

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO DINGHY TOWING PRODUCTS

MotorHome

Travel, Tech, Lifestyle – For the RV Enthusiast



TALKIN' 'BOUT MY GENERATION

WHY THE RV LIFESTYLE APPEALS TO ALL AGE GROUPS

THE GREAT ESCAPE
OREGON'S THREE CAPES SCENIC DRIVE

UP ON THE ROOF
STRONGER WI-FI SIGNALS

ALL STAR PARTY
1997 NEWMAR TOY HAULER



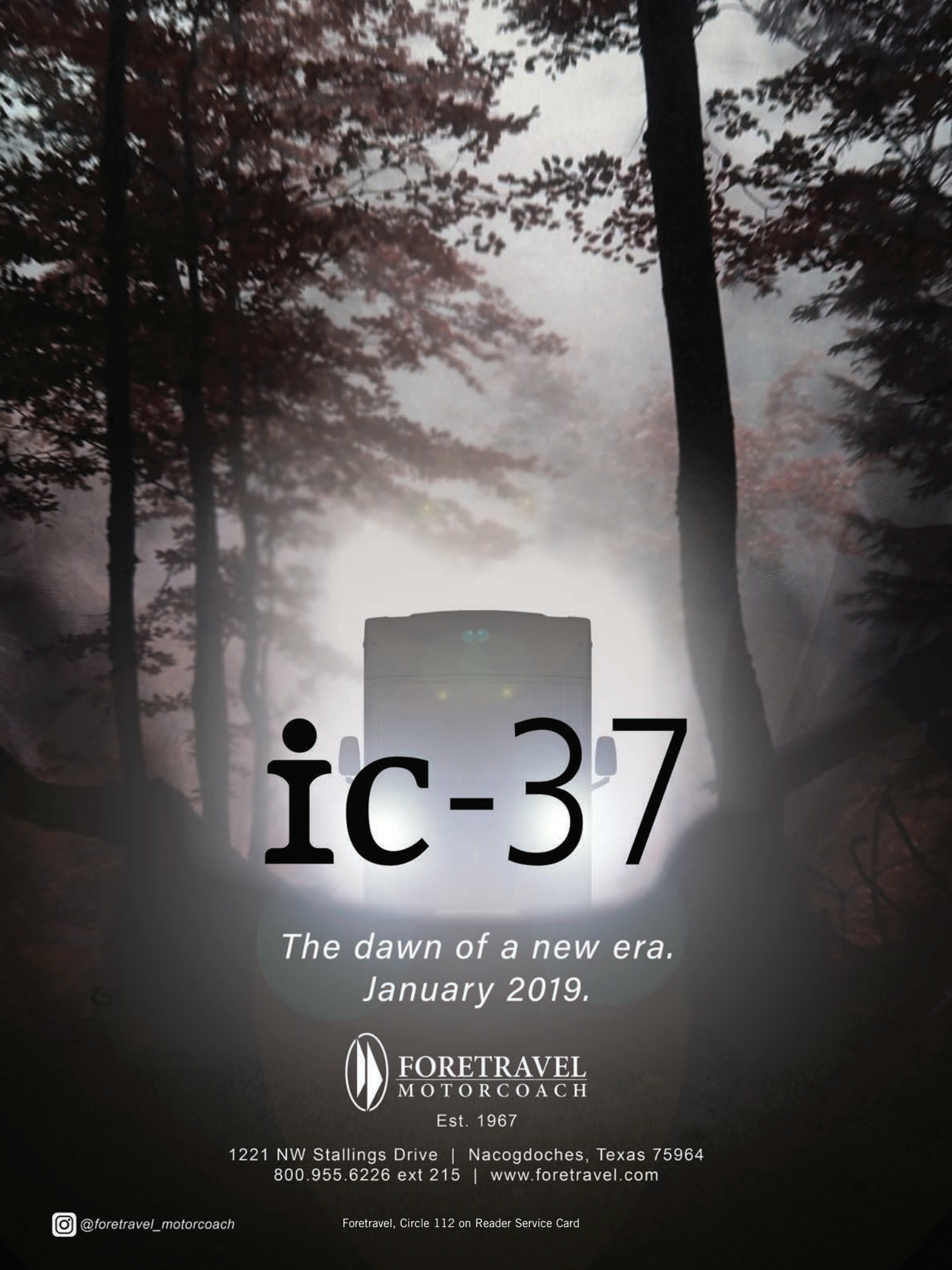
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Visitors to Oregon's Three Capes Scenic Route are treated to tide pools, lighthouse tours, waterfalls and postcard-worthy vistas (see page 19).



Using a cover while your motorhome is off the road is a great way to protect your coach from weather, dirt and debris, and help maintain its showroom shine. Pg. 43

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A Newmar All Star toy hauler converts into a mobile tailgating command center complete with bar and dining area

ON THE COVER

Winnebago's Revel 44E is a rugged Class B built for RVers in search of off-road excitement (see test on page 38). Photo by Michael Gordon.





By Kristopher Bunker

Generations

One thing we all love about the motorhome lifestyle is the ability to bridge generational gaps and connect with younger folks. Many of our most cherished memories are with our children — or grandchildren — and the freedom of traveling across the country and sharing experiences with family and friends is real-life scrapbook material. And, as the season kicks into full swing, it's likely that we will spend the next few months in the comfort of those we love, young and not-as-young alike.

This is never more apparent than when relatives who we are accustomed to seeing dining at the kiddie table show up to the annual feast in their own motorhome. We can't help but be warmed by the fact that they have patterned their interests in motorhome life after our own. "Why Wait?" beginning on page 24, is a great example of what happens when a younger generation breaks the mold and begins life in a motorhome early on. We're sure you'll find many of the reasons they have chosen to do so are the same as yours were back in the day.

Eventually, the subject of connectivity will come up — but it's more likely to be of the Internet variety rather than the towing type. The Internet is nothing new to any of us, but it's indisputable that later generations rely on it more than in years past. And that's a good thing. With Internet access and reliable Wi-Fi, being connected on the road allows us to conduct business, keep in contact with friends and family, watch our favorite

TV shows and stream music. To get that reliable signal, installing a booster such as the Winegard Connect 2.0 featured on page 34 will minimize buffering on connected devices, resulting in stable, fast Wi-Fi performance (with the ability to improve cellular signals as well).

Vehicle choices also continue to evolve with newer generations. Four-wheel drive motorhomes have been around for many years, but Winnebago's new Revel Class B is clearly designed for up-and-comers who prefer minimalistic design and adventure capabilities. But as you'll read on "Revel With Me," beginning on page 38, Winnebago has managed to fit many of the familiar comforts of home in an abbreviated floorplan, making the Revel a good choice for all of us who enjoy life off the beaten path every now and again.

But there are some things RVers

“We're sure you'll find many of the reasons they have chosen to (begin motorhoming) are the same as yours were back in the day.”

of all ages need to know, regardless of recreational pursuits or reliance on wireless technology.

Towing a dinghy vehicle helps unlock a motorhome's full potential, enabling owners to explore the surrounding area freely without the need to break camp or rent a car. "A Strong Following" details the equipment necessary to dinghy-tow, from baseplates and tow bars to auxiliary braking systems. Turn to page 28 for more details.

A motorhome is a large investment, so it's important to protect it as best you can. And, absent a climate-controlled garage or storage facility, purchasing a quality RV cover is your best bet. A cover may seem like an extravagant expense at the outset, but the protection it affords from the elements — extreme temperatures, rain, snow and debris — will help you recoup your cash in short order. "Under Cover," beginning on page 43, has you, well, covered.

As we gear up for the most family-centric time of year, take the time to celebrate the differences between generations, especially among fellow motorhome lovers who enjoy the lifestyle as much as we do. **M**

Contributors | November



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).



Chris Hemer has been an RV journalist and photographer for nearly 20 years. An avid outdoor enthusiast, he enjoys camping, motorcycle riding, mountain biking and hiking.



Angela McLaughlin and her husband, Andy, have been married for eight years and have been living full time in their motorhome for three years. They love exploring new places together with their pets.

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Publisher Ann Emerson
Editorial Director Eileen Hubbard
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Art Director Rick Damien
Production Director Bob Dawson
Production Manager Brenda Hutchinson
Prepress Specialist Rob Roy
Marketing Manager Lorisa Pierson
Business Manager Katey Purgatorio
Publisher Emeritus Bob Livingston

Consulting Editors Ken Freund, Jeff Johnston

Contributors Morey Edelman, Ann Eichenmuller, Michael Gordon, Chris Hemer, Malia Lane, Angela McLaughlin, James Richardson, Alan Rider, Shawn Spence, Mary Zalmanek

Vice President National Sales Terry Thompson

RV Classifieds Katey Purgatorio
 Tel 847-229-6756 Fax 270-495-6278
 katey.purgatorio@goodsam.com

Advertising Sales Representatives
 Sue Seidltz (Southwest Region)
 847-229-6813, sue.seidltz@goodsam.com

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

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

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

Customer Service

Subscriptions (print and digital)
800-678-1201
 motorhome@cdfs fulfillment.com

Website www.motorhome.com

Editorial info-motorhomemagazine@goodsam.com



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



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

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

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

Printed in the United States.

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Do you prefer staying at a corporate-style resort campground with expanded activities and amenities, or are you more likely to seek out a quiet mom-and-pop location for your motorhome travels?

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

Give Me the Good Life

We are new motorhome campers with just under 1 year of experience. We enjoy driving our 35-foot Georgetown Class A motorhome and towing our Lincoln MKZ AWD. I can say without a doubt that we prefer to stay at the resort-style campgrounds versus the quiet, old-style campgrounds. The second trip we took in our coach was to Hilton Head Island Motorcoach Resort in South Carolina. The resort has tons of activities and amenities. I feel that at some of the resorts that we've stayed at in the past (except Hilton Head), we were living in our RV. As my wife (who grew up camping in the '70s with a pop-up style camper) says, it doesn't feel like we are roughing it anymore by staying in these nicer sites that have concrete pavers or asphalt pads to park on. The pools and amenities make you feel like you're staying at an upscale resort. That's what we prefer, and there are many places to choose from. We've stayed at the mom-and-

pop locations, and while they are accommodating, it's not what we're looking for in our retirement travels.

Bob and Gail Long | Mount Airy, Maryland

Lounging Lakeside

My husband and I prefer mom-and-pop campgrounds to corporate. When we travel, we're looking for a place near sightseeing attractions; we don't spend much time at the campground itself. We have also found that some towns have city-owned campgrounds that are very nice. The ones we've stayed at are in Michigan and have been right on the shore of a lake. It's quite a bargain to pay \$31 a night and be able to get up in the morning and have my cup of coffee while looking at Lake Superior.

Cathi Meinecke | Via email

Time to Relax

My wife and I prefer to stay at the mom-and-pop locations or forest campgrounds. Generally, when we're camping we are going sightseeing. We tend to use the campground as a place to relax after being out, and don't need

all the resort-style amenities.

**Mark and Danette Johnson
Spooner, Wisconsin**

Doggie Dollars

I'm wondering why campgrounds charge extra for dogs. I have two dogs, and this can tack \$4-\$10 a day onto my bill. There's no way it costs a park that much in doggie bags or to clean up dog areas, since most dog owners have their own bags and use them. And, most dog areas are dirt or gravel — no watering required! Think about how much these parks make off of us RVers each day, and so many of these parks are already the more expensive ones.

Carol Moscatello | Arizona

Question of the Month

Do you think campgrounds should charge extra for pets? Why or why not?

Send your comments to:

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

Featured Letter

On the Waterfront

Whether we're staying one night on our way to a destination or for a week of exploring, sightseeing and fun activities, one of the first things we look for is water. We love a view and our favorite views are oceans, rivers, lakes and ponds. Whether the campgrounds are corporate-owned or run by a third-generation family, we don't have a preference. We faithfully use our *Good Sam Road Atlas* and our *Good Sam Travel Guide* to plan our trips. We pay close attention to the three-number rating system in the latter (the higher, the better). We go online and study the campground's site map and look at their photographs. Rarely have we had an unpleasant stay, and we've made it to all 48 contiguous states, plus Alaska. We like a nice, safe, friendly campground, and we particularly like ones with a water view.

Mary and Willis Capo | St. Augustine, Florida





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1. National Highway Transportation Safety Administration, 2015. 2. Daylight only. 3. Optional, not available for all vehicles.

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ESCAPES

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A trio of products from AMSOIL designed to tackle tough RV cleaning duties. [pg. 12](#)



12 WHEELS & GEAR | 14 CROSSROADS



Change is Constant

Utah's Natural Bridges National Monument provides a glimpse into the amazing power of erosion

By Mary Zalmanek

In 1908, Natural Bridges was named Utah's first National Monument. If our grandparents had visited back then, they would've ridden three days on horseback from Blanding, the nearest settlement. Fortunately for current visitors, it's only a scenic 45-minute drive from Blanding in southeast Utah.

The three natural bridges in the park were formed by the erosion of the Colorado River flowing through the junction of the White Canyon and the Armstrong Canyon. The bridges, carved from sandstone, are named Sipapu, Kachina and Owachomo.

Sipapu is the largest; its rounded opening and smooth sides could almost contain the dome of the U.S. Capitol. A 45-minute, moderately strenuous hike with ladders, stairs

and switchbacks allows visitors to enjoy the awe-inspiring view from beneath this bridge.

Kachina, considered the "middle bridge," is equidistant in the canyon from Owachomo and Sipapu, and second in size. In 1992, 4,000 tons of sandstone fell from the inside of the Kachina bridge opening, reminding us of the ever-changing nature of these creations.

Owachomo is the smallest and thinnest bridge, and thought to be the oldest. Since the bridges have eroded at different rates, their ages are difficult to ascertain. Owachomo is the most accessible bridge, just a .4-mile, 30-minute round-trip hike from the parking area.

For more information, call 435-692-1234 or visit www.nps.gov/nabr

Above: Owachomo is the most accessible bridge from the parking area, although there are several sets of uneven stone steps on the .2-mile trail.



Pet Pail

Motorhome owners who travel with pets know that the accessories for their four-legged friends can take up a lot of storage space, not to mention the additional expense of purchasing bowls, toys and waste bags. Pet Partners Worldwide has an all-in-one solution called the Pet Pail. The Pet Pail is a self-contained tote that includes 10 must-have items for Fido: a leash (the shoulder strap), bowls, food storage, feeder bags, waste bag dispenser, collar (the handle), no-spill pet feeder, pet-food can covers and a wet-food cooler — all in a stylish heavy-duty plastic enclosure with rubberized edges. Extras include additional waste bags and a set of dedicated leashes. It comes with a 1-year limited replacement warranty. MSRP: \$59.99.



