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HORSEPOWER AND TORQUE

TRAILER LIFE

FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

WEEKEND
PROJECT

4 PRACTICAL
ACCESSORIES
FOR YOUR
PICKUP

Page 40



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COZY NEST 
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Anthony Parker is a welder at Lance Camper. His obsession for precision and strength has helped make Lance Camper number one in travel trailer sales* and the recipient of the *Trailer Life Reader's Choice Gold Award*. Anthony's never met Dave and Kristy, but over the next couple decades of vacations, weekend getaways, and exploring too many hiking trails to count, he'll be with them. Visit your nearest Lance Camper dealer and experience Anthony's passion for yourself.

The logo features the word "Lance" in a stylized, italicized font with a metallic, 3D effect. Below it is a blue and silver swoosh graphic.

lancecamper.com



*In the 14'-23' segment.

Lance Campers, Circle 127 on Reader Service Card

Features

ON THE
COVER

16 NORTHWOOD WOLF CREEK

Equally at home on the beach or in the back-country, the four-season 850 truck camper is up for anything.

57 ALL SYSTEMS GO!
ASA Electronics' third-generation iN-Command with Global Connect lets owners keep tabs on RV systems from almost anywhere in the world.

25 AIRSTREAM NEST

It's not your grandfather's shiny Silver Bullet, but this sleek new fiber-glass travel trailer has an allure all its own.

62 DIESEL VERSUS GAS
Is a diesel engine the right choice for your tow vehicle? To find the answer, we consider the facts and crunch the numbers.

28 GUIDE TO FULL-TIME RVING

For those considering a life on wheels, we offer some words of wisdom from two RV veterans.

70 GATEWAY TO SOUTHERN VERMONT
With its scenic beauty and many attractions, the Bennington area is a prime New England destination and a perfect camping spot.

40 AFTERMARKET CANDY STORE
DIYers can sweeten their ride with a truck-bed cover, running boards, bicycle rack and dash protector.

75 PLUG-IN (HORSE) POWER
By boosting horsepower, torque and driver confidence, 5-Star Tuning aims to rev up the RV-towing experience.

50 RVS ON THE HUNT
Having a base camp on wheels makes pursuing a classic outdoor pastime considerably more comfortable.

25

Departments

4 DRIVER'S SEAT Chris Dougherty's monthly commentary

6 LETTERS Your opinions, stories and feedback

9 AROUND THE BEND News, events, places and trends

81 TECH Hands On: TireMinder Smart TPMS | **84 10-Minute Tech**
86 RV Makeover | **88 RV Gear** | **90 RV Resolutions** | **92 RV Clinic**

106 ROADS TO ADVENTURE Zion National Park, Utah

YEAR-ROUND ADVENTURE

Full-time RVer Emily Fagan and her husband, Mark, make camp in Idaho's Wood River Valley. Whether you're just dipping your toes in the nomadic lifestyle or are ready to dive in, she offers some sound advice. Page 28.



57





To Your Health

It's no fun getting sick or injured when you're RVing, but getting stuck with a big medical bill makes things even worse

Like all travelers, RVers should be prepared for medical needs and emergencies when they're on the road. While the health-care climate is complex and can be a political hot potato, RVers need to understand what their insurance plan covers — and where.

Medical insurance is available in several types of plans. Two of the most popular are the health maintenance organization (HMO) and the preferred provider organization (PPO). What's important for traveling RVers to note is that HMOs offer state or regional in-network coverage and often don't pay for medical expenses outside the network, other than for emergencies. PPOs, which tend to have more

or on the road, you need to know what procedure to follow when seeking medical attention. For instance, does your insurer provide better coverage if you go to an urgent-care center rather than a hospital emergency room?

When traveling, be sure to have sufficient funds to handle copay charges and fees for medications, medical supplies and emergency transportation. You should also carry an up-to-date medical history, a list of physicians and medications, insurance information and emergency contacts, particularly if you have ongoing medical concerns. These records can be kept on paper or electronically on a smartphone. Apple's Health app, for example, can store this information and is accessible by emergency responders. A smartphone can also be used for video consultations with doctors or nurses, which are covered by some insurance plans.

Travel insurance is an option when venturing out of state or internationally. Ask your medical-insurance provider or agent for details, or research the plans offered by companies that specialize in travel insurance. Some plans cover emergency air evacuation and provide transportation to the most suitable hospital or a facility closer to home. Good Sam TravelAssist takes that a step further, providing transportation for family members and pets, and making sure your RV gets home.

Full-time RVers should be particularly knowledgeable about their medical insurance. For those thinking about jumping into the year-round lifestyle, full-timers Emily Fagan and Norm Roy have put together a primer to help pave the way (page 28).

Whether you dream of becoming a full-time RVer or are happy just getting out on the occasional weekend, we'll see you down the road. **TV**

— **Chris Dougherty**



Medical insurance plans vary, so check your coverage carefully before hitting the road to avoid costly mistakes later.

expensive plans, provide greater flexibility and coverage for out-of-network claims. Plans vary, so check your coverage carefully before hitting the road to avoid costly mistakes later.

Medical emergencies are generally covered by insurers at most locations. However, the definition of "emergency" varies from one company to another. Whether you're at home

FRESH COAT OF PAINT

Notice anything different? This month we've freshened up the look of *Trailer Life* while providing the same great content you've come to expect. In keeping with the magazine's makeover, this issue launches our new RV Makeover section featuring readers' trailer modifications (page 86). We're also introducing the Tech Ed Tip (page 84) and a Staff Pick on the new-products page, now called RV Gear (page 88). Let us know what you think at info@trailerlife.com.



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TRAILER LIFE

FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

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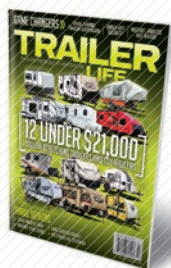
MIDSIZE TOW MASTER

HAPPY CAMPER

I read July's "Escape Hatch" about the Taxa Outdoors Mantis Trek while camping in the redwoods in our 2014 R-pod 179 that we tow with a 2016 Chevy Colorado LT Extended Cab 4x4. It has the factory towing package, but unlike the GMC Canyon Denali diesel Bruce W. Smith tested, it has the six-cylinder gas engine. We purchased the truck with towing a small trailer in mind and couldn't be happier with it.

We live in the foothills of the Oregon Cascades and have towed the R-pod more than 4,000 miles in the past 16 months. The trailer weighs around 3,600 pounds loaded, and we easily maintain highway speeds on mountain passes. We get 25 to 26 MPG solo, and average 15 MPG towing. We considered the diesel but found that it is not really needed with our combined weight, though it would be a good option if towing closer to maximum capacity.

Jeff Keto, Mehama, Oregon



HAVE A COMMENT?

Write to us at info@trailerlife.com or *Trailer Life*, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Please include your full name, city and state or province.



Dollar Stretchers

With great interest I read Stephanie and Jeremy Puglisi's July cover article, "12 Under \$21,000," but wondered why the roundup of "Dollar-Stretching Trailers and Toy Haulers" neglected to mention hybrid campers. We have owned our Jayco hybrid for nearly five seasons and find it to be the perfect transition from a pop-up camper, offering more than adequate living space for less than \$21,000.

Kathy Swedberg
St. Charles, Illinois



READER SURVEY: WHO DO YOU TRUST?

DON'T MISS THE CHANCE TO TELL US YOUR FAVORITE RV BRANDS AND BUSINESSES IN *TRAILER LIFE*'S 2018 READERS' CHOICE AWARDS. CAST YOUR VOTES BEFORE THE POLLS CLOSE ON SEPTEMBER 4.

www.trailerlife.com/2018-readers-choice-awards

All Quiet on the RV Front

I read July's "Pump Down the Volume" letters and sympathize with Tom Kutzlo whose water pump could wake up people three sites away. I own a Keystone Outback 31KFW fifth-wheel and was getting noise from the water lines vibrating against the interior walls. I replaced the original pump using extra rubber mounting and insulated every line I could get to with 1/2-inch foam pipe insulation. What a difference!

Wayne Bowden

East Wenatchee, Washington

We had the same issue in our 28-foot Trail-Lite travel trailer. I installed a small expansion tank downstream from the pump. It allows for a couple of toilet flushes or quick hand washes before the pump kicks on, and makes for quieter nights in the RV.

Lee Kelly, Suffolk, Virginia

Real-World Solutions

After not subscribing to *Trailer Life* for a few years, I recently received my first 2018 issue and didn't realize how much I missed it. I swear by 10-Minute Tech. The tips come from people like me conquering problems with simple fixes.

Joanne Verbridge

Tupelo, Oklahoma

I really appreciate 10-Minute Tech. Have you ever considered publishing all of the ideas?

John Schreiter

Mauston, Wisconsin

Three volumes of 10-Minute Tech tips are available on Amazon, although we stopped publishing these compilations in 2012. More recent tips can be found on our website, www.trailerlife.com, by clicking on the Tech tab, then clicking on 10-Minute Tech in the drop-down menu. — Editors

SUPER SERVICE

I was delighted to see the Outdoors RV Titanium Series 260RLS travel trailer highlighted in July's "Titanium Tough." My husband and I traveled nearly 6,000 miles round-trip last year to purchase an ORV travel trailer, and the journey was well worth it. We truly appreciate the effort and attention to detail directed toward the design of these RVs.

What Chris Hemer's article doesn't mention is the exceptionally high level of customer service the Outdoors RV team extends to its customers. I wouldn't be surprised at all to find out that ORV's responsiveness is the best in the industry.

Mary Hornung

Shokan, New York



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A woman with dark hair, wearing a white polo shirt with a "PROGRESSIVE" logo and a name tag, is riding a large, white, fluffy wolf. The wolf is standing on its hind legs and howling with its mouth open. The woman is pointing her right index finger towards the top right. They are in a dark forest at night, with a full moon in the sky. In the background, there are several vehicles: a camouflage-patterned SUV on the left, a white van in the center, and a dark pickup truck on the right. The scene is lit with a cool blue light, with some warmer light from the vehicles' headlights.

CREATURE SEEKERS

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The Texas Renaissance Festival rolls out the welcome mats for RVs and tents.

TODD MISSION, TEXAS

Get Thee to the Faire

Now in its 44th year, the Texas Renaissance Festival takes RVers and fellow revelers on a trip through time

— by Valerie Law

Lace your corset and shine up your chain mail for what's billed as the nation's largest Renaissance-themed event. On nine weekends this year, September 29 through November 25, merry-makers will stream into tiny Todd Mission (population: 111) for the annual Texas Renaissance Festival. Last year's event drew 644,917 festival-goers to the small town, situated 55 miles northwest of Houston.

Founded in 1974, the festival conjures up a 16th-century European hamlet with shops selling everything from bodices to broadswords, and costumed performers on dozens of stages. Acrobats juggle, jousters jab and falconers release birds of prey, while craftspeople practice glassblowing, candle-making

and blacksmithing. Following the nightly fireworks display, after-dark activities kick off for the 21-and-over crowd.

The festival is a colossal, if not always authentic, celebration of medieval and Renaissance life where cosplaying knights and nobility mingle with wizards, fairies and pirates. To keep the revelry and role-playing going all weekend, the 230-acre Fields of New Market campground hosts RVers and tent campers. For those without accommodations, 50 upscale "glamping" tents come furnished with a queen-size bed, two twins or four cots. Five rental cabins with two cots each are also available.

Food trucks and campground stores let overnighters stock up on snacks and supplies, and the restroom and shower facilities are a far cry from feudal privies. Quiet hours start at 10 p.m. on the family-friendly side, while carousing continues

into the wee hours on the other. Round-the-clock security guards keep everyone in check.

The Fields of New Market campground is open on festival weekends from noon on Thursday to noon on Monday. Campground admission runs \$30 per vehicle per weekend at the gate and \$25 if purchased online in advance. All campers must have a valid festival entry pass.

www.texrenfest.com

2018 TEXAS RENAISSANCE FESTIVAL

September 29-30	Oktoberfest
October 6-7	1001 Dreams
October 13-14	Barbarian Invasion
October 20-21	Pirate Adventure
October 27-28	All Hallows' Eve
November 3-4	Roman Bacchanal
November 10-11	Heroes and Villains
November 17-18	Highland Fling
November 23-25	Celtic Christmas

➔ Norsemen, knights and noble folk make merry on nine weekends this fall at America's largest Renaissance-themed event.



Catfish and Camping

On the outskirts of San Diego, Santee Lakes Recreational Preserve invites RVers to 194 scenic acres and a chain of seven small lakes for fishing and boating. The Good Sam Park fills its lakes with clean recycled water and strives to preserve native habitat, helping to attract some 175 bird species. Last year, the 300-site campground installed 55,000 square feet of sod and planted 100 trees, including sycamores, cottonwoods and carrotwoods.

While swimming is not permitted in the waterways, fishing is, and Santee Lakes makes the most of that at its annual Stockzilla weekend, October 6 and 7 this year. The lakes are heavily stocked for the event with 3,500 pounds of catfish, including tagged fish that pay off with prizes. — **Jeff Crider**

www.santeelakes.com



Built for Speed

● Most RVers want a toy hauler for transporting a golf cart, motorcycle or ATV, but what about a race car? That was the challenge when I got into autocross racing.

My husband and I decided to rent out our house in Utah and purchase a toy hauler so I could attend races, but it's hard to find an RV that can accommodate a 15-foot car. Fortunately, our salesperson at Camping World found a 45-foot Jayco Seismic Wave 416W fifth-wheel that has a 16-foot-long garage, and the car fits like a glove.

