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The Itch to Travel

Once the RV lifestyle gets into your blood, the adventures just keep on getting better — and longer



A really interesting phenomenon happened while my wife, Lynne, and I were driving home from the desert where we spent a month mingling with the snowbirds: We didn't want to go home. We struggled with the reasons why we were not looking forward to returning to our Ventura, California, home, and then it hit us — we were suffering from Hitch Itch, the need to hitch up the trailer or fifth-wheel and explore new horizons.

We didn't make up this axiom. It's one our good friends, Bill and Jenn Gehr, use when they are in one place for too long. The Gehrs are full-timers and regular contributors to this magazine. We meet up a few times a year and, after our visits, Lynne and I return to Ventura, and they head out on another adventure.

While saying our good-byes and promising to get together again soon, we usually get a little envious and continue our discussions about going full-time some day. I often try to analyze what drives that thinking. After all, we live in a fantastic place, in a beach community with just about perfect weather. Why would anyone want to give up more space, more comfortable furniture, a bigger kitchen, a bigger bed and the beach to live full time on the road in the restricted quarters of an RV? Hitch Itch, of course!

The lifestyle is addicting, and after spending the month with full-timing friends and meeting new people, it is easy to see why traveling in an RV is so compelling. For some, it's the insatiable desire to find out what's around the next corner, and we'll admit to that condition. We'll also admit that exploring unknown places and experiencing new traditions helps with our obsession for checking off our expanding bucket list.

But it's the people who really make the RV lifestyle special. During our month in the desert, we spent a lot of time with my brother, Dennis, and sister-in-law, Mary, two people who haven't a clue about the RV lifestyle. As world travelers, they often scratch their heads trying to figure out what drives our passion for RVs.

We exposed them to potluck dinners, social hours, classic campground activities, a musical jam, rec-room concerts and a lot of interaction with other RV owners while sitting on the patio under the awning. As we hugged each other in preparation for our journey home, my brother turned to me with a big smile and said, "You have so many great friends. I get why you love this lifestyle." He then quipped to his wife, "Hey Mary, maybe we should sell the house and buy an RV."

It's all about that itch. 🚐

— Bob Livingston, publisher

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DID YOU KNOW?

Originally called Decoration Day, Memorial Day combined Union and Confederate events honoring the Civil War dead. The federal holiday salutes all who died in military service and is the traditional kickoff to summer.

TRAILER LIFE
FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE



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Landmark Decisions

In "On the Mark," Chris Hemer's March test of the Heartland Landmark 365 Syracuse, the spec list indicates that the fifth-wheel's tires are LT215/75R17.5 LRH. Has Heartland gone to installing light truck tires on its trailers?

Walt Still, Baytown, Texas

Chris Hemer replies: *According to our source at Heartland, the Landmark 365 Syracuse comes with Goodyear Unisteel G114 215/75R17.5 H tires. Certified as LT and considered a commercial-type medium-truck tire, the G114 has steel-on-steel construction, with steel belts in the sidewall and tread, and a ribbed tread pattern for a smooth ride and to dissipate the heat of the road.*

At 13 feet 3 inches, the Heartland Landmark 365 Syracuse featured on your March cover is taller than many semitrailers. Anyone with a tall RV like that one should post its height somewhere on the dash so they can see it while driving. Always remember to check bridge height, and take advantage of GPS navigation specifically for RVers and truckers to avoid low clearances. Don't end up with your shiny trailer looking like a

The Roots of RVing

I have enjoyed the vintage trailers in your coverage of *Trailer Life's* 75th anniversary. We are proud to own one ourselves and hope to soon be able to travel with the almost-70-year-old trailer. This past fall we purchased a 1947 25-foot Spartan Manor, and our plan is to restore it, a two-year project.

Last year we restored a 1976 Scamper 17-foot trailer and enjoyed traveling as a couple. We also own a 26-foot Skyline Nomad Joey that sleeps nine. We like taking the grandkids with us, and we have 14 of them. Please keep looking back at the roots of trailering and giving us a glimpse of some of the old beauties.

Dave Longueil, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Speaking of beauties, your Spartan Manor is a real classic with a colorful past. Spartan Aircraft Company, owned by J. Paul Getty, turned to manufacturing travel trailers after World War II when orders for planes declined. Before closing in 1961, the company built 40,000 high-end aluminum trailers that were designed like its WWII planes. Here's a nostalgic look at one of the Spartan ads published in Western Trailer Life back in 1947, — Editors



sardine can with the top peeled back.
Rich Berte, Marlborough, Massachusetts

Know What to Tow ▼

I loved Chris Hemer's timely 2016 Guide to Tow Ratings, "Worth the Weight," in the March issue, as I'm

currently in the market for a new pickup to tow my travel trailer — all the towing specs in one place!

Paul D. Dziedzic, Bessemer, Alabama

I read with interest the March issue's 2016 Guide to Tow Ratings. In 2014 I was burned by Volkswagen because I had focused only on the tow limit of the Volkswagen Touareg diesel. VW advertised a rating of 7,716 pounds, which I thought would be overkill for towing a travel trailer weighing 4,500 pounds loaded.

I towed my trailer with the Touareg for 18 months before realizing a day before leaving on a two-month trip that buried in the owner's manual were rules that virtually disqualified the Touareg from safely towing *any* travel trailer, regardless of weight. VW did not allow the use of a weight-distributing hitch, tow-ball height had to fall between 13 and 16.5 inches loaded, and they did not allow the use of a tow ball that exceeded 2 inches in

[illegible]

diameter. It failed on all three counts.

For anyone purchasing a tow vehicle, I highly recommend checking not only its tow rating but also the towing chapter in the owner's manual. Do not expect the sales department at the dealership to tell you anything; they only want to make a sale.

Richard Udden, Marshfield, Massachusetts

Many years ago when our kids were young, we had a Winnebago Brave that left us with so many good memories. We often talked about how we missed the RV life.

I have an old Nissan pickup, and about a year ago I bought a nice used Trailmanor. When it was time for my wife to get a new car, she decided on a 2015 Chevy Tahoe, so I made sure we bought the towing package. The Tahoe towed the Trailmanor great. We took one long trip from Atlanta to Austin, and I didn't know there was a trailer behind me. After we returned home, I said to my wife, "We can tow a bigger trailer," and that's where my story begins.

We went to an RV show and fell in love with the KZ Spree 300RLS. The salesman told me it would be no problem towing the trailer with our Tahoe, and I trusted him. I just don't think he was schooled in towing capacities. On the way home from our first long trip, it was a windy day, and we were so frightened that I almost had the trailer towed back to the dealer. We had to make the choice between a smaller trailer or a bigger truck.

To make a long story short, after six long weeks, our 2015 Chevy Silverado 1500 LTZ 6.2-liter 2WD gas truck arrived. Proud as can be, I set up the Equal-i-zer hitch and took a few trips. The Silverado felt much safer than the Tahoe, with minimum sway when passed by a semi. The best gas mileage without the trailer was about 23 MPG, and towing the trailer I got about 11 MPG (down to 8 MPG with cruise control). I was happy with the mileage and the handling.

I'm not really sure how it happened, but five weeks ago we traded in our Silverado 1500 for a slightly used, 11,000-mile 2015 2500HD Silverado

High Country Duramax diesel 4x4. I don't have words to describe how awesome the 2500HD is. It's better in every way — more comfortable, tows great and is as powerful as can be. Also, we can go fifth-wheel in the future, if we choose to, which the 1500 was not rated for.

The best mileage on the 2500HD is 23 MPG, and 11 MPG with the camper on cruise control at 65 MPH. Speaking of cruise control, I set it at 65, and it does not vary even 1 MPH. The truck just goes effortlessly wherever I point it. It's a tight fit in the garage, and I have to choose parking spaces more carefully. I make multi-point turns to get it into some spots and have to walk when I can't find a large parking space nearby, but I just don't care. It was a bit expensive trading up three times in one year, but in the end, we have an awesome truck that we will own for a long time. Every time I drive it, I feel like that kid in the candy store.

Gary Bressler, Roswell, Georgia

Going Solar

When I saw "Ultimate Solar-Power System" on the March cover, I went right to Bob Livingston's "Electrical Independence" article, since I had just installed my own system. As boondockers, we absolutely love our solar setup with the Magnum MS2000 inverter, four Trojan batteries and three 150-watt Renogy panels with a Morningstar charger. Solar has been the best addition to our RVing, and no more generator. Our batteries are always charged and ready to go.

Dennis Dougan, Corralitos, California

I carefully read Bob Livingston's March article about installing a solar charging system to provide freedom from the electrical grid. One issue I did not see addressed is the impact of shade on the efficiency of such a system. Almost all of our summer dry camping is in forested country, and we purposely seek out shady parking spots to keep the trailer cool. How well does a solar charging system work under full shade for the entire day?

Ken Reed, Caldwell, Idaho

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Bob Livingston replies: *Since solar panels rely on sunlight, parking in the shade will not be very efficient. Considering your travels take you to forested areas, with little sunshine during the peak times of the day, you probably should forgo the idea of installing a solar system. A portable generator and three-stage charger will likely serve your needs better for keeping the batteries conditioned.*

Just a Matter of Time

I always enjoy reading America's Outback and was especially interested in Bill Graves' March column, "Daylight Saving Time." I've wondered for years why a country that's supposed to be so intelligent still sticks to a policy like that. I can't imagine how much money it costs, not to mention the inconvenience. Twice a year everything that's affected by time has to be disrupted. Don't you think

our complicated world could be made a little simpler by just doing away with it?

Keep up the great articles.

Ed Keller, Allentown, Pennsylvania

Oil in a Day's Work

I want to thank Ken Freund for "Engine Oils," the informative Performance Corner column in the February issue. I own a 1970 Ford F-250 with a 360ci engine that I use to tow my 23-foot travel trailer. It has less than 70,000 original miles. I always thought I was taking care of the engine with regular oil changes with quality oil. Freund revealed that changes in newer oil formulations were not providing adequate protection for older engines.

I went to the Pennzoil website, and it has an Oil Selector tool, but it goes back only to the mid-1980s. So I sent an email to their Contact Us link, and the technical rep who replied confirmed the information published in Performance Corner and recommended Shell Rotella T Triple Protection 10W-30 or 15W-40. He said that the flat tappet cams in my truck require an additional amount of anti-wear that most current gasoline engine oils do not provide. I'm sure most other oil manufacturers can provide similar information.

The column possibly saved me a very expensive engine repair. This will easily pay for many years of *Trailer Life* subscriptions!

Mike McDonnell, Marysville, Washington

Tent-Trailer Tires on a Cross-Country Tour

The photo of Jim Van Horn's Shredded Wheat tire in February's Letters prompted me to write. My wife and I were getting ready for a trip from Southern California to Pennsylvania with our 30-foot SunnyBrook travel trailer. I had the trailer's brakes checked and adjusted, and the wheel bearings packed. One of our sons had just bought a new tent trailer and decided to go with us, pulling his trailer. We both have Fords. Mine is a 460 V-8, and his is a four-cylinder Ranger.

My son had been camping once with his new trailer and had put only 25 miles on it. He didn't think the bearings needed

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service, but I talked him into it. As it turned out, there wasn't a bit of grease on the bearings. They were just turning a little blue but were OK. It pays to check! We wouldn't have made it very far.

The trailer blew a tire in Pennsylvania. We put the new spare on, and that one blew at Utah's Bryce Canyon on the return trip. The wheels on a tent trailer are pretty small, and those little tires aren't made for day after day at 60 MPH.
Gordon Straka, Rialto, California

Ins and Outs of Slides

In regard to February's "Can You Imagine?" letter, Jim Georger refers to trailers that are inaccessible with the slideouts retracted. We have a 2016 single-slide Jayco Jay Flight 28BHBE, and with the slideout completely retracted, we can access the entire living area (except where the TV is mounted), kitchen sinks, bunks, bathroom and refrigerator. We do not have to open the slideout at all when we stop, as everything is accessible.
Rick Aurand, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

TPMS in the Box

I read Lee Christianson's February letter, "Protect Your PSI," with interest. I had a different experience after purchasing a new tire-pressure monitoring system (TPMS). Once installed, the system worked great in the driveway, but when I hitched up and drove, it began letting air out of the tires. I reinstalled and retested it with the same experience.

After trading emails with the company and a few unsuccessful fix attempts, they advised, "The sensors can be used on rubber valve stems, but they are not recommended." Having brand-new tires and stems, I was, and am, reluctant to replace them with metal stems, which leaves me with a TPMS in the box.

Rick Pitts, West Chester, Pennsylvania

Still Dishing It Out

After reading about Gary and Cheryl Thornton's problem with Dish's Pay-As-You-Go program in February's Letters, I wanted to let readers know about my problems with Dish. When purchasing

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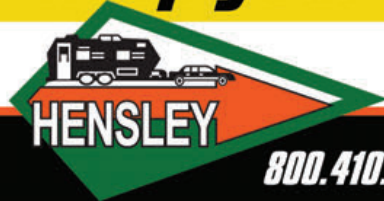
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LETTERS

a Tailgater and the associated receiver for our travel trailer, I repeatedly asked if adding local stations on the road would affect my Dish service at home in Colorado, since my daughter would still be there, and I was told that changes on the road would affect only the receiver in my trailer. *Not so!* Readers, be advised that choosing local stations when you travel changes the reception on any other receivers you may have.

Dennis Holliday, Aurora, Colorado

Sleeping Like a Baby

Two years ago we looked at all sorts of new and used RVs. We were impressed by many of them and would have loved one with a king-size bed. But we couldn't get past the fact that even those bedside stands they brag about were not conducive to a CPAP machine. The nightstands were often 2 to 3 feet away from the head of the bed, and outlets were even further away (to accommodate the slideout, I'm sure). My husband kept saying, "This is nice, but where would we put the CPAP?"

What we finally found was a used 2009 Keystone Copper Canyon. Although the 29-foot fifth-wheel has a queen-size bed, it has a wonderful 8-inch-deep recessed shelf that stretches across the entire width of the headboard. My husband's CPAP machine fits perfectly! There are reading lights and an electrical outlet, and plenty of room for books and tissues.

With the ever-increasing population of people who use CPAP machines, we feel this is something the industry should consider when designing RV bedrooms. If other RVs had this feature, we might have considered them.

Louise Clark, Morrison, Illinois

Correction

The March issue's Walk-Through misstated the base MSRP for the 2016 Starcraft Launch Ultra-Lite 24RLS as \$13,850. It is \$20,765. — Editors

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Masterpiece on the Mississippi

A Smithsonian affiliate, the 14-acre National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium offers an educational and interactive experience in Dubuque, Iowa

article by Dave G. Houser

For much of its existence, Dubuque, Iowa, has been a little short on charisma. It started out well with a lead-mining boom, eight breweries, and the Dubuque Boat and Boiler Works, a massive operation at Pfohl Boatyard that stood from 1851 until 1971 as the nation's largest ship-builder on inland waters. Rows of Victorian mansions overlooked the thriving Mississippi River port. But with the closing of the breweries and lead works, and eventually the shipyard, Dubuque faded into obscurity.

With the new millennium, however, came a city-sponsored \$188 million revitalization project that included establishing the National Mississippi River Museum and Aquarium (NMRM&A), which opened to the public in 2003. Suddenly, Dubuque was no longer a backwater. In fact, now it's calling itself the Masterpiece on the Mississippi.

Established as the Mississippi River's national headquarters' interpretive center, NMRM&A is a Smithsonian affiliate that has drawn praise as one of the finest museums in the Midwest. The 14-acre complex centers around two main buildings — the Diamond Jo National River Center and the William Woodward Mississippi River Center — separated by a plaza



and Pfohl Boatyard, the museum's outdoor hands-on area featuring steamboat artifacts and boat-building demonstrations.

The Discovery Center, with its array of large freshwater aquariums, animal exhibits, interactive theaters, barge-pilot simulator and touch tanks where youngsters meet up with mollusks, tadpoles, crayfish and other river critters, is NMRM&A's number-one attraction. Most dazzling is the huge Main Channel aquarium, where visitors stand face-to-face with massive, man-size catfish and alligator gars.

Connected to the Discovery Center is the Fred W. Woodward Riverboat Museum, housed in the old Dubuque Boat and Boiler Works building. The focus is on the long history of river-boating on the Mississippi, featuring a Mark Twain exhibit and working boat-building and blacksmith shops.

The Diamond Jo National River Center features the National Rivers Hall of Fame, honoring those who have made significant contributions to America's waterways. The center also houses a 4D immersion theater,

(Clockwise from top) An educator at the Carver Wet Lab and Touch Tank shows off a crawfish. The National River Center's exhibits and aquariums trace America's history through its rivers. The RiverWays Gallery showcases river exploration.

a watery play area for kids, a museum store and the River's Edge Café.

Outdoors again, the Woodward Wetlands takes visitors on a boardwalk trail to explore the natural habitat of the Mississippi and the vintage steamboat *William M. Black*. This National Landmark vessel, nearly the length of a football field, was a working dredge boat in the 1930s. You can walk the decks of the old steamer and tour the engine room and pilothouse.

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This Kieler, Wisconsin, Good Sam Park is 8 miles from Dubuque and open April 15 through October 31. 608-568-7797 www.rusticbarnrvpark.com

Super-Light X-lite

Shasta RV, celebrating 75 years in business, is rolling out its 2017 models with a new Phoenix X-lite fifth-wheel that the company claims is "super light at under 8,600 pounds." The first three introductory models include triple-slide floorplans: the 296RS and 276RL at 30 feet 11 inches, and the 286DB at 32 feet 6 inches. Weather Shield, Shasta's extreme-weather package, is claimed to keep the RV comfortable in all climates with enclosed dump valves, extra insulation, and reflective-foil wrap on the walls, roof and floor.

Sporty graphics grace the exterior, and the aerodynamic front cap integrates Turning Point Technology to assist with turning in shortbed trucks. Inside, two-tone wood colors, a designer valance package and a kitchen island give the X-lite a classy look. Simply stock the 8-cubic-foot double-door refrigerator and turn on the fireplace, and you're set for a cozy evening with the 40-inch LED TV and Bluetooth-enabled stereo.

The X-lite 296RS and 276RL sleep six, and the 286DB sleeps eight. All models have a walk-around queen-size bed and a wardrobe slide. Base price is \$42,900. Shasta RV, 574-825-7178, www.shastarving.com



Riders with a Cause

World Golf Village near St. Augustine, Florida, is hosting the 17th annual Riding into History motorcycle event on May 21. The competition attracts more than 300 classic and vintage motorcycles. General admission is \$10.

Over the years, the event has contributed \$400,000 to charities. The 2016 proceeds will benefit K9s for Warriors, dedicated to providing service canines to military men and women suffering from post-traumatic stress disability or traumatic brain injury.

Riding into History
www.ridingintohistory.org

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The Sky's the Limit

New Mexico's annual Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta (www.balloonfiesta.com) is a popular destination for RVers. This year's event runs from October 1 through 9, and RV sites are booking well in advance. Not as well known are the many other hot-air balloon festivals happening around the United States, where the skies fill with ornate and sometimes wacky balloons of all sizes and shapes. Here are a few other places for viewing colorful mass ascensions this year:



California

Temecula Valley Balloon and Wine Festival

May 20 to 22
Lake Skinner Recreation Area
www.tvbwf.com

Mississippi

Great Mississippi River Balloon Race

October 14 to 16
Rosalie Bicentennial Gardens, Natchez
www.natchezballoonrace.com

Nebraska

Nebraska Balloon and Wine Festival

August 7 and 8
Coventry Campus, Omaha
www.showofficeonline.com/nebraskawineballoonfestival.html

New Jersey

Festival of Ballooning

July 29 to 31
Solberg Airport, Readington
www.balloonfestival.com

Nevada

Great Reno Balloon Race

September 9 to 11
Rancho San Rafael Regional Park
www.renoballoon.com

Texas

Plano Balloon Festival

September 23 to 25
Oak Point Park and Nature Preserve
www.planoballoonfest.org

Southern California's Temecula Valley Balloon and Wine Festival includes dawn hot-air-balloon launches, evening balloon glows, wine and cuisine tastings, and chef demonstrations.

► Websites with information on ballooning events include www.balloonfiesta.com, www.hotairballoon.com and www.everfest.com/unique/hot-air-balloon-festivals. To find nearby RV parks, visit www.goodsamcamping.com

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* US Patent #6,986,524



Clean Sweep

While hiking the Heart Rock Trail in Southern California's San Bernardino Mountains last February, some of the *Trailer Life* staff came across a group of volunteers removing graffiti from the granite walls along Seeley Creek. Seventeen volunteers showed up to scrub away tagging along the popular and easy-to-hike trail that descends through a mountain forest of oaks and pines to a waterfall.

To raise money to buy eco-friendly graffiti remover and steel-bristle brushes, the cleanup's organizer, Torleif Karlson, took advantage of the GoFundMe fundraising website (www.gofundme.com). The site helps individuals raise money for personal causes and volunteer activities. Kudos to the group and other volunteers around the country for taking time to keep America's outdoor playgrounds and natural resources beautiful.

NEWSWIRE

PARTNERSHIP



Lance Partners with Cruise America RV Rental

Lance Camper, manufacturer of truck campers, travel trailers and toy haulers, has partnered with Cruise America RV Rental and Sales. The Cruise America T17, based on the Lance 650 truck camper introduced last year, will be available for rental at four North American locations: Los Angeles, San Francisco, Vancouver and Calgary. The 650 was designed specifically for half-ton shortbed trucks.

"We are happy to be partnering with Cruise America on this project. We believe the truck-camper market has substantial growth potential, and the additional exposure these units will provide at national parks and campgrounds...will help foster this growth," said Jack Cole, Lance president and CEO.

Cruise America Vice President Michael Smalley adds, "With the growing popularity of small campers, the T17 will allow us to provide our customers with a vehicle that's easy to drive, simple to operate, gets great gas mileage and still has all the amenities of a full-size motorhome. Especially for those who've never tried an RV vacation, this will be an excellent adventure vehicle." www.cruiseamerica.com

ACQUISITION



PHOTO BY SCOTT HIRKO

Erwin Hymer Group Buys Roadtrek

Kitchener, Ontario-based Roadtrek Motorhomes has been acquired by Erwin Hymer Group, owner of Europe's best-known motorhome and caravan (trailer) brands. Roadtrek owns a 30 percent share of the North American Class B market and currently offers 10 Class B models based upon the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter, Ram ProMaster and Chevrolet Express platforms.

Germany-based Erwin Hymer Group employs 4,400 people in eight European production facilities. The transaction creates a new corporate entity called Erwin Hymer Group North America Inc. (EHGNA), which will operate under the management of current Roadtrek President and CEO Jim Hammill, named president and CEO of the newly formed EHGNA.

Hymer, with about a 30 percent share of the European market, holds a strong position in the towable RV market as well and has indicated an interest in introducing lightweight towables into the North American market. However, "first and foremost, the company is interested in introducing the HymerCar, a Class B with a pop-up roof," said Hammill.

SAFETY



PHOTO BY SCOTT HIRKO

Ford F-150 Brake Investigation

Ford F-150 trucks with the 3.5-liter, six-cylinder engine from 2013 and 2014 are undergoing a brake-failure investigation. Ford stated that the company takes customer safety seriously and will cooperate with the investigation.

Approximately 420,000 vehicles will be covered, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) website. The agency said that some drivers reported that the brake pedal can suddenly go to the floor, with resulting brake failure. Although there have been no injuries as of this writing, four drivers reported that the problem caused crashes.

"The complaints allege symptoms of the brake pedal going to the floor with a complete loss of brake effectiveness, brake-warning-lamp illumination and/or a low or empty master-cylinder-reservoir fluid level with no visible leakage," the agency said in a notice of its investigation. "Several complaints allege repair facilities diagnosed the problem as brake fluid leaking from the master cylinder to the brake booster."

The NHTSA report states that 31 of the 33 complaints from F-150 drivers came in last year. www.nhtsa.gov

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The Murphys' family is still growing, so they added some much-needed space with a new Roamer fifth wheel. Plus, with the trade-in value of their Light, they were able to add residential upgrades, too. Bonus!



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Highland Ridge RV, Inc., Circle 120 on Reader Service Card

Lil Snoozy

Looking for a small travel trailer with lots of room inside that can go just about anywhere? South Carolina's Lil Snoozy makes built-to-order trailers with interiors that are 14 feet 6 inches long and 6 feet 6 inches wide. The trailers are also offered as empty toy haulers with a 4-foot-wide rear door for loading. Both models have 6-foot 4-inch ceiling heights.

The two-piece trailer is solid fiberglass with a smooth, glossy finish and has a rounded body for stable towing and good aerodynamics and gas mileage. "Imagine two boat hulls glued together and mounted on a custom-made boat trailer" is how the company describes the Lil Snoozy. The trailer is then mounted on a galvanized-steel frame to prevent rust and corrosion.

Inside, cabinetry is solid red oak, and there's a pedestal table, a queen-size bed with ample underbed storage, a 65-inch jackknife sofa and a wet bath. The Lil Snoozy has an 8,000-Btu air conditioner and a 1,500-watt ceramic heater. In the kitchen is a portable cooktop and an apartment-size 3.5-cubic-foot Magic Chef 120-volt AC refrigerator that requires shorepower.

Exterior length is 18 feet 6 inches, and the Snoozy weighs in at 2,650 pounds (dry) with a 225-pound hitch weight. The spring-leaf axle is rated for 3,500 pounds, and there's 11 inches of road clearance. Add-ons include a generator, a microwave, additional windows and a Sunbrella-fabric awning. Base price is \$21,500. Lil Snoozy, 803-655-5336, www.lilsnoozy.com



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Lance Campers, Circle 129 on Reader Service Card



National Barbecue Month

Summer's just around the corner, and what goes better with summer than barbecuing? Scott St. Clair, an avid RVer and general manager of Powell, Ohio's City Barbeque, says the best way to barbecue is "with my fingers and our family and friends." In honor of May's National Barbecue Month, he offers the following finger-lickin'-good barbecue tips:

- When RVing, prebake ribs in the oven at 200 degrees for about three hours to speed grilling and add a bead of brown sugar across the top to give them a sweet taste.
- With ribs and big meats, low and slow are best. Smoke the meats at a lower temperature for a longer period of time.

- Rubs are good, but take care not to over-salt, as that will dry out the meat.
- Make sure chicken hits an internal temperature of at least 165 degrees and big meats reach 190 to 200 degrees. St. Clair recommends investing in a good meat thermometer.
- Wood chips can be used with either LP-gas or charcoal grills, though hickory is best because of the slow burn.
- If using charcoal, don't overdo the lighter fluid, as the meat will pick up the taste.
- City Barbeque has its own signature rubs and sauces, but St. Clair's backup is Sweet Baby Ray's Sweet Vidalia Onion barbecue sauce.



St. Clair and his wife, Pam, have been RVing and camping for 26 years all around Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Kentucky. This summer they plan to visit Yosemite and Nashville with their new 28-foot Keystone Cougar. 🚐

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Pull-Rite, Circle 147 on Reader Service Card

Feelin' Groovy

In the late 1960s, *Trailer Life* was outta sight



After turning 25 in 1966, *Trailer Life* rolled into its second quarter-century with steadily increasing pages that peaked at 200 in the March 1968 issue. The thriving RV industry, and the explosive growth of motorhome ownership in particular, inspired Publisher Art Rouse to launch a new magazine devoted exclusively to motorized RVs. Named *Motorhome Life* when it debuted in 1968, *Trailer Life*'s sibling is now simply *MotorHome*.

Not long after that, the abbreviation "RV" made its first appearance in *Trailer Life*, replacing "RecVs" from earlier in the decade, and "trailer coaches" and "house cars" from the 1940s and '50s. As hairstyles got longer and skirts inched shorter, the era's game-changing youth culture crept naturally into the magazine, with Rouse's three children all coming of age and joining the staff, along with a team of enthusiastic RV writers eager to share their passion.

The possibilities seemed endless, and each issue featured more groundbreaking RVs, including a Kenskill trailer with a first-generation slideout, called a "tip-out," and one of the first fifth-wheels ("It's a semi! It's a trailer! It's a Hy-Lander!"). *Trailer Life* tested not one but three amphibious RVs in the late '60s (Trail or Float, Trail-R-Float and the Creighton Gull), and a fourth (Amphicraft) ran full-page ads.

By the end of the decade, all of the domestic automakers offered

trailer-towing packages, and sedans and station wagons were the go-to tow vehicles. From the Buick Electra to the Pontiac Grand Prix, *Trailer Life* put them through their paces hauling trailers at Southern California's now-defunct Riverside Raceway. With the U.S. market for foreign cars about to take off, the staff also hitched up imports, among them the Japanese Datsun 510 Wagon, the German Opel Kadett and the quintessential '60s ride, the Volkswagen Beetle.

Automakers got in on the RV action, too, with Dodge Motor Homes (manufactured by Travco and marketed by Chrysler) and Ford truck campers. The late-'60s camping package on F-Series trucks came with heavy-duty cooling, a larger alternator and rewiring for campers. Ford even offered a camper that fit the bed of the Ranchero, a coupe-utility pickup on a station-wagon platform.

Now that America's second largest car company is back in the RV business with Ford-branded campers, toy haulers and travel trailers (built by Livin' Lite), what goes around, comes around. How groovy is that? 🚐



RVing in the Age of Aquarius

(Above) Can a VW Beetle tow a 14-foot Cardinal Lo-Boy? Yes, according to the April 1968 *Trailer Life*: "The rig handled surprisingly easily." (Right) In a flirty full-page ad, Miss Tear Drop '69 enticed readers to check out "six sexy models" from Royal Coachman. (Far right) Futuristic RVs and Lucille Ball's TV motorhome vied for attention on the August 1969 cover.



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That Sinking Feeling

When the manufacturer didn't cover the full cost of repairing the sagging shower floor in his travel trailer, an Arizona reader turned to RV Resolutions for help:

► We have a major problem with the shower floor in our 2015 Northwood Arctic Fox 25Y trailer, for which the factory has not authorized a repair. The trailer's shower floor is unstable, flexing and collapsing as weight is applied.

After I sent photos to Northwood, they acknowledged the problem but said they "build them all that way," and offered only a partial contribution to pay for the repair, which does not make sense to me. In the meantime, we are stuffing boards under the shower to bring the foundation up to the bottom of the tub.

We'd like to continue RVing in this trailer for at least another five years. If you see some merit in this case, we hope that you will go to bat for us.