Pet Partners Worldwide | <https://mypetpail.com>

Beat the Freeze

As the cold weather begins to settle in, many motorhome owners look to winterize their rigs, and that includes getting all the liquid out of the freshwater system before it freezes. One way to do that is with compressed air, and for those who own one of VIAIR's popular 400P-RV or 450P-RV inflators, the company is offering a new winterization kit that includes a ¼-inch quick connector, a ¼-inch connector stud, a blow-out plug, a regulator and a pressure gauge. When paired with a VIAIR inflator, the kit will help avoid costly springtime repairs from damaged water lines due to winter freezes. MSRP: \$29.95.

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SmartPlug, makers of high-quality replacement power cords and hardware for retrofitting existing cords, has introduced service kits to prolong the life of its shorepower products. Kits include a Female Connector Repair Kit, Female Connector Gasket Service Kit, Male Inlet Connector Repair Kit and Male Inlet Gasket Service Kit. All kits are compatible with previous-generation SmartPlug products and are available in 30-amp and 50-amp versions. MSRP starts at \$21.

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Agua Caliente County Park

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There's an adult-only indoor spa/pool with Jacuzzi jets and 102-degree water, which is very relaxing. The outside pool is heated to around 90 degrees and gives bathers a great view of the surrounding desert and mountains. There's also a children's wading pool for the little ones.

In addition to the relaxing pools, there are numerous hiking opportunities in the park. For a little less strenuous activity, check out the horseshoe and shuffleboard pavilion. Park rangers are very helpful in recommending activities, and have the requisite equipment to challenge your fellow RVers to an aggressive — or easygoing — contest.

For more information, call 760-765-1188 or visit www.sdparks.org/content/sdparks/en/park-pages/AguaCaliente.html — *Morey Edelman*



Photo: Morey Edelman


Camden, Tennessee

Pearls of Wisdom

Travelers along Interstate 40 in Tennessee have undoubtedly passed Exit 133 near the Tennessee River and wondered about the road sign announcing the Tennessee Freshwater Pearl Farm and Museum at Birdsong Resort. The destination in question is actually more than a museum about pearls — it's the only

freshwater pearl-culturing farm in the U.S. This 58-acre recreational complex also has a 150-slip marina, 26 rental cabins and a 50-site RV park, where many of the campsites are shaded and at water's edge, and all provide partial hookups (some sites have full hookups).

The onsite museum is full of displays and information about freshwater pearls and the musseling industry. Among many other interesting tidbits, we learned that mussels are used for culturing freshwater pearls and are native to the Tennessee River, and that the freshwater pearl is the official gem of the state of Tennessee.

For more information, call 731-584-7880 or visit www.tennesseepearl.com — *James Richardson* 



Photos: Tennessee Freshwater Pearl Farm and Museum, James Richardson



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Pages From the Past

Retracing *MotorHome's* November issues over the years

“There’s no place like home for the holidays ...’ especially when that home is an elegant motorhome which lends itself to intimate entertaining in tasteful surroundings.” Apart from borrowing from the popular holiday tune to strike a merry cord, the November 1977 issue of *Motorhome Life & Camper Coachman* evokes another feeling so prevalent this time of year: gratitude, or more apropos to the season, being thankful. Our lifestyle affords us the opportunity for the ultimate in freedom, travel and recreation, and *MotorHome* magazine continues to highlight many of the wonders of — and reasons to be thankful for — owning a motorhome.

We give thanks for the ability to travel the country from coast to coast, and beyond, such as when the 1979 issue featured a special section devoted to motorhome travel in Europe (and an '88 feature on celebrating Thanksgiving in Baja, Mexico).

We say thank you for the opportunity to help make a real, positive difference in the world, such as the '83 issue (and another in '99) with features on foster care and more-accessible motorhomes.

We are thankful for the evolution of the motorhome itself, including the glut of Toyota-based coaches on the road in the 1980s-90s, which included the 1986 Micro Minnie Winnebago spotted on the cover of the '86 issue.

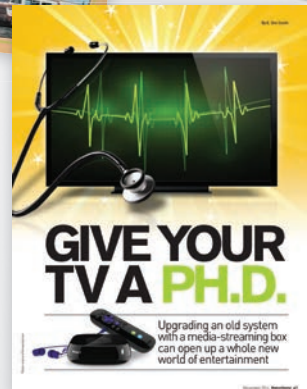
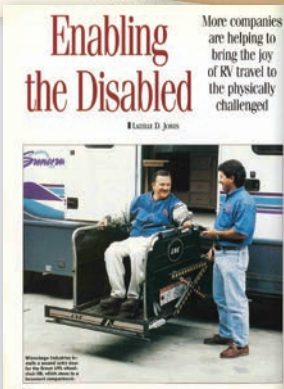
Our thanks go to variety, the true spice of life, as apparent in the 1991 issue pitting two Tiffin Allegro Bay motorhomes against one another; both were 32-foot Class A's, but one was powered by a gas engine and the other via diesel.

In this season of holiday feasts, we must give thanks for campsite delicacies, including traditional Thanksgiving dinners, highlighted in “Turkey on the Barbie” in the 2001 issue.

And, we are grateful for staying connected with others while on the road, made possible by cellular, Internet and Wi-Fi technologies that allow us to conduct business and enjoy home entertainment. “Are You Smart Enough for a Smartphone” in the 2011 issue is one example, 2014’s “Give Your TV a Ph.D.” is another. For a way to boost the reliability of cellular and Wi-Fi signals alike, this month’s “Making the Connection,” on page 34, detailing Winegard’s ConnecT 2.0 should offer improved performance, a reason to be thankful we can all get behind. **M**



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—Terry Kirkpatrick



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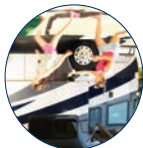
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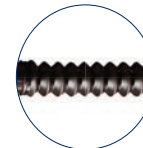
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The tide pools at Cape Kiwanda provide an informative and entertaining backdrop for all ages.

Coastal Oregon Escape

The Three Capes Scenic Route dazzles with lighthouse tours, classic sunsets and a famous cheese factory

By Malia Lane

Heading south along the Oregon coast in my motorhome, I lucked out with an extended period of mild fall weather, so I decided to stop at some of the state park campgrounds and tour the lighthouses nearby.

I wanted to find a temporary home base that was as close to the beach as possible, so my first stop was Cape Lookout State Park in Tillamook County. The campground there is right across the road from a big, beautiful sandy beach, and has some good-size campsites with full hookups. When I encounter nature's beauty and modern conveniences, that's what my RV dreams are made of!

Most of the 200 sites in the four different loops don't have hookups of any kind, but 38 have full hookups and there is an RV dump station at the front. All pads are asphalt, and being built in the 1950s, some sites are a little snug, but some can fit motorhomes in excess of 50 feet long. The state park reservation page and site map give the length of each campsite, making it easy to find your fit.

I enjoyed daily walks to the sparkling beach and long walks on the sand, where the sunsets were nothing short of awe-inspiring. When I could finally tear myself away from the ocean, I headed out to see what the surrounding area had to offer.

Cape Lookout is only about 10 miles from the town of Tillamook, so if you agree with me that cheese is the food of the gods, don't miss a tour of the Tillamook Creamery (www.tillamook.com). You can see down to the massive factory floor of this award-winning, family-owned dairy and watch the process from curds to whey of making and packaging the cheese. They also have a Food Hall where you can get delicious grilled cheese sandwiches (of course), so it was hard for me to leave room for their famous ice cream, but I managed.

Properly stuffed, I took off for Capes Meares State Park and Cape Kiwanda State Natural Area, which, with Cape Lookout, make up the Three Capes Scenic Route. This 40-mile byway used to be a loop, but the road is closed just north of Cape Meares due to a mudslide, with no estimate for reopening.

Cape Meares State Scenic Viewpoint has a 38-foot-tall lighthouse that has the distinc-

THREE CAPES SCENIC ROUTE



Getting There ➔

To begin your tour of the Three Capes Scenic Route from the south, take U.S. Highway 101 to Brooten Road. At Pacific Avenue, make a left and then turn right onto Cape Kiwanda Drive. From the north, take U.S. 101 to State Route 131 west (Netarts Highway) to Cape Meares Loop, which becomes Bayshore Drive.

GETAWAY

COASTAL OREGON ESCAPE

tion of being the shortest lighthouse in Oregon. I never thought I'd call a lighthouse "cute" but that's what I thought when I saw this one. Plus, the expansive views and potential for wildlife viewing, including whale watching in December and January, make this a worthy trip.

After touring the lighthouse (open May through September only), don't miss the short but sweet Octopus Tree trail from the parking lot. When you get to it, you'll easily understand where the tree got its name. The stubby base of the ancient tree is nearly 50 feet in circumference and it has no central trunk. Its low-growing branches look like tentacles reaching way out before turning upward at 105 feet tall. There is some debate over whether it was natural forces or Native Americans that shaped this huge Sitka spruce, which was once featured in *Ripley's Believe It or Not* and estimated to be 250 - 300 years old. The tree was designated an Oregon Heritage Tree in April 2009.

But before or after getting to the lighthouse parking lot, be sure to stop at the parking area above it for the ¼-mile trail to Big Spruce. It's really hard to see in a photograph how massive this old guy is. The information sign states: "This Sitka spruce was designated the state champion in 2008 for being the largest of its species in Oregon. Standing 144 feet tall, 48 feet in circumference and 15½ feet in diameter, it is estimated to be 750 to 800 years old." It was an honor to make his acquaintance.

A "secret" tunnel on Oceanside Beach during low tide offers a different perspective of Three Arch Rocks. Right: Cliffside Heceta Head Lighthouse makes an impression from a distance on U.S. Highway 101.



A beautiful view of Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuge from the beach at Cape Lookout. Three Arch Rocks consists of three large and six smaller rocks, and totals 15 acres.

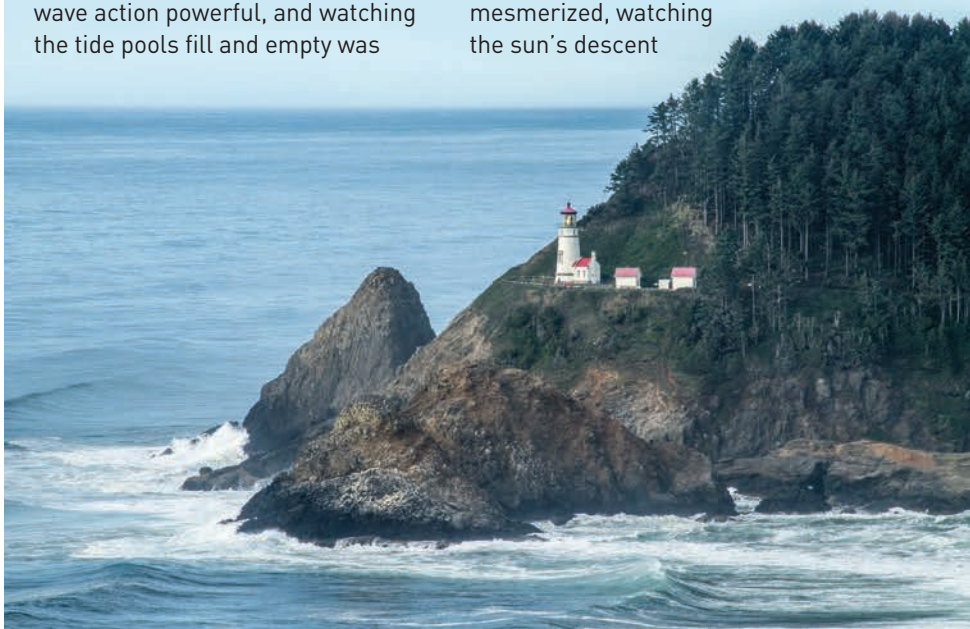
Cape Meares is right outside the town of Oceanside, and since I'd heard about the tunnel you could walk through to get to a "secret" section of Oceanside Beach at low tide, I wanted to check that out. It's a little tunnel in both length and width, but going through it gives a different perspective of Three Arch Rocks from what I'd seen from the beach at Cape Lookout. It's definitely worth the trek, but pay attention to the sign at the entrance into Oceanside that warns against driving RVs there. It's a little town with tiny streets and I'd hate to try to turn around there in my motorhome, so I was glad to be in my dinghy vehicle. There is adequate parking for large RVs in the parking lot at Cape Meares, however.

Cape Kiwanda was the third cape I visited and although it's the smallest on the route, it turned out to be my favorite. The beach is expansive and glorious, and the wave action powerful, and watching the tide pools fill and empty was

endlessly fascinating. Although almost impossible to choose, I'd have to vote for this as the site of the most amazing sunset I've ever seen.

It was a definite plus to be able to sit on the deck at Pelican Pub & Brewery (<https://pelicanbrewing.com>) beachside, sipping micro-brew beer and snacking while waiting for the colors to deepen and the show to begin. I wound up meeting some other RVers, as well as friendly local folks, and it was really great to laugh and talk with them. Even for the residents who had been here many times, these kind of experiences never get old.

I loved catching the sun in the middle of the hole made by the "handle" of Haystack Rock, which is located about a mile offshore from Pacific City. There is also a more well-known sea stack with the same name in Cannon Beach, but this one was plenty for me. I stood there, mesmerized, watching the sun's descent



into the ocean, sometimes strolling along getting different perspectives before the main light disappeared into the horizon, but still leaving deep and intense flashes of color across the sky. I don't enjoy driving at night, but I couldn't pull myself away from the beach until the last speck of color and light had faded.

My next stop was the campground at Carl G. Washburne Memorial State Park, about 100 miles south. I had heard that this is one of the lesser known — but most expansive and beautiful — beaches along the Oregon coast. That was enough to convince me to spend a few days at the park to give me a chance to really check it out.

Even though you can drive across U.S. Highway 101 to access the beach and day-use area, I say don't skip the short walking path from the campground. The shapes and textures of the lush green mossy trees were dappled with sunbeams on the morning I visited, and I felt like I had

entered an enchanted forest.

I love a beach with interesting features like driftwood, and there was a good amount of that here. I don't think you could ever get bored simply watching the changing light and movement of the water on the sand and the beautiful patterns it makes.

The campground is relatively small and heavily wooded. There are 41 full-hookup sites and 14 with partial hookups. I really enjoyed the generous space between neighboring sites here. The nights were dark and quiet, but a bonus is that you can hear the pounding of the surf sometimes even though the campground is across the highway from the beach.