The Seismic Wave allows me to go to race-tracks with my car and my family, and have the convenience of a hot shower, warm meal and comfortable bed. I love the full-time trailer life and sharing this experience with my husband and our little min-pin mix, Boom. — **Jamie Moreno**

FAST TRACK

Half Colombian and half Ecuadorian, Jamie Moreno calls herself the Racing Chica. She competes in the Global Time Attack AWD enthusiast class driving her modified 2009 Subaru Impreza WRX. Keep up with her — if you can! — on her website. www.theracingchica.com

SMALL PACKAGES

From nostalgic teardrops and rugged off-roaders to more mainstream ultralights, easy-towing mini trailers can be surprisingly big on amenities



Jayco Hummingbird

Jayco launched its lightweight Hummingbird brand a couple of years ago. The latest model, the 13-foot 10RK (starting at \$13,478), is also the smallest. The nimble little trailer fits under standard garage doors and has a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 2,000 pounds. It offers a 54-by-74-inch bed up front and an exterior kitchen out back, and comes with self-adjusting electric brakes and Goodyear Endurance radial tires. www.jayco.com

Little Guy Mini Max

Manufactured in Pennsylvania by Liberty Outdoors, the 17-foot, 2-inch Mini Max (starting at \$23,000) has many of the same features as Little Guy's larger Max, but its 2,900-pound GVWR is 900 pounds lighter. Beyond a sizable refrigerator, the Mini has a microwave, a two-burner stove, and a queen bed or two singles. Options include off-road wheels and tires, an axle riser and a 100-watt solar panel. www.golittleguy.com



Escapod Topo Series

Based on the outskirts of Salt Lake City, Escapod builds hearty teardrops for taking into the backcountry. With a GVWR of 3,500 pounds, the 13-foot Topo Series (starting at \$13,800) has off-road suspension, 18 inches of ground clearance and Goodyear all-terrain tires. Other features include a 7-foot awning, Rhino-Rack roof rack, stainless-steel counters in the rear galley and a custom memory-foam mattress. www.escapod.us

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Making History in the Heartland

The RV company launched in the barn of a northern Indiana farm family now celebrates its golden year

Fifty years after opening its doors, Jayco is still innovating and still going strong. Established in 1968 by Lloyd and Bertha Bontrager on their family farm in northern Indiana, the company got its start with a line of pop-up tent trailers utilizing a wind-up mechanism invented by Lloyd.

A fortuitous decision to bring Al Yoder on board as sales manager and minority partner led to the production of 132 folding trailers in 1969. In 1971 the company entered the travel trailer market, selling 1,100 of them the first year.

Jayco went on to launch products

THEN AND NOW
The 1972 Jayco Jay Wren, above, was designed to fit in a garage. Like the company's initial folding trailer, the 2018 Jay Sport, left, features a clever lifting system.



PHOTOS: JAYCO

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like the kitschy Jay Tiki tent camper and the daring Jay-Trek, which featured a steerable front axle. And through challenges like the closure of its Kansas and Canada plants in 1974 and the tragic loss of Lloyd, his son Wendell and two others in a plane crash in 1985, the company has prevailed.

Jayco not only survived the dot-com crash and subsequent recession, it thrived, becoming the

largest privately held RV manufacturer in 2011, even as other manufacturers closed their doors. It built its millionth RV in 2016, and today operates 14 plants in two states and employs more than 4,000 workers.

Now part of Thor Industries, the company is marking its golden year by including anniversary badges on all 2018 and 2019 models. Happy 50th, Jayco. — **Chris Hemer**

☞ **IF YOU GO** Jayco welcomes guests at its Middlebury, Indiana, visitor center, located near the intersection of U.S. Route 20 and State Road 13. Open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., the restored 1880s farmhouse displays 50 years of company memorabilia and sells Jayco-branded merchandise. For an inside look at how its luxury fifth-wheel trailers are made, Jayco offers behind-the-scenes tours. The free tours take place Monday through Thursday at noon and can be booked in advance on the company's website.

www.jayco.com/50th



Something Finer in Carolina

Next summer, a new 840-site RV resort will open its gates in the Myrtle Beach area. And even though it's still under construction, Carolina Pines will be taking reservations for next summer's stays this fall. If all goes as planned, 470 campsites will accommodate RVers by Memorial Day 2019, with the remaining sites opening in the following years.

A Sun RV Resorts property, Carolina Pines is located in Conway near the junction of State Routes 22 and 90. In addition to full hookups and some pull-throughs, the resort will feature a waterpark and indoor and outdoor pools, along with playgrounds, an arcade, volleyball and basketball courts, a dog park, walking trails and rental cabins.

www.suncommunities.com

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RV Showroom of Yesteryear

Wood-paneled walls and two comfortable armchairs lend a homey touch to the living room. The kitchen features a four-burner stove, a wide sink and enough cabinet space for a week's worth of meals. A modern RV? Not quite. It's a fully restored 1941 Westcraft trailer at the Jack Sisemore Traveland RV Museum in Amarillo, Texas.

"Basically, RVs are the same as they were back then," says Sisemore, a longtime RV businessman who founded the museum in 2013 with his collection of vintage travel trailers and motorhomes. "They've just figured out ways to put in toilets, microwaves, awnings, furnaces, air conditioning and lighting."

Housed in the dealership once owned by Sisemore, the museum highlights a half century of RVs, starting with a 1921 Ford Model T Lamsteed Kampkar and a 1935 Airstream Torpedo. The most popular is the red 1948 Flxible Clipper used by the singing



Gornicke family in the 2006 Robin Williams movie *RV*. "It's a leaker and a squeaker," says Sisemore. "Drips oil and antifreeze like all the old cars did. But it runs, and it's ready to go right now."

The museum is open weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission is free. — *Richard Varr*
www.rvmuseum.net

MORE ONLINE

For more RV news you can use, visit our website.
www.trailerlife.com

20 QUESTIONS

If you missed the August issue's compilation of the most frequently asked tech questions from our RV Clinic column, you can find them on our website along with the answers.

30 ESSENTIALS

Even seasoned RV owners can learn from Lorisa and Ron Pierson's online-only checklist, "30 Must-Have Accessories for New RVers."

AIR OPUS IN ACTION

Go to our YouTube channel, TrailerLifeDIY, to see more of the unique self-inflating travel trailer featured on our August cover. [TV](#)

PHOTOS: RICHARD VARR

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Up for Anything

Northwood's four-season Wolf Creek 850 is a go-anywhere, anytime truck camper at home on the beach and in the mountains

— by Chris Dougherty

Wolf Creek Pass is high in the Rocky Mountains, which touts itself as having “the most snow in Colorado.” Wolf Creek truck campers, an apropos name for an RV built for all-weather adventures, are designed to handle snow and cold, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t equally suited for camping at the beach.

The opportunity to test a new Northwood Wolf Creek 850 on Cape Cod was too good to pass up, and thanks to Truck Camper Warehouse in West Chesterfield, New Hampshire, we were able to grab one in late April and put the truck camper through its paces in seaside temperatures that ranged from near 80 degrees Fahrenheit in the daytime to the low 40s at night. We boondocked on the beach at Sandy Neck in Barnstable and enjoyed full hookups one night at Sun RV Resorts’ Peters Pond campground

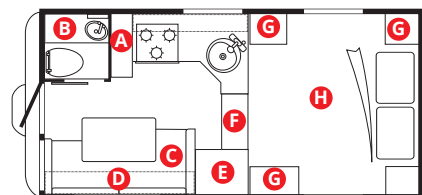


← The Wolf Creek's light weight and efficient layout were perfect for off-road beach travel in Massachusetts, and our F-350 handled the camper with ease.

OUTSIDE

The exterior lines and graphics of the Wolf Creek 850 are attractive, with a slight aerodynamic rake in the front and a modern-looking Wolf Creek logo across the cabover nose. The company uses a single piece of fiberglass in front from the roof to the floor to eliminate the problematic bottom cabover seam. The remainder of the seams are covered with traditional aluminum trim, sealed with butyl and caulk.

Although Wolf Creek is Northwood's lighter truck camper, there's no skimping on features. All lighting is LED, inside and out, except on the kitchen range hood. Exterior lighting is smartly placed on the rear below the Carefree of Colorado electric awning. The rear entry door features a friction hinge that holds the door in place in any position, eliminating the need for those inconvenient and difficult-to-use door holdbacks. A large steel storage bumper, which is part of the mandatory \$4,425 Wolf Pack package (meaning it's standard equipment) has locking doors on



- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| A) pantry | E) refrigerator |
| B) wet bath | F) step |
| C) roll-over sofa | G) wardrobe |
| D) overhead bunk | H) 58"x80" bed |

each end with a slide-out tray for storing essentials.

A separate sewer-hose tube on the passenger's side keeps most of the messiness well contained, and all the fittings and other items can go inside the bumper — providing they can get wet. The doors have no seals, and as we discovered driving through heavy rain, water flows easily into the bumper, filling the tray with water and soaking the contents. Adding stick-on weather-stripping might make this bumper more functional.

The test camper included the company's optional Fox Landing step system (\$1,043), which is a combination folding deck and

The 850 floorplan is one of the most comfortable and useful layouts for truck campers without a slideout, but Northwood ups the ante with a few options that you won't see everywhere.

in Sandwich, Massachusetts.

The 850 is one of two Wolf Creek floorplans Northwood offers in its lightweight truck-camper brand, but less weight doesn't make it inferior to its big brother, the Arctic Fox. The Wolf Creek lineup shares the fully welded aluminum frame, laminated walls and floor with the Arctic Fox, and is similarly designed for four-season livability, according to Northwood. But Wolf Creek truck campers have less bling and are a little smaller overall, resulting in lighter weights.

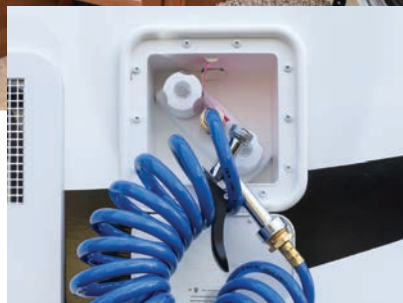
A unique feature of the Wolf Creek 850 is the optional table and roll-over sofa that replaces the standard dinette. The sofa slides several ways, transforming into a comfortable twin bed and maximizing floor space.



PHOTOS: MICHAEL GORDON AND CHRIS DOUGHERTY



🔧 The galley is nicely equipped and roomy, especially with the optional counter extension in place. The optional plastic kitchen sink is quite deep and surprisingly functional.



UTILITY-MINDED

Left: The exterior shower with a coil hose is convenient, practical and well designed, with hot and cold water. Below left: The Zamp portable solar plug adds to solar capacity. The camper is satellite- and cable-TV-ready. A removable 30-amp shorepower cord is standard.



steps. This is an interesting design, but being cantilevered off the bumper puts a tremendous amount of stress on the bumper and its mounts, and ours flexed more than we'd like.

As part of the Wolf Pack package, the 850 also comes with remote-controlled electric landing jacks, dual 5-gallon LP-gas cylinders, heated holding tanks, and a roof rack and ladder. The test unit included the roof ladder, but the roof rack was deleted by the dealer. The reason was the rear awning renders the ladder unusable because the retracted awning sticks out too far. We'd like to see a much deeper ladder that allows climbing above the awning and attaches to the roof for added stability. A toy-hauler-style side-mount ladder might be another option.

The rear utility door leads to the low-point drains, jack controller, and black- and gray-tank drain valves. The driver's side of the camper houses the outside shower and the LP-gas cylinder and battery compartments. The LP-gas and battery access doors are vented but insulated for cold-weather use.

The battery box will hold two 6-volt batteries, which are charged by the 55-amp converter, the 20-watt solar panel (with a 10-amp wall-mount Zamp Solar controller) or the charge line from the truck. The solar panel is barely

large enough to keep the batteries trickle-charged, let alone bring them up to full charge, which would require a solar array rated at 200 to 300 watts. Roof-mounted solar-panel options from the factory go as high as 100 watts (\$1,125).

The charge line from the truck saved our bacon, as it was cold on the beach, and running the furnace, lights, refrigerator and a CPAP device, the single 12-volt battery supplied



+ WHAT WE LIKED

All-weather capability, lightweight construction, remote-controlled electric landing jacks, versatile dinette, plentiful power outlets and charging ports

- WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE

Stronger rear-entry step, more accessible roof ladder, sealed dual-pane shower dome, cleaner sealant application, sealed rear-bumper compartment

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for our test unit couldn't keep up. We lost power at 3 in the morning and had to start the truck and let it run for the rest of the night, which took care of charging the battery. Needless to say, this is not a recommended practice, unless the truck is equipped with an engine high-idle control such as those from BD Diesel. We would probably opt for LiFePO4 batteries and an inverter-charger system, as well as adding a larger solar panel or utilizing the port for a portable Zamp solar-panel kit.

In addition to the standard rear awning, optional box awnings are available for both sides (\$848 each) and can be added after purchase. Thermopane windows are also an option (\$1,050).

INSIDE

The 850 floorplan is one of the most comfortable and useful layouts for truck campers without a slideout, but Northwood ups the ante with a few options that you won't see everywhere.

A booth dinette is standard, but the company offers a nice alternative, called a roll-over sofa (\$315). Instead of having a U-shaped dinette with standard cushions, there's a quasi jackknife sofa where the back rolls over and rests on the dinette table. The table has two sets of pedestal legs; the short ones are for use when the table is a bed support. The result is a comfortable twin bed and a more open floorplan when the bed is not set up. The table is also on slides that allow it to be pushed back toward the window for a roomier walkway



← The roll-over sofa converts to a twin bed. The overhead cabinet turns into an optional bunk for kids.

or toward the bathroom wall to allow more room for diners.

The downside is the loss of storage space under the dinette seats, but there is quite a bit of storage elsewhere. Across from the dinette is a tall closet, and there's a wardrobe next to the refrigerator and two more on the driver's side of the bed. The remaining cabinetry is roomy and leaves plenty of possibilities for customizing with shelves. The step leading up to the queen bed lifts to reveal another small storage cubby, and floor-level doors lead to the bed of the truck for additional storage of items that can be exposed to the elements.

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found in the Northwood camper. A Dometic range sits atop a functional pan drawer with a built-in knife block behind it. Above the range are a microwave oven and a snap-close exterior vent. The plastic single-bowl sink works surprisingly well and is deeper and wider than many we've seen. The optional counter extension (\$53) connects with wood and clamshell brackets above the step to the bed and stores neatly in the passenger's side shirt wardrobe. The 5-cubic-foot Norcold refrigerator has ample space and a separate freezer compartment. A 9,000-Btu low-profile air conditioner with a wall thermostat was included on the test unit (\$1,073); an 11,000-Btu high-profile air conditioner is also an option (\$953). The 20,000-Btu furnace and 6-gallon gas/electric water heater work well.