Hank Carstensen, Surprise, Arizona

RV Resolutions petitioned Northwood Manufacturing to take another look at Hank Carstensen's shower-floor problem and later received the following correspondence from Carstensen:

► A few days after I received my copy of RV Resolutions' letter to Northwood, I was called by one of their reps, Darrin, whose attitude was helpful, understanding and sweet (yes, sweet). Northwood has this man well placed. Darrin sent me to SST Auto/RV in Mesa, Arizona, for the shower repairs. The dealership did an excellent, clean and neat job. We are happy with SST and Northwood, and especially with RV Resolutions for your influence and help. Cheers!

H.C.

Claim a Victory

Frustrated when his RV insurance provider didn't foot the whole bill to fix his damaged fifth-wheel trailer after a tire failure, an Oklahoma reader asked us to intercede:

► We had a blowout on our Keystone Montana on July 16, 2015, that destroyed the panels on the side of the fifth-wheel. We had the tire replaced and called our insurance company, National General, to report the damage. The claims adjuster told us to send pictures of the side panels and asked where we wanted to have the repair work done. We sent photos and had several conversations about taking the Montana to Leisure Time RV in Oklahoma City, where we purchased the fifth-wheel and always have the maintenance work done.

On September 29, we left our fifth-wheel at Leisure Time and told them that we had an insurance claim for the damaged panels pending with National General and that the adjuster would contact them. We were naive about what was about to happen and mistakenly believed that the claim

would be handled properly.

On October 9, Troy at Leisure Time called to say that there had been no contact from the adjuster, and he asked for her phone number, which we provided. We also called the adjuster repeatedly but had no response. We finally called the main National General phone number and asked for advice on how to handle the situation about no contact from the adjuster. We were told that we could pay for the repair ourselves and send the receipts for reimbursement.

When we picked up the repaired fifth-wheel on December 8, we found out that National General had sent a partial payment of \$1,071.52. We paid the remaining \$1,562.63 to settle the bill. We do not know how the amount paid was calculated, but we are fairly certain that no one from

National General actually looked at the Montana in person. We are asking for a reimbursement of the amount we paid, minus the \$250 deductible, which comes to \$1,312.63.

**Charles F. Dusenbery
Guthrie, Oklahoma**

A month after RV Resolutions contacted National General Insurance Company on Charles Dusenbery's behalf, Dusenbery notified us that the claim had been resolved to his satisfaction:

► National General Insurance Company has paid our claim in accordance with the policy provisions. We thank you for assisting us. The claim is now settled, and the check has cleared.

C.F.D. 📧

NEED HELP? » RV Resolutions is a forum for the settlement of conflicts between consumers and RV dealers and manufacturers, accessory suppliers and service providers. After exhausting all other resources without success, please send a typed letter to *Trailer Life* RV Resolutions, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Include copies of appropriate bills and correspondence as well as a self-addressed, stamped envelope.



UP, UP AND AWAY

Arizona hosts the most uplifting club event of 2016

For the third year in a row, Good Sam members flocked to Lake Havasu City, Arizona, for January's Havasu Balloon Festival and Fair. RVers in 250 rigs crossed the historic London Bridge to park on an island with a terrific view of hot-air-balloon ascensions in the morning and ultralight planes and skydivers all day long. Members took advantage of the shuttle service to the festival grounds, where there was something for everyone with music, vendors and food booths, along with balloon displays and tethered rides.

Beyond the prime location, convenient shuttle and registration discount, one of the great things about the Good Sam deal was that net profits went to local Lions and Rotary clubs for distribution to charities throughout the region. The Lions and Rotary folks were great hosts, and we can't thank them enough for coordinating the RV parking, and providing doughnuts and coffee each morning. Our thanks also go out to Fantasy Tours for sponsoring Saturday's burrito breakfast.

Keep an eye on the events page of the Good Sam Club website for sign-up details for the 2017 festival, January 15 through 17. RV parking sold out early this year, so don't be left out. — **Jo Yett, Good Sam West Region Director**

► **MORE CLUB EVENTS:** To see the full schedule of upcoming Good Sam regional events and State/Provincial Rallies, go to www.goodsamclub.com/events.

Like, Totally

Get stoked for Camping World's Tubular '80s Weekend

You don't have to be a Valley Girl to get awesome discounts on RV and outdoor gear during Camping World's Tubular '80s Weekend, April 29 and 30. Part of Camping World's and Good Sam's shared 50th anniversary celebration, the 1980s-themed event also features gnarly savings on Doorbuster items and a totally rad giveaway to the first 50 customers each day at each location. Customers at all Camping World stores will take home a free collectible '80s-look shopping bag with any purchase of \$50 or more from April 18 through May 8, while supplies last.

Good Sam Club members enjoy exclusive savings at Camping World every day and extra savings during anniversary events. More anniversary events are scheduled throughout 2016, including July's 50th Birthday Celebration. Don't forget to enter the Golden Giveaway by September 11 for a chance to win a new RV or a portion of \$5 million in free camping. Visit Camping World for more details and sweepstakes rules.

To find Camping World locations near you, go to www.campingworld.com/stores.



Lucky Dogs

Since 1980 Good Sam chapters have raised money for Dogs for the Deaf, an Oregon nonprofit that rescues dogs and trains them to assist people in need. In recognition of members' dedication and hard work, each year Dogs for the Deaf honors the top-contributing chapters and states, including the following 2015 award winners:

Top Dog (\$7,500+)

Clackamas Campers, Oregon

Best in Show (\$5,000+)

Sams Radio Hams, Southern California

Pick of the Litter (\$1,000+)

Tundra Rollers, Alaska
Durham Good Sams, Northern California
Square Samers, Northern California
Lucky Ones, Northern California
Caldwell Ramblers, Idaho
Kaveman Travelers, Idaho
Prairie State Sams, Illinois
Trail Dusters, Oregon
Blue Mountain Sams, Pennsylvania
Foxchase Sams, Virginia
Canyon Sams, Washington
Skagit Sams, Washington
Three Rivers Sams, Washington

Top Five States

1. Oregon
2. Washington
3. Southern California
4. Northern California
5. Idaho

Learn more about Dogs for the Deaf at www.dogsforthe deaf.org.

Rescued and trained by Dogs for the Deaf, Harper now helps a hearing-impaired woman in California.



► **FOUNDING FATHER** In 1966, the year the Good Sam Club got its start, 23-year-old David Garvin set up a humble camping-supply store at Bowling Green, Kentucky's Beech Bend Park. Fast forward 50 years, and the Camping World chain Garvin founded with that single store has grown into America's largest retailer of RVs, RV accessories and RV services.



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Overachievers

The 2016 Chevy Colorado diesel and Lance 2155 travel trailer exceed expectations

We're all accustomed to the expression "Less is more." But is it, really? Everywhere we look, it seems that more is in fact more. What used to be a mobile phone is now a powerful device that can access the Internet, send and receive email, take pictures and provide navigation. Televisions seem to get bigger every month, and are loaded with apps that provide

more convenience and value. Manufacturers of all kinds are fighting for your hard-earned dollar, and the fact of the matter is, the only way they're going to get it is to provide you with — you guessed it — more. So it's really no surprise that what was once considered a small truck can now tow as much as a full-size model from just a few years ago, and that travel trailers are available with features and amenities



once reserved for their larger fifth-wheel cousins.

Case in point: The 2016 Chevy Colorado and Lance 2155 featured here. In the crew cab, longbed configuration, the test truck is just 14.7 inches shorter, 3.2 inches lower and 5.7 inches narrower than the equivalent full-size Silverado. When equipped with the new 2.8-liter Duramax four-cylinder diesel, it tows just 1,500 pounds less, gets better fuel economy (4 more MPG city, 7 more highway) and saves you almost \$10,000. The Lance 2155, while measuring only 25 feet 8 inches, offers dual slideouts, a kitchen island and an entertainment center with an

available fireplace, yet has a claimed dry weight of just 4,600 pounds. It seemed like these two were practically made for each other, so we hitched them up and headed to the Nevada desert for testing.

The Chevy Colorado and its sibling, the GMC Canyon, were all new for the 2015 model year, and this year added the diesel option as a coup de grâce to the midsize competition. Built in Thailand, the engine is part of GM's global family of turbo-diesel four-cylinder engines. And like its bigger brother, the 6.6-liter Duramax offered in GM heavy-duty trucks, it features a variable-geometry turbo with a

driver-selectable exhaust-brake function. It also uses a similar iron-block/aluminum-head configuration, and owing to its common-rail fuel injection and cooled-exhaust-gas recirculation system, it is the cleanest diesel truck engine ever produced by GM.

The engine is matched with a standard 6L50 six-speed automatic transmission with a torque converter featuring a so-called Centrifugal Pendulum Vibration Absorber (CPVA), an integrated damper that is designed to cancel out the engine's torsional vibrations. Also new: A segment-exclusive integrated trailer-brake controller that is standard on diesel models.

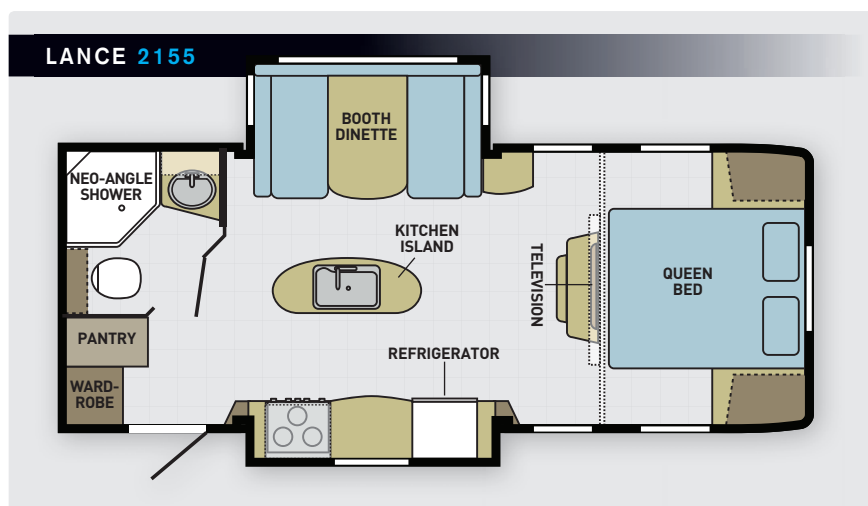


The Lance 2155 is the first travel trailer in the company's lineup to offer dual slideouts and an island kitchen. This preproduction model has two forward windows on each side; production models will have one.

The engine is smooth and powerful, and though unobtrusive, offers just enough clatter to let you know it's a diesel. The transmission is smooth shifting, and while it offers a manual mode, we didn't use it; the combination of diesel torque, exhaust brake and intelligent transmission logic made manual shifting unnecessary. The Colorado crested grades at 55 MPH or better with the trailer in tow, and its long crew-cab wheelbase contributed to excellent stability on the oft-breezy Interstate 15, even as 18-wheelers passed.

Overall, the truck has a solid feel that leaves little doubt it can handle this job for years to come, but at the same time offers a quiet and comfortable ride. In fact, about the only mechanical improvements we could wish for would be better steering feel and stronger brakes; even though GM fits the truck with four-wheel discs, they felt spongy to us.

Chevy still has some work to do to make the interior more comfort-



able. The seats are not only firm, but also narrow, and the driver's seat is offset to the right. That means sitting on the left bolster to be directly in front of the wheel, which feels like driving with a thick wallet in your back pocket. The upholstery is a sort of woven vinyl that doesn't breathe very well in hot weather, and the climate-control sys-

tem didn't help matters; in Auto mode, it seemed like we were constantly fiddling with the fan speed to make it cooler.

But the biggest offender, at least from an ergonomic standpoint, is the four-wheel-drive control; it is located on the left side of the wheel, right next to the headlight knob, and is exactly

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the same size and shape. Putting it on the center console (like almost every other four-wheel-drive vehicle) would make a lot more sense.

If you can overlook these flaws, there is a lot of good in the Colorado's office, including OnStar, an integrated 4G LTE Wi-Fi hot spot and the Chevrolet MyLink audio system, boasting an 8-inch color touch screen, Apple CarPlay and SiriusXM Radio. Our test truck was equipped with the optional navigation feature, a good buy at \$495. Other options included a spray-in bedliner (\$475) and a Trailering Equipment Package (\$250), both of which we would recommend.

We arrived at our destination in the evening and were grateful for the 4WD system in the hilly darkness. Although the campground was completely full (many public sites are first-come, first-served and don't take reservations), the gracious campsite host guided us to a couple of spots he reserves for latecomers like us. Setting up went

pretty quickly, thanks to the optional electric A-frame jack (\$239) and electric stabilizer jacks (\$681), the latter of which took some getting used to. The power switch is on the streetside front corner behind a locked compartment, along with the switches for the front and rear jacks on that side. The switch for the jacks on the opposite side are on the curbside front corner, which necessitates walking side to side a few times to get things right, but it still beats manual jacks by a mile.

The 2155 has the customary front-storage compartment that is pretty roomy and can be optioned (as ours was) with a pull-out storage tray (\$239) that is accessed from the curbside door. At first, we were concerned that we wouldn't have enough room to store our 2,000-watt generator here but found that there was just enough space on the other side of the compartment, behind the bin.

Once inside the trailer, it becomes obvious that Lance made the living



(Above and opposite page, left to right) Lance calls the large dual-pane radius window in the forward bedroom the Sky View window; day/night shades limit the amount of natural light that enters. Wardrobes and nightstands are positioned on either side of the queen bed, in addition to a conveniently placed electrical outlet and 12-volt DC USB charging port. The kitchen provides lots of prep space and plenty of light, courtesy of an overhead skylight and LED lighting throughout. The booth dinette offers room for four and has storage drawers beneath each seat.

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area its main priority, which makes sense, considering this is where most people will spend the bulk of their time. There is a closet, cabinet and pantry to the left of the entry door, which makes packing fast and easy, and the bathroom is located at the rear as well, so pit stops can be made without delay. This room is a bit on the tight side but has a large neo-angle shower with a glass enclosure and a

porcelain toilet, plus adequate storage for necessities.

In the living area, the kitchen island — a first for Lance travel trailers — features drawers, storage cabinets, a large single-bowl sink with covers, and ends that open out to reveal large, deep shelves. And though the preproduction model we tested had a short residential-style faucet, we're told production models will have a larger

high-rise faucet. Food-prep space is plentiful, and there's even more room to work on the curbside kitchen countertop. About the only thing we questioned was the placement of a storage cubby above the stove instead of the microwave, which is instead mounted beneath the countertop. We would vote to remove the cubby and put the microwave there instead, but that's personal preference.

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Aside from its smallest model, the 1475, the 2155 is the only trailer in Lance's lineup that does not have a large U-shaped dinette. In its place is a booth dinette with reversible cushions that can still seat four very comfortably and converts quickly into an additional bed for two kids or small adults. As is customary in Lance trailers, there is a huge drawer underneath each side that can easily swallow blankets, extra pillows and the like. In the test unit, one side was partially occupied by a number of insulated, snap-on skylight covers, part of the Four Seasons All Weather Package (\$583). They are designed to keep the heat in on cold evenings, but we found they were also useful for keeping the interior dark on sunny mornings.

At the front of the living area is the entertainment center, which comes standard with an AM/FM/DVD stereo, plus interior and exterior speakers, and Bluetooth connectivity. However, most buyers will probably



The Lance 2155 we tested was fitted with the optional 18-foot power awning with integrated LED lighting and a wind sensor.

opt for the available 32-inch LED television (\$863) and/or the aforementioned electric fireplace (\$297). Like many other trailers we've tested, the television rotates for viewing from the front bedroom, which is a cool idea, but traditionally has suffered from one major inconvenience: the head unit

doesn't turn with it, so you can't adjust volume or change channels once in bed. Jensen, manufacturer of the head unit and the television, developed a work-around for this problem called J-Control, an app for your smartphone that lets you operate the entertainment system via Bluetooth.

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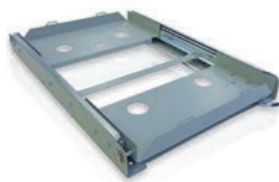
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The Chevy Colorado's interior looks nice and offers a lot of great features — but the seats were tight and didn't breathe well in hot weather.

The 2155's compact front bedroom features what Lance calls a "semi walk-around" queen bed, which means you can stand on either side but not at the front. This will likely cause some aggravation if you are alone, as you'll need to walk around the entertainment center to get to the other side of the bed several times while making it, and if you are taller than 6 feet, your toes will touch. Couples will have the most success, as they can make the bed from either side and will probably curl up at night anyway. On either side of the bed are good-size wardrobes for hanging clothes and, beneath them,

roomy side tables with 120-volt AC outlets.

Speaking of power, one of the things we love about Lance trailers is that everything except for the microwave, air conditioner and fireplace works off 12-volt DC, including the television and USB charging ports. And Lance also offers a 160-watt solar panel to keep the dual batteries charged on extended stays.

Come to think of it, there's another common expression we're reminded of as we return home with this feature-laden duo: good things come in small packages. 🚐

SPECIFICATIONS

LANCE 2155

Exterior Length	25' 8"
Exterior Width	8' 3/8"
Exterior Height	10' 1"
Interior Width	7' 7"
Interior Height	6' 6"
Construction	Powder-coated steel chassis, aluminum framing, laminated fiberglass exterior panels, TPO roof, block-foam insulation
Freshwater Cap.	45 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	45 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	45 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	6 gal.
Refrigerator	6 cu. ft.
Furnace	25,000 Btu
Air Conditioner	13,500 Btu
Converter	55 amp
Batteries	Dealer supplied
Tires	ST205/75R14
Suspension	Torsion bar
Weight [water and propane full, no supplies]	5,047 lbs.
Hitch Weight	786 lbs.
Axle Weight	4,261 lbs.
GVWR	6,000 lbs.
GAWR (2)	2,900 lbs.
Cargo Carrying Cap.	953 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$35,684
MSRP, as tested	\$41,777
Basic Warranty	1 year

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Fuel Economy, Solo	22.6 mpg (combined)
Fuel Economy, Towing	16.3 mpg
Engine	2.8-liter 4-cylinder Duramax diesel
Horsepower	181 hp @ 3,400 rpm
Torque	369 lb ft @ 2,000 rpm
Transmission	6-speed automatic
Axle Ratio	3.42:1
Fuel Cap.	21 gal.
Tires	P255/65R17
Suspension, Front	Independent, coil-over shock absorbers
Suspension, Rear	Solid axle with leaf springs and shock absorbers
Brakes	4-wheel-disc with ABS
Tow Rating	7,600 lbs.
Length	18' 8.9"
Wheelbase	140.5"
MSRP, base	\$34,940
MSRP, as tested	\$42,205
Basic Warranty	3 years/36,000 miles

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WALK-THROUGH: KZ SPREE C250BHS

A Good Connection

The Spree Connect lightweight bunkhouse inspires family togetherness in a comfortable, well-appointed trailer

One of the main reasons I became interested in RVing was the opportunity the lifestyle affords to connect with family and friends. Shortly after we had our first child, I could already see that taking extended weekend adventures with my little one was worth its weight in gold. More than 12 years and two more kids later, nothing has changed. We continue to value our RVing trips for the togetherness they provide and always appreciate a trailer that makes five people living in an abbreviated space enjoyable and fulfilling.

Recognizing this need for a family-conscious floorplan that doesn't scrimp on amenities and makes the most of its available space, KZ offers the Spree Connect C250BHS, a no-nonsense bunkhouse that's easy to tow and even

easier to live in. The C250BHS squeezes a lot of living into a lightweight package, although at first glance, nothing about the trailer's footprint jumps out at you. The steps under the 14-foot awning lead into an open floorplan with an emphasis on togetherness. That means there aren't a ton of bells and whistles or electronic gadgets.

The C250BHS has been designed on the premise that most of the time will be spent outdoors, perhaps enjoying a meal courtesy of the rear exterior kitchen that's equipped with a slide-out sink and two-burner cooktop, in addition to a small fridge for chilling the beverages and keeping the steaks cold until grilling time. I was pleasantly surprised such a feature was included standard on a trailer in this configuration, a sign that KZ un-



The dinette easily accommodates a family of five. At bedtime, it breaks down to sleeping quarters for one adult or two kids.

derstands its customers and delivers what the typical buyer for such a floorplan would enjoy.

The BH in the model name tells you this is a bunkhouse, and KZ has selected the popular rear-bunkhouse/front-master-bedroom floorplan that gives parents and kids a sense of their own space. The bedroom up front is tucked away behind a pillared entertainment center, a setup of which I am not a huge fan, but the pillar is flanked by sliding doors on each side that can be shut tight and offer a much better sound barrier than the usual accordion-door closures.

The bed is adorned with a wall-



Outside, the C250BHS shows off its color-infused fiberglass exterior, aerodynamic front end, tinted safety-glass windows and fold-away grab handle next to the entrance door.

(Right, top to bottom) A pillar that snugs up to the queen bed houses the entertainment center; sliding doors extend from each side for bedroom privacy and an effective sound barrier. Maple cabinetry, a decorative border and a high-rise faucet perk up the galley.

mounted faux-leather headboard and, in a departure from most trailers with this type of floorplan, offers plenty of room for my 6-foot 2-inch frame to stretch out for a comfortable night's sleep without my feet pinned against the back side of the entertainment center. Dual hanging wardrobes, in addition to the over-bed storage units, are sure to be well used by all occupants.

The galley area is compact but functional, with a microwave and three-burner stovetop, all more than capable of producing family delights from chicken tenders to macaroni and cheese. The dual-basin galley sink is a bit flimsy and made of plastic, but the high-rise faucet works to counteract the obvious cost-cutting measure. The double-door refrigerator provides 6.3 cubic feet of food storage. There isn't a ton of counter space here, but that's par for the course in a trailer this size and not usually a priority among weekend-oriented RVers.

Across from the galley, the dinette is of the U-shaped variety that many an RVing family can appreciate. The five of us had no problem gathering to eat (when the meal wasn't outside, that is), and there is even enough room for those of my, *ahem*, rounded build to shimmy to the back of the table.



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WALK-THROUGH: KZ SPREE C250BHS

The dinette breaks down into a sizable sleeping space at night, great for two kids or one wide-sleeping adult.

The kids will likely fight over who gets the top bunk in the rear of the trailer, but what those preteen pugilists don't realize is that, with no ladder, the top bunk is difficult to get into, and access will require some acrobatics and possibly cooperation from the lower-bunk occupant. That's not even mentioning the disconcerting "Thump!" resulting from the same child dismounting the bunk in the dead of night on the way to the bathroom.

We did note that the top bunk appears dark and cavernous, even with the light on; a small window here would have been a wise manufacturing choice. Each bunk has a handy mesh storage net mounted to the wall, which is great for books, small toys, electronics and whatever your kid may dream up.

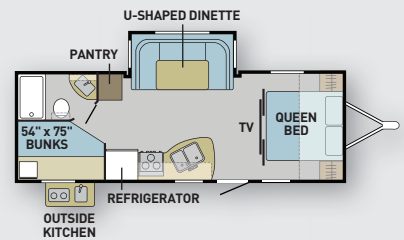
The rear bathroom won't win any awards for spaciousness, but there is enough elbowroom to get the job

done. The toilet is set nearly against the shower enclosure, which severely limits foot space and makes for an uncomfortable sit-down experience. The shower features a small basin tub that's always handy for washing the extra-little ones, and a medicine cabinet offers a bit of residential comfort.

The tank monitors are positioned near the bathroom sink, which puzzles me. In a family-oriented trailer, I'd like to see the panel and controls in a location not so readily available to precocious little ones who may be apt to play with the buttons and lights until otherwise discovered. But I'm splitting hairs here. I thoroughly enjoyed the Spree Connect C250BHS overall, as it is a family-friendly setup that includes many features I didn't realize I needed.

A bunkhouse floorplan isn't for everybody, but then again, it's not designed for everybody. If you're looking for a great way to "connect" with the family, this lightweight Spree warrants some serious consideration. 🚐

QUICK INFO



Exterior Length	28' 2"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	6' 6"
Exterior Height	10' 7"
Freshwater Cap.	40 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	32 gal. / 32 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.
UVW	5,120 lbs.
Hitch Weight	690 lbs.
GVWR	6,800 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$24,352.75

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NEW YORK'S WATERY PLAY

The Finger Lakes region embraces nature's handiwork with thundering waterfalls, deep gorges, miles of pristine shoreline, peaceful woods and rolling hills for hiking and biking. The bucolic countryside is also home to premier golf courses, wineries, microbreweries and a multitude of state parks

According to an Iroquois legend, the Great Spirit created the Finger Lakes by placing his hand on what is now west-central New York. Then he said: "Go forth, my children, to the land I especially prepared for thee, and there all shall find peace and happiness." History shows that did not work out well for the Iroquois, but a visit to the Finger Lakes clearly proves the land is blessed.

The region is famous for its lakes (actually carved by glaciers), waterfalls and gorges, as well as its rolling farmlands, vineyards and numerous state parks, referred to as the "jewels

on the fingers." Eleven of these parks have campgrounds with RV sites, most with electric hookups.

Taughannock Falls State Park, one of our favorites, has two main attractions: the falls, the highest in the East, plunge 215 feet over cliffs that tower 400 feet above a gorge, and 40-mile-long Cayuga Lake, which covers 42,956 acres. The Gorge Trail and both the North and South Rim trails offer spectacular views of the falls, and an overlook can be reached by vehicle as well. Note that parts of the Gorge Trail are now closed for renovation until 2017. On this visit, we were lucky because the



falls had an impressive water flow.

In addition to the campground and beach, Taughannock Falls State Park has a marina with boat launching and docking, a picnic area, a bathhouse and pavilions. My wife, Linda, and I enjoyed the falls and then sat by the shoreline, soaking up the sun and feeling the warm breeze caress us while listening to the whispering waves.

A few miles south of Taughannock Falls is Ithaca, known as “the biggest little city in the world” because of its cosmopolitan ambience and for being home to famous Cornell University.

The campus overlooks Cayuga Lake and covers more than 13,000 acres. Both the university and the city have much to offer: fine restaurants, shops, historic buildings, colorful botanical gardens and lake cruises, among other attractions.

Buttermilk Falls State Park sits at the southern end of Ithaca. A stream-fed-gorge pool for swimming, 10 waterfalls to view and a 46-site campground all make for an enjoyable visit. This waterfall park — like the others — is best visited when there has been sufficient rain. A dry spell

(Left) Robert H. Treman State Park’s mountain pool provides a unique opportunity for swimming at the base of thundering waterfalls. **(Above)** Strolling on the jetty at Sodus Bay Lighthouse supplies expansive views of oceanlike Lake Ontario. **(Below)** The jagged earthen spires of Chimney Bluff State Park rise dramatically from the shoreline of Lake Ontario.

GROUND





Taughannock Falls plunges 215 feet from the towering cliffs of a natural amphitheater.

can easily turn the thundering water of 500-foot Buttermilk Falls into trickles.

A few miles south of Buttermilk Falls is spectacular Robert H. Treman State Park with 12 waterfalls within a 3-mile gorge. I hiked the moderate Gorge Trail as far as Lucifer Falls, which plunges 115 feet, and was rewarded with impressive views of waterfalls and steep cliffs rising into the sky. The campground and stream-fed pool with a waterfall are reached via the main entrance to the park. The pool was a perfect place to cool off with a swim, especially after hiking. Linda accompanied me to the natural pool and waterfalls — she likes short, flat walks.

To the west is Seneca Lake. Stretching 38 miles and covering 43,343 acres, it has the largest surface area of the 11 Finger Lakes. Like most of the lakes, Seneca offers great fishing,

boating and swimming opportunities. Sitting on the southern shore is the town of Watkins Glen, famous for Watkins Glen International racecourse, which is actually located in nearby Montour Falls. The track covers 1,100 acres with a 3.4-mile road-racing course that you can experience in your own vehicle while following a pace car, but obviously not when real races are taking place!

Awe-inspiring Watkins Glen State Park is the most popular state park in the Finger Lakes region. From the entrance, the glen stretches west almost 2 miles, and its stream descends 400 feet past 200-foot cliffs and over 19 waterfalls. Underwater sediment formed the rock walls more than 300 million years ago. During the summer, a shuttle bus can eliminate hiking both ways. The park has picnic grounds,

SCULPTED BY GLACIERS

West-central New York is home to 11 Finger Lakes carved by massive glaciers and ancient rivers. The last glacier retreated 10,000 years ago, leaving debris that stopped the rivers' southward flow. As they filled and the water flowed north, side streams remained, eventually forming waterfalls and gorges. The region covers 9,000 square miles that Native Americans revere as sacred.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance
800-530-7488, www.fingerlakes.org

PUT YOUR FINGER ON IT

Finger Lakes Golf Trail
866-969-3548
www.fingerlakesgolftail.com

Finger Lakes Wine Country
800-813-2958
www.fingerlakeswinecountry.com

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge
315-568-5987
www.fws.gov/refuge/montezuma

Rose Hill Mansion
315-789-3848, www.genevahistoricalsociety.com/visit/rose-hill-mansion

Sodus Point Beach Park
315-483-4936, www.nyfalls.com/lakes/ontario/sodus-point-beach

Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion State Historic Park
585-394-4922, www.sonnenberg.org



Trinity Episcopal Church sits like a fortress on the shores of Van Cleef Lake in Seneca Falls. Originally built in 1834, the current structure was completed in 1886.

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a campground and an Olympic-size pool. On one of our visits, the area was suffering from a major heat spell. When I entered the gorge, it felt like I'd walked into an air-conditioned room — so cool and comfortable.

With more than 100 wineries, the Finger Lakes region is one of the largest and most respected wine-producing areas in the country. Four clearly marked wine trails — Canandaigua, Keuka Lake, Seneca Lake and Cayuga Lake — lead to vineyards for wine tasting. We toured on our own, but transportation services can be arranged through www.fingerlakes.org.

For beer aficionados, there is a budding microbrewery

(Above, from left) At Robert H. Treman State Park, the author walks next to a stream that flows over a roadway. The 1835 Greek Revival Rose Hill Mansion near Waterloo offers a taste of 19th-century life.

industry and even a Finger Lakes Beer Trail. And if you like to play golf, the Finger Lakes Golf Trail leads to four challenging courses.

Even if you don't do the wine tasting, following the wine trails gives an overview of the region's lush landscape. We imagined what life was like here for the Iroquois who lived in small hillside and lakeside villages where they fished and

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farmed hundreds of years ago. Unfortunately for the Iroquois, they sided with the British during the Revolutionary War. In retaliation, General John Sullivan and the Continental Army carried out a scorched-earth campaign in 1779, burning down villages and annihilating the Iroquois.