I couldn't get Internet or cellphone reception in the campground, although across the road at the day-use area, I was able to get a signal. I was also unable to get a satellite TV signal from my rooftop dish, nor could I get local channels from the antenna. I'm so used to being constantly connected, I



Top: The view from Cape Meares Lighthouse is stunning. Above: The campground at Carl Washburne offers wooded, private sites and a short walking path to the beach.

have to admit I felt a bit of technology withdrawal. But I had to laugh at a comment I heard from one of the campers I met, "This is camping like it was meant to be — leave all that technology at home." As a full-time RVer, I think I want different things from weekend RVers. I enjoy being out

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GETAWAY

COASTAL OREGON ESCAPE

exploring during the day, but I want my TV and Internet at night. So if you really want to get away from the usual noisy hustle and bustle and you like big, private sites in a shady, woody setting, this is the place for you.

Heceta Head Lighthouse State Scenic Viewpoint is only a 5 minute drive south from Carl G. Washburne Memorial State Park and I read that this is the most photographed lighthouse on the Oregon coast. True or not, I always enjoy visiting lighthouses. While some people might see them as quaint memories of the past, lighthouses are critical for keeping seagoing traffic safe.

The light's Fresnel lens from England was first lit in 1894 and the last light keeper left in 1963 when it became automated. I met some RVers working as interpreters at the lighthouse; it's always interesting to hear about the history and the families who lived such isolated lives and how difficult travel was to these

remote locations back then.

These days, it's an easy 1/2-mile paved walk from the parking lot, and along with some amazing views, you'll pass what's left of the housing quarters of the early assistant light keepers. It's now a bed and breakfast and, apart from the area outside the base and the ground floor of the tower, is not open for public tours. I absolutely loved the beautiful Queen Anne-inspired Victorian design, and since it's rumored to be haunted by ghosts of prior residents who don't seem to want to leave, I guess they love it, too. If the assistant house was that beautiful, I thought it a shame that the main house for the head light keeper has been torn down.

The interpreters told me about a little path from the lighthouse that led up to a higher view of the lighthouse looking down, and what a great tip that was. From here I could see the light rotating and hear the waves pounding and crashing on the rocks

like the boom of cannon fire.

In contrast to the shortest at Cape Meares, the tower here is 56 feet tall and the light is rated as the strongest on the Oregon coast. It sits atop the 1,000-foot-high Heceta Head and can be seen 21 miles from land.

By the time I got through exploring these wonderful state parks and scenic attractions, the infamous winter weather of the Oregon coast was threatening and it was time for me to head farther south, and inland, to escape the wind and growing cold. But I've already earmarked some other parks, sites and trails for a return visit. There's a whole lot more to see just on the Three Capes Scenic Drive, and I don't think it's possible to get enough of the Oregon coast! **M**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Oregon State Parks

800-551-6949, www.oregonstateparks.org

Three Arch Rocks National Wildlife Refuge

www.fws.gov/refuge/three_arch_rocks

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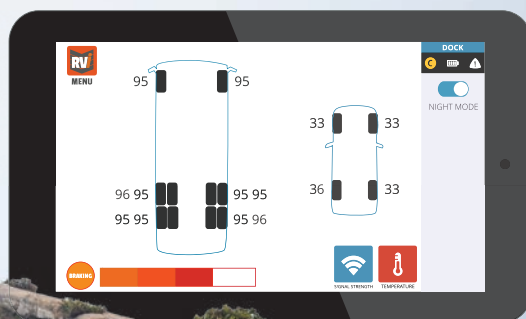
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WHY WAIT?

WITH MORE FEATURES THAN EVER AND UNLIMITED VERSATILITY, MOTORHOMES ARE GREAT FOR TRAVELERS OF ALL AGES

Many people outside of the motorhome lifestyle have it firmly placed in their minds that motorhomes are exclusively for retired couples finally getting the opportunity to travel — but this couldn't be more wrong. Traveling the country in a motorhome isn't something to wait for until after retirement. Our popular pastime continues to gain momentum with many different age groups, from families or young couples looking to explore to adventurers who use their motorhome as a mobile office and more.

There are several motivators behind this, and we've put together a list of a few of the top reasons why motorhomes offer great travel options for every generation.

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY

It all seems to come down to the green stuff. Have you ever started planning a trip somewhere, only to be discouraged by the rising cost of travel? Airfare, hotels, dining out — it all adds up quickly, and before you know it, you've talked yourself out of taking a much-needed vacation, perhaps trading it in for a milder version of what you'd actually like to do.

Traveling in a motorhome is a great alternative to traditional travel methods, and it may end up being more cost-



Traveling in a motorhome allows you the option of bringing your pets along for the adventure.

effective for long-distance trips — especially if traveling with a group. Vacations with family and friends are easier on the pocketbook if you can split the cost of fuel and bring your hotel room with you, particularly if the goal is to visit multiple destinations.

As we all know, the price of campgrounds is far less than a hotel room — plus you have options of where you want to stay. Perhaps you prefer to be secluded, surrounded by trees, nature and outdoor activities. Or maybe you'd rather stay in an RV park that offers many of the same amenities of a hotel, such as Wi-Fi and cable. Whatever your preference, there is a campground for you.

The ability to cook your own meals on the road instead of going out to eat all the time or living out of a hotel mini-fridge is yet another perk to traveling in a motorhome. For those with diet restrictions, there is the added benefit of being able to bring food with you instead of struggling to find appropriate meals on the road.

FURRY FRIENDS

If you're anything like me, traveling without your pets can leave your heart aching — especially if you don't have a trustworthy pet-sitter. And if you've ever tried to book a flight with your dog, you know the frustration and worry that can go into the decision.

With attitudes shifting from looking at dogs and cats as just pets to more like family members, many have a hard time leaving home without them. Traveling in a motorhome allows you to bring your pet(s) with you in the comfort of a traveling, temperature-controlled house, so you can keep them out of doggy daycare and by your side for the adventure. And who doesn't want to share their adventure with their favorite four-legged friend?

BELONGINGS AND HOBBIES

Pets aren't the only thing you can take with you on the road — your belongings and hobbies can make the trek as well. Trying to fit all the necessities into one suitcase can be a headache, and with many airlines changing their policies and pricing for baggage, the expenses

“OUR POPULAR PASTIME CONTINUES TO GAIN MOMENTUM WITH MANY DIFFERENT AGE GROUPS, FROM FAMILIES OR YOUNG COUPLES LOOKING TO EXPLORE TO ADVENTURERS WHO USE THEIR MOTORHOME AS A MOBILE OFFICE.”

can add up quickly. Motorhomes offer the convenience of extra storage space, so you don't need to decide between two pairs of shoes.

We love to be surrounded by our creature comforts, and motorhomes allow you to do just that. From stacks of your favorite books to board games and more, there are easy ways to personalize the inside of your motorhome while bringing your favorite things with you. Many rigs even have space to satisfy your need for outdoor hobbies — you can pack bikes, kayaks, paddle boards, scuba gear and more, stopping for an adventure whenever it catches your fancy.

Motorhomes are truly the original “tiny house” and the original version of “glamping” (a term used to describe the combination of glamor and camping, or camping in luxury).

CAMPGROUND ACTIVITIES

From secluded pads in the middle of

nowhere with no hookups to five-star RV resorts, travelers are able to find it all on the road these days. Many campgrounds offer fun activities in addition to a place to rest your head (and vehicle).

Filled with miles of hiking and biking trails, swimming beaches and fishing spots, owning a motorhome allows for a little bit of everything for the outdoor enthusiast. And for those who don't want to step foot much farther away than the front door, you can enjoy yard games such as ladder golf, cornhole and horseshoes — and don't forget those evenings spent around the campfire. Many campgrounds are adding pickleball courts and disc-golf courses, the latter of which allow people to get out and explore while playing a game they love.

In addition to these enjoyable activities, some campgrounds also host fun events for visitors to partake

Traveling in a motorhome is a great way to bond with friends and play your favorite games. Motorhomes provide space to bring your hobbies on the road — so you can carry your book collection wherever you go.



Photos: Angela McLaughlin



WHY WAIT?

Motorhomes provide a more affordable way to see and stay in places that might have otherwise been unavailable to you, such as the Redwoods National and State Parks. Many campgrounds now offer a variety of outdoor activities, like disc golf. This course at Farragut State Park in Idaho is one of a few 18-hole courses on the property.

in, from star-gazing parties to live music to cave tours to nature seminars — just to name a few. And some RV parks offer these events free of charge.

CONNECT WITH NATURE

Many of us live fast-paced, busy lives, and vacations can be our way to unwind. Getting up close and personal with wildlife can be a life-enhancing experience, and may even bring out the hidden birdwatcher or photographer in you! Traveling in a motorhome not only provides the comforts of home but the chance to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. The seclusion of nature combined with the comfort of a real bed — that's a combination we can all get behind! What more can you ask for than to step out your front door into the beauty of the outdoors after a good night's sleep?

Motorhomes are also a great way to tour state and national parks, historic monuments and more. Whether you have a beachfront parking spot with views of the ocean, a private place tucked into the trees or something in between, you are sure to find the rest and relaxation you are looking for — all in the comfort of a motorhome. **M**



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A STRONG FOLLOW

TOWING A DINGHY VEHICLE BEHIND YOUR MOTORHOME IS A PLEASANT SURPRISE AND CONVENIENT TRANSPORTATION ONCE SET-UP IN AN RV PARK. HERE'S HOW TO O

It's a fact: an automobile isn't a trailer.

That may seem elementary, but a lot more goes into towing an automobile safely and reliably than does a trailer. Consider that a trailer was designed from the outset to be towed; all it really requires is the correct hitch, and perhaps a sway-control device — then simply plug the wiring harness into the tow vehicle, and you're off. By contrast, an automobile is meant to be driven; it has no hitch, and no harness to plug into the motorhome to power-up the brakes, charging system and lights. To confound things further, some vehicles require more steps than others to prepare them for towing, and many still require the removal of one or more fuses and/or discon-

necting the battery to prevent discharging while being towed. Indeed, bringing the family vehicle along for your journeys can require commitment as well as equipment.

Without a roadmap as to what your dinghy vehicle will require, or what components are available, properly outfitting it can be a challenge. So, we've put this comprehensive guide together that spells out the process, in order, and provides some suggestions as to where you can find the products mentioned. Granted, there are a lot of choices out there, but by perusing this guide first, you can become a more-informed shopper and decide what products best fit your needs, budget and preferences. After all, you'd probably rather spend your spare time traveling than shopping.

BASEPLATES

The baseplate is the equivalent of a hitch receiver on a tow vehicle — but since every vehicle is different, manufacturers may offer hundreds to choose from. First and foremost, make sure that a baseplate is available for the vehicle you plan to tow, and research what is involved with the installation. Some baseplates bolt on easily with few modifications required, while others require the removal of the vehicle's front fascia and/or modifications (read:

cutting/trimming) to the grille, bumper mask, etc. Obviously, this will not only influence your choice, but also your budget, since you will likely be paying a shop to perform the installation. Blue Ox, Demco and Roadmaster all offer an extensive line of baseplates, and have fit lists to determine if a baseplate is available by simply entering the year, make and model of the vehicle. Installation instructions are also available for download so you can understand how much work is involved. It's important

to note that not all companies offer the same baseplates, and designs may vary as well (for example, one design might be essentially hidden from view, another exposed), so make sure you shop each company's website to find what works best for you.

TOW BARS

While it would seem like this is a fairly straightforward choice, there is a wide selection of tow bars available from companies like Blue Ox, Demco,



Photo: Scott Telford

MING

POPULAR CHOICE FOR
FIT AND PROTECT IT.

Roadmaster and others, and features and functionality can vary greatly. Aside from the all-important weight rating, consider how the tow bar is stowed (on the vehicle or on the motorhome), and whether or not the bar is a non-binding or traditional design. Traditional tow bars may be less expensive, but they are more difficult to connect and can be impossible to disconnect if you find yourself on uneven ground. Non-binding bars offer legs that move independently of one another — so the dinghy doesn't have to be perfectly aligned with the motorhome when connecting — and latches that can be released to make it easy to disconnect in less-than-ideal circumstances. Each manufacturer also has its own claim to fame for its tow bar design(s) and may offer unique features other manufacturers don't — so shop carefully. Above all, the tow bar is one place where you shouldn't scrimp, so get the best one you can afford and save yourself time and frustration later on.



Available for 2- and 2½-inch hitch receivers, the aircraft-grade aluminum **Ascent** tow bar from Blue Ox has a 7,500-pound rating and features non-binding latches and offset triple lugs to make unhooking easier. Rubber boots prevent dirt from getting into the legs, and safety cables are included. Shown above is model BX4370 with a Blue Ox drop receiver, which may be necessary to keep the tow bar level with the towed vehicle. Blue Ox offers a variety of steel tow bars as well, with ratings up to 20,000 pounds.



The **Excali-Bar II** steel tow bar from Demco Products offers the highest rating in its tow bar line at an impressive 10,500 pounds. Weighing in at just 46 pounds, Excali-Bar II features independent arms and an easy trigger-release system for easy hookup/release and a vertical bolt design that allows the user to maneuver the tow bar one leg at a time. A 1½-inch rise/drop receiver tube comes standard.



Roadmaster offers a wide range of steel and aluminum tow bars, but its latest is the 8,000-pound rated **Nighthawk**, the first illuminated tow bar. Featuring sleek, powder-coated aluminum outer arms and solid stainless-steel inner arms, the Nighthawk

incorporates the company's non-binding Freedom Latch and what the company claims are the longest arms in the industry for the largest hook up radius available. An enclosed channel for power cords and safety cables provides a clean appearance.

BRAKING

Like a trailer, the dinghy vehicle should have functioning brakes while towing to reduce stopping distance and improve safety. Some RVers tow without an auxiliary braking system in place, thinking that the motorhome's brakes alone will be sufficient. However, even a small car can increase stopping distances by a significant amount — and this could be the difference between a safe stop and a bad accident. In addition, most states and all Canadian provinces require an auxiliary braking system in a towed vehicle, so it should be considered a mandatory purchase.

That being said, there are two basic designs in auxiliary braking systems: portable and permanent. Portable systems locate between the driver's seat and brake pedal, and incorporate an arm and pedal clamp that depresses the vehicle's brake pedal when the motorhome's brakes are applied. Portable systems are a good option if you tow more than one vehicle, or if you may be considering another dinghy vehicle in the near future and therefore don't want to commit to a permanently installed system. Features vary greatly in portable systems, but proportional braking provides more accurate performance. "Proportional braking" means that the system is designed to mimic the timing and brake application of the motorhome, so as you brake harder, so does the system. Less expensive systems may use "on/off" braking, which can lead to a perceptible jerking sensation as the brakes are applied. It still works, it's just not as seamless.