The one-piece fiberglass wet bath has a molded counter and sink, and is equipped with a Thetford porcelain toilet. Above are a tall skylight and a powered roof vent, so there's enough

room for a 6-footer to stand. However, the skylight is a single-layer unit with no vapor barrier. Considering that this is a wet location and the RV is designed for four-season use, we feel this is a bit of a miss, although there may not be any choice to allow for adequate headroom. Showering resulted in quite a bit of water and condensation on the dome, which ran down behind the trim ring into the ceiling space. Adding a rubber gasket to the plastic trim ring or silicone sealant should fix the problem.

LED lighting is well placed, including two brushed-aluminum articulating reading lamps on either side of the queen bed. A Fan-Tastic Vent fan above the bed draws fresh air from the opposing cabover windows. Three sets of USB charging ports, in addition to the 120-volt AC receptacles, are placed around the cabover, making charging electronic devices a breeze. A receptacle is also available for a 12-volt DC TV or CPAP machine.

Keeping entertained inside on rainy



The wet bath is customarily compact but well made and appointed with a porcelain toilet. A step folds down to make access easier. Condensation on the skylight is a concern in cold weather.

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or snowy days is important, and there are plenty of options. A 19-inch LED TV on a swing-away bracket is optional (\$563) and can be fed by the standard amplified roof-mount TV antenna, park cable or satellite-TV connection. The 850 comes standard with a double-DIN Kenwood CD stereo with digital device connectivity. A DVD stereo is an option (\$450). Speakers above the bed and dinette are OK; however, outside speakers are not available.

Sleeping in the queen-size cabover bed was restful, and the innerspring mattress was more comfortable than most standard RV mattresses. It's a cozy space, and it's not possible to sit up at the head of the bed to read

because of the low ceiling clearance. There is, though, plenty of headroom to climb up into the cabover to make the bed or stow items.

According to Northwood, the 2019 model will remain largely the same as 2018 but with a few new features. Tables will include marine-grade pedestal hardware, and a stainless-steel kitchen sink will be standard. A NW TruRest mattress will also be standard, along with a TV antenna that's Wi-Fi-extender-ready. An optional Wi-Fi extender and 160-watt solar panel will be offered.

For folks wanting a smaller RV with all the amenities, it's hard to beat the go-anywhere flexibility of a truck camper, and the Northwood Wolf Creek

850 fits the bill nicely. It is well built, four-season capable and light enough to go on many trucks, all at an attractive price point. **TV**

Special thanks to Truck Camper Warehouse in West Chesterfield, New Hampshire. www.truckcamperwarehouse.com

SPECIFICATIONS

NORTHWOOD WOLF CREEK 850

Exterior Length	16' 2"
Box Length	8' 8"
Exterior Width	8' 1"
Exterior Height	7' 7"
Interior Width	7' 11"
Interior Height	6' 5"
Construction	Fully welded aluminum frame. Laminated fiberglass walls. High-density block-foam insulation. Laminated floor. TPO roof.
Freshwater Cap.	27 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	20 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	19 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	6 gal.
Refrigerator	5 cu. ft.
Furnace	20,000 Btu
Air Conditioner	9,000 Btu
Converter	55 amp
Batteries (2)	Dealer installed
Weight (freshwater, water heater, LP-gas full; no cargo)	2,960 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$21,696
MSRP, As Tested	\$30,218
Basic Warranty	1 year

Northwood Manufacturing

www.northwoodmfg.com

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The 58-by-80-inch queen bed is quite comfortable. USB charging ports are on each side of the bed, along with power outlets and LED reading lights. There's plenty of space to store necessities, and good airflow from the opposing windows and overhead Fan-Tastic Vent fan.

THE 850 FEATURES A FULLY WELDED ALUMINUM FRAME.



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Suggested Retail: **\$550**

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Comfort Ride Shock Absorber and Slipper Spring Kits (shown above) are available separately, but when installed together offer a more significant improvement in ride quality.

Patent #9,333,827 and Patent Pending

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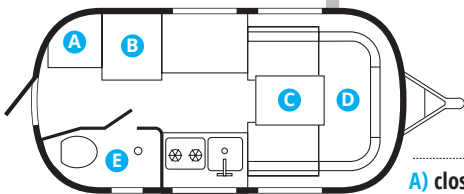


NESTED INTEREST

With its new premium fiberglass brand, Airstream's latest venture into the small-trailer market is its biggest yet

QUICK INFO

Exterior Length.....	16' 7"
Exterior Width.....	7' 1"
Interior Height.....	6' 6"
Exterior Height.....	9' 6"
Freshwater Cap.....	24 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap. (combined)	30 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.....	5 gal.
UVW.....	3,400 lbs.
Hitch Weight.....	375 lbs.
GVWR.....	4,000 lbs.
MSRP, Base.....	\$45,900



A brand is a precious thing. New companies spend years cultivating one. Older companies must constantly nurture theirs to maintain relevance in a rapidly changing world. Where reputation was once a large enough throne to rest one's corporate laurels on, a constant influx of new ideas, often spurred by younger minds who neither know nor care about the glory days, can rise to steal your thunder. Conversely, radical change can dilute the message, confusing the audience and weakening any hold on the market. Indeed, maintaining brand identity has become, perhaps, the single most important aspect of

surviving the new millennium.

Few could argue that the Airstream brand is as recognizable as the product's gleaming aluminum skin, but the demographic that drove it to legendary status, the Baby Boomer, is giving way to the Millennial. This younger generation has reverence for what is old, cool and classic, but won't abide by stagnant ideals, and will certainly ignore anything that doesn't resonate with their lifestyle. Over the past decade or so, we've seen Airstream gradually migrate to younger, affluent audiences with products like the smaller Sport and Basecamp products. But its new Nest travel trailer may be the company's biggest gamble yet.

First and foremost, the Nest's exterior is completely devoid of aluminum and rivets, which makes it unrecognizable as an Airstream. As of its launch, the Nest offers only two floorplans, sleeps only two, and carries a price tag north of \$45,000. But for the right consumer, namely a well-heeled couple who appreciates a clean design aesthetic and clever use of space,

A) closet B) refrigerator and microwave C) removable table D) convertible dinette E) wet bath



The Nest feels unexpectedly large inside due to clever use of space, light colors and an abundance of windows. Far left: The U-shaped dinette gives room to stretch out or invite friends over. Left: The kitchen offers storage above and below, plus high-end details like a stainless-steel sink with a residential-style faucet. A spacious counter across the aisle enhances livability.

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WALK-THROUGH | AIRSTREAM NEST 16U DINETTE



Left: A screened rear-entry door, standard air conditioning and a roof vent keep the interior comfortable on hot days. **Below:** The powered patio awning comes with LED strip lighting.

there are few products like it.

You enter the Nest through the rear, like most truck campers, which makes perfect sense, considering the compact interior dimensions. A side-entry door, while certainly more traditional, eats into valuable floor space. A strikingly modern design greets you like a breath of fresh air, with contemporary styling and tasteful flourishes of stainless steel that pay homage to the brand's heritage.

The floorplan we sampled was the 16U Dinette, which centers around a surprisingly large front dinette and gathering area adorned with playful teal upholstery that stood in welcome contrast to the gray, white and metallic tones elsewhere. The convertible dinette has plenty of room for four adults, and the removable table offers leaf extensions for more space at mealtime. It's also a great spot to chill, with a large window up front, one on each side, plus a skylight with a retractable shade. There are storage cubbies above with elastic bands to keep items like extra blankets and pillows in place, plus all-important USB ports at either end. Underneath the seat cushions are removable panels that allow access to more storage.

The galley is a model of efficiency, featuring a large stainless-steel sink with a white cutting-board cover and a two-burner Dometic stove with an electronic ignition and a smoked-glass cover. We liked clever touches like the gray simulated-woodgrain counter-tops, pop-up 120-volt AC receptacle with two outlets and recessed spice rack in the adjacent wall. There is an abundance of storage space here as well, with overhead cabinets featuring frosted-plastic panels, a large cabinet beneath the sink, plus two drawers and

a small lower cabinet. Directly across is another countertop with more food prep and serving space, and identical cabinets and drawers. Television prep, with two coaxial outlets, two 120-volt AC outlets and four USB ports, is standard, but you'll have to supply the flat-screen. You probably wouldn't expect much more than a cassette toilet in a trailer this size, but the Nest actually has a generously proportioned wet bath with stainless-steel fixtures, plus a gasketed cabinet with a waterproof TP dispenser and even some shelf space. There is more than enough room for 6-footers to take care of business.

Opposite the bathroom is a 3.5-cubic-foot refrigerator and a microwave. All the way to the rear on the street side is a large cedar-lined closet with room for hanging clothes and shelves for shoes or other items.

The exterior offers a full-size awning with LED strip lighting, an aluminum step, illuminated handle and a sliding screen door. Exterior storage is limited but is sufficient for necessities like tools and other supplies. In all, we found the Nest to be a nicely built, very well-equipped trailer that will hit the mark with its intended audience. In other words, it's an Airstream. **TL**

➔ Airstream

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Adventure OF A LIFETIME

DREAMING OF BECOMING A FULL-TIME RVER? AN 11-YEAR VETERAN OF THE NOMADIC LIFESTYLE SHARES THE LESSONS SHE'S LEARNED

— by Emily Fagan

Driving over the horizon to live in an RV full time was the best decision my husband, Mark, and I ever made, and our lives have been a thrill ever since. Choosing to become full-time RVers was a big decision, but the transition from living in a stationary home to one on wheels was surprisingly easy. Here are some of the things we've learned in 11 years of life on the road.

PLAN YOUR BUDGET

 The biggest question most would-be full-timers have is whether they can afford the lifestyle. The answer is yes. Full-time RVing is possible on

any budget. It just depends on how fancy you wish to be.

We have crossed paths with a very happy full-timing couple who made their home in a popup-tent trailer, as well as a single man who lived in his teardrop towed by a motorcycle. At the other end of the spectrum, we've met well-heeled travelers who reside in plush fifth-wheels and never think about their budget.

You can estimate day-to-day costs by looking at what you spend in your current lifestyle. Food, clothing and cell-phone expenses will be about the same, and satellite or cable-TV costs may be replaced with a mobile satellite-TV subscription. Homeowner-association dues,

HOME ON THE ROAM

For full-time RVers, seeing the sun rise and set over new horizons is just part of everyday life.



Author Emily Fagan and her husband, Mark, make the most of the full-time lifestyle to pursue their passion for bicycling. One of the first things they do in a new place is unrack their two-wheelers from the back of their fifth-wheel and saddle up for a ride.

trailer. This is far less than we drove our two cars when we lived a conventional lifestyle.

When contemplating your full-time RVing budget, it is worthwhile to consider the costs of any hobbies you plan to pursue. A few years into your travels, you might want to

property taxes and a home mortgage or rent will be replaced with campground fees. Homeowner's insurance will be exchanged for RV insurance, although the umbrella coverage for personal belongings that is standard with homeowner's insurance is not available with RV insurance, even if it is a "full-timer's" policy.

Health insurance and the cost of medications may be similar. Check with your health-insurance provider to determine how best to receive medical care or medications on the road. Be clear on how filling an out-of-state prescription at a local pharmacy works. During your southerly winter travels, you can walk across the border to Mexico to buy medications, glasses or dental care at significant discounts.

For full-timers who tow their RV, repair costs and auto insurance for his-and-her cars will be replaced by repair costs and insurance for a single tow vehicle (or a motorhome and dinghy vehicle), and fuel costs will depend on how much you drive. We rack up from 10,000 to 20,000 miles each year in our truck, about half of that towing and half without the

upgrade to a new mountain bike or invest in expensive camera gear. The laptop computer, phone and tablet you start with will need replacing a few years down the road, or you might have a hankering to buy that amazing hand-crafted guitar from the luthier's workshop you just toured.

If you start with a brand-new trailer that has a warranty, and everything goes well, you'll have few problems at first, and they'll be covered by the manufacturer. However, a few years down the road, systems in the RV will begin to break. The financial blow of an unexpected repair can be mitigated by buying an extended warranty or setting aside some money for when the fridge dies, the air conditioner quits working or the slideouts decide not to budge.

Emergency repairs on the road may require you to find lodging while your RV is being worked on, so it is important to understand your RV's insurance policy in relation to covering lodging. Also, sometimes it is difficult to get an appointment at a shop right away, and you may need to call around to find a shop that is available to work on your rig.

CHOOSING TO BECOME FULL-TIME RVERS WAS A BIG DECISION, BUT THE TRANSITION FROM LIVING IN A STATIONARY HOME TO ONE ON WHEELS WAS SURPRISINGLY EASY.





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FIND YOUR NEW HOME

 There is no such thing as a right or wrong type of RV for full-time adventures, but, as you may expect, a higher-cost, better-built RV will likely hold up better under full-time use than a lower-cost base model. What matters most is that, when you're in your RV, it feels like home.

However, there are things to look for when choosing a full-time RV. Make sure the cargo-carrying capacity can support everything you plan to take with you, including the weight in the freshwater tank if you plan to travel with it full. Everything you put in or on the RV adds weight, from hiking boots and winter coats to kitchen appliances, linens and bedding, tools and spare parts, bikes, barbecue, generator, solar panels, extra batteries and food.

Also, make sure the tow vehicle can pull the trailer with ease. In our experience, if the truck is towing at or near its maximum capacity, you will not be happy on the road. While flat roads in west Texas make for easy towing,



Heavy-duty hauler: Whether transporting logs or towing their fifth-wheel, the Fagans' one-ton diesel gets a full-time workout.

the Rocky Mountains can be a scenic experience or a white-knuckle drive, depending on your ride. It's a common mistake to start full-timing with a tow vehicle that is a poor match for the trailer, just as it's common to find such setups among weekend RVers.

DOWNSIZE YOUR POSSESSIONS

 The most daunting part of going full time is downsizing. Getting

PLACES TO STAY



Parking under the pines is just one benefit of full-timing.

 Commercial RV parks can be found all across the continent. Most offer full hookups and include a laundry room, general store, recreational facilities and other amenities. Nightly fees can be high, but monthly and seasonal stays will lower the cost. Getting peak-season reservations in popular destinations can be challenging (see "Full-Timing Can Be a Full-Time Job" on page 35).

