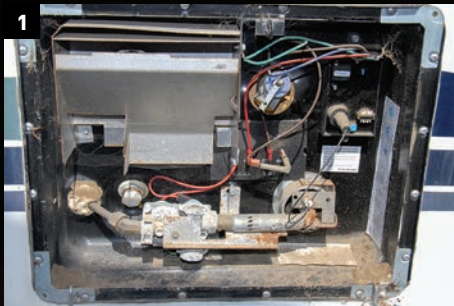
clean dishes after an evening’s meal and disinfect our hands after using the restroom or emptying the holding tanks. Without it, life would

still go on, but no one could argue that it would be a lot less pleasant.

Though there have been recent advances in hot-water delivery, including hydronic systems and various tankless on-demand water heaters, the staple of the RV industry remains to be smaller versions of what we use in our permanent homes (most commonly 6- or 10-gallon capacity), manufactured by either Atwood (Dometic) or

[1] If your motorhome has been in storage for a season or more, this is likely what you’ll find when you remove the cover — dirt, dust and spider webs. In fact, there was still a spider present when we took this photo.

[2] While dirt and other debris in the water heater enclosure aren’t attractive, they don’t do any harm. However, spiders and other critters love to build their homes in the burner tube, and that can reduce or obstruct the flow of LP-gas to the burner.



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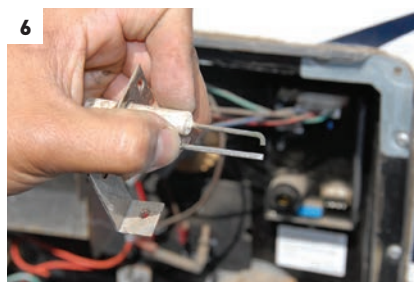
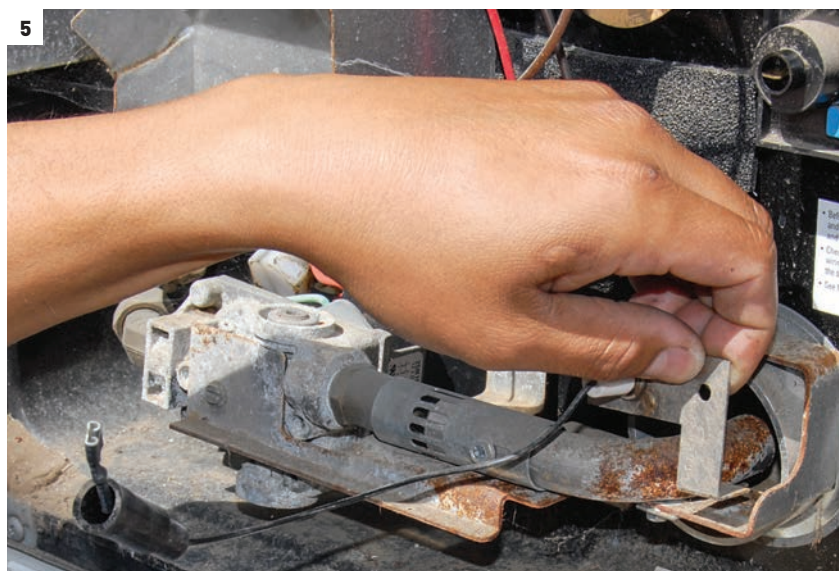
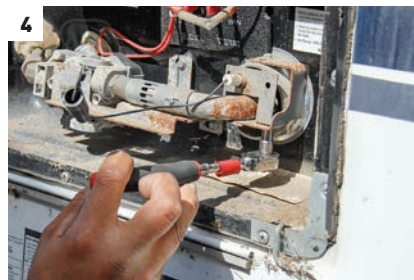
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MAINTENANCE: WATER HEATER

Suburban, a division of Airxcel Inc. They're proven designs that provide a reliable hot-water source and can last for years if properly maintained. The main difference with regard to DIY service on these units has to do with the tank design; Atwood uses an aluminum-clad tank that does not require an anode rod, while

Suburban models are porcelain-lined steel and use an anode rod. What's the difference? It's mainly philosophical. Atwood claims that the aluminum tank lining acts as the anode and the metals in the water serve as the cathode so an anode rod isn't required. Suburban uses an anode rod to draw the harmful elec-



[3, 4] On this Atwood water heater, the first step is to remove the igniter assembly (the thing that makes that "tick, tick, tick" sound before the burner lights). The unit is unplugged, then the single screw that holds the bracket in place is removed. [5] With the screw removed, the igniter bracket assembly can be lifted out of the way. [6] Use a piece of fine-grit sandpaper or emery cloth to clean the igniter electrode and ground wires. Make sure to hold the igniter assembly by the two wires as shown, not by the white porcelain, as it can crack if you're not careful. If the porcelain is cracked, the igniter must be replaced. [7] The water-heater igniter is very similar to an engine's spark plug — when it's dirty, it doesn't work very well. But also like a spark plug, its function can easily be restored by gently sanding off oxidation that can form on the metal wires over time. For the purpose of comparison, we cleaned just the bottom ground wire; compare it to the greenish-brown electrode.

trollytic process away from the water-heater tank lining, focusing corrosion on the anode rod and sparing the tank walls. When servicing a Suburban water heater, it's important to inspect the anode rod; corrosion eats it away over time, and once it has lost 75 percent of its material, it should be replaced. The anode rod should be inspected at least every six months and more often in areas with extremely hard water. Other than these design details, maintaining either brand is a similar process; the tanks should be drained and flushed at the end of every season, the burner tube inspected and igniter cleaned at the beginning of each season. We stopped by C&S RV Service Center in Oxnard, California, and observed as their technicians performed routine preseason maintenance on a 6-gallon Atwood and a 10-gallon Suburban. Performing this maintenance consistently will ensure that the water heater is always ready for use and will last as long as possible.