Permanent brake systems require a larger investment in time during the

initial installation, especially those that leverage the air- or hydraulic brakes in the motorhome to activate the brakes in the towed vehicle. However, once installed, permanent systems require little more than plugging in the power cord and/or quick disconnect, and you're ready to drive. Because a small control unit is all that is required, these systems are also hidden from view under the hood or in the passenger compartment. Permanent systems are a good choice if you plan to keep the car you're towing for a while, and prefer the quickest possible set-up before towing. Blue Ox, Demco, Hopkins Manufacturing, Roadmaster and RV Innovations all offer reliable portable/permanent braking solutions.



Roadmaster offers three dinghy-braking systems, including the portable **Even Brake**, and permanently mounted **InvisiBrake** and **Brake-Master** products. All systems include an emergency breakaway provision, work in virtually any vehicle with power brakes and with any motorhome with hydraulic or air brakes.



Blue Ox's **Patriot II** braking system is portable and features an in-cab controller with an extended RF range.



The **RVibrake3** from RV Innovations is a low-profile, portable brake system that locates against the rise in the floorpan beneath the driver's seat instead of the driver's seat itself. Easily set-up with audio prompts, RVibrake3 employs an accelerometer to measure changes in brake force and to apply the dinghy brakes proportionally. A unique feature is the included 7-inch Command Center tablet and hub, which features a built-in Travel Checklist, RV Level, support apps and more. Tire pressure monitoring can be added optionally to the system.



One of the best-known names in dinghy braking systems, Brake Buddy by Hopkins Manufacturing is available in three flavors: the portable **Brake Buddy Classic II** and **Select II**, and the permanently mounted **Stealth**.



SMI Brake Systems by Demco are some of the most respected in the RVing community, and consist of the **Air Force One** (for motorhomes with

air brakes), Stay-IN-Play DUO and the portable Delta Force proportional braking system.



The **ReadyBrake** by NSA RV Products provides a simple solution for dinghy braking. Inserted into the hitch receiver of the motorhome, ReadyBrake uses the momentum of the dinghy vehicle pushing against the motorhome during a stop to compress a shock and spring inside the unit, which in turn pushes an actuator arm forward. A cable attached to the actuator arm then pulls the dinghy vehicle's brake pedal.



The **ReadyBrute Elite** from NSA RV Products combines the company's high-quality aluminum tow bar with the aforementioned ReadyBrake supplemental surge braking system. Rated at 8,000 pounds, the ReadyBrute Elite is designed for easy hookup/detachment on uneven surfaces with clevis connectors that can rotate and swivel.

» READ THE MANUAL

When considering a vehicle for towing behind your motorhome, always read the owner's manual first — whether you already own the vehicle or plan to purchase it. It will provide valuable information on what is required before towing, which may influence your decision to use it as a dinghy. For example, some vehicles may require the removal of fuses, the disconnection of the negative battery cable and other steps, while others just require the transmission to be in neutral and the steering wheel unlocked. For more information, see *MotorHome's* annual Guide to Dinghy Towing at www.motorhome.com.

ELECTRICAL

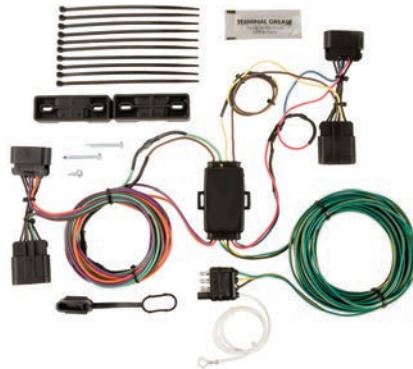
To tow your vehicle safely and legally, its running lights, turn signals and brakelights must mimic the motorhome's. The most common ways to do this are with a wiring harness that plugs/splices into the dinghy's taillights, or a "bulb-and-socket" system, so called because it bypasses the towed vehicle's lighting with independent bulbs and sockets mounted inside the taillight assemblies. In either example, the wiring harness is routed to a receptacle mounted at the front of the vehicle, for connecting a cable to the motorhome. If you're not comfortable cutting into the dinghy vehicle's factory wiring, Blue Ox, Demco and Hopkins Towing Solutions offer vehicle-specific wiring harnesses that plug into the factory harness, eliminating the need for cutting and splicing. These companies also have a fairly extensive fit list on their websites, but if your vehicle isn't listed, a universal kit, or bulb-and-socket system, is likely available. If you're looking for the quickest, easiest way possible to connect your dinghy, or if you tow more than one vehicle, you might prefer an auxiliary light system that attaches temporarily to the vehicle. Roadmaster's Magnetic Tow Lights and Demco's Light Bar are self-contained systems that require no connection to the dinghy's electrical system.

Aside from basic electrical needs, there are other products available to address specific electrical issues. For example, if your vehicle requires that the battery be isolated during towing, a battery-disconnect system (like one offered by Roadmaster and other companies) allows you to disconnect the battery by simply flipping a switch. If your vehicle requires one or more fuses to be pulled before towing, Roadmaster also offers a FuseMaster kit, which simply disconnects identified fuses with the push of a button. If the

battery becomes discharged by the end of a road trip, consider a charge-line kit that will help maintain the vehicle's battery charge by supplying up to 15 amps of current.



Hopkins Towing Solutions offers vehicle-specific towed vehicle wiring kits that plug into the dinghy vehicle's taillight wiring harness using OEM connectors — no cutting or splicing required. Shown above is part no. **56202** for Jeep Wrangler/Renegade.



The EZ Light wiring harness from Blue Ox can be plugged into a dinghy vehicle's electrical system in as little as 15 minutes, according to the company. The EZ Light kit connects to the towed vehicle's wiring to provide taillights, turn signals and brakelights while towing. The company's website offers a fit list for a wide range of vehicles in a variety of different configurations. Shown above is the **BX8836** kit for 2007-2014 model-year Cadillac Escalades (EXT/ESV).



Roadmaster offers universal diode and bulb-and-socket wiring kits, as well as specialty items like the **FuseMaster**, which allows owners to effectively disconnect one or more fuses (as required by the vehicle manufacturer before towing) by simply flipping a switch.



Some vehicles require the negative battery cable to be removed whenever the vehicle is flat-towed. The **Roadmaster Battery Disconnect** kit employs a solenoid that allows the user to disconnect the battery by simply pushing a button.



Demco offers vehicle-specific plug-in wiring kits, as well as **Bulb Taillight**

Wiring kits and **diode wiring kits** (like the one shown at the bottom of page 31) that employ heat-sealed diodes to connect the motorhome's running lights, turn signals and brakelights to the towed vehicle. Diodes prevent the backflow of electricity to protect both vehicles' electrical systems.

PROTECTION

Now that your dinghy vehicle has been completely outfitted, the next thing you'll want to consider is how to protect it during travel. Every vehicle is exposed to some hazards during normal use, but when towed behind a motorhome, the risk of damage is magnified. Think about what would happen to your dinghy if your motorhome ran over gravel, tar or wet paint, and you'll get the picture.

A rock/mud guard mounted to the motorhome is a good start, but for further protection, consider a product like the Blue Ox KarGard, Demco Sentry Deflector or Roadmaster Guardian mount to deflect rocks and other debris. Roadmaster also offers its Tow Defender, a vinyl-coated mesh screen that sits atop the tow bar and prevents road debris from reaching the vehicle.

For ultimate protection, Roadmaster offers what it calls the "Alaska Pack," which combines the Guardian and Tow Defender to protect against the harshest of road conditions — namely the ones commonly encountered on the Alcan Highway.

Even with products like these in place, an occasional stray rock may still get through, bouncing off the hood or roof and creating rock chips. To protect against these incidents, you might also want to add 3M Scotchgard Paint Protection film, which must be professionally installed. A certified installer can be located on the company's website (www.3m.com). The product is resistant to yellowing, is highly flexible and will fit snugly around the contours of your vehicle, making it difficult to detect, according to the company.



The **KarGard** from Blue Ox is a polyethylene protective shield that folds for easier storage. Aluminum mounting equipment and hardware are included.



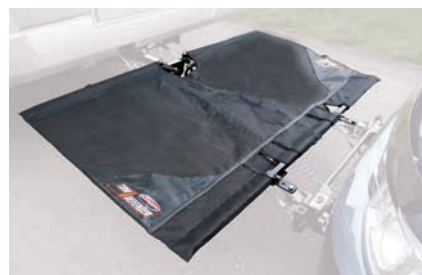
The **Sentry** tow bar deflector by Demco Products is made from high-density polyethylene and is unique in that it is positioned at a 30-degree angle to deflect debris down and away from the towed vehicle. Said to be easy to install or remove, the Sentry attaches to the connecting ears of the Demco tow bar.



The Roadmaster **Guardian Rock Shield** is made from rotationally molded, high-impact polyethylene that the company says absorbs the impact of rocks and other debris, instead of ricocheting it back against the motorhome. The Guardian fits all Roadmaster tow bars equipped with quick disconnects and can be attached/removed in seconds, according to the company.

» ALL FOR ONE

When outfitting a dinghy vehicle for towing, it's a good idea to purchase all of the products from just one manufacturer. While this isn't a hard-and-fast rule, consider that most manufacturers have designed their products to work with their own products, not their competitors' products — so it may be difficult or impossible to mix and match components. So, do some research and decide which company is the best fit for your needs and budget. This will also come in handy if there are any problems or warranty issues — if all the products are from the same company, no one can claim the issue arose from incompatible components.



The **Tow Defender** is an interesting approach to deflecting rocks and other debris thrown up by the motorhome. Offering 20 square feet of protection, the Tow Defender's all-weather, heavy-duty screen is secured by shock-absorbing gas struts. Seams have been reinforced and gussets added for increased durability. When not in use, it can be rolled into a 4-inch diameter package for storage. And, at only 14½ pounds, it's easy to manage. The Tow Defender works with Roadmaster and competitive tow bars. **M**

Sources

Blue Ox

800-228-9289, www.blueox.com

Demco Products

866-543-3626, www.demco-products.com

Hopkins Towing Solutions/ Hopkins Manufacturing Corp.

800-835-0129,
www.hopkinstowingsolutions.com

NSA RV Products Inc./ReadyBrake

620-365-7714, www.readybrake.com

Roadmaster Inc.

800-669-9690, www.roadmasterinc.com

RV Innovations

800-815-2159, <https://rvibrake.com>

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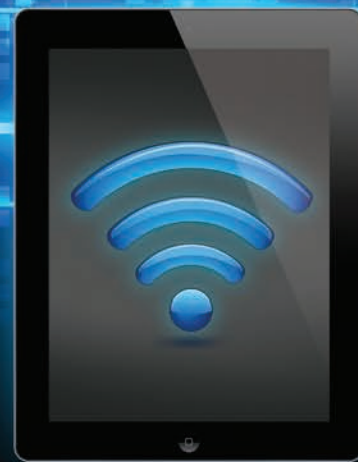
Sunlight RV, Circle 111 on Reader Service Card





By Bob Livingston

MAKING THE CONNECTION



Winegard's Connect 2.0 dome pulls in distant Wi-Fi signals while providing a foundation for 4G LTE data service

Choosing an RV park has always revolved around the type of sites and the amenities offered as part of the fees. Full hookups are probably the most important feature, but running a close second these days is whether the facility has Wi-Fi, and the quality of the service. For many travelers, staying connected can make or break a trip, and even though the Wi-Fi service in RV parks is getting a little better, the need to improve reliability and signal strength is a common concern. Winegard's Connect Wi-Fi extender is just the ticket for those who thrive on social media or need to stay in touch for family or business reasons.

The Connect 2.0 4G2 4G LTE + WiFi Extender's full name may be a mouthful to recite, but the latest model (WF2-435) needs that long designation to describe its ability

to pull in distant Wi-Fi signals with the added benefit of using a proprietary data plan or one supplied by an outside cellular-service provider. The features are mutually exclusive but

the end result is the same: improving Wi-Fi connectivity when traveling in a motorhome.

It's fair to say that most users will use the Connect to bring in free Wi-Fi and boost the signal strength appreciably to actually make it possible to feed a Facebook addiction, peruse the Internet and work email from their site. Campground Wi-Fi has a dubious reputation, which is usually the result of a sparsely populated antenna system. If you happen to be parked too far away, getting a solid connection

can be maddening. The Winegard device “pulls in” distant signals using three Wi-Fi and two 4G LTE high-gain antennas under a roof-mounted dome that looks like a mini satellite dish. It’s only 16 inches in diameter and 8 inches high, and weighs a scant 3.75 pounds.

The other aspect of the Winegard antenna is its ability to operate as an independent cellular data network. Loaded in the antenna is a Winegard SIM card that can be activated to allow the dome to function as a 4G LTE router and provide fast data service without throttling back the service when a certain level of data is consumed — a practice common among conventional cellular providers. But there is a caveat: The cost is on the high side, especially for those who consume a lot of data on a monthly basis.

Recently, Winegard announced a reduction in its 10GB plan, shaving \$15 off the original \$80 rate. Those with a more insatiable appetite for data can choose the 20GB plan for \$150 a month, or there are two less expensive rates for occasional users. One is \$20 for 1GB, which is almost useless in real-world conditions, and a 3GB plan for \$35, which is also very limited for most users. Published speeds via the 2.4 GHz system are 450Mbps for up- and downloading (faster than current data devices from wireless providers), making video streaming possible, but again, data caps will preclude practical usage



[1] Winegard Connect 2.0 4G2 4G LTE + WiFi Extender is packaged with power cable and extension, hardware kit and roof entry plate. [2, 3] If a SIM card from AT&T or Verizon is desired, it’s best to slide it into the provided slot before installing the dome on the roof. A proprietary SIM card for 4G LTE data service is installed in the slot from the factory; it must be activated for use. [4] Pertinent encryption and password information is on a tag stuck to the bottom of the dome, but will be difficult to access once the Connect is attached to the roof. The information is also on the instruction manual, which should be saved.

for more than occasional online TV viewing. In all cases, there are no long-term commitments or contracts, and data can be added as needed.

Alternatively, the Connect supports data plans from AT&T and Verizon, but the price is also rather steep. At presstime, the antenna is only compatible with SIM cards provided by AT&T and Verizon, and we discovered that the rates for such service can be high, so research the plans carefully. Rates, of course, are a moving target and, Verizon, for example, didn’t offer its Beyond Unlimited plan for the Connect at presstime.