Campground membership programs can also re-

duce costs. Good Sam Club members save 10 percent on nightly stays at more than 2,400 Good Sam Parks. Passport America and the Happy Camper Club offer 50 percent discounts on camping fees at member parks. Thousand Trails and Coast to Coast Resorts offer programs where a sizable membership fee at a home resort yields nominal camping costs at other resorts in those networks. Members of Escapees RV Club can purchase or lease a site in a member park, enjoy

discounts up to 50 percent at affiliate parks or stay on members' properties for free.

Federal, state and municipal campgrounds often have beautiful campsites in natural settings, but most offer few amenities, and many have stay limits and restrictions on RV length. For those who enjoy an even more rustic setting, boondocking on public land is also an option, particularly if you have a solar system that allows you to stay off the grid.

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rid of a lifetime's accumulation of stuff is hard work and can be emotional, too. You can hold an estate auction and have someone else sell off everything for you in one day, or you can host a series of yard sales and post items on Craigslist. Things that don't sell can be donated to a thrift store.

We gave our most cherished belongings to friends and family, and now when we visit them, we enjoy seeing our goodies in their homes. Some people rent a storage unit, but if you figure the cost over several years' time, it may not make financial sense compared to the value of the items being stored.

SELL YOUR HOUSE

 Many full-timers put their house up for sale so they can purchase an RV with the equity. However, if the house is fairly rugged and in a good location, you may be better off leasing it, particularly if your timing doesn't coincide with a sellers' market.

We thought we sold our house, but the deal fell through just days before our full-timing launch. Rather than putting



Above left: Household chores and improvement projects don't go away when trading a stationary home for an RV, though there's no lawn to mow and less floor to vacuum. Above right: Hobbies like playing the guitar and riding rails-to-trails bike paths give shape and purpose to year-round travel.

it back on the market and starting our travels with the house in limbo, we quickly found a tenant, and we've leased the house ever since. During 11 years of full-timing, we have had five different tenants, and because we've had time between tenants to work on the house while it was empty, it's now in better condition than when we lived in it.

Being a landlord is not the first choice for many — it certainly wasn't for us — but it is a viable alternative to selling. During the years that we've leased our home, rents have steadily increased, while home values in our neighborhood plunged a heart-stopping 50 percent after the 2008 financial crisis but are regaining lost ground.

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TIRES



ESTABLISH A DOMICILE

 Once you hit the road, you will no longer have a permanent physical building to call home, but you will still need a home address, or domicile, for legal purposes. Many full-time RVers choose South Dakota, Texas or Florida as their home state because of low tax, license and insurance rates. Each of these states has companies that offer mail-forwarding services and other assistance for full-time travelers. Among them, Americas-Mailbox (South Dakota), Escapees (Texas) and St. Brendan's Isle (Florida) are popular.

Establishing a legal domicile can involve many subtleties. Some mail-forwarding companies will help with obtaining a driver's license, registering and insuring vehicles, and registering to vote, all important steps in establishing state residency.

MAP YOUR PATH

 Some full-timers travel between two favorite places, usually one in the south for winter and one in the north for summer. They may own a campsite at one or two private RV parks, or they may rent sites seasonally. By doing so, they get to know each area in depth and have a stable social circle. Others prefer being on the go all the time, traveling from place to place and staying from a night to a month or more in each spot.

WORK CAMPING

 There are many ways to work on the road and lots of support for RVers who are looking for part-time or seasonal work. Campground hosting and grounds-keeping are popular options. RV-park workers are usually paid a wage and given a full-hookup campsite, while compensation at government-run campgrounds may be limited to a campsite and a nominal stipend or none at all.

Nurses can work short-term contracts, while consultants, software engineers, writers and photographers can take their professions on the road. Electricians and construction workers can find temporary jobs around the country, while internet-based businesses lend themselves to a mobile lifestyle.

Seasonal destinations need workers at gift shops, restaurants and attractions. Amazon CamperForce hires energetic RVers at the company's warehous-



In exchange for various duties, seasonal campground hosts get a campsite free of charge.

es for the four months leading up to the holidays, while oil fields and other properties need people to oversee the grounds.

Workamper and Working-Couples host popular job-listing websites for RVers. Responding to help-wanted posts in tourist areas can also yield results. Just keep in mind that, while it may be refreshing to return to this kind of "summer job" after years of responsibility in the corporate world, it is also a big transition for professionals accustomed to higher-end working conditions to become hourly wage laborers.

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GUIDE TO FULL-TIME RVING

Full-time RVers often start off with constant travels and later settle into extended seasonal stays at their favorite destinations. Many hit the big national parks in the first year, and that is an ideal way to begin. However, constant sightseeing gets exhausting after a while. Developing travel themes and hobbies helps give your travels shape and purpose. Some RVers focus on doing iconic hikes all across the country or riding rails-to-trails bike paths.

We met one full-timer who converted a bunkhouse room in her fifth-wheel into an arts-and-crafts studio for scrapbooking and other projects. Others take their oil paints into the national forests to capture the beauty on canvas. Some instrumentalists go from one musical gathering to another, while NASCAR fans head to the tracks, baseball fans take in spring training, and history buffs visit Civil War battlefields.

We let our motivation take shape as we travel. A beautiful waterfall at the south end of the Blue Ridge Parkway inspired us to make

waterfalls a theme as we followed the route north. Camping by a lake in Utah gave us the idea to seek out desert lakes and rivers in the Southwest for the next few months.

KEEP IN TOUCH

The internet has revolutionized full-time RVing. Our Verizon Jetpack MiFi uses cell-phone towers to access the internet, and the Jetpack, in turn, acts as a Wi-Fi hotspot for devices in our rig. A smartphone can be used as a hotspot in the same way. Banking, tax filing and other legal transactions can all be done on the internet, and Facetime and Skype add the intimacy of video chatting when calling loved ones.

STAY OR GO?

RVing full time is a dream for many, and it is something we are extremely grateful to be doing. However, it's not for everyone, and extended vacations and seasonal travel can be just as rewarding. But if wanderlust tugs at your soul and you long to break free from convention and try something exotic and new, then traveling down the winding road full time while towing your home behind you will change your life forever. **TL**

*FULL-TIME RVERS OFTEN
START OFF WITH CONSTANT
TRAVELS IN THE FIRST FEW
YEARS AND LATER SETTLE
INTO EXTENDED SEASONAL
STAYS AT THEIR FAVORITE
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Boondocking on public land lets full-timers experience true wilderness from the comfort of an RV.

MORE ONLINE CATCH A GLIMPSE OF EMILY AND MARK FAGAN'S FULL-TIMING LIFESTYLE IN AN EPISODE OF THE "RVING IS FOR EVERYONE" SERIES ON CAMPING WORLD'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL.

FULL-TIME RVING CAN BE A FULL-TIME JOB

GONE ARE THE DAYS OF TRAVELING WITHOUT MAKING CAMPSITE RESERVATIONS WELL IN ADVANCE

— by Norm Roy



RV nomads: Holly and Norm Roy

I quit my job to become a full-time RVer. I thought I'd retired but have since realized I've merely changed careers. I like to think of it as "vagabondage." I now spend more of my time making reservations and less time doing what I thought full-time RVers did: goin' where the weather suits our clothes.

For the past 13 years, I have worked under the close supervision of my wife and navigator, Holly, who has tolerated, indeed embraced, my penchant for a peripatetic life. "So," she enthused, "what do you think about spending February in Florida?"

Employing one of my few faculties that has improved with age, what I heard her say was: "I want to spend February in Florida. Make it happen." That created for me a problem of biblical proportions: I could find no room at the inn, or, in this instance, the campgrounds.

It's Getting Crowded Out Here

We began RVing 23 years ago in a small fifth-wheel. We ambled with ease to RV parks and public campgrounds with little regard to whether there was room for us. We rarely made reservations. This is no longer true.

Fueled by the annual migration of snowbirds and the buying power of young families, RV manufacturers have had one banner year after another, which means more RVers competing for a limited number of sites at resorts and campgrounds across the continent.

When snow flies in the Rust Belt, snowbirds flock to the Sunbelt,

which means campgrounds along the southern tier of the United States are frequently booked a year or more in advance. Securing a campsite at a state park in Florida, for instance, means making a reservation — and paying in full — up to 11 months ahead. In Georgia, it's 13 months.

Similarly, when students are paroled each summer, young families eager to get the most out of their new RVs will seek places to spend vacations. RV parks in the Rust Belt then fairly bulge with happy campers. If you failed to anticipate that and did not make reservations early, you may find it impossible to stay at a campground of your choice.

Online, On Time

To secure sites at preferred public campgrounds, I am now among the RVers who lurk online on the date and hour that reservations open. If the lurker is not ready to click on "Book This Site" at just the right instant, someone else gets the spot. My failure rate has become an item of entertainment for my navigator.

I am told that some lurkers stoop so low as to book sites earlier than necessary, later paying a fee to shorten that reservation to the dates they actually want. And some campers use the names of different family members to make back-to-back reservations, which allows them to secure a site for more nights than policy allows.

Gaming the System

To make matters worse, organized

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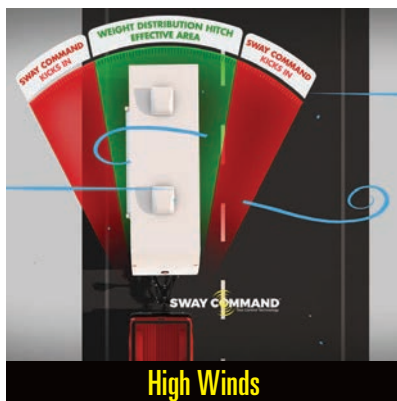
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GUIDE TO FULL-TIME RVING

scalpers, armed with sophisticated computer programs, have found ways to circumvent reservation rules. These “robo-reservation” methods are capable of securing campsites at prime locations; reservations are then resold through online auction sites to campers willing to pay what scalpers call a finder’s fee.

National and state park officials have long been aware of such practices and have altered reservation policies accordingly. Notably, National Park Service policies were changed in 2011 when officials became aware that many campsites at Yosemite National Park, for instance, were being resold through “clubs” and online auction sites that charged a premium of as much as 600 percent.

The inspector general for Florida’s Department of Environmental Protection issued a report in 2014 detailing how campers and scalpers had learned to circumvent reservation policies. The report was in response to complaints from citizens who had found it difficult or impossible to make peak-season reservations at state park campgrounds. While policy changes have limited the success of scalpers, reserving a campsite at a state park in the Florida Keys in winter remains nigh unto impossible.

The growing demand for campsite reservations is great for campground owners and managers, but not so good for folks who have no idea where they will be that many months away. That glorious sense of freedom one may get from RVing fades when your RV is parked in your own driveway because you failed to plan. Oh, *wait!* I’m a full-time RVer; I have no driveway.

SIX TIPS FOR BOOKING CAMPSITES

1. Plan Ahead

My navigator and I have learned to discuss our desires and make a commitment to be where she wants to be at least a year in advance. Once she determines location and a range of dates, I get busy online or on the phone contacting campgrounds.

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2. Be Flexible

Managers of most campgrounds and RV parks will work very hard to help you find a suitable site. You, after all, represent income. But if sites are full when you want to be there, be prepared to alter your schedule. I'm more flexible than Gumby.

3. Avoid Weekends

This is especially true of holiday weekends. We have found sites by checking in on a Sunday, after most weekenders head home. We'll check out on a Friday, when the next wave of weekenders is to arrive. If we want to stay at a particular campground over a holiday weekend, we arrange to arrive by the middle of the prior week and check out the middle of the following week. Hitting the road a day or two after everybody else had to go back to work means we avoid long lines at dump stations and heavy traffic on highways.

4. Be Persistent

Life happens, and plans change. Keep checking online reservation systems or call campground offices to determine whether a site may have become available due to cancellations. Many states and municipalities withhold a few campsites from reservation systems. Perfect timing on your part could yield a place to park for short periods. In Florida state parks, for instance, non-reservable sites may be occupied up to two weeks.

5. Choose Less Popular Locations

This need not mean lowering your standards. We have been pleasantly surprised by staying at campgrounds that didn't seem as appealing as the nearby RV resorts that could not accommodate us. We are more interested in people than we are in amenities and have always found someone who, or something that, contributed to our enlightenment or entertainment.

6. Consider Shoulder Seasons

November through March is peak season for snowbirds. But April, May, September and October offer suitable weather conditions across the Sunbelt. Campgrounds, attractions and restaurants are also less crowded. **TL**



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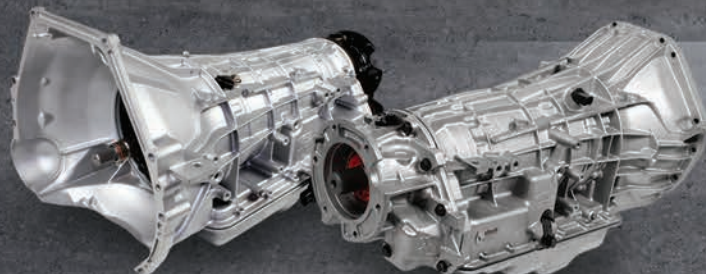
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Accessorizing a truck is a common ritual for owners who look to the aftermarket to personalize their rides. Today's robust tow ratings for half-tonners have opened a new market to those who prefer the agility and comfort of these spirited trucks but still want to install just the right amount of goodies to make a statement and add convenience.

The Ram 1500 is a good example of a so-called half-ton

pickup, and its tow ratings of up to 12,750 pounds make it a strong candidate for towing many of today's longer, fully livable trailers. Toss in a veritable candy store's worth of accessories available through the automotive and truck aftermarket, and it's not hard to come up with a suitable wish list aimed at trailer-towing enthusiasts.

Although the test Ram 1500 made short work of towing a 2016

23-foot Starcraft Travel Star trailer, there were a few items that we deemed necessary to improve and secure storage capability, handle outdoor recreation equipment, make it easier to get in and out of the cab, and protect the dash from the harmful rays of the sun.

