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Summer 2024 • Volume 21, No. 3



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It's Rally Time!

As I've mentioned in past "President's Corner" columns, I thoroughly enjoy meeting and spending time with Tiffin owners. Our rallies are probably my favorite opportunities to get to know folks and find out what they need from Tiffin Motorhomes as they immerse themselves in their traveling lifestyles.

From August 5 to 9, we will converge at Larkspur, Colorado, a hidden gem that is nestled in the foothills of the Rockies between Castle Rock and the Tri-Lakes area. The rally schedule is filled with informative seminars, showcases, activities and tons of fun.

I must admit that I look forward to the summer rally the most because my kids are able to join Baylee and me, and they really get to see and understand what our family business is all about. I grew up following my dad, uncles and grandfather around the plant, and I want my children to have the same affinity to the company that I did. And what better way to showcase the camaraderie, connection and candid communications we have with our customers than to see it firsthand at a Tiffin rally?

My family will embark on our more than 1,200-mile adventure to Larkspur in a Byway 38 BL. We plan to take our time getting to Colorado so we can soak in the beauty along the way, and we might take some side trips to explore new places. After all, that's what the RV life is all about!

See you in Larkspur!

Best,
Leigh Tiffin
President, Tiffin Motorhomes

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This issue's cover features the Allegro Bay. Read more about it on page 26. Photo courtesy of Tiffin Motorhomes.

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These 20 safety suggestions will come in handy on every road trip.



RECALLS AND MORE

This information is provided to make owners aware of safety recalls that may need to be completed on their motorhomes. For questions about what recalls may apply to your motorhome, please email recalls@tiffinmotorhomes.com.

NHTSA Recall #23V-104, Tiffin Recall #TIF-128, Cahaba suspension springs: Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists on the following models of motorhomes — **2021 and 2022 Cahaba 19 SC motorhomes, built between May 2021 and April 2022 and that are equipped with upgraded suspension springs.** Tiffin Motorhomes has become aware of the possibility that on these motorhomes, the upgraded front suspension springs were incorrectly installed by Tiffin Motorhomes and that the upgraded rear suspension springs are incorrectly sized. On 4WD units, improperly installed front suspension springs may cause damage to the front 4WD axles, which could lead to an increased risk of a crash. On 2WD units equipped with upgraded front suspension springs, the suspension will not function as designed.

NHTSA Recall #23V-297, Tiffin Recall #TIF-129, Cahaba tire carrier & Molle rack installation: Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists on the following models of motorhomes — **2021 and 2022 Cahaba 19 SC motorhomes, built between May 2021 and April 2022, and that are equipped with a spare tire carrier and/or Molle rack.** The tire carrier and Molle rack may not be installed properly and may become loose or detached from the rear doors of the motorhome. If the spare tire carrier and Molle

rack were to become loose or detach from the mounting location, this could lead to an increased risk of a crash.

NHTSA Recall # 23V-308, Tiffin Recall #TIF-130, refrigerator pan may overflow onto electrical connections: Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists on the following models of motorhomes — **2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023 Allegro Breeze motorhomes that were built between July 2019 and April 2023.** The condensation pan located underneath the refrigerator can become full of water and may overflow onto electrical connections located on the floor. If the condensation pan were to completely fill, water could overflow onto the Molex connections, which could cause a fire.

NHTSA Recall #23V-406, Tiffin Recall #TIF-131, PowerGlide A/C compressor failure causes loss of drive power: Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists on certain **2022 and 2023 Allegro Bus, Phaeton and Zephyr motorhomes that were built between May 2022 and May 2023.** On certain motorhomes equipped with an IFM brand of chassis controller, in the event of an A/C compressor failure, the current draw spike from the compressor will blow the fuse protecting the circuit. This circuit also supplies power to the chassis ignition switch. In the event of an A/C compressor failure, there would be a sudden loss of power to the chassis. If the chassis were to lose power, this would increase the risk of a crash.

NHTSA Recall #23V-643, Tiffin Recall #TIF-133, 240V induction cooktop grounding: Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a

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defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists on certain **2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 Allegro Bus motorhomes; and 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023 and 2024 Zephyr motorhomes built between April 27, 2015, and August 2, 2023, that are equipped with an optional 240V induction cooktop.** On certain motorhomes equipped with an optional 240V induction cooktop, there is no ground installed in the metal junction box used to connect the cooktop to the motorhome. If the wires inside the junction box were to short circuit, there is a risk of an electrical shock, which could increase the risk of injury.

NHTSA Recall #24V-036, Tiffin Recall #TIF-135 Villa driver's seat pedestal weld: Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists in certain **2022 Allegro Bus motorhomes, 2022 Phaeton motorhomes, 2022 Allegro RED 360 motorhomes, and 2022 Zephyr motorhomes built between January 3, 2022, and April 28, 2022.** On certain motorhomes the driver's seat pedestal may not be completely welded. If the driver's seat pedestal is not completely welded, this could cause the seat to break, which could result in injury to the driver and an increased risk of a crash.



CONTACT US!

Letters to the Editor: To send us comments or questions about the magazine, please email **RoughingItSmoothlyMag@outlook.com** and put "Letters" in the subject line.

Recalls: For questions about recalls that may apply to your coach, please email **recalls@tiffinmotorhomes.com**.

"From the Road" travel stories: We love hearing from Tiffin owners and invite you to share the special places you have discovered during your RV travels. Tell us about where you've been, including your favorite parks, restaurants, fishing spots, hiking trails, attractions, festivals, or just share a fun travel story. Go to **rismag.org/contact/travelstories** or email **RoughingItSmoothlyMag@outlook.com** and put "From the Road" in the subject line. Please share photos, too!

Tech Talk: The Tiffin Tech Team welcomes your questions and will address them with experts and specialists in the Tiffin Service Center. To send a question, especially those that may be useful to all our readers, go to **rismag.org/contact/techtalk**. You can also email **RoughingItSmoothlyMag@outlook.com** and put "Tech Talk" in the subject line.



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NHTSA Recall #24V-049, Tiffin Recall #TIF-136, solar panel bracket failure: Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists on the following models of motorhomes — **2023 and 2024 Convoy motorhomes, and 2023 and 2024 Tiffin GH1 motorhomes built between March 23, 2023, and December 6, 2023.** The aluminum brackets used to secure the solar panel to the motorhome are breaking. If the aluminum solar panel brackets were to break and the solar panel detaches from the mounting location, this could lead to an increased risk of a crash.

NHTSA Recall #24V-062, Tiffin Recall #TIF-137, Allegro Bay battery hold-down bars: Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists in certain **2022, 2023 and 2024 Allegro Bay motorhomes built between September 14, 2021, until December 7, 2023, that are equipped with standard house batteries.** On certain motorhomes equipped with standard house batteries, the batteries may shift during travel, which can allow the batteries terminals to contact the battery hold-down bars. If the steel hold-down bar contacts the battery terminals, there is the possibility of arcing, which could lead to a fire.

NHTSA Recall # 24V-260, Tiffin Recall #TIF-138, Suburban LPG range LED backlit knob overheating: Tiffin Motorhomes has decided that a defect, which relates to motor vehicle safety, exists in certain **2022, 2023 and 2024 Allegro Open Road motorhomes; 2022, 2023 and 2024 Allegro RED 360 motorhomes; and 2024 Byway motorhomes built between April 1, 2022, until March 1, 2024, which are equipped with an optional LPG cooktop and oven combination.** On certain motorhomes equipped with the optional Suburban LPG cooktop and oven combination, the LED backlight control knobs contain printed circuit boards that are not fully coated. The lack of conformal coating can allow liquid from the cooktop surface to accumulate, which could result in a short circuit which can cause the polyethylene cover of the light to melt and possibly ignite causing a fire. 🚒



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By joining a local chapter, you'll immerse yourself in a world of camaraderie and adventure right in your neighborhood. Imagine rallying with fellow Tiffin owners for weekend getaways, exploring scenic routes and discovering hidden gems. Our chapters are more than just gatherings — they're communities where lifelong friendships are formed.

To find a chapter near you, visit our website at tiffinallegroclub.com. If you can't find a chapter in your area and are interested in starting one, contact our office at allegroclub@tiffinmotorhomes, and we will schedule a call to discuss the next steps.

Lisa Smith
President, Tiffin Allegro Club



Bob and Judy Tiffin (center in blue shirts) enjoyed the evening entertainment by the Southbound Band at the April 2024 Tiffin Rally in Auburndale, Florida.



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GET NEWS AND UPDATES

We have heard that many "unofficial Tiffin" Facebook pages are preventing essential information from being shared and posted by Tiffin employees. To ensure you are receiving important announcements and updates

from the main Tiffin office and the Tiffin Allegro Club, such as factory news, technical tips, facility updates, upcoming rallies and events, new benefit partners and discounts, we invite you to click on and like the **Tiffin Motorhomes Facebook page**, the **Tiffin Allegro Club Facebook page** and our official Tiffin owners Facebook groups where you can interact with other owners and be the first to receive updates or answers regarding your Tiffin motorhome by hearing it straight from the source.

Each group is separated by class and includes knowledgeable Tiffin employees who can answer questions and provide relevant updates. Click on the links below to join these Facebook groups.

- **Bob Tiffin Service Center**
- **Tiffin Class A and Super C Owners Group**
- **Tiffin Adventure Series Owners Group**
- **Tiffin Class C Owners Group**

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At the Tiffin Allegro Club & General Store, we are immensely grateful for the brave individuals who have served our nation and communities. To express our appreciation, we've partnered with GovX to offer an exclusive 20% discount at our store. To learn more, visit **tiffingeneralstore.com**.

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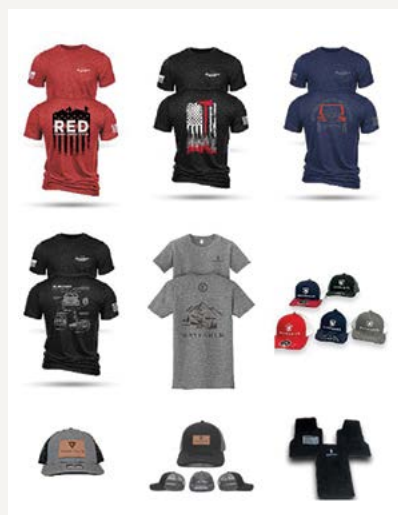
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We're excited to unveil a fresh selection of merchandise and accessories, available both at our Red Bay in-store location and online at **tiffingeneralstore.com**. From stylish apparel to must-have RV accessories, there's something for everyone. Explore our new arrivals and gear up for your next adventure in style!



5 Ways to Exercise in the Water

As the temperature soars, aquatic exercise is the perfect solution for staying fit during summer travel.

BY KATHRYN DRURY WAGNER



Lounging in a pool is always relaxing, but targeted water exercises are a great way to stay fit during the hot summer months.

Walking, hiking, weight training — they all sound invigorating on a crisp fall day, but come the dog days of summer, the only thing I want to lift is a large iced coffee. But we can’t really take the whole summer off from exercising, lest we lose muscle mass and cardiovascular benefits. The answer? Aquatic exercise.

According to the **American College of Sports Medicine** (ACSM), water exercise can boost cardiovascular fitness and increase muscle mass just as well as exercising on dry land. And **Harvard Health** reports that buoyancy provided by water lessens the stress of one’s body weight on joints, making moves easier on problem-prone areas like knees, hips and shoulders. Water workouts are wonderfully inclusive: They can work for people with arthritis, balance issues or nagging old injuries. Another perk is that water creates a natural resistance, slowing movements down and reducing the risk of incurring new injuries.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

If you happen to be visiting friends who have a pool, great. If not, find a pool through a website aimed at traveling adult lap swimmers. **SwimmersGuide**, for example, is an online directory of full-size, year-round swimming pools. Enter the name of the place you’re traveling to and tap on the green listings; those are the pools that offer public access. Then click “Read More” and you can get the pool facility’s address, phone and admission price. The website does not have pool schedules because they change so often,



See if your vacation location has a public pool that offers water exercise classes.

so once you find a pool you’d like to visit, contact it directly for hours — and to ensure you’re not crashing the water polo team.

Exercising in open water like lakes or the ocean is an option, too. Just be mindful that there are other factors, such as rip currents, tidal changes, surf conditions, water temperature, marine animals, water cleanliness and passing boats.

To keep swimming safe, ACSM recommends not swimming alone. It also recommends checking with your doctor if you have had any blood pressure or heart issues, or if you are over the age of 40 and have been inactive prior to starting an aqua fitness program. Also, don’t forget to hydrate after aquatic exertion, just as you would after any workout.

For equipment, you might want to get a set of waterproof headphones, which make it possible to enjoy music or catch up on podcasts or audiobooks while exercising. Look for headphones that are completely waterproof and have a long battery life. Some models of waterproof headphones can sync with a fitness watch or tracker, too.

Water shoes can keep feet from slipping or rubbing on the pool’s bottom, while “hand webs,” or resistance gloves, can be used to up the workout intensity. Both pack flat and won’t take up much room in your RV. Most pools will have the bulkier items like pool noodles and kickboards that you can borrow to continue to mix up your aquatic routine.

WORKOUT 1: TREAD WATER

Many of us learned to tread water when we took swimming lessons as children, and let’s face it, we have avoided it ever since. It’s worth a revisit, though, as treading water torches calories — moderate-effort treading burns up to 345 calories an hour and vigorous treading, up to 863 calories an hour. Plus, unlike swimming laps,

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Exercising in water can be more than swimming laps (above right). Try water yoga, water aerobics (above left) or even walking in water.

treading water does not require a lengthy pool, just a nice deep spot. Start with a few minutes at a time and build your way up to longer sessions.

WORKOUT 2: WATER WALKING

To water walk, start in water that is about waist high, and gradually move to deeper water as you build strength, suggests the **Mayo Clinic**. Swing your arms to add to the workout. If you water walk regularly, up your game by water jogging or water running.

Bonus: For people with joint issues, water walking in a pool heated to about 83 to 90 degrees can also help soothe pain, according to the **Arthritis Foundation**.



WORKOUT 3: AQUA YOGA

You've heard of yoga on the beach. Why not try yoga in the sea? Well, in a pool, at least. Aqua yoga features many of the same asana, or poses, that landlubber yogis do, but the water offers additional support. This makes it a great way to increase flexibility and strength.

Also, because the water pushes against the abdomen, practicing deep breathing techniques while submerged about chest-deep in water can give lungs a good workout.

WORKOUT 4: WATER AEROBICS

Offering the cardio benefits of aerobics with the low-impact nature of exercising in water, aqua aerobics has been growing in popular-

If you happen to be visiting friends who have a pool, great. If not, find a pool through a website aimed at traveling adult lap swimmers.

ity. (Now, it's not as big a trend as pickleball, but it's sure getting easier to find a class than it used to be.) As you travel, seek out a local class that is taught by a qualified instructor. Organizations like the **American Council on Exercise** offer certifications. You might even discover classes in aqua Pilates or aqua group cycling, depending on the pool facility.

WORKOUT 5: POOL CIRCUIT TRAINING

Exercises like squat jumps, push-ups on the side of the pool, and leg kicks make for a challenging circuit. Do each exercise, then repeat the cycle at least three times.

For water workout ideas, check YouTube — a good option is **Water Exercise Coach**, which also has videos containing workouts specific to different parts of the body as well as strengthening areas like knees. There are even some water-stretching suggestions.