As full-timers, we rely on data service from Verizon that’s tied to our cellphones. The additional cost to activate a Jetpack is only \$10 a month and it provides pretty good service for our needs. But, Verizon

throttles the data speed after reaching 15GB during any one month, so we also appreciate Wi-Fi availability in RV parks. That’s where the Connect really shines. We tested the system in a variety of RV parks last summer, during peak occupancy and usage, and found the antenna to be invaluable. It pulled in signals emanating from centrally located antennas, typically too far from our sites. As long as the RV park’s system was active and providing enough signal strength for the Connect antenna to process that signal, we were able to improve our connection to the Wi-Fi.

Interestingly, the Connect antenna reaches out beyond the RV park borders and has the capability to pick up Wi-Fi signals from commercial establishments, like coffee shops and other public places.



[5] Before permanently installing the Connect dome, place it on the roof to determine if it meets Winegard’s clearance requirements. It must be 12 inches from the edges of the roof and at least 12 inches away from other accessories and appliances. Power connection, SIM card slot and reset button must face the rear of the motorhome.



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Of course, access to Wi-Fi signals that have security protection will require the use of a password to activate through the Connect. The range is pretty impressive (up to 2 miles depending on conditions) and logging on to these sites, arguably, presents an ethical element, since using service designed for paying customers — and not password protected — might be considered a breach of trust. We buy lots of coffee at Starbucks, for example, and never bring our computer, so we would be comfortable using its Wi-Fi service at times, if there's a store close to where we're parked.

While some people might consider using the Jetpack as a Wi-Fi source redundant, we found additional versatility by connecting it through the Winegard dome. For one, the reach could be extended from inside the motorhome without physically carrying the device to an outside setting. But a more important aspect provides additional security when allowing others to use your Jetpack. By setting up guest access via the Connect, the Jetpack's password does not have to be shared, which can be an important aspect in today's hacking-hungry world. When we disconnect the connection, access to the Jetpack is blocked.

Installation is not very difficult, but does require a stint on the roof. Winegard has very specific requirements for locating the dome, and owners must make

[9] The power cable is routed through the roof and cable entry plate is used to prevent water leakage. A generous amount of sealant (designed for the particular type of roof) is applied under the cable entry plate and to the edges.

[10] It's best to secure the power cable to the roof with clamps, which are not supplied with the kit. Always use sealant on the screw heads and threads to prevent leaks. [11] Power switch and wall plate are provided with the dome; wires are connected in the back of plate using insulated terminals. The hot lead (12-volt DC) must be protected with a 3-amp fuse, which is not provided. [12] Hole is drilled into the structure where the power switch and wall plate will be mounted.

[6] Proper sealant must be used to cover the screw heads and threads to prevent moisture intrusion. [7] Wiring the dome is fairly simple. A 10-foot power cable is connected to the dome. If the 20-foot extension is needed, it can be connected easily to the cable attached to the dome. [8] Wire routing to the 12-volt DC source and switch mounted inside the motorhome can be customized using the provided barrel connectors.

sure the spot for mounting is level and 12 inches from the edges of the roof and from other devices, like the air conditioner(s) and satellite dish. The centerline of the dome must be parallel to the centerline of the motorhome; the dome is positioned so the connections are toward the rear. All the hardware for the installation, except for a 3-amp inline fuse and cable clamps, is provided in the kit — including the entry plate needed to route the power cable through the roof.

Simple hand tools are needed to complete the installation, and care must be taken to seal any entry points in the roof (screws and power cable) with the appropriate sealant. Figure on about two hours to complete the job, without rushing (which could lead to mistakes).



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[13] Switchplate fits nicely next to the controls for the Winegard satellite dish. [14] Once the install is finished, the system will need to be programmed and possibly updated. Connection to the Internet will be required to change passwords and establish access to available Wi-Fi signals in the area. Passwords will be needed to access protected Wi-Fi signals.

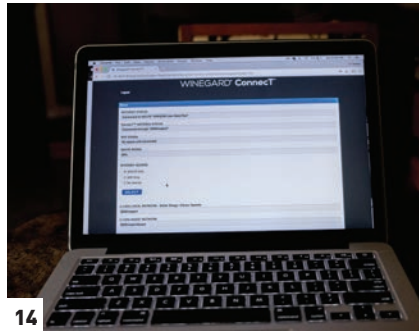
Once the ConnectT is secured to the roof and the switch is in place, the system will need programming and a possible software upgrade. Initial set-up will require reconfiguring, but that happens seamlessly, if you follow the instructions closely. Users will also be encouraged to reset passwords; Internet access will be required to make any changes, and anytime the system needs to be connected to an outside Wi-Fi source. Hold on to the instructions because unless you have a photographic memory, it will be necessary to refer to some of the steps. Also, the code encryptions are on the cover of the instruction manual, which will be necessary if the ConnectT ever needs to be reset.

And one more thing: Owners planning on using a SIM card from an outside provider should do it before mounting the dome. Otherwise, plan on a trip to the roof with a screwdriver to remove the access plate and swap the SIM cards.

Winegard's ConnectT will quickly become one of those devices you can't



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live without. Factor in the relatively low cost of \$369 (MSRP) for the 4G model, and the value becomes amortizable. Those who will never need LTE Internet access via the SIM card can choose the non-4G model, which has an MSRP of \$209.

In either case, the ConnectT is poised to take much of Wi-Fi access frustration out of the motorhome lifestyle. **M**

Winegard
800-320-9992, www.winegard.com/connect

Verizon Jetpack can be connected to the dome, which will extend the signal reach outside and allow guests to use without divulging the data-device password.



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Revel With Me

Winnebago Class B is built for 4WD adventure By Chris Dougherty

The snow was melting due to a recent thaw, but that didn't stop us from taking Winnebago up on a last-minute offer to get our hands on the new Revel 4x4 motorhome for a cold-weather New England test. While we were raring to test this puppy out, most of the RV-friendly destinations in New England were unavailable at the time. So, we reached out to Pine Acres Family Camping Resort (<http://pineacresresort.com>) in Oakham, Massachusetts. Pine Acres used to be a ski resort, and the trails were converted to campsites on the mountain with cabins and dirt mountain roads which, of course, are not usually accessible late in the calendar year.

The Winnebago Revel, a 4x4 Class B motorhome built on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter diesel van, is available from the factory with electronic-shift four-wheel drive. It is not your everyday motorhome and is designed with outdoor adventurers in mind, so its layout and equipment are a departure from the norm.

The Inside Scoop

The Revel interior is modern and no-nonsense, befitting its adventurous spirit — this Class B is equally at home

on a snowy ski mountain as it is on a hot, sunny beach. The color palette is designed to lighten the interior and help make scuffs and dirt less visible, a prerequisite for such a motorhome. There are four colors: lime green, gray, white and black. All the surfaces from floor to ceiling are designed for easy cleanup, which was really appreciated since we managed to track in large amounts of snow and mud.

Stepping into the side door, the Revel's interior layout is efficiently

designed, with few extras. The living space has seating for three or four people, but it's really designed for two. A folding table is the center of activity and can be used for dining or as a desk while underway or in camp. A window next to the table allows for enjoyment and contemplation of the scenery outside, or added ventilation when the temperature is on the rise.

Both front cockpit seats rotate toward the living area and are comfortable and adjustable. The standard Sprinter rubber floor mat adorns the front, while the remaining flooring is a super-tough nonskid vinyl with a weathered-wood gray appearance. The single, forward-facing dinette seat has two seat belts, but it's on the tight side for two.

The galley is built with outdoor living in mind and, as such, is minimalistic. A Dometic stainless-steel sink with glass cover and foldaway faucet is ideal,

ABOVE: From its aggressive styling to 4WD capabilities to a fold-down table for campsite dinner, the Revel is all about enjoying the outdoors.

providing additional prep space when the sink isn't needed. A fold-up 16-by-13-inch countertop extension adds a bit of extra space to the 19-by-36-inch galley. An interesting feature is a table that folds down from the kitchen cabinet to the outside of the motorhome, set up in a flash by screwing on a single leg. However, the spring-loaded clips that hold the table in the stowed position were a bit noisy while on the road.

The only cooking appliance is an electric single-burner induction cooktop, which further emphasizes the outdoor living/cooking concept. Below the cooktop is a compressor-driven 2.5-cubic-foot refrigerator freezer, along with three drawers for kitchen necessities. Above is a single overhead cabinet. All the cabinets lock with push-button hardware. There's also an overhead cabinet above the dinette for additional storage.

Moving aft you'll find a tall, narrow, counter-depth pantry, which rounds out the fixed storage in the Revel. While fixed storage is at a premium, the entire rear third of the interior is occupied by a power-lift bed, which doubles as a storage garage. The entire center section of the bed lifts electrically to the ceiling, creating a cavernous space for gear and toys, and is accessed from the inside or by opening the rear doors. Once again, most outdoor adventurers are carrying gear in duffels, backpacks, etc., which are easily stowed here. Longer items can even sit in the middle of the floor and extend as far forward as the dashboard.

The bed, which is longer than the motorhome is wide, extends into two fiberglass side panels (replacing the rearward OEM windows) that flare out from the sides of the van, giving the bed a total length of 79 inches. The mattress, at 49 inches wide, is comfortable, and the window at the head of the bed provides a nice breeze. Reading lamps and charging ports are readily accessible.

The bathroom is large by Class B motorhome standards: 26 inches deep, 30 inches wide and 71 inches tall, and has multiple functions — ideal for this motorhome's likely use. A Thetford C220 cassette toilet with push-button



Minimalistic galley includes stainless-steel sink with glass cover and foldaway faucet, single-burner induction cooktop and 2.5-cubic-foot refrigerator. Fold-up countertop extension adds prep space. Roomy wet bath with a cassette toilet that swivels for easier access is behind a bifold door.



electric flush has a seat that swivels 90-degrees, so taller folks can have the extra space of the aisle, if needed. A compartment door on the exterior leads to Thetford's exceptionally designed removable cassette tank, making dumping clean and straightforward.

The bathroom doubles as a gear dryer, with slatted racks that slide onto side-oriented detents, capitalizing on a Ventline pop-up exhaust in the ceiling, which draws air up through the gear from under the door. (Firefighters will recognize the similarity to hose dryers.) Once the bifold door is closed, moisture and odors are ejected through the roof. To take a shower, the racks are pulled out and set aside. A removable closet bar in the bathroom can be used for drying hanging clothes or storage.

The bedroom is interesting. Initially, the lack of any cabinetry was puzzling. But we soon realized how functional the space was; the bedroom doubles as a gear garage, so the openness of the space allows any type of gear to be stowed, albeit on the floor. Since most outdoor adventurers aren't afraid to stash their gear in the aforementioned duffel bags and backpacks, occupants will feel right at home.

The Revel, unlike most motorhomes, does not have any TVs, or even TV connections. With Millennials being the target generation for this

product, Winnebago has assumed that owners will choose to stream their entertainment and information using portable smart devices. RAM Tough-Track mounts are strategically located throughout the motorhome to accept portable device brackets. USB, 12-volt DC and 120-volt AC receptacles are also plentiful and placed near the Tough-Track mounts.

The Outside Story

Since its introduction in the fall of 2017, the Revel has been getting lots of attention, as this motorhome screams adventure. At least two online groups for owners and want-to-be owners have formed, frequently sharing trip information and modifications made to their motorhomes.

Like most serious 4x4s, the Revel is primed for modifications that individualize ownership. We have seen owners upgrade interior features, the suspension, remove the air conditioner, design storage bins for the rear ... the list goes on. The exterior of the Revel looks ready to go off road from the get-go.

The Revel's Mercedes 4x4 Sprinter base sports almost 8 inches of ground clearance from the factory, but Winnebago adds Method Race Wheels and terrain-eating BFGoodrich All-Terrain T/A KO2 sneakers, which not only add a bit of ground clearance but give



the profile a serious off-road look.

The Revel is equipped with a roof-length cargo rack with a rear-door, removable roof access ladder that stows on a bracket and attaches to the rack on the driver's side for access. That's a good approach, but the space is occupied by dual solar panels and the rooftop Coleman air conditioner, making it minimally useful for cargo. A Fiamma kayak rack is available for the driver's side of the cargo rack. Some owners have removed the air conditioner and added another roof vent in addition to the MAXXAIR vent in the galley to make the roof rack more usable for cargo.

Two paint colors are available: Pebble Gray and Silver Forest, along with available deluxe graphics for a sportier look. Buyers can also opt for a more understated look sans the vinyl graphics. Beyond the graphics, the conventional Mercedes black side molding extends down both sides, with sporty black front and rear bumpers. The front clip is sleek, with swept headlamp buckets and the chrome grille with that large, distinctive Mercedes-Benz badge in the middle, which instantly elevates the status of this off-roader.

The back doors of the Sprinter typically open 270 degrees and have magnetic holdbacks attached to the sides of the van. While the Revel maintains these holdbacks, the side bed flares prevent the metal doors from being attracted to the magnets and holding open. However, the hinge-mounted holdbacks still keep the doors open to 90 degrees, allowing unfettered access to the rear cargo area, and a great vantage point to view the beautiful vistas outside from the bed. An

WHAT'S HOT

4WD, roomy wet bath with swivel toilet, easy-to-clean interior, cargo space in flexible bedroom

WHAT'S NOT

Cargo rack not really usable, no TV hookups, no conventional city-water hookup, sink drainage



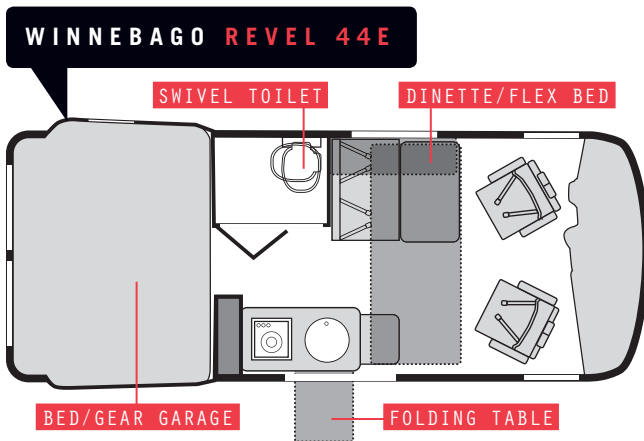
outside-access shower is located just inside the back door, with a quick-connect coiled hose and nozzle.

The Revel's performance on and off-road is quite good, taking the vehicle's design into account. Highway handling is decent and the steering is responsive. Acceleration is adequate, again understanding that this is a motorhome. Wind noise during our journey was less noticeable than expected, figuring the roof apparatus would be noisy. Road noise also wasn't bad, considering the all-terrain tires.

