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Many of the waterfalls at Lake Jocassee in the Mountain Lakes region of South Carolina are accessible only by boat (see page 29).



We offer a behind-the-scenes look at some of the hottest new and redesigned motorhomes for the 2018 model year.
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ON THE COVER

The 2018 Winnebago Spirit 31D Class C not only operates smoothly while on the road, but is also great for entertaining friends and family while in camp (see test on page 46). Photo by Shawn Spence.



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By Kristopher Bunker



Photo: Mercedes Morgan Photography

New Year, New Models

February is always an exciting time in the RV publishing business. Although we have been showcasing some of the year's new models for some time, February begins what I consider the official new motorhome season, meaning most of the new model year rollouts have been in place for a while and, more importantly, we can begin to share them with our readers in more detail. Whereas we previously may have been afforded a mere a glimpse, or perhaps a "hush-hush" on some coaches, we can now freely roll out close-up looks at some of the more noteworthy models and redesigned floorplans for the new year.

The unveilings for this issue begin in Elkhart, Indiana, the RV Capital of the World. Every year, the RV industry holds the Elkhart RV Open House, which is an opportunity for manufacturers to showcase their most impressive new-and-improved models in what's become a massive display; the packed three-and-a-half-day event celebrated its 10th anniversary last year with dozens of manufacturers and thousands of dealers and new products.

And *MotorHome* was there, walking the new models, opening cabinets and measuring headroom. And after collaborating with the staff from *RVBusiness*, the respected business-to-business bimonthly RV publication, we present "Latest Entries: Motorhomes for 2018," showcasing the hottest releases and newest models from the Open House event. The models run the gamut from downsized

Class C's to luxurious Class A's to nimble Class B's, with a few surprising changes in strategy from some of the top manufacturers in the industry. Turn to page 34 for more.

For an in-depth look at a new-for-2018 motorhome, "The Spirit of Iowa" is our hands-on test of Winnebago's new family-friendly Spirit 31D floorplan. The 31D offers a spacious footprint great for entertaining, can sleep up to eight, features an efficient galley setup and is outfitted with plenty of storage options (keeping weight capacities in mind, of course). Check out the test beginning on page 46.

But the new models don't stop there.

As you read this, the *2018 RV Buyers Guide* — featuring more than 550 models across all RV classes — has hit the shelves (even more listings are available at www.rvbg.com). The annual *RV Buyers Guide* from *MotorHome* and sister publication *Trailer Life* is the largest, most comprehensive guide on the market, and includes floorplans, photos and detailed specifications for each listing. As an added bonus, the guide also features the 2018 tow ratings of nearly 1,000 trucks and SUVs (look for the annual *MotorHome* Guide to Dinghy Towing in our April issue).

And apart from vehicles, we also strive to bring you the latest in product innovation as well. Adding an after-market product like the Magne Shade featured on page 43, or the RViBrake3 we install beginning on page 54, will only serve to improve the motorhome lifestyle we all love.

Be sure to look for our coverage of the annual Recreation Vehicle Industry Association's Louisville show next issue; we promise to pack it with even more fresh coverage of current and new motorhomes. **M**

“We can now freely roll out close-up looks at some of the more noteworthy models and floorplans for the new year.”

Contributors | February



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).



Dave Houser, a New Mexico-based travel writer and photographer, has served as a regular contributor to *MotorHome*, *Trailer Life* and other Good Sam magazines since 1999.



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

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

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



Sky's the Limit

The reason we downsized from a Class A to a Class C was height reduction. We spend a lot of time in state parks and National Forest Service campgrounds and were forever hitting low tree branches. Now we can go almost anywhere in our Class C. It's nearly 2 feet lower!

Mark Scott | Sarasota, Florida

Just Right

We started out with a 32-foot Class A, then switched to a 19-foot Class B and ultimately settled on a 24-foot Class C.

In deciding what size fits your needs, you must decide how you want to use the motorhome. The Class A was fine for long stays where we lived in the coach for long periods of time. Getting to and from destinations was

secondary because we had to tow our "town transportation." We could only stop at truck stops, and had to be careful of narrow streets and small secondary roads that didn't have wide turnarounds. We could not back up with the tow vehicle attached.

The Class B was fun to drive, easy to park and could go anywhere; it was basically a van with lots of conveniences. Unfortunately, it was small and cramped. It was a head-banger with an uncomfortable, hard-to-make-up bed. We did use it as a second vehicle. If traveling around is more important than the actual staying (living), this is the rig you want.

We enjoy the travel and sightseeing more than the actual destination, so the Class C is a nice compromise between the A and the B. We have limited, but enough, space for a comfortable stay for short periods. It is

small enough to easily maneuver and park in all but the tiniest parking lots. It fits in most parking spaces (barely), and can be used as a backup vehicle in a pinch.

Each class has strong points and weak points: Decide what is really important in your travels and pick the motorhome that fits those needs. We call our Class C "Goldilocks;" it's not too big, it's not too small, it's just right (for us).

Rus and Nan Steinebach | Via email

Just the Essentials

We had an Itasca Sunstar gas Class A motorhome that was about 29 feet long. It had a lot of external storage and was very comfortable. However, we worried about driving an 8½-foot-wide vehicle on smaller roads. That, along with leveling jacks that never worked, convinced us to downsize.

Featured Letter

Go Anywhere

We upsized from a Class B to a Class C and then to a Class A, and none were perfect in all aspects. Then we downsized from a gas Class A to a diesel Class C and we are now satisfied. Some of the reasons are: the 7½-foot-wide Class C is easier and safer to drive; we think the factory cab with two doors would be safer in an accident than the Class A; the diesel is more powerful and smoother shifting in the mountains than the gas Class A; and we can take the Class C just about anywhere, so we no longer need a dinghy.

John Bowers | Scottsville, Virginia



In 2016 we got a Winnebago Via 25T, which is a diesel Class A built on a Sprinter chassis. We liked it, but the diesel information said to avoid biodiesel greater than 5 percent. Since most truck stops only sell 15-20 percent biodiesel, we spent a lot of time searching for acceptable fuel.

Last year, we downsized again to a 2017 Winnebago Fuse 23A. It's on a Ford Transit chassis, which can take biodiesel up to 20 percent without restrictions. This is a twin-bed model Class C with the TV over the cab. Exterior storage is only 23.1 square feet, so the barbecue, extra chairs, ladder, etc., all had to be left at home. Plus, one of the beds is so short Winnebago installed a flip-up extension that blocks the refrigerator.

My advice for choosing a downsized motorhome is to consider what's essential and make sure the exterior compartments will hold what you need. Think about how you camp, the

dining and cooking comfort, whether there is space for a computer workstation, and consider TV viewing and the bed length. In addition, consider the type of fuel and compatibility with the stations you usually stop at.

Art Adkins | Via email

To Drive, or Not to Drive

We downsized from a 34-foot Class A to a 24-foot Class C. Advantage: I will drive it. Disadvantage: No couch. Other than that, my husband and I love our new Class C!

Debbie Jenson Kreinbring | Via email

Bed, Bath & Beyond

About a year ago we decided to downsize. We had driven our 35-foot Class A for 15 years and 60,000 miles. Because we spend three months or more at a time in our unit, two things were important — the galley and bath areas. We settled on a 31-foot Class A with one large slide. The advantages

are it feels smaller to drive, the ride is much better than the F-53 Ford chassis and it has a much tighter turning radius. The biggest disadvantage is the smaller storage space. We had to leave stuff at home, but most was not necessary. We also lost a barrel chair and swiveling cockpit seats. After using the coach for the season, we removed the dinette and replaced it with a table and two chairs. That made a big difference in living space. The bottom line is that we are very happy with the downsize, and feel it was the right decision.

Rich Henry | Howell, Michigan

Going Down or Up

My wife and I have been full-timers for about two years. We started RVing in an 8½-foot camper, then upgraded to a used 1999 33-foot Class A with one slide. We aren't certain whether we are going to come off the road to a stick-and-brick house or try to downsize the



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RV and be comfortable on the road.

We are both fairly small individuals, but we feel cramped in our current coach. I am 5 feet, 7 inches tall and can barely turn around in the shower. Our dining table is set up for four, but even seating two people is a tight fit. We're looking at 32- to 36-foot models with a minimum of two slides.

Frank and Dianne Casey | Mesa, Arizona

Stay in Class

First I went from a 34-foot Fleetwood Discovery diesel motorhome to a 40-foot Fleetwood Bounder diesel-pusher coach, mostly to have a mid-entry model rather than a front, side entry. Then, last January, I downsized to a 29-foot Fleetwood Jamboree Class C. It's a beautiful motorhome, but I'm not that happy with going from a Class A to Class C. It's not as user-friendly and is much more confined. The handling, though, is better — very little push from larger vehicles. My opinion is that if you're satisfied with the Class A, stay with it.

L.R. Kuhns | Dauphin, Pennsylvania

Good to Go

In December 2016, we downsized from a 37-foot Holiday Rambler Class A Vacationer to a Winnebago Class C Aspect 30J with three slides. The Class C is easier to drive, park, back, etc., yet we didn't give up on quality, amenities or living space. We even have the same size roomy shower and a larger closet. My wife is able to drive with more confidence and I get to enjoy more of the passing scenery. Last summer we drove more than 5,000 miles through 10 states and to 10 national parks. We stayed in RV resorts with full hookups as well as dry camped in national parks, and never found ourselves inconvenienced in any way. Downsizing was a good move for us.

Rick Githens | Shreveport, Louisiana

Meal Time!

We downsized from a 35-foot Class A to a 24-foot diesel Class C Forest River Sunseeker. We are retired and don't need a lot of space and storage, plus we wanted better mileage. We now get 15

mpg and don't worry about pulling into restaurants. We're very happy we did.

Joe Wales | Via email

Service with a Smile

We've been RVers for more than 50 years, starting with tents, proceeding to travel trailers, and then graduating to Class A's for most of those years of travel and fun. About two years ago we downsized to a Class C. A number of reasons brought about that change. First, we are not full-timers; we enjoy monthly short trips. Second, we're senior citizens and no longer need some of the amenities we had in the Class A, though we have to admit we miss the leveling jacks. I find the truck cab in our Class C to be more comfortable, easier to handle and accessible. We usually travel with a dinghy vehicle and the Class C setup is considerably shorter than the Class A setup.

One of the main reasons for making the Class A-to-C change was that the Class C chassis can be serviced and repaired by a regular auto dealer, and we don't have to find an RV repair shop when we're on the road.

All in all, we are happy with our downsizing. I've told some folks that I wish I had made the switch years ago. It would have saved money and frustration, and made a few of our trips a bit more pleasant.

David and Carol Mulcahy | San Diego, California

Pleasure-Way Correction

In the December 2017 issue, we tested the 2018 Pleasure-Way Plateau TS, touring Lake Huron and the west coast of Ontario, Canada, driving nearly 500 miles in this fun, easy-to-drive motorhome. Unfortunately, the background information about Pleasure-Way was incorrect. The company's founder, Merv Rumpel, began building Pleasure-Way coaches in 1986. The current CEO, Dean Rumpel, is the founder's son, and has grown up in the business, working his way up to the top position. For more on Pleasure-Way's history, please see "What's in a Name" on page 11.

MotorHome regrets the error.

Cover Crises

I am 75 years old and would like to cover my motorhome when not in use. However, my wife would be unhappy with me if I fell off the roof, and I would not like to fall off, either. Is there a way to get the cover on without getting on the roof?

Dennis Shaffer | Palmdale, California

We recently bought a cover for our new Class A motorhome, and I am less than happy with it. I followed the manufacturer's recommendation on measuring the coach (not relying on vehicle specs), and found the actual measurement to be longer than the specs. As such, this put me into ordering the next size up.

Getting the cover installed was no easy feat for us, as we're both in our 70s. Then the real disappointment came. The cover was too long and didn't fit well. I took photos and sent comments about this to the cover manufacturer, but haven't heard back.

There were two projections from the slideout awnings. I'm told these are to keep the slideout awning from unrolling during travel. Since I left the cover on when we had a very mild wind, these projections poked a hole into the new cover.

When looking at the cost of a cover, and realizing that they only seem to last two or three years in the California sun, I decided that a much better solution would be to install some kind of carport cover to protect my RV. It will be more cost-effective in the long run, and eliminates the need for us senior citizens to be climbing up on the roof.

George Shyavitz | Atascadero, California 

Question of the Month

If you use an RV cover — and you, should, really, if you plan on storing your motorhome for long periods of time — do you have any tips or tricks to make installing the cover a smooth process?

Send your comments to:

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

Pleasure-Way
Industries Ltd.



What's in a Name?

For the Rumpel family, after 50 years, a lot more than you might think

By Chris Dougherty

The RV industry was built on the hard work and sweat of small business owners. And, although today that same industry is mostly dominated by large corporations, there are still some small, family-centric holdovers. Pleasure-Way Industries Ltd. of Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, is one such company.

Having fallen in love with RVing, Merv Rumpel started an RV dealership in 1968 — Glenwood RV — which still operates today as a Jayco and Pleasure-Way dealer. In 1986, at the age of 50, Merv decided that he could build a better RV than other camper vans on the market, and Pleasure-Way Industries Ltd. was born.

With humble beginnings, Pleasure-Way started manufacturing in the back of the dealership, building only 15 units the first year, says Dean Rumpel, Merv's son and the company's current president. For more than 30 years, the family-owned-and-operated motorhome manufacturer has been building top-quality Class B and Class C motorhomes, turning out around 900 units a year. "The cornerstone of Pleasure-Way Industries Ltd. is built upon my father's old-fashioned work ethic, pride in craftsmanship and a 'customer comes first' approach to business," Dean said. This work ethic, attention to detail and customer service has led to a dedicated group of owners.

Because of the family enterprise, Dean is a child of the RV industry. Having reached the top rung of the ladder, he recalls what it was like growing up in the business. "I began at [age] 15 as a lot boy, painting bumpers and changing propane tanks; then I worked at the dealership in parts and service. When Pleasure-Way started, I worked in upholstery and then in purchasing, then into sales and warranty, so I've pretty much covered the gamut," he says.

Built by hand in bays, instead of an assembly line, Pleasure-Way's seven models are built mostly on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis, except the Lexor TS, which is built on the Ram ProMaster platform. The company prides itself on measuring build time in "Weeks, not days," Dean says, adding that the company has one of the lowest warranty rates in the industry.

For more information, call 800-364-0189 or visit <http://pleasureway.com>



Photos: Dean Rumpel

Above: The very first Pleasure-Way motorhome, built in 1986, taken in front of the plant in 2016. From far left: Current Pleasure-Way President, Dean Rumpel, left, with his dad, company founder Merv Rumpel, next to what the company calls a "B+ motorhome," in 2017. Merv with the first out-of-province shipment in 1988.

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Rock of Ages

The world's largest travertine natural bridge is a breathtaking geological study of the power of erosion

By Morey Edelman

One hour north of Phoenix, Arizona, hidden in a small valley surrounded by pine trees, is Tonto Natural Bridge State Park. This day-use park features a unique travertine bridge that stands 183-feet high above a 400-foot-long tunnel. Learn about the history and geological uniqueness of this formation at the visitor center near the entrance to the park. While there, pick up a trail map that shows the location of the viewpoints and the four trails that lead you above, around and underneath this very special natural bridge.

Unlike natural bridges developed from sandstone or granite, this travertine bridge displays unique colors and formations. From one viewpoint looking at the bridge, you

see what looks like the inside of a cave with stalactites and stalagmites.

Tonto Natural Bridge is located near Payson, Arizona, on State Route 260. Once you turn off the highway, there's a 14 percent grade down into the canyon to get to the visitor center, picnic area and parking lot. We had no problem driving our 30-foot motorhome on this access road. It's definitely worth the drive.

The closest full-service RV park in the area is Payson Campground RV Resort (928-472-2267, www.paysoncampground.com).

For more information, call 928-476-4202 or go to www.azstateparks.com/tonto.

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By Bobbie Hasselbring

Experience Twillingate

February is the month of love, and nothing says “I love you” better than your sweetheart’s favorite pie. Unfortunately, I’ve never mastered making a good pie crust. Mine always tear or come out dry, not tender and flaky. That’s why I love shortbread pastry dough. Because this dough has lots of butter, it’s soft, easy to work with and quite forgiving. It makes terrific pies, tarts and turnovers, and the crust is tender, almost like a shortbread cookie. So I was delighted when Crystal Anstey of Experience Twillingate in Newfoundland offered her grandmother’s mini pie recipe made with delicate shortbread crust.

We met Crystal, a visual artist and tour guide, on a motorhome trip of Newfoundland’s eastern coast. She lives on the island of Twillingate, on the edge of “Iceberg Alley,” the watery path giant pieces of glacial ice take southward from Greenland.