Sullivan's campaign destroyed the once-powerful and feared Iroquois Confederacy (also known as the Six Nations of the Iroquois), taking their land for the new nation. Nevertheless, their ancestors and impact remain today. All of the Finger Lakes and many of the towns are still called by their Native Indian names, and their history and influence are now celebrated.

Over the past few decades, the Amish have moved into the region and bought farms that had been bankrupted by the high cost of modern farming methods, and then made them profitable by living and farming with a 1800's lifestyle. Amish farms can be spotted easily because they have no electrical lines going to the houses or barns, and no cars or tractors are used. Amish people travel the country roads in traditional horse-drawn buggies.

For a taste of history, we visited Seneca Falls. Once called "a hotbed of radicalism," it is considered the birthplace of the women's rights movement. Here, in 1848, feminists Elizabeth

The 3-mile Gorge Trail at Robert H. Treman State Park leads to a dozen waterfalls and dramatic primordial views.



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ST185 / 80R13 - 6PR

ST205 / 75R14 - 4PR

ST205 / 75R14 - 6PR

ST215 / 75R14 - 6PR

ST205 / 75R15 - 6PR

ST205 / 75R15 - 8PR

ST225 / 75R15 - 8PR

ST225 / 75R15 - 10PR

ST235 / 80R16 - 10PR*

*3 ply sidewall construction

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NEW YORK'S WATERY PLAYGROUND

Cady Stanton and Jane Hunt organized the Women's Rights Convention, attended by more than 300 women and men. Later, they drafted a Declaration of Sentiments modeled after the Declaration of Independence. It called for the then-radical idea of letting women vote and expanding other rights.

Fittingly, Seneca Falls is home to Women's Rights National Historical Park and the National Women's Hall of Fame that honors the accomplishments of women in the fields of science,

education, business, social welfare and music. The antislavery and temperance movements of the 1800s also found fertile ground in Seneca Falls.

Located 5 miles east of Seneca Falls is 9,809-acre Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, created in 1938 as a breeding ground for migratory birds and other wildlife. Today, it is also home to six active bald eagle nests that can be viewed from Armitage Road off State Route 89.

In the 1600s, a Jesuit missionary

CAN YOU NAME THE 11 FINGER LAKES?

From east to west, they are Otisco, Skaneateles, Owasco, **Cayuga**, Seneca, Keuka, Canandaigua, Honeoye, Canadice, Hemlock and Conesus.



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working with the Cayuga Indians wrote about the area, "The sunlight over the marsh was actually shut off by clouds of ducks and geese, and the woods abounded with deer." It's unlikely you will experience that extreme, but there's still much wildlife to see along the 3.5-mile Wildlife Drive, including heron, osprey, mink, fox, deer and coyote.

Close to Seneca Falls, overlooking Seneca Lake, is Rose Hill Mansion in Geneva. Built in 1839, this national historic landmark is a perfect rendition of Greek Revival architecture. With 21 rooms open to the public, the mansion gives a rare glimpse at the lifestyles of the wealthy in 19th-century America. Next door is the Billsboro Winery's tasting room.

Also in Geneva is Seneca Lake State Park, which has a beach (open only on weekends), a water-spray playground with 100 water jets and a 2.5-mile (one-way) paved lakefront path. At the southern end of the path is the Geneva jetty. Among the rocks, we spotted a

STAY AND PLAY IN THE FINGER LAKES

There's no shortage of campsites in west-central New York, from state parks to full-scale RV resorts. Here's a sample.

BATH
Hickory Hill Family Camping Resort (Good Sam Park)
800-760-0947, www.hickoryhillcampresort.com

BLUFF POINT
Keuka Lake State Park
315-536-3666, www.nysparks.com/parks/67

CAMPBELL
Camp Bell Campground (Good Sam Park)
800-587-3301, www.campbellcampground.com

CORNING
Ferenbaugh Campground
607-962-6193
www.ferenbaugh.com

GENEVA
Seneca Lake State Park
315-789-2331, www.nysparks.com/parks/125

ITHACA
Buttermilk Falls State Park
607-273-5761, www.parks.ny.gov/parks/151

Robert H. Treman State Park
607-273-3440, www.parks.ny.gov/parks/135

Spruce Row Campground and RV Park (Good Sam Park)
607-387-9225
www.sprucerow.com

NEWFIELD
Pinecreek Campground (Good Sam Park)
607-273-1974, www.pinecreekcampground.com

ODESSA
Cool-Lea Camp (Good Sam Park)
607-594-3500
www.coolleacamp.com

ROMULUS
Sampson State Park
315-585-6392, www.nysparks.com/parks/154

SENECA FALLS
Cayuga Lake State Park
315-568-5163, www.nysparks.com/parks/123

SPRINGWATER
Holiday Hill RV Resort (Good Sam Park)
800-719-2267
www.holidayhillcampground.com

TRUMANSBURG
Taughannock Falls State Park
607-387-6739, www.nysparks.com/parks/62

WATKINS GLEN
Warren W. Clute Memorial Park and Campground
607-535-4438
www.watkinsglen.us/clute-park-campground

Watkins Glen State Park
607-535-4511, www.nysparks.com/parks/142

WALCOTT
Chimney Bluffs State Park
315-947-5205, www.nysparks.com/parks/43

Money Saving TIP ... RV CARE



“Instagone is a multipurpose stain remover, a must-have item in any motorhome or pop-up camper - Pete Chicarielli”

Opening your pop-up trailer or motorhome for the first time this season? Loaded with mold, mildew or water stains? If yes, you're in need of a fresh start. Simply spray Instagone on stained areas. Wait 5-10 minutes and stains disappear. See photos of a before and after (on left) from a Happy Customer!

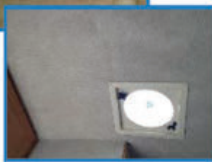


Highlights: As seen in the *Motorhome* February 2016 Issue (TECH SAVVY Section)

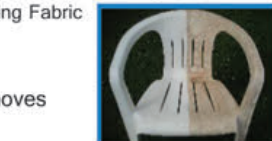
"Unsightly problems with ceiling type fabric can be frustrating, but InstaGone...can make a big difference in handling repairs that may have seemed futile in the past." *For just pennies on a dollar!* (Gehr, Bill & Jenn. "Ceiling Fabric Care." *TECH SAVVY. Motorhome. Feb. 2016 P. 60.*)



Uses for your RV: Effective on water stains for RV fabric type ceilings, removes mold and mildew in the bathroom, shower walls and/or sink, removes stains from your sewage hook-up stations or PVC fittings. Also removes nicotine and soot from ceilings. PLUS removes mold and mildew stains from your RV accessories: PVC patio furniture, awnings & vinyl cushions.



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•all pictures supplied by real customers•



family of minks living off the ample fish supply.

West of Geneva is Canandaigua. Originally a Seneca village of 23 longhouses, it was destroyed by the Sullivan expedition on September 10, 1779. The settlement's name means the Chosen Place. It is home to shops, museums, historic buildings, and Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion State Historic Park, built in 1887. Sonnenberg, German for "Sunny Hill," is a 50-acre estate built to reflect the grandeur of the European nobility's country estates.

Although Lake Ontario is not a Finger Lake, it is in the Finger Lakes region and worth a visit. At 193 miles long and 53 miles wide, Ontario is the smallest of the Great Lakes, with a mere 7,340 square miles of surface area. Numerous state parks dot

the shoreline, but most dramatic is Chimney Bluffs in Walcott.

Day-use services at Chimney Bluffs include picnic areas, restrooms and nature trails along the rim of the towering earthen spires that rise along the shoreline. Great views can be had even without hiking the trail. There's an impressive contrast of the spires against the immensity of the lake, which seems more like an ocean. Nearby are Sodus Point Beach Park and the Sodus Bay lighthouses — one overlooks the bay from a hilltop, and the other is at the end of a jetty.

Leaving Sodus Bay on our last day, we headed back to our campsite filled with awe and reminisced about all of the spectacular sights. The allure of the Finger Lakes region already has us planning our next trip. 🚐



(Top left) Recalling the simplicity of the 1800s, an Amish farmer plows his field using clean, efficient and economical horse power. (Left) Popping up in a sea of green, a folding camper at Robert H. Treman State Park is surrounded by picnic tables, restrooms with showers, and hiking trails that lead to numerous waterfalls.

Quality is in our Nature...

An advertisement for Northwood Mfg. featuring a row of various RV models parked in a wooded area. The models include Nash, Arctic Fox, Wolf Creek, and Snow River. The text "Quality is in our Nature..." is at the top, and "...let it be in yours." is at the bottom. The Northwood Mfg. logo and website are in the bottom right corner.

...let it be in yours.

Arctic Fox, Nash, Desert Fox, Wolf Creek, Fox Mountain, Snow River

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QUIET

Thanks to inherently quiet four-stroke engines and superior technology, Honda generators boast incredibly low decibel levels.

PORTABLE

Honda EU Series generators are made for true portability, from the lightweight, easy-to-carry suitcase design to the compact design of the EU6500i with wheeled transport kit.

RELIABLE

Honda has an unmatched reputation for reliable generators that offer dependable starts and keep running year after year.

FUEL-EFFICIENT

Honda's superior technology, with features such as Eco-Throttle, means increased fuel efficiency and longer run times.

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\$50 OFF any Honda Generator
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EU1000i



EU2000i



EU2000i COMPANION™



EU3000is



EU3000i HANDI™



EU7000is

What Can a PORTABLE HONDA GENERATOR Power?

Model	TV	Computer	Coffee Maker	Small Microwave	Electric Fry Pan	Small Heater	Large Microwave	Fridge/Freezer	Air Conditioner
EU1000i	■	■	■	■					
EU2000i	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
EU3000i	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■ (13,500 BTU)
EU7000i	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■ (15,000 BTU)

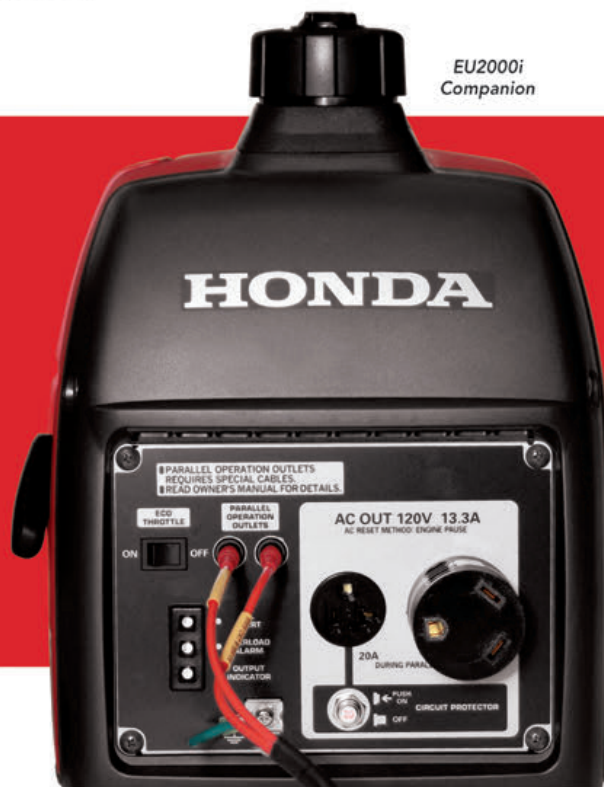
For optimum performance and safety, we recommend you read the owner's manual before operating your Honda Power Equipment. ©2016 American Honda Motor Co., Inc. Connection of a generator to house power requires a transfer device to avoid possible injury to power company personnel. Consult a qualified electrician. Spark arrestor approved by U.S. Forest Service for use in National Parks.

*DC Charging Cord compatible with EU2000 only.

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CLEAN, EFFICIENT POWER TO GO



Famous for their quiet operation, fuel efficiency and overall dependability, Honda EU Series portable generators are a popular choice among RV owners and campers for supplying power to boondock, dry camp or tailgate.

All Honda EU Series models are inverter equipped for clean, smooth power output that's perfect for efficient appliance operation (refrigerator and air conditioner) and best for sensitive electronics like satellite antennas, HDTVs and computers. Each is available in an environmentally friendly 50-state configuration. The EU1000i, EU2000i, EU2000i Companion, EU3000i, EU3000i Handi and EU7000i models are parallel capable for added versatility; just connect a second like model, using optional parallel cables, for twice the power when needed, or simply use one generator for lighter duty applications.

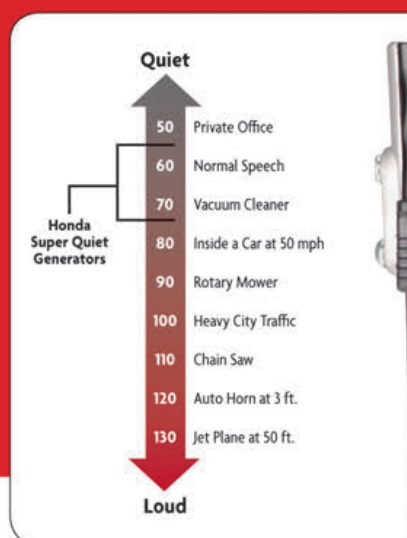
Honda's efficient EcoThrottle system extends run time, allowing the generator to use less fuel when power draw is lower. A low oil alert lets you know when it's time to top up before any motor damage occurs. The EU2000i, Companion, EU3000i, EU3000i Handi and EU7000i models all come with Honda's three year warranty; the EU1000i comes with a two year warranty.

Lightweight and compact, the EU1000i is Honda's smallest inverter generator. It weighs only 29 lbs. and produces 1,000

watts maximum and 900 watts rated. It features two 15-amp/120-volt AC outlets, a 12-volt DC outlet, recoil start and 53 dB sound rating. Runtime is about 8.3 hours at a 25% load.

The EU2000i and EU2000i Companion models share most of the same features, with the Companion offering an RV-ready 30-amp/120-volt AC locking outlet (adapter required). Both produce 2,000 watts maximum and 1,600 watts rated, and weigh 46.3 lbs. Connect an EU2000i and a Companion in parallel for up to 4,000 watts of power when needed—enough to run one 13,500 BTU RV air conditioner with power to spare. Runtime on both recoil-start models is about 9.6 hours at 25% load, at a 53 dB sound rating.

For powering lights, accessories and appliances in larger trailers or motorhomes, the EU3000i provides 3,000 watts maximum and 2,800 watts rated, plenty to run one 13,500 BTU RV air conditioner. Amazingly quiet for a larger generator, at only 49 dB, the EU3000i also offers easy electronic starting, simultaneous AC and DC output, and a 30-amp/120-volt locking outlet (adapter required). Runtime is about 20 hours at 25% load.



An optional wheel kit and integrated lift handles help make the 134 lb. unit easy to maneuver and transport.

The EU3000i Handi produces up to 3,000 watts of power without the bulk or weight of other 3,000 watt generators. Weighing only 78 lbs., it comes equipped with a folding tow handle and built-in wheels, so it's easy to take along. It's rated at 2,600 running watts, enough to power a 13,500 BTU air conditioner, and runs about 7.7 hours at 25% load. Sound rating is 57 dB—quieter than most vacuum cleaners—and it offers easy recoil starts plus a locking 30-amp/120-volt outlet (adapter required).

For plentiful RV accessory power as well as home emergency backup, Honda's EU7000i with electronic fuel injection cranks out up to 7,000 watts maximum, 5,500 running watts while humming along at only 52 dB at 25% load. With this kind of power, it can run a 15,000 BTU RV air conditioner. Fuel injection improves fuel efficiency—it can run up to 18 hours at 25% load—and eliminates choke, carburetor and starting problems. The iMonitor tracks hours, RPM, volts and watts as it produces 120-volt/240-volt power for larger 50-amp RVs. It comes with a handy wheel kit and battery for the electronic ignition.

Honda EU Series generators are available at Camping World, with free generator prep including gas and oil available on request at SuperCenters nationwide.



Parallel Cables & 30-amp RV Adapter Kit

Connect a Honda® EU2000i Companion to a standard EU2000i or connect a EU3000i Handi™ to another EU3000i Handi™. 30-amp.

Honda Power Equipment, a division of American Honda Motor Co., Inc., markets a complete range of outdoor power equipment, including outboard marine engines, general purpose engines, generators, lawnmowers, pumps, snowblowers, tillers and trimmers for commercial, rental and residential use. For consumer information about all Honda products, visit Honda.com. A full selection of Honda portable generators is available at Camping World SuperCenters. Select Honda EU Series generators are also available at CampingWorld.com.

CAMPING WITHOUT BOUNDARIES



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FOR THE ULTIMATE IN RVING FREEDOM, CAMPERS CAN GO ALMOST ANYWHERE TRUCKS CAN, AND THE LATEST MODELS OFFER EVERYTHING FROM MULTIPLE SLIDEOUTS TO A KING-SIZE BED

To many of us, RVing means freedom — the freedom to pull up stakes at the drop of a hat and camp anywhere we choose. But for most RV owners, that idyllic “anywhere” is restricted by a campground’s ability to accommodate our often sizable RVs. That’s where truck campers truly shine. As an RV that mounts in the bed of a pickup, a truck camper adds relatively little length to your truck, and therefore allows more freedom to roam. In fact, it’s highly likely that, if your truck can physically reach an off-the-grid destination, your camper can, too — height and width clearances permitting, and assuming the truck is properly sized and equipped for the additional weight.

Looking back, truck campers have typically been thought of as the cute little brothers of travel trailers and fifth-wheels, adept at imitating characteristics of their larger brethren but ultimately coming up short in terms of comfort and convenience. The main reason, of course, is size. A truck camper must fit into the truck bed, so the living area is restrained somewhat to the truck-bed dimensions, plus some side and end overhang areas,

along with the cabover portion, which normally houses the sleeping quarters. Ride and handling are other hurdles. A fully loaded, well-equipped camper can markedly affect a truck’s stability and braking distance.

As manufacturers have become more innovative and the suspension technology, payload and stopping power of trucks have consistently increased, truck campers have evolved perhaps more than any other RV type. Buyers today can find multiple-slideout models with floor lengths of nearly 12 feet that contain dry baths, theater systems and full kitchens. Of course, larger campers necessitate larger vehicles (not to mention deeper pockets), but even the more compact models are a vast improvement over the previous generation.

See for yourself on the pages that follow. We’ve rounded up 20 of the top truck-camper brands — manufacturers of everything from spartan pop-ups to spacious hard-sides that will turn owners of other types of RVs green with envy as you make your way to remote campsites their towable counterparts couldn’t even dream of reaching.



Telescoping Alaskan Camper

ALASKAN

Aptly named Alaskan Camper got its start in 1950 when Don Hall and his wife, Irene, designed a truck camper specifically for traveling the Alaska Highway. Today, Alaskan truck campers continue to utilize four hydraulic pistons to raise (for camping) and lower (for travel) the hardshell top from the hardshell lower half. The company often customizes its standard units based on customers' needs.

360-748-6494

www.alaskancamper.com



ALP

Adventurer LP (ALP) has been building truck campers since 1969 and is now based in Yakima, Washington. The company's current Adventurer lineup includes the 80GS, an 8-footer with a slideout, and the 80RB for shortbed trucks. ALP also makes the Eagle Cap brand, high-end slideout campers with some surprising features like a king-bed floorplan.

509-895-7064

www.amlrv.com



BIGFOOT

Bigfoot introduced its first truck camper in 1978, emulating fiberglass boats made using a top and bottom fiberglass shell. Fiberglass RVs weren't new, but back then most had an exposed wood floor. Bigfoot built the first two-piece fiberglass truck camper, and the combination of real fiberglass and laminated construction eliminated the need for a framed structure. Today, the British Columbia manufacturer utilizes its original shell construction on nine floorplans, with models for shortbed, regular and longbed trucks.

250-546-2155

www.bigfootrv.com



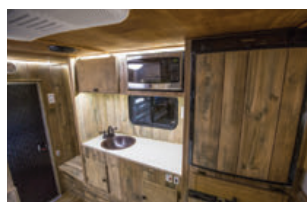
BUNDUTEC

After more than three decades at Northstar Campers, run by his family for four generations, Rory Willett went out on his own

to found BundutecUSA in 2014 and build truck campers for export to Australia. Willett now offers the BunduCamp line of off-road campers to North American buyers from his Iowa factory. Various models are available for midsize, half-ton and three-quarter-ton trucks, all with the option of a pop-up-hardtop roof.

319-234-0071

www.bundutecusa.com



CAPRI

Born and raised in the Lone Star State, Capri Camper builds the entry-level Cowboy, America's top-selling rodeo truck camper, according to the company. The no-cabover camper is used by a number of professional bronco riders and steer wrestlers to travel the circuit while hauling a comfortable place to sleep. The 47-year-old custom manufacturer also makes the roomier Cowboy XL and a couple of larger cabover models, available for various truck beds. Campers for hunters and anglers are in the works.

254-728-3226

www.capricamper.com



EZ LITE

Originally a truck-camper

dealer, EZ Lite started designing and selling its own brand of low-profile pop-up and hard-side campers in 1988. Custom models feature name-brand components and are available directly from the company's El Cajon factory in San Diego County, California.

800-509-4703

www.ezlitcampers.com



FOUR WHEEL

Based in Northern California, 15 miles from Sacramento, Four Wheel builds pop-up truck campers that are significantly more refined than when the company started back in 1972, but the fundamental concepts haven't changed: simplicity, durability and light weight. Aluminum framing and skin keeps the company's five lines of campers on the light side, while also giving them the ability to flex for greater strength and durability.

800-242-1442

www.fourwh.com



HALLMARK

In business since 1969, Hallmark sells factory-direct pop-up truck campers from its 30,000-square-foot facility in Fort Lupton, Colorado, north of Denver. The company's nine models of

lightweight, low-profile, four-season campers all feature a molded fiberglass composite frame and a one-piece molded fiberglass roof for durability.

877-659-5753

www.hallmarkrv.com



HOST

Based in Bend, Oregon, Host dates back to 2000 when the company was started by the families that founded luxury motorhome manufacturer Beaver Coach. Although Beaver closed in 2009, Host continues to manufacture fully outfitted, multi-slide

luxury truck campers with residential-style amenities and three-year structural warranties. Popular models include the Mammoth, Aspen, Chinook and Everest.

541-330-2328

www.hostcampers.com



LANCE

Fresh off celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2015, Lance continues to be a major player in the truck-camper market and is not content to rest on its laurels. The Southern California manufacturer offers four-season, multi-slide campers

designed using 3D CAD and CNC techniques. Azdel polypropylene-and-fiberglass panels do away with mold and rot, and imported Lite Ply lightens the load. At the top of Lance's nine-model lineup, the spacious 1172 features full-wall and rear-wall slideouts. The smallest Lance, the new 650, was designed for shortbed half-ton trucks (see "What's Hot for 2016" on page 62).

661-949-3322, www.lancecamper.com/truck-campers



LITTLE GUY

Since 2002, Little Guy

Worldwide has been known for its specialized teardrop trailers. That changed last year when the Ohio company introduced the Cirrus, a truck camper that uses European concepts and wood-free frame construction (see "What's Hot for 2016").

877-545-4897

www.cirrus-truckcamper.com



LIVIN' LITE

As its name implies, Indiana-based Livin' Lite manufactures lighter-weight RVs using all-aluminum construction, which not only keeps the pounds off but also eliminates



FURY RV HANDHELD

Take your RV Shower to the next level

Introducing the newest product in RV shower innovation, the Fury RV. Unleash an epic downpour in the comfort of your RV. Sounds like too much water for your water tank to handle? The Fury RV actually SAVES water — leaving plenty left for, well, more epic showers. With **5 POWERFUL SETTINGS, A COMFORT CONTROL LEVER, AND A NON-SLIP RUBBER GRIP** — the Fury RV is equipped with features to make you feel unstoppable.



Available in White and Brushed Nickel

Includes 72" hose and wall mount

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NEW! The r5 Bed
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Discover the Sleep Number® Difference

With Advanced DualAir™ technology, you can adjust the firmness on each side of your Sleep Number® r5 bed at the simple touch of a button. So you can both wake up refreshed and rejuvenated, ready to face whatever the day may bring.

NEW! DualAir™ technology:

- Lets you name your side of the bed, so that it can refer to you by name
- Finds your individual Sleep Number for you
- Tells you when there is an issue and how to directly reach Sleep Number for assistance

Sleep Number® r5 Bed

- **NEW!** Comfort layer for responsive and resilient support
- **NEW!** Intuitive, wireless Sleep Number® remote

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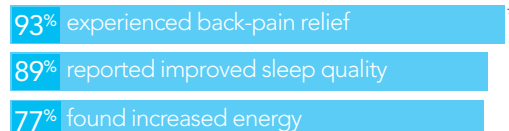
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the possibility of dry rot associated with wood-based frames. A subsidiary of Thor Industries, Livin' Lite offers six floorplans in its ultralight, hard-side Camplite brand and recently introduced a line of Ford-licensed aluminum truck campers (see "What's Hot for 2016").

260-593-3850

www.livinlite.com



NORTHERN LITE

In business since 1989, British Columbia's Northern Lite Manufacturing knows a thing or two about keeping the cold out of truck campers. Each of its four-season

molded-fiberglass campers comes with thermal-pane windows, a solar panel, and a heated basement and holding tanks. The company builds four lines of campers, all backed by an impressive six-year structural warranty. Special editions include Northern Lite's flagship 10-2 EX, which earned Best Truck Camper of the Year distinction for the 2016 model in *Truck Camper Magazine's* latest Readers' Choice Awards.

800-887-5342

www.northern-lite.com



NORTHSTAR

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Northwood Wolf Creek 850

experience manufacturing truck campers, Cedar Falls, Iowa-based Northstar Campers now draws on the fourth generation of the R.C. Willett family to manufacture lightweight pop-up and hard-wall campers for midsize and full-size pickups and three-quarter-ton flatbeds. The company keeps abreast of the latest construction techniques and

trends, including cabover-less truck campers. New for 2016 is the Vista, a half-ton-ready camper-sans-cabover.

319-233-3461

www.northstarcampers.com

NORTHWOOD

La Grande, Oregon, RV manufacturer Northwood was founded in 1993 by Ron Nash with the goal of building rugged four-season

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- Ergonomic flush pedal – press partially to add water; press fully to flush
- Bone or white color



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RVs. The 2016 Arctic Fox lineup has eight floorplans and full-wall slideouts, and is a top seller in the industry. The likewise popular but lighter weight Wolf Creek brand, with two floorplans, complements the Arctic Fox as a non-slide option for light-duty trucks. All Arctic Fox and Wolf Creek models feature an aluminum superstructure, heated and enclosed tanks, high-efficiency LED utility lighting, residential-style cabinets utilizing solid-wood components, and a one-piece, roof-to-truck-bed construction with a fiberglass cabover nose.

800-766-6274, www.northwoodmfg.com/tuck-campers

OUTFITTER

A smaller niche builder of about 150 truck campers per year, Outfitter RV Manufacturing sells factory-direct from its location in Longmont, Colorado.

Outfitter campers are built to order and offer features like composite materials, a low profile and a pop-up "basement," where the holding tanks are located in an insulated compartment for four-season use. A side-door model is also available.

970-535-9421, www.outfittermfg.com



LANCE CAMPER 650

Named one of the Top Debuts for 2016 by *RVBusiness* magazine, Lance's new 650 shortbed truck camper is designed for half-ton pickups with 5- and 6-foot beds, but that doesn't mean it feels that way inside. With a standard wet weight of 1,842 pounds, a floor length of 6 feet 10 inches and an interior height of 6 feet 9 inches, the surprisingly spacious 650 sleeps three and can accommodate even more for meals or entertainment, all from the bed of the most commonly owned class of trucks. Appointments include a tankless water heater, ducted heat, a one-piece TPO roof and radius, dual-pane tinted-acrylic windows. Lite Ply framed cabinets and a Bluetooth-enabled audio system are standard equipment. MSRP starts at \$19,857.

To drive home the go-anywhere capabilities of its latest truck camper, Lance built a project camper, the 650 Overland Edition. The beefed-up Overland starts with the 650 but adds off-road equipment from some of the top companies in the industry, including a Hellwig sway bar, Thule rack, T-Rex grille and Rigid LED lighting, all of which add up to an impressive, souped-up package that, although not currently available to the public, may be down the road.

www.lancecamper.com/650



LITTLE GUY CIRRUS 800

Little Guy Worldwide designed the all-new hard-side Cirrus as a higher-end shortbed truck camper with a unique approach to detail and amenities. Making use of European concepts, materials and appliances, the Cirrus 800 has features not normally seen on this side of the pond, including a front window that opens, a fold-down bathroom sink, a sub-floor "convactor" heating system and Euro-inspired LED lighting throughout the interior.

The remaining list of innovative features reads like an IKEA catalog, including Horrex shade-and-screen systems, Alde hot water and central heat, and an Alde radiant-heat panel in the bathroom. There's a queen bed with a Froli Sleep System and a convertible dinette perched atop a Fawo table base. These well-constructed, top-notch appointments meld nicely with the wood-free construction (save for imported Lite Ply cabinets), Fiamma awning, Fan-Tastic Vent fans, Norcold refrigerator, microwave convection oven and kitchen sink with a foldaway faucet.

The Cirrus won the 2015 Readers' Choice Award for Best Truck Camper Innovation of the Year in *Truck Camper Magazine*. Base MSRP is \$33,900.

www.cirrus-truckcamper.com



LIVIN' LITE FORD TRUCK CAMPERS

The Ford F-150 has been the top-selling truck brand overall for the past three decades, so it was only a matter of time before the venerable automaker teamed up with a trusted RV manufacturer. The all-new Ford-branded, aluminum-constructed truck campers from Livin' Lite are clearly designed with Ford F-150 enthusiasts in mind, featuring numerous design cues taken from the truck's aluminum-clad body.

Ford truck owners will admire things like the familiar oval logo on embroidered seat cushions and exterior graphics, F-Series-style wheels and an automotive-inspired window in the front fiberglass cap. What they might not immediately notice but are sure to appreciate are the solid-surface countertops, high-end entertainment system, aluminum-framed cabinets, extruded aluminum floor and electric camper jacks.

Livin' Lite's Ford-licensed truck campers are available in six models with floor lengths ranging from 6 feet 7 inches to 11 feet 6 inches. Highlights include the 9.2 floorplan, which offers a built-in step/bumper, and the 11S floorplan, which comes in a split-bath configuration. MSRP ranges from \$22,393 to \$32,193.

www.fordrvs.com



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PALOMINO

Palomino RV got its start back in 1978 and is now a division of Forest River offering two lines of truck campers, each with a dozen floorplans. Backpack Edition campers feature well-appointed interiors and plenty of room to stand up (see "What's Hot for 2016"), and Real-Lite models offer a bit more in terms of luxury and convenience. Both lines come in soft-side pop-up models and two hard-side options.