Engaging the four-wheel drive is a push-button affair, and we put the Revel through some paces at Pine Acres. The snow-covered trails leading up the mountain weren't a challenge, and even though there wasn't a huge amount of snow, the trails hadn't been cleared, and the ground was soft in spots, so we were able to test traction in mud and snow, and were impressed at how this motorhome handled it all.

The Revel's utilities are a little different from mainstream motorhomes, primarily because of its size, but also to help keep the plumbing from freezing up in cold conditions. The water system is different but functional; no city-water hookup here, as the systems are only supplied by the onboard tank. There are two water fills, one each for a pressurized source and a gravity fill, both located on the galley cabinet inside the sliding door. The Dometic sink is connected to a macerator pump for drainage into the gray tank and is operated by a momentary switch on the galley cabinet. This setup discourages leaving the water running since it won't drain unless the macerator switch is held in the ON position. A black-water tank is not necessary with the use of a cassette toilet, but the gray-tank dump valve is located near the driver's side rear wheel.

Comfort heating and hot water are provided by a diesel-fired Espar hydronic system. The efficiency of this system is exceptional, and it kept the motorhome nice and warm on



Control panels are centrally located and provide simple at-a-glance reference. Hinge-mounted holdbacks keep rear doors open 90 degrees, allowing clear access to the cargo area. Revel is equipped with a roof-mounted cargo rack with removable access ladder. Cargo space is limited, though, by the dual solar panels and Coleman air conditioner. Some owners have opted to remove the A/C to allow for more cargo space.

those cold New England nights. The main burner unit is below the dinette floor, and the circulator routes the antifreeze through a tank and heat exchangers for hot water and comfort heat respectively.

There is no AC generator on the Revel. Instead, it is equipped with three Group 31 AGM deep-cycle batteries, a 2,000-watt power inverter and the previously mentioned solar panels. The 30-amp shorepower cord is removable and is stowed on the floor in the rear of the unit. While the roof air conditioner will not operate without shorepower, the refrigerator and induction cooktop work nicely. Everything else, including the Espar heating system, works on 12 volts DC.

Patio life in the wilderness is an indulgence and is well served by the Revel, thanks to the Carefree 118-inch Freedom 12-volt-DC-powered awning, fold-out galley table, and exterior 120-volt AC and 12-volt DC receptacles.

The Final Word

The Winnebago Revel is an excellent sport-utility motorhome for those looking for outdoor adventure and to participate in sports. The Revel's flexible (open space) bedroom allows the unit to be used to carry gear of multiple sizes, while still having many of the comforts of home. The build quality is typical for Winnebago: solid and functional, with quality systems integrated into the mix.

Winnebago studied the target demographic for this motorhome, so it doesn't necessarily fit into a "typical" category. The Revel is a platform that can be customized to suit personal tastes and lifestyles. It can be a surf-fishing sand runner on the Cape Cod National Seashore, a mobile ski lodge in Colorado, a portable photography studio in Arizona, or can carry all the gear for the intrepid mountain climber headed for Yosemite's El Capitan.

If you're looking for a motorhome that can take you to remote places, the Revel should be at the top of your list. **M**

Winnebago Industries

641-585-3535, <https://winnebagoind.com>

Specifications

Chassis

Model	Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 319 KA 4X4 3665
Engine	3.0L 6-cylinder diesel
SAE Hp	188 @ 3,800 rpm
Torque	325 lb-ft @ 1,400 rpm
Transmission	Automatic 5-speed
Axle Ratio	3.923:1
Tires	LT245/70R17 LRE
Wheelbase	144"
Brakes Front/Rear	Ventilated Disc/Disc
Suspension Front/Rear	Strut/Leaf
Fuel capacity	24.5 gal
Fuel Economy	17 mpg
Warranty	3-year/36,000 mile plus 5-year, 100,000-mile powertrain

Coach

Exterior Length	19' 8"
Exterior Width	7' 1"
Exterior Height with A/C	10' 3"
Interior Width	6' 7" (at the bed)
Interior Height	6' 3"
Construction	Steel body, composite floor
Freshwater Capacity	21 gal
Black-water Capacity	5 gal (cassette toilet)
Gray-water Capacity	21 gal
Water-heater Capacity	Instantaneous
LP-gas Capacity	N/A
Air Conditioner (1)	13,500 Btu
Furnace	Hydronic 17,000 Btu
Refrigerator	2.5 cu-ft
Inverter/Charger	2,000-watt/45 amp
Batteries	(1) 12-volt chassis, (3) 12-volt house AGM
AC Generator	N/A
MSRP	\$134,799
MSRP as Tested	\$142,535
Warranty	12 months/15,000 miles

Wet Weight

(Water and water heater, fuel, LP-gas tanks full; no supplies or passengers)	
Front Axle	3,820 lbs
Rear Axle	3,660 lbs
Total	7,480 lbs

Chassis Ratings

GAWR, F/R	4,600/9,600 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	14,200/20,000 lbs
ROCCC	3,180 lbs (deduct weight of passengers for net cargo capacity)
GAWR, F/R	4,101 lbs/5,360 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	8,550 lbs/13,550 lbs
ROCCC	1,070 lbs (deduct weight of passengers for net cargo capacity)
GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Gross Combination Weight Rating
ROCCC	Realistic Occupant and Cargo Carrying Capacity (full water, no passengers)

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UNDER COVER

A high-quality RV cover is one of the best ways to protect your motorhome against damage from exposure

ADCO

One of the leading names in RV covers, ADCO has produced more than 20 million protective covers and assorted soft goods since it was established in 1955. Now a part of Covercraft Industries, which stitched its first cover in 1965, you can be assured that these covers are backed by experience and expertise. ADCO offers basic rooftop, universal and custom covers for all types of motorhomes, but its best-selling product is the All Climate + Wind Designer Series Tyvek RV cover, backed by a 3-year warranty. Offered in the universal and custom-fit product lines, the DuPont Tyvek material (derived from the same stuff used to protect homes that are under construction by helping reduce air infiltration in the finished product) offers superior UV protection and incorporates a wind-resistant internal strap system that cinches at the top and bottom of the cover for a snug fit that minimizes impact from the wind,

Think about what your motorhome goes through in just one season: burning sun, acid rain, bird droppings, sap deposits, hail and snow. And that's just when it's parked.

The fact is, the average motorhome spends the bulk of its time waiting for its next adventure — and as it languishes in storage, it's usually subjected to a wide range of potentially damaging elements. They may go unnoticed for the first few years of ownership, but over time, damage can range from fading gelcoat and black streaks to more expensive problems like water intrusion and delamination. If you are one of the many who stores your motorhome outdoors, the best bet

for long-term care is an RV cover. Depending on where you live and the conditions your motorhome is subjected to, an RV cover can help protect your investment, and there are a variety of companies that manufacture one or more products to help address specific needs. To help you find the best options, we've compiled this guide to give you an idea of what's available, whether you need ultimate protection from the Arizona sun or the Minnesota winter. Keep in mind that we don't have room to mention every product each manufacturer offers, so if you're in the market for a new cover, be sure to research each manufacturer's website for a complete list of its products and benefits.

▼ All Climate + Wind Designer Series Tyvek



according to the manufacturer. Extra reinforcement is engineered into the top and bottom of the cover, zippered entry doors allow for access during storage, and four Travel Tyre Gards are included. For wetter climates with moderate UV exposure (the Pacific Northwest, for example), ADCO offers its Designer Series Aqua Shed cover (2-year warranty), and for the best possible protection for all climates, opt for a custom-fit Sunbrella cover (5-year warranty).

MSRP at Camping World starts at \$436.99.

ADCO Products, 800-541-2326, www.adcoprod.com



Custom Sunbrella ▶

◀ Designer Series Aqua Shed

CALMARK COVERS

A Southern California original, CalMark covers are made at the company's headquarters in Oxnard, California. Each cover is custom tailored to the length, width and height of the motorhome and made out of high-quality Sunbrella acrylic woven fabric, which is UV-, water- and mold/mildew-resistant. CalMark prides itself on its Fabric Stress Reinforcement (FSR) construction, which incorporates 2-inch-wide, 100-pound webbing (1,000-pound tensile strength) sewn approximately every 4 feet across the inside top of the cover to support the fabric weight in high winds, snow, etc. CalMark covers also come with a zippered entry door, polyester tie-down straps (with 2,000-pound tensile strength), military-grade grommets, a fabric repair/reinforcement kit and an impressive 6-year warranty. MSRP starts at \$595.

CalMark Cover Co., 800-838-7236, www.calmarkcovers.com

Polyester tie-down straps help keep CalMark covers in place during high winds. ▶



CLASSIC ACCESSORIES

Based in the rainy state of Washington, Classic Accessories knows the importance of protecting your belongings from the weather — and has been doing it since 1983. In fact, Classic offers a variety of covers for everything from patio furniture and barbecues to golf carts, boats, UTVs and more.

Classic Accessories offers its covers in four product lines: PolyPRO1, PolyPRO3, PermaPRO and its newest offering, SkyShield.

Designed to provide a perfect blend of protection, strength and value, PolyPRO1 covers utilize a single layer of breathable, waterproof fabric that protects against dirt and scratches, while elasticized bottom corners create a tight fit. PolyPRO3 covers are designed for all-season weather protection, with a three-ply top and quick-drying PolyPRO1 sides that help reduce bulk. Adjustable front/rear tension panels and elasticized hem corners provide a custom fit, an integrated air vent system



SkyShield ▶

reduces wind stress and moisture buildup, and zippered panels offer easy access. PermaPRO covers offer similar benefits but are crafted out of lightweight ripstop material (the same used in parachute construction) that repels water and protects against dirt and sun damage. SkyShield covers feature a bonded, tear-resistant DuPont Tyvek top with PermaPRO ripstop sides for all-season protection, plus zippered side/rear panels and adjustable front/rear tension panels. Elasticized hem corners are designed to provide a custom fit and disperse stress in windy conditions, while air vents help reduce moisture accumulation and lofting. An integrated undercarriage strap system features multiple click-close straps and a weighted toss puck system eliminates crawling under the motorhome. Classic Accessories covers range in price from \$145.95 to \$437.95 depending on model. Classic Accessories, 800-854-2315, <https://classicaccessories.com>

COVERKING

Coverking offers a variety of products to protect your prize possession, be it an RV, car, motorcycle, ATV or boat. For the RV segment, Coverking offers its Universal Presidium covers for Class A and Class C motorhomes. Available in multiple sizes, the Presidium is made from tough, yet breathable, 600-denier polyester for all-season protection and maximum durability. Double-stitched seams prevent tearing, and top curtain air vents help stop moisture buildup and mildew. Adjustable quick-release buckles keep the cover securely in place — and speaking of security, Coverking offers available lock grommets around the bottom skirt of the cover to help prevent thievery. While the motorhome is in storage, a zippered door flap allows you to gain entry. MSRP: \$399.99-\$649.99, depending on motorhome type and length. Coverking, 714-850-0303, www.coverking.com



◀ Presidium

EVEELLE

Established in 1994, Eevelle is a wholesaler of high-quality products for the RV, marine, automotive and recreational industries — so you can't buy its products directly from its website. The good news is, Eevelle RV covers are available through National RV Covers, and they're offered in two brands: Goldline and S2 Expedition. Both product lines include a new feature for 2018: load-bearing roof straps designed to reduce stress on roof seams. Using heavy-duty Tru-Weave fabric technology, a water-resistant Sof-Tec Marine coating and a UV inhibitor, Goldline covers offer all-weather protection, while a so-called microporous film allows superior breathability to prevent mildew and rot. Zippered panels with anti-scratch sleeves and quick-release buckles allow easy access to entry points and even accommodate slideouts. Available in gray or tan, Goldline covers come with a duffle RV cover storage bag and a 5-year warranty. Price varies depending on type and length of motorhome, and ranges from \$349.99-\$689.99.

Billed as the next generation of RV covers, S2 Expedition covers combine technology with sleek, cutting-edge design, according to the company. Marinex marine-



Eevelle's roof straps are adjustable to accommodate roof-mounted accessories and connect via quick-release buckles for cover cleaning or replacement.

grade waterproof fabric is combined with heavier-duty side-wall panel construction and reinforced corners for extended durability in tough weather conditions. Sewn-in Dual Flow Vortex Vents enhance airflow, and Durapel UV agents prevent fading and other damage. An integrated strap system and adjustable full-length tension panels help achieve a perfect fit, and zippered panels with non-scratch zipper protection sleeves allow access for all entry points. MSRP ranges from \$259.99-\$424.99. National RV Covers, 800-616-0599, www.nationalrvcovers.com

Goldline ▶



S2 Expedition ▶



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◀ Premium

ELEMENTS

Offered exclusively through Camping World, Elements covers are available in two models to fit your needs and budget. Kicking things off is the All Climate, a water-resistant cover with triple-layer construction to protect against rain, snow, sun and (gasp) black streaks. Featuring heavy-duty DuPont Tyvek material on the roof, All Climate covers incorporate four reinforced roof panels to position the cover; gutter guard protectors to prevent snags/tearing; and polyformed grommets that the company claims are stronger than metal grommets but won't rust or corrode. Reinforced solid-vinyl panels are positioned behind the grommets and buckles, as well as at the front/rear bumper corners. Breathable polypropylene side- and end-fabric, combined with front/rear/side vents, prevent moisture buildup, while zippered panels provide easy entry and access to storage compartments. MSRP starts at \$149.99.

Next up is the Elements Premium, which offers similar features to the All Climate, but is crafted from Poly-Oxford fabric, which is tough and durable, yet lightweight. In fact, Camping World claims that the Premium cover stores 50 percent smaller than the All Climate covers. Lock-stitched, UV-protected straps and buckles ensure that the cover will stay secure for years to come. MSRP starts at \$339.99. Camping World, 888-626-7576, www.campingworld.com 



All Climate ▶

COVER INSTALLATION, MAINTENANCE AND STORAGE

➔ There's no way around it — installing an RV cover, especially for the first time, isn't easy. It's big, heavy and unwieldy, so the most important thing to keep in mind is safety. You should always enlist the help of a friend and exercise extreme caution when ascending or descending a ladder, or walking around on the roof.

That said, make sure there are no sharp edges that could potentially snag or tear the cover prior to installation. Unroll it behind the motorhome, making note of where the front is. Then, with the help of a partner, grab the front of the cover and carefully ascend the ladder, pulling the cover as far forward as possible. Drape the cover over the sides as you work your way rearward, being careful when climbing down. We've even heard from readers who climb the ladder first, then use rope to pull the cover up to them, which is easier than trying to drag it up one-handed, and certainly safer. Once in place, a ladder can be used to pull edges all the way down as needed.