[8] If you have access to compressed air, blow out the burner tube as shown to clear any spider webs or other debris. If compressed air isn't available, you can remove the slotted burner tube cover (held in place with one screw) and run a flexible brush through the burner tube. Some spiders and many insects are attracted to the smell of the odorant in LP-gas. Their fine, silk-like webs will impede the proper flow of LP-gas. Use a burner brush to clean out the burner. When reassembling an Atwood burner, adjust the shutter, which is the sliding vent on the burner tube, one-quarter of the way open to start, so the flame is mostly blue with a very slight orange tint here and there. When you walk away a few feet, the sound of the water heater should quiet down. A "roaring" water heater is too lean (too much air going in) and a lazier orange flame is too rich and needs more air. Sooting from the exhaust is an indication of a rich air setting and/or a blocked tube by a spider web. A Suburban burner is not adjustable.


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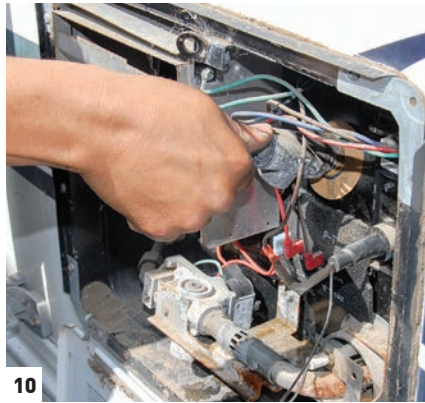
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9



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12



13



14

[9] The igniter assembly can then be re-installed and plugged back in. [10] Next, check the emergency relief valve by pulling up on the handle. Water from the tank should start to trickle out of the valve if it is working properly. If the valve is sticky or won't move, it must be removed with a pipe wrench and replaced. [11] Here is a good example of a frozen emergency relief valve. Note the calcium deposits and rust that eventually prevented the valve from functioning. [12] The water heater should be drained at the end of every season. Atwood water heaters use a plastic plug that is easily accessed using a ratchet, extension and $\frac{5}{16}$ -inch socket. [13] Here is a plastic drain plug from an Atwood unit that is several years old. Note the silt residue caused by water-tank corrosion and infrequent maintenance. Metal plugs should not be used. [14] This anode rod did its job. Note that all of the magnesium has been eaten away by corrosion, leaving only the metal core. Obviously, you shouldn't wait this long to replace the anode rod; it should be checked at least twice a year (more often when exceptionally hard water is used) for signs of corrosion and replaced when it has lost 75 percent of its material.



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➔ PRO TIP

When replacing an anode rod or a drain plug, cover all the threads well with plumber's tape. This will help prevent the plug from seizing into the tank from corrosion.



15



16



17



18

[15] Although it looks different, servicing a Suburban water heater is a similar process. First, unplug the electrode wire, as shown. [16] The electrode assembly is secured with one screw. [17] The Suburban electrode assembly is cleaned in the same manner as the Atwood. A few gentle passes with a piece of sandpaper and it will be good as new. [18] Checking the pressure relief valve is the same process as well. The biggest difference between the Atwood and the Suburban is that the Suburban comes with an anode-rod drain plug from the factory.

The Tank-saver from Western Leisure Products is an inexpensive and easy way to clean out the harmful sediments that can accumulate in the tank below the drain plug line. After opening the pressure relief valve on the water heater, remove the drain plug and attach the Tank-saver to a garden hose. The Tank-saver wand is then directed downward into the tank to remove any deposits. **M**



Sources

Airxcel Inc. — Suburban Division
423-775-2131, www.airxcel.com/suburban

Atwood Mobile Products
800-546-8759, www.atwoodmobile.com

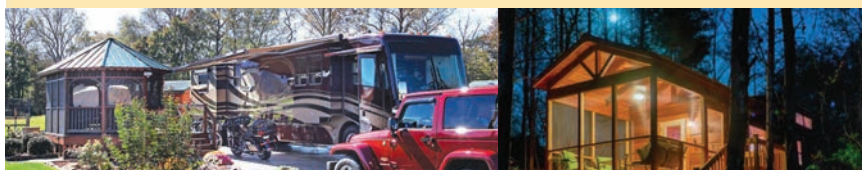
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BOATS AND B'S

A COUPLE SPLITS THEIR TIME BETWEEN A 40-FOOT CATAMARAN AND A 2005 FOREST RIVER MB CRUISER

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

Life is full of difficult choices. Take the decision to sell the house and travel full-time: Do you buy a boat and sail the open seas, or purchase a motorhome and take to the open road? If you are Robert and Becky Nordstrom, the answer is simple: Why not do both?