269-432-3271, www.palominorv.com/truckcampers



PALOMINO BACKPACK BODY ARMOR EDITION

At first glance, the Palomino Backpack SS-550 Body Armor Edition for half-ton trucks represents a light-weight truck camper with a decent amount of storage and sleeping space, not to mention a refrigerator, a two-burner stove and a 55-inch one-piece door.

The "Body Armor" part of the package takes things a step further with a liberal coating of Line-X spray-on bedliner material, giving the exterior and undercarriage an added layer of protection. The Body Armor deal is available only on the SS-550 floorplan and will set you back a few bucks, but the extra \$3,493 pays for the protective coating and the standout olive-green "camo" color.

Intended to appeal to off-road enthusiasts, Body Armor Edition Backpack campers have a standard electric roof-lift system with an optional remote control, a queen bed and a battery-charger port. Included as part of the mandatory Backpack SS package are a furnace, fridge and LED interior lighting. Options include an 11,000-Btu air conditioner and electric jacks. Base MSRP is \$9,759.

www.palominorv.com/backpack



TRAVEL LITE RAYZR

What do you get when you cross a camper shell with a truck camper? The answer is something like the affordable new Travel Lite Rayzr, a truck camper that forsakes the cabover and rear overhang associated with this type of RV but still offers sleeping and storage space. Called a "canaper" — half canopy, half camper — by some industry insiders, the Rayzr fits in almost any half-ton pickup bed, including 5½-footers, making it an option for truck owners who aren't interested in upsizing their vehicle. They can even close the tailgate after the Rayzr has been installed.

One of *RVBusiness*' Top Debuts for 2016, the Rayzr features a one-piece fiberglass wrap on the roof and front, LED lighting, a corrugated vinyl bottom board and LP-gas cylinder, with options including a CD stereo, hand-hung fiberglass gelcoat exterior and a side-mounted air conditioner. Of the four configurations — SS (Super Sleeper), FK (Full Kitchen), FB (Front Bed) and FB-M (Front Bed Midsize) — all but the SS offer kitchen amenities. Wet weights range from 885 pounds to 1,075 pounds. Base MSRP is \$5,595.

www.rayzrcamper.com



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PHOENIX

Phoenix Campers is a Colorado-based factory-direct manu-



facturer that draws on more than 40 years of family-owned experience. In 2007, Phoenix began offering what it calls the first fully interactive custom-ordering process. Today, the company specializes in custom-built off-roading campers for a wide range of vehicles, including the Honda Ridgeline, and three base models are available — slide-in, flatbed and chassis-mount.

303-286-3921

www.phoenixpopup.com

TRAVEL LITE

Located in New Paris, Indiana, and family-owned



and operated since 1998, Travel Lite builds more than 30 truck-camper floorplans, including the trendsetting cabover-less Rayzr (see "What's Hot for 2016"). Models include hard-wall, pop-up and slideout versions for midsize, half-ton and three-quarter-ton trucks.

855-831-3525

www.travellitecampers.com

XPCAMPER

The brainchild of a chef of 20 years and his graphic-designer wife, the XPCamper is in its fourth year of production. The aerodynamic pop-up raises hydraulically in less than a minute and offers a galley, queen bed, dinette, toilet and shower, and lots of storage. From the two-burner cooktop to the 40-gallon freshwater tank, heating and hot water are diesel-powered. Three models are available, and a fourth is on the way.



530-274-1957, www.xpcamper.com



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Silver Is Gold

Northwood's smallest Arctic Fox fifth-wheel is four-season-friendly and loaded with some surprising features

With a reference to one of the coldest regions on earth in its name, the 2016 Northwood Arctic Fox Silver Fox Edition 27-5L was destined to be a four-season-capable fifth-wheel. In fact, Northwood is one of the industry's leading manufacturers of RVs for camping in northern climates. Weather plays a big role at the company's manufacturing location in La Grande, Oregon, where average high temperatures top out in the 30s in December and January, and employees know how to keep out the cold.

Northwood prides itself on the integrity of the foundation of its trailers, starting with a proprietary chassis certified by Pacific West Associates and more than capable of supporting the solid aluminum frame, which utilizes .060 to .125-inch-thick wall aluminum tubing. Beneath the stout

chassis are Goodyear tires mounted on 16-inch aluminum rims, and there's a shock absorber at each wheel. Mounted to the frame using maximum-strength components are the spare-tire carrier, entry step and electric stabilizing jacks, along with 12-volt DC landing jacks and a standard MORryde rubber pin box.

Blending into the pin box is an aerodynamic fiberglass front cap with flush LED lights and radius corners. Below the cap, a diamond-plate rock guard runs the full width of the front storage compartment, which is conveniently prewired and prepped for a generator install. The rest of the body is assembled with the stringent standards used throughout the build process. High-density walls and roof with one-piece skins are constructed with top-tier lamination procedures, and the roof is capped with a heavy-gauge



A slide extends the wardrobes and linen closet in the bedroom. The queen bed has LED lamps and nightstands on both sides.

membrane over bowed trusses, which promotes moisture runoff and allows for an arched cathedral ceiling.

Integrated into the side-wall construction are exterior speakers, deep-tint windows, a convenience center, a Carefree Travel'r electric awning with an LED light strip, and a number of sizable storage compartments. Compartment doors are 1-inch thick and secured by slam latches.

Inside, the 27-5L has the feel of a small luxury apartment with a wide-open layout and ample floor space, despite the fifth-wheel's less-than-30-foot length. The living and dining area is well executed and aesthetically pleasing, with a substantial slideout that is packed with an extremely



Equipped for north-country adventures, the Arctic Fox 27-5L has an R-18 ceiling-insulation rating, R-15 reflective-foil insulation in the roof and slides, thermal-pane windows and heated holding tanks.



comfy hide-a-bed couch and a pedestal table with four padded dining chairs.

Across from the couch and next to the entry door is the entertainment center with a 32-inch LED smart TV and an AM/FM/DVD/CD stereo system supporting Bluetooth, plus storage compartments and command switches for items like the awning and lights. Clearly, more than a little thought went into this all-in-one cabinet than simply providing a place to hang a TV. A small coat closet tucked behind the entertainment center is ideal for leaving keys and jackets on a user-friendly sliding rack.

An interesting feature that changes the look and feel of the living area is the freestanding swivel rocker in front of the couch. The jury is still out on this option. Although the rocker offers another comfortable place to sit, it occupies valuable real estate.

The rear kitchen extends from the entertainment center to the back of the fifth-wheel. Well-placed corner cabinets add extensive storage that's easy to access. An 8-cubic-foot refrigerator with raised-panel doors stands next to the 1.5-cubic-foot convection microwave, the high-output three-burner range and a 22-inch oven with three racks rather than the usual two. Between the two appliances is a practical and appealing custom backsplash.

A pair of dual-pane-glass windows and a skylight in the kitchen let in a generous amount of natural light, warding off any closed-in feeling because of the limited space. A deep stainless-steel double sink with a pullout faucet and solid-surface counters stretch out below the window, and a full-height

(Above, from left) One side of the wide-open living and dining area houses the entertainment center and the refrigerator, convection microwave and range. A comfortable jackknife sofa and freestanding table with four chairs provide ample seating in the streetside slideout.

pantry with extensive shelving handles generous portions of foodstuffs. Three very deep drawers are ideal for big pots and pans or hefty quantities of large utensils. The ceiling fan is a welcome touch and is not commonly found in fifth-wheels of this size.

Up front, two doors at the top of the stairs include one with a frosted-glass inlay that leads to the master bedroom. Opening the door reveals a fully loaded suite with a wardrobe/linen closet slideout and a set of matching nightstands and LED lamps flanking the queen-size TruRest pillow-top mattress. At the foot of the bed are all the usual connections for a TV.

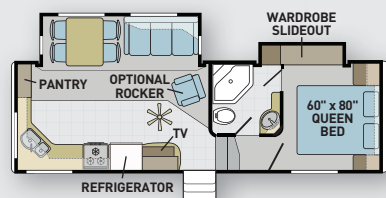
The second door leads to a spacious pass-through bathroom with some really nice amenities and master-bedroom access through yet another door. For a homelike feel, the bathroom has a porcelain toilet and a tub/shower combo with a frosted-glass enclosure — no dealing with a small tub or oversize curtains. Adding to the amenities are LED fixtures and the typical roof vent with a fan. The bathroom contains a mirror above the corner sink plus a lighted, telescoping magnification mirror.

Everything about this fifth-wheel suggests quality, down to the smallest details, like coiled slideout wires to prevent damage and promote longevity. In keeping with Northwood's commitment to provide robust self-containment features, the 27-5L comes with an

82-gallon freshwater tank, a 65-gallon black-water tank, 67- and 35-gallon gray-water tanks, and twin 10-gallon LP-gas cylinders (instead of the usual 7 gallons), plus a quick-coupler propane bib for connecting LP-gas accessories.

It's this attention to detail that proves Northwood's commitment to its "Absolute" quality construction and why you can expect the unexpected, even from the company's smallest fifth-wheel. 🚐

QUICK INFO



Exterior Length	29' 5"
Exterior Width	8' 6"
Interior Height	8' 5"
Exterior Height	13' 3"
Freshwater Cap.	82 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	65 gal. / 67/35 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	20 gal.
UVW	7,782 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,868 lbs.
GVWR	13,400 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$52,760

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SAVANNAH'S SO

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I had never eaten a mountain of seafood until lunch at The Crab Shack, a casual alfresco lunch spot en route to Tybee Island on the outskirts of Savannah, Georgia. The platter was as big as the tabletop on which it rested, and heaped with boiled shrimp, crab, mussels, crayfish and chunks of sausage and potatoes. Gorging on local seafood was but one of the many delightful experiences we had in the spring on a two-day stopover in the Savannah area while traveling up the East Coast.

A visit to Savannah (population: 144,352) has been perched atop my bucket list for more than a decade. When my husband, Jack, and I finally got there, the oldest city in Georgia far exceeded our expectations, not only for its coastal cuisine but also for its historical sites, friendly locals and the beach on Tybee Island. Savannah makes a point of fully immersing visitors in its heritage and hospitality.

TROLLEY TOUR

In 1732, British General James

Oglethorpe, a member of Parliament and an advocate of prison reform in England, laid out Savannah a year before King George II sent him to the New World to create a haven for debtors and misfits and a military buffer between Spanish Florida and British colonists in South Carolina. Oglethorpe's blueprint for Savannah was based on a pattern of 24 "squares" — parks, gardens, cemeteries and other pedestrian green space — of which 22 survive today. The 2.2-square-mile original town is now one of the largest National Historic

Districts in the United States.

Although the old city is a lovely place to walk when you're wearing cobblestone-friendly shoes, we opted for a trolley tour the first morning to get an overview of the place. The trolleys ran constantly and allowed ticketholders to get on and off at will. They also provided unexpected entertainment.

"Hey, y'all! I'm Abel Clayton," announced the Confederate soldier who bounded aboard our trolley at Forsyth Park. "Did you notice how the memorial in Forsyth Park faces north? It faces the enemy! The statue was made in Canada, then delivered by sea, so it wouldn't be contaminated by touching Yankee soil." With that, he leapt off the trolley, leaving us to contemplate who was friend and who was foe at various periods in Savannah's long and colorful history.

Shortly after the Confeder-

SOUTHERN CHARM

, Georgia's oldest city begs to be explored on foot and by trolley



(Above) City lights reflect on the water in a sunset view across the Savannah River from River Street. (Right) A tempting seafood feast from Tybee Island's Crab Shack. (Far right) Enjoying a delightful evening's entertainment, free of charge, next to the river.

ate soldier encounter, the trolley driver slowed to point out a cast-iron downspout in the shape of a dolphin on the side of a building. The 18th-century sailors who crisscrossed the Atlantic Ocean believed dolphins were good luck. As an extension of that belief, they put dolphin-shaped downspouts on their homes to keep evil spirits out, but dolphins offered little protection from pirates.

"Hey, y'all!" hiccupped a drunken pirate, as she stumbled up the trolley steps. "Bet you didn't know the Pirates' House is the oldest building in the state



of Georgia. Yup. It is. It was built for the gardener who tended the peach trees here, but he didn't last (*chuckle*). Couldn't hold his liquor (*hic*)."

The Pirates' House was to our right, a modest gray building that looked preserved but weathered and well used. The pirate explained, between chugs on her bottle, that the Pirates' House was an inn of ill repute that hosted seamen and the less savory elements of early Savannah society. Many sailors mysteri-

ously disappeared after a night at the inn's pub, some undoubtedly into an underground tunnel, of which Savannah has many.

Savannah's tunnels were built during the 1800s to hide bodies during yellow-fever epidemics and for escaping slaves as part of the Underground Railroad. The tunnel in the basement of the Pirates' House purportedly led to the Savannah River and was used to smuggle illegal rum into the city or



A man is shown from the waist up, wearing a light-colored, vertically striped button-down shirt. He is also wearing dark suspenders over the shirt and brown corduroy pants. His right hand is placed over his chest, and his left hand is on his hip. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Flint is a character in Robert Louis Stevenson's 1883 novel *Treasure Island*, one of dozens of bestsellers set, at least in part, in Savannah. *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, by John Berendt, is another. The 1994 novel tells the true story of the shooting death of

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(Far left) Shops and restaurants line Savannah's cobble River Street. (Left) "Fishing" for baby alligators at the Crab Shack provides post-meal entertainment.

Danny Hansford, a local male prostitute who worked as an assistant to Savannah mansion restorationist Jim Williams. Williams killed Hansford in the Mercer-Williams House on the southwest end of Monterey Square. Lover's quarrel, pre-meditated murder or self-defense?

As the trolley driver paused in front of the brick Italianate mansion to speculate, Jack and I stepped off the trolley to explore more of old Savannah on our own.

CITY WALK

With Monterey Square at our back, we headed north on Bull Street toward the Savannah River. One of the first stops of the trolley tour had been Chippewa Park, which we revisited, this time on foot. A 9-foot statue of General Oglethorpe dominated the center of the park, facing south "toward the enemy" — in his case, the Spanish.

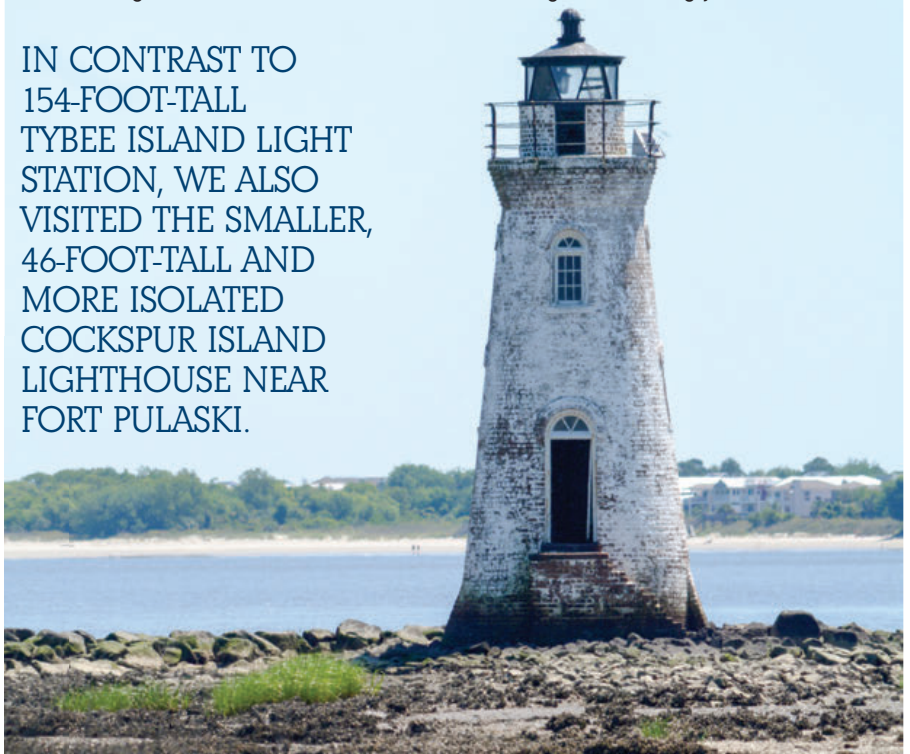
From the imposing statue, we wandered to the side of the park where the Independent Presbyterian Church caught our eye, its stark white steeple in contrast to the azure sky. President

James Madison attended the church's dedication in 1819. In 1885, future President Woodrow Wilson married the granddaughter of the church's minister there, but I recognized the church as the backdrop for one of my favorite movies, *Forrest Gump*. In the movie, Gump sat on a bench by the church, reminiscing about his life over a box of

chocolates, as a feather drifted down from the steeple.

From the church, we drifted as well, stopping here and there to examine other landmarks and eventually reaching the gold-domed City Hall. From there, we walked down a steep cobblestone street past the old Cotton Exchange. Interestingly, the rocks that

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TYBEE ISLAND LIGHT
STATION, WE ALSO
VISITED THE SMALLER,
46-FOOT-TALL AND
MORE ISOLATED
COCKSPUR ISLAND
LIGHTHOUSE NEAR
FORT PULASKI.



SOUTHERN BELLE

Easy to reach from interstates 95 or 16, Savannah is a good place to visit year-round, although the weather can be hot and humid. Springtime is the season for sand flies, known locally as sand gnats. These biting pests are best deterred with insect repellent containing DEET.

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paved the street were from cargo ships' ballasts, left behind after the ships were loaded with cotton for their return trip to Europe.

Multiple iron walkways crossed over the cobbled descent. During the pre-Civil War cotton-growing era, factors (brokers) used these walkways to access the exchange where they negotiated the sale of cotton crops for their plantation-based clients.

Below the cotton exchange, River Street was a happening place, a mix of eateries, boutiques and souvenir shops housed in a line of restored waterfront buildings. Hungry from our walk, I slipped into River Street Sweets, a sizable candy store, lured by the pecan treats in the window and the free samples inside.

Afterward, we poked in and out of small shops and vendor booths, as several large ships cruised down the broad river. The ships reminded me that Savannah has always been an important port city and commercial center of the south and remains so today.

WHERE TO STAY

Good Sam Parks in greater Savannah

SAVANNAH

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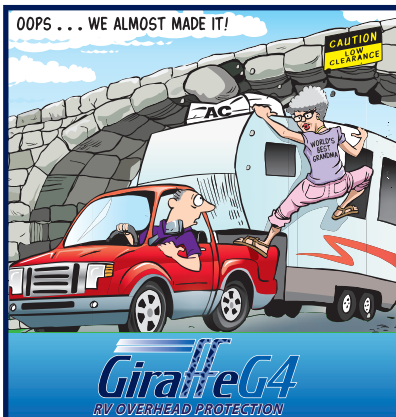
Fishing ponds, a birding trail, horseback riding and a clubhouse with a pool table and big-screen TV. Trolley-tour stop. 912-272-8028
www.redgatecampground.com

Savannah Oaks RV Resort: Fish for bass, catfish, shad and other gamefish on 24 acres along the Ogeechee River. Swimming pool, boat ramp, playground, laundry facilities and free Wi-Fi. 912-748-4000
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TYBEE ISLAND

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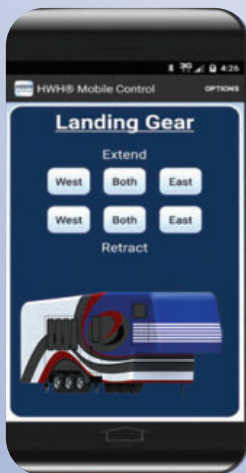
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TYBEE ISLAND

The next day, we headed to Tybee Island, just outside Savannah, hoping for a leisurely day at the beach. Tybee is the easternmost point in Georgia. It was renamed Savannah Beach in the 1950s but reverted to its original moniker

20 years later. I never did put on my bathing suit. There was too much to see, starting, ironically, at the beach.

The day we visited Tybee Island coincided with the Savannah College of Art and Design Sand Arts Festival. Students, alumni and faculty compete

SAVANNAH SAVVY

1794: **Eli Whitney** invented the cotton gin in Savannah, which revolutionized the cotton industry by making seed removal much more efficient.

Built in 1819, the **Owens-Thomas House** in Savannah was the first home in the United States to have running water.

Scarborough House at the Ships of the Sea Maritime Museum was built in 1819 for the owner of the *Savannah*, the first steamship to cross the Atlantic Ocean.

The **Colonial Park Cemetery** was the final resting ground for a number of colonial and Revolutionary War heroes including Major General Nathanael Greene, though his remains were moved in 1901 to his monument in Johnson Square.

Savannah's **Cathedral of St. John the Baptist** was founded by the French in the late 18th century. It became a cathedral in 1850. Today it is a religious center for 90 counties in southern Georgia.

In 1912, Savannah native **Juliette "Daisy" Gordon Low** founded the Girl Scouts of America. Her birthplace, the Wayne-Gordon House, is open to the public.

The **Southern live oak**, or evergreen oak, is the state tree of Georgia and a common and most striking tree throughout Savannah. Because it never drops all of its leaves at the same time, it looks the same in January and July.

The **Spanish moss** draping hundreds of Southern live oaks in Savannah is not a parasitic plant and does not damage its host trees. It just uses the tree for support.

Singer-songwriter **Johnny Mercer**, a native of Savannah, wrote more than 1,100 songs and won four Academy Awards during his career. The Mercer-Williams House, site of the shooting in the book *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, was built by his great-grandfather.

More than 100 movies and TV shows have used Savannah as a filming location, including *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, *Cape Fear*, *The Last Song*, *The Legend of Bagdad*, *Glory*, *Something to Talk About*, *Forrest Gump* and the TV miniseries *Roots*.

More than a million people come to Savannah each year for St. Patrick's Day. The city's first **St. Patrick's Day parade** took place in 1824. For a week each March, the fountain in Forsyth Park spouts green water in honor of the occasion.



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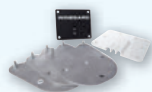


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SAVANNAH'S SOUTHERN CHARM

annually in this creative sand-sculpting event in five categories: Sand Castles, Sand Sculptures (at least 3 feet tall), Sand Relief (less than 3 feet tall), Wind Sculpture (artistic structures that “engage the wind”) and Best Underwater Creature (real or make-believe). We spent most of our time at the beach gawking at these intricate works of sand art, including a smiling Cheshire cat, a sexy mermaid and a 6-foot-long lobster.

After walking among the sand sculptures, we got more exercise and another dose of history climbing to the top of the Tybee Island Light station. The 154-foot-tall tower was built in 1773 and is the oldest and tallest lighthouse in Georgia. By contrast, we also visited the smaller, 46-foot-tall and more isolated Cockspur Island Lighthouse near Fort Pulaski, then ventured into the fort itself.

FORT PULASKI

Named for Casimir Pulaski, a Polish nobleman and military commander



The grandest church in historic Savannah, the French-gothic Cathedral of St. John the Baptist showcases towering steeples (left) and stained-glass windows created by Innsbruck glass-makers in the Austrian Tyrol (right).



who is credited with founding the U.S. Cavalry, Fort Pulaski is a mammoth structure believed to be impenetrable until the invention of rifled cannon fire during the Civil War. The fort's significance in the history of warfare and its live cannon demonstrations caught

Jack's attention, but the man for whom the fort was named intrigued me more.

At the recommendation of Benjamin Franklin, Pulaski emigrated to North America to help the American cause during the Revolutionary War. He is credited with saving George



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Washington's life during the Battle of Brandywine and then becoming a general in the Continental Army. During the Battle of Savannah, he was mortally wounded and died shortly afterward.

Following our tour of Fort Pulaski, now a national monument, we returned to the riverfront in Savannah to watch fireworks and listen to live music. River Street and the adjacent ribbon of waterfront park were packed with people. I wanted so dearly to find a place to sit after a day on my feet, but every possible spot was taken.

"Hey, y'all!"

I turned to find a young man gesturing to me to take his seat on a park bench. Grateful, I accepted, as Jack went to look for some fried chicken and sweet tea (sugar-sweetened iced tea), two of Savannah's culinary specialties. Sometimes called the Hostess City of the South, Savannah certainly rolled out the red carpet for us in many endearing and delightful ways. 🚗

SOUTHERN COMFORT

Savannah is a cocktail-friendly city. Most watering holes have plastic cups by the door so you can bring your drink with you on the city streets without using a glass container.

Aroy-Jung Asian Fusion and Sushi Bar:

A hip, vegan-friendly restaurant in downtown Savannah, Aroy-Jung features a conveyor-belt sushi bar and authentic grilled Japanese and Thai specialties.

The Crab Shack: This backwater-fishing-camp-turned-seafood-hotspot, created by husband and wife charter boat captains, is where "the elite [over]eat in their bare feet." www.thecrabshack.com

Crystal Beer Parlor: A speakeasy that became one of the first places in Savannah to serve alcohol after Prohibition. It now serves wine, spirits and a broad selection of specialty burgers and other fare. www.crystalbeerparlor.com

Flying Fish Bar and Grill: Casual lunch spot near Fort Pulaski that dishes up four

versions of mahi sandwiches (grilled, blackened, fried or in buffalo sauce). Bring in your fresh-caught fish to have them cook it. www.flyingfishsavannah.com

The Lady and Sons: Cooking-show host and celebrity chef Paula Deen offers a buffet of Southern comfort foods and soups, salads and seafood. Reservations recommended. www.ladyandsons.com

Tybean Coffee and Art Bar: A colorful, funky coffee spot on the Savannah side of Tybee Island. Good java, real lattes, smoothies and other quick pickups. Local arts and crafts. www.tybeans.com



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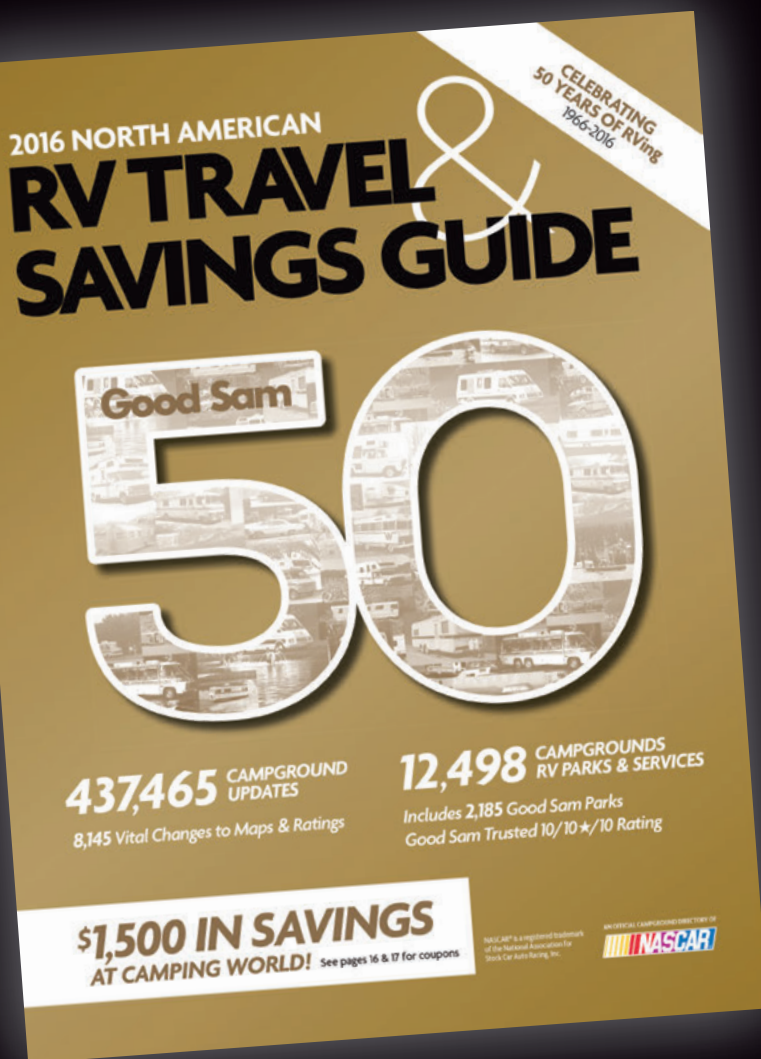


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STEP UP TO LUXURY

Popular among boat owners, Infinity's specialized vinyl floor covering is making strides in the RV industry. It looks stylish, cleans easily, resists fading and stands up to heavy use

Nice flooring can make or break the decor aesthetics in any RV. In the past few years, tile and faux-wood floors have pretty much displaced traditional carpet fabrics and patterns, and for good reasons. Carpeting may feel good on our feet, but the reality of living in a home with limited square footage and materials that might not meet residential quality standards frequently leads to soiling that may not clean easily, as well as early signs of wear. Compound the effort — and labor costs — to maneuver around slideouts when it comes time to replace the carpeting, and it only makes sense that alternatives have become so popular.

The flooring of choice these days is overwhelmingly hard surfaces, but a company that specializes in marine-trade decor, Infinity Luxury Woven Vinyl, has introduced a unique product to the RV industry that transforms floors into a look that rivals expensive yachts and extravagant homes.

As the name suggests, the product is made of vinyl and constructed in such a way as to provide long-term durability in high-traffic areas. The material is 100 percent recyclable and Certified Green, but that will probably be a moot point for most RV owners, since the flooring is guaranteed to perform without failure for 10 years.

What caught our attention is the

material's inherent resistance to elements that typically soil carpet in an RV, especially if the owners are social and entertain frequently or have pets. Without question, hard-surface flooring is easy to clean up, but Luxury Woven Vinyl (LWV) provides close to the same convenience, without having to drag out a mop or carpet cleaner, and offers a softer, warmer surface that is comfortable on your feet.

Infinity's LWV repels fuel, grease, motor oil, spills (think red wine) and pet stains. It is designed not to fade and is virtually unaffected by ultraviolet rays and sun exposure. Another key feature is its antimicrobial properties that resist mold and mildew, which can be

problematic in RVs that are stored — or even used — in areas with high heat and humidity. Bacteria will not grow in the vinyl, so there's little chance for unwanted odors.

For these very reasons, LWV has become popular among boat owners, and the vinyl flooring is also used in the aviation industry and other high-traffic commercial areas like fitness centers, restaurants and retail stores. Airstream now uses LWV, and a number of other RV manufacturers are looking at the product's feasibility.