Crystal and her family have lived in the Back Harbour region of Twillingate for generations; so long, in fact, that Anstey Point is named for her ancestors. She grew up exploring its shores, foraging its bountiful food sources and enjoying food from the sea and shore on its beaches. “I’ve grown up here, with the sound and smell of the ocean and its beautiful landscape, and it’s influenced my art, my cooking and my outlook on life.”

Wanting to share and preserve her historic and authentic experiences of Newfoundland, Crystal began Experience Twillingate (www.experiencetwillingatenl.com), a local tour company that gives visitors a “sea-to-plate experience, right on the beach.” The menu is wild and local — with hints of rustic sophistication. She serves cocktails cooled by chunks of 12,000-year-old icebergs. The menu features shellfish and fresh fish, and locally foraged berries and edible plants.

Guests dine on the beach with delicious fare like sautéed scallops and mussels, and whole Maine lobsters steamed in seawater. It’s all cooked over an open fire and served on Crystal’s rustic handmade pottery. There are no fancy linens, no suits nor evening dresses. Just authentic food in an unparalleled setting that invites visitors to relax and enjoy.

And, if you’re lucky, for dessert you’ll be offered Nanny Anstey’s Mini Pies. Crystal says, “My grandmother grew up eating and baking these pies. She spoiled her children and



Above from top: The Back Harbour region provides the perfect setting for a Newfoundland “boil up” on the beach. Fresh lobster, cooked in seawater, is on Experience Twillingate’s menu.

grandchildren with this recipe. On my tour I serve a trio of different flavors of jam pies. You can make them yourself and share them with those you love and cherish.”

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

Email bjhasselbring@gmail.com with “pie” in the subject line.

NANNY ANSTEY’S MINI LOVE PIES

Makes 24-36 tiny pies (depending on how thin you make the crust)

- ☐ 2 cups flour
- ☐ 2 tablespoons powdered sugar
- ☐ ½ pound (2 sticks) butter, softened
- ☐ Jam (one or several flavors)
- ☐ Whipping cream

► Preheat oven to 350 Fahrenheit.

Mix together ingredients. (Don’t overwork or dough will toughen.) Pinch off pieces (about 1 tablespoon) and flatten between your hands. Press firmly into the bottom and sides of mini muffin tins. Bake for 10-12 minutes until light golden.

Cool and fill each pie with 1 teaspoon of your favorite jam/filling.

Whip cream and top each pie with a dollop of cream.



Photos: Anne Weaver



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Geico, Circle 109 on Reader Service Card

Tailgating King

Bringing along your grill is great for campsite barbecues, but the storage space it requires may have you thinking twice. With the Redzone Portable gas grill, space is no longer a problem; simply insert the frame into your motorhome's 2-inch hitch receiver and hit the road. The 25,000-Btu grill is large enough to grill 100 hot dogs or 25 burgers at a time, according to the company, and there's even a warming rack for buns. The grill features all welded steel tubing with a powder-coat finish; solid rubber all-terrain tires make it easy to move around the campsite. The unit weighs 86 pounds when assembled, and after the barbecue is over, the grill tips up and slides into the receiver without any heavy lifting. The unit is pictured here with the optional EZ-BBQ Fuel Kit (sold separately), but owners can use any standard 5-gallon LP-gas cylinder. MSRP: \$449.



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Pet Protection

We love bringing our four-legged friends along for the ride, but the mess — and the damage — that can occur is often difficult to handle. SmartFit Premium Pet Seat Covers from Solvit Products help preserve the seats that Fido frequents. The covers are available in bench, hammock and bucket styles, and are made from heavy-duty quilted cotton twill trimmed with leather accents. They incorporate a waterproof membrane to prevent damage from moisture, mud and spills, and the seat belt openings utilize waterproof zippers to prevent dirt, hair and liquids from passing through to the seats below. The system includes elasticized panels on the sides and the front, seat anchors, seat belt keepers and cinch straps.

The covers are available in two color options: green with gray trim and gray with black trim. They are machine washable and covered by a lifetime warranty. MSRP \$59.99-\$114.99.

Radio Systems Corp., Pet Safe Brand | 865-824-9581, www.petsafe.com



Footloose and Carefree

Billowing is one of the main concerns with slideout toppers, as strong winds while on the road can cause damage or even failure.

Carefree of Colorado has designed its new Alpine series covers to help prevent such damage. Alpine's new "Billo-Stop" technology is fully automated and self-contained in the awning's end caps, saving the installer time and extra steps without the need for lock calibration or additional hardware, according to the company. Carefree also says the Alpine prevents billowing even if the slideout isn't fully closed or straight. Billo-Stop is designed to automatically engage when the fabric attempts to billow, securely holding the fabric in place. Carefree Alpine slideout covers are developed to work on slides as long as 32 feet, without having to install additional cradles separately. The Alpine is lightweight, comes with black or white hardware and is offered in many vinyl fabric colors. MSRP range: \$300-\$1,000, depending on fabric, brackets and levels of protection.

Carefree of Colorado | www.carefreeofcolorado.com



Hydrate in Style

Keeping hydrated is an important part of the outdoor lifestyle, but buying bottled water is not only expensive, the plastic bottles can be harmful to the environment. Black + Blum offers a quality stainless-steel Water Bottle that provides the perfect balance between style and function, ensuring a cool drink of water is always at the ready. The bottle features a wide spout to allow for ice cubes or even a charcoal filter to be added. The bottle is made from stainless steel, polypropylene and silicone, plus there's a vegan-friendly "leather" strap that holds on the lid. The bottle is also available in white.

The Water Bottle is available online from Black + Blum in two sizes: small (500 ml; \$13.95) and large (750 ml; \$15.95).

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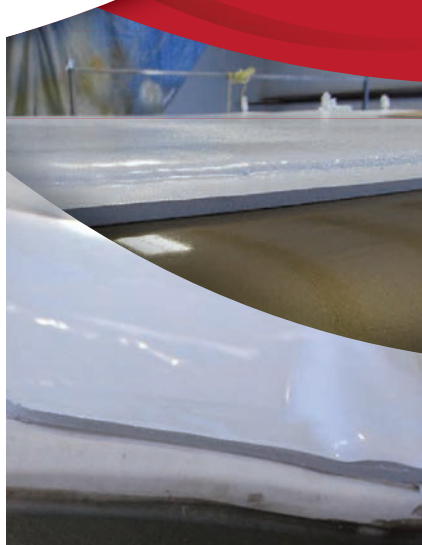
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Ganado, Arizona

Southwest Trading Post

Located in the town of Ganado in eastern Arizona you'll find a unique National Historic Site — Hubbell Trading Post. The trading post — said to be the oldest in the Southwest — was established in 1878 by Don Lorenzo Hubbell and remained in his family until 1967, when it was sold to the National Park Service.

In addition to the actual trading post store, which has supplied goods to travelers and community members for more than 100 years, the site also features a visitor center and the Hubbell Home — open for tours at a cost of \$5.

As we shopped the aisles of the old building, we saw beautiful Navajo rugs, baskets, jewelry, carvings, and arts and crafts. Then we watched a live demonstration of Navajo rug weaving in the visitor center.

Situated on the Navajo Nation reservation, the site is off State Route 264 and is easily accessible by larger motorhomes.

For more information, call 928-755-3475 or visit www.nps.gov/hutr — *Morey Edelman*



Photo: Morey Edelman

Grand Rivers, Kentucky

What's so Grand About Grand Rivers?

I've often wondered what made the small town of Grand Rivers, Kentucky, so grand. I presumed it was the two grand rivers between which it sits — the Cumberland and the Tennessee. Or, perhaps it's the proximity to the Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area. Either of those would make it a special place, but I discovered even more grand spots during my visit.

One is Patti's 1880s Settlement, which has a fantastic restaurant, a small chapel, a gourmet coffee

café and several specialty shops.

Another is Badgett Playhouse, also called Grand Rivers Variety, a theater with Branson, Missouri-style shows located just across the street from Patti's. There are also antique shops, two marinas and plenty of RV parks in the area, including Tween the Lakes Campground (270-709-5440, www.tweenthelakescampground.com), which is a Good Sam park.

For more information, call 888-493-0152 or go to www.grandrivers.org — *James Richardson* 



Photos: James Richardson

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Pages From the Past

Retracing *MotorHome's* January/February issues over the years

After beginning life as an annual buyers guide in 1968 and in response to popular demand, *MotorHome Life* increased its frequency to bimonthly in 1971, the same year that Apollo 14 landed on the moon. And the magazine hasn't looked back since.

The months of January and February represent new beginnings to many. Just after Richard M. Nixon was sworn in for a second term, the February '73 issue saw an advertisement for the brand-new Minnie Winnie, billed as "the first mini motor home good enough to wear the Flying W." That same issue included a feature on "Motorhome and the Single Girl," dispelling (and sometimes, unfortunately, reinforcing) many of the outdated beliefs of the time. February '74 included a commentary by publisher Art Rouse on the ongoing oil crisis, encouraging shorter trips and doubling up with other motorhome owners to conserve gas. This sentiment would continue, as the January '78 issue examined fuel-economy tips and tricks, while an Airstream

advertisement in the January 1981 issue flaunted the 15-mpg Airstream Diesel Class A.

MotorHome dropped the "Life" from its name in January '82, and in the same issue offered a look at the effects of consumerism on the quality of motorhome manufacturing. The magazine achieved monthly status in '83.

Technology was at the forefront in January '85, as two events — the introduction of Apple computers and the beginning of the "Domain Name System" to be used by something called the Internet — set the tech world ablaze. Following suit, the February '85 issue offered a look at "High-Tech TV," including clunky satellite dishes exponentially larger than those of today.

As we moved into the 1990s, *MotorHome* tested the first production

coach to offer slideouts, the Newmar London Aire 37', in the February '91 issue, just following the declaration — and subsequent cease fire — of the Gulf War with Iraq.

At the turn of the century, things were looking up. Vehicle tests in the February 2003 issue featured a pair of upscale motorhomes — the Chinook Glacier and Georgie Boy Cruise Master 36' — while anticipation for the magazine's successful annual gathering, The Rally, began to build, headed that year for the Daytona Speedway in Florida. *MotorHome* would undergo another facelift in February '08, while features on RVing in New Zealand and Super C motorhomes reflected a strong economy ... just before the bubble burst and the stock market nosedived due to the sub-prime market crisis.

The next decade would usher in the concept of "greener living," and Senior VP/Group Publisher Bob Livingston used the On-Ramp column in February 2011 to prove that RVing was much more environmentally conscious than thought. A Walkthrough of the fuel-efficient Pleasure-Way Plateau TS on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis was further proof of his claim.

Which brings us to today: fuel-efficient vehicles, such as easy-to-handle Class B's and Class C's, are now the talk of the town, and a January 2017 test on the new Hymer Aktiv proved that the economy and versatility generally reserved for overseas travelers has cemented its hold stateside. Even longtime Class A builders such as Tiffin have downsized their offerings to match the trend; the new Wayfarer Class C shown in the January 2018 test is based on the fuel-sipping Sprinter chassis as well. **M**

Introducing the 1973 Minnie Winnie.
The first mini motor home good enough to wear the Flying W.



Even waiting for a motor home that's big enough to live in, yet easy enough to take to the supermarket? This is the one.

Another great value packed model.
The "Minnie Winnie" delivers the compactness you need to get into the ground. Yet it's designed to hold into the rest of the unit and give you the kind of motor home comfort you'd expect from Winnebago, the world's largest producer of motor homes.

You get more standard equipment.
A "Minnie Winnie" is completely self-contained. You get a 4-cylinder gas engine with over 100 horsepower. A 10-gallon water system with heater. Twin LP gas burners. A marine toilet and shower or bathtub combination. A high-output automotive heater and a big 10,000 BTU forced-air furnace — not a "hot spot" heater. And you get a 4 cu. ft. gas/electric refrigerator — not an icebox.

Winnebago gives you a complete warranty and coast to coast service.
Winnebago's complete warranty and coast to coast service is a testament to the quality of the materials and workmanship that go into every Winnebago motorhome. The "Minnie Winnie" is a testament to the quality of the materials and workmanship that go into every Winnebago motorhome.

We give you more.

The "Minnie Winnie" is priced at \$14,995. F.O.B. Forest City, Iowa, including state and local taxes, dealer preparation, transportation and optional equipment. *Estimated. Price and specifications subject to change without notice.

Winnebago, Inc. 2017, on page 105.

WINNEBAGO





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WINNEBAGO CELEBRATES 60 YEARS

Launched in 1958, Winnebago has provided six decades of extraordinary outdoor experiences. We begin a series about the history of this iconic brand — and introduce new Winnebago models designed for the way RVers live and travel today.

► THE FIRST DECADE: 1958-1968

Winnebago began as a civic project. It was the late 1950s, and Forest City, Iowa, needed jobs. Local businessman John K. Hanson loved vacations in his family's Aljo travel trailer, and had an idea: Lure the RV's California manufacturer to open a local factory.

It worked. Backed by local investors, Modernistic Industries began production with 17 employees on February 12, 1958, and produced its first 15-foot towable weeks later. Its sticker price: \$895.

Soon, John K. bought out the

other investors, and kicked off a series of innovations in design, quality, and safety. The company made 50 improvements to the Aljo, including a choice of 15-foot, 17-foot, and 19-foot models.

The 1960s were a decade of phenomenal growth, and American prosperity drove an RV boom.



Above: The first Winnebago-made Aljo trailer. Winnebago pioneered an automotive-style RV assembly line, while preserving outstanding craftsmanship. By 1969, Winnebago made a pop-up camper, a line of KD Kap pickup bed RVs, a pop-up camper and two self-contained motorhomes, the F-19 and D22.

Winnebago deliveries would soar from \$1 million in all of 1961 to \$1 million a day by September 1968. In 1961, 102 RV dealers came to the company's first Dealer Days for tours of the now-legendary plant.

With a name change to Winnebago Industries (after the county of its locale), Winnebago pioneered game-changers in quality manufacturing, including:



MINNIE TRAVEL TRAILERS TODAY

WINNEBAGO'S TOWABLE LINE NOW INCLUDES FIVE MODELS — ALL WITH BUILT-IN REFRIGERATOR AND STOVE, COMPLETE BATHROOM WITH HOT AND COLD WATER, COMFY BED AND GEAR STORAGE.



Minnie may be their name, but the space and features of all five lightweight Winnebago towables are large! Here's the whole family, in a range of sizes:

- Minnie Drop (18'4"-20'4")
- Micro Minnie (19'2"-22'5")
- Minnie (26'9"-27'11")
- Minnie Plus (29'6"-36'11")
- Minnie Plus Fifth Wheel (27'3"-29'8")

Winnebago Minnies are lightweight, but heavy-duty. Their frames all have industry-leading strength-to-weight ratios, strong tongue-and-groove floor foundations, and welded aluminum side walls to solidly anchor interior furnishings. Every model comes in eight fun colors, and there's a choice for nearly all budgets, with a starting price of \$19,394.

Above: The retro Minnie Drop hearkens back to the original Aljo travel trailer that launched Winnebago in 1958. But it has 2018 roominess and comforts. **Left:** Shea and Erin Laughlin travel nearly full-time with their Minnie travel trailer. "We chose a travel trailer primarily because we wanted to separate our living space from what drives us from place to place," says Erin.

- Super structure framework for build integrity
- Strong, lightweight construction with Thermo-Panel walls and roof; and
- An efficient, automotive-style assembly line with outstanding craftsmanship

Out of these innovations came KD Kaps, a popular pickup bed RV that was easy to ship and install.

In 1966, Winnebago rolled out its first self-contained motorhomes: the F-19, built on a Ford chassis, and in 1967, the famous D22, built on a Dodge chassis. It was the first of many times Winnebago would set the pace for an entire industry.

Soon, an avid community was born. What is now the Winnebago International Travelers (WIT) club drew 155 trailers to the first Grand National Rally in 1966.

Winnebago managed all of this during recovery from a 1964 fire, and construction of three new plants.

By the end of the 1960s, the once-small Iowa company was the No. 1 manufacturer of travel trailers and motorhomes. And the Winnebago

name had become synonymous with all RVs.

For several decades, Winnebago focused on motorhomes and raised the bar with living amenities that have become industry standard. But a surge in camping among young people and active adults is driving a big revival in towables. A generation that values experiences over stuff wants affordable, compact models that help them unplug while keeping modern conveniences and digital connections.

So, while staying strong in motorhomes, Winnebago has returned to its roots, putting smart design and manufacturing into a full line of feature-packed travel trailers. After six decades, the RV pioneer is still a leading innovator, giving the new RVer extraordinary options for work, play, and travel.

➔ **COMING UP IN MARCH:** How the 1970s set the stage for Winnebago's exciting new Class A Gas model — the 2018 Intent.