We first met this adventurous couple while on a sailing trip near our home in Virginia. We had just tied up at the Urbanna Town Dock when an unfamiliar Class B motorhome in the parking lot caught our eyes. It didn't take long to track down the owners — as luck would have it, they were on the boat right next to us.

It isn't uncommon to meet

liveaboard boaters, but these are the first ones we've ever known who are also enthusiastic RVers. It is an understatement to say that the Nordstroms have embraced a life less ordinary. In 2009, when their youngest child left home, they sold their house near Charlotte, North Carolina, and moved aboard their 40-foot catamaran. In his job as a remote program manager, Robert could work from anywhere with Internet access, and the couple found they loved snowbirding on the boat, with summers spent in Chesapeake Bay and winters in the Florida Keys and Caribbean. There was only one drawback — they could only explore



Above: Robert, Becky and Maggie aboard their other "mobile" home, a catamaran.

what was accessible by water. They tried keeping a car on land, but they found their desire to travel was still complicated by what Becky calls their "spontaneous lifestyle," and the fact that they wanted to take their dog, Maggie, along on trips.





"It can be hard to find a pet-friendly hotel where you want to go, especially at the last minute," she notes.

They decided that what they really needed was a motorhome that could double as the family car.

"We were looking for something we could drive every day, something with good fuel economy, but also something we could park on the street," Robert says.

That narrowed their search to Class B units with a cost comparable to a typical family-sized SUV, which meant looking on the used market. They narrowed their search to anything with a Freightliner chassis, since Robert, a former Freightliner service director, knew the company produced a quality product. In 2014 they began visiting dealers to get a feel for what was available and in the process added one more requirement to their wish list — a full bathroom.

"In everything we looked at, the bathroom was just so small that Robert couldn't fit in there and close the door," Becky laughs.

Then they saw the 2005 Forest

Above: Large side windows open up the living space. The Cruiser sports a full galley opposite the large sliding door that, when open, also increases the feeling of space in the interior.

River MB Cruiser. At 22 feet, 5 inches long and 7 feet wide, the Cruiser handled and parked more like a car than a motorhome. Its 2.7-liter, five-cylinder Mercedes-Benz diesel engine sipped fuel while feeling like a V-8, and with a Freightliner chassis and roomy back bathroom, it covered all of the Nordstroms' requirements. It also sported a full galley, including a 2.7-cubic-foot refrigerator with freezer space, a two-burner stove and a microwave. Another plus was the storage — this Class B had generous overhead cabinet space inside and a rear spare-tire trunk with plenty of extra room. The Nordstroms were also drawn to the open feel of the unit, created by large rear and side windows and the absence of interior walls. They were also thrilled with the Cruiser's 5,000-pound towing capacity, which would give them the flexibility to add a toy-hauling trailer for trips. The decision to buy was made even easier by a selling price of \$34,000, making the MB Cruiser

no more costly than a full-sized SUV, and packing in far more potential for comfort and fun on the road.

"And it's pretty hard to beat 22 mpg," Robert adds.

While the unit was in good condition, at 9 years old it was lacking some modern necessities. The first modification the couple made was one they both saw as essential — a backup camera. Even with its open floorplan and sizeable windows, the Cruiser has some significant blind spots, something Becky found out on her first turn at the wheel. She was backing out of the parking space when Robert told her to stop and put the transmission in PARK. Then he motioned for her to get out and take a look behind the Cruiser.

"I was about *that* close to hitting a tree," says Becky, holding her hands just inches apart.

They installed a bundle that included the rear backup camera, large dash-mounted screen and a Bluetooth-compatible AM/FM/CD/DVD

A RARE FIND

Because it was only manufactured for four years, the Forest River MB Cruiser is in limited supply on the used market. It also continues to get rave reviews on RV forums, another reason this Class B has maintained its resale value in recent years. Current listings range from \$32,000-\$39,400 but, considering the Cruiser's track record, that is money well spent.

▶ At just under 22½ feet long and 7 feet wide, the MB Cruiser can fit into tight spaces but lives large.



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The Classic Ride

stereo receiver. The 2.5-kW LP-gas generator wasn't operating, so they replaced it with a slightly larger 2.7-kW unit. They also replaced the 10-foot patio awning with one that is 13 feet long, and Robert installed two rooftop MAXXAIR vents.

Inside the motorhome, the upholstery and the woodwork were in good shape, so the only pressing job was the carpet. A water-pipe leak had soaked the floor, loosening dirt and leaving behind stains. Once the plumbing repair was complete, the Nordstroms got estimates to remove and replace the carpet. In the end, they purchased a remnant for \$40 and did the work themselves.

"Of course, we also had to pick up \$400 worth of tools to do the job," Robert says, adding, "but we still came out ahead, and we got to keep the tools."

into a completely self-contained motorhome. They hook up their 12-foot trailer, complete with kayaks, bikes and a motorcycle, and the Nordstroms are ready for their next adventure.