Beyond the fact that LWV has a clean look and lies nicely on any floor, we were enamored by the simplicity



of the cleanup. We've ruined plenty of carpet over the years, and being pet-friendly RVers, the inevitable stains required constant attention. We found LWV easy to clean with common household products, especially those with oxy formulations, and really liked the way Roadmaster Voom RV Cleaner worked for most stains. Heavy stains, like tracked-in grease, can be removed with acetone or even carburetor cleaner, although expect the chemical odor to linger for a while.

To test the practicality of replacing existing carpet, we chose a rig with carpet in the slideout, under a free-standing table, four chairs and dual theater seating. This provided a good sampling of what an installer would face in the real world. Dealing with the slideout is usually a tough assignment for any installer, and frankly, the part of any RV installation dreaded by those who specialize in laying floor covering. The level of difficulty is always compounded when the slideout is not removed before the project; removing the slideout should be done only by trained technicians and will lift the labor costs substantially. Our installation was completed by Advanced Canvas in Oxnard, California, experts in marine and automotive interior renovation.

Similar to choosing flooring for a stationary home, the process for finding the right LWV for your RV

requires patience. There are 17 collections and 160 colors to choose from, and you'll likely have to rely on viewing the sample images on the company's website. We spent hours combing the collections online and settled on what we thought was a good match for the test RV. In the end, the material turned out to be too light and somewhat different from the online image. It's obviously better to view the collections in a live showroom, but until the flooring becomes more commonplace in the market, that might be difficult. To eliminate surprises, it's best to request swatches from the local RV or marine dealer, or an upholstery or canvas shop that carries the Infinity line.

LWV comes in 8½- and 10-foot widths and two cushion-backing thicknesses. The thinner backing works best around corners and where sharp bends are necessary; it also may be best for use under the leading edge of the slideout. For our installation, measurements were sent to the company, which figured out the final cut size, but that process might be better left to professional carpet people who understand exactly what it takes to cover any given area.

Once the original carpet was removed — which took some finesse to keep key sections intact so they could be used as a pattern — the area was prepped for the new LWV. Overall,

the installation went without many hiccups, although it turned out to be more time-consuming than projected. The section of vinyl that was tucked under the slideout was installed first, using staples, and then the main floor was stapled in place. Judicious use of staples that were concealed by the furniture allowed the vinyl to lay flat and smooth.

Wood-edge trim was used to finish the installation, which turned out better than expected. The leading edges of the vinyl were trimmed with a fabric binding, which wound up being too light and picked up dirt almost immediately. In retrospect, a darker binding should have been used, and a darker-style LWV would have been even better. A matching "throw rug" was cut to match the vinyl in the slideout, which really enhanced the look in the living room. However, since LWV is virtually indestructible, it can also be used as a patio mat, which will move the aesthetics up a notch.

After living with LWV for more than a month, we found the material comfortable to walk on and pleasant to look at. Beyond the enhancement to the interior decor, we really liked how easily the dining chairs moved around, and although indentations were created by the legs, they went away quickly once the weight was taken off the chairs.

LWV is not inexpensive and sells for from \$6 to \$12 a square foot, depending on the collection. Installation labor must be added into the price structure. Since the vinyl is self-contained, it requires no additional padding.

Here's how the carpet teardown and installation of Infinity's Luxury Woven Vinyl went in the test RV.



1) The process starts by unscrewing and removing the theater chairs and dining table in the slideout area. **2)** It took a few minutes to figure out how the original carpet was attached to the floor. Scissors were then used to make the first cuts. **3)** A flat-blade screwdriver was used to free the corners to give the installer a good grip for pulling out the carpet. **4)** Commercial-grade scissors made it easy to cut around a good portion of the carpet.



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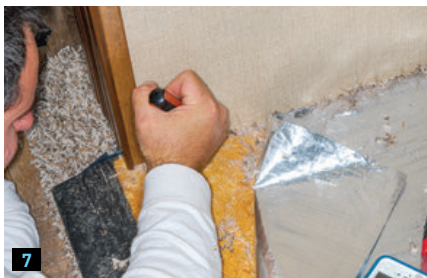
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5) After the cuts were made, a razor knife was needed to free the carpet at the walls. **6)** A power cutting tool was used to free sections of the carpet, which saved the installer's back and hands — and quite a bit of time. **7)** Extra care was taken in removing the carpet without damaging the wood slideout structure at the transition points. **8, 9, 10)** As an experienced installer in the marine trade, the technician strategically marked the old carpet so it could be used as a template when cutting the new LWV. Locations were also marked for the screws used to secure the furniture, especially since repositioning was critical to accommodate the clearance between the table and island galley counter when the slide is retracted.



11) Once the carpet was completely free and marked, it was rolled up carefully for transporting to the Advanced Canvas shop where the LWV was cut. **12)** LWV comes in rolls that are 8½- or 10-foot wide. For the test installation, 10-foot sections were cut, after the area was carefully measured. This is where the installer's expertise can make a big difference in ordering the proper amount of LWV with limited waste and additional expense. **13)** Once the carpet was removed, the old staples were pulled, and any ends that broke off were hammered flat. This is an important step to prevent any sharp protrusions through the new flooring. **14)** The carpet was installed by the RV manufacturer before the slideout was mounted; to prevent a labor-intensive project, the exposed carpet when the slideout was extended was carefully cut away. **15)** Removing the carpet from the main floor is a painstaking task, requiring a great amount of finesse to maintain the integrity of the section so it can be used as a template. **16)** Hanging fibers must be removed from under the lip of the slideout to make room for the LWV and prevent binding.



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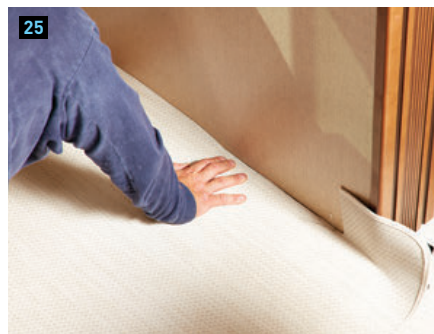
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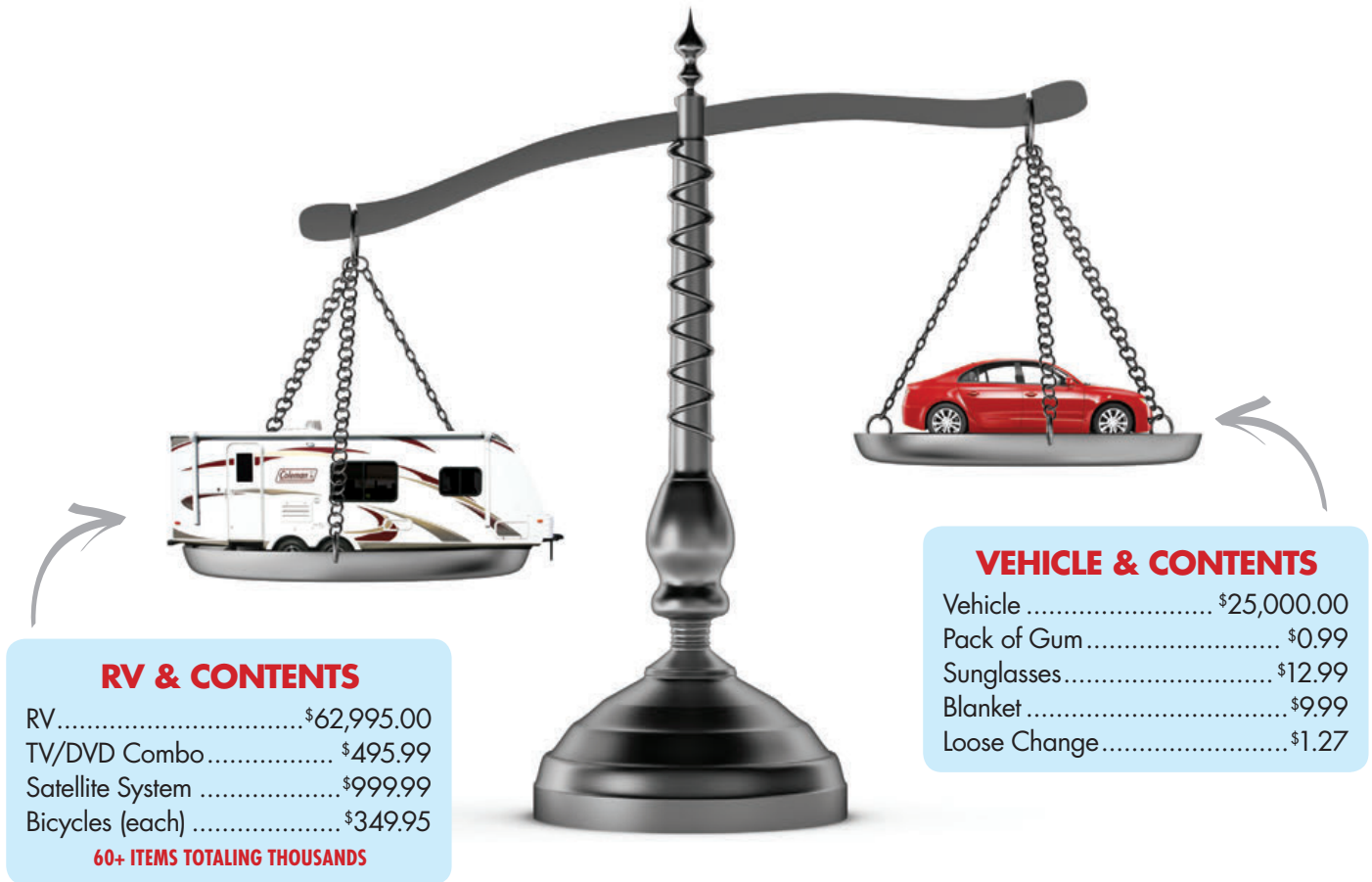


17) Expect to collect a lot of these fibers during the process. **18)** After cutting the LWV to match the templates and sewing on the edge binding, the first step was to install the vinyl on the main floor. **19)** The material was carefully trimmed for placement under the slideout. This is a one-shot process; overcutting will require starting over. **20)** Location markings were made to ensure placement accuracy and **21)** the LWV was first stapled to the floor. **22)** The contours of the LWV were carefully cut in around the corners of the slideout using scissors.



23) A water-based glue was applied to sandwich the two pieces of vinyl needed to fill the gap under the slideout. Using water-based glue eliminated any chemical odors inside the RV. **24)** The edges were then tucked in between the slideout and main floor. Once completed, the LWV was neatly stapled to the main floor with no signs of buckling. **25)** Cutting the LWV from a template made the section fit like a glove. **26)** The edges were neatly tucked in along the walls and **27)** any excess material was carefully trimmed for a perfect fit. This is another area where experience counts; making wrong cuts can be costly and create long delays. **28)** A staple gun was used to attach the LWV to the slideout floor. It's important to use the right staples to prevent unsightly distractions in the final look.

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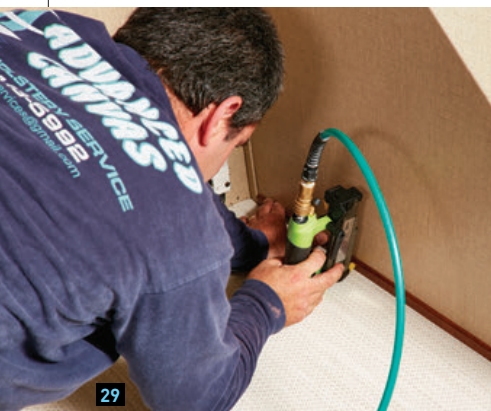
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29) Wood edging was used to enhance the look of the LWV. This is not a necessary step, since the vinyl can be cut and the ends will not unravel, but it makes for a much more finished look — and compensates for walls that are not perfectly straight. **30)** It took a little doing to find edging that would match the overall look of the RV, but the material was located at a local store that specializes in home-remodeling supplies. The edging is difficult to find in RV stores. **31, 32, 33, 34)** The hardest part of fitting the LWV to the slideout floor was cutting in the material around the wide moldings that frame the room. This took quite a bit of time and careful cutting. Again, a wrong cut here can send the installer back to the shop.

35) With the furniture back in place in the extended slideout, it was time to step back and enjoy the finished product. The LWV adds a handsome — and much more luxurious — look to the interior and is light years more attractive than the original carpet. The “throw rug” with sewn-on bindings is a nice complement to the installation. **36)** Roadmaster Voom RV Cleaner, available from Camping World and other RV dealers, worked the best when removing stains from the light-color LWV. **37)** A simple application of the all-purpose Voom and wiping with a microfiber towel restored the look of the LWV; the light-color binding was harder to clean, but much of the dirt came out. **38)** The vinyl material is very flexible and has a cushioned backing that is available in two sizes to accommodate installation requirements. 🚐

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diesel for a good price.

Transfer Flow has a solution with its new 50-gallon auxiliary fuel tank for diesel engines. New are the tank's electronics on the Trax 3's (explained shortly) fuel-monitoring and transfer system that work with the electronics on new trucks. Better still, for all those important things you bring along that slide around in the bed of your truck or clutter up the space behind your seat — emergency tools, jumper cables and the like — the new

50-gallon auxiliary tank incorporates a weatherproof, lockable toolbox.

The fuel tank is made from 14-gauge aluminized steel for superior rust resistance and strength, and has been baffled to reduce fuel sloshing. The toolbox is made of 1/8-inch aluminum diamond plate, and the lid features locking paddle handles and gas-filled shocks for easy opening and closing. A stainless-steel fuel fill is recessed on the front of the toolbox on the driver's side, and the tank height



1) The 14-gauge aluminized steel tank is light enough to be lifted by two people, eliminating the need for the hoist used at Transfer Flow. The diamond-plate shell is then mounted over the tank. **2)** With the tank lifted into the bed, careful measurements were taken before drilling the mounting holes, making sure that there was no interference under the bed from factory lines or exhaust. **3)** Holes for the mounting bolts, fuel-transfer hose and electrical connectors were drilled. **4)** Thick anodized-steel plates were used to secure the tank to the truck's bed.

won't interfere with a standard fifth-wheel trailer's turning radius.

The toolbox's storage area is 60½ inches long by 9 inches deep, enough room for fishing gear and a number of tools. The dimensions of the complete tank/toolbox are 61¾ inches by 27½ inches. The tank is made in the USA,

meets all federal and state emissions regulations and comes with a three-year, unlimited-mileage warranty. The unit is available for all full-size longbed pickups.

As a bonus, you don't need to wonder how much fuel is left, because the 50-gallon tank comes

with the aforementioned Trax 3, Transfer Flow's latest generation of its computer-controlled, self-diagnosing fuel-monitoring system that transfers fuel from the Transfer Flow auxiliary fuel tank to the vehicle's main fuel tank. The Trax 3 computer module constantly monitors fuel levels in



5) Rubber grommets were installed to protect fuel and electrical lines. **6)** Detailed instructions for each vehicle describe how to tap into the factory wiring harness. **7)** With all connections made, the factory loom was taped up and secured with supplied cable ties.



both tanks with a dash-mounted LCD display.

During a recent visit to the Transfer Flow factory in Chico, California, we followed the installation of the 50-gallon tank/toolbox in a 2015 Ram truck.

Detailed mounting and hookup instructions come with the unit, so a good DIY mechanic could install it in a driveway. However, the better option is to have it installed at one of Transfer Flow's 325 locations in the United States, Canada and Australia. They offer an installation special at the factory for \$250, plus the

8) All preloomed wires and connectors are supplied for the installation of the Trax 3 computer-control system. 9) All mounting hardware and fuel-line connectors are supplied with the 50-gallon tank/toolbox. 10) Electrical connections for the auxiliary tank, the Trax 3 computer controller and the LCD monitor are routed through existing holes in the firewall.

cost of the system. MSRP is \$2,348.

With the tank lifted into the bed, careful measurements were taken before drilling the mounting holes, making sure that there was no interference under the bed from factory lines or exhaust.

With holes and rubber grommets installed, the supplied fuel-transfer

line and wires were routed. Detailed instructions for each vehicle explain which color wires need to be tapped. Under the hood, the cigarette-lighter fuse was fitted with a tap-a-fuse adapter for the system. On the Ram, there was a convenient bolt that was used for a ground.

The loomed wires for the Trax 3



11) Removing the cover of the door pillar provides access to the connection wire and plug for the Trax 3 LCD display. 12) After opening the small cover panel on the driver's side, the plug for the LCD display is attached. 13) The cigarette-lighter fuse was fitted with a fuse tap to supply power to the Trax 3 system. 14) Using a supplied connector, the ground wire for the system was attached to a convenient bolt in the fender well. 15) Detailed instructions for each vehicle explain which color wires need to be tapped. 16) A T-adapter is spliced into the factory tank's vent hose to allow the auxiliary tank pump to transfer fuel as needed.



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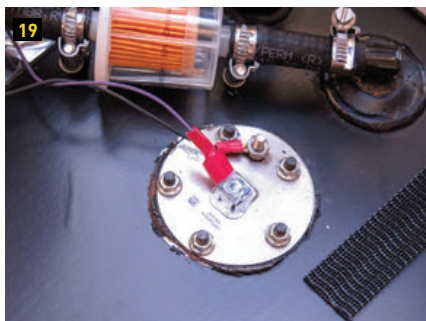
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17) All wiring is preassembled at the factory. **18)** The final step is to plug in the factory-wired electrical connectors. **19)** Ground wires are securely attached to the tank cover. **20)** A metal cover attaches with hook-and-loop fasteners over the pump, fuel filter and electrical connectors.

dash-mounted LCD display and the wires for the transfer pump were routed through existing holes in the firewall. By removing the rubber trim, the driver's-side pillar cover and the side cover, the control plug for the Trax 3 LCD display was easily fed through and plugged in.

The factory tank's vent hose was removed, and a T-adapter was spliced in to allow the auxiliary tank pump to transfer fuel as needed. With that hose reinstalled and connected to the Transfer Flow tank, the two plugs inside the toolbox cover could be connected, and the cover over the pump and fuel filter was secured with hook-and-loop fasteners.

At the Transfer Flow facility, the



final step was to fill the new auxiliary tank, check for leaks and observe that the Trax 3 monitor was showing fuel being transferred. The LCD screen will show "Pump On," and the percentage

of fuel left in each tank. That's peace of mind. 🚚

Transfer Flow

800-442-0056, www.transferflow.com

21) The new 50-gallon tank-and-toolbox will fit all full-size longbed pickups. **22)** The tank incorporates a lockable weatherproof toolbox to hold many of the items sliding around in your pickup's bed. **23)** The final step was to fill the new auxiliary tank, check for leaks and observe that the Trax 3 monitor was functioning properly. **24)** The Trax 3 computer module constantly monitors fuel levels in both tanks with a dash-mounted LCD display.



The Trax 3 monitors fuel levels in both tanks from 100 percent/100 percent when filled, to an appropriate percentage as the tanks are drained.

TRAX 3™ Fuel Transfer Process

Main 100% SYS
Aux 100% OK

When both the main and auxiliary fuel tanks are full, the LCD will display 100 percent for both tanks.

Main 85% PUMP
Aux 100% ON

When the main tank is at 85% capacity, the pump will go through several transfer cycles until both tanks are at 85%.

Main 85% SYS
Aux 85% OK

After both tanks are at 85%, the system will maintain the same fuel level percentage until the auxiliary tank reaches 25%. For example, when the main tank is at 55% capacity, the auxiliary tank will also be at 55%.

Main 25% PUMP
Aux 25% ON

When both tanks reach 25% capacity, fuel in the auxiliary tank will be transferred to the main tank, keeping the main tank at 25% until the auxiliary tank reaches 0%.

Main 25% SYS
Aux 0% OK

The auxiliary tank is now empty. The only fuel left is in the main tank.

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From Great Smoky Mountains National Park to the Blue Ridge Parkway, a North Carolina road trip into the heart of Appalachia reveals a land of waterfalls, wildflowers and other over-the-top wonders

Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the Blue Ridge Parkway are two of America's favorite destinations within the National Park System, and there's no wonder why. They are gorgeous, they're filled with things to see and do, and they're not too far from the major cities on the Eastern Seaboard.

Both are located in the Blue Ridge Mountains, a range in the Appalachians, but each is very different. Great Smoky Mountains National Park is enormous. It spans two states, North Carolina and Tennessee, and has four visitor centers inside the park. Just outside the park's boundaries are four more information centers. The Blue Ridge Parkway is a narrow 469-mile-long ribbon of road that connects Great Smoky Mountains National Park to Shenandoah National Park in Virginia, and the locations of its many sightseeing highlights are designated by mileposts.

When we took our 36-foot HitchHiker fifth-wheel trailer on a road trip to this area recently, we opted to use the small town of Cherokee, North Carolina, as our home base. Cherokee is perched at the confluence of Newfound Gap Road, which traverses Great Smoky Mountains National Park, and the southern terminus of the Blue Ridge Parkway. It is an ideal spot to explore both of them.

Cherokee itself is quite touristy, but the slightly cheesy atmosphere is still fun. Members of the Cherokee tribe stand on the street corners in full-feathered-and-beaded regalia, complete with fringe and moccasins, eager to talk with visitors and invite them into their souvenir shops.

As we strolled through town, we came across a group of Native American street performers doing an impromptu dance. We had no idea whether the moves and music were authentic or just for tourists, but we

Just north of Cherokee, North Carolina, the Oconaluftee River Trail (left) crosses the junction of Newfound Gap Road in Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the southern tip of the Blue Ridge Parkway (right).



TRY HOLIDAY





ON TOP OF OLD SMOKY

Newfound Gap Road [U.S. Route 441] takes motorists from Cherokee, North Carolina, across **Great Smoky Mountains National Park** in less than an hour, but don't rush it. Savor the 3,000-foot ascent through northern hardwood and evergreen forests. Get out and stretch your legs on the Appalachian Trail. And don't miss the 7-mile detour up Clingmans Dome Road to the Smokies' highest point at 6,643 feet.

Likewise designed for leisurely driving, the **Blue Ridge Parkway** has plenty of pullovers for admiring alpine vistas. Stop at the Haywood-Jackson Overlook near mile marker 431 (about 38 miles from Cherokee) to hike the 1.5-mile loop trail over the summit of 6,410-foot Richland Balsam Mountain, among the 20 highest peaks in the Appalachians. The next overlook, a third of a mile away, claims the highest elevation along the 469-mile parkway, 6,053 feet, and is known for its stunning sunset views.

Two low tunnels (lower than 11 feet 1 inch at mileposts 458.8 and 459.3) make this southern portion of the parkway tricky for taller trailers. Leaving our fifth-wheel at the campsite, we enjoyed day trips and scenic drives in our tow vehicle and got a kick out of going through the pretty stone tunnels that cut through the mountains on the southernmost 75 miles of the parkway. Although the parkway is managed by the park service, there is no fee or pass required to drive it, and loads of local mountain roads intersect it, making it a cinch to hop on and off.

Who's Number One? With 10.7 million visitors, Great Smoky Mountains was the most visited of the 59 designated national parks in 2015, but the Blue Ridge Parkway was the most popular of the National Park Service's 410 overall sites with more than 15 million visitors.



Powered by water flowing along a raised millrace to a cast-iron turbine, Mingus Mill dates back to 1886 and sits just beyond the town of Cherokee. Today it is a favorite photo-op spot.

laughed and clapped alongside a dozen other visitors and enjoyed the show immensely. Three dancers demonstrated various footwork and arm gestures, including an evocative Eagle Dance and theatrical Warrior Dance.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS

Leaving the beaded jewelry and trinkets behind, we quickly found the natural wonders of the Smoky Mountains just steps from town on the Oconaluftee River Trail. An easy and delightful hiking and biking trail wanders beside the namesake river for a mile and a half between the Cherokee Welcome Center in town and the Oconaluftee Visitor Center in the national park. The pungent smell of leaves on the trail tickled our noses,

and our eyes grew wide when we turned a corner and spotted a bull elk and his harem of females standing in the river just a few feet away, leisurely taking a morning drink.

Elk were reintroduced to the Smokies in 2001 and 2002, and the herd has thrived since then, with their numbers now topping 150. Many wear radio collars so they can be tracked, and during a second biking excursion on this same trail, we came upon a female elk wearing one. She stood stock still, turning her head slowly from side to side to look at us first with one eye and then with the other.

Over the next few days, we learned that elk sightings are commonplace in the fields around the Oconaluftee Visitor Center. Lots of tourists



From Interstate 40 west of Asheville, a field bursting with pink and blue wildflowers presented an ideal spot to pull off the highway and take some photos.

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Waterfalls abound in the Smokies, and they come in all shapes and sizes. A fun travel theme for RVers exploring the area is to search for and hike to the most dramatic ones (right).

congregate there to watch the herd and also to wander through the historic cabins of the Mountain Farm Museum next door. These cabins, built more than a century ago, were gathered from throughout the Smoky Mountains in the 1950s and moved to this site. They offer a step back in time, showing just how dramatically life has changed in a few short generations.

A half-mile farther into the park on Newfound Gap Road, we encountered more 19th-century history at Mingus Mill, a historic gristmill dating to 1886. This mill was unusual because it was powered by water flowing along a raised millrace to a cast-iron turbine, rather than to a more conventional paddle wheel. The turbine generated the power

to crush grain on a grindstone, providing cornmeal and wheat flour for the whole community. Samples of those grains are sold at the mill today.

We piled back into our truck and continued on Newfound Gap Road to higher and higher elevations. As we rounded a series of switchbacks, suddenly the mystical beauty of the Smokies revealed itself at several scenic overlooks. Gray, misty layers of mountains rippled into the distance. Each overlapping band of undulating hills drew our gazes further out along the ridges until they melted away at the horizon in ever-whiter shades of pale. This was the classic image of the Smoky Mountains that we had always held in our minds.



AS WE ROUNDED A SERIES OF SWITCHBACKS, SUDDENLY THE MYSTICAL BEAUTY OF THE SMOKIES THE DISTANCE. EACH OVERLAPPING BAND OF UNDULATING HILLS DREW OUR GAZES FURTHER OUT



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(Far left) Fragrant and delicate mountain laurel flowers dance in the breeze each spring. (Left) On the southern half of the Blue Ridge Parkway, pretty stone tunnels cut through the mountains. For RVers with bigger rigs, it's best to explore this part of the route by tow vehicle and leave the trailer at a campsite.

Turning west, we made our way to the highest peak in the Smokies, Clingmans Dome, along a curved ramp that winds its way up to a 360-degree lookout. Groups of tourists took turns taking photos of each other against the iconic backdrop of the Smokies

that rose and fell in waves and faded into soft, silvery hues. As we began our descent back to Cherokee, the sky erupted in a glorious spray of pinks and reds, and we stopped at every overlook to soak up another majestic view of the sunset.

On another day, we discovered a little-known and unnamed gem of a waterfall on the south side of Newfound Gap Road, about 8.5 miles from the Oconaluftee Visitor Center. Scrambling over rocks and leaves, we followed the splish-splash of the waterfall toward its

REVEALED ITSELF AT SEVERAL SCENIC OVERLOOKS. GRAY, MISTY LAYERS OF MOUNTAINS RIPPLED INTO ALONG THE RIDGES UNTIL THEY MELTED AWAY AT THE HORIZON IN EVER-WHITER SHADES OF PALE.



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source, going up hundreds of feet into the woods to watch the water tumble down over mossy rocks.

The serenity of this wild place captured our imaginations, and after spending a delightful few hours by the side of this waterfall, we were inspired to look for more. We discovered that

three tall beauties can be enjoyed in one easy hike about 9 miles west of Cherokee, near Bryson City in the Deep Creek region of the park.

At Juney Whank Falls, the National Park Service has set up a bench on a bridge right in front of the waterfall, and it was a lovely spot to enjoy a picnic

(Above, from left) A classic Smokies sunset lights up the sky on the descent from Clingmans Dome, the highest point in Great Smoky Mountains National Park. A Native American dances on the streets of Cherokee.

while watching the water crash down a sheer cliff face just a few feet from us and then slip away behind us under the bridge.

Hiking just a short distance farther, we came to Tom Branch Falls, a tall and skinny stream of water that trickles down the side of a mountain across the river from the hiking trail. A father and his two kids waded out into the river to get a closer view of the waterfall, and then two girls on tubes came floating past us all. They clicked photos on their cell phones as they drifted by, lounging in swimsuits in their tubes.

The last bit of this easy hike took us to Indian Creek Falls, which is as squat and wide as Tom Branch Falls is tall and slim.

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

One of the greatest charms of the Smokies in the springtime is the explosion of color as the wildflowers bloom, and all along this leisurely waterfall hike we passed gorgeous mountain laurel trees whose delicate blossoms danced in the breeze and gave off the most delicious fragrance.

Big bushes were beginning to flower along the roadsides as well, and 3 miles north of Cherokee, when we turned



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east onto the beginning of the Blue Ridge Parkway, we found bright-orange azalea bushes dotting the sides of the road. White trillium flowers peeked up between brown leaves in the woods.

The 80-year-old Blue Ridge Parkway is a favorite among motorcyclists, and we saw endless groups of bikes enjoying the sweeping turns and rolling hills as they rode under the canopy of green trees that frame the route.

With our appetites whetted for beautiful waterfalls, we sought out more along the parkway. Literally dozens flow within a short distance of Cherokee. We hiked down to stunning Soco Falls, just 17 miles from Cherokee via the parkway and an easy 10-mile return trip on U.S. Route 19. There is a viewing platform about halfway down the falls, but we discovered these waterfalls are most stunning if you brave the brief scramble all the way to the bottom. From this low vantage point, the twin falls towered above us — an impressive sight as they plunged straight down with a thunderous roar onto the rocks below.

A trio of local little kids was playing in the water near the base of Soco Falls while we were there, happily fishing for trout and collecting their catch in buckets.

"Look, we caught eight fish!" one kid announced proudly to my husband, Mark, while holding up his bucket. Mark raised his eyebrows and asked what they planned to do with them all.

"Eat them, of course!" was the proud reply.

Two more exquisite waterfalls lie along the Blue Ridge Parkway a short distance from the town of Spruce Pine, about 100 miles or so northeast of Cherokee as the crow flies. To get there, we took a shortcut up Interstate 40 and were stunned when we suddenly passed a vibrantly colored field of wildflowers right next to the freeway just west of Asheville. We pulled over and were soon thigh-deep in crimson and pink flowers that stretched as far as we could see across a vast meadow. Motorists of all kinds pulled off the highway along with us to wade out among the red blossoms and immerse themselves in springtime.

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Crabtree Falls is at milepost 339.5, and we enjoyed an easy hike down. It is a lofty waterfall, and a tall curtain of white water cascades over hundreds of rocks on its way to the bottom, forming a fantastic mosaic of silky spray. While the hike down had been a breeze, going back up was a good stair-stepping workout.