To get there, we enlisted products pinpointed to satisfy specific needs. The biggest segment of this project was the installation of a Pace Edwards



TRUCK-BED COVER 1-16 1) The canister assembly that houses the UltraGroove cover and motor is lifted into position by two people and placed on a tool bucket to maintain proper height for installing the rails. 2) After removing the tape, which is for shipping purposes only, the rail flange (3) slides into the rail grip in the canister. The ribbed cover must be pulled out far enough to clear the canister flange and stop. 4) Once the rails are seated correctly, the canister can be pushed against the front wall of the truck bed. It's easy to get this misaligned, which will impact steps later in the installation.

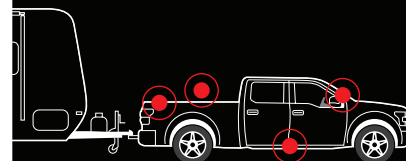
UltraGroove Electric Retractable Truck Bed Cover. For obvious reasons, keeping stored items out of the view of persons with less than perfect scruples makes a lot of sense, not to mention the protection-from-the-elements factor. This cover is made to blend in harmoniously with the truck's lines, and it opens and closes with a remote key fob.

While the Ram 1500 won't give passengers nosebleeds, there's still a hefty step up to the cabin, especially on four-wheel-drive models, which was the configuration of the test truck. BesTop's PowerBoard NX Automatic Retracting Running Boards fit the bill here nicely, following the mantra "out of sight, out of mind." These running boards tuck in below the doors and are virtually invisible when retracted. Rather than contend with fixed running boards, which arguably detract from the truck's exterior aesthetics, the PowerBoard NX running boards operate automatically

when the doors are opened and closed, using Bluetooth technology.

Since the bed cover neatly keeps all supplies out of the way, the top of the bed is a perfect location for specialized racks — in this case, one that handles bicycles with little compromise. Compatible crossbars from Thule are slid into the top rails that guide the retractable bed cover. When adding the Thule Big Mouth Upright Bike Carrier to the Tracker II crossbars, two bicycles can be mounted safely and securely behind the cab of the truck. Of course, this is practical only when towing conventional trailers, and there are optional carriers available for bringing other outdoor toys along.

Last on the list was a Covercraft DashMat UltiMat Custom Cover to protect the top portion of the dashboard that's exposed to the sun. This is a very simple installation, since the UltiMat is cut to fit the contours of the dashboard.



UPGRADES

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DASHBOARD COVER

Product Covercraft DashMat UltiMat

Difficulty

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- 5) Before securing the rails to the canister, the wiring harness is routed down a stake pocket to a holding place under the truck. It will be connected to 12-volt DC power later.
- 6) Attaching the rails to the canister takes some agility due to close clearances. 7) Once the rails are secured to the canister, the provided installation tool is used to confirm the proper gap between the cover rail ends and the tailgate. A proper gap will ensure protection from the elements. 8) Foam tape is applied across the front portion of the truck-bed rail. It takes some measuring to get it right and provide a good weather seal for the canister-top cover.



DIY TIP Casual Saturday mechanics will have no problem installing the Thule bike carriers and UltiMat dashboard cover, but the UltraGroove retractable truck-bed cover and BesTop running boards will take a higher level of experience. Figure on spending the better part of a weekend to complete the entire project.

TRUCK-BED COVER-UP

Pace Edwards has a strong reputation in the automotive aftermarket, and the name is synonymous with truck-bed covers. To its credit, the company emphasizes that instructions should be read carefully before starting the installation, and do-it-yourselfers must take this advice to heart. Even so, be prepared to fly by the seat of your pants, because a few of the steps are not perfectly clear. Not only does this project require strong mechanical aptitude, it can't be done without an assistant to help with the heavy lifting and positioning. Interestingly, only a few common hand tools are needed to mount the hardware.

To get the ball rolling, the drain holes in the front wall of the truck bed must be located.

If there are plastic or rubber access ports in place, drilling holes will not be necessary. This determination is necessary because it will be very difficult to access this area for drilling once the canister is in place. The wiring harness is also routed before positioning the canister.

The canister houses the cover when rolled up and the motor, and it will need to be positioned on some sort of a support so that it will be temporarily slightly higher than the truck-bed rails. We used a bucket with a wrapper for storing tools, which worked nicely. Once the canister is lifted into position, which will take two people, the cover rails are attached to the canister. The factory protective covers for the truck-bed rails are not removed; we made the opposite assumption, requiring a little backtracking.

Sliding the cover rails into the canister seemed easy, but the first tries were challenging. Once in place, the canister will hang freely and can be pushed against the front of the bed. It's important to make sure the lead cover rib is pulled out enough to clear the canister flange and stop. During the placement of the rails, it was easy for the cover to slip past the stop and sneak back into the canister, again slowing down the install. This issue made it more difficult to seat the cover flanges into the canister rail grips.

Although it seemed like the flanges were seated, the cover was binding, which turned out to be problematic later in the operation and required multiple attempts and reassembly. Getting there required repetitive study of the illustrations and photo in the instructions. If the rails are not mounted to spec, the cover will not roll properly and hang up when extending and retracting. Obviously, shops that specialize in this type of installation will make short work of this step.

The work at the canister is finished off after mounting



9) If the rails are seated properly, the top cover can be screwed down without deforming. **10)** Clamp extensions slide into the cab and tailgate ends of each rail, and Allen screws are tightened when in place. **11, 12)** The hold-down clamps attach to the extensions and are tightened by turning the big black knob.

the end caps to the rails and attaching them to the canister with the provided screws, a step that required some agility since access was tight. At this time the cover rails are positioned against the closed tailgate to ensure good engagement by setting the gap with the supplied tool. This is essential to provide the best weather protection.

Installing the top cover is the last step, which requires a measuring exercise before laying down the self-sticking foam tape on the front sill of the bed. Once in place, the top cover can be secured with screws. If the rail flanges placed earlier in the install are not seated in the canister flange grip just right, the cover will not fit properly. We learned that the hard way, extending the installation time and adding a little frustration to the process.

The rest of the operation was a breeze. Clamp extensions are slid on the cover rails, to which specially designed clamps are attached to secure the rails to the



13) Kickstands are mounted to the rear clamps on the side where the pivot foot lands on the flattest section of the truck-bed wall. **14)** Although different from the parts shown in the instructions, the fitting for the rail drain tube snapped in place without tools. **15)** The drain tube for the canister was equally easy to install. **16)** A key fob is used to operate the cover wirelessly. If power is lost, the cover can be manually released and moved (not shown).



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truck bed. No drilling is required, and securing the clamps is uneventful. Kickstands are mounted on the rear clamps to make sure the rails are level; adjustments are made by turning the knob and applying pressure to the side walls of the bed. Shims may be necessary to assure proper rail alignment so that the cover moves freely, but they were not necessary for the test truck.



BIKES ON BOARD

The Thule rack system and bicycle carrier are designed to mount directly to the UltraGroove side rails. Thule's Big Mouth Upright Carriers, attached to crossbars, secure two bicycles with wheel straps and a downtube grip.



17



18



19



20

BICYCLE RACK 17-23 17) The base for the Thule crossbar slides into the T-tracks cut into the aluminum cover rails. 18) Once the crossbar is placed into the Thule Tracker foot, it snaps to the metal bar in the base. 19) After aligning the crossbars, the bases can be secured to the rails (20) using the provided hex key. An access flap leads to a setscrew that is tightened with a hex key to lock in the crossbar.



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The project was wrapped up by connecting the prerouted wiring harness to a source of 12-volt DC power and attaching a drain tube to the canister and rear of the cover rails. All the drain tubes snapped in place with little fanfare, without the use of tools.

A key fob is used to open and close the cover, which operated smoothly right from the get-go. A release handle, mounted at the canister, unlocks the cover for moving manually, should the power be lost. Of course, you'll have to open the tailgate and crawl under the cover to access the release handle, which could be a good trick if the bed is filled with cargo.

Although there were some frustrating moments to get the UltraGroove installed, the end result was satisfying, knowing that items stored in the bed were protected from the elements and prying eyes. The smooth action of the cover brought smiles to our faces. The UltraGroove retails for \$2,900.

HAULING TWO BICYCLES

Adding the Thule bike-rack hardware to the UltraGroove rails was almost comic relief after struggling with the bed-cover installation. The bed-cover rails are made to



21) The button to release the foot from the base can be replaced with an optional keyed lock. **22)** The Thule Big Mouth Upright Carrier mounts to the crossbars with specially designed clamps, and the wheel straps **(23)** slide into the wheel tray. The system does a good job stabilizing bikes for transport.

accept the Thule crossbar mounting components, which simply slide into the T-tracks cut into the aluminum. The Crossbar Mounting Kit includes the bolts, washers, track nuts and Allen (hex) key needed to secure the bases. This step takes only minutes.

Thule's 430 Tracker II kit comprises specially designed feet that snap into the round bars built into the bases. After the crossbars are inserted in the feet and aligned, the bases in the bed-cover rails are tightened before going back and securing the crossbars in the feet with the provided hex key. The feet and crossbars can be removed by pushing a button at each position and lifting off the rails. To increase security, an optional lock kit can be added, which we elected to install.

AUTOMATIC ENTRY STEPS

Using wireless technology, BesTop PowerBoard NX running boards extend when any door is opened.



RUNNING BOARDS 24-41 **24)** Before the PowerBoard NX components can be installed, the system must be initialized to verify the linkages are in sync with the sensors. This requires connecting the harness to the truck's starting battery and connecting the leads **(25)** to the controller, receiver, motors and lights. **26)** Linkage mounting points are already cut into the truck body from the factory. Protective tape is removed, exposing the necessary holes for installing the linkage. **27)** A reinforcement bracket is temporarily held in place with the rivet nuts so the location for the 1/8-inch hole can be marked and drilled **(28)**. **29)** String or wire is used to fish the reinforcement bracket into an oblong hole in the truck body.

From here the 5990E Big Mouth Upright Carrier is assembled and bolted to the crossbars, and the rack is ready for bikes. To mount a bicycle, the tires ride in the wheel tray and are secured with straps; the upright carrier is rotated up so the jaws clamp around the bike's downtube.

The bikes ride upright and are very secure. Mounting and dismounting takes only a few minutes. While the kits

are marketed individually, the total cost to handle two bikes is around \$539.

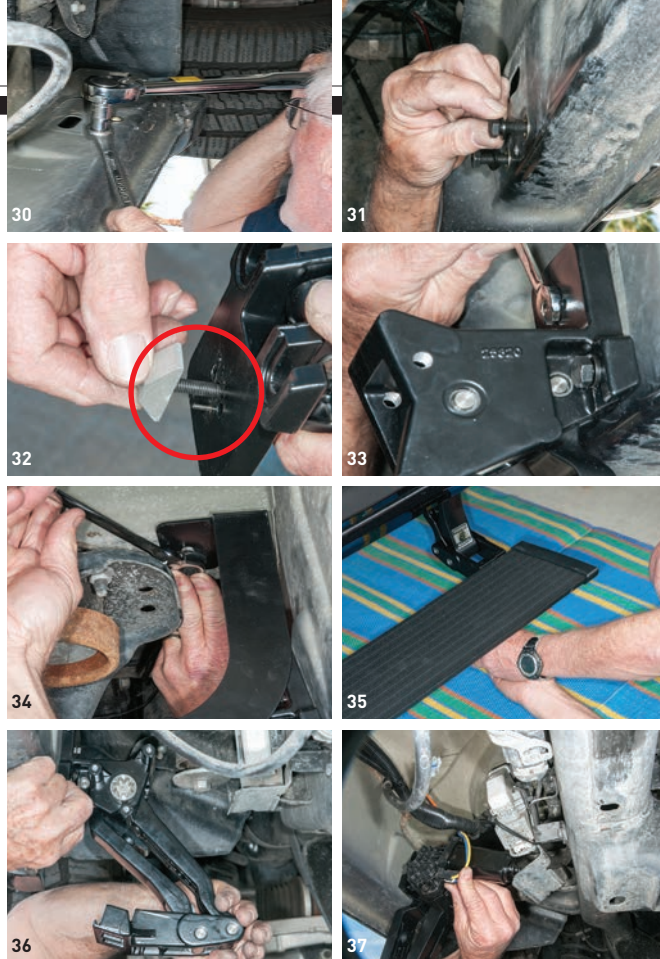
ONE STEP AHEAD

Climbing into and stepping out of a pickup, especially a four-wheel-drive model, is less than graceful for many people. Those who are

vertically challenged have to stretch to get on and off the seats, and often have to pull themselves up by the assist handles. That's why running boards were invented.

Typical running boards are mounted below the door thresholds and, depending on the model, can impact

Once in place, the rivet nuts can be set (30) using the provided tool, wrench and socket. 31) After the tab on the reinforcement bracket is pushed back in the hole, the hex bolts are set into the rivet nuts, leaving ½ inch of thread showing. 32) The roll pin is driven into the linkage and the mounting insert is bolted in place and oriented properly. Follow the instructions closely to prevent issues with mounting the linkage into the slot in the truck body. It takes a little maneuvering to get the linkage in place. 33) The hex bolt is torqued to 12 FT-LB. The bolt must not rotate the mounting insert on the linkage when torquing to specification. 34) The rear support bracket is installed after the bolt and large washer (not shown) are located into the body support member. 35) Running boards are bolted to the linkages before the motors are installed and manually moved in and out to make sure the mechanisms are not binding. 36) Driveshaft and mounting bosses are used to attach the motors to the front linkages. Harness leads are connected to the motor (37). BesTop did a great job sizing the harness and providing all the connectors necessary for the components.





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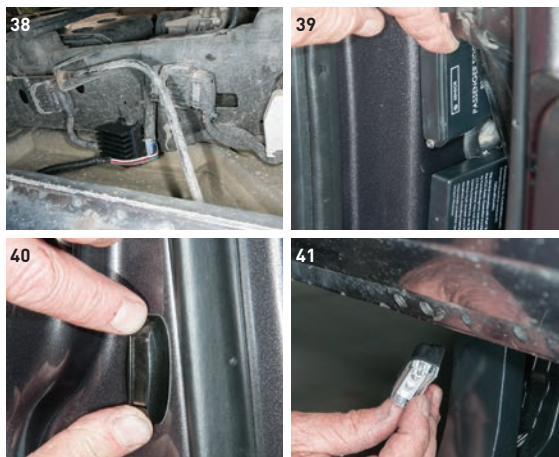
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aesthetics and ground clearance. BesTop, a name common among Jeep aficionados, markets an Automatic Running Board under the PowerBoard NX banner that adds a whole new level of convenience while preserving the exterior lines of the truck. When retracted, the BesTop running boards are stowed below the thresholds and are barely visible. When a door is opened, the running board extends via the use of linkages and a motor, providing a solid surface to step up into the cab.