In the three years that they have owned their motorhome, the couple has explored parts of New England, the Appalachian Mountains, the Outer Banks and inland Florida. They do an annual trip to Stone Mountain, North Carolina, with two other camping couples. More recently, they used the Cruiser to attend their son's wedding, staying at a campground in Biloxi, Mississippi, so close to the ocean that their tires were touching the sand.

In addition to vacation travel, having a motorhome instead of a car also makes the sometimes complicated logistics of sailing and moving a vehicle from port to port more comfortable. Robert tries to time transferring the

"THE NORDSTROMS WERE ALSO DRAWN TO THE OPEN FEEL OF THE UNIT, CREATED BY LARGE REAR AND SIDE WINDOWS AND THE ABSENCE OF INTERIOR WALLS."

There are still changes the couple would like to make. The first is to mount a new 26-inch flat-screen TV, a modification they were readying to do when we met. Another is to replace the fixed passenger seat with one that swivels, making it more usable while in camp. A third is to add an outdoor shower, since they utilize their indoor shower as a storage area on longer trips.

After three years and 36,000 miles, the Cruiser has more than lived up to the Nordstroms' expectations. Although the MB Cruiser was only produced by Forest River from 2003-2006, the Nordstroms have been pleased with the manufacturer support, and parts have proven easy to find, plus their RV has required little more than standard maintenance since its purchase. Day to day, it serves as a reliable grocery-getter, day-tripper and transport to and from the airport when Robert has to travel for his job. Then, when it's time for a vacation, they need only stock the fridge and pantry, and the Cruiser transitions

Cruiser with business trips, "boon-docking" on the drive to their next sailing port and flying out of a nearby airport.

"It's perfect for what we use it for," Robert affirms.

For all that they love about their Cruiser, they do have one complaint — the bed. As is the case in most Class B's, the sleeping quarters must be broken down each morning. In the Cruiser, the sofa opens and the dinette folds down, creating a spacious 60-by-72-inch bed, which necessarily blocks transit from the galley to the bathroom.

"It's not a huge inconvenience," Becky says, but she admits that a dedicated bed is something they would factor into any decision to buy a larger unit.

That is a possibility they leave open for the future, after Robert retires. For now their MB Cruiser is just right, giving them the ability to travel both by land and by sea, making this 12-year-old Class B a fun and functional classic ride. **M**

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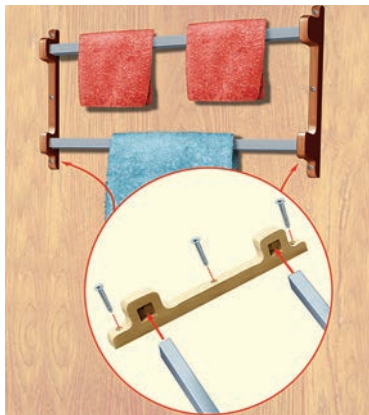
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Dinette Storage

We are full-timers who travel to many different areas of the country where the water supply is questionable at best, so we began buying drinking water and refilling gallon jugs at purified-water stations. Stowing water jugs, soda cans and single bottles of water in the space under the dinette booth was fine, until we realized that we could barely get our feet under the table.

As we don't need the entire bench seating area for the two of us, I placed a 12-inch board, cut the width of the table, on the supports designed to hold the table when lowered for a bed. I added a 3-inch lip, cut shorter than the board, to avoid items moving around when we are traveling. The lip was cut shorter so that the cushions would not be damaged by rubbing up against it. As the board just rests on the supports it can easily be removed if needed to convert the dinette to a bed. The best thing: A big-box lumber store cut the board to size from a free scrap 2-by-4.

Nanci Dixon | Sioux Falls, South Dakota



Rack 'Em

Our 2012 Sunseeker has only a single towel ring in the bathroom. We have found that setup to be inadequate for long tours with two people, and we solved it by using the bathroom door as a mounting point for a hand-made towel and washcloth rack. Since RV hollow-core doors have very narrow frames, we made our rack as wide as the frame allows when closed. We opted for square towel rods to ensure that the towels would not "walk" off the rods while we drove. After a 500-mile trip, the towels and washcloths remained on the rods.

George R. Woodside | Via email



Spray-in Convenience

For difficult-to-access batteries that require refilling the cells with distilled water, I use a 1-gallon pump sprayer (such as is used for weed killer). I can direct the nozzle into the battery and fill with distilled water. You can pick this up for less than \$10 at a home-improvement store. To make sure I don't overfill the cells, I use a lighted inspection mirror, available online, for less than \$10.

Glenn Cannon | Waco, Texas



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Infuriating Inverter



Frustrated with a partial reimbursement for replacing an inverter that is no longer manufactured, a reader asked for our help in recouping the rest of the cost. He wrote:

“In February, my 13-year-old motorhome’s inverter malfunctioned, and the 12-volt powered items stopped working. I opened the compartment where the inverter was mounted and saw black soot around the vent holes and smelled smoke. I checked the power in and out of the inverter and determined that the inverter was not functioning.

I have an extended warranty with USA Travel Care. I contacted them and was told to have a repair company check out the unit, and then call USA Travel Care for authorization. A repair person examined the inverter and said the unit was bad. He then called USA Travel Care for authorization to replace it. He received authorization and ordered a new unit, which was a new model. The repair person told me he looked for parts and a technician who could repair the old unit, and was told none were available. Because of the cost of repair or replacement, an inspector was required to look at the old unit to confirm it was not working.