2018 MINNIE PLUS FIFTH WHEEL

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Grand Ole Opry House has been the site of the famous venue since 1974.

Music City, USA

It may be the tunes that draw visitors to Nashville, Tennessee, but the culture, architecture and dining opportunities make the experience so much more

By Pam Windsor

You can't help but think of country music when you think of Nashville, Tennessee. It's home to the Grand Ole Opry, and it's the place where any up-and-coming country singer has always gone to make it big. In recent years, the TV show "Nashville," currently in its sixth and final season, has only helped solidify that reputation with a younger generation of music fans.

And while country music may be the initial draw to most of the millions of visitors who travel here every year, the city has experienced a cultural boom in recent years that's seen it expand and grow in a number of new directions. "Music City" doesn't only mean "country" anymore. Rock and pop stars live, record and perform here, and Nashville has its own symphony. Other non-music attractions include distilleries, wineries and a fast-growing dining scene. That, combined with historical sites like The Hermitage, Belle Meade Plantation and the Parthenon, make it clear that if you're going to visit Nashville, you need a plan to make sure you see as much as possible.

Downtown you'll see the famous Ryman Auditorium, which served as the home of the Grand Ole Opry (the oldest running radio show in

the world) for 31 years, from 1943 to 1974. In '74, the Ryman closed and the Grand Ole Opry moved to its current home at the Grand Ole Opry House about 20 minutes from downtown. The Ryman later reopened as a music venue and offers a wide variety of shows (country, rock, gospel and more) throughout the year. Both the Ryman and the Grand Ole Opry offer back-stage tours. (Ryman Auditorium has a self-guided tour, as well.)

It's an easy walk from the Ryman to the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, which has two floors of exhibits, artifacts, photos and memorabilia that highlight the careers of artists who have achieved the genre's highest honor. Some of the newer exhibits focus on Loretta Lynn, Faith Hill and Tim McGraw, Shania Twain, and the unique relationship between Johnny Cash and Bob Dylan.

Still downtown, you can visit the George Jones, Johnny Cash and Patsy Cline museums, all within walking distance of each other. The Patsy Cline Museum opened in April 2017 and showcases the short career of one of the greatest female voices

What to See ➔

Perhaps the most famous landmark in Tennessee is the Grand Ole Opry House, located at 2804 Opryland Drive, about 20 minutes from downtown. Nearby you will find numerous restaurants, a golf course and shopping including the large Opry Mills mall.





Above: The Bridgestone Arena located downtown hosts a variety of entertainment events and is the home of the NHL's Nashville Predators. Right: The 42-foot-tall statue of the goddess Athena on display at the Nashville Parthenon is covered in 8 pounds of gold.

in country music, as well as offering insight into her life as a wife, a mother and a friend.

Patsy Cline Museum's Keith Wright says there are many items on display that tell some special stories, including an old scrapbook he counts as his favorite.

"The book was Patsy's scrapbook, where she collected clippings, photographs and things about her career as it went along, and one night she asked Dottie West to take it home for her and take care of it. When Dottie got home she found a \$75 check inside and Patsy had written a note saying, 'I know you're not working right now, pay your rent.' That's the kind of woman Patsy Cline was," said Wright. Cline's music career was cut short when she died in a plane crash in 1963.

The Johnny Cash Museum, which is in the same building, pays tribute to the Man in Black with personal items such as handwritten lyrics to songs like "I Walk the Line" and "Folsom Prison Blues," artifacts from San Quentin, and a heart pillow Valentine he gave to his beloved wife, June Carter Cash.

The George Jones Museum is part of a bigger entertainment complex

that also features a restaurant and rooftop bar. The museum was created by Jones's widow, Nancy, and includes items she collected over the years.

"George used to say, 'Why do you hold on to all of that? Nobody cares about that stuff,'" she recalled. "He never realized that he was a legend or an icon. I told him I was going to put it all in a museum and he'd say, 'Well, go ahead; nobody's going to come.' Boy, was he wrong."

While you're downtown you'll also want to check out Lower Broadway, also known as Honky Tonk Row. A honky-tonk is a club with music, and

the music here starts at around 11 a.m. every day and goes into the early hours of the next morning. There are no cover charges and it's a family-friendly environment, with all ages welcome to walk in and enjoy the music until around 6 or 7 p.m. Don't miss a chance to stop in to a couple of these places and hear some incredible singers and musicians.

One other interesting spot for music fans is the Historic RCA Studio B. It's the only recording studio open for tours on Music Row, and the only way to tour it is to buy a ticket at the Country Music Hall of Fame. Your ticket includes transportation. More than 35,000 songs were brought to life here by artists like Elvis Presley, the Everly Brothers, Porter Wagoner,



Right: Known as the "Athens of the South," Nashville also is home to a full-scale replica of the famous Parthenon.

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GETAWAY

NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE

Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson and others. Elvis alone recorded more than 260 songs at Studio B and you can see the exact spot (called “the sweet spot”) where he stood when he sang.

Austrian tourist Alexander Fritsch told me that visiting Studio B was the highlight of his Nashville visit.

“Studio B is where Elvis recorded and Roy Orbison recorded, and many other greats recorded. One of my favorite guitar players, Chet Atkins, ran that studio as a producer, so seeing it was very special for me.”

When it comes to dining out, Nashville affords plenty of options. If you’re downtown, check out Puckett’s, Jack’s or Martin’s Bar-B-Que. You might try Urban Grub in the trendy 12 South neighborhood, or visit Biscuit Love for breakfast or brunch in the Gulch neighborhood. Another popular Nashville breakfast spot is the Pancake Pantry in Hillsboro Village.

There are plenty of breweries, distilleries and wineries in and around

Right, top: Two Rivers Campground is a convenient home base for area attractions. Right, bottom: The Johnny Cash Museum is a tribute to the legacy of the Man in Black.

Nashville. You can also take half a day and visit the Jack Daniel’s Distillery about 70 miles outside Nashville in Lynchburg, Tennessee. It’s interesting to note that the world’s No. 1-selling whiskey is made in a “dry” county. During a tour and tasting you’ll hear some of the history of Jack Daniel and the distillery, and discover some interesting facts about the whiskey. For example, Frank Sinatra was such a fan, he was buried with an airplane bottle of the stuff in his lapel pocket.

Nashville is home to two historic mansions that are definitely worth visiting. President Andrew Jackson’s Hermitage home is about 15 minutes outside of downtown. Exhibits and displays in the 13-room Greek Revival structure, along with his wife’s beautiful gardens, help paint a picture



of Jackson’s life. He and his wife are buried on the property.

Belle Meade Plantation is another beautiful example of Greek Revival antebellum architecture. It’s also one of the few homes that had a Civil War battle fought on the lawn. If you look at the columns on the front porch you can see the marks left by cannon fire.

After seeing two examples of Greek Revival architecture, be sure to check out Nashville’s full-scale replica of

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the Parthenon. The original structure was built in 1897 for the Tennessee Centennial Exposition as a way to mark the city's designation as the "Athens of the South." It was permanently reconstructed in 1931. There's a 42-foot-tall statue of the goddess Athena inside. The statue is covered with 8 pounds of gold.

When choosing where to stay in Nashville, options include two Good Sam campgrounds, both just 10 to 15 minutes from downtown.

Nashville Shores Lakeside Resort is a vacation spot all on its own with a 14,000-acre lake, a marina, a waterpark, a Treetop Adventure Park with zip lines and rope courses, pontoon boats, jet skis and more.

"We have full hookups and Wi-Fi at our park," noted Nashville Shore's Daniel Strobel. "We also have a laundry facility, and if you stay on property you get discounts to our waterpark, you get discounts to our zip line and ropes course, you get discounts to jet ski rentals and pontoon boat rentals, and more." There's also a shuttle to take guests to the Grand Ole Opry.

Two Rivers Campground is owned by Rusty and Cathy Rust, and sits right next to a Camping World SuperCenter. In addition to all of the normal amenities offered, the campground has a full concierge desk right on the property.

"When people come to Nashville and want to do tours, dinner shows and get Opry tickets, we offer access



Above, left: The famed mineral-rich Cave Spring Hollow that provides all the water for Jack Daniel's Distillery. Above, right: Although Lynchburg, Tennessee, is located in a dry county, visitors to the distillery are allowed a taste at a number of tours (a dry option is also available).



to all of that," Cathy explained. "And the tours do pick up right here at the campground."

And for those who like to stay close to home in the evenings, the park has live music of its own five nights a week. She adds that extra discounts are available for people staying an extended amount of time.

You do need to book in advance at Two Rivers and Nashville Shores, as both stay very busy.

If you plan a visit to Nashville, make sure to allow enough time. You'll be surprised at just how much there is to see and do. **M**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Belle Meade Plantation
615-356-0501, www.bellemeadeplantation.com

Country Music Hall of Fame
615-416-2001,
www.countrymusichalloffame.org

Grand Ole Opry
615-871-6779, www.opry.com

The Hermitage
615-889-2941, www.thehermitage.com

Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp.
800-657-6910, www.visitmusiccity.com

Nashville Shores Lakeside Resort
615-889-7050, www.nashvilleshores.com

Ryman Auditorium
615-889-3060, www.ryman.com

Two Rivers Campground
615-883-8559, www.tworiverscampground.com

Jack Daniel's Distillery was the first registered distillery in the United States. Naturally, Daniel was the whiskey's Master Distiller.

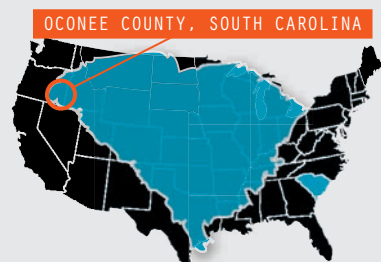


Secluded Lake Jocassee is noted for its clear, cold waters, fine mountain views, and for its fishing and water activities.



THE GOLDEN CORNER

Known as the Mountain Lakes Region, South Carolina's Oconee County is renowned for lush green foothills, sparkling streams and breathtaking waterfalls



Getting There

The Cherokee Foothills National Scenic Byway (State Highway 11) provides a pleasant, historic alternative to Interstate 85 near the North Carolina border to just shy of the Georgia state line, near the South Carolina welcome center.

We're with five other thrill-seekers onboard one of Wildwater Adventures' bright-blue rafts as it plunges like a rubber submarine into the roiling abyss of the Chattooga River's notorious Bull Sluice Rapids on the border of South Carolina and Georgia.

Gripped by a curious sensation of terror and exhilaration, I'm crouching down, clinging to my now-useless paddle in hopes of remaining in the raft as it is consumed by an ocean-sized wave of bone-chilling water. Relieved and smugly satisfied to be one of three stalwart paddlers still onboard as the raft pops to the surface in the after-swell, I'm convinced this is a roaring good way to begin a four-day adventure in South Carolina's Oconee County.

Accompanied by my friend, Melinda, whose superior intelligence and acute sense of self-preservation prompted her to decline the optional Bull Sluice plunge, we're setting out to explore the highlights of the Palmetto State's northwestern-most county, alternatively known as the Mountain Lakes region or the "Golden Corner."

Situated along the Blue Ridge escarpment, Oconee County's 674 square miles are defined by forested



foothills, jewel-like lakes, rushing streams and rivers, and the highest concentration of waterfalls — some 150 of them — in the eastern United States. Mountain Lakes, therefore, does seem to most aptly describe the region.

We're taking our tour in a Winnebago Trend Class C motorhome as we amble along the sinuous Cherokee Foothills National Scenic Byway (State Highway 11) to learn what Oconee County has to offer visitors to the area.

We get things rolling with the

Above, from left: The Winnebago was right at home at South Cove County Park on Lake Keowee. The Tiki Hut at Lake Keowee Marina is a popular spot for alfresco dining. Numerous waterfalls — such as Wright's Creek Falls — are accessible only by boat at Lake Jocassee.

aforementioned whitewater rafting exercise. The Chattooga is more than just an exciting rafting venue (some may recall it being featured in the 1972 film *Deliverance*) — it's an aesthetic masterwork of nature as well, designated in 1974 as a Wild and Scenic River.

Our base of operations for the first two days is South Cove County Park, a meticulously maintained multiuse

complex at the southern tip of Lake Keowee, conveniently positioned between Oconee's two main towns, Seneca and Walhalla. It features 88 RV sites with partial hookups, a fishing pier, playgrounds and picnic areas. While hooking up at our lakefront site, we're greeted by a flotilla of panhandling waterfowl.

During an early morning walk the next day, we encounter an angler



armed with a spinning rod, intently flipping a green artificial worm, which he claims is working well for spotted bass. He tells us that Keowee is widely known for its trophy bass and is home to several annual tournaments. Fishing is an extremely popular pastime here in the Mountain Lakes region and possibilities for it are many and varied. In that regard, let me backtrack a bit to say that, in addition to its Wild and Scenic designation, the Chattooga River is listed in Trout Unlimited's "America's 100 Best Trout Streams."

We head out, stopping first at Mountain Rest Café, west of Walhalla on State Highway 28, to fortify ourselves with a big country breakfast including such Southern requisites as grits, and biscuits and gravy. Next, we drive 4 miles south to work off the biscuit 'n' gravy-fed calories with a 1.3-mile hike to Yellow Branch Falls. The jaunt along a forested path is rewarded by great views of the falls

cascading more than 60 feet over glistening rock ledges.

Next, we visit nearby Issaqueena Falls — a big and beautiful 200-foot cascade — followed by what must be Oconee County's most unusual visitor attraction. Stumphouse Tunnel is a 1,617-foot-long, 20-foot-wide passageway to nowhere — originally intended to be a railroad tunnel. The tunnel was to be one of three in South Carolina essential to completion of the proposed Blue Ridge Railroad route linking Charleston to the Ohio River Valley. Construction began in 1856 when an English company imported a small army of Irish miners to the site, intent on gouging out the 5,863-foot passage, largely by pick and shovel. Funding difficulties and the Civil War brought the project to an end. Neither the tunnel nor the Blue Ridge Railroad line was ever completed.

Checking in for our rafting trip the day prior at Wildwater Adventures' headquarters in Long Creek, we'd

The Toxaway River flows into Lake Jocassee at its northern tip, near Salem.



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Above, from left: Ziplining on the Canopy Tour at Wildwater Adventures Center in Long Creek. Wildwater's run along Section III of the Chattooga River features mostly Class II and III rapids, but also takes on Bull Sluice Rapids, an optional Class IV that inevitably soaks everyone onboard.

“Although launching out on the first section is a bit unnerving, we’re soon soaring among the treetops like Tarzan and Jane. The three-hour Canopy Tour is great fun.”

Initiated as a railroad tunnel in 1854, the 1,617-foot-long Stumphouse Tunnel was never completed, thanks largely to the Civil War.

noticed the company also conducts a ziplining program. The center has set up a 10-section course with lines running through a 20-acre hardwood forest. Always receptive to new adventures, we call Wildwater to reserve spots on an afternoon Canopy Tour.

We’re bound for Long Creek, on the county’s western edge, where we’ll stop for lunch and a look-see at Chattooga Belle Farm, a 138-acre working farm owned by Ed and Kitty Land. It’s an impressive layout that includes a restaurant (Belle’s Bistro), farm store and event barn overlooking acres of vineyards, orchards and berry patches artfully swathing the surrounding hillsides.

We dine on salads fresh from Kitty’s gardens and juicy Angus burgers produced from the farm’s herd. Ed then gives us a tour of the facilities, where we see the farm store well-stocked with Chattooga Belle branded products including jams, preserves, relishes, packaged cuts of Angus beef and rows of Muscadine wine that Ed produces and bottles on the premises.

Following some rudimentary instruction to prepare us for our Wildwater Canopy Tour, Mel and I are fitted with helmets, gloves and an apparatus resembling a parachute harness — now ready to make the leap. Although launching out on the first section is a bit unnerving, we’re soon soaring among the treetops like Tarzan and Jane. The three-hour Canopy Tour is great fun. We’d do it

again in a minute.

Back in Walhalla, a town settled by German colonists back in 1850 that now serves as the seat of Oconee County, we head for two of the region’s top cultural attractions. Housed in a renovated 1892 tobacco factory, Oconee Heritage Center preserves the history and cultural heritage of the county through its sizeable array of exhibits and collections of original artifacts. It’s like a giant antique store where one could spend hours browsing. Just a block away, we visit the Museum of the Cherokee Indian, which houses a priceless collection of vintage Cherokee baskets, pottery, weapons and clothing.

Next on our agenda is a visit to Clemson, where Mel, who loves gardening, is eager to visit the South Carolina Botanical Garden, a 295-acre sanctuary of woodlands and niche gardens nestled on the edge of the Clemson University campus. We are very near Lake Hartwell at this point. A U.S. Army Corps of Engineers reservoir covering 56,000 acres, it’s the area’s largest body of water, most of it lying in neighboring Pickens and Anderson counties. While it offers an abundance of recreational and fishing opportunities, we won’t have time during our brief stay to see it — so Hartwell will have to wait for a future visit.