And, of course, it's summer, so there's nothing wrong with simply enjoying being in the water. In fact, there's a lot to be said for languidly floating on an oversized, inflatable flamingo. Go on, you've earned it! 🦩

Kathryn Drury Wagner is a Savannah-based writer and editor. She is the author of two books and writes frequently about health and wellness for national publications.



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Smart Travel First-Aid Solutions

Take on your pet's medical mishaps while on the road, and get him back to being happy and healthy.

BY MELISSA L. KAUFFMAN

When you are on a road trip with your pets, things happen. Thankfully, I've rarely had to practice pet first aid during a trip. Being prepared ahead of time is not only practical but allows you to focus on having fun with your furry friend. Before you embark on your journey, there are things you can do to help you feel confident: get your pet checked by the vet, prepare a pet first-aid kit, take a pet first-aid class and have a list of veterinarians you can go to in case of an emergency along the way and at your destination.

PRE-TRIP VET CHECK

If your dog hasn't been to the veterinarian recently, schedule a quick checkup. Tell the vet where you are heading; she may recommend vaccines or medications depending on common pet hazards in the area (fleas, ticks, leptospirosis, etc.).

Your vet can give you proof of vaccines, an updated medical summary and even a certificate of veterinary inspection, if you need one. It's good to take these documents on a trip.

If your pet isn't already microchipped, have the vet insert one to increase the chance he



will get home to you if lost. If your dog or cat has a microchip, have the vet scan it to make sure it is still working properly.

Finally, ask for vet recommendations who practice in the area you will be visiting or do some research yourself. This will save you time if there is a real emergency.

PET FIRST-AID KIT & FIRST-AID CLASS

Always keep a first-aid kit specifically for your pets in your RV. I asked master certified pet first-aid instructor, founder of **Pet First Aid 4U** and director of the instructor program for **Pro Pet Hero**, **Arden Moore**, what we should bring along.

"Because RVers may find themselves in remote areas, far from veterinary clinics, I recommend that they keep a comprehensive first-aid kit designed for people and cats/dogs," she says. "I like those made of water-proof exteriors."

Moore recommends going through the contents twice a year (ideally when we change our clocks in the spring/fall) to make sure none of the items have expired. (See sidebar for a full list of pet first-aid items.)

Did you know that you can take a first-aid class for pets? In fact, Moore recommends taking a veterinarian-approved pet first-aid/CPR course in person, via Zoom (live and interactive) or a self-paced online course. "Things in pet medicine are always being updated, and it is important to know how to safely render pet first aid without causing more harm to the pet," she says.



Take your pet to the vet (far left) to ensure that she is healthy and ready to hit the road.

Give your dog a quiet, shady place to rest if he has an upset stomach or is dehydrated.

Another tip: When your pet is injured, your attitude is vital. "Dogs smell and read our emotional states," Moore says. "Avoid baby talk and apologies when rendering aid to an injured dog. Speak in calm, confident tones."

And, lastly, Moore recommends practicing some pet first-aid demos on your pet when he's not injured. Sometimes, when your dog is injured and hurting, you need to make a muzzle from your leash so you can treat him without getting bitten. Moore advises, "Practice using a 6-foot nylon leash to safely muzzle your dog and then undo the muzzle and reward with treats to make this a positive experience for your dog."

PREP FOR INJURIES ON THE TRAIL

RVers love to hike when they are on a road trip, and if your trip includes a lot of hiking, think ahead: How will you get your pet back to the RV if he gets injured? One of the worst experiences I've had is when our 75-pound dog, Sprey, injured herself while we were hiking some distance from our car. She was heavy and the terrain was difficult, and it took hours to get her back.

Immediately after, I spoke to a dog trainer who specializes in training dogs in off-road activities. He told me to always carry an emergency rescue harness/sling in your backpack.

Moore also has some great advice for this type of situation. She created a program called "How to Be a Mutt-gyver," in which she encourages pet parents to be creative and use everyday items to render pet first aid. Here's what she suggests for a makeshift sling:



If your dog gets injured outdoors, be prepared to carry him back to your RV.



If you plan to hike on rough terrain, get your pet some dog booties!

POISON-RELATED EMERGENCY

If you think your pet has ingested something poisonous, call the **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center** at (888) 426-4435.

“Take a big blue Ikea plastic shopping bag,” she says, “cut the sides, leaving the main portion with the handles on each side, to make a gurney to transport an injured large dog.”

COMMON AILMENTS ON THE ROAD

Now, let’s look at some of the most common pet medical issues you might encounter while on the road.

Motion sickness: You’ll run into this at least a few times if you travel a lot with your dogs and cats. My parrots have even suffered from this on occasion. If your cat or dog regularly suffers from motion sickness, ask your veterinarian to prescribe medication to help with nausea. Symptoms to look for include vomiting or lots of drooling, licking of the lips, whining, pacing or moving around in the vehicle.

Upset stomach: We all get upset stomachs on the road and our pets are no exceptions. Bring along whatever you give your pets when they have an upset stomach at home. Whether that’s chicken and rice or some special food. Typically, stomach issues clear up after the first day or two on the road. If it doesn’t, see a vet.

Tick Bites: Tick populations have been growing and expanding throughout the U.S. According to the **U.S. Tick-Borne Disease Research Program** (TBDRP), there are more than 18 known tick-borne infectious pathogens, with 20 known conditions and 13 illnesses, like Lyme disease, resulting from these bites. This is why you must do a thorough body check on your pet (and yourself) for ticks immediately after every hike.

If you find a tick, pull firmly on the head, until the tick lets go. This can take a little time, so be patient. It’s recommended to use tweezers, not your fingers. The CDC has a great YouTube video called **“How to Remove a Tick.”**

Snake Bites: Stay on the trail when hiking to avoid snakes. Even if you stay on a path, you may encounter a snake (I have), but you’ll be able to see it better. This is where a leashed dog that listens to the “Leave It” cue comes in handy. If your dog gets bitten, immediately take him to a veterinarian. Try to get a look at the snake so you can describe it, but don’t catch it or get near it.

Dehydration: “Some dogs are so go-go-go and want to please their people that they are in danger of becoming overheated and dehydrated,” says Moore. “It is up to us to keep tabs on our

dogs during hikes, walks, road trips and make sure we build in breaks for rest and water.”

Some signs that a dog is becoming dehydrated include pale gums, gums feeling sticky, tongue hanging out and drooping, and staggering or panting. Moore adds, “If you grab the skin on the back of your dog, it may fall back into place slowly — a sign of dehydration. Unchecked, a dog can collapse and become unconscious.”

To prevent shock, never give an overheated/dehydrated dog ice cubes. “Instead, dip each paw in cool water to help drop the body’s core temperature and then give some cool water to drink in the shade or ideally, inside an air-conditioned RV,” Moore says.

COMMON PAW INJURIES

Cuts, splinters and cracked pads can all happen when hiking with your pet. “Injured paws are prone to infections, and splinters or other foreign objects can get into the paw and cause infection, swelling and pain,” Moore says.

Before your trip, make sure your pet’s paws are in good condition — trim the hair between the paws, cut the nails and deal with any cracked pad issues. Staying on the trails or having your pet wear booties can keep paw injuries to a minimum.

If your dog’s paw is cut on the trail, Moore has this Mutt-gyver tip: “Rinse the cut paw with clean water, elevate the paw above the heart to slow down blood loss and — if you don’t have any pet first-aid supplies available — insert the paw into a clean white sock and hold it in place by wrapping an unused dog poop bag around the ankle or a shoe lace.”

Got a splinter? You may first need to muzzle your dog if he is touchy about having his paws touched or treated. “Then, use a pair of tweezers — sterilized in alcohol if available — and strive to get the splinter protruding from the paw pad,” Moore says. “Move in the same angle from where it has entered the paw pad. Follow up with baking soda/water and you may need to wrap the paw.” Watch your dog’s movements and check the paw regularly to make sure the paw area is not swollen or infected. 🐾

Melissa L. Kauffman is the former editor of Dogster and Catster magazines. For the past decade, Melissa and her husband have traveled around the country in their RV along with their dogs and parrots.



PACK YOUR PET FIRST-AID KIT

Master certified pet first-aid instructor **Arden Moore** recommends stocking the following items in your pet first-aid kit:

- ❑ cold compress
- ❑ ER blanket
- ❑ adhesive bandages
- ❑ triple antibiotic ointment packets
- ❑ alcohol prep pads
- ❑ sting-relief pads
- ❑ antiseptic wipes
- ❑ antihistamine for bee/wasp reactions (Note: containing only diphenhydramine)
- ❑ saline eye wash
- ❑ bandage wrap and vet wrap
- ❑ styptic pencil/powder
- ❑ oral syringe
- ❑ triangle bandage
- ❑ tongue depressors
- ❑ tick removal tweezers
- ❑ adhesive tape roll
- ❑ pair of scissors
- ❑ vinyl gloves
- ❑ hydrogen peroxide (Note: Hydrogen peroxide is only safe to use on pets when you suspect they swallowed something toxic and you are far from a vet clinic. Before administering, get a vet on the phone, to guide you on how to give the right amount by syringe to induce vomiting to get out the toxin. Never use hydrogen peroxide to clean a wound — you only cause more damage to the skin and impede healing.)

Plan for Emergencies

Keep these 20 safety suggestions in mind before you venture on your next trip.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE BLUME

Bob and Terry Harris were traveling north in their 2004 Tiffin Phaeton on I-95 from Palm Bay, Florida, on what they thought was an ordinary travel day. However, things would change quickly. “After only a short drive, there was a loud pop behind our rear camera monitor, then it immediately went dark,” Terry recalled. “I thought I saw a tiny puff of smoke between the monitor and my husband’s knee and as I was looking around, I glanced back and saw smoke rising in the bedroom. We were on fire! Fortunately, a Brevard County deputy was behind us, saw what was happening and blocked traffic for us to get off the road.”

Terry grabbed the dog and cat, her phone, purse and phone chargers. “Thank goodness

the cat was in a carrier, which probably saved it,” she said. “My husband and the deputy grabbed our fire extinguishers, but it wasn’t enough. Bob tried but was unable to disconnect our car. The flames were growing, and the heat was already intense. The fire soon engulfed our RV. Despite Brevard County bringing four trucks, they ultimately had to just let it all burn.”

The best time to plan for an emergency is before you are in the middle of one. If you regularly travel in an RV, you will always have bumps, and sometimes they can be catastrophic. Mechanical failures can leave you stranded on the side of a remote highway, accidents can make your coach undriveable and sudden medical emergencies can derail all your plans.



PHOTO FROM BOB AND TERRY HARRIS

A vehicle fire can be catastrophic, so be prepared and keep all important emergency documents in a fireproof container.

I always ask myself, “What could go wrong, and what would I do about it?”

I reached out to several Tiffin owners for their emergency-planning ideas to share with you along with some of my own. Here are 20 things to consider as part of your “be prepared” plan. Hopefully these suggestions will help you create your own safety plan. Safe travels, fellow Tiffinites!

1. MAINTENANCE AND PRE-TRIP INSPECTION

Control the things you can control. Every coach comes with a recommended maintenance schedule, which spells out when to fill, lubricate and replace the things that are on the list. The maintenance schedule also ensures that someone is looking around for other possible failure points, whether it’s an owner who is mechanically inclined or a service center doing the work.

2. TANKS READY

Traveling with plenty of waste tank capacity and enough fresh water to last three to four days will help you survive in the event you are stranded. Do you have any RV friends who reluctantly spent several days in a parking lot? We all do.

3. EMERGENCY INFO IN ONE PLACE

What information do you keep in a safe “go-to” place? Emergency contacts, insurance, roadside assistance and anything else to help in emergencies. I put all this in a folder in the front driver cabinet. Tiffin owner Duane Peck agreed. “Broken down on the side of the road is not the time to be searching for numbers,” he said.

Leon Sosa shared this great idea: “Get a fireproof bag from Amazon, and keep important documents, cash plus three days of medications in it, ready to grab and go if necessary.”

4. ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE POLICY

Review and know what coverage you have and keep that sheet in your go-to place. Is it with your insurance carrier, or do you have a separate policy with someone like **Coachnet**, **Good Sam**, the **Tiffin Allegro Club** or **Family Motor Coach Association** (FMCA)? Don’t try to figure out who to call in the middle of your emergency.

5. MANUFACTURER CONTACTS

In a serious mechanical emergency, there is a good chance that you may be calling your chassis manufacturer. Have their num-

ber and your VIN in your go-to place. For example, Freightliner has a 24/7 emergency number: 1-800-FTL-HELP.

6. INSURANCE INFORMATION

In an accident, you will immediately notify your insurance carrier. Know the limits of your coverage and have their contact information.

7. EMERGENCY PARTS KIT TO CARRY

I attended Camp Freightliner, a two-day course on understanding, maintaining and driving my Tiffin, which is built on a **Freightliner chassis**. A great take-away from that course was a list of the parts specific to your coach that would be difficult to find locally. These parts would help a mobile tech get you on your way. Obviously, it is not realistic to stock a warehouse in your bays, so the basic parts you should have in your “emergency kit” are a fuel filter, fuel water separator filter and any engine belts. This same kit would apply to any coach, regardless of the manufacturer.

8. HOW TO UNHOOK YOUR CAR

What if I was the emergency? My wife doesn’t drive, and I do everything related to hooking up and unhooking our car. Unless you have been around RVs, the concept of flat towing and all those wires and cables is a mystery. In my “go to” place, I include a la-

beled photo of the connections between the coach and the car for any responders.

9. INSTRUCTIONS TO MOVE COACH

Moving a diesel coach is much different than moving gasoline coaches. To park, put it in neutral and engage the air brake. To drive, shift into D or R and release the air brake. There is no “park” on the shifter. The air pressure must be allowed to build for working brakes and getting the coach to ride height. My step-by-step sheet covers these basics. There is also a big warning to never back up with the car connected.

10. HIGHWAY SAFETY MARKERS

When you are forced to pull over on the shoulder, have reflective triangles, cones and reflective vests in compartments that are easily accessible.

11. FIRE EXTINGUISHERS OR SUPPRESSION SYSTEM

If you have a fire, you will never feel that you have enough fire extinguishers. Keep one in an outside compartment near the rear of the coach in the event your towed vehicle is burning. Know where all extinguishers are stored. Tiffin owner Julia Laforest shared, “We also carry a fire blanket for any possible small kitchen fires before we deploy a fire extinguisher inside.” Popular fire

suppression systems like **Proteng** extinguish fires before they can get started.

12. FMCAssist

If you are a member of **FMCA**, an included benefit is FMCAssist, an emergency medical evacuation and “getting-you-home” coverage. Benefits include medical evacuation and repatriation, return home, family travel expense, return of mortal remains, return of dependent children, RV return, private passenger automobile return, pet return, prescription medication replacement and a host of other items. FMCA offers several additional programs if you want more coverage that greatly expand the benefits.

13. EMERGENCY SOS

Enable “Emergency SOS” under settings on your smartphone then open and update your health app. This app can be accessed by emergency responders even when your phone is locked and will also temporarily share your location to call them. Julia LaForest shared, “My sister follows us on her iPhone Find Me app. Someone always knows where we are.”