I also called Dimension, the inverter’s manufacturer, and spoke with a technician, Scott Patterson, regarding available parts to repair the inverter. He told me, “This model hasn’t been manufactured for several years, and no parts are available.”

Once the new unit was installed and the invoice submitted, USA Travel Care paid all but \$458.90, stating that I should have had the unit repaired, not replaced. I called Dimension again to check again on availability of parts and was again told no parts are available for a unit that old.

I called Dennis Delano at USA Travel Care and he said that there were parts available and that the unit should have been repaired. I think USA Travel Care should pay the additional \$458.90.

David Johnston | Fridley, Minnesota

This is a case of one person’s word against another. Johnston claims there was nobody available to repair the inverter and, even if there was, there were no parts available. However, as you’ll read in the letter below, the claims administrator stated that parts — and a technician — were available, and that the inverter should have been fixed.

Below is the company’s response, followed by an update from Johnston that demonstrates the assistance upon which Hot Line prides itself.

The company responded:

American Guardian (AG) is the claims administrator and obligor for the USA Travel Care vehicle service contract that Mr. Johnston purchased. Our records show that AG was contacted on

March 7, 2017, by Robert’s RV Repair of Surprise, Arizona, to report a claim for the consumer. The repairer diagnosed that the circuit board in the Magnum-Dimensions inverter had failed, and requested to replace the inverter with a new unit. AG verified the failure and offered to have the inverter rebuilt and delivered overnight. The AG agent had contacted the vendor, RV MD of Tucson, Arizona, to verify that they could rebuild the Magnum-Dimensions inverter.

The consumer and repairer refused the offer even though the rebuilder was relatively near Tucson. The repairer went ahead with the new unit with the consumer’s authorization. Subsequently, AG issued payment for what it would have allowed for the rebuilt unit and paid \$1,812.55 to the repairer.

In this case, we believe that we met the terms of the service contract, as an agent offered a rebuilt, similar and quality inverter that was guaranteed and met the terms of the contract. AG would have backed the replacement part in the event of a problem. Since receiving the complaint inquiry, AG has contacted the consumer and offered a compromise for half the difference of his out-of-pocket cost for a signed release.

John Wendt, VP Claims and Underwriting, American Guardian Group of Companies | Warrenville, Illinois

We then received the following from Johnston:

“I’m pleased to report that Delano called to ask if I would consider splitting the unpaid balance. I agreed.
— D.J. M

Take Action

Contact Hot Line for Help

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

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03	Wisconsin RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Wisconsin Center District
04	Knoxville RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Sevierville Convention Center
05	Savannah RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Savannah Int'l Trade & Convention Center
06	Greater Atlanta RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Georgia Int'l Convention Center
07	South Carolina RV & Camping Show - Greenville	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	TD Convention Center
08	Mid America RV Show	1/11/18 - 1/14/18	Kansas City Convention Center - Bartle Hall
09	Washington Camping RV Expo	1/12/18 - 1/14/18	Dulles Expo Center
10	Greater Chicago RV Show	1/12/18 - 1/14/18	Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center
11	New Jersey RV & Camping Show - Edison	1/19/18 - 1/21/18	New Jersey Convention & Exposition Center
12	Lexington RV Show	1/19/18 - 1/21/18	Kentucky Horse Park
13	Cincinnati - Dayton RV Show	1/25/18 - 1/28/18	Dayton Convention Center
14	Greater Phoenix RV Show	1/26/18 - 1/28/18	Phoenix Convention Center
15	Minneapolis/St. Paul RV, Vacation & Camping Show	2/9/18 - 2/11/18	Minneapolis Convention Center
16	Richmond Camping RV Expo	2/9/18 - 2/11/18	Richmond International Raceway Complex
17	Chattanooga RV Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Chattanooga Convention Center
18	Atlantic City RV & Camping Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Atlantic City Convention Center
19	Gulf Coast RV Show - Mobile	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Mobile Convention Center
20	Harrisburg RV & Camping Show - Pennsylvania	2/22/18 - 2/25/18	PA Farm Show Complex & Event Center
21	Columbus RV Show	2/23/18 - 2/25/18	Greater Columbus Convention Center
22	Colorado RV, Sports & Travel Show	3/1/18 - 3/4/18	National Western Complex
23	Central Illinois RV Show - Peoria	3/2/18 - 3/4/18	Peoria Civic Center
24	Rhode Island RV & Camping Show	3/2/18 - 3/4/18	Rhode Island Convention Center
25	Virginia RV Show - Hampton	3/9/18 - 3/11/18	Hampton Roads Convention Center
26	Springfield RV & Camping Show	3/16/18 - 3/18/18	BOS Convention Center
27	Greater Tucson RV Show	3/23/18 - 3/25/18	Tucson Convention Center
28	Good Sam RV Super Show - Indianapolis	4/12/18 - 4/15/18	Indianapolis Motor Speedway

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By Ken Freund

Sun Damage

Q The strong Arizona and California sun has taken its toll on my 2012 Fleetwood Bounder. Two problems have developed: The side cameras have become clouded and hamper clear vision, and the front side windows have developed a fog. Can you suggest any corrections?