Moving on now via State Highway 11 to Oconee’s northern reaches, we aim for Devils Fork State Park, near the village of Salem, where we’ll spend

our last two nights. The campground here features 59 RV sites with water and electricity — all hidden away in the woods alongside Lake Jocassee.

Jocassee is remote, lying well off the beaten path, and access to it is limited, with the park serving as its only point of entry by road. It is not a place that overwhelms one at first glance. After checking in at the park visitor center we drive down to the boat ramp where a group of kids are pulling out canoes. The view from this point, however, is nothing special, and we have something of a ho-hum reaction as we head for our site.

That impression changes soon after we board Stephanie Couch's pontoon boat the next morning for a five-hour tour of the lake. Stephanie owns Jocassee Keowee Rentals and has been guiding tours and renting kayaks and other watercraft here at Jocassee for more than 20 years so we sense we're in good hands. Once beyond a row of multimillion-dollar homes on the lake's western shore, we enter a wonder world of unspoiled nature — Jocassee's sparkling blue water framed by mountains covered in dense green forest, all topped by billowing clouds.

Cruising north, we encounter innumerable streams and waterfalls tumbling into the lake — which, along with nearly 75 inches of rainfall annually, feed the 7,500-acre, 400-foot-deep lake, adding to its reputation for pure, clean water. These streams and rivers emanate from the Jocassee Gorges, a protected watershed of almost 250,000 acres extending into neighboring North Carolina, a sanctuary devoid of polluting runoff.

Hoping to show us a bald eagle family that she's recently seen perched in a tall pine, Stephanie cuts the motor as we drift silently into a wooded cove. No luck this day, but we do spot a giant blue heron sunning on the shore. We see some of the native flora as well — blooming sourwood, rhododendron, silver leaf hydrangea and a sprinkling of coreopsis. Stephanie says we must come back in the fall when the oaks and maples turn, making for a real show of color.

Waterfalls are now becoming larger and we pause at several — Wright's Creek, Mill Creek and Laurel Fork falls — for photos. We also come upon a pile of boulders where a group of youngsters are having a ball, barrel diving into the lake.

At the very top end of Jocassee now, where the Toxaway River spills into it over a granite ledge, we disembark, clambering up to a suspension bridge over the river for a better view of the lake. The bridge enables hikers on the 82-mile-long Foothills Trail, which extends along the escarpment from Oconee State Park to Caesars Head State Park, to cross the steep Jocassee Gorge.

Looking around us here, we surmise this must be one of the most beautiful and serene places we've ever seen — a contention endorsed by a far more authoritative source than ourselves. In a 2012 special issue, National Geographic featured Jocassee Gorges — where we now stand — as one of "50 of the World's Last Great Places," a "Destination of a Lifetime." The isolated gorges support a unique ecosystem, including the highest number of salamanders found

anywhere in the world and more than 60 species of rare plants, including the Oconee bell, an extremely rare and delicate wildflower whose nearest relatives grow in China and Japan.

Contemplating the beauty that has unfolded during the day, it seems unbelievable to us that Lake Jocassee — and Lake Keowee as well — are man-made. They're actually reservoirs, created in the early 1970s by Duke Energy to supply hydroelectric power and later to serve as a source of cooling water for the utility company's Oconee Nuclear Power Station.

Back at our campsite, we dine on one of Ed Land's big Chattooga Belle Angus steaks and recount events of our fabulous day on Lake Jocassee — all the while aware that we must pack up and go in the morning. We are reluctant to leave this last best place and pledge to return one day soon ... perhaps for fall colors. **M**

For More Information

Chattooga Belle Farm

866-647-9768, www.chattoogabellefarm.com

Devils Fork State Park

864-944-2639, www.southcarolinaparks.com/devilsfork

Jocassee Keowee Rentals

864-704-0004, www.lakejocassee.com

Mountain Lakes CVB

864-380-3976, www.scmountainlakes.com

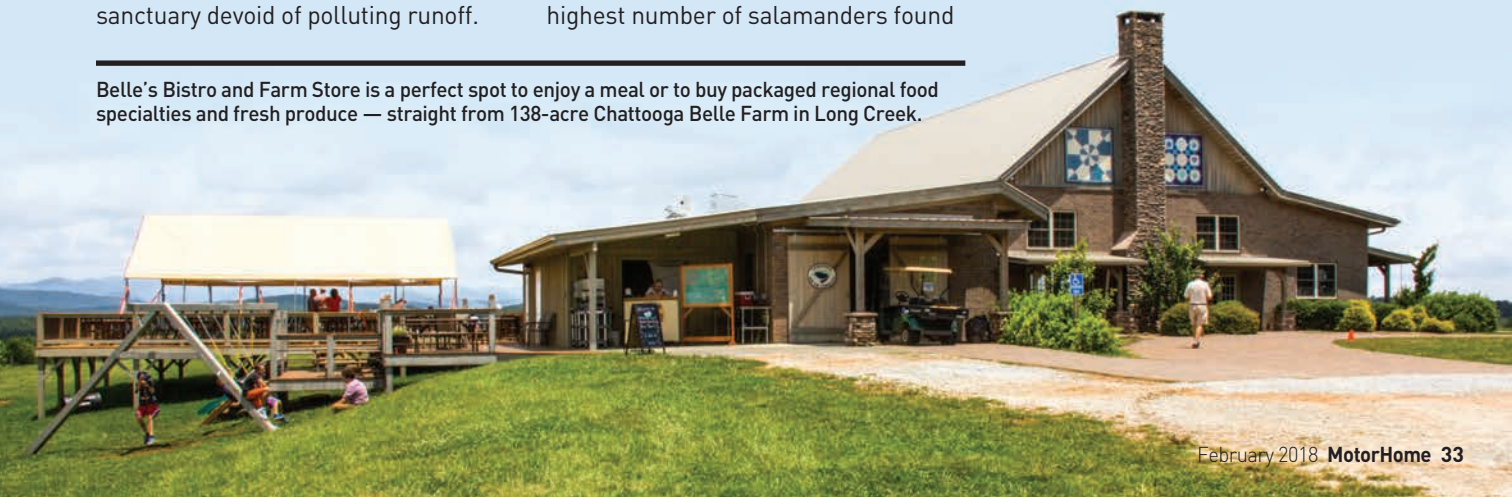
South Cove County Park

864-882-5250, www.experienceoconee.com/parks/south-cove-park

Wildwater Adventures

866-319-8870, www.wildwater rafting.com

Belle's Bistro and Farm Store is a perfect spot to enjoy a meal or to buy packaged regional food specialties and fresh produce — straight from 138-acre Chattooga Belle Farm in Long Creek.



LATEST ENTRIES: MOTORHOMES FOR 2018

NEW MODELS AND STRATEGIES WERE ON DISPLAY AT THE ANNUAL OPEN HOUSE EVENT IN ELKHART, INDIANA

If there remained any lingering doubts about the surging health of the motorized RV market, Entegra Coach eliminated them last fall. Just eight months after another venerable Class A builder, Tiffin Motorhomes, rolled out the Wayfarer — its first Class C since 1992 — Entegra ended its holdout as a Class A-only manufacturer with the

debut of the Middlebury, Indiana-based company's Odyssey and Esteem Class C motorhomes. And though this clearly was one of the more newsworthy releases during the annual RV Open House in Elkhart, Indiana, plenty of other manufacturers made waves with model updates, upgrades and new products altogether. Some of the highlights include:



Entegra's new Class C Odyssey is built on the Ford F-450 chassis and includes many high-end amenities as standard equipment.



Airstream Atlas

Airstream has debuted what it calls a “Class B-plus” Atlas motorhome. The Atlas represents growth into a new segment for the RV manufacturer, which also produces the Class B Interstate and several travel-trailer lines. Built on the Mercedes-Benz 3500 cutaway chassis, the upscale Atlas features a power slideout room that houses a Murphy bed suite with a Froli ergonomic sleep system, rear bath with teak shower inlay, soft-touch interior styling with ultra-leather seating, signature high-gloss Airstream cabinetry and a 40-inch LED HDTV hidden on a power lift inside the credenza.

Noting that backlog on the Atlas already is to “at least mid- to late-next year,” Tim Garner, general manager of Airstream’s motorized division, said the 24-foot, 9-inch long, \$216,000 (MSRP) Atlas boasts 50 “best-in-class” features — including standard air-ride suspension and a 3.2-kW Cummins-Onan quiet diesel generator — and the most spacious floorplan in Airstream’s touring coach lineup.



Carado

With the debut of the Carado Banff

and Carado Axion, Erwin Hymer Group North America (EHGNA) added the Carado badge to Roadtrek and Hymer as the third brand under its burgeoning umbrella. Like Hymer, Carado also is a brand of Erwin Hymer Group, one of Europe’s largest RV manufacturers and Hymer’s Germany-based parent company.

Both Carado models are built on the RAM ProMaster chassis. The Axion, listed at \$73,461 (MSRP), offers comfort and maneuverability with its shorter exterior length of 17 feet, 9 inches, yet is fully equipped. At 19-feet, 6-inches long, the \$71,000 Banff is basically a bigger version of the Axion, EHGNA Vice President of Sales and Service Mike Snell pointed out, so it offers more interior cargo and living space.

Their appeal is their versatility, added Snell. “During the day, their living areas feature a 72-inch-long couch along the driver’s side. At night, the couch converts into either a single bed or a 47-inch-wide double bed. On the opposite wall, a galley with plenty of storage leads into a spacious Euro-styled rear bath.”



Coachmen Pursuit Precision

Coachmen RV rolled out the Pursuit Precision — a new gas-powered Class A line that slots as a shorter, entry-level version of its five-model Pursuit brand. Also built on the Ford chassis, the Pursuit Precision debuts with two models, the 27DS and 29SS, with an MSRP at about \$120,000. Where the Pursuit ranges from 29 to 33 feet in length, the 27DS and 29SS Pursuit Precision come in at 27 and 29 feet, respectively.

“The idea behind these was to introduce two floorplans that were smaller and hit that entry-level Class A segment a little stronger than we have in the past,” National Sales Manager Zack Eppers said, adding the 27DS features a Dream Dinette and king bed while the 29SS offers an outdoor kitchen, Dream Dinette, large sofa and good counterspace.

“What’s unique about the Precisions is, the only options to choose from are some of the different exterior and interior décors.”



Dynamax Isata 5 Series 30FW

Forest River’s Dynamax has been building luxury Class C motorhomes for years, but the Isata 5 Series takes it to a new level, according to Brian Clemons, general manager of the Dynamax division. “People wanted more carrying capacity and 10,000-pound towing, but they wanted something smaller. So, we went to basically a 30-foot full-wall-slide floorplan in our 5 Series. You get a sofa, dinette, a walk-around queen bed and a shorter length, so you have almost 3,000 pounds of carrying capacity on a 4x2 chassis and about 2,400 to 2,500 pounds on a unit equipped with optional four-wheel-drive,” Clemons added. Built on the RAM 5500 SLT chassis with a Cummins 6.7-liter I-6 turbodiesel and Aisin HD six-speed transmission, the \$170,000-\$180,000 (MSRP) 30FW has a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 19,500 pounds and an overall length of 32 feet. The fully-equipped — there are only five options — motorhome is available in five exterior full-paint

schemes and three interior décor options, all with Early American Cherry cabinetry.



Entegra Odyssey/Esteem

One of the most attention-getting new debuts for 2018 is from Jayco's Entegra Coach, a veteran player in the diesel-pusher market. However, the company has served notice that it is looking to grow into other product categories with the unveiling of its \$110,000 (base MSRP) Odyssey and \$120,000 (MSRP) Esteem Class C's, both on Ford E-450 platforms. Behind the Class C is an effort to strategically position Entegra for the future, according to Andy Baer, Entegra's new general manager. "We've got to have a broader product line to attract more buyers who could, in the future, be a potential buyer for a traditional high-end diesel," Baer said. Nic Martin, director of product development for the Jayco Motorhome Group, considers the new Class C's an entry-level option for the traditional Entegra buyer, but not for the mainstream C-body customer. "To say the Odyssey is 'entry level' is a bit misleading," he interjected. "It has things you won't find in an entry-level Class C, like a full fiberglass roof. And the Esteem has a two-A/C option — no other Class C offers two air conditioners as even an option — plus a big, 12-cubic-foot gas/electric refrigerator. And one of the distinct differences you can see in the front cab is the large automotive-bonded window in the cabover. That's going to be a staple across Entegra's entire Class C line." While the Odyssey and Esteem share similar floorplans

in the 29V and 31L bunkhouse models, both have a unique third configuration. The Odyssey 26D has a queen bed curbside slide in the rear bedroom along with a sofa/dinette streetside slide, while the Esteem 30X has a full-wall slide on the driver's side. The 29V for both lines has the same sofa/dinette streetside slide as the Odyssey 26D, but the queen bed slide moves to the driver's side. The 31L has bunks and a wardrobe in a curbside slide, while a streetside slide in the living area contains a sofa and cooktop/cabinetry.



Fleetwood Axon

REV Recreation Group made quite a splash at the Elkhart RV Open House, with no less than 12 new models making their debut. For its bold red exterior alone, perhaps none stood out more than the Fleetwood Axon 29M, an entry-level Class A gasser at a little more than 29 feet, and an MSRP slightly less than \$100,000. Vice President of Sales and Marketing Lenny Razo said the Axon — and the similar Holiday Rambler Reno 29M — is exactly the type of motorhome coveted by the next generation of buyers.

"It has chrome belt lighting in the side, black trim on everything else and a very raked automobile-type of windshield," Razo said, also mentioning the 50-inch outdoor TV and Bluetooth-controlled speakers.

Another unique feature on the outside is the multifunctional outdoor kitchen. A large baggage door opens to reveal a shelf with a power outlet

to add a small refrigerator, and the insulated bottom part of the compartment can be used as a beverage cooler. Or the entire space can simply be used for gear and equipment storage.

On the inside, the 29M features a full-wall streetside slide that contains a jackknife sofa, a well-equipped kitchen and wardrobe space in the rear bedroom. Located curbside are an L-shaped booth dinette that converts to a bed, a large three-piece bathroom and, in the rear, a king bed master suite. A drop-down twin bed over the cockpit offers additional sleeping space.



Fleetwood Discovery 38N

When officials at REV Recreation Group were looking to expand its Fleetwood Discovery Class A diesel-pusher lineup, Razo said they were only interested in a floorplan that would be considered an industry-first. The result is the \$298,000 (MSRP) Discovery 38N, a 39-foot, three-slide bunkhouse with two full bathrooms and the type of amenities — like an Aqua-Hot hydronic heating system — you'd expect to find in longer coaches retailing well above \$300,000, according to Razo.

"Everybody likes to build bath-and-a-half models, but when you really look at it, if you've got that many people with you — and you could, because this is a bunkhouse — you need an extra shower," Razo added.

The rear bath features a tiled shower with seat, and the second three-piece bath is tucked behind the angled entertainment center



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that offers a 42-inch flat-screen TV, fireplace and Bose sound system.

Across the hallway is the mid-level bunk arrangement — each with its own DVD system — that converts to wardrobe or storage. The bunks are set in the middle of the full-wall streetside slide that also includes a side-by-side washer and dryer and wardrobe opposite an adjustable king bed slideout in the bedroom, and a sofa and L-shaped dinette in the living area. The curbside kitchen slide includes a convection microwave, two-burner induction stovetop and residential refrigerator.



Fleetwood Pulse 24A

The Fleetwood RV Pulse and its sister motorhome, the Holiday Rambler Prodigy, both of which debuted at the Open House — are REV Recreation Group's first Class C diesel RV product since 2009. The Pulse debuts with the 24A and 24B models. The 24A has a dinette slide off the driver's side and a north-south queen bed slide in the rear. The 24B has a full-wall slide on the driver's side that houses a dinette, wardrobe and east-west queen bed. Both have a small, but functional, three-piece bath and a well-appointed galley with high-gloss cabinetry.

The exterior features a choice of partial paint or full-body paint, aluminum baggage doors and an

optional Mobileye collision avoidance system. Another feature is the Truma water heater system. MSRP on the Pulse will be less than \$130,000, Razo added.



Forest River Berkshire XLT 45A

Forest River's Berkshire division has gone all-out for 2018, with a new bus-style look on the outside and an upgraded furniture redesign inside. With the company's flagship Berkshire XLT, there's also a new family floorplan.