14. CAMPGROUND PARKING PASS

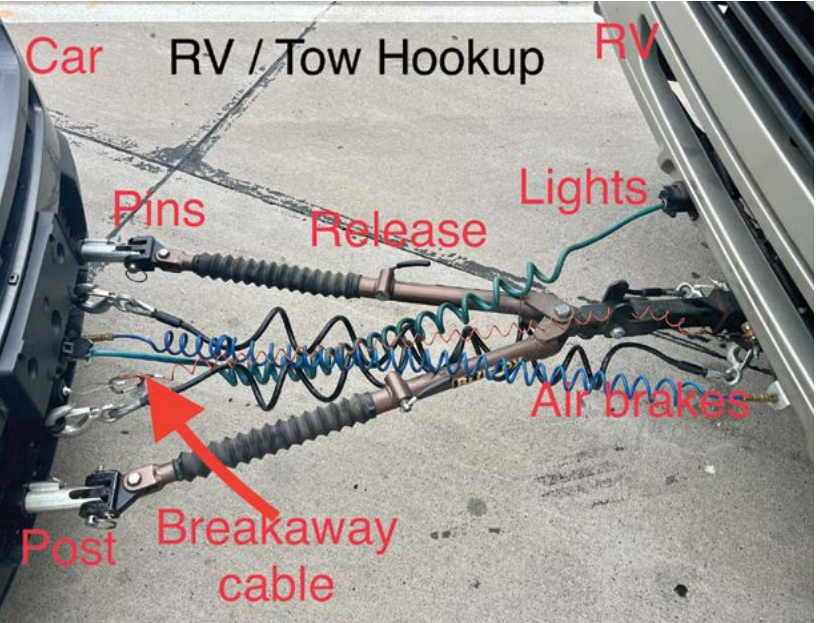
That annoying parking pass hanging from your car’s rearview mirror has your campground’s location and dates you are booked, which can help responders locate your current “home” if you are away in your car.

15. KEEP A “GO BAG”

Keep a packed emergency bag within easy reach with a change of clothes, toiletries, a few days meds, protein bars, an extra phone charger and spare keys. Bill Richard is a retired sailor who had to fight two fires at sea, so he takes the “go bag” seriously, even keeping an extra one in the car. “I guess all that training sticks with you,” he said.

16. SECURITY

Security and self-defense options are a personal choice. “If you choose to be armed, you better know how to use it,” cautioned my friend Loretta Young, a solo traveler in her 60s who travels around the country as an LPGA pro in her new Allegro Bus. Owner Kimberly Coyne suggested, “Some people may be more comfortable with mace or bear spray.”



17. DUCT TAPE AND ZIP TIES

Basic tools are a necessity in an RV, but duct tape and a variety of zip ties can secure a lot of loose things and remedy many situations in a pinch.

18. FIRST-AID KIT

Have an adequate first-aid kit and know where you keep it. Periodically inspect it and resupply as needed.

19. PETS INSIDE

Many pet owners place a card in the window or use decals to notify responders that pets are inside, along with the owner’s phone numbers.

20. TIRE PRESSURE MONITOR SYSTEM

Having a TPMS on your coach is essential because sudden changes in tire pressure immediately destabilize it. An early warning of dropping tire pressure could get you off the road quickly and safely. If you are towing, having a TPMS on your car or trailer alerts you to tire failure behind you that you would never see otherwise. We have all heard horror stories of towed vehicles being dragged for miles on a flat tire, catching fire that could spread to the coach. 🚗

A retired entrepreneur, Steve Blume and his wife, Nancy, spend half the year on the road and the other half at their Brentwood, Tennessee, home. His articles have appeared in newspapers and magazines on multiple topics.

This labeled photo shows how to hook and unhook the car from the RV, which might be necessary if I’m incapacitated.

Know where all fire extinguishers are kept in your RV. Quick action can be the difference between a little damage and a total loss.



PHOTO FROM BOB AND TERRY HARRIS

EVERYDAY'S A HOLIDAY IN AN *Allegro Bay*

The Allegro Bay 38 AB offers power, performance, safety and all-around fun. .

BY STEVE BLUME

Now entering its fourth model year of production, the **Tiffin Allegro Bay** continues to get better. For 2025, the Allegro Bay has three floorplans: 38 AB, 38 BB and 38 CB. They are all built on the Freightliner S2RV chassis, which is not a truck chassis but one built specifically for Super C RVs.

Do you tow a large trailer? With the Cummins B6.7 360-HP diesel engine (800 lb.-ft. torque) and the Allison 3000-MH 6-speed automatic transmission, this coach is designed to tow up to 12,000 pounds! It is two-wheel drive, but the Eaton Tractech NoSPIN Differential is activated by a switch on the dash that locks both wheels to keep you from spinning and getting stuck in loose surfaces.

Want to stay out there longer? The fresh water tank is big — 150 gallons — and the 70-gallon grey water tank and 45-gallon black tank give you plenty of capacity. The 8.0-kilowatt Onan quiet diesel generator gives you the power when you need it.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TIFFIN MOTORHOMES

The National Indoor RV Center (NIRVC) near me was preparing a brand-new just-off-the-line 38 AB for a big VIP event. NIRVC’s National Sales Manager Angie Morell offered to give me a tour. First off, this beast, which is 39’4” long, is beautiful in a rugged way. Quality and thought in the design are unmistakable. The exterior paint is bold and striking. The one I saw was White Mahogany (the other paint schemes offered are Bordeaux, Crimson Mist, Fire Opal, Frosted Granite, Polar Frost and Mid-night Blue). Aluminum wheels are standard, but you can opt for black aluminum wheels, which makes this bad boy really stand out.

A WALK AROUND THE COACH

“Check out these headlights,” says Morell. On the Allegro Bay, LED headlights are stand-ard and protected behind a composite cover

to fend off rock hits. The bulkhead of the one-piece molded front cap transitions right into the overhead, with no sharp corners. “They call this a three-way airfoil, designed to cut through the wind, aerodynamically direct air over the top and reduce wind noise. With the Allegro Bay you get a windshield that is 20% larger than any other Super C manufacturer,” Morell says. Tiffin has integrated cab entry steps into the molded fiberglass. The hood design allows easy access to the engine and main-tenance items because it tilts forward. Just release the latch and gently lift up the back. There’s no need to worry about letting go be-cause it’s on spring struts that make it easy to lift and lower. To close, gently push the front up and it softly returns to its original position and is ready to latch.



The Allegro Bay 38 AB’s interior boasts a spacious 310 square feet.

2025 ALLEGRO BAY 38 AB SPECIFICATIONS

STARTING MSRP approx. \$385,000

DIMENSIONS	
Overall length (approx.) ¹	39' 4"
Wheelbase	279"
Overall width ¹	101"
Overall height	13' 3"
Minimum Garage Height	14'
Interior height	82.5"
Interior width	96"
Square footage (approx.) ²	310
Basement storage (approx.)	136 cu.ft.

WEIGHT LIMITS (in pounds)

GAWR — front	12,000
GAWR — rear	21,000
GVWR	33,000
Maximum Trailer Weight	12,000
Hitch Rating	12,000
GCWR	45,000

CAPACITIES (in gallons)

Fuel tank	100
DEF tank	10
Fresh water	150
Grey water	70
Black water	45
LPG tank ³	20.3

QUANTITIES

Number of Slideouts	3
Sleeping Capacity ⁴	4 to 6
Sleeping Areas ⁴	3 to 5
Seat Belts	6 to 8
Seating Capacity ⁴	6 to 8

¹ The approximated coach width and length does not include side view mirrors.
² Square footage calculated with the slide-outs fully extended;

calculations include living areas and do not include the driver's compartment.
³ The diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) is the active component used in selective catalytic reduction (SCR) engines to reduce nitrogen oxide emissions by 90% to meet EPA standards.
⁴ Dependent on furniture and dinette options.

Standard Chassis and Drivetrain: Freight-liner® S2RV Chassis; Cummins® B6.7 360-HP Diesel; engine with 800 lb.-ft. torque; two-wheel drive; 185-amp alternator; Allison® 3000-MH 6-speed; automatic transmission with lock-up torque converter; aluminum wheels; front and rear 275/80R 22.5 tires; (2) 12-volt flooded lead-acid chassis batteries; hydraulic leveling jackswith control panel; taper leaf front suspension; Freightliner® Airliner® rear suspension with manual dump valve; rear sway bar; custom-tuned Sachs® shock absorbers; Eaton Tractech NoSPIN® differential; front radiator; full air-brake system with automatic slack adjusters; heated air tanks with auto drain valve; single stage Variable Geometry Turbocharger (VGT) engine brake; manual parking brake; rear fuel fill; automatic traction control; cruise control; tire inflation kit with quick disconnect fitting

Standard Construction: seamless one-piece gel-coat; fiberglass molded roof cap; 5 1/4" formed roof insulation; tubular aluminum roof skeleton frames; Extraordinaire™ ducted air cooling system; one-piece molded gel-coat fiberglass front and rear caps; Crane® Composites Noble® Select all-composite exterior sidewalls; tubular aluminum wall skeleton frames; high-performance thermal

insulation in sidewalls; steel floor skeleton; engineered wood sub-flooring; 1.5" thick thermal insulation in floor; steel basement construction; rust-protective undercoating; hydraulic slide-out mechanisms

Standard Electrical: liquid propane (LP) coach; Spyder Controls multiplex system; Firefly Integrations Mira Module; centralized 7.5" Spyder System main monitor; interior entry-way Spyder System color touchscreen; additional Spyder Color touchscreens throughout coach; 8.0-kilowatt Onan® quiet diesel generator; 2,000-watt pure sine wave inverter charger with auto-gen start and interior remote control; (2) 15,000-BTU air conditioners with heat pumps; 50-amp shore power with powered retract reel; auxiliary solar port; HD over-the-air antenna; park cable and ground satellite hook-up; prep for in-motion satellite; Blu-ray™ player; satellite receiver; 12-volt breaker panel; 12-volt disconnect switch; (4) 6-volt, 210-amp hours extended cycle AGM house batteries;; rotary disconnect switches for house batteries, chassis batteries and inverter; ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) outlets at galley, lavatories and sewer bay; 110-volt exterior receptacle; Surge Guard® transfer switch; USB receptacles throughout coach; satellite receiver

Standard Plumbing: Aqua View Shower-miser™; water filter; water pump switch access from Spyder System and sewer bay board; low-point water drain lines; black holding tank flush system; gravity water fill;

tank level monitor system; exterior sewer bay with winterization system and gravity black and grey evacuation ports; exterior rinse hose with shower head; fresh water hookup for city water and tank fill; heated fresh and holding tanks via tank pads layers of clear coat; single-colored slide-out endwalls; high performance protective film on front cap and select areas; (1) Girard® side-mounted powered patio awning with integrated LED lighting; Girard® slide-out toppers; side-swinging exterior storage doors with gas shocks; lockable handles on compartment doors; motion-sensor lights in cargo bay; GatorHyde-lined cargo walls and floor; frameless style tinted windows; exterior patio light; driver and passenger side front cap exterior entry light; daytime running lights; heated power side-view mirrors; exterior TV with soundbar; fast charge USB ports within exterior TV compartment; lightweight entry door with integrated screen; entry door grab handle; deadbolt front entrance lock; automatic double entry step; front door entry System via key fob; mud flaps; Lippert™ On-The-Go™ telescoping ladder

Standard Interior: handcrafted overhead cabinetry with honeycomb-patterned glass; carpeted step well with composite steps; living area TV; solid surface galley countertop; handcrafted slide-out fascia; soft touch vinyl ceiling; dimmable LED lighting; prep for washer and dryer; carbon monoxide detector; LPG leak detector; smoke detector;

fire extinguisher; solar and privacy shades; soft-closing drawers; powered roof vents; interior grab handle at entry door; egress windows throughout coach

Standard Driver's Compartment: Ultra-fabrics® Montage pneumatic suspension driver and passenger seats; dual driver and passenger seat armrests; mounted seatbelt brackets; dual chamber lumbar support on driver and passenger seats; adjustable damp-er on driver and passenger seats; tilt, fore and aft, backrest and height adjustment on driver and passenger seats; leather-wrapped, tilt and telescoping steering wheel; ergonomic dash with woodgrain driver accents; dual center cup holders; roof-mounted storage compartments; backlit instrument cluster; generator start and stop rocker switch; USB dash receptacles; 12-volt dash receptacle; dash rocker switches; driver and passenger map lights; one-piece, tinted, roped-in windshield; single-motor intermittent windshield wipers; automatic LED headlights; trailer marker light switch integrated with headlight switch; side-view cameras; color back-up camera; 10" detachable touchscreen featuring media center, AM/FM and satellite radio, Bluetooth® and camera monitoring; dash and B-pillar mounted speakers; in-dash navigation system via 10" detachable touchscreen; front overhead bunk with privacy curtains; cab skylight; auxiliary start switch; dual electric horns; air horn with pull-cord; powered windows; driver and passenger sun visors; powered door locks; integrated door storage

pockets; stepwell light mounted inside doors; privacy curtain

Standard Kitchen: 20-cubic-foot stainless steel residential refrigerator with top freezer; 1.7-cubic-foot smart convection microwave with air fry; double bowl kitchen sink with single lever faucet and pull-down sprayer; galley overhead cabinets; panoramic galley window; task lighting; full tile backsplash; solid surface galley countertop, sink and cooktop cover; manual release expand-an-island

Standard Bedroom: memory foam king mattress (72" x 80"); bedside windows; bed comforter with throw pillows; handcrafted privacy door; LED reading lights; nightstand with solid surface tops; mounted bedroom TV; centralized entertainment center; ceiling fan; bedroom slide overhead cabinets; wardrobe with drawers underneath

Standard Bathroom: (1) bathroom; porcelain master bathroom sink; solid surface lavatory top one-piece molded fiberglass shower (28.5"x40.5"); handheld shower head with slide bar; shower skylight; shower LED light with sliding cover; gravity flush toilet; towel and toilet paper holders; mirrored medicine cabinet; roof vent fan; base cabinet

Standard Driver's Side Furniture: 75" booth dinette-sleeper; 74" DE sofa bed

Standard Passenger Side Furniture: 68" air-coil sofa bed



Theater seating is an available option in the Allegro Bay 38 AB. Standard seating is a 74" sofa bed.

Morell explains, “You’ll notice a three-piece breakaway front bumper rather than a one-piece bumper. If you hit something, rather than bending back into the tire, it breaks away. It also means that you only need to replace that one section, not the entire bumper. If you are going to get tangled up in something, it’s nice to know the outside mirrors are mounted on a spring-loaded arm that rotates back when struck without breaking.”

DESIGNED FOR CONVENIENCE

Back on the ground, we continued our walk around the coach and started opening the basement doors. The 38 AB comes standard with four 6-volt, 210-amp hours extended cycle house batteries on a slide-out tray. “A quick disconnect and air chuck enables you to access the coach air supply to inflate tires on all your toys,” Morell says. “This purpose-built Super C chassis gives you a huge 136-cubic-feet of basement storage space underneath. The wet bay has your city water inlet, black tank flush, outside shower, satel-

lite/cable connection and also a solar input. The outside water pump switch is handy and where you need it. The dump station valves have been moved back to a different compartment away from the fresh water inlet.”

The Allegro Bay comes with heated air tanks with an auto drain valve to eject moisture. The power cord reel easily handles the 50-amp power cable. The built-in Surge Guard provides peace of mind when campground electricity spikes and drops. The 38 AB comes with a 20.3 LPG tank, but you can choose to have an all-electric coach, which comes with the Aqua-Hot 250D and full hydronic heating.

Morell continues, “Most manufacturers place the fuel fill on the side, but Tiffin places it in the rear so you can pull forward, especially with big trailers, and fill from either side.”