Mike Chamberlin | San Clemente, California

A The camera lenses may have become sun damaged. About the only thing you can do for that is replace the lenses and try to keep them covered in the future. The double-pane side windows become fogged when

the seal between them leaks. This happens even in less sunny climates. *MotorHome* ran an informative article on this topic in our June 2016 issue. The article is also available online at www.motorhome.com/rv-how-to/rv-tech-tips/motorhome-window-swapping.

Airing Up Duallies

Q In an effort to make putting air in the duallies of our 2015 Pleasure Way Pursuit an easier experience, we are trying to decide between buying replacement valve stems and having a professional install them, or buying a portable air compressor and extensions or adapters, which we can install ourselves.

Last night I came across what seems to be a third option. I found two products that give a central air input point, equalize pressure between the two tires and have a visual indicator when the pressure is low. One is Cat's Eye and the other is Crossfire. We would probably still have a professional install one of them. Can you share some wisdom on which is the best option for ease of airing up dually tires?

Elisa Rios | Sedona, Arizona

A Both products make it easier to check and adjust dual tire pressures, and have external visual indication. These systems allow air transfer from one tire to the other to equalize pressure, which

is a good thing as long as there's no air leak. An internal check valve will prevent the good tire from going flat in the case of a tire blowout or a broken pressure hose. Cat's Eye Tire Pressure Maintenance System is from Link Manufacturing (800-222-6283, www.linkmfg.com). Crossfire Tire Pressure Maintenance System is by Dual Dynamics (800-228-0394, www.dualdynamics.com).

I prefer not to endorse products or brands. Both products appear to do the job you're looking for and seem to be made to hold up to rugged commercial use. Keep in mind that you still won't have a system that informs the driver in the cab as the motorhome is going down the highway, unless you add a tire-pressure monitoring system connected wirelessly to a dash display.

Current Draw

Q I have always kept my rig plugged in so my Xantrex can keep my batteries topped up. I check water levels monthly, as there is some loss over time. I put a clamp meter on the positive cable on the Xantrex and found 10 amps plugged in and 1 amp draw

unplugged. I turned off the battery disconnect and the 1 amp remained! If I could not keep it plugged in, I would definitely need a disconnect switch between the batteries and the Xantrex!

Paul Thorpe | Gig Harbor, Washington

A You didn't mention the make and model of your coach, nor the Xantrex model. I assume you mean you measured current flow on the positive cable of a Xantrex power converter/inverter that goes to the battery pack. A simple converter, which acts as a battery charger, won't draw from the battery, but an inverter/charger will draw current when it's connected to a battery, even when it's on standby. Therefore you should have a battery disconnect, which is a good idea on all rigs.

We reached out to Xantrex and spoke with Don Wilson, the company's "Tech Doctor," for his take:

Most RV OEMs do not wire the inverter through the disconnect for a variety of reasons. For instance, the size of the circuit may require a much larger disconnect. If it is a charger as well, a disconnect would prevent it from charging the battery backup, and other reasons.

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COACH & POWERTRAIN

The inverter does have a microprocessor that needs power, although 1 amp is a bit high and I would question the calibration of the meter. So, yes, there is a small draw, and that's not just with Xantrex products ... all inverters will have this behavior.

If you're only storing short-term, then you're fine. For long-term storage, a trickle-charger, small solar maintainer or hard-disconnecting the batteries would be the best solutions. For the above-mentioned drawbacks of putting the inverter through a disconnect, a full hard-disconnect is truly a better solution than a solenoid disconnect switch.

Don Wilson | Xantrex Tech Doctor

Workhorse Dash-Cluster Problem

Q I have a 2003 Winnebago Adventurer motorhome on a Workhorse chassis. I can't read the odometer or anything on the digital readout because the readout is faulty. There are places out there that can fix the problem but how do I remove the cluster from the dash?

Ross Thompson | Saginaw, Michigan

A The problematic LCD dash clusters used in Class A motorhomes built on Workhorse chassis between 2003 to 2010 were made by Actia (www.actiaus.com). Ultra RV Products of Centralia, Washington, (800-417-4559, www.ultrarvproducts.com) offers its Actia Instrument Cluster LCD Upgrade Kit, which replaces the previous instrument system and LCD screen. This is a fairly complex job, and you need to be an experienced DIYer to do this, or you may choose to have it done by an RV shop or auto-electric expert. You can find detailed instructions online at <http://rvlife.com/replacing-your-workhorse-lcd-cluster>.

Driving in the Dark

Q The clearance lights are not working on my 1999 Holiday Rambler Vacationer (continued on page 67)

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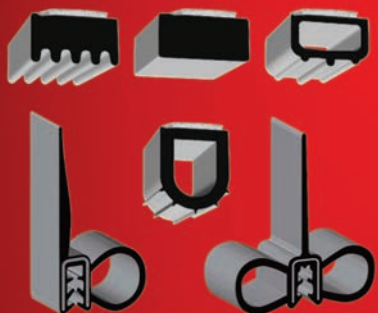
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(continued from page 45)

a drawer for utilities, a paper-towel holder, a 120-volt AC receptacle and even a bottle opener.