The \$376,055 (MSRP) 45A is a four-slideout, two-full bath, bunkhouse motorhome, built on Freightliner's XCR chassis with a GVWR of 44,320 pounds and a 450-horsepower Cummins engine. The 44-foot, 7-inch coach is available in seven exterior full-paint options, five interior treatments and, with six seating options for the front right slideout, there's plenty of room for personal touches. The galley slide includes a stainless-steel French-door residential refrigerator, dishwasher, convection microwave, induction cooktop, solid-surface counter and more. A large LED TV sits above the fireplace and conceals a storage cabinet. The first full bath and the two bunks are built into the slideout, while the master suite features a king bed, a dresser with a full wardrobe, and a large rear bath with dual vanities and corner shower.



Hymer Aktiv

EHGNA had no shortage of debuts at the Open House, including a Hymer Aktiv with a "pop-top" roof. "The pop-top basically is a bed up top. This now allows our motorhome to be the first Class B van that's family friendly. Most vans will sleep two; now we have a four-sleeper. We think it's going to open up a huge market for us as far as families," said EHGNA Vice President of Sales and Service Mike Snell.



Jayco Seneca

Along with other changes to its five-model Seneca line — including a new 37K floorplan — Jayco has upgraded the entire lineup to the new S2RV chassis from Freightliner Custom Chassis Corp. (FCCC). The S2RV front-engine diesel cab chassis is designed and built specifically for the RV market, and caters to drivers who want the power and performance of a diesel without the cockpit of a conventional Class A.

Jayco Motorhome Group Regional

“EVERYBODY LIKES TO BUILD BATH-AND-A-HALF MODELS, BUT IF YOU’VE GOT THAT MANY PEOPLE WITH YOU, YOU NEED AN EXTRA SHOWER.”

Sales Manager Ryan Eash said the S2RV chassis has a number of improvements over the previously used M2 chassis, also from Freightliner.

"You get a 360-horsepower Cummins engine now, instead of the 340. You get the 3000MH six-speed Allison transmission instead of the 2500. You get 100 gallons of diesel instead of 74. You get more DEF capacity. You also have pass-through storage now." The Seneca 37K model, with an MSRP of \$244,900, features one-and-a-half baths — a spacious rear bath and a half-bath tucked in behind the living area's angled entertainment center, which is opposite an L-shaped sofa for optimal viewing. The sofa and a dinette are housed in a full-wall slide on the driver's side, while the curbside slide holds the bed in the master bedroom.



Leisure Travel Vans Wonder

In addition to a host of upgrades to its Unity and Serenity products based on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis, Leisure Travel Vans, a brand of Triple E Recreational Vehicles, has added a front twin bed (FTB) model to the Ford Transit-based Wonder lineup. Featuring European interior styling, the company's second Wonder floorplan carries a \$108,550 base MSRP, has a GVWR of 10,360 pounds and is powered by a 3.2-liter, 185-horsepower Power Stroke turbo-diesel and six-speed automatic transmission.

Ryan Elias, general manager of Triple E RV, said the FTB will appeal to consumers looking for a "Class B-plus" motorhome, yet are

not willing to compromise on living space or amenities. "We believe the new Wonder front twin bed model offers customers an innovative second option to the original Murphy bed floorplan," he said. "Some of the highlights of the new Wonder FTB include an open and spacious layout, a generous galley for those who enjoy cooking and a large bathroom with a 30-by-32-inch enclosed shower."



Thor Motor Coach Axis/Vegas

For 2018, Thor Motor Coach (TMC) rolled out a new 27.7 floorplan for the Vegas and Axis, the shorter gas-powered Class A lines that TMC describes as Recreation Utility Vehicles (RUV). At 28 feet, 6 inches, the 27.7 floorplan is the longest RUV to date, using the extra room for expanded living and storage spaces.

Both slides on the 27.7 are streetside, with the forward extension containing the 68-inch Dream Dinette and 40-inch LED TV next to the cooktop and microwave. The rear slide holds the flip-up queen bed. A closet in the bedroom, and the kitchen sink and cabinet storage in the living area, are in between the two slides. Along the passenger side is a 68-inch jackknife sofa, entry door, refrigerator and cabinet storage, and three-piece bath opposite the bed. "The 27.7 is a bit longer, but it still has that tapered front end, so it's a bit easier to drive," said TMC Vice President of Product Development Jon Krider. "It's not as wide, so it doesn't feel as big and boxy. It's still a little less intimidating than a big Class A."



TMC Palazzo 37.4

TMC also introduced the 37.4 model to its Palazzo line of entry-level diesel pushers for 2018. Featuring three slideouts and seat belts for eight passengers, the \$246,300 (MSRP) 37.4 is built on a Freightliner straight-rail chassis paired with a 340-horsepower Cummins diesel engine.

"This is the longest Palazzo we've ever made; it's the only triple-slide Palazzo that's in our lineup, and it's the first Palazzo for us to have opposing seating," said Adam Gudger, national sales manager for TMC's diesel division. "What's nice is we've actually kind of overlapped this third [curbside] slide, opposing both the front and the rear [streetside] slides, so it almost gives the feeling of opposing slideouts the whole way in the coach."

Just off the mid-entry door, the curbside slide houses an 80-inch-long galley in the living area and a stackable washer/dryer and closet in the rear bedroom that also features a full-width rear wardrobe. A 72-by-80-inch Tilt-A-View king bed is set in the bedroom streetside slide, while the final slide contains a 72-inch Dream Dinette and 68-inch sofa bed backed by a 50-inch retractable LED TV. Theater seating is located opposite the sofa bed/TV setup.



TMC Quantum

Among its numerous debuts, TMC

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2018 RV SHOW LINEUP

MARVEL CHARACTER
APPEARANCES

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EVENTS

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

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

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also unveiled three new floorplans in its Class C Quantum line, including the RC25 3TRAX wall-slide model with rear wardrobe and swivel captain's chairs in the cockpit; the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter-based RW28 with a MEGA-Storage pass-through basement compartment; and the Sprinter-based RT24 with a king bed that converts to twin beds. Of the new models, Krider singled out the 25-foot RC25 in particular. Featuring a full-wall slideout, queen bed, full bathroom, convertible dinette and a large wardrobe in the rear, the RC25, built on an E-Series platform, packs a lot of living in its relatively short space.

"With 25-foot motorhomes, you usually have to give up something. You either give up wardrobe, exterior storage or living space. This one does a good combination of having living space for two to four people," Krider said. "So, from a livability standpoint, if you want to be under 26 feet long in a motorhome and you want all-solid-wood cabinets, solid-surface countertops and the electronics, the big TVs — you'll get it all in this little motorhome."



TMC Tuscany 45MX

The Tuscany 45MX from TMC, Krider noted, is the motorized builder's "most luxurious model" in its Class A diesel-pusher lineup that, across the line, now features a side-radiator chassis from FCCC. "The 45MX is a new 45-footer that has all the luxury features, including a hand-built tile shower, hand-placed tile floors and countertops, Sony electronics and JBL audio systems," said

Krider. "And, for 2018, the Tuscany was completely redesigned," he continued, mentioning Tuscany's new caps, dashboard, 200-watt solar panel system, Winegard 4G connect, multiplex wiring system and the drop-down Project 2000 front bunk. While the Tuscany line starts at about \$399,000, Krider said the 45MX will be listed at about \$420,000.



Winnebago Horizon

The Winnebago Horizon, in particular, proved to be a hit at Open House. "They loved it — it breaks outside of the mold in that diesel-pusher category," said Chad Reece, director of marketing. "It's very sleek, contemporary — we think there's a big market out there for folks who want to take that step in diesel pushers. This takes it to a new level, and the functionality that's designed into it also is a step forward. The layout is intuitive and the ability to use the vehicle has been stepped up, as well." Reece also noted there's more to the Horizon interior than just a sleek appearance. "The styling in the Horizon has a modernistic feel, but it also has a functional purpose," he said. "We were able to create storage inside that makes maximum use of space because we're not limited to straight lines and angles. When you can make curves in cabinetry, you open up options on how you can store things, how things fit together." Horizon interiors sport high-gloss laminates and radius doors as well as stainless-steel and backlit translucent panels that, described Ryan Roske, Winnebago's director of

product management, project the ambiance of a European yacht — an impression for which he partly credits European furniture supplier Technoform S.p.A. "The company we work with is based out of Italy," said Roske. "Their lamination processes are all top-notch. Their tolerances are tight and that is a big plus working with them."

Initially available in lengths of 40 and 42 feet and retailing for \$400,000 to \$430,000 (MSRP), the Horizon is built on a hybrid Maxum chassis. "We buy an XCL lower rail chassis from Freightliner and then we bridge it together, adding some width for strength to the full width of the motorhome," said Roske.



Winnebago Revel

Winnebago's new Revel is an aggressively styled Class B with an MSRP of \$140,000 to \$150,000. Designed for outdoor enthusiasts, the Revel offers a rear queen bed that raises to the ceiling to allow storage capacity for a single motorcycle or mountain bikes. The configuration provides the room for a marine-style bathroom/shower with slide-in teakwood shelves that convert the entire bath into a large storage area when not in use. Outside, a clamp-on-style ladder that attaches to a roof rail around the entire motorhome facilitates tie-downs for kayaks or gear storage. The Revel also features a 200-watt solar panel backed by an inverter system and batteries for extended dry camping. The motorhome also has diesel-powered comfort and water heater systems. **M**

By Owen Mitchell

SUN SHADE SOLUTIONS

Magne Shade creates an easy way to reduce solar heat

Ever since shade cloth appeared in the 1990s, it has found an ever-increasing market, including motorhomes. During warm or hot weather, the sun streaming through a motorhome windshield can dramatically raise interior temperature even when interior curtains are closed. The result can be discomfort and/or more power devoted to operate the air conditioners.

Shade cloth (mesh) is an effective remedy, blocking much of the heat while admitting some light and allowing limited see-through. However, conventional methods of attaching and removing the mesh during trips have been a challenge. Installation and removal usually require the use of a ladder to reach swivel fasteners or snaps used to hold the cover in place, and the ladder often has to be strapped to the

rear of the motorhome for travel — somewhat unsightly, not to mention the safety risk of fiddling with swivels/snaps while perched high on a ladder.

Roger and Clare Hunckler of Magne Shade came up with a better

way: temporarily securing the shades to the windshield with strong rare-earth magnets strategically located in pairs around the circumference of the shade. The outside magnets are sewn into pockets in the shade, and the opposing inside magnets are attached to the inside surface of the windshield with double-sided adhesive discs.

A telescoping 6-foot wand (40 inches collapsed) is used to lift the cover to the windshield so the matching outside/inside magnets can attract each other. No more swivels or snaps, and no more ladder. And the shade can be removed easily.

While the most popular shade colors are brown and black, the Huncklers decided to add more style by offering the option of hundreds of choices of digital photographic images for the shades — anything from scenic mountains, lakes, streams and sunsets to the customer's favorite libation.

An aluminum wand is used to place the Magne Shade on the windshield — without a ladder.



For our installation on an Itasca motorhome, we chose a scenic mountain lake image, and supplied several windshield measurements to ensure precise fit.

Magne Shade provides detailed instructions as well as videos on the company website, which describe the ordering and installation process. Our installation went as described with the rather surprising exception of accidentally allowing a couple of the inside magnets to get too close together, which the instructions caution against. They jumped together with surprising magnetic force.

After a bit of wrestling, we got them separated and carefully laid them out — several inches from each other — on the underside of a steel cookie sheet, per instructions. The instructions specifically caution that the magnets can jump, can be dangerous to customers who are fitted with cardiac pacemakers, and should be kept away from sensitive electronics.

The installation process begins with a “dry fit” by two people to position the inside magnets opposite the outside magnets without removing the film from the adhesive on the inside magnets — thus, no stick-down at this point. This allows adjustment of their position for later permanent placement.

Using a ladder, one installer holds the shade in place at the center of the windshield at the top, which places two outside magnets in position, while the other person places two center magnets on the inside of the windshield. Immediately the two magnets attract each other through the glass and hold the center portion of the shade securely in place, allowing the same procedure with the remaining eight magnets.

This serves as a temporary test fit prior to removing the adhesive backing and sticking all 10 in place



1



2



3

[1-3] The shade is held in place while magnets are positioned on inside surface of windshield.



[4] Inside magnets create a strong magnetic field with outside magnets sewn into strategically placed pockets in the shade. [5] Magnets can be spaced out on a steel cookie sheet to keep them from "jumping." [6] Magne Shade EZ Fold tire covers leave wheel visible; when not in use they can be folded for compact storage.

on the windshield. During the test fit we marked the position of each inside magnet with a non-permanent marker pen to ensure correct placement.

After the magnets were in place and the shade was wrinkle-free, we peeled the backing off the adhesive on each magnet and stuck them securely to the inside of the windshield, one at a time for the final fit.

After allowing the adhesive to set for several hours, we could remove the shade by gently pulling it away from the inside magnets. For reinstallation, the wand is fitted into slots at the top of the shade, allowing it to be lifted into place and into the magnetic field of the inside magnets.

The windshield wiper covers also are made of the digitally printed shade cloth and they completed an attractive and attention-getting package. Heat-wise, the payoff was immediate when compared with closing interior curtains: more light and appreciably less heat. Magne Shade states that the shade cloth will block 90 percent of the sun. Using an infrared thermometer, we measured 88 degrees Fahrenheit on the beige vinyl dash behind the shade and 105 degrees with

the sun directly on the dash.

Magne Shade also markets EZ Fold tire shades that we found convenient to install or remove. They are made of black polyester, designed for total sun block to prolong the life of tires. The shades are made with spring steel wire around their circumference and are easy to collapse and store by twisting them in opposite directions so they fold into layers. In our case, the shades were made for 22.5-inch tires and they folded for storage to a circumference of 14 inches with thickness of about 2 inches. A convenient storage bag is provided.

Pricing for a standard solid-color windshield shade is \$549 for windshield heights less than 56 inches, or \$599 for higher windshields; the optional digital printed shade is an additional \$395. Tire shades are \$57 each. The company also markets NanoShades for side windows, in varying sizes. All products are made in the USA. **M**

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The Spirit of Iowa

The opposing-slide Winnebago 31D, with its welcoming living area, is ready for family-friendly adventures

By Donya Carlson

It was almost midnight and I was standing outside watching a spectacular Midwest thunderstorm. The rest of the testing crew was deep in slumber, their RVs dark, as were the other RVs in the campground. Lightning flashes illuminated the Winnebago Spirit 31D, my home for the week in Elkhart, Indiana, where about 80 percent of America's RVs are manufactured.

But not the majority of Winnebagos. With the exception of some of the company's towables that are manufactured in Middlebury, Indiana, and high-end diesel motorhomes in Junction City, Oregon, the renowned RV giant builds most of its motorhomes in Winnebago County, Iowa. Talk about getting into the spirit — the company was named by Winnebago's founder John K. Hanson after the county in which it resides, and the river flowing through Forest City, where the company's headquarters is located.

The Spirit is offered in seven floorplans, ranging from several with no slides to some with three, like the 31D we tested. Though this 32-foot, 9-inch Class C could have entertained up to seven more overnight guests, I had the place to myself. Class C's are known to be family-friendly, and this unit features a cabover bed as well as opposing slideouts in the living area that house a dinette/bed on the curbside and sofa/bed on the streetside, making for a triangle of sleeping for six. For private quarters, head to the rear of the Spirit to the bedroom, with its queen bed in a third slideout that deploys from the rear of the motorhome.

Because this bed moves out on a platform — practically surrounding you with shelving — you must crawl into bed from the foot of the 60-by-80-inch mattress. You'll also need to climb over the bed to get to the cabinet, and there's no storage under the bed since the freshwater tank is housed

ABOVE: The Winnebago Spirit 31D, seated on a Ford E-450 chassis, provided a smooth ride down the highways and backroads of Elkhart, Indiana.

there. But that's not to say there's no room for essentials. On the curbside, what the company calls a "nightstand" is really a shelf that runs the 7-foot length of the bedroom — and it can hold a lot of overflow. As if this isn't enough space to keep magazines, tablets, your dog or cat, eyeglasses, nibbles and anything else you may want bedside, there's a large storage pocket below the nightstand and another shelf parked over the head of the bed.

This overhead shelf, while good for keeping items handy, limits headroom, so sitting up in bed to read or watch the 24-inch TV (\$471 option) on the wall above the drawers at the foot of the bed is out. Two reading lights illuminate the overhead shelf so you can see its contents, and they shed enough light to read by without being so bright that your bed buddy will feel like he/she is in the spotlight. A USB charger and 120-volt AC GFCI outlets are somewhat hidden, tucked up under the nightstand. Large windows on either side of the bed allow for natural light and a decent cross-breeze.