Continuing around to the passenger side, I noticed the awnings and slide toppers, which are all Girard. “The awning has one-touch operation and LED lighting, which doesn’t attract bugs. That outside TV and soundbar complete this outdoor entertainment area,” she says.



The kitchen features a two- or three-burner cooktop, a microwave, a double bowl sink, a 20-cubic-foot stainless steel refrigerator and a pull-out pantry (below right).



QUALITY, COMFORT AND SAFETY GUARANTEED

After opening all the doors, I remembered what Tiffin Regional Sales Manager George Victorine said about quality at another RV show I attended: “When comparing manufacturers and looking at quality, there is something I call the ‘Unseen, Untold, Unsold’ story. All of these coaches have a roof, bay doors, etc. You can tell quality by looking at the bay doors. Ours is made of one-piece aircraft aluminum with a curved bottom, aluminum backing, aluminum framed structure and foam insulation. It has a gas strut and limiter

chain in case the wind catches it. When you close the door, we call it the 60/40 close. If you let go at 40% open, it closes. More than that and it swings open. If the doors have this level of quality, you can rest assured that the rest of it has that same quality.”

Cleverly placed grab bars beside the driver’s seat provide stability as you ascend into the cockpit. Freightliner has been doing this for a long time, so the control panels are well-marked and intuitive. Floor mats are heavily insulated against engine heat and sound. Air ride seats are standard to ensure a more comfortable ride, and you can adjust the level



The Allegro Bay 38 AB comes in seven exterior colors options, which is applied in an eight-step, full-body paint system that features premium-grade paints sealed with three layers of clear coat.

of air applied. With a taper leaf suspension up front and a Freightliner Airliner rear suspension, this thing is beefy. To connect a big trailer, just press the button on the dash for the manual dump valve to release the rear air and lower the back, making that connection much easier. On long downhill grades, the engine brake uses the back pressure to help slow you down.

A PEEK INSIDE

Now it was time to go inside. The entry door is just behind the cab, and stepping up inside, you enter directly into the living space. “This big up-front bunk area over the cab is massive, and look at the big window

with sliding shade, the two-tone lights (blue and white) and reading lights, along with plenty of plugs for your devices,” Morell points out. “The TV is optional. When the bunk is not in use, this front hinged section easily raises out of the way for open access to the cockpit area. When lowered, a privacy shade along the back edge pulls down to block off the whole front area.”

The Allegro Bay’s floors are a porcelain glazed tile, with a choice between gloss or matte finish. All cabinets are solid wood with soft close doors. Cabinet choices are Platinum, White Linen or Sandstone. Interior decor options are Stoney Creek or Solstice and fabrics in Montage Landscape or Montage Alpaca.

On the driver’s side, the 38 AB comes standard with a 75” booth dinette-sleeper, but an option is to go with a 75” dinette bar or a 75” dinette with chairs. The 74” sofa bed is standard or choose the comfy 74” theater seating, if you don’t need the extra sleeping space. A roomy 68” air-coil sofa bed is on the passenger side.

“The primary Spyder Controls Multiplex System panel is located in the hallway, with additional color touchscreens throughout the coach,” Morell says. “The main lights are dimmable, with memory to return to their setting before you turned them off. The Allegro Bay comes with two 15,000-BTU air conditioners with heat pumps.”

Morell went on to explain that the 38 AB has three hydraulic slideouts — two in the living area and one in the bedroom — creating a really open spacious feel.

EASY COOKING

The large panoramic galley window — a Tiffin signature — lets in plenty of light. The pullout cabinet provides extra counter space when needed. “The countertops are a solid surface product Tiffin cuts with routers and polishes to a beautiful durable finish,” Morell says. “Depending on your preference, an all-electric system changes to an induction cooktop, microwave/convection/air-fry combination, and you can add a dishwasher.”

This floorplan features an L-shaped kitchen with a double-bowl sink with single lever faucet and pull-down sprayer on the back wall. Below the sink, there is extra storage with easy access thanks to a clever design that opens on the side rather than the front — which is “possible when you build your own cabinets,” Morell says with a smile.

The 38 AB comes with a 20-cubic-foot stainless-steel residential refrigerator with top freezer and 1.7-cubic-foot smart convection microwave with air fry. Pantry doors lock in with a soft close like residential cabinetry, and the shelves are adjustable.

BED AND BATH

“This floor plan features a split bath,” Morell says as she moves on. “A large shower with a water miser opens into the hallway. It is a one-piece molded fiberglass enclosure with no seams, so it can’t leak.”





The Allegro Bay 38 AB's one bathroom features a one-piece fiberglass shower with a skylight, a gravity flush toilet and a porcelain sink.

In the bedroom, you can choose from the standard wardrobe or the optional washer and dryer.



A skylight in the shower can be opened for light or closed to keep out heat. A private toilet area is across the hall with a single bowl, recessed sink and lots of cabinets.

Morell says, "The bedroom features a king-size bed and large spacious cabinets overhead with outlets on both sides for medical devices, such as CPAP machines. The sliding doors are all heavy, solid and custom. There are no hollow-core doors in this coach."

When the sliding doors are moved, they reveal a cabinet with hanging rods for clothes above and a washer and dryer below.

At the foot of the bed, a Smart TV is mounted with drawers below and wardrobes on each side. Sliding doors on both sides

OWNER REVIEWS

I spoke to several Allegro Bay owners, and all rave about their RV.



Ricky White from Lake George, New York, says: "We compared Super Cs for a couple years. Tiffin is definitely nicer inside than all the others. As an example, the storage compartment has metal bottoms, not plastic."

Anne Ferris from Timberlake, North Carolina, says: "The truck style front-end is easier to drive and easier to access maintenance items. We love that larger bunk up front. Our 38 AB living room with couch/bed, theater seats and dining table with wall storage is exactly what I wanted. We can entertain inside when it rains!"

Chrissy Richter from The Villages, Florida, says: "Yesterday we purchased a new 38 AB! We looked at several other manufacturers but have always had a Tiffin and know the quality. Our previous coach was an Allegro Bus, and

we were planning to downsize but fell in love with the 38 AB — so downsizing obviously didn't happen."

Troy Rader from Omaha, Nebraska, says: "After years of research, we landed on Tiffin because of its reputation for customer service, and it was in our budget. This is our first RV of any kind. At first, we were looking for a used Class A. We saw a YouTube video tour of the Allegro Bay by Phil and Stacy (**Today Is Someday**) and changed our minds. Our plan was to work and live in it full time, and the 38 AB gives us more room up front where we work and hang out most of the time. It was also comforting to have three doors in and out. I feel we studied enough to get the right one the first time, and it worked. We have looked at million-dollar rigs and tons of others and still prefer our floor plan over everything else." 🚐

Expect to rest comfortably in the king-size memory-foam bed.

DESTINATION: *HOT SPRINGS, ARKANSAS*

HOT SPOTS in HOT SPRINGS

Arkansas' Spa City is a cool place to indulge in rest and relaxation.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY NICOLE SIPE



MICHAEL CARROLL / ADOBE STOCK

Ancient thermal springs, mountain views, incredible geology, forested hikes and creeks can be found at Hot Springs National Park.



Located in the heart of Arkansas an hour southwest of Little Rock, the city of Hot Springs offers travelers a mix of rejuvenation and outdoor exploration. Hot Springs has been touted as “America’s First Resort” since the early 1900s, when it was the most visited health and wellness spot in the United States. People have been drawn to the area’s healing, mineral-rich thermal waters for decades, making it a great place to relax and restore. But Hot Springs is more than just a spa city. History buffs, foodies and adventurers will find lots to do in this cool little Arkansas gem.

HOT SPRINGS NATIONAL PARK

When you think of a national park, you probably imagine vast areas of nature, such as a mountain, forest or desert landscape. That’s not the case with **Hot Springs National Park**, the second smallest national park in the country. Hot Springs is an urban park that was built around the city center. Bathhouse Row — eight buildings constructed between 1892 and 1923 — are located in the center of the park.

The thermal water that has been bubbling from the land for more than 4,000 years is the star of the area, of course. Visiting Hot Springs National Park means experiencing the water in many ways. (101 Reserve St.; 501-620-6715)

Soak in the Springs on Bathhouse Row: Outdoor bathing is not available at Hot Springs National Park. So, if you want to soak in the healing waters, you must visit a bathhouse. Experience two unique experiences at two different bathhouses in Hot Springs National Park.



- **Buckstaff Bathhouse** offers a traditional bathhouse experience, using original bathtubs and equipment from when the bathhouse opened in 1912. Baths are available on a walk-in basis only. (509 Central Ave.; 501-623-2308)
- The Quapaw Bathhouse (now **Quapaw Baths & Spa**) offers modern spa services with public thermal pools, private baths, massages, facials and other services. (413 Central Ave.; 501-609-9822)

Drink the Spring Water: You’re welcome to “quaff the elixir,” or drink the hot springs water that is flowing from the many public thermal springs fountains all around town. The water is free — just bring your own cup or fill a jug to take home. You might be surprised by how hot the water is upon your first



MUST-TRY RESTAURANTS IN HOT SPRINGS

Coffee + Tea: Nosh on a healthy, light meal made with nourishing ingredients at **Kollective Coffee + Tea**, located just steps from the Hot Springs bathhouses. This calm and eclectic restaurant offers an astounding array of tea varieties (served hot or cold), as well as artisanal coffee and gluten-free baked goods. Visitors can indulge in breakfast, brunch and lunch items like eggs Florentine, detox salads, grown-up grilled cheese panini and vegan gyros. (110 Central Ave.; 501-701-4000)

BBQ: Opened in 1928, **McClard’s Bar-B-Q Restaurant** has earned world recognition for its slow-smoked meats. They are best known for pork ribs and butts, their signature vinegar-based tangy sauce, and their tamales, which are filled with beef and pork and steamed in paper instead of corn husks. For an unusual twist, order the Tamale Spread — a gut-bomb of a dish consisting of a tamale topped with Fritos corn chips, beans, chopped beef, cheese and onions. (505 Albert Pike; 501-624-9586)

Historical Eatery: A Hot Springs hot spot for more than 100 years, **The Ohio Club** opened in 1905 as a bar and casino, and was frequented by “celebrities” like Al Capone, Bugsy Segel and Lucky Luciano, as well as many Major League Baseball players. Today, The Ohio Club is Arkansas’ oldest bar, and is a great place to be surrounded by history, hear live music Thursday through Monday, and try a burger or sandwich off the menu. This restaurant was a finalist for the 2023 Arkansas Food Hall of Fame! (336 Central Ave.; 501-627-0702)

Breakfast Stop: The history of **The Pancake Shop** is intertwined with Hot Springs itself. Since 1940, the restaurant has exclusively served breakfast, and has won accolades for its ham steak — as big as a dinner plate and definitely shareable. Small and cozy, this restaurant will see long wait lists on the weekends. But once you’re seated, one taste of the buckwheat pancakes, toast with apple butter or freshly squeezed orange juice will prove worth the wait. (216 Central Avenue; 501-624-5720)

Thermal Springs Brewery: This brewery is unique in two big ways: It makes the world’s only beer brewed with thermal spring water, and it is the only brewery located in a United States National Park. The architecture itself of **Superior Bathhouse Brewery** is as unique as the brews, too. Built in 1916, the building operated as a bathhouse until 1983, then laid vacant for 30 years. Owner Rose Schweikhart reimagined the Superior Bathhouse into a craft brewery and full-service restaurant. If beer isn’t your thing, try the house-made root beer, which is also made with thermal spring water. (329 Central Ave.; 501-624-2337; closed on Tuesdays)





The Fordyce Bathhouse (opposite page and above) is now the visitor center of Hot Springs National Park.

You can drink hot springs water from several public fountains (left).

sip. It naturally comes up from the ground at around 143 degrees Fahrenheit.

Touch the Thermal Springs: Although outdoor bathing is not permitted within Hot Springs National Park, there are three public places where you can touch the thermal water with your hands. These include the Display Spring, located behind the Maurice Bathhouse; Hot Water Cascade at Arlington Lawn; and the Fordyce Fountains, located near the visitor's center.

THE FORDYCE BATHHOUSE

To learn about the history of Hot Springs, stop at the **Fordyce Bathhouse**, which operated from 1915 to 1962, but now serves as the Hot Springs National Park visitor center and museum. Visitors can explore the three floors of the building on a free, self-guided tour. See artifacts and displays that show the history of the bathhouse, and learn why people came from all over the world to bathe in the restorative hot springs waters. (101 Reserve St.; 501-650-6715)



At Garvan Woodland Gardens, stop by the Anthony Chapel, which boasts amazing acoustics.



Enjoy the Gangster Museum, which accounts how some of the most notorious criminals interacted with the Hot Springs community.

EXPLORE THE OUTDOORS

The greater Hot Springs area offers three lake options for outdoor recreation: **Lake Catherine**, **Lake Hamilton** and Lake Ouachita. All three offer a range of activities, including boating, kayaking, fishing and relaxing along the shore.

If you only have time to visit one, make it Lake Ouachita, Arkansas' largest lake. With more than 200 islands and nearly 700 miles of shoreline, **Lake Ouachita State Park** is surrounded by forests, with crystal-clear waters that make it ideal for scuba diving. Bring your fishing pole, as you'll find catfish, striped bass and largemouth bass in abundance in the clean water and quiet coves. The park also has 58 Class AAA campsites for RVs. (5451 Mountain Pine Road, Mountain Pine; 501-767-9366)

THE GANGSTER MUSEUM OF AMERICA

From the 1920s through the '40s, Hot Springs was a popular respite for infamous mobsters. The town saw regular visits from the likes of Al Capone, Lucky Luciano and other gangsters, who visited Spa City to gamble, bootleg and hide out. Learn how Hot Springs coexisted with criminals at the **Gangster Museum of America**, where you'll get a guided tour of seven galleries that reveal a slice of this sordid history. Tours are by reservation only, and last 60 to 90 minutes. (510 Central Ave; 501-318-1717)

GARVAN WOODLAND GARDENS

Garvan Woodland Gardens is a true Hot Springs gem. Spread across 210 acres, this botanical garden is a peaceful place with trails that offer views of the Ouachita Mountains. The Garden of the Pine Wind, with its Japanese-inspired design, provides a serene environment for quiet contemplation and reflection, while the Anthony Chapel offers an architectural spectacle and a peaceful retreat for visitors. The Evans Children's Adventure Garden houses a tree house set in the woods that's a sight to behold, whether you're visiting with children or not! (550 Arkridge Road; 800-366-4664)

MINE FOR QUARTZ CRYSTALS

Arkansas' natural landscape and silica-rich water is the perfect environment for creating quartz crystals. You'll find many dig-your-



Dig for clear quartz with Avant Mining in Mount Ida.

own crystal mines just outside of Hot Springs in the Ouachita Mountains, an area of the state that was considered a magical location by Native American tribes because of the abundance of beautiful quartz crystals that can be found there. Mt. Ida — located west of Hot Springs — is considered the quartz capital of the world. It's where you'll find **Avant Mining**, (11 Logan Gap Road, Mount Ida; 870-985-988) which offers public quartz crystal digs six days a week (weather permitting), as well as private guided tours that take you deeper into their mines. 🗺️

Nicole Sipe is an editor for a Midwest parenting magazine and a children's book author. Born and raised in Southern California, Nicole traded the city and sun for corn and creeks, and now lives in Indiana with her husband, two sons and dog.