A pump must be switched on to drain the water from the exterior sink into the gray-water tank. It's located in an adjacent compartment, where a manifold-type water system neatly organizes all the lines. The only water connections are at this manifold and the faucets and toilet, resulting in no extreme bends in the Pex tubing or unions elsewhere to leak.

While there are certain compromises that were needed to get the price point to entry level, one of them was not structural integrity. Designers and engineers were quick to point out that proprietary construction techniques were maintained throughout the Intent line. The one-piece front cap is a first and very pleasant looking; it houses the aforementioned one-piece, flush-mounted windshield. A large hood opens wide to reveal access to the starting battery and to provide easy reach to all of the fluid fill locations. Behind the cap is basically the same steel cage that delivers comparable cockpit protection afforded by all Winnebago Class A products.

Side walls are comprised of aluminum framing and laminated panels, in step with other Winnebago products, but the Intent is fitted with a rubber roof in lieu of fiberglass.

Overall, this is a highly livable floor-plan for the size of the motorhome. A lot of thought went into providing systems that are easy to understand and use. Many of the high-tech gizmos are absent, but Winnebago has retained convenience items like the OnePlace control center. The company has focused on simplicity without compromising comfort for a family of up to six. Thoughtfully, since there is virtually no option list, neophytes will not have to risk leaving something out during the purchasing process.

Kudos to Winnebago for expanding the marketplace for people with smaller budgets who still want the quintessential Class A experience. **M**

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

(continued from page 62)

Class A motorhome. Where can I find the fuse box?

Real de Repentigny | Saguenay, Quebec, Canada

A There are two fuse panels on the Ford F-53 chassis. One is small and located under the dash on the driver's side against the firewall. The main panel is under the front hood, near the top on the driver's side, also against the firewall. I think the running-light fuse is in the panel under the hood. Hopefully, a new fuse will get it working. Sometimes fuses corrode or crack. However, if you have a blown fuse, and it blows again, you'll need to track down the location of the short circuit. This may require an RV or automotive electrician.

Inoperative Mirror

Q The control on the driver's-side mirror will no longer work on our 2001 Tiffin Allegro Bus. Can we move it manually without damaging the mirror, or is there something else we should do? Your help in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

Louise Rogers | Wakeman, Ohio

A Most electric mirrors can withstand gentle manual persuasion. However, I recommend fixing the electric controls rather than relying on manual adjustments. This is especially true if you change drivers, who often need a different mirror position. Mirror controls are fairly simple; essentially you have one motor that controls up-and-down motions, and one that controls side-to-side movement. The control switch sends 12 volts DC to one of these motors at a time, with a flick of the selector switch, and reverses polarity when the switch is moved from one direction to the other. The problem may be something as simple as a bad electrical connection going to the mirror. I'd start by checking the connections where the mirror attaches to the coach, as this is affected by weather. A call to the Tiffin/Allegro technical department could also produce some helpful information.

Adding Amenities

Q I just purchased a 2015 Winnebago Trend motorhome and have a few questions for you about some additions I might want to add to my new home. I would love to have front seats that turn around to face the table, and I really need a couple of shoulder seat belts for my small grandchildren. Are these items available?

Barbara Bourgeois | Baker, Louisiana

A Swivel front seats are installed from the factory on some motorhomes, and are designed to mount to flat floors, so they are relatively easy to install. They are also very expensive to buy new. I suggest that you check with some RV salvage yards (Google "RV salvage yards") and try to find seats in good working condition. You may need to get them reupholstered to match your motorhome's interior décor. While you are at it, you can get some three-point seat/shoulder belts for the kids (assuming they are large enough for adult belts, and don't require child seats). The dealer you purchased the motorhome from should be able to help with the installation. After-market seat/shoulder belts are also available from a wide variety of online retailers, so you should be able to find something that fits your situation.

On the Level?

Q We are proud owners of a 2009 Fleetwood Bounder 35H. I have an issue that may have been addressed before, but being a new RVer, I am seeking good advice.

The Bounder has automatic levelers that really are a blessing; however, occasionally, the levelers lift the entire unit off the ground and the tires do not touch the ground. This happens even when our campsite is relatively level.

Two things concern me: 1) that must put a lot of stress (perhaps too much) on the hydraulic seals of the individual jacks and 2) the motorhome

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tends to shake when the tires lose contact with the ground and we move about the unit. Is there a reason that they extend that far?

Terry Rogers | Daytona Beach, Florida

A The automatic leveling jacks are designed to hold up all the weight of the motorhome, with some reserve capacity, so as long as there are no leaks don't worry about that. Sometimes sites look level because of the surrounding terrain, but it can be deceiving. Next time you go out, take along a carpenter's level and place it on the floor to check how the leveling system is working. As for the movement when the tires are off the ground, you might consider driving up on wood blocks, Lynx Levelers or ramps to support some of the weight instead of having the axles hang freely in the air.

Which Flooring is Best?

Q I have never seen an article that deals with replacing the floors in a motorhome. I do not like carpet. I live in Canada, so the temperatures are toasty in the summer and freezing in the winter. What is the best replacement flooring to use?