There's good airflow and natural light in the Spirit's living area as well, with large sliding windows over the dinette and sofa and a ceiling vent above the cabover bunk. The galley's great use of floor space makes for a welcoming gathering place, where up to nine people (with the cockpit's swiveling captain's chairs) can com-



Above left: Handy open shelving and a 32-inch HDTV are mounted over the dinette that's housed in the curbside slideout. Above right: Chill and fill: The hallway leading back to the bedroom from the living area features a 7.5-cubic-foot refrigerator that blends in nicely alongside the pantry, a large wardrobe and drawers for lots of packing space.



fortably sit. The captain's chairs have 4-inch booster seats to raise the occupants so they don't feel left out of the party. Swiveling the chairs around takes a little finesse in order to clear the doghouse and is probably best done *before* having that glass of wine.

One evening, Publisher Emeritus Bob Livingston's wife, Lynne, and I parked ourselves on the sofa to shuck several dozen ears of corn from Sweet Corn Charlie's, a nearby farm that sells such good corn on the cob that it became a staple for almost every dinner. Afterward, sweeping up the corn silk was quick work on the vinyl floor, though the sofa was so comfort-

able that we joked that we should sit here and enjoy a glass of wine and see how long it would take until our group noticed that the corn was missing from the dinner table.

The sofabled, an optional TrueComfort+Sofa with Memory Foam (\$1,283), has two seat belts for travel and is the comfiest spot in the house. The queen bed in the bedroom was perfectly adequate, but once I discovered the 58-by-74-inch TrueComfort's thick pad of bliss, the queen bed was abandoned for the rest of my stay. For tall folks who need a couple more inches of legroom, you can lose the back cushion, but it served as a comfy headboard for me. And there's plenty of headroom to sit up in bed and watch the 32-inch HDTV with Sony CD/DVD player set over the dinette's window across the aisle. For movie night, the TrueComfort's wide armrest served as the perfect place to set a bowl of popcorn, and the couple inches of countertop next to the range served as a good place to keep a drink.

With the TrueComfort reclined for sleeping, it leaves a 16-inch walkway between the foot of it and the dinette. There's room to pass through into the



Left: An L-shape galley places the sink, range, convection microwave, oven and cabinetry in close proximity. The TrueComfort+Sofa lives up to its name with memory foam cushions that pamper your behind and back.



Above: Attaching the privacy curtain in the cab was quick work, and the captain's chairs swivel around for additional seating. The cabover bed is almost the width of a queen-size mattress.

cab, but it does crowd the bunk ladder for the overhead bed, so you'll need to fiddle with the ladder to position it just right and step onto the sofa to climb up.

The dinette, with its 4-inch-thick ultraleather cushions, makes into a 6-by-3½-foot bed. There are seat belts for three in the dinette, and the two-tone black-and-tan back cushions snapped in securely for travel. The area under the dinette's bench seats was good for stowing large items, though the plywood bases are not hinged, so some assembly was required when putting them back in place. Above, open shelves with netting

are handy for keeping DVDs, hats, and odds and ends next to the TV.

The kitchen is set up efficiently with a stainless-steel two-basin sink, range with oven and convection microwave grouped together in an L-shape that places everything just a step or two apart. For an RV that's clearly designed to accommodate a lot of happy campers, the kitchen is set up more for one person to do the cooking. With an 18-inch-wide countertop, there's room for just one person to chop and prep as there were no sink covers or a countertop extension. Of course, you can always set up shop on the dinette table and enlist the help of a couple of

WHAT'S HOT

TrueComfort+Sofa, living area with seating for nine, long nightstand in bedroom, lighted exterior storage accessible from three sides

WHAT'S NOT

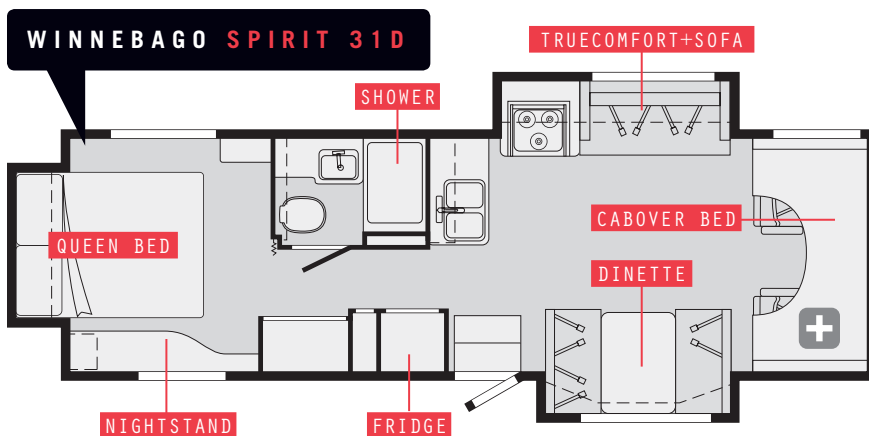
No countertop extension or sink covers in kitchen, overhead shelf in bedroom gets in way of sitting up in bed



sous-chefs.

Behind the three-burner range with a one-piece grate covering are 7½ inches of counterspace, which is handy for keeping bottles, spices and cooking utensils at the ready. There's also a glass backsplash to the right to keep cooking splatters off the neighboring TrueComfort+Sofa. Across the aisle is a 7.5-cubic-foot Norcold refrigerator that's set midway between the living area and the one step up to the aisle that leads back to the bedroom and bathroom. Putting my foot on the step when perusing the contents of the refrigerator was natural, just as the location of the step itself was.

A large pantry with four drawers on slides is located to the right of the refrigerator, and more cabinetry is across the way. The bathroom door does double-duty by closing the bathroom and bedroom off from the galley, but a wise investment would be a door stop since the door handle, when bumped against the cabinet, can leave a ding in the side of the cabinet. A second accordion-style door that Winnebago refers to as a folding door, meets where the bedroom joins the hall. With both doors closed, this area makes for a private bathroom/dressing room with access to the large



wardrobe and four drawers.

There's no lack of places to hang towels in the bathroom, with a bar on the wall behind the toilet, on the inside and outside of the sliding glass shower doors, a towel ring next to the mirror and double hooks on the door. The toilet is set at a good height of 17 inches, but you do have to step up and down almost a foot into the (separate) shower. With the skylight, there's 6 feet 7 inches headroom in the shower, and there's an exhaust fan (the only one in the motorhome). My feet stayed toasty warm after a shower one cold morning thanks to the floor-level heat register.

The Spirit's control panels are grouped together on the wall opposite the refrigerator and the Coleman-Mach thermostat is a cinch to control the 15,000-Btu air conditioner and 30,000-Btu furnace. While the furnace was turned on a few times to take the edge off on a couple of chilly mornings, the Spirit's A/C with Indiana's change-in-a-minute weather — from muggy-and-hot to muggy-and-rainy to muggy-and-muggier — was on a good portion of the daytime and did a fine job keeping the interior comfortable.

While the 31D is conducive to group gatherings in the living area, it's also set up well for when alone time is in order, with the bedroom nicely separated from the galley and the bathroom in between. The test motorhome had the optional Exterior Tailgate Package (\$1,001) with a 32-inch TV and Jensen DVD player, making for a total of three TVs, good for family members who like to watch their own programs.

Entering the motorhome from

outside, there's no exterior step to wipe your feet on, so using an outdoor mat would be good, otherwise you'll be tracking in dirt. A welcome touch is a large interior handrail, and switches for the awning, lights and hydraulic auto leveling system set inside the door for easy access. The dinette slide to the right restricts the entry door from folding open against the coach, of which I'm not a big fan.

With the push of a button, the electric awning moves out posthaste, and slopes down lower in front to keep us in shade longer during the day. At night, almost 15 feet of LED-strip shines enough light to read by. We enjoyed sitting under the awning at night to watch the light show put on by the fireflies.

Spanning the width of the Spirit at the rear is a most practical locking exterior storage compartment, and it houses the Jensen DVD player for the exterior TV. The lighted storage is accessible from three sides, and with the large doors held up out of the way with clips, it makes packing and retrieving items convenient. It's 3 feet tall at the highest point with "bins" to keep stuff contained. Another exterior storage area below the TV was large enough to hold a couple of folding chairs.

Our caravan of test motorhomes headed out one day for some sight-seeing and to weigh the RVs. Rolling down country roads in a \$120,000 motorhome with rear air springs and all the comforts of home was such a contradiction to the Amish horse-drawn buggies sharing the lanes. Here I was settled into a plush high-

Below left: Optional Exterior Tailgate Package adds a third TV, with the DVD player inside the rear exterior storage compartment that has access from three sides. Below right: Queen bed is on a platform so there's storage on both sides, and the nightstand spans the length of the bedroom.



Specifications

Chassis

Model	Ford E-450
Engine	6.8-L V-10
SAE Hp	305-hp @ 4,250 rpm
Torque	420 lb-ft @ 3,250 rpm
Transmission	TorqShift 6-speed auto
Axle Ratio	4.56:1
Front Tires	LT225/75R16
Rear Tires	LT225/75R16
Wheelbase	220"
Brakes Front/Rear	Four-wheel disc, ABS
Suspension Front/Rear	Coil/ multi-leaf single-stage
Fuel Capacity	55 gal
Fuel Economy	9.84 mpg
Warranty	Engine 3-year/36,000-mile bumper to bumper/60,000-mile powertrain

Coach

Exterior Length	32' 9"
Exterior Width	8' 5.5"
Exterior Height	11' 1" (with A/C)
Interior Width	8'
Interior Height	6' 10" Galley/6' 5.5" Bedroom
Construction	Aluminum framing in walls, steel in roof, laminated fiberglass side walls, one-piece fiberglass roof, block foam insulation
Freshwater Capacity	44 gal
Black-Water Capacity	37 gal
Gray-Water Capacity	30 gal
Water-Heater Capacity	6 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	18 gal
Air Conditioner	15,000 Btu
Furnace	30,000 Btu
Refrigerator	7.5 cu-ft
Converter	55 amp
Battery (1)	12-volt chassis, Group 24 deep-cycle house
AC Generator	4kW Cummins Onan Microquiet
Inverter	1,000-watt with remote panel
MSRP	\$104,963
MSRP as Tested	\$120,083
Warranty	1 year/15,000-mile limited

Wet Weight

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

Front Axle	4,120 lbs
Rear Axle	9,100 lbs
Total	13,220 lbs

Chassis Ratings

GAWR, F/R	5,000/9,600 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	14,500/22,000 lbs
ROCCC	1,280 lbs
GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Gross Combination Weight Rating
ROCCC	Realistic Occupant and Cargo Carrying Capacity

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With the slides in, there's a 16-inch-wide walkway from the cab through the galley, giving access to the bathroom, refrigerator and most of the kitchen. The 31D has nicely balanced opposing slides to create an open and welcoming living area, comfortable sleeping accommodations for up to eight, plentiful storage and it drives well, to boot.

I enjoyed my stay in the Spirit so much that if Winnebago had given the OK, I would have driven it back to our office in California from Indiana, swinging through Iowa to explore its roots in Winnebago County. It is in this Spirit that I'd love to explore the country, and bring along a couple of friends. **M**

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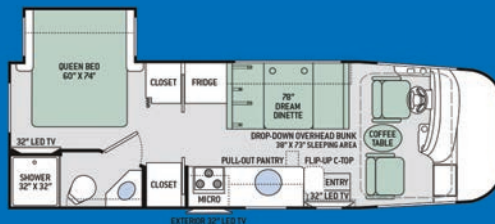
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By Bob Livingston

DINGHY BRAKING, PLUS

RViBrake3 system integrates tire-pressure monitoring and a level indicator into a system that's controlled wirelessly by a 7-inch touch-screen tablet



Towing a dinghy vehicle is a perfect way to handle alternative transportation once set up in an RV park. The practice of hooking up a vehicle behind a motorhome is more popular than ever, and employing the necessary equipment to do so has never been easier. Safe stopping is a prime consideration, and in most states and Canada, towing without braking support from the dinghy vehicle is illegal. There are a number of auxiliary braking devices on the market, but the new RViBrake3 portable system offers advanced features that have raised the technological bar to new heights.

RV Innovations, a company based in Castle Rock, Colorado, has been marketing portable braking devices for many years, and the latest offering retains its diminutive size while adding a number of features that improve functionality and convenience. The biggest change is the Command Center smart tablet and hub. While wireless monitoring and control of a braking device in the dinghy vehicle is not new, using a tablet (think Kindle Fire) and a unique, hockey-puck-looking hub



[1] RViBrake3 kit includes everything needed to install the system on any dinghy vehicle. Tire Patrol sensors are optional. [2] Compact size and a folding handle make it easy to carry the device from the storage compartment to the dinghy vehicle.

that sends and receives information wirelessly is quite unique. Add the capability to monitor tire pressure on all motorhome and dinghy vehicle tires, and the ability to determine whether the motorhome is level at a glance, and the system takes on a totally new role for the driver.

The brake actuating housing that sits on the floor pan in the dinghy vehicle is relatively unchanged physically, and is one of the most compact and easy-to-handle units on the market. The necessity to use an external antenna is gone, and the mounting system to connect the activation arm to the brake pedal is amazingly simple.

If there is a lip in the driver's seat floor pan, the box will stay properly aligned without further modifications, as was the case in the Ford Fiesta we used for the evaluation. If the floor is flat and has no seat pan to push against, there's a stop plate that attaches to the seat frame. This adjustable stop plate provides the support needed to secure the braking device when the arm extends and pushes the brake pedal.

Keeping with the portable theme of the system, there are no permanent parts to install other than the breakaway switch and the aforementioned stop plate. While not complicated, finding a logical place for the breakaway switch takes some contemplation. Once that's established, the hardest part is running the sense wire through the firewall. Ford



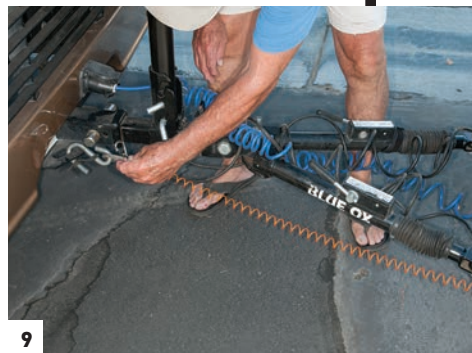
[3] A seat floor pan with a lip in the back is needed to position the RViBrake3 properly. If the dinghy vehicle has a flat floor pan, the provided stop plate **[4]** can be installed. **[5]** Low-profile housing makes it simple to position on the floor pan in the test Ford Fiesta. Well-designed claw **[6]** attaches to the brake pedal without the use of tools.

does a good job sealing the firewall from the interior, so routing the large plug was challenging. After a number of futile attempts to find a suitable passageway or a clear area to drill a hole, the plug was cut off and the wire routed through a smaller opening, and the leads were then re-soldered. From here, the RViBrake3 was placed on the floor pan and the rest of the setup process was all "plug and play."

Before setting up the unit, the Command Center tablet was paired to the hub. Prompts on the tablet screen guide the user through a few simple

steps, including taking a picture of the QR code on the back of the instruction booklet (which should be stored in a safe place for future pairing, if necessary). To be successful here, the tablet and hub must be fully charged. Two combination 12-volt DC/120-volt AC double USB outlet chargers and flat cables are provided with the kit. The tablet and hub should remain plugged into the chargers when in use for optimum service.

Attaching the arm clamp (claw) on the pedal is as easy as it gets; it takes a few tries to learn the articulation of



[7] Once the Auto Position button on the side of the housing is pushed, the voice commands guide the user through the set-up process. **[8]** A logical place to mount the breakaway switch was on the topside of the safety chain loop, attached to the baseplate. A coiled cable **[9]** is routed from the switch to the hitch receiver on the motorhome when towing.



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the arm from its resting place in the body of the device. Once the clamp is in place, the housing is slid toward the seat and positioned against the edge of the seat pan or stop plate (if necessary). Power is sourced from the 12-volt DC port in the dinghy vehicle dash or center console using a cord that is coiled on the side of the housing. The breakaway switch is plugged into the unit at the same time.

With the unit plugged into the power, the voice command, which the company refers to as an “audio assistant,” will guide the user after pushing the Auto Position button. Adjustments for brake type, brake pressure and sensitivity can be accomplished using the tablet touch screen, which can be mounted in a convenient location in the cab of the motorhome. A very sticky suction-cup mounting bracket can be placed on just about any smooth surface, and it stays put with little wiggle. The tablet is then “stuck” to the strong magnet on the bracket and plugged into a

[10] The firewall in the Fiesta was so well sealed, finding or drilling a hole to accommodate the plug at the end of the breakaway-switch wire was challenging. The wire was cut and the plug re-soldered after routing through the firewall. In use, the wire is plugged in to the side of the RViBrake3 [11]. [12] Tire Patrol sensors are screwed on to the Schrader valves following the prompts on the tablet screen. Each session is 10 minutes, which was plenty of time to install sensors on all the motorhome and dinghy vehicle wheels. [13] Tablet is held in place by a magnet on the end of the mounting bracket that uses a very sticky suction cup for just about any smooth surface. [14] Command hub is held in place by a magnet with double-sided tape. It can be located on a counter [15] or wall inside, toward the rear of the motorhome.

nearby 12-volt DC accessory outlet. The hub, which sends the signals from the RViBrake3 to the tablet should be placed near the rear, inside the motorhome for best reception. A magnetic base can be attached to a wall or any flat surface using the strong double-sided tape; the hub is attracted to the magnet by a metal plate on the backside.