Linville Falls is located just 20 miles northeast on the parkway, and when we stopped at the visitor center for a hiking map, we discovered there are actually two waterfalls. With overcast skies looming, we decided to take the shorter hike to less visited Duggers Creek Falls first, and we were almost instantly engulfed in a torrential rainstorm on the trail.

After a mad dash back to the truck to hide out from the deluge, we resumed the hike an hour later and arrived at the falls to find the water was now foaming and creating wonderfully artful swirls, as the bubbles slipped downstream under a small bridge. We reveled in the unique beauty of this tiny canyon so long that the afternoon escaped us, and we never made it to Linville Falls.

The magnificent landscapes of the Blue Ridge Mountains captivated us, and we loved traveling during wildflower season with waterfalls as our guiding theme. We're eager to make a return trip — with Linville Falls at the top of our bucket list — but next time we'll try a different emphasis, perhaps focusing on fall foliage or wildlife sightings. 🐾

CAMPING IN THE APPALACHIANS

BLUE RIDGE PARKWAY

The Blue Ridge Parkway Association's printed and online directory provides maps and information for RV parks along the parkway, organized by geographical regions. The directory also lists landmarks and other attractions along the route.

828-298-0398, www.blueridgeparkway.org

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS

America's most-visited national park has nine developed campgrounds with campsites that accommodate RVs, but no hookups. Five campgrounds take reservations; the others are first-come, first-served. Maximum RV length varies.

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Offering campsite discounts to Good Sam members, the following RV parks are located in Cherokee near the main North Carolina entrance to Great Smoky Mountains National Park and the southern entrance to the Blue Ridge Parkway, making them ideal base camps.

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828-497-9331, www.fortwilderness.net

Happy Holiday Campground

828-497-9204, www.happyholidayrv.com

Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park — Cherokee

877-716-6711, www.jellystonecherokee.com

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WHEN IT COMES TIME TO REPLACE THAT WORN-OUT OR MANUAL PATIO AWNING, CAREFREE OF COLORADO'S IMPROVED TRAVEL'R UPS THE ANTE

One of the most valuable accessories on any RV is the patio awning. When extended, the awning fabric provides much-needed shade when the RV is in the direct sun, protecting the side of the RV and occupants who enjoy hanging out on the patio. It's a rather clever accessory, and one that has evolved over the years from manual to electric operation, further increasing the convenience factor. While these mechanisms are fairly durable — except when subjected to strong winds — the fabric takes the brunt of the sunlight, as well as the destructive elements provided by dirt and, of course, tree and bird droppings.

Most owners can expect quite a few years of service from their awning, especially those that have a protective shield that covers the fabric when rolled up against the side wall. After a while, the fabric can become worn, and the hardware may need repair. There are number of things to consider when the decision is made to replace the fabric, the hardware

or both. Those with manual-operating awnings just about universally opt for electric versions, and in many cases, the cost of the fabric and labor can justify a new awning.

Carefree of Colorado has supplied awnings to the RV industry for a long time and has a sterling reputation for quality and function. Recently, the company has made a number of improvements to its line of awnings and has made the case for updating to a new model even stronger. The Carefree 12 Volt Travel'r is a bread-and-butter model that has taken on a number of design cues from the company's Eclipse line, a product that has been very popular on motorized RVs. The improvements provide many of the features of the Eclipse, but at a more economical price point. Key elements are the flush-mounting arms for better aesthetics and the truss-support that increases head clearance when walking through the patio — something highly desired by those of us who have clunked our head more times than we care to admit.

The other feature that will have a major impact on longevity is the new FLXguard wrap that protects the awning material when rolled up. This unique material is light and super strong, and offers comparable protection to the heavier metal wraps, but a much lower cost. The material looks like shiny plastic but is very thin so it blends in nicely — and tightly — with the contours of the rolled-up fabric. Carefree's Uniguard and Alumaguard housings are still available for the Travel'r, but the FLXguard option is a practical alternative.

To check out the feasibility of replacing the factory-installed awning with a new Travel'r, we first had to make



some decisions. The factory awning was a less-expensive, basic electric model with the typical vinyl fabric found on most trailers and fifth-wheels. It worked OK, but it was slow, and the material was not protected from the sun when in storage.

The Travel'r is available in two models: steep pitch and adjustable pitch. While the steep-pitch model can provide more shade, it's designed for mounting on taller fifth-wheels where there is at least 14.5 inches of clearance between the top of the door and the awning rail. Since the test fifth-wheel was not that tall (12-foot overall exterior height), we elected to install the adjustable-pitch model, which gives the owner the ability to make quick pitch adjustments simply by depressing a release button in each arm. We eventually adjusted the pitch to the lowest position, which provided the desired shade for our needs.

Awning arms are available in black or white, and black was picked to better match exterior graphics. There's also a choice of FLXguard cover colors, which come in black, white, satin and, soon, carbon fiber. We settled on black arms, again to match the graphics.

The bigger decision is fabric type and color. We chose the higher-end acrylic for its good looks and exceptional durability. Carefree offers a number of choices, with online color swatches to view or real samples available at selling dealers.

After carefully measuring the spacing between the arms for the replacement awning, we elected to order the Travel'r Direct Response Auto-Retract System, which automatically

rolls up the awning in windy conditions. This is a feature that will prevent inevitable insurance claims when the awning is left out unattended in windy conditions. The new system requires no externally mounted anemometer and is easy to retrofit into the motor housing at the top of the awning arm. It's relatively simple to mount the control box, but the installation requires routing wires and mounting a switch plate.

For the most part, the installation is not overly complicated, but it does require a few extra-strong backs to maneuver the awning tube in place and mount the arms. Since the fifth-wheel was already fitted with an electric awning, wire routing was a little less involved, although it still required that the installers had a good understanding of electricity. Also, the holes for the arms didn't exactly line up, so they were filled with silicone, and decorative aluminum plates will be made for a more finished look.

We wrapped up the project in around three hours, with quite a bit of time devoted to the wiring and mounting of the switch plate. The operation of

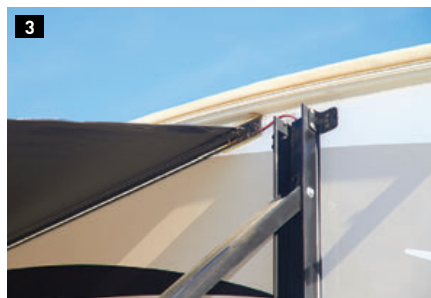
the awning is push-button simple, and the mechanism is smooth, fast and quiet — something Carefree has built a reputation around. The fabric rolls up evenly, which is attributed to the way Carefree cuts the fabric.

Extending the awning requires continuous pressure on the rocker switch, but retraction is activated simply by pushing and releasing the switch. We also tested the Direct Response Auto-Retract System in a Southern California windstorm, and the fabric rolled up after being hit by a moderate gust, way before any damage could occur.

Obviously, prices for an awning will be all over the board, depending on size and fabric choice. The test awning measured 13 feet, 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ inches long, and it retails for \$1,910 with the woven-acrylic material, which is exceptionally handsome and adds a lot of panache to the fifth-wheel. The auto-retract feature retails for \$105.

Upgrading to the Carefree 12 Volt Travel'r, whether by choice or necessity, provides a level of convenience and outside livability unmatched by almost any other accessory. Here's how it's done:

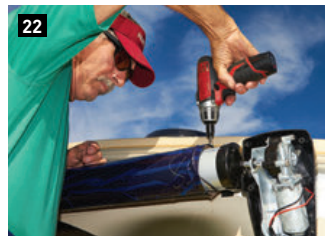
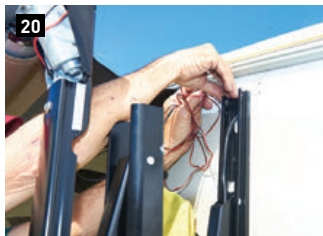
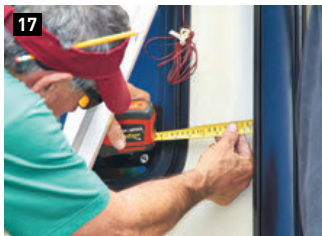
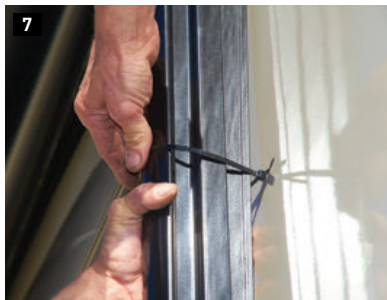
1) The fifth-wheel's factory awning was a basic electric model with vinyl fabric. It did not provide protection for the material when stored against the side wall. **2)** Arms were mounted to the side walls in similar fashion to the new Travel'r, but the holes in the top portion of the arms **3)** did not match perfectly. **4)** The process for removing the existing awning starts by pulling the bolts from the arms and **5)** using a putty knife to carefully release any sealant. **6)** Wires that are routed through the side wall are cut before removing the arms. Be prepared to scrape a large ball of silicone out of the hole in the wall.



7) Cable ties secure the arms so they will not separate when pulling the awning tube from the railing. Failure to do this step will create unwanted difficulties.

8) Once the screws that keep the fabric from sliding in the railing are removed, the awning is ready to be pulled off the side wall. This step takes at least two people and lots of muscle to balance the arms and awning tube. **9, 10)** After unpacking the hardware, the awning tube is attached to the arm assembly on each side. **11)** A top mounting bracket is used on the arm when there's no structural backing for the upper mounting holes. The upper clearance on the test fifth-wheel was limited, so these brackets were omitted; there was solid backing for all the bolts. **12)** Three people were enlisted to balance the Travel'r awning as it was slid into the side-wall railing. It's best to smooth out the opening to the railing using a file to prevent snagging the material. **13)** The awning tube actually moves smoothly in the railing once the bulk of the material is in place. The arms are adjusted **14)** to match the original holes as closely as possible.

15, 16, 17) Once the awning is in position, it must be adjusted to clear doorjamb, windows and the slideout. Careful measurements are made to ensure the arms are straight (level). This step may take some time and require some eyeballing to line up the arms properly, since the doorway, windows and slideout may not be perfectly square. **18)** Once the arms are straight, they are attached to the side walls using only the lag screws that come with the awning. **19)** It's pretty clear that the holes at the top of both arms did not line up. The holes were filled with silicone to prevent water intrusion, and templates for decorative painted-aluminum covers were fabricated. **20)** Additional wires were routed to accommodate the LED strip light in the awning tube and the Direct Response Auto-Retract System. Fortunately, access behind the arm was very good, giving the installer plenty of room to route the wires to the inside of the fifth-wheel. **21)** A cable-tie clamp is attached to the side wall using double-sided tape to control the power wire for the LED lights as the awning is extended and retracted. **22)** The awning fabric is secured in the railing with a small screw on each end. This keeps the material from sliding and becoming off-center when extended and retracted.



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3500	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			■	
3800	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			■	
4000	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			■	
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23) Silicone is used to seal existing holes in the side wall and around each lag screw **24)** used to attach the awning arms. The hole at the top of the arm **25)** where the wires were routed required a large shot of silicone. **26)** Wires for the auto-retract control were connected to the motor assembly before mounting the box in the arm head **27)** using double-sided tape. The control box was sized perfectly to fit in the allocated space. **28)** The hot wire behind the existing panel that housed the factory awning's control switch was identified. While the existing wiring was not compatible with the Travel'r system, two wires **29)** were connected to route power in the wall behind the awning arm that housed the motor. **30)** Rather than attempting to route wires to the original switch panel behind a cabinet door near the entry door, the new switch plate was installed in the bedroom, immediately behind the area where the original wires were routed. The switch plate was used as a template and the wood cut **31)** with a razor knife. **32)** Once the 12-volt DC power was in the area, it was just a matter of wiring up the switches for the awning, auto-retract system and LED lighting.

33) The switch on the left operates the LED lighting in the awning tube. The awning control switches (right) are used to turn the auto-retract system off, if desired, and extend and retract the awning. The switch must be held down to extend the awning, but only needs to be pushed and released to automatically retract the fabric. **34)** After making final adjustments, fasteners are rechecked for tightness. **35)** The cover for the motor assembly and auto-retract box is reinstalled before testing the new awning.



23



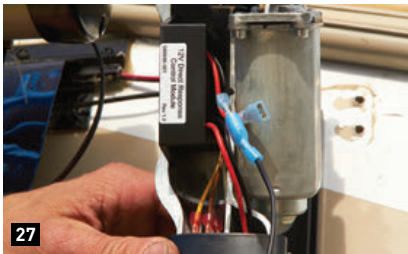
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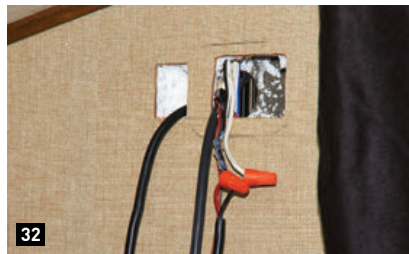
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30



31



32



33



34



35

36) The awning is partially extended to make sure the arms clear and the fabric is centered properly. **37)** The woven-acrylic fabric looks plush and is extremely durable. The new FLXguard material is hardly noticeable when the awning is extended. The protective shield will extend serviceability while keeping the end of the fabric looking nice. The pitch control worked perfectly for this installation. 🚐



36



37

SURGE GUARD™
RV Power Protection

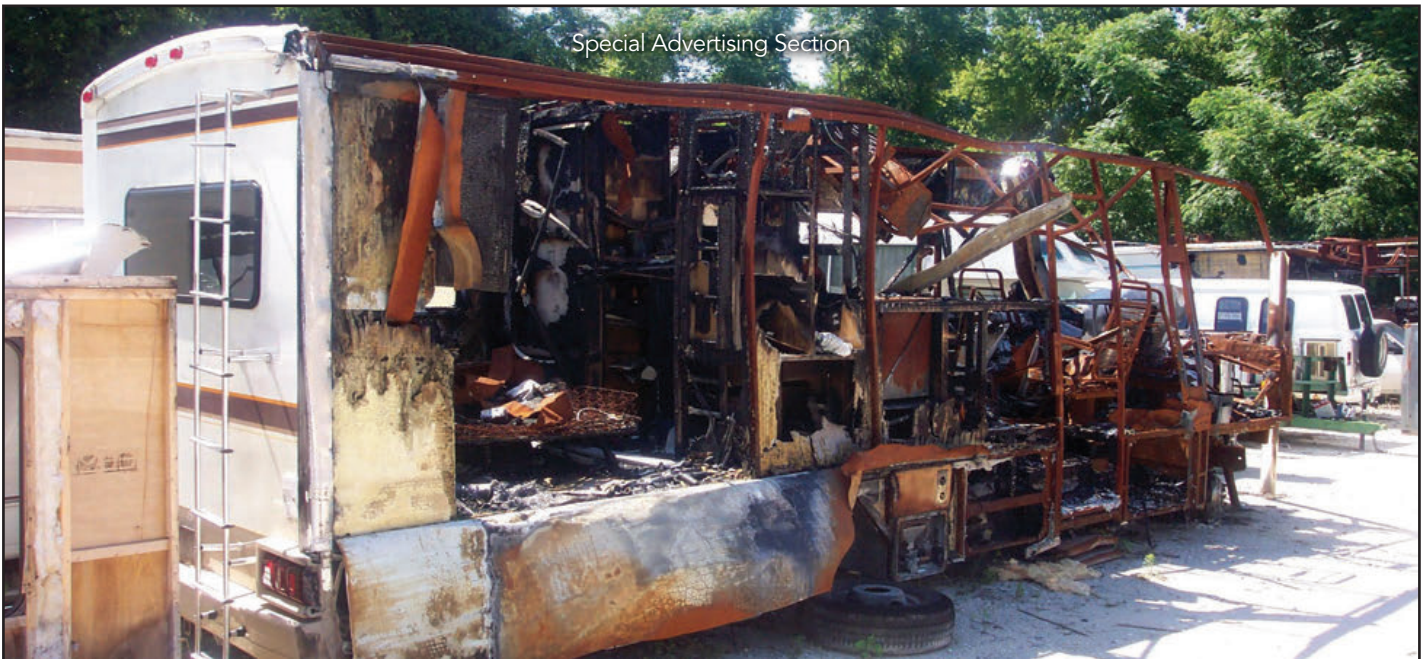


PLUG IN FOR POWER PROTECTION

Surge Guard™ surge protectors protect you and your RV against dangerous and damaging electrical surges and spikes from park power plus other hazards.

You've invested thousands in your RV, and within a few seconds, faulty campground power can render key appliances and accessories fit only for the junkyard, thanks to a sudden power surge or miswired power pedestal. Worse, faulty power can put you and your family in deadly danger of accidental shocks or an electrical fire. For these reasons, it only makes sense to protect your RV against power surges and other electrical hazards lurking in parks and campgrounds. It's not a question of if you will encounter one of these hazards—it's a question of when.

Fortunately, Technology Research LLC offers a full line of carefully engineered devices that deliver the most complete electrical protection available for any size RV from pop-up trailer to custom coach. TRC's Surge Guard surge protectors protect your RV's electrical system, appliances and electronics against power surges and spikes, high/low voltage, miswired pedestal, open neutral, open ground, ground fault and plug/receptacle overheating, depending on the model and level of protection you choose.



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

Surge Protection & Diagnostics

Perfect for pop-ups and travel trailers, Model 44260 (30-amp) and Model 44270 (50-amp) are portable units that provide surge protection plus they identify faulty park power, analyzing circuits to verify pedestal power while testing for and indicating open ground, open neutral and reverse polarity. LED indicators show power status. The 30-amp model offers 2100 Joules of surge protection; the 50-amp model, 4200 Joules. Both offer up to 6,500 amps of protection against current spikes.

Model 44750 portable 30-amp surge protector with ground fault protection automatically shuts off power when it detects a ground fault, plus it offers 510 Joules of surge protection and up to 1,250 amps of protection against current spikes. The affordable unit resets manually after a ground fault.

Complete Electrical Protection

For 5th wheels and motorhomes, Model 34830 (30-amp) and Model 34850 (50-amp) portable surge protectors with easy-to-read LCD display offer total protection, shutting off power automatically when they detect open neutral, open ground, overheated plug/receptacle or low (< 102 volts) or high (>132 volts). They reset automatically once power is restored, and continuously monitor and indicate voltage and amp draw (RMS), reverse polarity from a miswired pedestal or elevated ground voltage and surge failure.

The 30-amp unit provides 2450 Joules of surge protection; the 50-amp unit, 3850 Joules. Both have a built-in 128 second reset delay to protect air conditioner compressors and up to 6,500 amps current spike protection. All TRC portable surge protectors have Easy-T-Pull™ handles for safe disconnection from the power pedestal and are built for weather resistance.

Hardwired Convenience

For the convenience of built-in surge protection, Model 34520 (30-amp) and Model 34560 (50-amp) hardwired surge protectors offer multi-mode surge suppression, automatically shutting off power to the RV in the event of open neutral or low/high incoming power. Both reset automatically with a 128 second delay to protect air conditioner compressors. LED indicators show miswired pedestal, reverse polarity and elevated ground voltage. The 30-amp model provides 2450 Joules of surge protection; the 50-amp model, 3850 Joules. Both provide up to 6,500 amps current spike protection. The UL-listed units install easily in a storage compartment, protected against UV and weather.

TRC Surge Guards are available at Camping World and other retail outlets, along with portable voltage regulators, anti-theft locking hasp for portable surge protectors, automatic transfer switches and digital power monitor. With TRC between your RV and the power pedestal, enjoy peace of mind the next time you plug in.



SURGE GUARD®

RV Power Protection

Plug-In to Peace of Mind

Features Built-In Intelligence, LCD Display, auto reset, multi-mode surge suppression, caution light for miswired pedestal, reverse polarity and elevated ground conditions.

Full Featured Protection

- ▶ Automatic reset on power restoration
- ▶ Shuts off power for:
 - ▶ Open Ground/Neutral
 - ▶ Low/High Voltage
 - ▶ Reverse Polarity (Miswired Pedestal/Elevated Ground)
 - ▶ Plug/Receptacle Overheating (Patent Pending)
- ▶ Continuously monitors and indicates:
 - ▶ Surge Failure
 - ▶ Voltage and Amp draw
- ▶ Hardwire Models Available:
 - ▶ 35550 - 30A, 120V with 2450 joules of Surge Protection
 - ▶ 35550 - 50, 120/240V with 3850 joules of Surge Protection



**30A Portable
34830**

**50A Portable
34850**

30A Model 34830

- ▶ 120V, 10/3 AWG Cord with 2450 joules of Surge Protection

50A Model 34850

- ▶ 120/240V, 6/4 AWG Cord with 3850 joules of Surge Protection



Entry Level Surge Protection

- ▶ Perfect for Pop-ups and Travel Trailers!
- ▶ Offers Surge Protection plus tests for and indicates:
 - ▶ Open Ground
 - ▶ Open Neutral
 - ▶ Correct Polarity

30A Model 44260

- ▶ 120V, 10/3 AWG Cord with 2100 joules of Surge Protection

50A Model 44270

- ▶ 120/240V, 6/4 AWG Cord with 4200 joules of Surge Protection



**30A Portable
44260**

**50A Portable
44270**

CALIFORNIA'S ENCHANTED HILL

A towering figure in American history, media magnate William Randolph Hearst built a mansion in the sky that was just as audacious as he was. Now a historical landmark, Hearst Castle recalls the high society of its heyday nearly a century ago

Weekend getaways rarely have 115 rooms furnished with museum-worthy art, 42 bathrooms, 30 fireplaces, a private airport, the world's largest private zoo, an indoor pool that would do Julius Caesar proud and a guest book signed by anyone who was anyone almost a hundred years ago. And that doesn't include the three guest "cottages" with another 20 bedrooms. All of this in a small village on the central California coast, far from any center of influence or commerce. When one gazes up the hill from sparsely populated State Route 1 and sees the anomaly at the top, even mere mortals are inspired to eloquence.

William Randolph Hearst was a larger-than-life character

who dominated the nation's consciousness during the latter part of the 19th century and early part of the 20th. Although born to privilege, he didn't let that deter him from becoming even richer and more successful in his own right.

Here was a man who amassed the largest newspaper and magazine business in the world, was a two-term U.S. congressman, was the primary inspiration for the leading character in Orson Welles' film masterpiece *Citizen Kane*, may or may not have fomented the Spanish-American War, and ultimately left us with access to a country home whose over-the-top opulence raises the question, could this place be replicated today? Not likely.

The bell towers of Casa Grande, the grand house, hold 36 chiming bells and dominate the hilltop view.



(Right) A Greco-Roman temple casts its reflection on the Neptune Pool, one of the estate's signature features. (Far right) From swaying palm trees to climbing bougainvillea, landscaping was as important as buildings in Hearst's vision for the property.

And his legacy lives on. The privately held Hearst Corporation remains a publishing empire, with marquee names like *Esquire*, *Car and Driver*, *Road & Track*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Good Housekeeping*, *Town and Country*, *Elle*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *Seventeen* and more, to go with other media interests like A&E, ESPN (both jointly held with the Walt Disney Company) and an impressive portfolio of daily and weekly newspapers.

Hearst grew up the son of a wealthy San Francisco businessman. When his parents shipped him off to Harvard, he got to show his mischievous side, sending his least-favorite professors chamber pots with their names inscribed on the bottom. Although that and other excesses got him expelled, he parlayed a brief tenure as editor of the *Harvard Lampoon* into a media career by convincing Dad to turn over the reins of the *San Francisco Examiner*, which was said to have been acquired as settlement for a gambling debt.



While perhaps somewhat lacking in the political-correctness department, Hearst proved to be a pretty astute businessman. At the *Examiner* he proceeded to hire the best writers he could find, like Mark Twain, Ambrose Bierce and Jack London. Within a few years, he dominated the San Francisco market and headed east to test his mettle in the most competitive market in the world, New York.

With support from his mother, this time he bought the ailing *New York Morning Journal* and adopted a business model that in short order made his paper the place to work. Higher pay and front-page bylines



helped, as did his human resources' mission statement, which said he was indulgent of "prima donnas, eccentrics, bohemians, drunks or reprobates, so long as they had useful talents."

And then there's the camping connection. As a youth Hearst had spent considerable time at a property his father had acquired over time near San Simeon, just south of Big Sur. Originally about 48,000 acres, the family's holdings grew over the years, eventually exceeding 250,000 acres. While they had built a home as a retreat overlooking the ocean, what the Hearsts enjoyed most was tent-camping at the crest of a hill above it: They called it Camp Hill.

PHOTOS COURTESY CALIFORNIA TRAVEL AND TOURISM COMMISSION

WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST (1863–1951) The son of a Gold Rush millionaire, Hearst took over the faltering *San Francisco Examiner* at age 24 and soon turned it around. But he didn't stop there. By 1920 a quarter of all Americans were reading one of Hearst's 31 newspapers, and his publishing empire had grown to include six magazines, a newswire agency and a syndication company.

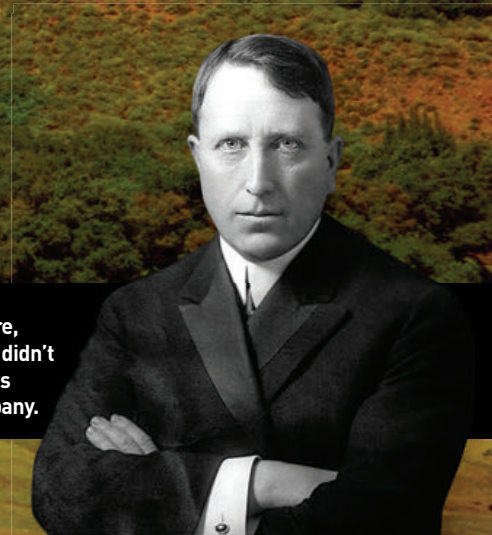




PHOTO BY PETER LEWIS

Architect Julia Morgan designed the outdoor spaces to take maximum advantage of the views.

Upon inheriting the property at the age of 56, Hearst relished the opportunity to replicate his youthful adventures atop the hill, but with a difference. While visiting his architect, Julia Morgan, in her San Francisco office, he was overheard to remark, "We are tired of camping out in the open at the ranch in San Simeon, and I would

like to build a little something."

His first thought was to construct a rustic retreat on the site where tents once stood. And perhaps what he built could accommodate a growing collection of art, antiques and one-of-a-kind collectibles from around the world. And then there were the legions of friends he wanted to spend time with. Where



DO YOU KNOW THE WAY TO SAN SIMEON?

Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument is on the central California coast, halfway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. To get there from L.A., take Highway 101 north to San Luis Obispo, then drive north on Route 1 for 40 miles. From San Francisco, take Highway 101 south, go west on State Route 46, then head north on Route 1 for 13 miles. 800-444-4445, www.hearstcastle.org www.hearst.reserveamerica.com

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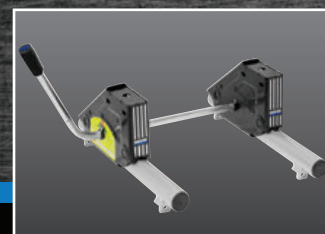
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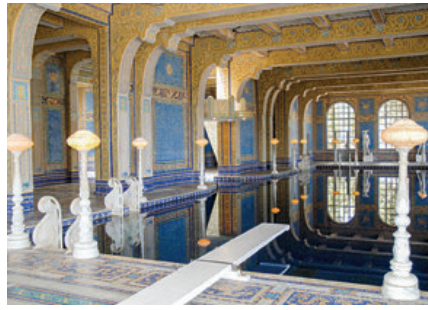
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would they stay in an area with no accommodations? With the essentially unlimited funding that his business success could provide, that rustic retreat soon morphed into something entirely different. And that is an understatement of monumental proportions.

In the old days, say, before 1962, there was a saying that behind every good man was a good woman. (We now know from experience that it's a better woman, and she's in front.) Hearst's business partner in his quest to build something suitable for his needs was the diminutive Morgan, an accomplished and respected architect with an immense talent. With a degree in civil engineering from the University of California-Berkeley, she was at the time the first female graduate of the prestigious École des Beaux-Arts in Paris. Really wealthy people often like to hog the limelight, but rarely is what was later accomplished here discussed without both Hearst and Morgan being mentioned. One had the money and a



(Above, from left) The indoor Roman Pool's glass-tile mosaics took more than five years to complete. Hollywood gossip columnist Hedda Hopper often slept in one of two Celestial suites.



PHOTOS COURTESY CALIFORNIA TRAVEL AND TOURISM COMMISSION

unique vision, the other had her own vision and the talent to blend the two and make it happen. Hearst had no problem sharing the glory.

The first shovel hit the dirt in 1920, and except for the World War II years, construction continued for 28 years. Although never quite "finished," the mansion you see today is nothing short of amazing. A visitor can't help but consider with awe the foresight required to design and build this place in this setting, the amount of money spent to

get it done, the artisan talent required to do the work and the audacity of the whole thing.

The Hearst family rarely referred to the place as a castle, preferring to call it La Cuesta Encantada (the Enchanted Hill), but more often, simply "the ranch." There is the main house, and then there are the three guesthouses. Suffice it to say that if any of these guesthouses were relocated to your neighborhood, your real-estate values and property-tax bill would escalate significantly.

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Ultra Super Grip Chock, Set of 2
Eliminates front-to-back rocking motion when applied between tandem trailer tires, using opposing force.



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Each provides a 6500 lb. lifting capacity. Bolt or weld to RV frame.



3500 lb. Tongue Jack
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Tripod design offers maximum frame overhang stability, giving side-to-side and front-to-back support.

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Without overloading you with facts, Hearst and his wife, Millicent, separated during construction, as the former had taken up with Marion Davies, a movie actress and his companion for more than 30 years. They were well connected in Hollywood and elsewhere, and enjoyed hosting all manner of famous folks at Hearst's various properties, from Calvin Coolidge and Winston Churchill to Howard Hughes, Hollywood celebrities like Greta Garbo and Cary Grant, and tennis great Bill Tilden — caught on film rallying with Charlie Chaplin — and the list goes on.

To quote Davies on this subject, "At the slightest drop of a hat, any occasion at all, we would say, let's make a costume party. Carloads of people would arrive, and musicians, extra chefs and all that sort of thing. It was really fun."

Nothing lasts forever. After Hearst's death in 1951 at age 88, the property was donated to the State of California by the Hearst Corpora-

tion and is now officially known as Hearst San Simeon State Historical Monument, managed by the California Department of Parks and Recreation. A visit takes a little planning. Four guided tours focus on different areas of the property: the Grand Rooms Tour, the Upstairs Rooms Tour, the Cottages and Kitchens Tour, and the Evening Tour. Tickets can be purchased online, by phone or in person.