Although self-installation doesn't require the use of complicated tools, the project is not for the faint of heart. Instructions are clearly segmented but can be confusing. Do-it-yourselfers will do themselves a big favor by spending a lot of time deciphering the installation procedure. Before any of the parts can be installed, the system has to be initialized to verify that the sensors are responding to the motors in the right sequence. Wireless sensors attached in the doorjamb and a very well-

38) The receiver is mounted to the side of the frame with the supplied 17-inch cable ties. 39) Using adhesive tape, wireless sensors are mounted in the doorjamb corresponding to magnet placement (40). Magnets are secured with holders and adhesive tape. Wireless sensors make it unnecessary to route electrical cables to each door, which cuts installation time. 41) LED lights are attached to the outboard surface of the linkage arms using adhesive tape. Lights come on when the running boards are extended.



designed harness simplify the power hookup dramatically.

Existing mounting points that are built into the truck's body facilitate the installation. BesTop cleverly designed linkages to mount into these locations and provides reinforcement/support brackets to stabilize the linkages. Mounting the linkages is by far the most complicated part of the

installation process.

Beyond orienting the linkages, a certain amount of finesse is needed to place the reinforcement brackets and install the rivet nuts for the mounting bolts. It's like a jigsaw puzzle, and the steps must be followed precisely to keep from getting into trouble, which is easy to do. Working with the mounting insert on each linkage can

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be confusing, so reviewing the instructions repeatedly will be time well spent.

After mounting the linkages and torquing the bolts to specifications, support brackets are added to make sure the running boards do not flex under load. These brackets rely on inserts that are relatively easy to place and line up perfectly. Once the brackets are secure, the wiring harness and receiver are installed, and the running boards are attached to the linkages. The running boards must be cycled by hand a few times before the motors are installed to make sure they are not binding.

Installing the motors to the linkage assemblies and connecting the harness is fairly straightforward. Finally,

the magnets and sensors are placed in the doorjamb, which takes trial and error to find the right gap needed to activate the linkages. The sensors and magnets/holders are attached with high-strength adhesive tape, after cleaning the surface with a 50-50 mixture of water and alcohol. Light fixtures are mounted to the linkages and plugged into the harness, and you're done.

Although there were tenuous moments during the install that brought out some colorful language, having the automatic running boards adds a huge element of convenience and is a viable hedge against slipping and muscle pulls due to uncomfortable stretching getting in and out of the cab. The kit retails for \$1,240.99.



PROTECTING THE DASH

By the end of the second day, we still had one more detail to handle: rolling out the DashMat-brand UltiMat dashboard cover.

The UltiMat, part of the Covercraft family of vehicle-protection products, is soft-molded to fit the shape of the dashboard and made of a single piece of needle-punch carpet. There are no seams, and the vents and sensor openings are precut to provide a factory look. Ten colors are available for matching the look of the interior and dashboard.

Self-adhesive hook-and-loop fasteners keep the material from moving around, although the fit is so precise, the dash cover barely moves when not secured. For \$62, the UltiMat is money well spent to achieve the aforementioned benefits. **TV**

The DashMat UltiMat is cut to fit the exact shape of the Ram 1500 dashboard. The simple-to-install dash cover offers protection from the sun and eliminates annoying glare reflecting on the windshield.

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RVs

ON THE HUNT

A recreational vehicle can serve as an ideal home base for a time-honored outdoor pursuit

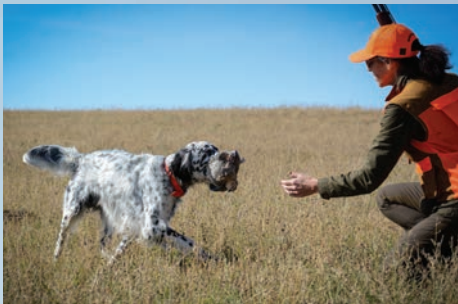
— by Jack Ballard

In 2016 researchers at Cornell University's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences released the results of a study assessing people's motivation to hunt. The group they surveyed had taken a "nontraditional" path into hunting, meaning those individuals did not grow up in a hunting family but were introduced to the sport from elsewhere. Almost half of the respondents were under the age of 31. As it turns out, most of their motivations to go hunting were strikingly similar to the reasons people are inspired to camp in a tent or RV.

FAMILY TIES

The opportunity to spend time with family and friends outdoors is a primary motivation for many hunters.





Clockwise from above: An RV makes a fine base camp for hunting big game such as these mule deer. The climate-controlled interior of an RV provides protection from heat during warm conditions and warmth during chilly times, for hunters and bird dogs alike. Bird hunting is a favorite pastime of dogs and their owners, and an excellent way to exercise.

REASONS TO HUNT

High on the list was the opportunity to spend time with family. Nineteen out of 20 of those surveyed listed this as a moderately to very important aspect of their hunting. The opportunity to “get close to nature” was also recorded as moderately to very important by 97 percent of those surveyed, and the opportunity to find a temporary escape from everyday problems found similar favor with 83 percent of those surveyed.

Enjoying time with parents, children and siblings. Getting immersed in the wonders of the natural world. Unplugging, and dodging the stress and drudgery of daily life in the Great Outdoors. If those don’t describe the primary motivations of the average RVer, I don’t know what does.

Of course, one can engage with the natural world in all those ways without hunting. So why stalk a deer or a duck? While visions of old-time “sport” hunters displaying their trophies to the world are still common portrayals of hunting, the attitude of most modern hunters, especially those who have taken up the pursuit as adults, is quite different. The Cornell survey discovered that 95 percent of respondents were favorable toward hunting as a means of

obtaining local free-range meat.

Around 87 percent nodded in approval at a motivation that included participation in efforts to contain wildlife populations that are environmentally harmful. For example, when white-tailed deer (the most commonly hunted large mammal in North America) become overabundant, they can consume certain plants and shrubs to the extent that they become locally extinct. Such an intense exploitation of food resources also affects other animals that rely on the same plants for survival. In such places, hunting deer in limited seasons is considered a critical aspect of maintaining an environment capable of nurturing sustainable numbers of deer and other creatures.

THE CAMPING CONNECTION

RVs serve as ideal home bases for a host of outdoor activities that go beyond camping. I’ve rubbed shoulders with folks who camp in an RV when rock climbing, windsurfing, horseback riding, dogsledding, beachcombing and stargazing. In addition to casual camping, my family has turned to RVs for comfortable accommodations while hiking, fishing and photographing wildlife. If all these pastimes can

IN ADDITION TO CASUAL CAMPING, MY FAMILY HAS TURNED TO RVs FOR COMFORTABLE ACCOMMODATIONS WHILE HIKING, FISHING AND GOING ON WILDLIFE-PHOTOGRAPHY EXPEDITIONS.

be enhanced via the convenience of an RV, why not hunting?

But as the fine print often reads, "Certain restrictions apply." Or perhaps more appropriately, "Certain practicalities apply."

The timing of hunting seasons varies from state to state and different regions of the country. In our home

state of Montana, for example, bird hunting opens in early September and extends until the end of December. Antelope hunting occurs from early October until mid-November, while deer and elk seasons open and close two weeks later. RV camping while hunting for elk is certainly feasible during the early part of the season along primary roads in the mountains, but taking such a vehicle up a steep secondary road is flirting with disaster, as snow and extreme cold can descend quickly.

I vividly remember an elk hunting trip when I was in college. My dad, two brothers and a dozen members of our extended family (uncles, cousins and husbands of cousins)

were hunting from a traditional tent camp deep in the Snowcrest Range of southwestern Montana. After making camp in delightful, sunny weather, we awoke the next morning to a foot of snow. The blizzard howled all that day and the following night. When it abated, the snow was nearly thigh deep all around the camp. Equipped with 4x4 vehicles and tire changes, we escaped the high country unscathed. On the opposite side of the drainage were several RVs that weren't able to be retrieved until the following spring.

Hunting often occurs in places where "roads" may be RV-friendly in seasonal, dry conditions but can become impassable due to mud and snow in inclement weather. The first



With a sensible selection of locations, any standard RV, like this Class C Winnebago Trend, can be used for hunting.

GOING NATIVE ☺

RVs and hunting go hand in hand, and some manufacturers make the most of that connection — among them, Winnebago. The easy-towing Minnie Drop 1790 is offered in Hunter Green with special-edition Camo graphics and all the comforts of home.





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—Scott and Lori Darrow

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practicality of hunting from an RV thus concerns its portability in nasty weather.

Fortunately, there is lots of hunting to be enjoyed all across the continent in favorable weather. In more than a few places, an air-conditioned RV represents a pleasant haven from the heat at midday. Such might be the case for bird hunters and their canine companions.

HUNTER'S BEST FRIEND

Five short years ago our home welcomed a new arrival. Although I grew up on a ranch hunting large-game animals such as elk and mule deer, I'd only dabbled in bird hunting. My wife Lisa's hunting experience prior to our relationship consisted only of bird hunting, mostly for pheasants, waterfowl and woodcock in New England. She greatly

❶ FROST-FREE CAMPING

Camping in an RV for hunting — or any other activity — with an operational fresh- and waste-water system during periods of known cold weather requires special preparation beyond the scope of this article. A simple solution is to use an RV for shelter with some or all of the water system disabled. This might include using a portable container for drinking water, and draining water from the kitchen sink directly into a bucket. Campgrounds offering indoor toilet and shower facilities make it possible to use the RV for sleeping and protection, while relying on outside sources for water consumption and waste disposal.



desired owning a dog with traits making it a capable bird hunter and an amiable family pet. And so it was that when she was out of town I made an impulse purchase on a six-week-old English setter.

Percy immediately endeared himself to his mistress. He's now a fine hunter of upland birds including pheasants, quail, grouse and partridges. As an added bonus, he's a very competent waterfowl retriever and a supremely pleasant pet. Bird hunting with a dog, I've discovered, especially an animal trained by its owner, is infinitely more about observing the incredible instincts and keen senses of the canine than harvesting birds.

The first real outing of Percy's hunting career came on an early September morning in the farming country of northeastern Montana. We camped out beside a small, undeveloped lake on state land in a Winnebago Trend motorhome, just the right size for a couple and a dog. As it turned out, the outfit proved even more beneficial



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to Percy than his owners.

Cool, comfortable temperatures for hunting and hiking just after dawn gave way to low 80s under a relentless sun by noon. Though I kept water for the enthusiastic setter in two bottles in my fanny pack, by the time we broke for lunch he was panting profusely, feeling the effects of exertion and heat. Back at the RV, we switched on the air conditioning, giving Percy — and his human companions — some much-appreciated relief.

Later in the afternoon, the black-and-white dynamo's dash across the prairie came to an abrupt halt. A front foot lifted slightly as the young hunter's entire body froze, engulfed in concentration on a telltale odor. "Whoa," I commanded softly, wondering if he'd scented one of the birds his lineage had been bred to hunt or was simply enthralled with yet another of the field mice he'd loved to pester since puppyhood. Fifteen feet in front of his twitching black nose, a covey of gray partridges exploded from the flaxen grass at my approach. Percy's obvious elation when he retrieved a downed bird from the flock seemed to eclipse my own.

RV HOME BASE

We've shared innumerable hunts since then, with many family members and friends enjoying our pet's prowess as a hunter. Accommodations have ranged from elegant lodges to Percy and me sleeping in an SUV. But from the standpoint of comfort for dog and hunter, and the opportunity to reside in the same natural world as one's quarry, nothing tops a smartly outfitted RV.

Which raises the question, what makes an RV suitable for hunting? So long as the rig can handle the weather and travel conditions on the hunt, there's nothing special required. However, attention to details encountered while hunting that might not be common to everyday camping will make the outing more enjoyable.

Most importantly, be mindful of temperatures during fall hunting that are much colder than on summer

camping trips. Water systems are of primary concern. A dip of a few degrees below freezing overnight isn't a reason to panic. Colder snaps or sustained below-freezing temperatures are another matter.

Waste and water in holding tanks is quite susceptible to freezing, as these are typically located on the exterior of the RV. However, water lines that run along the outside of an RV's shell

can also freeze, even with a running, functional heating system. Opening doors to closets and cabinets to allow warm air to reach water lines can be helpful to prevent freezing.