Tire-pressure monitoring can also be viewed on the tablet screen after installing the optional Tire Patrol sensors on each wheel; the system is

capable of monitoring up to 14 tires, so it can easily handle a motorhome and dinghy vehicle. A sensor with an internal battery (clearly labeled for position) is simply screwed on to the end of the Schrader valve in each wheel using a sequence prompted by the Command Center tablet. Each sensor pairing session is 10 minutes, which we found perfectly adequate to install the sensors on the motorhome and dinghy vehicle (10 total).

After pairing, the pressure readouts on a diagram of the tire

[16] Two chargers are supplied with the kit and can be connected to 120-volt AC or 12-volt DC power; there are two USB outputs on each one. [17] Charger is plugged into the motorhome dash 12-volt DC port for powering the tablet.



16



17

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positions are shown on the tablet screen and are easy to follow. The user then inputs high and low pressure values for the tires based on the loading labels on the motorhome and dinghy vehicle.

The Command Center hub also doubles as the aforementioned leveling sensor, which sends the signals to the tablet, visually indicating front-to-rear and side-to-side attitude of the motorhome. This is accomplished by placing the hub on the floor and using the specific app that's loaded into the tablet. The app guides the user through the set-up and calibration process. Other apps provide a checklist of 100 things to do, and support functions.

RV Innovations designed its system for an almost effortless process to install on the dinghy floor pan and remove when not towing, and succeeded on both fronts. Initial setup takes only a few minutes, and after that the process is seamless. The tablet's dashboard provides instantaneous messaging when braking occurs and the user can easily test dinghy braking levels and make adjustments on the

[18] RViBrake3 can be removed from the dinghy vehicle quickly, and is easy to handle. [19] Smart tablet has a 7-inch touch screen and can be mounted on the motorhome dash for clear visibility. Tablet is user-friendly and the icons are large enough for grown-up-size fingers. [20] New RViBrake3 system was tested in a Ford Fiesta towed by a 40-foot Tuscan diesel pusher. Dinghy-vehicle braking was precise in proportion to motorhome deceleration.

touch screen. Tire pressure can be monitored by pushing the Tire Patrol icon, and the screen/alarm will inform the driver when pressure exceeds or drops below the preset thresholds with very convincing messaging. The user can use the icons to rock back and forth between Driving Mode and Tire Patrol, but we'd like the ability to view both at the same time, which is a change the company is working on.

On the road, the RViBrake3 triggers the dinghy's brakes with precision. An accelerometer is used to detect changes in inertia as the motorhome slows down, and activates the brakes in the dinghy proportionally. There is also slope-sensing software that adjusts sensitivity based on downhill or uphill travel. This type of sensitivity control is automatic and helps prevent excessive dinghy-vehicle brake wear — and promotes all around accurate braking. At no time during the test did we experience excessive dinghy-

vehicle braking, resulting in a tugging motion on the motorhome. Braking was smooth throughout the evaluation period, a testament to the sophisticated componentry and software loaded into the Command Center tablet.

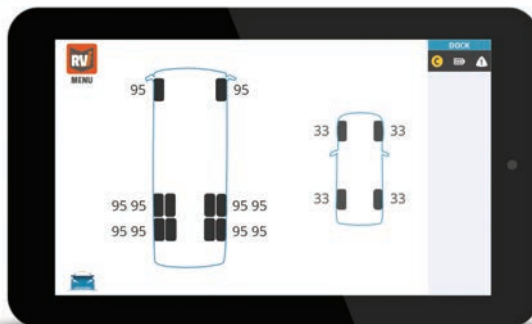
The RViBrake3's svelte size makes it a true lightweight and compact contender in the field of portable braking devices. It's super easy to handle and the housing's flat profile takes up very little space in storage compartments. Hook-up and disconnection is a breeze, and the voice command mitigates operational errors, promoting confidence-building performance.

The RViBrake3 system retails for \$1,195, while the tire sensors are sold individually for \$45. **M**

Source

RV Innovations
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Right: Screen shot of the Tire Patrol readout. Far right: Screen shot of the tablet in Drive Mode, displaying performance of the RViBrake3.



RETRO RELIABILITY

DURABLE 1973-1978 GMC MOTORHOMES ARE TRUE BLASTS FROM THE PAST AND STILL GOING STRONG

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

Before Microsoft, before barcodes, before the first space shuttle flew or the first mobile phone was sold, there was the GMC motorhome.

Proudly introduced in 1973 as the first motorhome that "Doesn't ride like a truck. Doesn't look like a box," more than 13,000 of these then-futuristic vehicles were produced between 1973 and 1978 with model names like Sequoia, Painted Desert, Eleganza II, Palm Beach and others.

After four decades, you might think they would have gone the way of Betamax tapes, but in fact an estimated 7,000 are still registered and on the road today. A testament to the motorhome's durability and ver-

satility, the GMC is seeing something of a resurgence, with a devoted new following eagerly restoring and re-imagining these vintage vehicles. If longevity is the mark of a classic ride, then the GMC certainly deserves a place on that list.

When you meet a GMC owner, you find yourself ushered into a very unique society. We had no sooner reached out to one local club before we were introduced to an entire network of owners and enthusiasts, all willing and eager to share their knowledge about these unique motorhomes.

Take Jim and Ada Galbavy of Lake Mary, Florida, who invited us to visit with them and see their beautifully

repainted GMC. Jim purchased his 26-foot GMC 14 years ago for \$15,000 after looking at a range of used Class A, B and C motorhomes. The retired U.S. Army aircraft equipment specialist was impressed with the GMC's body construction. Like an airplane fuselage, a complete cage of heavy-gage aluminum ribs and stringers is mounted on a wide steel chassis. Below the beltline the exterior skin panels are made of solid reinforced fiberglass; above, body and roof are constructed of sheet aluminum. The result is a body with a sleek, futuristic shape that ages well, making it a good candidate for repainting, which is what Jim did. He



The Freys' 1976 GMC Palm Beach still sports its original lime-green exterior paint.

The Classic Ride

went with a neutral beige-and-white exterior and a striped awning, resulting in a modern appeal while still keeping some of the GMC's vintage look.

For Ken and Janet Frey of Philadelphia, it was not the body but the chassis that convinced them to purchase their 1976 GMC some 30 years ago. They were visiting family in Arizona and came upon an ad in the local paper about a "Cabin fever" sale at a U-Haul agency. They checked it out and got their first glimpse of a used Palm Beach model GMC. As soon as he heard there was a 455 Oldsmobile Toronado engine under the hood, Ken was sold. As an auto mechanic at an Oldsmobile dealership, he knew its quality, dependability and impressive power.

"We call it our hot rod with plumbing," Janet laughs.

They have garage-kept their GMC, thus preserving its unique and original lime-green exterior. The motorhome did need restriping, a process that involved the nasty job of removing the decals with a heat gun. An auto-detailer friend did the restriping, even adding a new Palm Beach logo. They have found that keeping the original colors has led to lots of attention while traveling, and they seldom go anywhere without getting smiles and waves — and sometimes something more.

"We were driving through South Dakota, a long, straight stretch, and a car full of teenagers passed us, and you know, they are pretty hard to impress," Janet remembers. "They pulled off, and a little while later they pulled next to us again, and they held up a handmade sign that said, 'WE LOVE YOUR CAMPER!'"

One reason the GMC remains so



Cinnabar renovation includes a Davo couch, leather dash and touch-screen infotainment system.

popular is that it was ahead of its time in many respects. It was designed for comfort, both on the road and in an RV park. With front-wheel drive, a low roofline and a low center of gravity, the GMC handles easily. The air suspension provides a smooth ride, and the wide, panoramic windows ensure superior visibility while traveling. Unlike many smaller motorhomes of that era, it boasts 6 feet, 4 inches of headroom, and features an unusual 15-inch ground-to-floor clearance for comfortable entry and exit. Built in 23- and 26-foot lengths, GMC offered three models differing only by color; however, empty GMCs (Transmodes) were upfitted and sold by several other companies under their brand names, providing up to 15 different interior configurations.

The standard GMC motorhome came with a Davo (sliding) couch behind the driver's seat that unfolds into two bunk beds; the galley consisted of

a double sink, a 6-cubic-foot refrigerator, LP-gas range and oven. Also standard was the molded fiberglass wet bath module, which includes a shower, mirrored sliding door medicine cabinet, sink and an Aqua-Magic toilet. This is opposite the closet module and adjacent storage drawers. The rear bedroom features twin sofas that create a queen-size bed.

But regardless of its configuration on the showroom floor, don't expect to see a stock GMC motorhome today. In more than four decades of use, every one we have seen has been modified in ways big and small to suit its owners.

"You can go inside 10 of these motorhomes, and you won't see two alike," Jim Galbavy notes.

Many owners, like the Galbavys, had their units stripped to the bare bones and then re-outfitted with modern cabinetry, furnishings and appliances. While some owners opt

CULT CLASSICS

For those wanting to collect this "cult" classic, there are GMC motorhomes in all conditions available on the market. If you are looking for a restoration project, you can pick one up for less than \$5,000. For a GMC that has been partially restored but will require some additional work, expect to pay \$20,000-\$30,000. Fully restored motorhomes vary widely in the amenities that have been added, and average \$45,000-\$50,000. Complete renovations cost much more and generally come with a warranty. To learn more, check out GMC Motorhomes International at www.gmcmi.com, or GMC Motorhome News at www.thegmcmotorhomepeople.com/news.

► New paint accentuates the futuristic lines of this renovated Palm Beach GMC.



Photos: Cinnabar Engineering, opposite page, bottom: Janet Frey



for a total interior renovation, we were charmed by those like the Freys, who have updated while holding on to that 1970's look. Janet and Ken kept the original gold Formica and double-bowl stainless-steel sink in the kitchen but replaced the barrel chairs with residential office chairs and the green shag carpet with a mix of vinyl flooring and residential plush carpet. They replaced the rear sofas with a double bed, repurposing one as living-area seating in place of the dinette. Janet wasn't happy with the louvered cabinet doors, which collected dust, so a cabinetmaker friend replaced the fronts with solid wooden faces on lower sections and Plexiglas "picture frames" on some upper cabinets to allow for a photo gallery.

Because of its size and design, storage in the original GMC design is limited. Ken solved this problem uniquely by adding a five-drawer toolbox next to the sofa and covering the two sides that faced the living area with wainscoting to resemble an end table. The result is quick and easy access and additional table space.

As cool as the GMC is, there has to be more to its continued existence than its futuristic design. Wes Caughlan, Cinnabar Engineering's president and an original GMC motorhome owner, has the answer.

"You know what makes something a classic ride? Parts. Without available parts, older motorhomes can't

Left, from top: The galley of this renovated GMC Palm Beach sports solid cherry cabinets, solid-surface counters and modern appliances. The original gold countertop defines the 1970's look of the Freys' GMC.

survive," he explains.

In the case of the GMC motorhome, Cinnabar Engineering purchased the rights to manufacture and distribute original GMC motorhome parts and publications in the 1980s. The result is a supply chain that keeps these vintage beauties on the road. The Freys agree, noting that they have been able to get many of the needed parts from Cinnabar Engineering. The company also specializes in complete GMC motorhome renovations and published GMC Motorhome News, which was dedicated to the preservation of a classic and timeless vehicle.

Another valuable resource is GMC owners themselves, available on the Blacklist (www.gmcmi.com/black-list), a nationwide directory of volunteers who agree to be on-call for assistance to fellow owners on the road. Galbavy notes that he answered his share of distress calls from owners stranded on Interstate 95 when he lived in Virginia.

"We are like a family. We have to help each other out," he explains.

This sense of camaraderie may be the GMC motorhome's greatest strength. There are active GMC motorhome clubs nationwide, known for enthusiasm for their coaches. Janet and Ken Frey attend monthly rallies, plus the GMC International club's conventions twice a year. The Galbavys are active members of a Florida club. Spend 10 minutes with a GMC owner and you will find yourself initiated into their absolute passion for their motorhome.

"We have a motto: It's not a club, it's a cult," Ada Galbavy laughs.

Which makes the GMC motorhome not just a classic, but a "cult classic" ride. **M**

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

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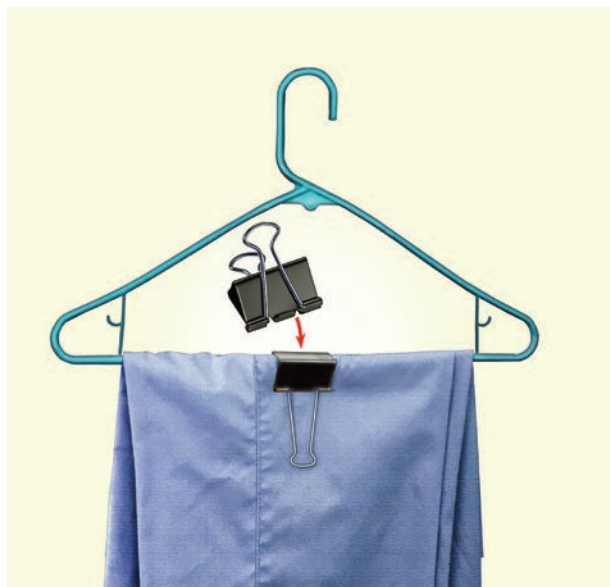
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See-through Storage

Storage in a motorhome is always an important subject, and having read different ideas in recent issues, I'd like to share my method. I use clear plastic tubs for storage. The translucent tubs, which are available at stores such as Walmart, come in all shapes and sizes, and some even have two or three drawers. They work great in the cabinets above the couch and chairs and, of course, the basement bays. The tubs ensure that all materials are securely contained and readily available. A lid is particularly important if carrying liquids (wax, cleaners, etc.). For added convenience, mark the contents with a felt-tip pen on the facing side of the plastic container. Plus, if careful measurements are made for each area, the neatness and convenience these bins afford will add to the overall satisfaction.

Bob Fornefeld | Scottsdale, Arizona



Clever Clip

The bouncing of a motorhome while on the road often causes items like trousers to slip off their hangers. I was tired of having to pick up my clothes after each trip, so I set about finding a solution. I discovered that large binder clips do a perfect job of keeping clothes on the hanger. And, when they're not in use, they take up very little space.

Dr. Jerry Vinson | College Station, Texas

Simple Solution

Our motorhome came with several ceiling-mounted fluorescent lights; the fixtures each hold two standard F15T8 bulbs. The bulbs were all Daylight-rated, and the light was really stark and uncomfortable. I replaced one bulb in each fixture with a warm white bulb, and the resulting light is a mixture that is pleasing, homey and bright enough for all needs.

Tom Becker | Los Lunas, New Mexico

It's a Wrap!

Is anyone else bothered by the glare coming off the underside of a Class C overhang while driving? It bothers me by day and even more at night. I found a simple fix. I contacted a shop that does vinyl wraps for automobiles and had them apply a white matte-finish vinyl to the underside to match (you can get clear and other colors as well). Wow, what a difference! There's no more glare, and I don't even notice the overhang now. Driving is a pleasure once again.

Chris McKee | Rancho Santa Margarita, California 



Have an Idea?

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

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Cummins Fuel Control

Upset because a repair facility overlooked a potentially hazardous condition while doing a major repair, a reader turned to Hot Line for help. He wrote:



“ In April 2017 the 5.9-liter Cummins engine on my 1995 Wanderlodge locked up on a road trip through Missouri due to a ruptured coolant line in the Aqua-Hot engine loop. I had the coach towed to Cummins Sales and Service in Joplin, Missouri. It needed a new long block installed due to rod bearing and piston failure. The coach was completed on August 17, 2017. The bill was \$12,849.46 for the engine work.

About halfway home to San Diego, I noticed what I thought was an oil leak streaming down the passenger side of the oil pan. I immediately emailed Grant Bosworth at Cummins in Joplin to report the problem, as the new engine was covered by a warranty.

After I got home, I called Cummins Cal Pacific in El Cajon, California. The coach was repaired for \$272. The leak turned out to be fuel and not oil. Apparently, a small plastic block isolator on the fuel lines had deteriorated due to heat. The isolator block had been on the coach since it was new in 1995 and obviously needed to be changed. This failure of Cummins in Joplin to recognize this bad isolator block when changing the engine cost me an additional \$272, not to mention a hassle and safety hazard on the trip home. I am requesting reimbursement of the \$272.