HOT SPRINGS RV PARKS AND RESORTS

Hot Springs is a hotbed of great RV parks and resorts that cater to all types of travelers. Here are six to seek out when you're in the area.

Catherine's Landing: RVers get easy-in and easy-out access, with spots on the water near the boat wharf where they can enjoy the lovely view of Lake Catherine. Spanning 400 acres, **Catherine's Landing** offers RV sites on concrete pads surrounded by lawns and landscaping. Each site comes with a full hookup, as well as a BBQ, fire pit and picnic table. Go for a hike on the Big Foot Trail — where you might see critters such as armadillos, bunnies and deer — or explore the property by zipline. There's something for everyone at this unique RV park. (1700 Shady Grove Road; 501-262-2550)

Cloud Nine RV Park: Travelers can enjoy full hook-ups and extra-wide sites at **Cloud Nine RV Park**, along with free WiFi and cable TV, plus an exercise room and large gathering room. Leashed pets are allowed, and there is a designated pet walk area to ensure your furry family members have a great trip to Hot Springs, too. The campground's prime location with convenient access to downtown Hot Springs makes it a great place to create a home away from home. (136 Cloud 9 Drive; 501-262-1996)

Crystal Ridge RV Park: Near the entrance to Ron Coleman Crystal Mine is where you'll find **Crystal Ridge RV Park**, which houses 24 campsites with utilities, plus primitive campsites and cabins. For a fee, dig through freshly mined rocks for quartz crystals on the RV park's four-acre mine, or get a bird's-eye view of the area on a zipline that has you flying through the air over the park. Crystal Ridge also offers a crystal mine tour and a gift shop where you can browse quartz crystals and minerals. Located about 15 miles away from downtown Hot Springs, Crystal Ridge is a good option if you're looking for an RV park a little ways out of town. (155 Crystal Ridge, Jessierville; 501-209-9933)

Gulpha Gorge Campground: Nestled on Gulpha Creek just a few minutes from downtown Hot Springs, this tree-lined RV retreat features 44 campsites for RVs and tent camping. **Gulpha Gorge Campground** is a little more on the primitive side, as it offers modern restrooms but no showers; however, each site has a picnic table, pedestal grill and water. It has trail access to Hot Springs Mountain and Bathhouse Row, making it a great spot to set up camp before you explore the historic Hot Springs area. (305 Gorge Road; 501-620-6715)

Hot Springs National Park KOA Holiday: This campground is located about three miles from downtown Hot Springs National Park and Bathhouse Row in the foothills of the Ouachita Mountains. The **Hot Springs National Park KOA Holiday** is mostly shaded and offers back-in RV spots with full hookups, a laundry room, a pool (open May 1-Sept. 30), a playground and an arcade. Hop on one of the KOA shuttles and go downtown for a fee, or get a free ride to Magic Springs amusement park and Oaklawn Racing Casino Resort seasonally. From February to November, enjoy a hot breakfast at the campsite. (838 McClendon Road; 501-624-5912)

Treasure Isle RV Park: Stay on the shores of Lake Hamilton at **Treasure Isle RV Park**, a family-friendly gem that offers a kid- and pet-friendly place to relax. The park offers 45 pull-through and 20 back-in full-service sites, as well as DirecTV channels, Wi-Fi throughout the park, and pontoon boats and kayaks to take onto the lake. The kids' play area was renovated in spring 2022, and includes a playground, gaga ball pit and corn hole. Located 15 minutes from downtown Hot Springs, Treasure Isle is a great spot to escape the crowds, yet be close enough to the action when you want to be. (205 Treasure Isle Road; 501-767-6852)

Midas TOUCH

The Midas 24 BT is a small and easy-to-use Class C coach that anyone can enjoy and operate.

BY STEVE BLUME

I always envy those folks who have an RV that they can take to the grand-kids' baseball games, to the beach and to a trailhead for a hike. The idea of returning to it with air conditioning blasting on a hot summer day, lunch at your fingertips and a place for immediate relaxation seems like a dream come true. **You could actually have all this with a Midas.**

The Midas is the perfect solution for those who want the luxury of a Tiffin in something that's a little larger than a van. Built on a Ford 350-HD AWD transit cutaway chassis with a Ford 3.5-liter EcoBoost 310-HP gas engine and a Ford 10-speed Selectshift automatic transmission, this is Tiffin's most nimble Class C coach. At 24'6" long, it boasts a hitch rating of 4,000 pounds at an affordable



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TIFFIN MOTORHOMES



The area behind the cockpit can be a day/child bed (right). The middle section converts into a pedestal table (opposite page).



There's lots of storage in the Midas 24 BT, including this pass-through storage under the bed (right).



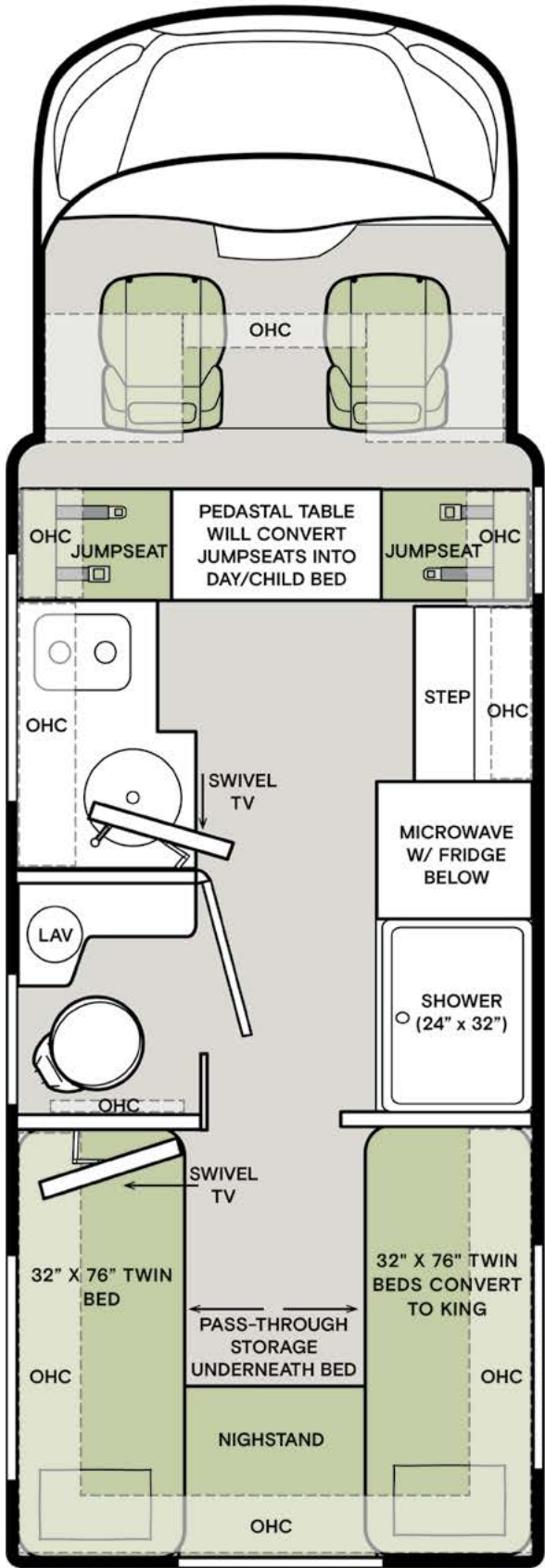
The bathroom has a porcelain sink (far right).



switches are well-marked and easy to reach. Apple CarPlay integrates your smartphone for music and navigation. Safety features are abundant, including a Tire Pressure Monitor System (TPMS), SOS Post-Crash Alert system, post-collision braking, forward collision warning, lane keeping assist, pre-collision and auto emergency braking, plus adaptive cruise control. A color backup camera helps keep your Midas dent free, especially when backing alone. The easy-to-clean vinyl floor up front is greatly appreciated when getting in and out in dusty or muddy conditions.

The 38-gallon freshwater tank, 28-gallon grey water tank and 26-gallon black water tank are much larger than Sprinter van models. The LPG tank is 12.2 gallons. Managing your resources is part of RV life, and Tiffin has provided enough capacity for plenty of options. Propane supplies the 20,000-BTU ducted furnace and Truma AquaGo Comfort Plus instant water heater. A 13,500-BTU air conditioner is more than enough to keep things cool. The 30-amp SmartPlug power cord is detachable for easy storage. A 4.0-kilowatt dual fuel gas/LP generator creates power

24 BT



when you need it, with a high altitude setting for mountain trips. A 200-watt solar panel with a 30-amp controller also helps keep the two 12-volt flooded lead-acid house batteries charged.

The bay doors on the Midas are the same construction as all high-end Tiffin coaches, made with aircraft aluminum curved at the bottom, foam insulation inside and two stage door locks. When the bay doors are opened, a motion activated light illuminates that compartment. The under-basement storage in this Class C makes use of every available inch, including a large L-shaped compartment in the rear.

DESIGN AND DÉCOR

The Girard awning on the passenger side runs almost the entire length of the coach, providing ample shade during the day and a welcoming outdoor space with its soft LED lights as the evening approaches.

There is a single electric step that extends from underneath and a composite one built into the step well, so entry is easy. The entrance door is lightweight but feels solid. The Spyder Controls multiplex monitor is located just inside the door on the right.

The decor package is called Seafront. The handcrafted cabinetry throughout the coach comes in three finishes: Sandstone, Shadow and White Linen. The flooring color is Stony Ground. There are privacy shades on all windows throughout the coach.



The two opposing jump seats have multiple functions. First, they are seats for riding or for lounging. Next, a removable pedestal table between them turns them into a dinette for two people. Last, the table can be lowered to create a day/child bed. Although not huge, with the two cab seats turned around and these jump seats, there is seating for four in this area. A smart TV with a swivel mount is located on the kitchen wall.

KITCHEN, BATH AND LOUNGING AREA

The kitchen has a one-burner induction cooktop, stainless-steel convection mi-



crowave, stainless-steel single bowl sink, faucet with built-in sprayer and a 12-volt, 8.0-cubic-foot refrigerator. A gas-electric 7.0-cubic-foot refrigerator is an option. Those beautiful custom Tiffin cabinets provide ample storage in the kitchen/living area. A full extension slide-out pantry in the wall behind the sink keeps your cans and other frequently used items within easy reach.

As a split bath, the 24x32-inch one-piece fiberglass shower with skylight is on the passenger side. When not hooked up to city water, your freshwater is precious as is the space in your grey tank. A shower miser

enables you to run your freshwater until it gets hot without filling your grey by diverting it back to your fresh tank. Across the hall is the toilet area with a vessel bowl porcelain sink on a solid surface countertop with matte black faucet. Cabinets in this area conveniently store your toiletries.

The entire back area is for lounging or sleeping, with two 32x76-inch twin beds that can be configured into a single king bed. Beneath the cushions is a hatch for direct access to the basement storage below. There are six large overhead cabinets as well as storage underneath or between the beds.

At 6'4", I'm a big claustrophobic guy and was concerned the interior was only 6'6" high and 127 square feet. Numbers don't really mean a lot to me — I need to see how it feels. The first time I stepped into a Midas was at the 2023 Tiffin rally in Lake Wales, Florida, and I was so impressed, I brought my wife to take a look as a possible option for us down the road. I did not feel cramped or limited and could easily travel in this model.

The Midas 24 BT simply feels simple. With no slides, no Murphy bed, no overwhelming technology to understand, anyone can love and operate this easy-to-use coach. 🚐

The Midas comes in three exterior color options, including the Palladian (above).

DESTINATION: CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE

Hiking, biking, paddling
and more abound in
Tennessee's Scenic City.

BY MELISSA L KAUFFMAN

CHOOSE *Chattanooga!*

Surrounded by Tennessee’s southeast mountains and with the Tennessee River running right through it, Chattanooga was made for outdoor lovers. You’ll find great hiking, biking and water sports opportunities throughout the city and surrounding areas. It’s the perfect spot for an RV trip because it’s just a two- to three-hour drive to other popular destinations like Nashville, Knoxville, Asheville in North Carolina, and Atlanta.

There’s so much to do in Chattanooga, but if you only have time to focus on one area, take a drive up Lookout Mountain, which sits 2,000 miles above sea level. It’s right outside downtown Chattanooga, on the Georgia/Tennessee border and is part of The Cumberland Plateau — the southern part of the Appalachian Plateau in the Appalachian Mountains. At Lookout Mountain, four unique experiences wow visitors: Rock City, Ruby Falls, the Incline Railway and Point Park, which is part of the Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park. Just take it slow driving the RV because the roads are steep and twisting.

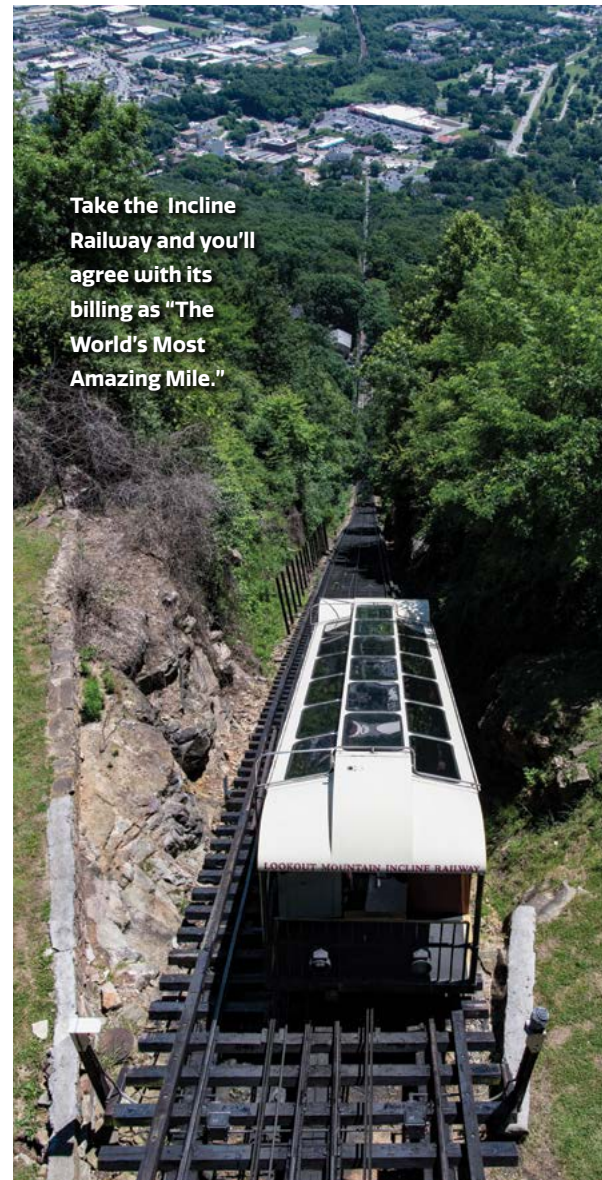
SEE ROCK CITY

You’ll see advertisements for visiting **Rock City** long before you get there. In fact, Rock City is just as famous for its advertising as the destination. It opened in 1932, when the only way to advertise was billboards. Owners Garnet and Frieda Carter put their “See Rock City” billboards on barn roofs through the south, making them some of the most well-known and iconic billboards in the U.S.



MELISSA L. KAUFFMAN

From this picturesque vantage point, visitors to Rock City can see seven states!