With ticket in hand, you board a bus that travels from the visitor center at the base of the hill to the castle grounds, a 5-mile uphill jaunt. From there you are joined by a tour guide and led through your chosen tour for about an hour. You cannot deviate from that tour, and you need to remain on a special carpet so as to not damage the "real" carpeting, which is usually a priceless oriental variety. Flash photography is prohibited so as not to damage the tapestries, paintings and other museum-quality furnishings that are everywhere.

SEAL THE DEAL

About 5 miles north of San Simeon on Route 1 is a not-to-be-missed experience. At **Piedras Blancas**, an elephant seal rookery that is home to more than 23,000 of the blubbery marine mammals stretches alongside the road with viewing platforms set just off the beach. At any one time, you'll see hundreds or even thousands of these web-flipped critters lollygagging on the sand, barking, sleeping, mating, nursing and generally passing time until their internal clock tells them to return to the sea to feed.

These are not the cute little harbor seals that most of us know. Northern elephant seal males can reach 2 tons in weight and remain here for three months or more, fasting and mating until the last female has been serviced and sent on her way. During that time, they can lose a full ton of their weight. This protocol, mating and fasting to lose weight, I have dubbed the Piedras Blancas Diet. Is it a fad? Not for these guys.

Piedras Blancas
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CALIFORNIA'S ENCHANTED HILL

The guides are well trained and do a good job making the tours interesting. Once your time is up, you are free to wander on your own through the hilltop's extensive gardens, until closing time if you wish. Buses that run every 10 minutes or so take you back to the starting point. If you signed up for more than one tour, you remain on the grounds and are advised how to rendezvous with your next guide.

Throughout history, there have been people who lived on a scale so beyond the pale as to be almost other-worldly. In the United States, we have our Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, Morgans, Gettys, Astors and a handful of others. At or near his peak in the 1930s, Hearst was ranked the 37th richest American by *Fortune* magazine, which still puts him in pretty impressive company.

You can read about the lifestyles of the rich and famous, and look at old photos and paintings, but in few places can you stand in one place and feel what it might have been like. This is one of them. 🏰

CAMPING NEAR THE CASTLE

Getting back to reality after a trip to Hearst's hilltop mansion, there are a few things that RVers might like to know. The closest camping is about 5 miles distant at Hearst San Simeon State Park. California is still experiencing a drought, and the park's two public campgrounds, San Simeon Creek and Washburn, have greatly curtailed water usage, to the detriment of the camping experience. Those who like public campgrounds but value restrooms with hot showers and flush toilets should consider driving south to Morro Bay State Park. These types of water restrictions haven't affected most of the region's privately owned campgrounds, some of which are listed below. To find more RV parks, visit www.goodsamclub.com/findacampground.

MORRO BAY

Morro Bay State Park

805-772-2560, www.reserveamerica.com

Morro Dunes RV Park

805-772-2722, www.morrodunes.com

OCEANO

Pismo Sands RV Park (Good Sam Park)

800-404-7004, www.pismosands.com

PASO ROBLES

Paso Robles RV Ranch (Good Sam Park)

805-237-8685

Vines RV Resort (Good Sam Park)

877-820-0940, www.vinesrvresort.com

Wine Country RV Resort (Good Sam Park)

866-550-2117

www.winecountryrvresort.com

PISMO BEACH

Pismo Coast Village RV Resort

888-782-3224, www.pismo coastvillage.com

SAN SIMEON

Hearst San Simeon State Park

805-927-2020, www.reserveamerica.com



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Eliminates Musty Odors & Prevents Moisture Damage Inside Your RV

DampRid® attracts & traps excess moisture to prevent musty odors

Put the hanging bag
in your RV's closet
or bathroom.



The hi-capacity tub
features a sealed
safety cover to
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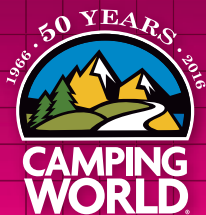
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Clay

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13 1/2" H x 18 3/4" W x 17" L

KING | tailgater

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MEMBERS
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POWER PROTECTION

Electrical surges are a common part of RV life. Here's how to keep the electrical components safe

Traveling the country by tow vehicle and trailer is often a game of unknowns. We usually don't know what we'll see, who'll we'll meet along the way, and may not even know where we're going. We're OK with that — in fact, a little mystery is what makes the RVing lifestyle fun. But pulling into an unfamiliar RV park and plugging into a power source of unknown condition isn't something anyone looks forward to, particularly those of us who have seen the dark side of electrical power.

Most of the time, whether at home or on the road, we plug into an outlet and never give it a second thought. As long as everything works, we're happy. But electrical power is far from perfect; in addition to fluctuation and outages, surges are a common occurrence. In fact, low-level power surges can happen dozens or even hundreds of times a day, and while they won't necessarily melt parts or blow fuses in electronic components, they can gradually degrade internal circuitry until it eventually fails. Anything with a microprocessor is particularly susceptible, and this includes TVs, computers, microwaves and even some dishwashers and refrigerators.

Power surges occur when the flow of electricity is interrupted, then started again, or when prevailing conditions send electricity flowing back into the system. Surges can range from just a few volts when you turn on an appliance like a hair dryer (an internal surge) to several thousand volts if lighting strikes a transformer or a tree falls on a power line

(external surge). Surges can also occur when power comes back on after an outage.

If you own a permanent residence, you likely take care of your home and make sure there are no wiring or grounding issues. But in an RV park, you're not necessarily in control. Not only can the wiring in the campsite pedestal be questionable (something we've all experienced), the whole park could have problems. Add bad weather and/or an unreliable power grid to the equation, and there's a good chance you'll fall victim to bad power at some point in your travels.

That's why it's important to use a surge protector (not to be confused with an outlet surge suppressor, which is commonly used for plugging in computers and TVs at home). A surge protector prevents bad power from entering the RV when it is hooked up to shorepower, preventing costly damage to electrical appliances. They can even protect you from your own mistakes, such as accidentally plugging the 30-amp power cord into a 220-volt AC outlet (more common than you might think).

Surge protectors are available in portable versions, which are easy to connect and relatively inexpensive, and hard-wired units that become a permanent part of the RV. Like most aftermarket products, surge protectors range in their features and price, so we've compiled this handy guide to help you find the right one for your RV. After all, a little protection now can save you a lot of trouble and expense later.

Hughes Autoformers

Not really surge protectors in the strictest sense, although they do incorporate surge protection, Hughes Autoformers are designed to increase voltage to the RV and help eliminate low-voltage appliance damage. The Autoformer's "sense circuit" adjusts the output based on the load demand, so you can run additional appliances on a 30-amp circuit. With the increase in the voltage to the RV (when plugged in through the Autoformer), the amperage demand will be lower, and the overall performance will be greater, according to the company. An operating range of ap-



◀ RV2130

proximately 94 to 115 volts AC input will boost RV voltage to safe and efficient levels. Two models are offered, with install kits available separately.

Voltage-Boosting Transformers RV2130 (30-amp, 3,600-watt)

- Fully automatic 10 percent boost when needed
- Park-power diagnostic light
- Boost indicator light
- Spike and surge protection
- Size: 5½ inches wide by 5½ inches long by 12 inches high
- Weight: 21 pounds
- Two-year limited warranty
- Made in the USA

MSRP: \$368

RV220-50 (50-amp, double-phase 12,000-watt)

- Fully automatic 10 percent boost when needed (95 to 115 volts AC)
- Park-power diagnostic light
- Boost indicator lights for each line (two)
- Spike and surge protection
- U.L. listed
- Size: 5½ inches wide by 8½ inches long by 12 inches high
- Weight: 35 pounds
- Two-year limited warranty
- Made in the USA

MSRP: \$548

Hughes Autoformers
888-540-1504
www.hughesautoformers.com



The built-in surge-status indicator tells whether or not the surge protector is functioning properly, and the integrated polarity tester checks the status of the power source prior to use. Progressive recently released its new SSP-30XL (\$116.65) and 50XL (\$151.85), which offer similar features, plus the added benefits of higher-rated wire, an all-weather receptacle shield, a cable splash-up guard and a rugged pull handle.

SSP-30X (30-amp)

- 5 inches wide by 13½ inches long by 3 inches high
- Portable design
- Bright three-color LED indicators
- Open ground indication
- Lost/open neutral indication
- Surge fault indication
- Thermally protected
- Weather-resistant
- Lifetime warranty

MSRP: \$89

SSP-50X (50-amp)

- 5 inches wide by 13½ inches long by 3 inches high
- Portable design
- Dual-line polarity tester
- Bright three-color LED indicators
- Open ground indication
- Lost/open neutral indication
- Surge fault indication
- Thermally protected
- Weather-resistant
- Lifetime warranty

MSRP: \$132



Progressive Industries

Founded by a full-time RVer, Progressive Industries offers a product line that includes everything from basic portable surge protection to portable or hardwired complete RV power protection for 30- and 50-amp service.

Portable Surge Protectors

The Smart Surge SSP-30X (30-amp, 120-volt AC) provides three-mode protection, 825 joules and a 22,500-amp surge-current rating. The SSP-50X (50-amp, 240-volt AC) provides five-mode protection, 1,650 joules and a 45,000-amp surge-current rating.

Progressive Industries' hardwired EMS-LCHW30 automatically shuts down power in adverse conditions.



Progressive's portable Emergency Management System (EMS) devices provide surge and voltage protection in a compact unit. The digital display continuously scrolls all of the AC power information, including voltage, current, frequency, error codes and previous errors. Driven by a state-of-the-art microprocessor, the units are weather-resistant and feature a built-in lock bracket that allows them to be secured to the power source.

EMS-PT30C (30-amp) EMS-PT50C (50-amp)

- Three-mode/five-mode surge protection (30-amp/50-amp)
- Surge fault indication
- High/low voltage protection
- Time delay for A/C compressor
- Reverse-polarity protection
- Open neutral protection
- Open ground protection
- AC frequency protection
- Accidental 240-volt AC protection
- Previous error code
- 5 inches wide by 16½ inches long by 3 inches high (30-amp)
- 5 inches wide by 16½ inches long by 4¾ inches high (50-amp)
- Lifetime warranty

MSRP: \$310 (30-amp), \$431 (50-amp)

Progressive's line of portable Smart Surge Protectors includes the 50-amp SSP-50X (far left), which comes with a built-in polarity tester that checks power status at the source. Also portable, the EMS-PT50C (left) includes a digital display that continuously scrolls through power-source information.

Hardwired Surge Protectors

Progressive's hardwired EMS devices offer similar protection to the portable units but are permanently wired into the RV. The modular design makes repairs user-friendly, according to the company, and an enclosed jumper wire allows users to bypass the computer circuit in the EMS in the event of a failure, thereby allowing power back to the RV. If mounting in an area where the readout is not readily visible, Progressive offers the EMS-HW30C (\$299) and EMS-HW50C (\$410), which have the additional benefit of a remote display.

EMS-LCHW30 (30-amp)

EMS-LCHW50 (50-amp)

- 5 inches wide by 9 inches long by 3 inches high (30-amp)
- 5 inches wide by 9 inches long by 4 inches high (50-amp)
- Lifetime warranty

MSRP: \$258 (30-amp), \$349 (50-amp)

Progressive Industries

919-267-6948

www.progressiveindustries.net

Technology Research Corporation/Surge Guard

TRC offers a wide range of surge protectors under its Surge Guard line, including portable and hardwired units. Here are a few of the company's most popular models.

Portable Surge Protectors

44260 (30-amp)

44270 (50-amp)

Billed as entry-level portable surge protectors, these models identify faulty RV-park protection, analyze circuits to verify pedestal power and test for open ground, open neutral and correct polarity. The 30-amp model offers 2100 joules of surge protection, and the 50-amp model provides 4,200 joules.

MSRP: \$107 (30-amp), \$131 (50-amp)

34830 (30-amp)

34850 (50-amp)

The new 30- and 50-amp Surge Guard portables with LCD displays offer more features than previous models. These

Surge Guard power protectors (from right): The portable 34830 has an LCD display and monitors voltage, amp draw and reverse polarity. The hardwired 35550 tucks away in the RV's utility compartment and is available with a remote LCD display. The entry-level 44260 is perfect for pop-ups and small travel trailers.



units continuously monitor for surge failure, voltage, amp draw and reverse polarity (such as a miswired pedestal or elevated ground voltage). Compact and easy to use, the 34830 and 34850 models are suitable for use on any trailer with 30-amp or 50-amp service, respectively.

MSRP: \$344 (30-amp), \$487 (50-amp)

- Protection from faulty park power
- Built-in intelligence
- Automatic reset on power restoration
- Automatic power shut-off when open ground, open neutral, low-/high-voltage conditions exist
- Thermal protection against plug/receptacle overheating
- Multi-mode surge suppression
- 128-second reset delay protects air-conditioner compressor
- 2,450 joules (30-amp) or 3,850 joules (50-amp) of power-surge protection
- Convenient easy-pull handle
- Weather-resistant

Hardwired Surge Protectors

35530 (30-amp)

35550 (50-amp)

Offering the same features as the portable models, these hardwired units have the additional benefit of being permanently installed within the utility

compartment of a trailer, which deters the possibility of theft or damage from the elements. The optional LCD display plugs into a remote port and features 16 detailed fault screens plus a joystick for easy screen navigation. The LCD display is also compatible with previous models with a telecom jack.

MSRP: \$260 and \$366

Universal Lock Hasp

Portable surge protectors aren't cheap, and, unfortunately, there are some unscrupulous individuals out there who will steal them if given the opportunity. To help protect all portable Surge Guard products, TRC offers a Universal Lock Hasp (model 34590) that easily attaches to standard 30- and 50-amp plugs. Attach a padlock to the durable, weather-resistant, high-quality plastic lockbox, and the Universal Lock Hasp does the rest.

MSRP: \$25

Technology Research

800-780-4324

www.trci.net/products/surge-guard-rv



The 34590 Universal Lock Hasp secures 30- and 50-amp portable Surge Guard devices, helping prevent unauthorized removal or theft.



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All American Coach	Sylvania, OH	419.885.4601
Route66RVS	Claremore, OK	918.342.5169
Thunder RV	La Grande, OR	541.962.2975

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Arrkann Trailer & RV Centre	Edmonton, AB	780.451.6656
Kelowna RVs	West Kelowna, BC	250.769.1000
Roulottes A.S. Levesque	Chateauguay, QC	450.691.5860
Roulottes A.S. Levesque	Saguenay, QC	418.512.0736
Roulottes A.S. Levesque	Ste-Hélène, QC	450.791.2727
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One Tuff Bag

Designed to protect stowed gear from the elements, these rugged truck-bed storage enclosures are built of tried-and-true materials used on inflatable boats

DIFFICULTY

1 2 3 4 5

TIME TO COMPLETE

5 MINUTES

TOOLS NEEDED

NONE

A great feature of any pickup is the bed. The space behind the cab, which ranges from 5½ to 8 feet, is a valuable asset, especially for those who have already packed the trailer's storage compartments like sardines in a can and still have a mound of supplies to load for a trip. No doubt, a pickup bed can hold a lot of stuff, but having items out in the open, ready to be pounded by the elements, is not exactly a great way to treat them.

There are solutions, although some, like a bed cover or truck cap, are on the expensive side. Tuff Truck Bags take the process of packing gear in an open truck bed to the extreme. As the name suggests, Tuff Truck Bags are super-rugged storage bags designed for trucks. Resilient enough to resist puncturing and 100 percent waterproof, the bags provide safe sanctuary for up to 26 cubic feet of camping and outdoor supplies or other items that simply need transporting.

Our first impression of a big bag used to store things in the back of a truck met with a few chuckles before realizing that the idea really had merit. A closer look at the Tuff Truck Bag reveals more than just a hefty 40-inch-wide, 50-inch-long and 22-inch-tall rectangular bag. The bag resembles a raft — not surprising, since it's made from the materials used in whitewater-river boats, which typically sell for thousands of dollars, and there's no question that those inflatable watercraft must be tough.

The bags are constructed of non-breathable PVC multilayer fabric that



(Above, from left) The Tuff Truck Bag can be tied down using the provided bungee cords and the stake pockets in the bed. When not in use, the bag can be stuffed into the tote bag for easy transporting and storing.

has been heat-fusion seam-sealed at all edges. The "door" to the bag is a heavy-duty commercial-grade zipper backed by a triple-folded, waterproof PVC flap that unquestionably will keep out the elements. For tying down and securing into any truck bed, the Tuff Truck Bag has four heavy-duty D-rings bonded into the top corners, along with four adjustable bungee cords.

When it comes to a formal installation procedure, in short, there isn't one, aside from taking the usual safety precautions that coincide with bungee cords. Just load the Tuff Truck Bag with the possessions that need transporting, zip it up, tie it down using the included bungees (and/or other tie-downs), and away you go. When finished, allow the empty bag to dry, if needed, then fold it back up, pack it in the storage tote and put it away until next time. That's it! Of course, you need to be watchful of the bag and its contents; it's not exactly se-

cure out in the open.

It's nice to see when a company delivers exactly what's being advertised with no question about its form, function or quality. Tuff Truck Bags weigh 10 pounds empty and should easily provide years of reliable performance. The bags come in black or khaki and sell for \$199.95.

By the way, you're not limited to the bed of a truck with this bag. You can get a little creative with its location for even better value for the investment — and remember, these bags are tough. 🚚

Tuff Truck Bags

877-535-8833, www.tufftruckbag.com



INSTANT STORAGE » The size of the Tuff Truck Bag is deceiving at first, but it can fit a lot of items that are normally tossed about in the bed.

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RV Supreme Euro Top

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Features

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Dimensions

Short Queen	60" x 75" x 11"
Queen	60" x 80" x 11"
Narrow King	72" x 80" x 11"
King	76" x 80" x 11"



Easy-Clean Backsplash

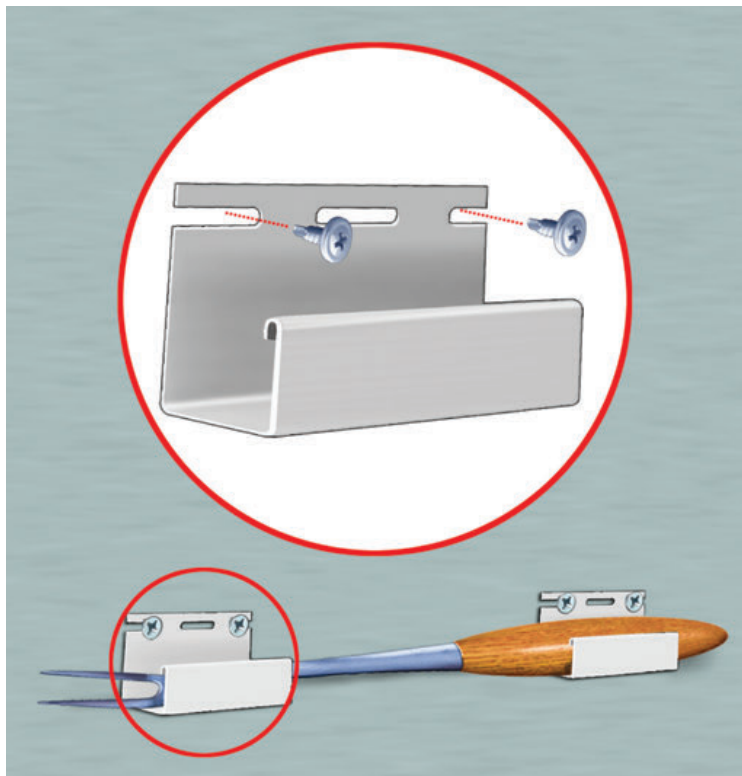
Cooking splashes and grease are hard to clean off, especially if the area around your RV's stove is wallpapered. I created a relatively inexpensive way to protect the wallpaper by making my own backsplash.

I measured the area I wanted covered and purchased a 1/16-inch-thick piece of clear plastic at Home Depot. I carefully cut the two pieces to size to cover two walls, and placed a small heavy-duty hook-and-loop tab in each corner, plus one in the middle to prevent bowing of the plastic in the center.

After removing the plastic tape from the back of the hook-and-loop tabs, I carefully lined up the pieces of plastic, and then gently pressed the plastic piece against the wallpaper.

Now I just wipe the grease splashes off the plastic, and the wallpaper remains nice and clean.

Paul Tesar, Rockwood, Ontario



Tidy Storage Compartments

We tend to collect a lot of small items that lie around on the floor of our RV's outside storage compartments, so I came up with a simple solution. I bought a piece of vinyl J-channel that is used to place vinyl siding on houses, and I cut it to various lengths. I then secured the cut channel to the walls of the storage compartment with small self-tapping screws. I use them to hang up our marshmallow-roasting sticks, firepit poker, yard-flag holders and other small things I need to get off the floor. Now everything is organized and out of the way. I also cut a longer piece (16 inches) and mounted it to the wall to hang up bungee cords.

Keith Whitehead, Elizabethton, Tennessee

QUICK FIX

Mold-Free Freshwater Hose

Reading "Hold Off Mold," Jim Linde's 10-Minute Tech tip in the June 2015 issue, made me think about the way I store my RV's freshwater hose. I hadn't thought about the prospect of mold forming inside the hose, because after I drain it, I pour about a cup of bleach into the hose before coiling it up and connecting the ends. The next time I hook up to a water supply, I flush the hose for a few minutes before connecting it to my RV. So far I haven't had any problems with mold or an unpleasant taste. You just need to be careful when disconnecting the ends for use to remember that there is bleach in the hose.

Edward Sikora, New Castle, Pennsylvania 🚚

To send your submission, write to 10-Minute Tech, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036 or email 10minutetech@trailerlife.com. Please include an illustration or photo, if applicable. *Trailer Life* will pay \$35 for original 10-Minute Tech ideas. All payments require an FEIN or SSN.



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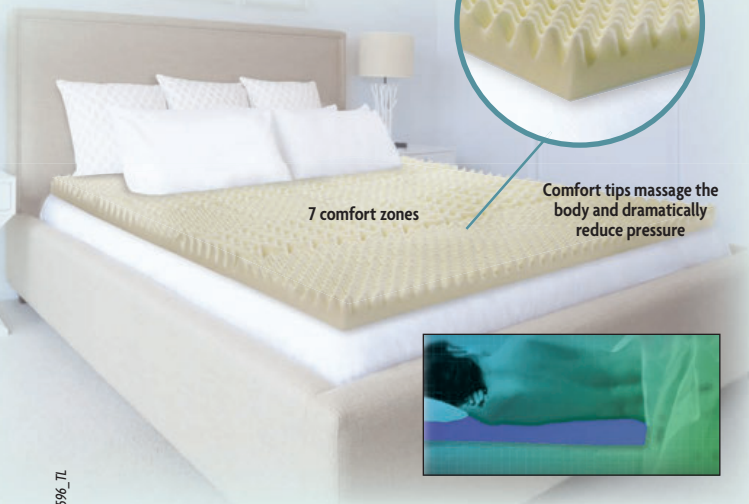
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2" Angel Soft™ Fiber
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Body and Chassis Maintenance

In the March 2016 issue, we covered “Under-Hood Maintenance.” Now, let’s take a look at what needs to be done on the rest of your tow vehicle, camper hauler or motorhome. These steps should be done at least annually and before long trips.

To get started, familiarize yourself with the factory maintenance schedule, which should be in the packet with the owner’s manual. Keep in mind that trailer towing is considered “severe” service and requires more frequent intervals for services, typically twice as often. If the printed pages have been lost, you can often find them on the manufacturer’s website.

Along with this information, you should arm yourself with a factory shop manual or at least a do-it-yourself repair manual, such as those from Haynes or Chilton. Information can also be found online on the Haynes and Chilton websites, at www.alldata.com or with an Internet search. Keep a maintenance logbook, and update it with date and mileage for each service and repair item.

Before inspecting and lubricating the undercarriage, you’ll need to have a way to access everything. Many light trucks and SUVs, especially 4x4 models, sit high enough that you can simply slide underneath on a large piece of cardboard or carpet scrap. Mechanic’s creepers require more clearance to fit underneath. If you just need an extra couple inches, you can drive up onto pieces of scrap wood, such as one layer of 2x10 lumber, making sure it fully supports the tires.

Park on a flat, hard surface, preferably concrete. Jack stands can sink into hot blacktop when the sun is on them (don’t ask me how I know). After the vehicle is parked, it should be secured by placing the transmission in Park (automatic) or first gear (manual), and the parking brake should be fully engaged. Remove the key or fob, and don’t allow anyone in the vehicle while you are working on it.

Wheel chocks should be placed on

the forward and rear tread surfaces of at least one tire. Never get under a vehicle supported by only a jack. Use jack stands rated for the weight or better.

Use only oil, lubricants and other products approved by the vehicle manufacturer. Always wear shatter-proof wrap-around eye protection. Wear mechanic’s gloves when working with tools such as wrenches and wear nitrile rubber gloves when handling lubricants or solvents to protect your skin. Never wear anything around your neck that could be caught in machinery.

Fluids

Depending on time and mileage, various fluids need to be checked, or drained and replaced. This includes gear oil in manual transmissions and automatic transmission fluid and filters. Four-wheel-drive (4WD) and all-wheel-drive (AWD) models also have transfer-case fluid that should be checked or replaced. Differential oil levels also need to be checked, or drained and replaced. Limited-slip differentials may need special fluid or additives.

Lubrication

In addition to changing the oil and filter in a timely manner, chassis lubrication is one of the most cost-effective ways to reduce wear and extend the life of any vehicle. Many vehicles are now manufactured with sealed “lubed-for-life” chassis components, including ball joints, tie-rod ends and universal joints. Unfortunately,

when the original grease dries out, the joint fails, and this requires replacement of the affected part(s). Leaving off grease fittings allows manufacturers to save money, simplifies routine maintenance and can spur sales of replacement parts (and vehicles).

The good news is that some models still are fitted with suspension and driveline components with grease fittings that allow you to extend serviceability by greasing them at regular

Regular fluid inspections help safeguard against tow-vehicle breakdowns. (Below top) Check brakes for fluid leaks, worn linings and cracked hoses. (Below middle) Check the fluid level in the differential by removing the plug near the center of the cover.



Wheel bearings in rear-wheel-drive vehicles require periodic disassembly, inspection and lubrication. Most front-wheel-drive vehicles have sealed bearings but should be checked for smooth operation.

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Shock absorbers should be checked for worn rubber mountings and boots, fluid leaks and loose fasteners.

intervals. Some parts also have plugs in place of fittings, which can be replaced with grease fittings. Most aftermarket replacement parts also have grease fittings that allow lubrication. Greasing chassis components is messy but simple. All it takes is a grease gun and some chassis grease, rags, hand cleaner and old work clothes.

Steering and Suspension

Front-end and steering components, including tie-rod ends, drag links, ball joints, A-arms, linkages and kingpins need to be inspected and checked for wear and looseness. Grasp the tire and try to rock the wheel on the hub. Shackles also wear, and springs can break, so inspect all parts carefully. After inspection, lube any parts that have grease fittings.

Wheel Bearings

Wheel bearings are also critical components that require inspection. Many rear-wheel-drive vehicles have adjustable front-wheel bearings that require periodic disassembly, inspection and lubrication. Other types of front ends, including 4x4, front-wheel-drive and AWD, often have non-serviceable front and rear wheel bearings, which should just be checked for smooth operation. Refer to the shop manual for recommended procedures.

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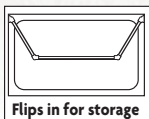
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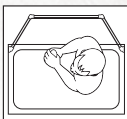
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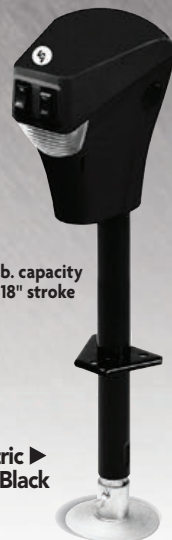


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Brakes, Wheels and Tires

Brakes also get a heavier workout when towing a trailer or hauling a camper, and should be inspected frequently for safety. To access the brakes, the wheels need to be removed. Support the vehicle securely on jack stands. Brake shoes or pads should be checked for wear and damage.

Drum-brake inspection requires drum removal. While the drums are off, look for shoe and drum wear and also check the springs, adjusters and hardware. Look for signs of brake fluid and grease leakage around seals and wheel cylinders or calipers and hoses. Caliper mechanisms are subject to rust and corrosion. Remove them and clean away rust, and apply a light coat of special caliper grease to moving parts.

Check parking-brake adjustment and lubricate the cable pivots and moving parts. Premium brake parts and linings should be used, and consider upgrading to heavier-duty aftermarket components when

replacing shoes or pads and rotors.

Inspect each tire and wheel carefully for signs of damage and wear. Tires that are wearing unevenly may indicate the need for repairs, alignment or balancing. Inflate tires to recommended pressures for positions and load. When installing wheels, install the lug nuts by hand and tighten them in several stages, working back and forth (also known as a star pattern) with a wrench so that the wheel is evenly seated on the hub. Finish tightening the lugs to the manufacturer's specified torque.

Universal Joints

Universal joints, or U-joints, are used to transmit power from the transmission to the drive axle(s). They're typically X-shaped, articulating assemblies that have needle bearings at each of four corners and are attached at each end of a driveshaft. Look for grease fittings on U-joints and grease them, if so equipped. Many U-joints don't have fittings, to save costs and reduce the

chance of a failure caused by a crack propagating through the fitting hole, which is more of a concern on high-torque diesels.

If your vehicle has a two-piece driveshaft, check the condition of the center mount and bearing. Many independent suspensions have constant-velocity (also called CV) joints at the ends of the "half" shafts that connect the differentials to the drive wheels. These joints also wear out and need inspection. Some driveshaft joints may require a special needle-type grease injector.

To grease a fitting, remove the dust cap (if equipped) and wipe off any grime with a rag so dirt isn't forced inside. Push the grease gun onto the fitting and pump until grease seeps out slightly. Check for grease fittings on all the tie-rod ends, upper and lower ball joints, drag links, control-arm pivots or kingpins, etc.