Philip Swanson | Bonita, California

There are a lot of factors at work here, but let's start with the obvious: although you would think repairing an engine would entail completely new parts across the board, that's not the case. It is important to remember to ask the repair facility to check other components that may be affected. However, since we aren't all professional mechanics who know what to look for, we feel that Swanson was in the right, so we sent his request to Cummins in Joplin.

And though we didn't hear directly back from the facility we did receive good news from Swanson.

“ I am very satisfied with this outcome. Thanks to *MotorHome*, Cummins in Joplin is refunding the entire amount of \$272.

P.S.

water. I feel they should honor my claim.

Gerald Crockett | McDonough, Georgia

Sometimes, a little persistence pays off. We forwarded Crockett's request for re-examination. Progressive responded as follows:

Progressive Industries was acquired in April 2017 by another corporation. As with any acquisition, there were numerous areas of transition. The timing of our warranty transition affected Mr. Crockett in an unfortunate way, and it seems the appropriate information and documentation were not implemented or executed. We are in the process of replacing Crockett's product with a brand-new model, the EMS-PT50X. We pride ourselves on our lifetime warranty and excellent customer-service group, and understand the importance of providing the best surge-protection products in the RV industry. Progressive Industries has a new online warranty-claim database that is clear and concise, allowing for excellent communication between us and our valued customers. Go to www.progressiveindustries.net/warranty-claim-form.

Joe Casale, Operations Manager, Progressive Industries | Apex, North Carolina

We then received the following note from Crockett:

“ I am happy to inform you that I received a new EMS-PT50X surge protector from Progressive Industries. **G.C. M**

Progressive Protection

A Georgia reader asked Hot Line for help when his portable power protector failed:

“ I purchased a Progressive Industries EMS-PT50C surge-protection unit on March 31, 2017. I used it three times, and it worked perfectly, but then it started showing an E5 error code. I filed a warranty claim with Progressive Industries that was denied. Progressive said an E5 error code indicates possible water damage. The unit was never subjected to rain or

Take Action Contact Hot Line for Help

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

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By Ken Freund

Kidde Fire Extinguisher Recall

If you have a Kidde brand fire extinguisher in your motorhome you should check the information at www.odl.nhtsa.dot.gov. I discovered I have one fire extinguisher model on the recall list in my RV, so it is being replaced.

Roger Marble | Via email

Thanks for writing, Roger. This recall involves two styles of Kidde fire extinguishers: plastic handle fire extinguishers and push-button Pindicator fire extinguishers. The current recall also includes fire extinguisher models previously recalled in March 2009 and February 2015. Concerned parties can call Kidde toll-free at 855-271-0773, or visit www.kidde.com and click on "Product Safety Recall" for more information. Kidde's recall number is 18-022.



Onan Genset Sheds Load

Q My motorhome is a 2011 Winnebago Journey Express. Regarding the series of complaints on the "Genset Quits" subject from the January 2017 issue, I have a slightly different problem with my Onan 8HDKAK-1046M diesel genset. It operates fine under the load of one A/C unit (and the smaller loads of refrigerator and battery charger), but adding the load of the second A/C unit causes the generator to almost quit, dump the load and go to unloaded idle. What can I do to correct the issue?

Larry Hanes | Arlington, Virginia

A This is typically an indication that you are overloading the genset, but yours is rated at 8,800 watts, so you should have enough juice for both air conditioners, unless something is wrong with one of them (or something else is drawing a lot of current). You didn't mention if it trips any circuit breakers in the process. I suggest that you try switching on the front and rear air conditioners in the opposite order of what you normally

do. Note if the same thing happens, or if it's reversed. The initial starting current of one of the units may be higher than normal because of a faulty motor, starting capacitor or other malfunction. Does the genset flash a code when it fails? The light on the start switch will flash codes, which can help determine what's wrong. Page 22 of the HDKAK Operator's Manual shows how to read the codes. Also, there could be other issues like fuel-supply problems, which only manifest themselves when the unit is at or near full load. At any rate, I suggest taking the motorhome to a Cummins Onan service center and having the generator and appliances tested.

LEDs and Dimmers

Q I recently purchased a motorhome and enjoy it very much. However, the puck lights over the dinette and couch are too bright to be usable. I have looked extensively to find a dimmer that will solve the problem and have come up dry. Can you advise me?

Gerry Mueller | Via email

A Most LEDs don't work well with dimmers. LEDs don't change brightness much as you turn them down, until suddenly they reach their minimum voltage and shut off. There are some LEDs designed to work with dimmers, but you need a special dimmer with pulse-width modulation (PWM). I suggest you look up the bulb numbers and then do an online search for dimmable LEDs of that type, along with dimmer controls.

As a source, check out www.superbrightleds.com; there's also an informative video at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rab8FyE-2KA.

Riding Out Storms and Banging Noise

Q We own a 40-foot 2015 Tiffin Phaeton. Due to a mandatory evacuation caused by Hurricane Irma, my wife and I ended up at our home base of Brunswick, Georgia, where we rode out the storm with my wife's 98-year-old mother. As the winds increased, we closed the slides in order to protect the slide toppers, which made it a bit tight inside, but

certainly livable under the circumstances. The highest winds happened during the night and I initially elected to leave the jacks up. As the wind gusts — which were in the 40-50 mph range — increased and we tried to sleep, the coach started to rock and roll noticeably; the coach weighs 35,000 pounds. I decided to lower the jacks, which substantially eased the movement of the coach and we all ended up sleeping better. When I tried to move the coach after the storm, and I put it in DRIVE, I initially had no response from the transmission, but after about 5 seconds it went into gear and made a slight bang, similar to moving a car that has been through a car wash and then parked overnight.

I have two questions. What is the best way to position a coach in high winds, with jacks up or down? And why did the transmission perform the way it did after sitting for a few days once the storm passed?

Bill Halderson | St. Simons Island, Georgia

Motorhomes are more aerodynamic when faced directly into the wind, compared to when their sides are exposed to the direct windblast. Having less surface area helps, plus they won't rock side to side as much. I would expect that it would be steadier with the jacks down; try it both ways next time you're in strong winds (but not hurricane-force). Additionally, consider other hazards, like the possibility of flooding or power lines and tree branches that can blow down. Motorhomes are not the place to be in really high winds, such as those created by a hurricane.

Regarding the bang, I'm not familiar with the noise you refer to related to car washes. I've found that on some automatic transmissions the torque converters leak down after sitting for an extended period, and after the engine runs briefly they fill up and then clunk as the vehicle begins to move. Or, perhaps that's the brake pads rusting to the rotors overnight?

Sometimes motorhomes with air parking brakes engaged can essentially have the wet brakes rust or stick in place. The bang can be from the brakes releasing when pressure is put on them. This is not usually a problem that requires repair; however if you're concerned, have the brakes checked at a qualified facility.

Steering Looseness

Q I own a Class A Monaco La Palma 35-foot motorhome. I notice a feeling of something loose in the steering sector when driving on the interstate, and there's a noise, like a rattle, from the steering wheel shaft.

Scott Hay | Via email

A Steering problems should always be taken very seriously and checked immediately. You didn't mention the year of your coach, but there is a recall campaign 06V226000 dated June 21, 2006, for chassis

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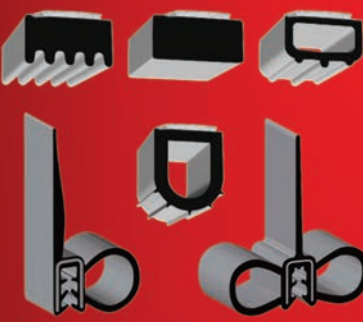
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that were manufactured from June 14, 2005 through May 5, 2006. Certain motorhome chassis built on Workhorse chassis may have been equipped with incorrect steering intermediate shafts. The spline can strip while the steering wheel is being turned. This steering condition could result in a loss of steering control, increasing the risk of a crash. Workhorse is conducting this recall (see 06v148000) and will inspect and, if necessary, replace the steering intermediate shaft. Owners can contact Workhorse at 877-294-6773 or Monaco at 800-685-6545. Customers can also contact the NHTSA's vehicle safety hotline at 888-327-4236, or go to www.safercar.gov.

Multimedia Unit Problem

Q I have a Jensen VX7020A multimedia receiver in my 2016 RV, which I bought used, and because I'm the second owner there is no warranty. I've noticed that when I'm driving, the sound will intermittently cut out for 1-2 seconds on the unit. This never happens when the RV is not moving. This happens whether I'm using the radio, a CD or connected via Bluetooth or cable to my phone, so it's not related directly to the [technology] transmission type. There are also multiple speakers so I know it's not a speaker issue. I assumed it was a loose connection so I reseated all the connections, and that seemed to help somewhat. Now I can go for 5 minutes sometimes without the cutoff, but other times it will occur once a minute. The other thing that is confusing is that the bumpiness of the road is not related. Any advice?

Joe Mendygral | Pleasant View, Utah

A First, you need to determine if the cause of the problem is intermittent power supply to the unit, or if the problem is inside the receiver unit. I suggest temporarily connecting a small 12-volt DC pilot light to the point where power goes into the audio unit. Make sure that the bulb has a good ground. Keep (continued on page 72)

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COACH & POWERTRAIN

(continued from page 69)

in mind that an intermittent ground could also be causing the problem with the receiver cutting out, so be sure to confirm continuity. If the light blinks or goes out when the audio unit cuts out, power supply is the culprit. You'll have to trace it back to the fuse panel and make the repair. If the audio unit cuts out but the light is steady, it means that unit is faulty and you'll have to take it in for repair or replacement.

Furnace Issues

Q We have a 2008 Tiffin Allegro with a Suburban propane furnace.

The issue we have is it works 80 to 90 percent of the time. When we took it to a repair facility, of course, it worked normally. When we inquired about it at another facility, they said those percentages were good. I tend to think 100 percent is good. Any suggestions to improve our percentages? Seems to be the case that when it's the coldest, it doesn't light.

Larry Kalvelage | Nampa, Idaho

A Intermittent problems are very frustrating. Properly troubleshooting an RV furnace requires following good troubleshooting procedures. Always start outside the furnace to make sure the energy supplying the unit is in good working order. Get a copy of the wiring diagram for the furnace, which is sometimes on a sticker inside the unit or in the owner's packet, and use a multimeter to check each component in the sequence of operation to find the culprit. The furnace needs at least 10.5 volts DC at the unit to open the LP-gas valve. Check this at the module board with the multimeter. Furnaces draw a lot of current, mostly from the fan, which discharges the batteries. If it fails to light, especially when not hooked up to shorepower, low 12-volt DC power is a likely culprit. You also need sufficient LP-gas pressure; this can be measured at most RV shops and LP-gas dealers using a manometer.

Do the stove and other LP-gas

appliances work properly? If you have good power, and good LP-gas pressure coming into the furnace, then the problem most likely is within the furnace. If you hear a clicking sound, the spark igniter is probably working, but there may be insufficient or no gas pressure. There may also be cracked ceramic on the ignitor, which could prevent the spark from jumping across the gap to the burner tube, or preventing the unit from sensing the flame. The main control board, which creates the spark, could also be defective, creating enough spark at times and not enough at others.

Another source of the problem could be the thermostat; you can temporarily jump the wires (at the thermostat on heat only thermostats, or at the A/C control board on combined A/C and heat systems) to bypass the thermostat and see if it starts. Finally, check the sail switch for operation, as it needs to sense airflow before it allows the furnace to ignite. This can be tested at the sail switch terminals using the multimeter.

Discolored Decals

Q I own a Thor 2014 Vegas 24.1. The decals on the rear of the coach are changing color. It reminds me of mold. The back faces the sun most of the day. Is there anything available to clean the decals or do they need to be removed? How do I remove the decals?

Ray Jodoin | North Port, Florida

A Decals left to bake in the sun's rays will oxidize and may turn dark and crack. When decals harden and dry out, they become much more difficult to remove. Many body shops use a 3M product called Stripe Off Wheel, which is used in a drill chuck to remove decals. A heat gun is also very helpful to soften decals. The adhesive residue can be removed with 3M Adhesive Remover, and some folks use acetone or mineral spirits and rags. Keep ignition sources, such as the heat gun, away from these flammable chemicals and work outdoors for ventilation. You

can find many how-to videos, etc., if you do a Google search for "How to remove RV decals."

Shimmy Suggestion

You recently referred to tire changing on the Ford F-53 chassis that caused a shimmy at 50 to 65 mph ("Tire Replacement," June 2017). In my experience, this is not caused by the new tires, but the I-beam in the front end. I had the same problem with my 2011 Forest River Georgetown 38-foot Class A. I had to replace both front tires because they were worn crooked, which was caused by the alignment (motorhome manufacturers don't usually check alignment). I suggest owners get a front-end alignment first to make sure.

Bernard Kiernan | Boiling Springs, South Carolina

Thanks for writing, Bernard. I-beam front ends seem to be more prone to

harmonics and shaking than independent front suspensions. As you mention, many motorhome manufacturers don't check front end alignment, assuming it was done at the chassis factory. Alignment changes once the body is built onto the chassis. This can lead to uneven wear, and when tires wear this way, they also go out of balance. Therefore, the first step to fix a front-end shimmy problem should be to check for uneven wear, and balance the tires. Alignment should be checked; typically all you can adjust is toe-in. **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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A Little Something Extra

With Fat Tuesday fast approaching, here's a little lagniappe for you: Everything you need to know to have a good time at Mardi Gras

By Alan Rider

Lagniappe. In his 1883 book *Life on The Mississippi*, Mark Twain declared it a word “worth traveling to New Orleans to get.”

Though it's not like author Samuel Clemens needs my second, I'm here to tell you I couldn't agree more. But lagniappe (pronounced “lan-yap”) is more than just a great word; it's a great concept.

It's the New Orleans tradition of giving (or getting) a little something extra. It's a distinctly regional custom that I'd like to see adopted everywhere.

So, I thought I'd do my part to spread the word by offering you a little lagniappe of my own. And since it just happens to be Carnival season in New Orleans (Mardi Gras, aka Fat Tuesday, is February 13th), let's use that as a focal point.

Now, here's where the lagniappe comes in: While lots of people will tell you that you need to experience Carnival in New Orleans at least once in your lifetime, no one ever tells you what to do once you get there. I aim to fix that.

You can start before you even hit town by tuning your radio to 90.7, WWOZ-FM. This noncommercial station is nothing less than the soundtrack to New Orleans. While this step is optional, it's guaranteed to put you in the right frame of mind for everything that follows.

Like the 50-plus parades that are at the heart of Carnival. As for which parades to attend, let me direct you to

a must-have resource: Arthur Hardy's *Mardi Gras Guide* (\$5, www.mardigrasguide.com). With important details like overviews of each parade and maps of their routes, this 164-page book is worth every penny.

As for what to do between parades, you'll find one of the most fun — and least expensive — ways to explore New Orleans is to ride the streetcar down St. Charles Avenue through the Garden District. Stop off for a visit to the Audubon Zoo, or continue on to the corner of St. Charles and Carrollton and have lunch at the Camellia Grill (don't miss the chocolate pecan pie).

To see New Orleans from an entirely different perspective, set sail for a two-hour cruise aboard the steamboat Natchez, one of the last authentic paddle wheelers still plying

the Mississippi River. Get there a little early and you'll be treated to an old-fashioned calliope concert.

Once back on land, head for the Presbytère located on Jackson Square next to St. Louis Cathedral. Built in 1791, the ornate building is now part of the Louisiana State Museum where you'll find an exhibit titled *Mardi Gras: It's Carnival Time in Louisiana*. All those questions you have about strange Mardi Gras traditions? This is where you'll find the answers.

To get a peek behind the curtains of Carnival, visit *Mardi Gras World* (www.mardigrasworld.com). Inside this giant warehouse of float-builder Kern Studios, you'll learn how a ridiculous amount of papier maché gets turned into glittering over-the-top parade floats.

Last but not least, you'll want to tuck into the local cuisine. Start your day with beignets at Café du Monde, and then head to nearby Central Grocery to pick up a muffaletta sandwich to eat while you're waiting for the parade to roll. You also can't go wrong with anything on the menu at the Gumbo Shop or Cochon Butcher, and the daily jazz brunch at Court of Two Sisters is both excellent and expansive.

While you're enjoying all that, I'll be looking to spread a little more lagniappe in my travels along *The Road Ahead*. **M**

“While lots of people will tell you that need to experience Carnival in New Orleans at least once in your lifetime, no one ever tells you what to do once you get there. I aim to fix that.”

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Right: Go all in for your Mardi Gras experience, and enjoy a delicious beignet at Café du Monde before touring the displays of floats inside Mardi Gras World.





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