JACKIE NIX / ADOBE STOCK

Rock City itself is just as unique. This fourth-generation-owned botanical and geological park packs a solid afternoon of fun with a 4,100-foot walking trail through plants, one-of-a-kind sculptures and lots of rocks in all shapes and sizes. Don’t miss the 90-foot waterfall, the 180-foot long suspension bridge, the retro Mother Goose Village (with mini scenes of favorite nursery stories) and the Fairyland Caverns.

My favorite spot is Lover’s Leap, a large rock jutting out from the side of Lookout Mountain. The amazing view from here allows you to see seven states at one time: Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.

It’s self-guided, so go at your own pace; there are stairs and just under a mile of

walking. Leashed, well-behaved dogs are allowed. You can pick from the couple of eateries inside the gardens. Tickets are timed, so buy them online before you arrive, or you may have to wait, especially during the summer. (1400 Patten Road, Lookout Mountain, GA; 706-820-2531. RV parking available. Open year-round, but hours vary depending on the season.)

RIDE THE INCLINE RAILWAY

Incline tracks were created more than 135 years ago for train cars to climb up Lookout Mountain from the town of St. Elmo. Today, you can ride up and down the steep incline for fun instead of transportation. Two inclines were created, the first in 1887 and the second — which is used today — in 1895.

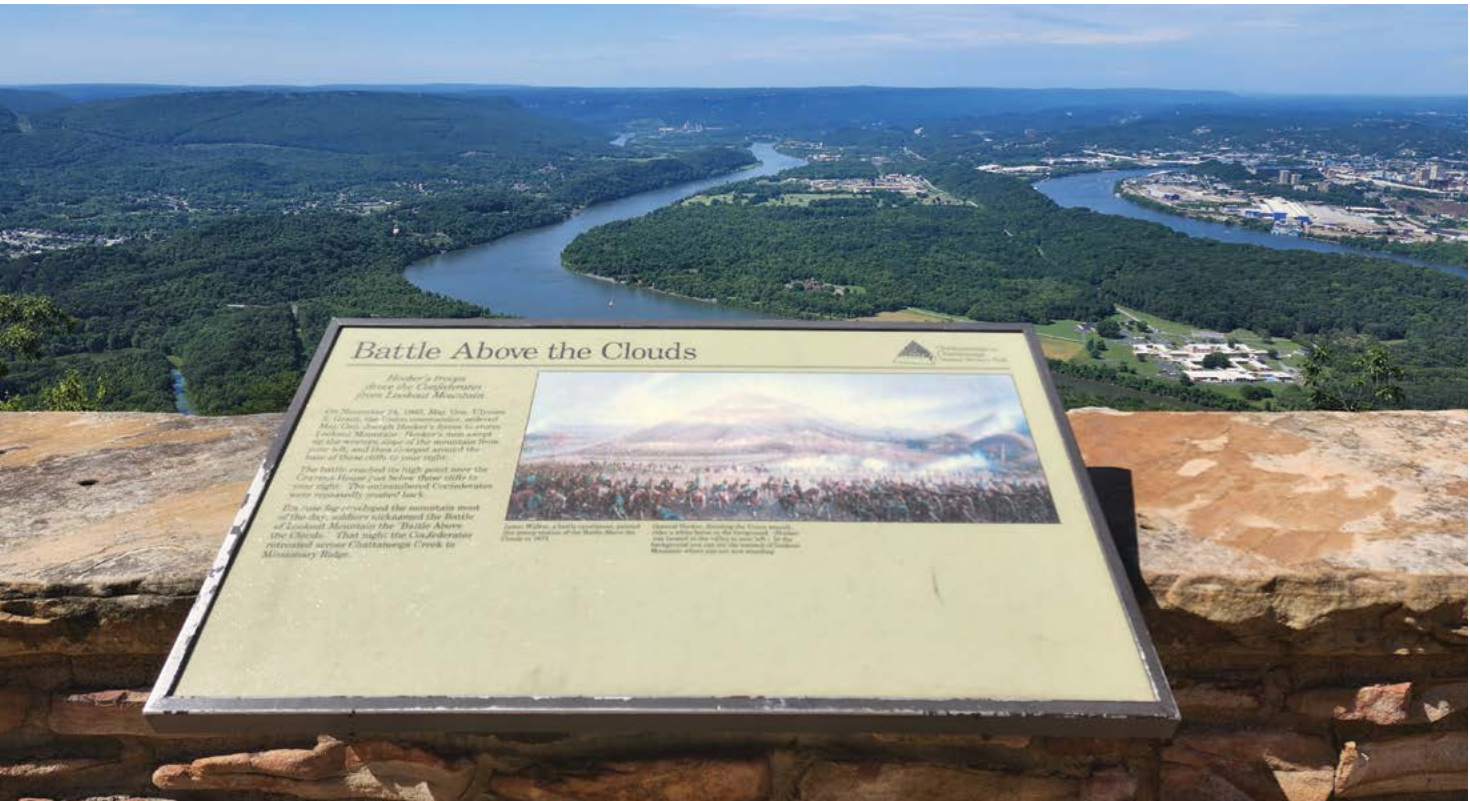


MELISSA L. KAUFFMAN

The **Incline Railway** has two substations — one at the top by Point Park and one at the bottom in St. Elmo. Each way takes 10 minutes, and the cars leave every 20 minutes. Enjoy the 10-mph ride — it’s one of the steepest passenger railways in the world due to the 72.7% grade near the top. Once at the top, check out Point Park, then ride back to the bottom and enjoy ice cream at **Clumpies** or **Mr. T’s Pizza and Ice Cream** in St. Elmo.

Tickets are timed, so buy online ahead of time to avoid waiting. Tickets are \$15 per adult round trip and \$7 for children. (3917 St. Elmo Ave.; 423-821-4224. Only a few RV parking spaces are available. Park at the St. Elmo substation at the bottom as there is no RV parking at the top. Open year-round but hours vary depending on the season. No dogs allowed.)

Lover’s Leap is a must-see attraction at Rock City which is located just six miles from downtown Chattanooga.



MELISSA L KAUFFMAN

Union troops defeated Confederate forces at the Battle of Lookout Mountain, which is also known as the Battle Above the Clouds.

The passage-way to Ruby Falls was discovered by chemist Leo Lambert in 1928. He named the falls after his wife.



MIAMI2YOU / ADOBE STOCK

VIEW POINT PARK

For some of the best views in Chattanooga, don't miss Point Park, part of the **Chickamauga & Chattanooga National Military Park**. This 10-acre Civil War memorial overlooks the Lookout Mountain Battlefield, where the Battle Above the Clouds was fought in November 1863. A paved path winds throughout the park's monuments with spectacular views of the city and river at different points. (110 Point Park Road, Lookout Mountain; 423-821-7786. Admission is \$10 for adults, children and veterans are free. Dogs are allowed. Although free, car parking is limited. No RV parking.)

Walk down to the Ochs Memorial Observatory, which houses different historical photos. Warning: It's a bit of a steep walk up and down to the observatory, but the views are worth it. Outside the park sits the **Lookout Mountain Battlefield Visitors Center** that includes a Civil War digital diorama, a relic and weapon collection, plus a bookstore and gift shop. (1110 East Brow Road, Lookout Mountain; 423-821-2812. Open year round.)

DISCOVER RUBY FALLS

Want to see an underground cavern and a 145-foot waterfall? Just take a glass-fronted

GOOD EATS, Y'ALL!

You'll find a surprising amount of variety in Chattanooga's restaurants, not just Southern cooking. I asked pretty much every native Chattanooga I encountered for their favorite, made a list and then checked them out. Here are some of my favorites.

Craving Italian: **Tony's Pasta Shop & Trattoria**, a carriage house restaurant nestled in the Bluff View Art District, offers baskets of bread from the **Bluff View Bakery** as soon as you are seated. The bread is so amazing (and yes, you'll go through more than one basket!) that you could be too full to eat the main meal. My favorite entree here is the baked pesto chicken ravioli. (212 High St.; 423-321-0235)

Train Experiences: Looking for a completely unique eating experience? Try the **Homefront Tea Room** at the Tennessee Valley Railroad Grand Junction Depot. Enjoy the experience of high tea (tea, scones, sandwiches, sweets) followed by around an hour-long train ride. For those who are not high tea lovers, try the **dinner train** experience — a three-course meal in the dining cars. Whichever you choose, you'll enjoy every moment. I sure did. Pinkies up! (4119 Cromwell Road; 423-894-8028. No pets allowed.)

Ice Cream Galore: A Chattanooga favorite is **The Ice Cream Show**, which offers so many ice cream choic-

es — over 17,000 possible flavors! How? First choose vanilla or chocolate ice cream (or yogurt, sugar-free or dairy-free options) and then add your pick of a variety of flavors (Kahlua, rum, hazelnut, etc.) and ingredients (Thin Mint, banana, cookie dough, etc.). It takes me a long time to order because the combinations are overwhelming. The shop sits on the south side of the pedestrian Walnut Street Bridge, which makes it perfect to grab some ice cream before making the trek to the North Shore. (105 Walnut St.; 423-702-5173. Closed Sundays, hours vary depending on seasons.)

Casual American Fare: Previously a retail store, **Frazier Five & Dime** now offers casual dining. The front of the restaurant has a large horseshoe bar area with tables that look out over the North Shore's Frazier Street, where you can watch tourists and locals walk by. It's American fare with a southern twist: smoked pork belly, house-made bologna, pimento cheese, biscuits and more. My favorite is from the brunch menu — smoked salmon eggs benedict, yum! (16 Frazier Ave.; 423-541-9655. Serves Sunday brunch and dinner from 3 p.m. to close.)

Fan Favorite: When I asked Chattanoogaans for a favorite restaurant, **Boathouse Rotisserie & Raw Bar** was on everyone's list. Located right on the south bank of the river, the views command. You'll find the restaurant packed most days of the week. Although known as a seafood restaurant the menu offers a variety of fare, from rotisserie chicken to fish tacos and, of course, raw oysters. I enjoyed the ahi tuna poke bowl while my husband chowed down on the chicken chimichanga. (1459 Riverside Drive; 423-622-0122. Does not accept reservations, so be prepared to wait.)



MELISSA L KAUFFMAN



ROBERT HAINER / ADOBE STOCK

The Tennessee Aquarium (right) is located on the Tennessee River. You can take the Walnut Street Bridge (above) to get there.

elevator that descends 260 feet into Lookout Mountain. You'll spy the deepest, tallest underground waterfall open to the public in the U.S. **Ruby Falls** opened for tours in June 1930, with the cave, waterfall and the destination's limestone castle, which were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

A variety of tours are available: the basic cave walk to Ruby Falls, a history tour, a gentle walking tour and a lantern tour, which takes place in the evening. The basic tour takes about an hour and a half, but plan for more if you want to peruse the gift shop or check out the view from the Lookout Mountain Tower and Blue Heron Overlook. These are timed tours, so buy your ticket online in advance to avoid long waits.

If going underground isn't enough of a thrill, you can also purchase tickets to the Ruby Falls' High Point Zip adventure — 700 feet of rushing ziplines. There's plenty of parking but it's limited for RVs.

The zipline is located close to Rock City and Point Park, so you can do all three in one day if you time the tickets right, but I advise doing it over two days. (1720 S. Scenic Highway; 423-821-2544. *Dogs are not allowed, but there are four kennels available on a first-come, first-served basis.*)

WALK DOWNTOWN

The Tennessee river runs right through Chattanooga, making it incredibly picturesque. The South Shore downtown area —



KENNETH SPONSLER / ADOBE STOCK

south of the river — includes the Tennessee Aquarium and the Bluff View Art District, along with the Riverwalk.

The **Tennessee Aquarium** takes about two hours to go through and also includes an IMAX theater (tickets sold separately). The aquarium is housed in two buildings that highlight the biodiversity of the Southeast, with its rivers, caves and mountains. It's located along the river and the Riverwalk. (One Broad Street; 800-262-0695. *Open Sunday through Saturdays, closed Thanksgiving and Christmas.*)

After the aquarium, take the Riverwalk to the **Bluff View Art District** and the **Hunter Museum of American Art**, which is surrounded by some incredible outdoor artwork. The museum has one of the most complete collections of American art in the Southeast. (10 Bluff View; 423-267-0968. *Closed Tuesdays and holidays.*)

Stop by the free sculpture garden exhibit of the **River Gallery** high on the bluff, along with a spectacular view of the Tennessee River. It features permanent sculptures and hosts an annual changing exhibit. If you love

walking, stay on the Riverwalk, which boasts a 16.1-mile walkway along the Tennessee River Southern bank.

If your time is limited, I recommend crossing from downtown to the trendy shopping and eating neighborhood, **North Shore**. You can get there by four different bridges, but the one to take is the **Walnut Street Bridge**. This bridge — one of the longest pedestrian bridges in the world — takes about 10 to 15 minutes to walk across, and the view and breeze make it well worth it. You'll find plenty of shopping and fun eateries on the

The Tennessee Aquarium requires timed-entry tickets. Guests must arrive within their scheduled 30-minute time block to be admitted.

North Shore, plus its own Riverwalk. It has two parks — **Coolidge** and **Renaissance** — all great for walking your dogs. My favorite part: the **Coolidge Park Antique Carousel**, where you can ride one of 52 whimsically carved animals (I love the rabbit!).

Note: There's no good place to park an RV in downtown Chattanooga or North Shore, so it's best to leave it behind at one of the RV parks. There is a free downtown electric shuttle service.

DO SO MUCH MORE

These attractions don't cover everything you can do in Chattanooga. Water adventures abound throughout the area with plenty of opportunities to canoe or kayak in the Tennessee River Blueway (the 45 miles between the Chickamauga and the Nickajack Dam) and nearby lakes. Whitewater rafting is big here, with several rivers running through Western North Carolina and Eastern Tennessee. If that's not your style,

you can cruise around the river and city on the **Southern Belle Riverboat**, which you can do in under two hours.

Prefer biking? Rent bikes downtown or ride the dirt trails in the surrounding parks. Two **U.S. Bicycle Route Systems** go through Tennessee, too, with USBR 121 and USBR 21 connecting to Chattanooga.

More into drinking up adventure? You'll find over 15 local breweries in Southeast Tennessee, plus you can tour **Chattanooga Whiskey**, which brews award-winning bourbon.

Whatever or wherever your taste for adventure lies, you are sure to find it in Chattanooga. You never know, you might be one of the families that fall in love with the area after a visit and decide to make it their permanent home. 🚗

Melissa L. Kauffman is a freelance writer and editor, who recently relocated to Chattanooga. For the past decade, Melissa and her husband have traveled around the country in their RV along with their dogs and parrots.



EWY MEDIA / ADOBE STOCK



MELISSA L. KAUFFMAN

The Walnut Street Bridge is for pedestrians only and is known for its spectacular views and as a great place to meet new friends.

WHERE TO STAY

There is a range of RV campgrounds in the southeast around Chattanooga. Where you stay depends on what activity you most want to do.

River Life RV Resort: Located on the banks of the Tennessee, **River Life RV Resort** has both 30- and 50-amp full hookup sites. There's a limited number of spots, so reserve in advance. (21448 River Canyon Road; 423-413-7411)

Ocoee RV Park: Just outside of the Cherokee National Forest and Cleveland, Tennessee, is **Ocoee RV Park**. Located just 45 minutes from downtown Chattanooga, this campground is perfect for those who want to kayak, canoe or whitewater raft because it's close to several outdoor adventure companies. Includes a dog park, showers and laundry facilities. (1765 US-64, Benton; 423-582-2258)

Lookout Mountain/Chattanooga West KOA Holiday: Part of the KOA campgrounds, **Chattanooga West** is the closest to Lookout Mountain and downtown Chattanooga. Includes all the KOA amenities: pool, frisbee/disc golf, bathrooms and dog park. (930 Mountain Shadows Drive, Trenton, GA; 423-661-7655)



MELISSA L. KAUFFMAN

The Hunter Museum of American Art is housed in three buildings that represent 100 years of architectue. Above is the 21st century waterfront west wing, a \$22 million expansion that was completed in 2005.