Due to their intended purpose, RV covers are pretty tough, but that doesn't mean they don't need any maintenance. Before unwrapping your motorhome for the season, hose off the cover to remove any loose dirt or other environmental residue. A washing brush on an extension pole, combined with mild detergent, will help remove tougher stains. Allow the cover to dry thoroughly before removing/storing it.

Most RV covers come with a storage bag, which, like most storage bags, doesn't seem large enough when you want to use it. In these instances, a large plastic trash can (with a lid or some other cover) functions well to keep the cover clean and relatively compact until its next use.



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DOUBLE-DUTY DIESEL

WHEN THIS 2007 NEWMAR ALL STAR 4153 TOY HAULER ISN'T TRANSPORTING A PAIR OF HARLEYS, IT IS TRANSFORMED INTO THE ULTIMATE TAILGATING MOTORHOME

Perhaps you've seen motorhomes tailgating at sporting events. Maybe you've even tried it yourself. However, I feel confident in stating that no one has ever tailgated quite like Philadelphia Eagles fan Dennis O'Donnell. Why, you ask?

Because he does it with a 2007 Newmar, a full bar and a hot tub.

"We're sort of famous around Philly," he admits with a grin.

It wasn't exactly what Dennis had in mind when he and wife, Trish, bought their RV. The couple owned a 1995 Fleetwood Pace Arrow, and while it wasn't the motorhome of their dreams, with jobs and children

at home, it made sense to wait until retirement to purchase a new coach. That was before they bought his-and-hers Harley-Davidsons and realized that camping trips would be a lot more fun if they could bring their new motorcycles along. The only solution was to replace their current motorhome with a toy hauler, and they didn't want to wait more than a decade to do it.

The O'Donnells began to heavily research their options, intent on finding a motorhome that would have a garage without sacrificing a comfortable interior. They found that only one model fit their specifications — a

mid-mounted diesel pusher made by Newmar and built on a Spartan chassis with a Cummins 350 ISL engine. The company didn't produce the All Star in large numbers, and there were only three listed at dealers across the United States: Washington state, Florida and Michigan. The O'Donnells made the drive from Pennsylvania to Michigan and liked what they saw.

The All Star 4153 was designed as an ATV hauler, the mid-engine allowing for a side-loading door as well as more optimal use of interior space. Engine access is through a large hatch in the kitchen floor between each side of the split bath, which Dennis says actually makes routine maintenance easier, since it is done under the roof and out of the weather. The model includes two driver's-side slides, a full couch, and a dinette — all pluses for a



Dennis and Trish O'Donnell have been impressed with the versatility of their mid-engine All Star.

family motorhome. They were also impressed by Newmar's reputation for customer service and quality of craftsmanship.

The list price of the All Star was \$252,000, but the coach was not a popular model, and the O'Donnells were able to negotiate a purchase price of \$177,000. At the time, they saw the toy hauler space as nothing more than a portable storage for their Harleys.

That has changed.

"I didn't really anticipate it, but we figured out different ways to use the garage," Dennis explains.

The versatility comes in part from the fact that the garage space has comfort heating and air conditioning. With the motorcycles out, the garage became an extra bedroom for camping trips. In winter, when the motorcycles weren't in use, the All Star was transformed into the family's mobile ski chalet, with the garage serving as a mudroom and ski storage area.

As the kids got older, the O'Donnells began to use their Newmar to tailgate at games. Dennis built a portable bar that could be easily set up in the garage and installed a flat-screen TV. Eventually



Above: The All Star, at 11 years old, recently had an interior facelift, getting new laminate flooring and carpet. Above, right: The ramp door doubles as an outdoor raised patio, making the Newmar a popular RV park attraction.

he developed supports for the heavy ramp door so that it could double as a patio and covered the ramp with indoor/outdoor carpeting. He used dog fencing for patio walls and put up a portable canopy, creating a comfortable, all-weather porch that has become party central at RV parks along the East Coast.

All of which leads us to the Eagles/Saints 2014 playoff game, on a freezing cold day in Philadelphia. A friend loaded his hot tub in a trailer, filled it, let it warm up and then hauled it to the game, parking it at the end of Dennis' open ramp.

"You could walk out of the bar, grab a hot dog from the grill on the patio, and then step right down into the hot tub," Dennis laughs.

The unique sight of a half-dozen men in swim trunks sitting in steaming water on a 24-degree day drew the attention of an NBC news crew reporting from the stadium parking lot, and the cameras started rolling. O'Donnell's Newmar ended up on the evening news and the video went viral on YouTube.

As for the O'Donnells, they have passed the 10-year anniversary of ownership, and are just as pleased now as the day they bought their All Star.

"Once in a while we think about getting a new motorhome, but we can't get serious about it because they don't make anything like this anymore," Dennis says.

The couple did give their Newmar an interior facelift in 2017, taking the coach to the manufacturer for

installation of new laminate floors and carpeting. They have put 109,000 miles on the odometer, which is impressive when you consider they did it all while still working full-time. Dennis has a position in information technology sales and Trish in human resources benefits.

For all of their trips, Dennis keeps a captain's log, a practice he highly recommends because it allows you to look back on past vacations as well as be reminded of lessons from previous camping experiences. At the time of this writing, the All Star has made 192 trips, with 790 nights spent vacationing on board. They recently used the coach to drop their son off at school in Colorado, making it a leisurely sightseeing adventure. With the kids grown, most of their trips are now made with Jax, the family dog. They have a group of eight other couples with whom they regularly go RVing, staying at spots like Rehoboth Beach, Delaware; Virginia Beach, Virginia; and Nashville, Tennessee. As for the future, "Our ultimate trip is the Alaska run," Dennis says.

As for the decision more than a decade ago to buy their retirement motorhome years before retirement, it is one choice they do not regret.

"Overall, we are extremely happy," Trish notes.

The versatility of the toy hauler has allowed the Newmar to adapt to the family's changing needs — not to mention achieving Internet notoriety. Truly a vehicle for all seasons, the O'Donnells' All Star is a wonderfully unique classic ride. **M**



ALL STAR RVING

A mid-engine toy hauler is not for everyone. The 8-by-9-foot area occupied by the garage does cut down on the motorhome's interior space. However, if you want to haul a boat or tow another vehicle and you still want to take along other toys, the All Star is a great choice. Because of their limited production, Newmar All Stars are not easy to find on the used market. If you do find one, expect to pay between \$102,000-\$117,000.

▲ The O'Donnells' 2007 All Star has a rear garage and a side-loading ramp.



Hair's to You

The chassis air conditioner on our 2006 Safari Cheetah didn't seem to be blowing as hard as it did years ago. After a little investigation, we found the core was clogged with a tremendous amount of cat hair. After a \$300 fee to have the core cleaned, we came up with a way to stop the hair from clogging it up again. We cut a piece of roof-A/C filter material to fit a \$5 frame we bought from the Dollar General and attached it with hook-and-loop fastener. Now, does anybody want a cat?

Carl and Marty Turner | Pensacola, Florida



Bungee Blocker

Housed above each of the captain's seats on my Class A motorhome are very shallow cupboards in which very little can be stored. I thought this would be a good place to keep CDs and DVDs, so I placed several in the cabinets. However, when the cupboard was opened, the contents would all tip forward and fall out because there was nothing holding them in. To remedy this, I inserted a cup-holder screw into each side of the cupboard, a little less than halfway up, and attached a thin, taut bungee cord. The bungee securely holds the DVDs and CDs in the cupboard, and the titles can still be viewed and removed without removing the cord. Even with the cord in place, the contents are quite accessible and easy to remove.

Barb Clingensmith | New Castle, Pennsylvania

Rescue Socks

Don't throw away your old, worn out socks with holes in them! They're great to use for polishing wheels or applying wax on the motorhome's exterior, or for polishing cabinets, dusting or for cleaning up spills inside the coach. You can also use them to wrap up items that may bang together in cabinets (like glassware). White cotton socks seem to work the best. Of course, it's a good idea to wash them first.

Norm Hardy | Meadview, Arizona

Going Vinyl

We have owned several Class C motorhomes, and in each one of them we mimic the snap-on privacy curtain while traveling using clear vinyl plastic to help with climate control. We overlap the clear vinyl in the center to allow us to freely enter and exit the living area from the cockpit. This keeps the cool air in the cockpit

and keeps the need to run the dash air conditioning to a minimum, thus saving fuel.

When we stop for lunch, we turn off the engine and dash air, and then start the generator to run the roof air conditioner. When we want to cool the living area, and not the cockpit, we make sure the vinyl curtain is closed. Once back on the road, the clear vinyl

allows us to see to the rear of the coach, and also allows us to safely see out the side windows for traffic.

We are pleasantly surprised at the amount of fuel we have saved, not to mention the increased horsepower of our motorhome without the roof air running constantly to cool the entire unit.

Kenneth Bednarz | Lubbock, Texas 



Have an Idea?

Quick Tips is looking for submissions. Please send your ideas to: *MotorHome* Quick Tips, 2750 Park View Ct., Ste. 240, Oxnard, CA 93036, or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com. Photos must be high-resolution, at a minimum of 1,400 by 1,400 pixels. If your tip is published, you will receive \$35. All payments require an FEIN or SSN.

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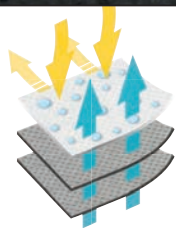
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The Very Thirsty Caterpillar

Upset after their motorhome's small oil leak had grown to disastrous proportions following an oil change and minor hose repair, a couple turned to Hot Line for assistance. They wrote:



“ We are hoping that Hot Line can help us obtain a refund of payment made for the replacement of the hydraulic electronic unit injector (HEUI) pump on our 2002 Newmar Dutch Star, built on the Freightliner chassis with a Caterpillar engine.

We took our coach to McWhorter's Truck Center in Lubbock, Texas, to have the oil changed and to investigate a small oil drip from the line from the HEUI pump. The hose had many cracks, and one seemed to be weeping oil (it was not a major leak). The shop performed the oil change and said the leak was due to a loose fitting, which they tightened. We drove it home and it seemed to be OK.

The next time we used the coach, we noticed the leak was back again so we took it back to the shop. At this point they said the hose would have to be replaced, and they would have to get the part from Caterpillar. The first hose they received and tried to install was not the right part, as the service manager said the threads were incorrect. He then said that Caterpillar had also upgraded the hose to steel tubing, so the shop once again contacted Caterpillar to get the new part. The service manager refunded the amount (\$185) of the previous repair — excluding the oil change — and charged us \$638.51 for the new repair. We drove home and everything seemed to be fine.

The following week, my wife and I took the motorhome to a town located only 12 miles away from our house. The trip there was fine, but by the time we got home we were leaving a trail of oil on the road behind us. We called the shop and the service manager sent out a technician, who

had to add about a gallon of oil when he got there. He found the leak in the same place and said the O-ring had blown out. After he fixed it the next day, he ran the engine for about 45 minutes at different rpm and, again, it all seemed to be fine.

Later, not even a mile from our house, the motorhome lost all power. Again, the coach left a large trail of oil behind us. We called McWhorter's. Once they towed it back to the shop, we were told the HEUI pump had to be replaced. I asked how that could be when the only thing that was wrong when we brought it in was that the hose was leaking. The service manager didn't have an answer. I asked for an estimate, but he said he wouldn't know until he received the bill from Caterpillar.

I then asked the service manager how they tested the pump to determine it was bad. He told me there was no way to bench test it. I asked if he had hooked a computer to the engine to test it and he said it couldn't be done. I know it can be done — and I have seen a video that proves it. I told him his shop had either cross-threaded or over-torqued the fitting, and that is the only reason the pump had to be replaced. He finally admitted that it was not his fault that Caterpillar sent him the wrong part.

Wrong part or not it was his shop that caused the damage to the pump when it was only a small leak in a hose to begin with. The final bill was \$3,800 that I do not feel I should have to pay. I hope Hot Line can help recoup some, or all, of our money. Thank you in advance.

Kyle and Sharon Thompson | Anton, Texas

That's one of the more involved sequences of events we've seen at Hot Line. But the bottom line is, the Thompsons feel their motorhome's problem was actually made worse by McWhorter's unsuccessful attempts to fix it. After reviewing their case, we agreed, so we sent a message to McWhorter's. We heard back a short time later.

I am writing regarding the work that was done at McWhorter's Truck Center on a 2002 Freightliner X Line motorhome for Kyle

and Sharon Thompson. I have reviewed the work that was done on this vehicle and have come to the conclusion that the customer should not have been charged for the replacement of the [HEUI] pump. From what I can tell, it was carelessness by

the technician in not matching up the parts. That being said, we are issuing a check to refund the customers for the \$3,640 that they spent replacing the pump.

Tony Lee, Store Manager, McWhorter's Truck Center | Lubbock, Texas

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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64061/64060 shown

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64030/64032 shown

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By Ken Freund

Wiper Woes

Q We have a 2002 Fleetwood Southwind Class A coach on a Ford F-53 chassis. The windshield wipers went whacky. They work, but won't properly park. If I am agile, I can park them manually, as necessary. On at least one occasion they would not turn off until the key was turned off. I had the motor rebuilt. A good mechanic replaced the switch, then the module from Ford and even tried another motor. He was able to return all parts except the module. He had to eat it. I am only out the new switch. Any thoughts?

Kent Bosch | Estes Park, Colorado

A The module controls the delay function, but the act of shutting it off in the park position is controlled by an internal switch within the wiper motor itself. Therefore, the rebuilt motor needs to be replaced. A good mechanic should understand the function of each part in the system. I'm not sure how good your mechanic is; he seems more like a parts replacer to me.

Bugged by Bugs!

Q I have some questions about products for my 1999 Rexhall Vision Class A 25-foot motorhome. I'm looking for something that can be applied to the front hood area that deflects bugs or allows them to be easily wiped away. I'm also looking for a product that cleans the screens on the windows without damaging them. What product is used to enable easy bug removal from windshields, and what's the best way to remove dirt from window screens?

David Zuckerman | Erda, Utah

A The front end of your motorhome is nearly vertical, so bug deflectors won't work. Some owners have clear plastic "masks" installed, but these tend to harden and deteriorate after a while. Others install pre-shaped vinyl "bras" that protect from stone chips and other damage. However, they tend to hold moisture underneath, which can damage the surface. Both options are somewhat costly.