Lift the weight off weight-bearing joints such as ball joints before greasing

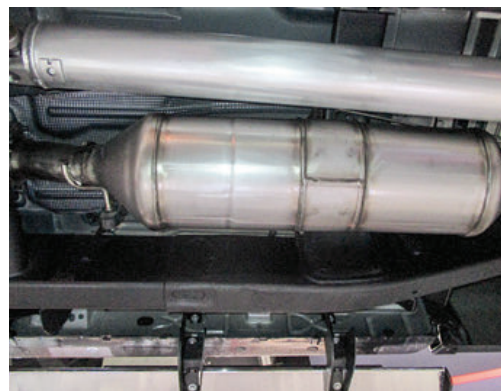
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them. Sometimes you may not be able to force grease into a fitting because it's clogged with solidified grease, dirt or, worse, rust. In this case, unscrew the fitting with a wrench and clean it out with a length of wire and solvent, or just install a new one.

Shock Absorbers

Towing is also tough on shock absorbers, which wear faster in heavy-duty use. Visually inspect each shock and note any leaks, bent

(Above, from left) Inspect the universal joints for rust, looseness and security of fasteners. Check the constant-velocity (CV) joints for loose fasteners, cracked boots and grease leaks. Check the exhaust systems for leaks, damage, rust holes, loose clamps and hangers.

mounting points or shafts, and broken, damaged or missing parts such as nuts, washers and rubber bushings. Grasp each shock and try to move it around to check its mounting security. Repair or replace as necessary. Shocks should be replaced in pairs, or better yet, full sets. Use premium heavy-duty units for towing service.

Exhaust System

Exhaust systems have become very heavy and expensive, especially with the advent of diesel exhaust filters and catalyysts. Inspect the whole system when it is cool. Shake and try to wiggle the components to see if they rattle or move around on loose clamps, brackets or rubber mounts. Look for cracks, dents and other damage.

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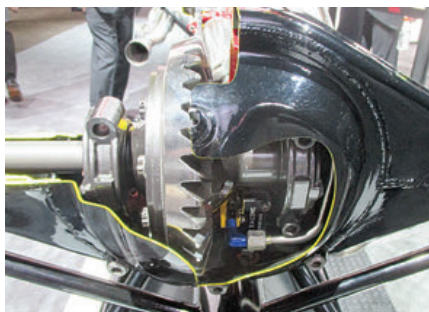
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(Above left) This cutaway view of a differential shows the ring gear and internal details. Periodic inspections ensure that there is enough gear oil to protect the differential. (Above right) The underside view of an automatic transmission shows the red spin-on filter. This filter should be replaced as recommended.

Body Service

Doors, hoods and rear-deck lids or tailgates all have hinges that can get dry and squeak, or worse. Free up sticking moving parts with aerosol or pump-spray penetrant and follow with spray-on white-lithium grease. A few have grease fittings or holes to inject grease; if so, use them.

Hood-release mechanisms and other cable-operated systems such as fuel filler flaps also need love. If it takes two people to open them — one to pull the release inside while the second smacks the hood or flap until it pops open — it's past time to lube the cable and latching mechanism. Coat the mechanism with spray penetrant to remove dirt or dried-out, dirty grease. Then spray it with aerosol white-lithium grease and cycle the mechanism several times by hand to work in the lubricant.

Door latches can stick, too. If a latch is outside the door's weather strip, spray it with white-lithium grease. If it is inside the weather strip, use a dry-film spray so it won't attract dirt. Many door-latch mechanisms have plastic bushings instead of metal-on-metal and supposedly don't need lubrication. However, they do get gummed up and need attention. Flush with aerosol dry-film lubricant and then wipe with a rag to remove excess lube.

Key locks should be lubed only with special lock graphite, never with penetrating oil or anything that causes dirt to stick in the mechanism.

Doors and rear-hatch lids can get really difficult to open, especially when temperatures drop below freezing. This

is because moisture and condensation collect and freeze in the locks and latch mechanisms, making movement almost impossible. If this happens, direct an electric hair dryer on the latch and/or lock area to get it to open. If it continues to be a problem, remove the door panel and inspect all rubber seals and weather strips. Check that the drain holes in the bottoms of the doors are not plugged with undercoating or rust; clean if necessary. Clean the locking mechanism and spray it with lithium grease to keep moisture out.

Sometimes a door will freeze shut because moisture makes the rubber seals stick to the door opening. If you force a door open, you may rip and tear the expensive seals. Avoid a recurrence by wiping the rubber with silicone to keep the ice from sticking.

While you're at it, this is a good time to check that the fasteners are tightened securely on the fifth-wheel or conventional hitch and lube the friction points. Inspect the spare tire and measure/set the pressure. Clean bugs and debris from the radiator and condenser. Also check the condition and operation of all lights and safety devices such as mirrors and reflectors.

Final Thoughts

Maintaining your vehicle properly can make it more reliable, economical and fun to operate, and increase its resale value. The more of this work you can do yourself, the greater your savings are likely to be. However, if you are unsure that you have the know-how and skills required, have the work done by professionals. 🚚

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TRUCK-TIRE REPLACEMENT

Q I have a 2008 Gulf Stream Innsbruck 24RKL travel trailer that I tow with a 2009 Dodge Ram 2500HD. I use a weight-distributing hitch, but I don't need sway control, because the only time I have sway problems is when a big truck passes. The Ram came with BFGoodrich tires.

Recently, I replaced the rear tires with the same size Cooper tires. Since then, I have experienced more sway when pulling the trailer. I am thinking about replacing the front tires with BFGoodrich tires, putting them on the rear and the Coopers on the front. Do you think the different brand of tire could make that kind of difference in the way the trailer tows? I was on a tire-replacing program because the Goodrich tires are original and showing some peeling problems on the sidewalls.

The last trip that we took, I used a friction-type sway-control bar, but it was not any help. We have not changed the way that we pack the trailer when going on a trip.

Raymond Mills, Beebe, Arkansas

A Yes, using different brands of tires, front and back, on your tow vehicle can indeed affect towing stability. Both brands of tires may be described as "steel-belted radials," for example, but each is built a bit differently,



including the casing and tread design. That means each tire brand will deliver slightly different ride and handling characteristics. Running solo, that can make your truck feel a bit "squirrely," but the effect may be really subtle. However, you take that subtlety and add the dynamics of a trailer, and you feel that instability, amplified.

It's a bit of a project, but you can do a test to see if it's the tires that are causing the problem. Start with a short test drive with your trailer hitched as usual. Then temporarily swap the tires on your truck so you have four identical tires installed, and repeat the test drive to see if you feel an improvement in stability. You can swap two tires to match two of your existing tires, or four tires; either way gets you identical tires on your truck.

You might be able to do the tire and wheel swapping with an amenable local tire dealer and perhaps borrow tires on wheels from a friend's truck of the same bolt pattern. It's a hassle, but it could help you find the real-world, hands-on answer to your question. — **Jeff Johnston**

60-AMP PLUG USE

Q I recently purchased a Jayco Jay Feather travel trailer and have an electrical-connection question. There is a 60-amp, four-prong plug in my garage, and I want to know how I should convert or adapt that plug to support the 30-amp trailer plug without damaging the components of the trailer.

Marc Money, Clearwater, Florida

A You can make your own converter cord, Marc, with the 60-amp plug on one end and a 30-amp receptacle on

the other. I made my own such adapter, converted down to a 15-amp plug receptacle, that I use to run my shop air compressor, and it works great.

You need to choose the correct 60-amp pins to produce the correct 30-amp, 120-volt AC power. You can find the wiring diagrams online, but if you have the least bit of doubt, have a professional electrician do the job. This kind of current is nothing to mess around with, and you can make a potentially disastrous and expensive mistake if it's done incorrectly. — **J.J.**

SRW VERSUS DRW ... AGAIN

In response to the "Single Rear Wheel Versus Dual Rear Wheel" letter from Chris Lefevre in the February issue, single-rear-wheel (SRW) one-ton trucks handle midsize fifth-wheel trailers just fine. Granted, dual-rear-wheel (DRW) trucks are a more stable towing platform, but SRW trucks are a lot more stable than any of the trailers you will tow with it. We tow a 13,000-pound fifth-wheel with a Ford F-350 SRW truck, and the truck handles the trailer just fine and is well below tow limits and gross combination weight rating (GCWR) when fully loaded.

One item that may be of more concern is the height of the truck hitch versus the hitch height on the trailer. SRW one-ton trucks sit considerably higher than DRW trucks, and the hitch height is a little too high for many trail-

THE TECH TEAM



KEN FREUND: Ken is a former ASE Certified Master Technician, service manager and shop owner who has authored numerous books on automotive repair.



JEFF JOHNSTON: Jeff served as technical director of *Trailer Life* for 20 years and has been an RV enthusiast, mechanic and writer since he could hold a wrench.

ers. Also, DRW trucks are too wide to fit through a typical 9-foot-wide single-car garage door, and some SRW trucks like ours are too high to fit in a typical 7-foot-tall garage opening.

It seems like there is no end to the conundrums we face when RVing — and don't get me started on trailer-tire issues.

Rich Nelson, Augusta, Kansas

Bed-height differences between SRW and DRW pickups vary among truck manufacturers. Mismatches between a pickup's bed height and a fifth-wheel trailer's hitch height occur most often when people buy first and start measuring later. The best bet is to measure and document all of the details first, whether you're shopping for a trailer to match a truck or vice-versa. Also pay attention to gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), gross axle weight rating (GAWR) and tow rating.

DRW trucks aren't for everyone, and neither does every heavy trailer call for a DRW tow vehicle. Check the numbers, do the math, and you can make a sensible decision that's right for your situation. — J.J.

REVOLUTION PIN BOX OR SLIDER?

Q After being out of RVing for quite a few years and now nearing retirement age with young grandchildren, my wife and I are looking at buying another trailer. We're 98 percent set on a Rockwood Signature Ultra Lite 8281WS fifth-wheel because of its floorplan that includes a bunkhouse and a half-bath. This trailer also comes equipped with a Reese Revolution pin box, which will help accommodate my shortbed truck, a 2011 Chevy Silverado LTZ Crew Cab.

My questions are, should I purchase a sliding fifth-wheel hitch because of the truck's short 6-foot bed, and will a sliding hitch even work with the Revolution pin box?

Tom Cahill, Galion, Ohio

A The Revolution is designed to address the matter of towing a fifth-wheel with a shortbed truck, so

use of both devices is not necessary, Tom. — J.J.

BENT AXLE, TIRE-WEAR BLUES

Under the heading "Tires Wearing Crooked" in the February issue, Brian Wilkerson asked why his trailer tires were wearing on the inside after only 4,000 miles. There is another possible reason for this: overloaded axles that are bending downward in the middle, which would slant the tops of the wheels inward, putting more wear on the inside of their tires.

I had this happen on a couple of my axles with a 3,500-pound GAWR. I weighed them, and they were right around 3,500 pounds each. I asked the same question on the RV.net forum, and a fellow RVer said the same thing happened until he upgraded the axles to handle more weight, which is what I did. After I installed axles rated at 5,000 pounds, using the same springs and wheels, there is no more abnormal inner-tire wear.

Ted Keener, Bend, Oregon

You're right on the money regarding the bent-axle problem and solution, Ted. RV axles are manufactured with a predetermined amount of camber that is designed to accommodate the trailer's weight. The idea is that the tires will run true with that weight added. For the most part, it works, but if the axles are loaded right down to their GAWR, they can start to bend the wrong way, resulting in poor tire wear. A trailer's weight resting on the axles is fine, but start bouncing that trailer when towing, and each bounce adds extra impact to the weight.

Some specialty frame and alignment shops have equipment that can bend an axle back in shape to correct the alignment, but unless that axle has reinforcements added (a modification that may not be approved by the axle manufacturer), the bend will happen again, unless you significantly reduce the weight on the axle(s). When you're right up against the axle's GAWR with the trailer's weight, replacing the axle with a heavier model is a great solution. — J.J.

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ANTI-SWAY HITCH OPTIONS

In the February "Anti-Sway Hardware" letter, Lee Phillips wrote that he is "considering the Hensley Arrow hitch and would like to know your thoughts or other ideas." As I read your reply, I was waiting to get to the part where you would suggest some "other ideas." I would like to offer one.

I have 21 years and many tens of thousands of miles experience towing two travel trailers with four different vehicles using a PullRite hitch. It works like a fifth-wheel as it moves the point of rotation from the ball aft to the rear bumper to just behind the differential. It is weight distributing and requires no added anti-sway accessories or fine-tuning. Truck and trailer are essentially unaffected by crosswinds or passing trucks, buses or motorhomes that buffet Phillips' trailer. I hope this is helpful to him and other readers who have experienced those white-knuckle moments.

Larry Verhulst, Prescott Valley, Arizona

The PullRite hitch has been around forever, and it has a long reputation for doing just what it's claimed to do, which is almost eliminating travel-trailer sway. It's a viable alternative to the Hensley Arrow and is just a different way to accomplish the same task. Thank you for the comments and testimonial. — J.J.

BATTERY SWITCH AND BREAKAWAY

Q My 2008 Keystone Raptor fifth-wheel has what looks to me to be a factory-installed battery disconnect. My concern is towing the trailer with the batteries disconnected. When they are disconnected, does the brake's breakaway switch still have power? It's not exactly something I'd like to find out the hard way!

Phillip Goldman, Mount Prospect, Illinois

A Your Raptor's breakaway switch is likely not powered when you

disconnect the batteries, Phillip, unless it has a separate power line and circuit breaker.

You can find out by disconnecting the batteries and using a multimeter to check for 12-volt DC power at the switch. You can also try pulling the breakaway plug pin and then pull the trailer a few feet with the tow vehicle. If you feel the trailer brakes dragging, the switch has power. And no, you do not under any circumstances want to tow your trailer without a fully functioning emergency breakaway switch.

In any case, why tow your trailer with the batteries disconnected? You aren't charging the batteries during towing with them disconnected, and there's the breakaway-switch situation, too. We'd recommend you leave the batteries connected while towing. — J.J.

WARPED DOOR TRIM

Q We own a 2013 Keystone Laredo 266RL fifth-wheel. I recently no-



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ticed the hardwood door trim that surrounds the interior of our entry door is warping away from the wall; a 5-inch section bows outward about a half-inch, but the rest remains attached to the wall. This is a thick strip of wood, and it takes some force to hold it into its original position. What would be the best way to reattach this securely to the wall?

Jim Catlin, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

A It seems like that wood trim has perhaps absorbed some moisture and swelled a bit, causing it to lengthen slightly, and the center fasteners gave way because that lengthening stress had to be relieved somewhere.

To fasten it back, you'll need to start by loosening one end or the other to allow the trim to fit flush again. Once in place, use small finish nails or screws, depending on what type of original fasteners were used. Install the fasteners from the still-attached end toward the loose end, and that will automatically help it lie flat, as it should. — J.J.

SLIDEOUTS NOT RETRACTING

Q I have a 2010 Keystone Montana fifth-wheel. I'm having trouble getting the three slideouts to come in when unhooked from shorepower. The slide will start to move in, but then will stop after the power loss, wait a couple minutes and then start to move in again. It will do this three or four times before all slides are in. Two new batteries are hooked in, positive-to-positive and negative-to-negative. I have checked both batteries after power loss, and they are each at 12.4 volts. I have checked the ground wires and they seemed OK.

Loyd Flynt, Bremond, Texas

A Replacing the old batteries may be the solution, but I'd suspect the converter is not charging them adequately and/or there is some damaged or corroded wiring. A fully charged battery will read about 12.7 volts or slightly more; 12.4 volts is about 25 percent discharged, but with proper

wiring, that should still be enough to operate the slideouts.

Check the charger for proper operation to start with. Verifying that the ground cables are OK is great, but then inspect the wiring all the way from the batteries to the slideout motor. Also check the slideouts to see if they need to be cleaned and lubricated, because such maintenance reduces drag on the system, and that means less power is required to operate the mechanisms.

If you do a lot of dry camping, consider adding a solar-panel charging system to keep the batteries up to snuff between plug-ins. — J.J.

TOW-DOLLY SETUP

I think the RV Clinic response to Rebecca Risher's "Towing a Jeep" question in the October 2015 issue is not quite accurate. When using a tow dolly, the vehicle's steering *is* part of the equation. If you lock it down, you'll be scrubbing tires pretty drastically, as the distance between the tow-dolly wheels and the rear wheels on the tow vehicle can be significant.

I don't know how to best bypass the steering lock on this Jeep, but to simply leave the ignition on will probably drain the battery and require a jump-start when ready to drive, as I learned the hard way.

Chris, via email

The towed car's front tires are strapped firmly to the dolly and can't turn, Chris, so leaving the steering column unlocked won't do anything but potentially run the battery down, as you discovered. On lower-cost car dollies with a fixed platform, there can be some minor scrubbing torsion between the dolly wheels and the towed car wheels, but this has not been a problem among the many such dollies and towed cars on the road today.

Better-quality dollies have a tire-support platform that pivots at the center, so the towed car can pivot side to side relative to the dolly, and that allows smoother tracking in sharp corners. The towed car's front tires are still strapped solidly to the tire-support

platform and do not pivot. Alternately, some dollies include steerable wheels, and that type of setup also produces smoother tracking on corners. Either of these dolly types will produce the smooth towing results that avoid any perceived towed-car tire stress. — J.J.

STRIPE REMOVAL

Q I'm in the process of tidying up the exterior of my 2004 Pilgrim Open Road travel trailer. What can I use to clean old trim caulking or glue that will not damage the fiberglass exterior? What is the best process for restoring or replacing the white 3/4-inch reflective-tape accent stripe that is showing cracks?

Also, is there an adhesive for reattaching holding-tank heating pads that have come loose?

Paige Lee, Clemson, South Carolina

A Use a plastic-edge scraper to avoid damaging the paint and a solvent such as paint thinner, denatured alcohol or Goo Gone to remove the residue. Test an inconspicuous spot first to be sure the cleaner doesn't harm the finish. There are many different tape-stripe adhesive removers on the market, and a visit to your auto-parts store or an Internet search will turn up many results. A hair dryer or heat gun can help soften the stripes and ease removal, but extreme caution should be exercised with this practice, as a heat gun in particular can cause damage.

A holding tank is made of plastic that's not too adhesive-friendly, but an adhesive such as contact cement or a double-sided bonding tape should do as well as any. Be sure to clean the surfaces thoroughly with an appropriate cleaner/degreaser before applying. — J.J.

BRAKE CLEANING

Q I have a 2007 Jayco Eagle 322FKS travel trailer. I think the axles are made by Dexter and have the E-Z Lube system like on a boat trailer. Over the years I have greased (continued on page 150)

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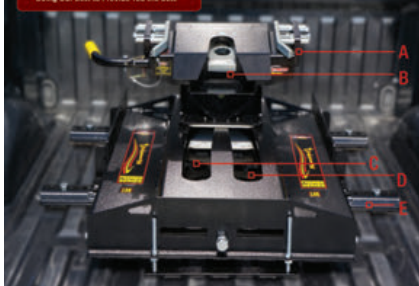
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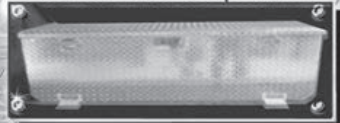
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(continued from page 147)

the axles liberally and apparently too much. The last time out, the brakes were working but did not have their previous stopping power. I believe that I have over-greased the bearings and grease has gotten on the brakes. Can I clean the brakes and return them to normal, or will I need to replace the brakes? If cleaning is an option, what would you suggest to use as a cleaner? If not, how much will it cost to have the brakes replaced?

Dennis Bunch, Corbin, Kentucky

A Yes, you can clean the greasy brake-shoe parts, Dennis, and a variety of spray-on brake cleaning solvents are available. These are fairly volatile, so taking on this job should be done in a place with adequate air circulation, and be sure to provide ground protection and fluid-absorption material to soak up the excess solvent when it runs off. Try this process, and test your trailer's brakes for operation afterward.

If in doubt, replacement brake shoes are not that costly, and the extra safety margin you receive when using new shoes is worth the investment. Inspect the wheel-hub seals to make sure you haven't damaged or blown any out when you pumped in that excess grease. — J.J.

DIESEL EXHAUST FLUID

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

Pete Whitehouse, Clayton, Delaware

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

To begin with, let's cover the legal definition of diesel exhaust fluid (DEF). It must meet the guidelines established by the International Organization for Standardization, ISO 22241, which maintains quality requirements for DEF production, storage and distribution. To qualify as DEF, it must (continued on page 154)

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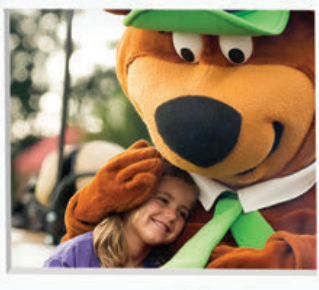
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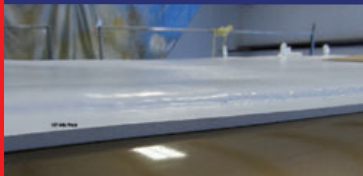
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(continued from page 150)

contain a urea concentration of 32.5 percent by weight. This concentration has a freezing temperature of 12 degrees Fahrenheit, the lowest of various urea-water mixtures. There are strict, low limits on impurities to ensure reliable operation of the Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) system, which controls emissions.

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

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

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

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

— Ken Freund

TUNDRA TOW RATING

 I'm shopping for my first tow vehicle and trailer, and have been looking at a 2015 Keystone Springdale

282BH and the 2015 Toyota Tundra Limited CrewMax. If I have done the numbers correctly, I believe the Tundra can pull the trailer, and the hitch weight will not be an issue. However, when I look at the total payload for the Tundra, it will go over.

For example, the curb weight is said to be 5,860 pounds. Payload is 720 pounds (three adults, one teenager and 100 pounds of cargo). Hitch weight is 715 pounds; gross vehicle weight equals 7,295 pounds. The truck's GVWR is 7,000 pounds, so it looks like it would be over by 295 pounds. This seems hard to believe. Can you please help with calculations?

Brian Miller, Walton, Kentucky

A Let's start with the trailer specs. The trailer's GVWR is 9,515 pounds, which is the weight you should use when determining whether your tow vehicle has enough towing capacity. Depending on options with that cab, tow ratings vary from 9,800 to 10,100 pounds, so you are just within that limit.

The hitch-weight spec is right out of the brochure; that will vary with trailer loading, but let's use it for this computation. I don't understand where you got curb weight. According to Toyota's official specs, curb weight with the cab and various option packages varies from 5,250 to 5,675 pounds.

If you choose the truck with the 5,250-pound curb weight and add passengers, cargo and hitch weight, it comes to 6,685 pounds, which is under the maximum GVWR. If you choose the trim level that has the highest curb weight (5,675 pounds), using your numbers for passengers, cargo and hitch, it'll be 110 pounds over. So it is possible to tow this trailer if you spec the truck right. However, additional weight in the trailer will add hitch weight.

We've found over the years that performance is marginal when towing with a vehicle that's virtually at its limit, and if you try climbing mountain grades, the reduced performance from thinner air will be very noticeable. I suggest you consider either a lighter trailer or a truck with a higher towing and weight-carrying capacity. — K.F.

DIESEL FUMES IN CAB

This is in reference to Jerry Dews' "Diesel Smell in Cab" letter in the October 2015 issue, regarding a strong diesel smell in the cab of his 2011 Ram 3500 when idling or driving more than 50 miles. I have the same problem in my 2012 Ram 2500. With so many people with the same problem, I don't know why the manufacturer doesn't address it.

This situation exists in both heating and air-conditioning modes, and appears to be coming mainly from the dash vents. When I push the fan-speed knob and turn on the recirculate indicator, I no longer smell the fumes. It seems as if an air valve in the duct system isn't closing completely. Once the recirculate indicator is active, there is no longer air coming in from the air intake. As the RV Clinic answer suggested, I believe fumes are coming from the air intake at the base of the windshield."

Jerry Newville, Norman, Oklahoma

Thanks for sharing your experience and solution to this problem. There was a recall for cabin fumes caused by exhaust leaks on the Ram 1500 with the 3.0-liter diesel, but that's a different situation. The fact that the smell goes away when you activate the recirculation mode confirms that the fumes are coming in from the air intake at the base of the windshield.

There really shouldn't be many traces of diesel exhaust fumes in that area when driving, but when the truck is stationary and idling, it's likely that some fumes would get sucked in, especially if there is even a slight tailwind. It's more likely to happen during extended warm-up idling after a cold start in chilly weather. Anyone having this problem should have the vehicle checked for exhaust leaks by the dealer or a qualified diesel mechanic.— **K.F.**

CARPENTER ANT INFESTATION

A year ago we had a carpenter ant infestation in our RV. The ants ignored regular ant traps. Eventually, I discov-



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ered that sprinkling boric-acid powder did the trick. It still took about a week to 10 days to get rid of all of the ants, but as I understand it, the ants track the borax back to the queen, so you kill the colony.

Boric-acid powder isn't as easy to get as it was in the past, but I found some at a non-chain store. Pharmacies occasionally carry it, and it's relatively inexpensive, too.

Roger Marble, Ravenna, Ohio

Thanks for sharing your solution, Roger. Carpenter ants can be particularly nasty and aggressive, and powdered boric acid is an inexpensive and effective deterrent. I've used it to get rid of ants and yellow jackets, and it works great. — **K.F.**

TRAILER WHEEL BEARINGS

Q I read with interest Chris Hemer's "Underworld" article about brakes

and wheel bearings in the September 2015 issue. I wonder about those who own RVs with the Dexter Axle Nev-R-Lube wheel bearings that are supposedly good for 100,000 miles. When I've asked technicians to check mine, they have all refused. Apparently, these bearings need unique grease cups and special tools to torque them back down.

Recently, I saw two axles on the floor of an RV repair shop. They were ordered to replace one of these bearings that went dry and seized. The wheel and brake drum spun off the axle, destroying the side of the RV, including a slide, after only 20,000 miles.

It bothers me that I can't look at these myself and check for hot hubs at each stop. What can an RVer do to inspect or repack these bearings?

Ken Anderson, Puyallup, Washington

A Dexter Axle Nev-R-Lube bearings are a sealed bearing cartridge that never requires repacking with grease. They are sealed for life, and they have a five-year/100,000-mile warranty against defects in material and workmanship. However, they still need to be inspected every year or every 12,000 miles, which can be done during a routine brake-maintenance inspection. With them, there's no need to replace the grease seals when checking the brakes.

The bearings had some quality-control problems and failures early on, where they leaked grease and failed. Trailers that have these earlier bearings but haven't been used much might still be subject to failures.

The bearings do require special service procedures, but some RV technicians may be wary because they don't understand them. Keep looking for a tech that agrees to do the inspection ... and be prepared to pay a little extra for it. — **K.F.**



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69595/60334

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45170927

SUPER COUPON

2.5 HP, 21 GALLON 125 PSI VERTICAL AIR COMPRESSOR
CENTRALPNEUMATIC

Customer Rating ★★★★★

LOT 69091/67847 shown
61454/61693/62803

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Registry of the Prairie

Many of the half-million pioneers who crossed through Wyoming in the 19th century left inscriptions on a cliff that rises 100 feet above the North Platte River Valley



What I am seeing is classic Wyoming — there's nothing growing out here that's higher than grass. Off to the west is the jagged horizon of the Shirley Mountains. I am on Highway 487 that runs north from Medicine Bow almost to Casper.

If there is a true outback in America, this is it. With 586,000 people, Wyoming is our least populated state. More people live in Milwaukee.

Just beyond the highway's only rest area, I am stopped by a flagman because of roadwork. Mine is the only vehicle around, except for a brown UPS truck, parked on the other side of the road. I watch the driver hop off the truck, package in hand, and walk over to give it to the flagman. They chat for a bit. Then the UPS driver hops back in his truck, waves to both of us and takes off toward Medicine Bow.

The wait is beginning to drag, so I get out to visit with the flagman. His name is Ken DeWitt. "UPS brings stuff out here all the time," he says. "They go by here anyway." The package is addressed to his boss at Milepost 45, Highway 487.

To me, traveling the back roads is always fascinating. Who says that a milepost number is not a legitimate address? Without a zip code, however, I am sure that the U.S. Postal Service would have a problem with it. Out here, private enterprise adapts.

Near Casper, I pick up Interstate 25 and head east, paralleling the North Platte River and the old Oregon Trail. In the mid-1800s, more than half a million pioneers passed through this river valley on the trail that rightly bears the names "Oregon," "California" and "Mormon." Wherever their ultimate destination, they all headed for, and funneled through, South Pass, west of here — the prairielike saddle that got them, their livestock and their wagons comfortably over the mountains. With the Continental Divide behind them, they took the separate trails to what are now the states of Oregon, California and Utah.

Five miles southeast of Glenrock, next to County Road 27, is the grave of 19-year-old Alvah Unthank. It's on a



(Top) The grave of 19-year-old Alvah Unthank, who died of cholera. The disease killed an estimated 10 percent of those who traveled the Oregon Trail. (Above) Register Cliff, a trail landmark where hundreds of emigrants carved their names in its sandstone surface.

barren slope of private land near the North Platte River, off by itself, surrounded by brown prairie grass. In the spring of 1850, he and his family left Wayne County, Indiana, bound for the gold fields of California. On June 23, his party reached Register Cliff, near what is now Guernsey, Wyoming. There, in the smooth sandstone of the cliff, he carefully carved his name and the date.

Many names were already carved in the rock, as this was common practice for those on the emigrant trail. For some, it was a declaration that they had made the journey. Others hoped their signatures would tell family and friends, who were behind them on the trail, that they were OK and had gotten this far.

Alvah's party made camp here by the river. He had suddenly taken ill with cholera. A friend wrote in his diary: "July 1, Alvah is rapidly sinking. July 2, in the early morning hours, Alvah died."

His father procured a proper stone. "Solomon Woody carved the inscription. At noon July 2, the solemn task of burial took place."

It's estimated that 5,000 people died on the Oregon Trail during its epochal years, 1840 to 1869. Very few graves are marked. In fact, the pioneers normally obscured gravesites, lest animals or Indians violate them.

These early Americans, mostly farmers, were not prepared or equipped for this 2,200-mile journey. Still, they came.

Welcome to America's Outback. 🚚

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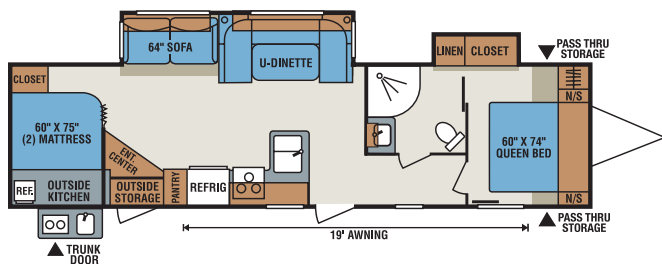
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