The Coolidge Park Antique Carousel (left) was originally constructed in 1894 and was restored by local carver Bud Ellis, who ran Horsin' Around woodcarving school.



Setting the Bar HIGH

National Indoor RV Centers is not only a Top 10 authorized Tiffin dealer, it also offers a menu of services that differentiate it from other companies.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEVE BLUME

At a time when most RV companies are hanging on by their fingernails, Tiffin's newest authorized dealer is thriving. **National Indoor RV Centers** (NIRVC) was launched in 2009 by founder/President/CEO and visionary Brett Davis, who is a full-time RVer himself. Initially, NIRVC offered service, indoor storage, wash and detail, and paint and body before venturing into sales at the end of 2014. Currently, there are six locations — Atlanta, Dallas, Las Vegas, Nashville, Phoenix and Washington, D.C. — and 11 more planned. In the company's first six months of selling Tiffin Motorhomes, it has already earned a spot in Tiffin's Top 10.

NASHVILLE CENTER

Last December, I searched for indoor RV storage facilities near me, and NIRVC in Nashville was at the top of the list. I incorrectly assumed that's all NIRVC offered. In April 2024, I had an opportunity to peek behind

the curtain and meet with Davis and learned much, much more.

The Nashville location is visible from I-40 but seeing it up close blew me away. It's a sparkling new 200,000-square-foot, squeaky-clean building with a full hookup RV parking area in the rear. Davis builds his centers to maximize storage space and efficiency rather than purchasing existing warehouse space.

There are 20 service bays plus a full paint and body center with a 75-foot paint booth. Modern offices and a comfortable customer waiting area are first class. When we sat down to talk, my first question to Davis was, "How did all this come about?"

THE UNIQUE BUSINESS MODEL

Davis explained that he and his children loved their first motorhome purchased in 1985, but his wife hated it. "Before a trip I would pick it up at the gravel storage lot where it had been sitting unplugged, and it was always dirty and smelled awful



inside,” he said. “I would plug in a trickle charger the day before departure. Then we had to spend an hour filling up the fresh tank and finding somewhere to air up the tires. No one had a better option, so I started thinking of one.”

Davis looked around and saw that the storage, service and washing were fragmented mom-and-pop operations with mostly negative impressions. He asked himself, “What if there was a place where you could store your motorhome indoors and plugged into 50-amp service, and when you picked it up, the tires had been checked, it was washed and any service you needed was already done? What if that place could also sell you a new coach,

take care of all the service, and even fix any bumps that happened along the way?”

And that, my friends, is the business that Davis built!

BY THE NUMBERS

According to Davis, manufacturers shipped 45,879 motorhomes in 2023 (according to the **RV Industry Association**), and dealers sold 39,737 motorhomes (per **Statistical Surveys, Inc.**), which is less than one inventory turn per year industry-wide. By comparison, NIRVC turns its inventory more than eight times per year. “NIRVC is a high-volume, low-margin dealer, shooting for only a 4% gross profit margin. Service is the hub of our

wheel, and sales is merely a funnel for our storage, finance, collision, wash and detail, and service businesses,” Davis said.

Unlike most RV dealers, NIRVC does not rely on a lot of advertising. Instead, it focuses on what Davis refers to as “differentiators,” the things that set NIRVC apart, and investing in relationships by creating personal interactions at rallies and events.

DIFFERENTIATORS

“As far as differentiators are concerned, no one comes close to our indoor storage capacity,” Davis said.

For example, when the Nashville location is fully leased, NIRVC will have 2,300 coaches



stored companywide. They are also the largest Class A collision repair company in the nation, so Davis considers the paint and body service to be another huge differentiator.

“We service all coaches, regardless of where they were purchased. With our online service portal, customers can schedule storage drop off and pick up along with extra services such as washing and detailing. They can schedule service and follow the status of any repairs in progress and warranty claims made and know what we know without waiting on the phone for a service manager,” Davis said. “We also offer free four corner weighing at all our locations.”

NIRVC also sells several specialized products. Tire failure on a moving RV can be catastrophic, so Davis co-founded a company (with a partner who develops armor for the military) that makes a flat tire device called **RetroBand**. Another product is **Proteng**, a fire-suppression system, sold exclusively through NIRVC.

Accurate information guides every decision NIRVC makes, and Davis said that they track everything and share it with customers. “For example, we thoroughly inspect new coaches when they arrive and hold manufacturers accountable. Our website shows defects per unit (DPU) by manufacturer and class. We will

Tiffin Motorhomes President Leigh Tiffin (left) and NIRVC founder Brett Davis.

NIRVC's Angie Morell (in the blue vest) shows the Zephyr brochure to an interested buyer (right).

At an NIRVC event, this quilt (far right) was auctioned off. The bids and subsequent donations resulted in a \$40,000 donation to the Wounded Warrior Project.



be adding our warranty ratings of chassis and motorhome manufacturers, and extended service plans by the third quarter,” he said. “Soon, customers will see real-time motorhome market stats and the real cost of ownership by model, including projected resale value. I consider our DPU, warranty ratings and market stats with cost of ownership to be three additional differentiators.”

In a time where customers are complaining about the lack of service and quality in the RV industry, Davis is openly sharing his data for full transparency.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Rallies and events create opportunities for RVers to build relationships because everyone there already owns a coach.

I first met Davis at a rally — the All-Inclusive Motorhome (AIM) Club rally at the Florida RV Supershow in January 2024. I managed to get into one of the club’s reserved RV spaces just outside the fairgrounds gate. During the first evening’s social event, I learned that NIRVC had actually created AIM in 2018 and is the largest sponsor.

After the happy hour and burgers, propane fire pits came out, the music came on and it was time to mingle. Talking to several people, I found that most of the crowd had either

purchased a coach or had a great NIRVC customer service story to share. Someone pointed out Davis, standing quietly in a corner, and I made it my mission to meet him.

Davis is known as a humble man who avoids stages, the spotlight and microphones. Some of his employees jokingly claim he sleeps with his spreadsheets, and I understood why once we started talking about the RV industry. His knowledge and grasp of various statistics were amazing. After comparing calendars, we agreed to meet at the Nashville location in late April for a tour of the facility.

Before my visit, NIRVC held two customer-appreciation events with seminars, food and entertainment at **The Ridge Outdoor Resort** in Sevierville, Tennessee, each lasting three days. Like any rally, there was plenty of time for relationship building. Freightliner was there and explained its new **PowerGlide** agreement with Tiffin and how they would provide service through their network, then **Tiffin Motorhomes** President Leigh Tiffin shared some of his thoughts on the current market. Also present was NIRVC National Sales Director Angie Morell, who is a star in her own right on **YouTube**, where she shares tours of all the new NIRVC coaches. Parked out front were several new coaches that people could explore, including a Zephyr!



A CARING COMMUNITY

Have you ever heard of a \$40,000 quilt? A handmade quilt was donated by one of the attendees at the customer-appreciation event to be auctioned off, with proceeds going to the **Wounded Warrior Project**, a charity that helps injured veterans. Another guest offered to match the winning bid, which was ultimately \$5,000. Donations continued pouring in, and the grand total raised during the event was close to \$40,000. This amazing RV community is filled with generous, patriotic owners who really care, and NIRVC is right in the middle of it.

The NIRVC **Music City Motorhome Expo VIP Experience** in June was created to provide 300 guests an exclusive preview of over 120 Class A, B and C 2025 model year motorhomes, including the opportunity to test drive them. With entertainment provided by country artists **Josh Turner** and **Diamond Rio**,

the Music City experience couldn’t get any better. The cost you paid to stay in your coach in the event area (\$1,495) or for the day pass (\$495) will be applied to any coach purchase made in the next 12 months.

According to Davis, “Other dealers get upset that we sell at such low margins, but we want volume and to be constantly turning over our inventory.”

Every RV dealer in America would jump at the opportunity to have 300 prospective customers paying to attend a sales event and providing their own version of a VIP experience, but I can’t think of another that could actually pull it off. Congratulations, NIRVC, on a job well done! 🚐

A retired entrepreneur, Steve Blume and his wife, Nancy, spend half the year on the road and the other half at their Brentwood, Tennessee, home. His articles have appeared in newspapers and magazines on multiple topics.

DESTINATION: CHINCOTEAGUE / ASSATEAGUE, VIRGINIA

Vacation on **Virginia's Eastern Shore**

Visit the picturesque Chincoteague and Assateague area
and see the famous wild ponies, birds and more!

BY KELLIE B. GORMLY

XAVIER ASCANIO / ADOBE STOCK

For the past several years, I have cherished my annual drive from Pittsburgh to Virginia's Eastern Shore, where I visit my cousins where they live in the Chincoteague area at the top of the fingerlike strip of land that is separated from the mainland of Virginia by the iconic Chesapeake Bay. Getting there truly is half the fun — at least if you're driving onto the 70-mile-long Eastern Shore peninsula from the west through the Annapolis, Maryland, area on U.S. Route 50. The view from driving over the Chesapeake Bay Bridge is breathtakingly spectacular!

Once you get onto Chincoteague Island, you will find this cute town very charming. It's adjacent to **Assateague Island National Seashore**, where the legendary Chincoteague ponies live in a beautiful area of beaches and trees.

For tourism information about the Virginia Eastern Shore, Chincoteague and Assateague, check out visitesva.com, chincoteague.com and assateagueisland.com.

TOM'S COVE VISITOR CENTER

There is so much fun and scenic stuff to do in the immediate vicinity of Chincoteague Island and Assateague Island, mostly revolving around nature and the outdoors.

A good starting point for your visit is the **Tom's Cove Visitor Center**, located near the beach parking areas where you will park for a delightful day at the beach at Assateague Island National Seashore. This place has beachcombing exhibits, a marine aquarium, a bookstore, a touch tank and lots of informational brochures about fun things you can do in the region. (8586 Beach Road; 757-336-6577)

SEE WILD PONIES

A visit to the Chincoteague/Assateague region isn't complete without seeing the beloved herd of some 300 wild ponies that roam the beaches, inland pine forests, and salt marshes of Assateague Island. You can see



The U.S. Coast Guard maintains the Assateague Lighthouse (right) as an active navigational aid.

You can see many birds, including Snow Geese, (opposite page) at Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge.

KOSOFF / ADOBE STOCK



BRIAN E. KUSHNER / ADOBE STOCK

RV PARKS ON THE EASTERN SHORE

Along the Eastern Shore peninsula, RVers can choose from several campgrounds to park and enjoy some rest and relaxation. Some are on the east Atlantic Coast, some border the Chesapeake Bay facing west, and some are inland.

Thousand Trails Virginia Landing: This cozy campground sits near the Atlantic Coast and offers tranquility on the shore with its own clamming area. **Thousand Trails** has 285 sites and offers volleyball, crabbing and bird watching. (40226 Upshur Neck Road, Quinby; 757-442-4853)

Sun Outdoors Chesapeake Bay: Formerly called the Tall Pines Harbor Campground, this camp is nestled along the Potomac Sound, a mini bay of the Chesapeake Bay. The camp includes a private beach and pool, and themed weekends with special activities. **Sun Outdoors** offers seven types of RV sites. (8107 Tall Pines Lane, Temperanceville; 757-824-0777)

Sun Outdoors Chincoteague Bay: This RV resort and campground is right on Chincoteague Island, near many of the regional fun activities. You will share the campground's RV slots with lots of rental cottages. **Sun Outdoors** has a private swimming pool and fishing pier and boardwalk. (2272 Main St.; 855-462-3423)

Tom's Cove Park: Located on the island, this campground overlooks Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge and Assateague Island National Seashore Park, where you can see the famous wild ponies. **Tom's Cove Park** has three fishing piers, a boat ramp and marina, a recreational clubhouse, a swimming pool, and a large country store with groceries. (8128 Beebe Road; 757-336-6498)

Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park Chincoteague Island: I can't help but smile at the thought of the mischievous cartoon bear waiting to poach my sandwiches. At **Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park** in the heart of Chincoteague, guests will get free passes (through September 2) to the on-site Maui Jack's Waterpark, which has fun slides and other water features. (6742 Maddox Boulevard; 757-336-3111)

Pine Grove Campground and Waterfowl Park: Among these 60 acres of pine trees are six ponds that serve as sanctuaries for waterfowl like ducks, geese, swans, egrets and herons. **Pine Grove Campground** is a great place for bird lovers to take their RV and enjoy a nature retreat. (5283 Deep Hole Road; 757-336-5200)

the equines on driving tours, or you can take a pony-sighting cruise. Try the **Pony Express Nature Cruise**, which takes you past the spots where you are most likely to spot the animals from the water. You will probably see Bald Eagles, and maybe even catch a glimpse of dolphins. (757-336-5956)

A good time to schedule a summer trip to the area is late July. On July 24, tens of thousands of spectators will gather in the area to watch the 99th annual **Chincoteague Pony Swim**. The famous Saltwater Cowboys round up the herd, and then, they guide the ponies in a swim across the Assateague Channel and to the east side of Chincoteague Island. It's quite a spectacle to watch!

CHINCOTEAGUE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

For a beautiful walk through nature and the chance to see wild animals, spend a day at the **Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge**. Here, you can walk along 15 miles of hiking trails and relax on the beach. You might spot any of more than 200 species of birds, along with deer, dolphins and other wildlife. (8231 Beach Road; 757-336-6122)

ASSATEAGUE LIGHTHOUSE

There's something so charming and nostalgic about lighthouses, and Assateague Island has a red and white striped one you can visit and climb inside on the southern end of the

WHERE TO EAT IN CHINCOTEAGUE

We drew these eatery choices from personal experience and recommendations from family and friends. The vast majority of these places are on Maddox Boulevard, which is definitely the town's restaurant row.

Scoops of Fun: It's not summer without ice cream, and you can get some great scoops at **Island Creamery**. This is a regional chain with three locations, and the flagship original place is the Chincoteague Scoop Shop, which opened in 1975. You can get ice cream cones with scoops in a few dozen flavors, sundaes, shakes or an ice cream cake. (6243 Maddox Blvd.; 757-336-6236)

Coffee House: For a coffee shop with much more than coffee, check out **AmaRin Coffee USA** where you can get any kind of hot or cold coffee beverage, tea, baked goods and breakfast foods. (6141 Maddox Blvd.; 757-336-7229)

Designer Donuts: With the beach and the world-famous ponies in the region, **Sandy Pony Donuts** is perfectly named. The shop has 24 flavors of made-to-order donuts with cute names, like Porky Pony, Aww Shucks, Pony Party and Jingle Shells. You can also get teas, smoothies and acai bowls. (6276 Maddox Blvd.; 757-336-7246)

Mexican Favorites: For a hearty Mexican meal, check out **Lily's Little Mexico**. They have all the favorites ranging from tacos to burritos to fajitas and quesadillas, plus a vegetarian menu. At Lily's, you can eat outside or take the food back to camp. (6700 Maddox Blvd.; 757-336-7130)

Seafood Fare: Being an island and coastal area, Chincoteague has its fair share of seafood restaurants. Favorites include **AJ's on the Creek**, a more upscale restaurant that has much more than seafood — steaks, pastas, salads and breakfast are on the menu. With the proximity to the Chesapeake Bay, the crab cakes are especially popular. (6585 Maddox Blvd.; 757-894-7209)

Waterside Dining: Enjoy good views and the freshest seafood catch, plus some other delicious entrees, at **The Village Restaurant & Lodge**. Oysters, crabs, scallops and shrimp abound on the menu. (6576 Maddox Blvd.; 757-336-5120)

Casual Dining: Located right on the gorgeous Assateague Channel, **The Pearl** is a casual seafood restaurant where you have a bird's-eye view of the iconic Assateague Lighthouse. The menu offers lots of fish dishes as well as other items like flatbreads and a deck bar called The Pony Pen. You'll find something to enjoy here. (7452 East Side Road; 757-336-5644)



AJ's on the Creek

FROM AJ'S ON THE CREEK



BO / ADOBE STOCK



BOB BREWER / UNSPLASH



FROM IRON PONY ADVENTURE PARK

While on a boat tour (above), you can catch glimpses of wild ponies as well as birds like Snowy Egrets (far left).