Darlene Mills | Kemptville, Ontario, Canada

A Ideally, floor coverings in motorhomes need to be flexible, sound absorbing, have good insulating qualities for temperature extremes, feel good on the feet and not cost a fortune. Something that is water-resistant is also a good idea; for example, real wood plank-style flooring may not be the best idea for motorhome use. Synthetic plank-style flooring would be fine as long as your motorhome interior components can accommodate the slight extra thickness compared to standard vinyl flooring. You may have asked the wrong person because I find that carpet does the best job of meeting all of those requirements. Stepping barefoot on a cold hardwood, linoleum or tile floor on a frigid morning will definitely wake you up! I'd like to hear from other readers on their solutions.

But, personal preference aside, you're not alone disliking carpet, and many, if not most, RVs built today don't have carpet. Instead manufacturers and renovators are replacing carpet with other types of flooring that offer better soil resistance and are less subject to wear. Carpet can also hold moisture, which can lead to mold issues and water damage.

To see how much floor your RV can hold, you need to determine how much space there is between the slideouts and the floor, how much space there is to cover and how much room there is in your motorhome's realistic occupant and cargo carrying capacity (ROCCC) to add heavier flooring. Once you have determined these values, you can start looking at flooring.

Your flooring options include sheet vinyl, luxury vinyl tile (LVT) and laminate flooring. Sheet vinyl should ideally be a heavy-duty type like Beauflor, which besides being very durable is waterproof, stands up to temperature extremes and is warm to the touch. LVT and laminate should be glued or stapled/nailed down only. Floating floors will shift in an RV. Solid wood laminate like Bruce Hardwood by Armstrong works in some situations to give a real hardwood appearance with less weight and size than full-thickness hardwood, and works well nailed down — but it is not waterproof. Ceramic tile is another option, but it is heavy and requires a special process to install in a motorhome so it doesn't fail and crack. For more information, visit www.beauflor.com or www.lasallebristol.com/flooringcenter, the latter of which is the website of a retail outlet for one of the RV industry's major flooring suppliers, located in Elkhart, Indiana. **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.



Copping An Attitude

Good reasons not to let the holidays be the only time you give thanks

By Alan Rider

What would you say if I told you there was an exercise that could help you feel happier and healthier, all without breaking a sweat? My guess is that, if you're like most people, you'd be all over it.

Now, honestly, there's a part of me that wishes I could package this exercise and sell it via late-night infomercial. But the fact is this ancient practice, which traces its roots at least as far back as Socrates and Plato, can be boiled down to three simple words. Namely adopting an "attitude of gratitude."

Of course, you're probably thinking it can't possibly be that simple. But the fact is that gratitude is one of the most rigorously studied emotions in our human repertoire, and multiple peer-reviewed academic studies have found it to have surprising benefits.

You see, the simple act of acknowledging and expressing our appreciation for all that we have (and all that we've been spared from) is a powerful remedy for psychological ailments like the vague, free-floating sense of discontentment we sometimes experience. Researchers have found that cultivating this skill by focusing daily on what we're grateful for is one of the most reliable methods for increasing positive feelings.

What's more, developing an attitude of gratitude can have physiological upsides, including lowering blood pressure, strengthening the immune

system and minimizing everyday aches and pains. Focusing on your blessings has even been shown to help people sleep more soundly and awake feeling more rested.

What, you ask, does this have to do with motorhome travel in particular and the RV lifestyle in general? Plenty.

Think about it. One of the things I'm most grateful for is that I have a comfortable place to live — and that humble abode just happens to be on wheels that allow me to enjoy new scenery at a moment's notice.

I'm also thankful for the long list of adventures my RV travels have brought my way. From the metal-crunching satisfaction of flattening a perfectly serviceable Oldsmobile with a 55-ton British Chieftain main battle tank (507-931-7385, www.driveatank.com), to the incredible interspecies encounter of swimming with the manatees of Crystal River, Florida (352-563-2763,

www.birdsunderwater.com), my motorhome has afforded me more extraordinary experiences than I ever could have dreamed of.

Finally, I'm grateful for you, the readers of this column. For without you I'd be forced to share these tales of motorhoming adventure — and my philosophical ruminations — with a much smaller audience (that assumes, of course, that my cat counts as an audience).

With Thanksgiving fast approaching, I suspect many of you will be thinking of, maybe even articulating, some of the things you're grateful for in the days to come. Which raises the question, why limit these expressions of appreciation to just this one holiday when they can make such a difference in our everyday lives?

But don't take my word for it. Try this simple experiment for yourself: Notice how you're feeling now, then take a few minutes to think of three things you are grateful for. Go ahead, we'll wait. Then check back in with yourself to see how your outlook has changed after this brief attitude of gratitude experience (if you don't feel a change, don't give up — like all forms of exercise, the benefits aren't always immediately apparent).

In the end, I suspect you'll find a lot of things in your life to feel grateful for. I'm also confident you'll find many more waiting for you out there along The Road Ahead. **M**

“One of the things I'm most grateful for is that I have a comfortable place to live — and that humble abode just happens to be on wheels that allow me to enjoy new scenery at a moment's notice.”

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