As is the case with RV camping, families who hunt take to the outdoors for a variety of reasons and in a range of seasons. No matter their motivation, an RV makes a superb home base for hunting. **TL**

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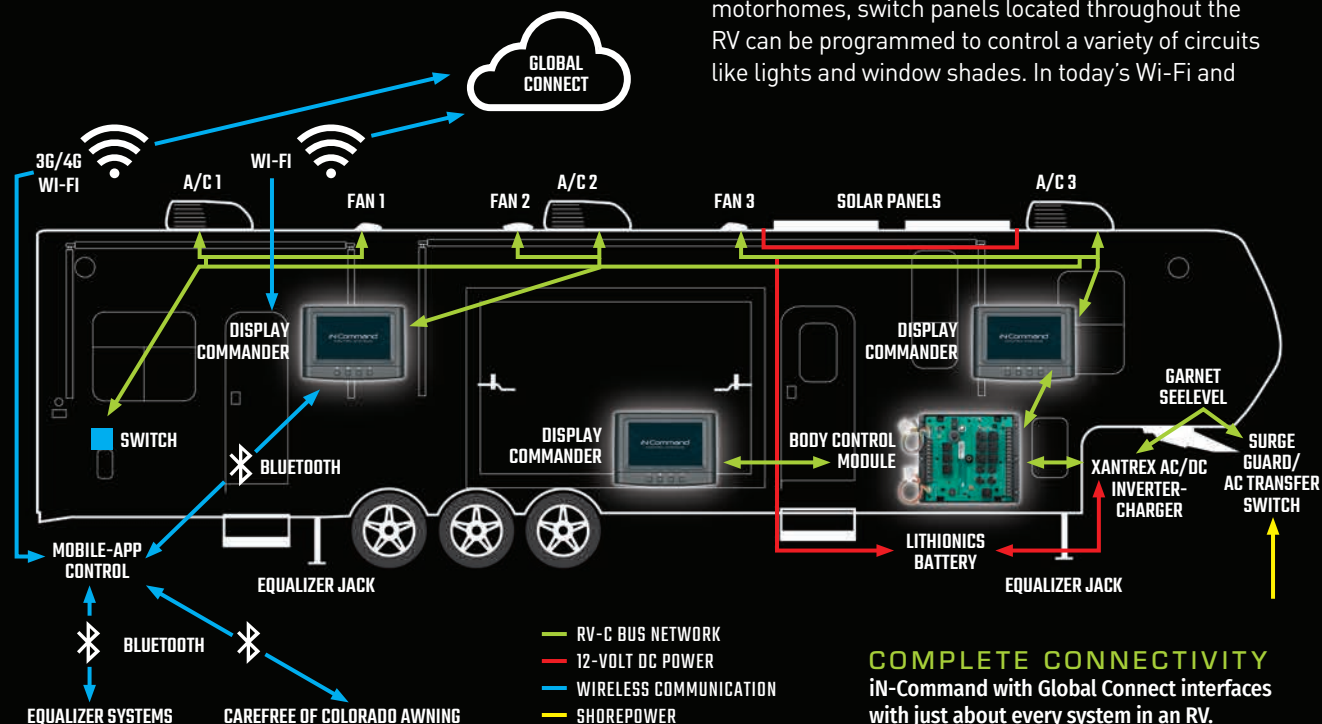
Remember when trailers were a relatively simple yet still comfortable way to travel? Sure, there were many amenities of a home like a roof air conditioner, hot running water and, if you were really digging it, cable TV and a phone connection.

Fast-forward to 2018, and the paradigm has changed. To some, RVs are now passé if not connected. Many of the newest models come with cellular boosters, Wi-Fi hotspots, USB charging ports, integrated entertainment systems with smart connectivity, all-in-one remotes, digital HVAC controls, programmable inverter-chargers, automatic leveling systems and, well, you get the point. For many consumers, RV technology is just as important, if not more so, than its construction features. To that point, RV manufacturers have even “decontented” some

models to add technology that consumers demand and keep the price stable.

The technology fueling the RV space race is a mix of new and old. What was the highest-level technology in the RV industry, reserved for the most exclusive motorhomes, has now filtered down to fifth-wheels and some travel trailers. Multiplex technology is probably the most notable.

In simple terms, multiplexing is where multiple digital signals are transmitted over a wire to a computer that reads and then responds to the data. Most current model-year cars and trucks utilize multiplex wiring systems where the processor controls each electrical circuit. In big conversion coaches and motorhomes, switch panels located throughout the RV can be programmed to control a variety of circuits like lights and window shades. In today's Wi-Fi and



WHOLE-RV CONTROL

1) The iN-Command mobile app transforms an Apple or Android smart device into a remote RV-system controller. 2) The main touch-screen, called the Display Commander, is mounted in a convenient spot, usually on a wall near an entrance. 3) User-interface graphics are displayed on a tablet computer. Each icon leads to another level of interaction with items like (4) lights, (5) tanks or (6) the generator. 7) Soon to be offered are digital touch-panel switches.

7



Bluetooth world, multiplexing allows control of systems through connected smart devices and even via the internet from half a world away.

There are varying communication protocols in multiplexing. Some carry messages; others, just signals. The Controller Area Network bus (CAN bus) is the automotive protocol that allows a mechanic to connect to a vehicle to see fault codes, test circuits and other diagnostics. For years the RV industry and SilverLeaf Electronics have worked on integrating a protocol based on CAN bus, called RV-C, into RV components and systems to aid technicians and owners in diagnosing problems. It's been slow going, but the advancement of technology is helping to push this into the RV mainstream.

Enter ASA Electronics, a name well known in the RV industry for supplying mobile electronics. *Trailer Life* has had the opportunity to test several RVs with ASA's iN-Command multiplexing system installed, and the company recently invited us to its Elkhart, Indiana, facility to see the third-generation componentry. While the first product was introduced a couple of years ago, the latest systems have significantly raised the bar on advanced technology for RVs and supercharged the wow factor.

Previous iterations of the system allowed users to control circuits and monitor battery-charge and tank levels. Owners were able to operate slideouts, awnings,

levelers and lighting via a touch-screen tablet built into the RV or a smart-device app.

The latest version is a true, whole-RV control system. The system connects to Android and Apple devices via Bluetooth for app control, and for the first time it incorporates the RV-C protocol, allowing iN-Command to communicate with and operate HVAC systems and roof-vent fans, and send alerts to users for empty or full holding tanks. Applications are almost unlimited, according to ASA.

COMMUNICATION AND CONNECTIVITY

To make the system even more powerful, ASA's Global Connect feature automatically switches to Wi-Fi mode and the company's dedicated cloud network if Bluetooth connectivity to the paired smart device is out of range. The connection is made via a separate Wi-Fi access point, like your home or campground Wi-Fi system, or a Wi-Fi hotspot installed in the RV. Once connected, full functionality with your internet-connected smart device is available anywhere there is an internet connection.

While some folks may think this has little practical application, it can be beneficial, and even life-saving. As more components are built to communicate with the network, additional functions will be introduced. For

instance, if you forget to turn off the lights or want to turn one on remotely, you can do it with the mobile app. Or, say, it's cold outside, and the furnace is running. The app lets you check power and propane levels. Or

CONNECTED

The latest ASA multiplex system incorporates the RV-C protocol, allowing iN-Command to communicate with and operate HVAC systems and roof vent fans, and send alerts to users for empty or full holding tanks.



50 Years of Fun and Counting



1981
Tommy's first camping trip

This year, we celebrate our 50th anniversary. While a lot sure has changed about RVing, one thing has always remained the same—our focus on family fun for generations to come.

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it's warm, the pets are in the RV with the air-conditioner on, and the power goes out. You can react by starting the generator, and opening and turning on a roof-vent fan to circulate air remotely. Or perhaps you want to turn on the air conditioner to cool the interior for your return. The list of possibilities goes on.

According to ASA's design-engineering team, the goal is to have universal interfacing for all the different systems and functions in an RV. A growing number of component manufacturers are offering app control for their products, which can lead to user confusion and poor function when too many individual apps are loaded into the smart device, not to mention the constant stream of updates required for smart devices. According to ASA, iN-Command users will eventually be able to use a single app to manage just about everything in their RV, except maybe the recliner.

The latest iN-Command has a similar feel to previous-generation systems, using a wall-mounted central controller and a body control module (BCM), typically located in a compartment or cabinet. The system requires special wiring throughout the RV for loads and RV-C networking, so it is not available in the aftermarket.

The convenience of being able to operate so much from the app or main controller raises the question, what

IN-COMMAND ON THE GO

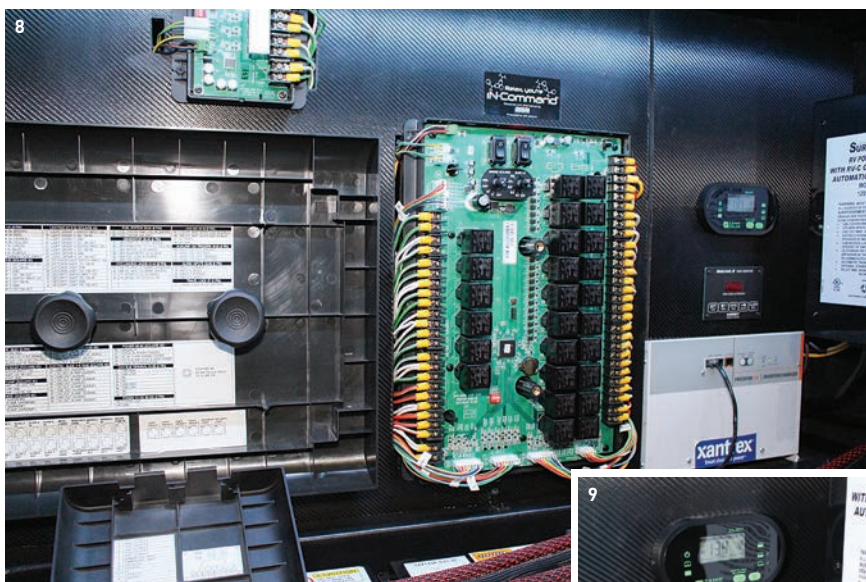
The following new RVs come factory-equipped with iN-Command with Global Connect. ASA reports that more models will be available with the control system in the coming year.

Dutchmen: Voltage
Keystone: Alpine, Cougar, Fuzion, Montana Legacy, Raptor

Redwood: All models
RV Factory: Luxe Gold, Luxe Elite, Luxe toy hauler
Winnebago: Minnie Plus fifth-wheels and travel trailers

happens if something goes wrong? The engineers at ASA came up with an ingenious way of making sure the system remains reliable by using common automotive relays for the switching circuits. If one should fail while you're out camping, a quick trip to an auto-parts store will yield a plug-in replacement. Additionally, essential items like slideouts and awnings can be controlled from the BCM in an emergency.

Wiring for the iN-Command follows a color-code profile set by ASA so technicians will



BEHIND THE SCENES

8) The body control module is the heart of the system and includes manual controls for essential components like slideouts and awnings. Relays are common automotive plug-in components, and replacements are easily found at auto-parts stores. A complete wiring code is on the inside of the removed cover. **9)** iN-Command with Global Connect can interact with many more RV systems than earlier versions, including Xantrex inverter-chargers, Zamp Solar chargers and Garnet SeeLevel II holding-tank monitors.



be able to trace the component wiring from source to load quickly. The company will soon be offering smart touch-screen switch panels that can be programmed for various loads and button styles.

Many corporate partners have teamed up with ASA Electronics to test the iN-Command interface. Garnet Instruments, maker of SeeLevel II holding-tank monitors, has interfaced its components to provide level information for up to seven tanks. Xantrex power inverters can be controlled through the system. Dometic and Airxcel HVAC systems are compatible, as are Maxxair and Fan-Tastic Vent roof fans. Other partners include BAL RV Products, Winegard, Equalizer Systems, Surge Guard, Carefree of Colorado, Wesco and Lithionics Battery.

RVers who purchase a new model equipped with the latest iN-Command system will receive a Global Connect account and can log in if the BCM is within range of a local Wi-Fi source or one is installed in the RV.

What's next? At this point, according to ASA, the sky's the limit. As companies continue to develop new app-accessible RV technologies, iN-Command with Global Connect will provide additional interfacing. **TL**

➔ **ASA Electronics**, www.asaelectronics.com/incommand-welcome

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EG2800i	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
EU3000i	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■ (13,500 BTU)
EU7000i	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■ (15,000 BTU)

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

Diesel Versus Gas

We ask experts and crunch numbers to see if a diesel is right for you

Throughout automotive history, few engines have been as polarizing as the diesel. Those who own them, love them; those who don't, love to hate them. Techies and engine nerds will cite the diesel's greater efficiency and longevity, while the average driver who hasn't driven a modern diesel in the past 10 years or so might complain that they're noisy, smelly and in some cases, sooty. They're certainly not for everyone, but for commercial truckers and RVers, they're still the last word when it comes to pulling heavy loads.

Then again, gasoline engines have become more powerful and efficient than at any time

in history, with trucks like the EcoBoost-equipped Ford F-150 posting tow ratings that were possible only with a three-quarter-ton truck a decade earlier. And where it was once common to expect around 100,000 miles out of a gasoline engine, it's not uncommon to get 200,000 or more out of one today, which may make a diesel's greater longevity a moot point for many people.

So the question is, do you really need a diesel, or do you just want one? Will the extra cost be a worthwhile investment or a waste of money? That's what we aim to find out.

GAS PAINS

The extra \$9,000 (approximately) you would spend on a diesel-engine option will buy 3,176 gallons of gasoline at \$2.83 per gallon, the average price at time of press. Assuming both vehicles get 20 MPG running solo, the break-even point on the investment would be 63,520 miles. However, the manufacturers we spoke with claim a heavy-duty diesel can return up to twice the fuel economy when pulling a heavy load (which coincides with our own experiences), putting the break-even point at around 32,000 miles from a standpoint of fuel savings only.

Cost Analysis

When considering a diesel, cost is the primary consideration. Diesels have always brought with them a higher price tag, owing not only to the heavier-duty components of the engine itself but all the ancillary items that go along with it. A high-pressure injection pump, turbocharger/intercooler, larger radiator and beefier transmission have always been part of the package, but the evolution of the modern-day diesel has brought with it substantial extra costs.

In the year 2000, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) adopted new guidelines designed to reduce emissions from on-road heavy-duty trucks and buses by up to 95 percent and cut the allowable levels of sulfur in diesel fuel by 97 percent. Beginning with the 2007 model year, 100 percent of on-road diesel trucks required the use of a diesel particulate filter, and by the 2010 model year, 100 percent would also require NO_x exhaust-control technology. As a result, today's trucks are not only equipped with a complex Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) exhaust after-treatment system but also must ingest a nonstop supply of

diesel exhaust fluid (DEF), a solution of 32.5 percent urea and 67.5 percent deionized water, to break down NO_x emissions into harmless nitrogen and water.

While many lamented the higher costs (not to mention hassle) of the DEF equation, the addition of the fluid typically results in higher fuel economy, so depending on the application and driving habits, DEF can actually save money, or at least not add to operational expenses.

In an article published in August 2011 on TruckingInfo.com, fleet managers were quizzed about DEF consumption and related costs. They found that 2 to 3 gallons were consumed for every 100 gallons of diesel fuel, but there was also a 10 to 11 percent fuel-economy improvement running identical routes, comparing their then-new SCR units to '09 or older models. This is, of course, information derived from trucking fleets, but it is a good indication of DEF use and related expenses in RV applications.