Iron Pony Adventure Park (left) offers fun for all.

island. The **Assateague Lighthouse**, 142 feet tall, was built in 1867 and is listed on the Virginia Historic Register. A major restoration project, including a new paint job, started in 2008. Now, you can climb the lighthouse most weekend days from April through November. It's a fantastic view! (Assateague Island National Seashore; 757-336-3696)

IRON PONY ADVENTURE PARK

If you like climbing, heights and thrills, check out **Iron Pony Adventure Park**, which is Chincoteague's newest attraction for family fun. At this aerial adventure course, you move from platform to platform via ladders, tight ropes, balance beams, wobbly bridges and cargo nets. The Pony Plunge is a 26-foot leap. Participants are always in safety harnesses, so it's a safe adventure. (4368 Pension St.; 757-336-7118)

MUSEUM OF CHINCOTEAGUE ISLAND

For history buffs, the **Museum of Chincoteague Island** is a must-see. Here, you will learn about local stories like the legendary Chincoteague ponies, Misty and Stormy. Popular artifacts to view include items that washed ashore from shipwrecks, models of ships that sailed around Chincoteague way back in history, and the 1st Order Fresnel Lens from the Assateague Island Lighthouse. The museum is open from March through early December. (7125 Maddox Blvd.; 757-336-6117) 🚗

Kellie B. Gormly is an award-winning veteran journalist. She writes for publications including **The Washington Post**, **Woman's World** and the **History Channel**. She lives in Pittsburgh and lives to travel — both via road trips and airplanes. Kellie's website is kelliebgormly.com.

Group Travel for Solo RVers



NATALIA ARTEEVA / ADOBE STOCK

Group travel offers the best of both worlds for people traveling alone: camaraderie and plenty of solo adventures.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY JENELL JONES

There we were — stuck in the mud. As we surveyed the verdant field where we had camped for a week, we realized how lucky we were because we were not alone. Solo RV travel has its allure, but when you're stuck, it's so much better to be stuck with your RV travel club.

Imagine this: Pella, Iowa, May 2024. Your RV club has set up camp in a picturesque field, ready to enjoy the renowned **Tulip Time**. The private property boasts rolling hills, serene ponds and a perfectly flat, level field for parking your RV. Everything is idyllic until the sky suddenly opens up and unleashes a deluge. Rain, rain and more rain.

By week's end, all five of the Class As (including two Tiffins) were mired in the muck. After digging out as much mud by hand as we could, we had to use two of our tow vehicles to drag out the RVs. It was a day-long affair with many helping hands.

This was not the first time I was grateful for an RV club where camaraderie and a tow rope are always close at hand. RV clubs aren't just about practical help — they're also about the shared experiences and the unexpected friendships that turn a solo journey into a cherished adventure. We already look back at Mud Bog 2024 with fond memories.

RETIREMENT: A NEW CHAPTER

Upon retiring, I initially embraced a leisurely lifestyle, content to sit at home, watch TV and putter around the house. I learned to enjoy the freedom of being off the clock and grew comfortable not answering to someone or something every day. For about two years, this routine suited me perfectly. However, it soon became clear that gardening and having lunch with friends wouldn't transform me into the next health guru or keep my brain from turning into a mushy potato.

Craving the joy of learning and new experiences, I decided to embark on a grand adventure across Europe. I hiked the breathtaking Amalfi Coast, explored the champagne region of France, and immersed myself in learning the King's English in London. This journey reignited my passion for discovery and reminded me that retirement is just the beginning of a new chapter. But what did that look like? In time I came to realize it was an RV.

A group of travelers bike through Harper, Texas, and camped on private property to see the solar eclipse in April 2024.



HITTING THE ROAD

I began to imagine traveling the country with all the comforts of home right there with me. No more hotels, heavy luggage or searching through crammed backpacks. I would explore and see the country in style. Once I bought my Allegro Open Road in 2020, I was ready to start the adventure. And what an adventure I had those first two years.

Traveling solo, I spent a summer in Skagway, Alaska, rode a mule around the rim of the Grand Canyon, snowmobiled around Yellowstone, drove the Pacific Coast Highway, canoed the Lewis and Clark Trail, and worked at a fancy RV resort in Bar Harbor, Maine. I traveled continuously for 24 months, checking on my house and visiting it only four times. I knew I had found my new life of adventure and memories.

There are countless perks to hitting the road, and we have the stats to prove it. First, traveling is a mental health magic wand, slashing stress and boosting happiness levels. According to a study by the **Global Commission on Aging** and the **Transamerica Center for Retirement Studies**, 89% of people reported feeling much less stressed after just a day or two of travel — think of traveling as a fast pass to relaxation!

Travel also supercharges your brainpower, enhancing cognitive flexibility and creativity. Plus, all that exploring keeps you physically active, which is great for your health. New sights and experiences keep your brain buzzing, fostering neuroplasticity and potentially delaying cognitive decline.

After that initial rush of excitement and travel, reality started to set in. I missed the connections of friends, and my pals “back home” didn’t quite get my new nomadic lifestyle. My mom was convinced I was one pothole away from financial ruin, and my sisters were certain I’d end up lost in the wilderness, fending off bears with a spatula. To top it off, I had checked everything off my bucket list and found myself wondering what to do next.

IS IT LONELY TRAVELING SOLO?

The answer to this question can be summed up in three ways: 1) nope, 2) not usually and 3) sometimes. By the end of the first couple years, my biggest worry was where to go next. I mean, I was a full-time traveler now — no sticks-and-bricks home to return to and plop down for a bit. So, I started researching RV clubs. I found sever-



al that offered fabulous month-long trips, regional clubs and even some specifically for women. However, none of them quite clicked with me. A \$12,000 month-long trip? Not exactly realistic for a full-time solo RVer. And a one-week meetup that would take five days to reach? Yeah, not practical unless I figured out teleportation or how to use water for fuel.

I knew it was important not to isolate myself, no matter how much fun I was having. Socialization is critical, especially as we age. It’s vital for our mental health, and research shows that loneliness among older adults is a significant and growing concern. Nearly one-fourth of adults aged 65 and older are considered socially isolated. According to a report by the **National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine**, social isolation and loneliness in older adults are associated with a 50% increased risk of dementia, a 29% increased risk of heart disease and a 32% increased risk of stroke. Additionally, loneliness can lead to higher rates of depression and anxiety, exacerbating existing health conditions.

Now, I’ve always been the life of the party, always ready to go to lunch, the movies or



Experiences with the Wandering Individuals Network include hiking the Volksmarch in Crazy Horse, South Dakota (far left), exploring the Everglades (above) and celebrating with a “burning van” ceremony (left).

anywhere I was invited. I’m comfortable in my own skin and crack myself up regularly, but I knew that in the long run, my health would suffer if I continued to live and travel by myself. After all, there’s only so much talking to my GPS I can do before it starts suggesting therapy instead of directions.

LONE WOLF VIBES WITH A GROUP SELFIE TWIST

I embrace the joys of being a single older traveler — like a lone wolf, but with more sunscreen and sensible shoes. Despite the many benefits, one must consider safety and practical planning. Sure, you could go solo, but traveling in a group is like having a squad of bodyguards that double as impromptu photographers.

Group travel is fun for solo RVers and includes activities like this hike up Crack Trail in Lake Havasu, Arizona, in February 2024 (right).

In Pella, Iowa, a club member was stuck in the mud (far right). Several members pitched in to get her out.



Take it from me. During one trip, I wandered off the beaten path to visit a little-known county park with beautiful water views. I ended up on a random dirt road for eight miles with no way to turn around, wondering if I was about to star in the next episode of “Lost.” I never did see the beautiful view.

In the end, I am a woman traveling alone, facing the hard reality that solo female travelers can be more vulnerable to certain crimes like theft, harassment or assault. I mean, I didn’t want my life to be featured on “I Survived: Solo Edition.”

On the other hand, group travel is much safer. Groups face fewer incidents of crime. Bad guys prefer less of a challenge and more of a stealthy approach — like cat burglars, but with worse fashion choices.

Group travel also means you have someone to share responsibilities with, so you’re less likely to get lost, scammed, or find yourself negotiating with a llama and a suspicious market vendor (another story for another time). The **Adventure Travel Trade Association** found that organized groups feel safer — probably because there’s always someone to scream “drive!” if things get sketchy. So, while I embraced my inner lone adventurer, there’s something to be said for safety in numbers and having friends to laugh with when you back into the same tree — twice.



FINDING MY TRIBE

I finally found my tribe, the ultimate RV club for solo travelers: the **Wandering Individuals Network** (WIN). Since 1988, WIN has been the go-to club for those who love a solo journey but crave a sense of community. It all started around a campfire with seven friends, longing for companionship and security among fellow RV enthusiasts. Most of the initial group were women — an oddity at the time, cruising solo in their RVs.

WIN offers trips throughout the US, Canada and parts of Mexico, catering to our wanderlust. One unique feature? The trips range from six weeks to six months, perfect for those who want to truly immerse themselves in the adventure.

The Club’s unofficial motto “we travel on our own but together” means a member can join up with any group at any time and stay as long as

WIN ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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In March 2024, a WIN-ing group hiked in Sabino Canyon Recreation Area in Coronado National Forest in Arizona.

they choose. And the cherry on top? An annual membership is just \$125, with no contract.

It’s a no-brainer to join and hit the road with a gang of sunscreen-slinging, sensible-shoe-sporting road warriors! We’re a diverse bunch from all walks of life — widows, the never-married and folks with partners who prefer the sofa to the open road. It is a fulfilling and simple life, packed with adventures and activities. Full disclosure, I loved the club so much I bought it in March 2023!

WIN-ING BENEFITS

I can honestly say I’m healthier and have a better quality of life, thanks to WIN. The unique experiences I’ve had with my fellow wanderers are priceless. Forget the traditional work schedule or a quiet retirement — we’re all about fulfillment, happiness and freedom.

I’ve crisscrossed the United States and Canada, visited 40 national parks, kayaked the Bay of Fundy, hit the extreme four corners of the U.S., sipped coffee at the original Starbucks, hiked Acadia National Park, and floated in hot-air balloons. And that’s just scratching the surface!

In November 2024, we’re caravanning to Mexico for a month of beach living, and in May, two groups set off for a summer-long adventure through Alaska. Most importantly, I’ve found friends who share my independent spirit and unshakable wanderlust. So, if you’re ready to trade the mundane for the extraordinary, come join WIN, and let the adventures begin! 🗺️

*Jenell Jones lives and travels extensively in her Tiffin. She has looped the U.S. three times and visited 41 of the 62 national parks. She owns and operates the **Wandering Individuals Network**, an RV club for the solo traveler.*

A SIGHT TO BEHOLD: CARHENGE

Almost 40 years ago,
a man used old cars
to build a replica
of Stonehenge
in the small town of
Alliance, Nebraska.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOGRAPHS
BY SCOTT FOX



CARHENGE



STONEHENGE

NORBEL / ADOBE STOCK



Most of the vehicles in Carhenge are American cars. In addition to the Stonehenge replica, there are other interesting sculptures made from car parts (opposite page).

Carhenge is a modern interpretation of Stonehenge using old cars, which was designed by **Jim Reinders**. It must have been a long cold winter in 1986-1987 for Reinders to erect a replica of Stonehenge. I can't come up with a better reason other than a long cold winter for someone to stack cars in Alliance, Nebraska. Now, **Carhenge** stands with precise alignment to the solar solstice just like the real Stonehenge.

SCALED TO SIZE

The circle at Carhenge is made of 38 cars and is scaled to approximate the circle at Stonehenge. Each car represents one of the huge stone blocks. Part of the scaling at Carhenge was to reduce the size of the circle.

Reinders studied the structure and shape of Stonehenge to correctly align the cars in a fashion that would replicate the alignment of the circle with the summer solstice.

VISITING CARHENGE

Carhenge (2151 CR 59, Alliance, NE; 308-762-5400) is open daily from dawn to dusk. Admission is free (donations are appreciated). The **Pit Stop Gift Shop** is open seasonally from May 23 to September, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

DETROIT STEEL

Rumor has it that there are three cars buried so deep at Carhenge that nothing is visible. These cars were made in other countries and didn't mix well with the cars, which were mostly built in Michigan, that are visible above ground. Perhaps a few thousand years from now these three buried cars may be uncovered and will puzzle archaeologists just like Stonehenge puzzles us now.

Every time I look at these pictures, I see a different car that I hadn't seen before or perhaps didn't recognize. Some are really easy to identify, and some are much harder. Most of these cars are luxury models from the mid-1960s, but some are from the '70s and a few prior to 1960.

The glass in all the cars have been replaced with steel to prevent breakage. And all the cars were coated with thick layers of gray paint to preserve them.

ROADSIDE ATTRACTION

Each summer, Alliance hosts hundreds of visitors who come to Carhenge to see the sunset during the summer solstice. The town originally wanted the car display torn down but has since warmed to it. Now, local residents seem to like the notoriety that Carhenge brings to their town.



The closest regional airports to Carhenge in Alliance, Nebraska, is in Rapid City, South Dakota, and Cheyenne, Wyoming.



The Nebraska Department of Highways wanted Carhenge to be declared a junkyard, which is appropriate since most of the cars came from junkyards and most are missing several key parts.

Carhenge is currently owned and operated by the city of Alliance.

2017 SOLAR ECLIPSE

More than 4,000 people descended on Alliance to view the 2017 solar eclipse. What better place to view the eclipse than a loca-



tion dedicated to the movement of the sun? As luck would have it, the 2017 path of the eclipse aligned the sun and moon directly across Alliance. Reinders was happily surprised that Carhenge was in the path of the eclipse. (The recent 2024 solar eclipse was best seen farther south.)

WORTH A TRIP!

In addition to Carhenge, other car parts have been assembled at the site, which adds to the unique attraction. A few years ago, a building was erected on the site that serves as a visitor center during the summer.

Jeske Over The Hill Campground is located just north of Carhenge, and they invited us to stay to experience Carhenge at sunset. However, because it was April and not during the summer solstice, we chose not to stay. Our visit was on a cold, windy, blue day, which ended up being perfect to take these unbelievable photos. 🚗

Scott and Tami Fox document their RV travel adventures on their blog site, [FoxRVTravel](#), where this article originally appeared. Follow them as they explore various places around the country.

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