There are a number of bug-removal products on the market that reduce the effort required for removing bugs; we put 14 of them to the test in "Bugging Out" in the

April 2016 issue (www.motorhome.com/top-stories/bugging-out). While microfiber towels work well for removing bugs, sometimes with only water, products like the Love Bug Eraser (<http://lovebugeraser.com>) make the job less unpleasant. You might also consider products that help prevent the bugs from sticking to the surface. RejeX (<http://rejex.com/rejex-high-gloss-finish-that-protects>) is popular with RVers and can be applied twice a year. 3M makes a spray-on film (www.autozone.com/landing/page.jsp?name=3m-paint-defender-spray-film) that lasts for one year, is easy to remove and reapply, and is available from AutoZone. Rain-X (<https://www.rainx.com/>) also works quite well on the windshield to prevent bugs from sticking.

As for the window screens: Dust the screens with a dry rag to remove loose dirt or use a soft brush vacuum cleaner attachment to suction off any dirt. If the screens cannot be removed for cleaning outside, lay old towels or plastic sheets below the windows. Fill a bucket with warm water and add a few squirts of dish soap. If the screens are very dirty, use a little more dish soap, and add ¼ cup of ammonia and a few ounces of Borax powder to make a stronger

cleaning solution. Dip a lint-free rag in the cleaning solution and wring it out well. With the rag wetted with cleaning solution, wipe the window screens. Don't press too hard. Rinse and wring out the cloth frequently to remove dirt. Then, dip a clean, lint-free cloth into a bucket of plain water and wring it out thoroughly. Wipe the window screens several times to remove the cleaning solution and any remaining dirt. Allow the screens to air dry.

Towing an Equinox

Q We have a 2012 motorhome and a new 2018 Chevy Equinox LT AWD with the 1.5-liter turbocharged 4-cylinder gas engine. I've owned it eight months and want to flat tow it cross country.

Warren A. Wells | Liverpool, New York

A Chevrolet only approves certain versions of the Equinox for flat towing. This information is listed in our 2018 Guide to Dinghy Towing and is also available for free on our website (www.motorhome.com). The front-wheel-drive (FWD) Equinox models with the 1.5-liter gas or 1.6-liter diesel engine are both towable, but with all-wheel drive (AWD) models, only the

1.6-liter diesel is approved for dinghy towing. Unfortunately, your model is not approved by the manufacturer for flat towing, and cannot be towed on a dolly (with two wheels down) either. So, your only option is to use a car trailer. The [expensive] lesson here is to do your research before purchasing.

Frequent Fuel Pump Failures

Q Recently, the fuel pump on my 2007 National Sea Breeze on the Ford F-53 chassis, 6.8-liter V-10 engine failed. This is the third pump replacement in four years, with only 6,000 miles traveled. The first replacement occurred at 30,000 miles in 2014. It was repaired using an OEM pump at a Ford commercial truck dealer. The tank was inspected, and no issues were found. The following year, the replacement pump failed, and the vehicle was taken to the same dealer for repair. Fortunately, the repair was free, since the dealer warranties its

repair for one year (parts and labor). Again, the system was inspected, and no issues were found (an OEM pump was used). Three years later it failed again. The same dealer (albeit at a different location) was used to perform the repair. The mechanic had no advice or knowledge as to what might be causing the failures, but agreed that the rate of failure was too high. Again, full inspection of the system was done, and no contributing factors were identified. This time I had them use an aftermarket pump, since I had already had two failures with OEM pumps. In all cases I had the fuel filter replaced post failure; I know this is down line from the pump, but it only made sense to do so. There were no performance issues prior to failure of any of the pumps. I did keep the failed pump this time with the hope that someone could use it to identify the origin of the failure. It's hard to believe that I'm the only one having this problem. Is it possible there is an electrical issue

causing this? I can't keep replacing pumps at a cost of \$1,500 each time.
Ray Weber | St. Paul, Minnesota

A The OEM pump should be a Walbro; several brands of aftermarket pumps are also available. The number of failures you have experienced is unusual, although coincidentally I had four aftermarket electric fuel pumps fail on my motorhome's chassis this summer within 8,000 miles. Turns out all were made in China. Mine was mounted on the frame behind the left exhaust manifold. When it got hot it would quit temporarily. I had to make a heat shield and air duct to reduce temperatures to make it live.

A restricted inlet strainer can starve the pump, causing it to run dry, overheat and fail. Contamination in the tank, such as rust, could also kill pumps. However, I suspect these conditions would have been noticed. Have someone who is an expert on fuel pumps take the failed pump apart and

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Unmasking Motorhomes

You recently published my letter, "Removing Protective Paint Film," in the August issue, and I want to thank you. I received quite a few comments from people who took the time to look me up and offer suggestions as well as ask for any learned resolution. I want to pass on to your readers something interesting I learned from all of this: There's a company in Fort Myers, Florida, that specializes in Ugly Shield Removal (which is the name of the company). They do great work while you wait, for a very reasonable price. The link to their site is <https://uglyshieldremoval.com>. The company was recommended by two previous customers who called me. I also referred my brother to Ugly Shield Removal, and he was very pleased!

Daniel Walters | Elkton, Florida

Thanks for sharing your experience, Daniel. I have received several letters from satisfied customers. Folks in that region with mask problems may want to inquire with the company.

Sagging Ceilings

Q We have a 2006 36-foot Class A Itasca Meridian diesel pusher. The interior roof of (padded) vinyl material is sagging and has begun to separate from the foam backing. After speaking with several upholstery shops and contacting Winnebago, there doesn't seem to be an easy fix for this problem — we'll have to replace the entire ceiling. We have encountered other RV owners who replaced their motorhome's ceilings at a high price, some reaching up to \$6,000. This seems to be a widespread problem.

Lee Menke | Las Cruces, New Mexico

A This also happens to older cars and trucks, as the glue dries out and fails. Check with several auto upholstery shops, particularly ones that work on motorhomes. You should be able to find a shop that will install new ceiling material without costing a fortune, although it may be different from the original.

Genset Quits — Tip

This is in regard to Bo Johnson's August letter "Genset Quits." I had the same problem with my motorhome's generator on numerous occasions. I took it to Cummins in Kansas City and the mechanics couldn't find any issues. On one trip, I raised the hood and found that the dash air-conditioner evaporator drain tube was plugged and water was cascading onto the top of the generator. After clearing the blockage and allowing everything to dry out, the generator ran for a while. Although water was draining through the drain tube, the gasket on the evaporator housing was defective and allowing enough water to drain onto the generator control to prohibit operation. Since the gasket was repaired, I haven't had any

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COACH & POWERTRAIN

generator issues. Johnson's problem sounds exactly like mine. Hopefully this will solve his problem.

Terry Parsons | Independence, Missouri

Thanks for sharing your experience, Terry. This is an unusual situation, which could confound repair shops (as it apparently did) because they would likely just let the genset run without running the motorhome's engine and dash air, and experiencing the problem. I learned long ago that in situations like this, the owner should drive the vehicle and demonstrate the problem firsthand.

Genset Quits When Hot — Tip

This letter is in regard to "Genset Quits When Hot" by Jim and Carole Harper in the September issue. We had a similar problem a few years ago. It turned out that the fuel tank was contaminated due to rust caused by condensation. We had the fuel tank steamed and reconditioned, and we installed a new fuel pump. That ended our problem. Simply installing a new fuel pump will not work if the tank is contaminated.

Rod and Rosemary Bartlett
Ontario, Canada

Generally, rust in the fuel tank will clog up fuel filters, and may even jam the pump itself. Typically, it will cause havoc at any time, not just when the genset is hot. It will usually get worse over time as the rust deposits build up in the fuel filters and screens, etc. If you cut open the used filters, you should see rust inside, which is a tip-off that you have a problem. Some radiator shops are set up to chemically clean the tanks, or will know where to take it to have this work performed.

Genset Quits — Comment

This is in reply to "Genset Quits" in the August issue. I have an Onan generator with the same symptoms. The model is a 2500 MicroLite, but the issue sounds familiar. I had been experiencing an intermittent start issue — but no run problems — as described, for more

than a year. I tried everything possible without removing the generator, as I know tracing an intermittent electrical problem is nearly impossible. Thankfully, it finally quit this year and I could start troubleshooting. I thought it was the low-oil level sensor, but that was not the problem. I took it to a shop and it quickly diagnosed a faulty voltage regulator. The tech said this is a classic symptom — it will fail to run, intermittently, until it finally quits. While I'm not a fan of throwing parts at a problem, it may be worth a try if it is intermittent.

Jarry Wilday | Sharon Springs, New York

Thank you for your comments, Jarry. Intermittent symptoms are frustrating and can cause a lot of grief, as well as wasted time and money.

Genset Quits When Hot — Solved

We had basically the same issue with our 5-kW Onan generator in our 1999 Class A motorhome. We tried a new control board, fuel filter and fuel pump, but nothing solved the problem. Our local Cummins/Onan dealer had the control board for around \$350, but we found one online from Dinosaur Electronics for \$149. Finally, I put in a new low-oil-pressure sending switch last year and that solved the problem. We spent more than \$400 to find it was a \$10 part. We did this repair ourselves, so there was no labor cost.

Steve McColm | Arvada, Colorado

This is the drawback to the shotgun approach to fixing a problem. I suggest testing questionable parts before replacing them — blow through a fuel filter to determine if it's clogged; run 12-volt DC power directly to the fuel pump to check to see if it runs; use an ohmmeter to test the oil switch with and without pressure; and so on. I hate to see parts replaced needlessly.

Adding Instrumentation

Q My husband and I own a 2015 32-foot Class C (continued on page 65)

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COACH & POWERTRAIN

(continued from page 61)

Forest River Sunseeker motorhome. The GPS system in the coach is a Jensen VM9726BT. I want to replace it with a system that offers a clock, outside temperature and a compass. To be fair, there is a set of crosshairs on one of the screens showing N, S, E, W, but I have to put on my reading glasses and get close to the screen to see it. We travel quite a bit in early spring and late fall, sometimes running into frost or snow. It would be nice to have a heads up that the temperature was falling so we could adjust our speed. The compass would come in handy when we're in an unfamiliar area and need to go a certain direction; and a clock — come on, Jensen — a clock! These three items seem like a no-brainer to me, but I get "no can do" from RV dealers, stereo shops that specialize in RVs and the Jensen website. I don't need a GPS system either — I'd be happy with a blank screen that had time, temperature and direction. In fact, it's been so frustrating, I don't even turn it on. Any suggestions?

Julie and Ted Thornton | Boise, Idaho

A Rather than spending a lot of money ripping out a perfectly good GPS unit (which you might want to use sometime), consider adding an aftermarket compass and weather monitor. There are quite a few units available. Compasses are offered in digital and conventional fluid-filled designs. There are many thermometers that have both indoor and outdoor readings, and some of them include a clock as well. Keeping the original GPS may also help maintain resale value if you decide to change motorhomes. **M**

Have a Tech Question?

Contact our experts:

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

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Flying North

Just because the snowbirds are headed south for the winter, doesn't mean you have to

By Alan Rider

I admit I've never been one to follow the crowd. Which explains why I'm about to suggest what many in the motorhome community may consider outright heresy. Namely, heading north for the winter.

Yes, I'm well aware this flies in the face of convention, as all around us snowbirds have begun their annual migration south to warmer climes. There's one thing those destinations with more benevolent weather can't offer, however: the brilliantly colored phenomenon known as the northern lights.

You see, I've been fascinated with the aurora borealis since I first saw its undulating bands of greens and magentas decades ago; a kind of otherworldly lightshow created to give us mere mortals a shot of celestial awe and wonder.

The trick, of course, is that seeing the northern lights requires some effort. Which, to my mind, makes it an ideal expedition for intrepid motorhome owners.

Now, I'm no fan of cold and snow, but since the aurora borealis is best viewed in northern latitudes during the winter and early spring, I'm willing to endure both in service of such a quest. To paraphrase someone wiser than me, it's not a real adventure if you're not at least a little bit uncomfortable.

The good news is that the long-range predictions put out by the

National Weather Service's Climate Prediction Center are looking surprisingly agreeable for the months ahead. Forecasts are calling for warmer-than-average temps across the northern tier of states and even up into Alaska.

Which is not to say the weather will be exactly mild but, compared to how ugly winter can get in this part of the continent, things are looking promising. Just the same, you'll want to thoroughly cold-prep your rig, stock-up on long underwear and check the latest forecast before you head out.

Not surprisingly, you'll also want to find a spot in the auroral zone with the dark, cloudless skies that are a key to successful viewing (hint: schedule your trip to coincide with the new moon). Likewise, you'll want to find a wide-open vista where you can get the full effect.

Finally, you'll want to give yourself the luxury of time, as the northern lights aren't guaranteed to appear on

any given winter night. Prime hours are 10 p.m. to 2 a.m. solar time (that's roughly 11:30 p.m. to 3:30 a.m. on your earth-bound clock), so layer up, invest in some of those chemical hand- and foot-warmers and fill your Thermos with the hot beverage of your choice.

As for actual destinations, Fairbanks, Alaska, is a prime spot, where you'll find all the usual services in town along with dark skies a short distance outside the city limits. Western Canada locations like the Northwest Territories town of Yellowknife are also good alternatives.

Thanks to technology, you can even get an idea of the auroral activity before you leave home. The University of Alaska Fairbanks Geophysical Institute provides a short-term northern lights forecast (<http://auroraforecast.gi.alaska.edu>) that can predict their appearance based on the sun's 28-day cycle.

With a little digging I also found there's an option for those of you who are truly averse to winter weather. The Canadian Space Agency offers a website with a live camera trained on the skies above Yellowknife (<http://asc-csa.gc.ca/eng/astronomy/auroramax>) so you can catch the northern lights show while enjoying the balmy breezes of your beachfront campsite.

Ultimately, whether you decide to "fly" north for the winter or not, here's wishing you many colorful nights along The Road Ahead. **M**

“Seeing the northern lights requires some effort. Which, to my mind, makes it an ideal expedition for intrepid motorhomers.”

Light Up the Night ☺

When selecting an area for viewing the northern lights, make sure there is very little ambient light from a nearby city. Prime viewing hours are generally from 11:30 p.m. to 3:30 a.m.

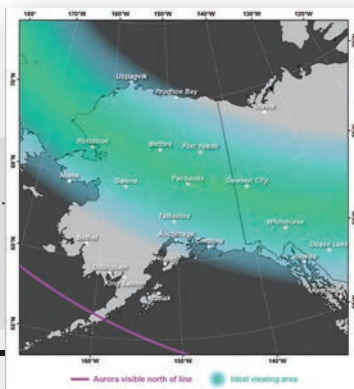


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