Left and above: Ram's 6.4-liter Hemi engine makes a pretty strong case for gasoline power in a medium-to-light-heavyweight application. With 410 horsepower and 429 LB-FT of torque, it can tow up to 16,320 pounds. Above right: It could be argued that the addition of a Cummins engine to a Dodge truck in 1988 started the diesel horsepower race. Today, the High Output version of the engine is capable of 385 horsepower and 930 LB-FT of torque when paired with the Aisin six-speed automatic transmission.

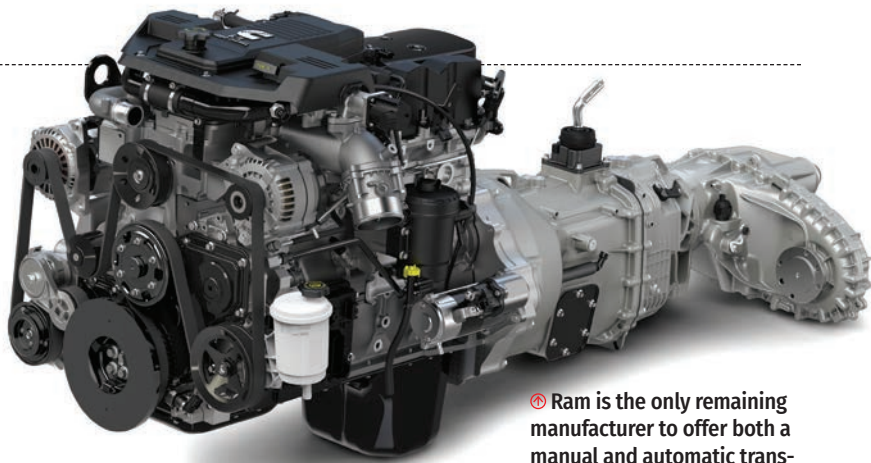
DIESEL VERSUS GAS

"Emission and CO₂ legislation do drive costs higher," concedes Michael Pruitt, chief program engineer for Ford Super Duty. "But they also contribute to improvements that customers appreciate, such as better fuel economy, no smoke, minimal odor from exhaust, improved quietness and better performance."

"After-treatment systems, higher-pressure pumps and material cost increases all play a role [in overall cost]," agrees Rod Romain, head of 2500/3500 Engineering for Ram trucks. "Also, with greater capabilities come larger transmissions, frames, brakes and drivelines with higher capacities," he adds. "When we launched the 1988 Ram truck with a Cummins engine, it had 400 LB-FT of torque. We are now at 930 LB-FT and offer 7,390 pounds of payload."

With all of this in mind, it's not hard to see why a 6.7-liter Cummins engine option runs \$9,200, while the Power Stroke will set owners back \$9,120, and a GM Duramax adds \$10,585 at the time of this writing.

Then there are other considerations that diesel ownership brings. Scheduled maintenance will be costlier, as the 6.7-liter Cummins holds 12 quarts of oil, while the 5.7-liter and 6.4-liter Hemi gas engines take 7 quarts. The 6.7-liter Power Stroke requires 13 quarts, while the 6.2-liter gas V-8 uses 7 quarts as well. There may be added costs associated with fuel filters and water separators, and over the past several years diesel fuel has been marginally more expensive than regular. As of this writing, the national average cost of regular gas was \$2.833



Ⓜ Ram is the only remaining manufacturer to offer both a manual and automatic transmission in the heavy-duty diesel pickup segment.

per gallon, while diesel was \$3.216.

Considering that heavy-duty trucks are not required to post fuel-economy ratings, comparing mileage figures against an available gas engine isn't so cut and dried. "It depends on the usage profile," Pruitt says. "Light-duty usage may see a 15 to 25 percent improvement, while heavy towing applications can see one-and-a-half to two times the mileage with a diesel. Cost of ownership is very dependent on the vehicle usage. Fleet buyers in particular are very specific with cost-of-ownership calculations for their usage and will purchase the lowest overall costing vehicle, considering the initial cost, fuel, maintenance and expected life of the vehicle. The more a customer tows and the higher rate of mileage accumulation, the stronger the business case for diesel," Pruitt says.

"Always consider your use and length of ownership," Romain adds. "In some cases, the weight you haul will require a Ram 2500 or 3500 HD with a Cummins 6.7-liter. If not, the 6.4-liter Hemi is a great option and reduces upfront costs. Each owner has a different need, and it's up to them to crunch numbers."

To wit: The Ram 2500 with the larger 6.4-liter Hemi gas engine can tow up to 16,320 pounds, while the same truck with the 6.7-liter Cummins tows 17,980 pounds, a difference of just 1,660 pounds. So in the case of a trailer that weighs between 10,000 and 15,000 pounds, it may not make sense from a budget standpoint to spend the extra money on a diesel.

"It's harder to quantify in monetary terms the towing confidence of a diesel," Pruitt reasons. "Especially for many RVers, vacation is not the time to wish you had purchased a diesel."

Indeed, while a gas engine may have similar tow ratings to a diesel



Above and right: Ford's new 3.0-liter Power Stroke diesel engine produces 250 horsepower and 440 LB-FT of torque. It should be available by the time you read this. The 3.0-liter Power Stroke diesel-powered F-150 could be an ideal solution for those who want sedan-like fuel economy and the ability to tow on weekends.



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in a given truck, there's little doubt that the diesel will be able to pull a load with far less effort. So if you're considering a trailer that's approaching 16,000 pounds, it may make more sense to go overkill with a diesel than to overtax a gas engine. "We find that, due to demands, you're either a diesel customer or a gas customer," Pruitt says. "We see very little movement from one to the other."

Half-Ton Haulers

The addition of a diesel-engine option in the half-ton segment adds a new wrinkle to the diesel-versus-gas debate. As of the 2017 model year, Ram's 3.0-liter V-6 EcoDiesel option cost more than a standard Hemi yet towed less in an apples-to-apples comparison. Ford's 3.0-liter Power Stroke V-6 (which should be available by the time you read this) and GM's upcoming 3.0-liter

inline won't be able to eclipse their top gasoline tow ratings, either.

So what is the thinking here? In a word, versatility. It is widely known that the F-150 is the best-selling vehicle in America, and that a half-ton crew-cab pickup makes the most sense when you want a vehicle that can do it all. The one thing it lacks, however, is fuel economy. Indeed, new technologies, taller gear ratios and reduced weight have given half-ton trucks respectable fuel economy, but it pales in comparison to even the largest sedan. The six-cylinder diesel aims to correct that disparity, or at least make a sizable dent in it.

The 2017 Ram EcoDiesel, the only half-ton diesel engine we can reference at press time, gets an EPA-estimated 20 MPG/city and 27 MPG/highway in a 2WD 1500 Ram, compared to 17 MPG/city, 22 MPG/highway for the popular 5.7-liter Hemi. Ford claims its 3.0-liter Power Stroke will return 30 MPG/highway, and there's little doubt that GM's entrant will produce a similar figure. For those who use their truck primarily as a commuter or family vehicle and tow a travel trailer during the warmer months, this new breed of half-tons starts to make sense.

For the emotional buyers among us, nothing will ever beat the security that comes with owning a diesel. Their heavy-duty nature and ability to haul heavy loads with minimal effort will always make them attractive to some buyers, regardless of the extra cost or intended use. But for the more pragmatic among us, a gasoline engine may make more sense, particularly if frequent, heavy hauling isn't in your future. In any case, it always makes sense to crunch numbers on the truck models you're considering to see what's right for you. **TR**

A LONG, HAPPY LIFE

Why do diesels have such a legendary reputation for longevity? With their anticipated heavy use and compression ratios that can be twice that of a gasoline engine, they must use stronger components, including the block, crank, rods, pistons and cylinder heads. These components typically double the weight of the best available gasoline engine. The other reason is engine speed. Turning roughly half the RPM of a gasoline engine for a given scenario, internal wear is greatly reduced.



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GATEWAY TO SOUTHERN VERMONT

Overflowing with history, Bennington and the surrounding area converge in a kaleidoscope of charming villages, covered bridges, mountain forests, hiking trails and a battle monument

— by *Kenneth W. Dahse*

Vermont, known as the Green Mountain State, has a population of 627,000 and is one of the most rural states in the country. It is painted with picturesque 19th-century villages, mountain forests, lush farmland and historic sites. One of the most popular places to visit is the Bennington area.

Considered the gateway to southern Vermont and all it has to offer, Bennington has a population of just 15,450 people yet is one of the state's 10 largest cities. Nearby is the Green Mountain National Forest, home to black bears, deer, coyotes and eagles, along with hiking trails and scenic overlooks. The region has commercial campgrounds with full amenities as well as more rustic public campgrounds, which serves to make southern Vermont a prime camping destination.



WOODFORD STATE PARK

Just east of Bennington is one of our favorite campgrounds, Woodford State Park, which sits atop a forested mountain plateau off State Route 9. At 2,400 feet, the campground has the highest elevation of any park in Vermont. It surrounds 23-acre Adams Reservoir, which has a beach, plus rowboat, canoe and kayak rentals, as well as hiking trails. Woodford State Park borders the Green Mountain National Forest and the George D. Aiken Wilderness area.

Although lacking full hookups, the campground has the basic RV necessities, is quiet and off the beaten path, and yet is still in close proximity to Bennington and other attractions. After enjoying the campground for a day or so, exploration always calls to us.

PICTURE PERFECT

Lake Paran in North Bennington offers stunning beauty, swimming, fishing and boating. The Robert Frost Trail along the north shore climbs to allow sweeping views.



BENNINGTON HISTORIC DISTRICT

When entering the village of Old Bennington, besides the lovely historic homes, an impressive sight is the First Congregational Church. The original meeting house was built in 1763, and much of Vermont's early history took place here. The present structure was completed in 1806 and dedicated by the state legislature in 1935 as Vermont's Colonial Shrine. This New England-style church is imbued with country grandeur and still in use today.

The adjacent Bennington Centre Cemetery contains the graves of 75 Revolutionary War patriots along with British and Hessian soldiers killed in the Battle of Bennington. It, too, received a dedication by the legislature as Vermont's Sacred Acre. Walking through these hallowed grounds pulled on our emotions with the realization that our independence and freedom were paid for with the blood and lives of these people. Also resting here is the famous American poet Robert Frost.

The nearby Bennington Battle Monument commemorates the 1777 Battle of Bennington where Revolutionary War General John Stark and the Green Mountain Boys defeated the British redcoats. Rising 306 feet into the heavens, this stone obelisk provides an impressive multistate panorama after an elevator ride to the top.

At the monument's gift shop and visitor center, maps of the city can be obtained for walkabouts and directions to Bennington's three covered bridges — Silk, Paper Mill and Henry — all located just off State Route 67A. My wife, Linda, and I are aficionados of covered bridges, and in southern Vermont they dot the countryside like monuments to a simpler era.



For the ultimate in excitement, try tandem skydiving with Green Mountain Skydiving at Bennington's William Morse State Airport.

SKYLINE DRIVE

Traveling north of Bennington on historic State Route 7A or 7 takes you to Mount Equinox Skyline Drive. This 5.2-mile road is the longest privately owned paved toll road in the United States. Vistas and picnic areas along the way offer impressive views of southern Vermont and the Battenkill River that meanders through towns, farms and woodlands below. At the 3,848-foot summit, temperatures are usually 10 degrees cooler than in the valley.

The road leads to the highest peak in the Taconic Range, and from the decks of the St. Bruno Scenic Viewing Center, a 360-degree panorama unfolds like a colorful quilt created by Mother Nature. On a clear day, you can see five mountain ranges in four states: the Taconic and Green mountains of Vermont, the Whites of New Hampshire, the Adirondacks of

Top: The Townshend Church, built in 1790 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, stands stoically on the commons. **Above:** A Victorian-style farmhouse epitomizes the charm and simplicity of rural Vermont.



MORE ONLINE: TO READ THE AUTHOR'S TAKE ON VERMONT'S CAPITAL, SEARCH FOR "MONTPELIER" ON WWW.TRAILERLIFE.COM.

New York and the Berkshires of Massachusetts. The center's videos depict the history of Equinox Mountain and the still-active Carthusian Monastery, which owns the mountain and toll road.

GREAT AMERICAN STORY

A short drive from Equinox Mountain is Manchester and Hildene, the historic summer home of Robert Todd Lincoln, son of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln. Born in a log cabin, Abraham Lincoln rose from his humble beginnings to become president and lead the nation through the Civil War.

Robert Todd Lincoln chose business over politics, becoming president and chairman of the Pullman Car Company, maker of iconic railroad cars and one of the largest manufacturing companies in the early 20th century. He built his 8,000-square-foot Georgian Revival mansion in 1905 and used it as a summer home. Now open to the public, it's an impressive structure with 24 rooms and eight bathrooms.

Robert Todd Lincoln died in this home in 1926. Descendants of

President Lincoln lived in the house until 1975. Many family mementos are on display throughout the mansion. The immense estate has colorful gardens, a farm and a Pullman railroad car built in 1888 that was used by Theodore Roosevelt in his 1912 Bull Moose presidential campaign.

Entrance fees are steep at \$23 for adults and \$6 for youth (children under six are free), but discounts are offered to adults who return for a second day. Self-guided tours are included, though guided ones of the mansion have an additional fee. Twelve miles of walking trails grace the estate.

OUTLET SHOPS AND FAMILY FUN

Beyond Hildene, gentrified and beautiful Manchester includes fine stores, cafés, restaurants, inns and 40 brand-name outlet stores such as Giorgio Armani, Ralph Lauren, J.Crew Factory and Orvis, to name a few. Covered bridge, fall foliage and Revolutionary War tours can be booked here through Backroad Discovery Tours.

If you are traveling with children or are a kid at heart, the nearby Bromley

Mountain Adventure Park in Peru is worth a visit.

A compact park with an alpine slide, four zip



SOUTHERN VERMONT BASE CAMPS

BENNINGTON

Greenwood Lodge and Campsites has RV sites with water and electric hookups (20-, 30- and 50-amp), free hot showers and heated bathrooms. Open mid-May through late October. www.campvermont.com/greenwood

POWNAL

A Good Sam Park, **Pine Hollow Campground** can accommodate large rigs and has pull-through and full-hookup sites. Open mid-May through mid-October. www.pinehollowcamping.com

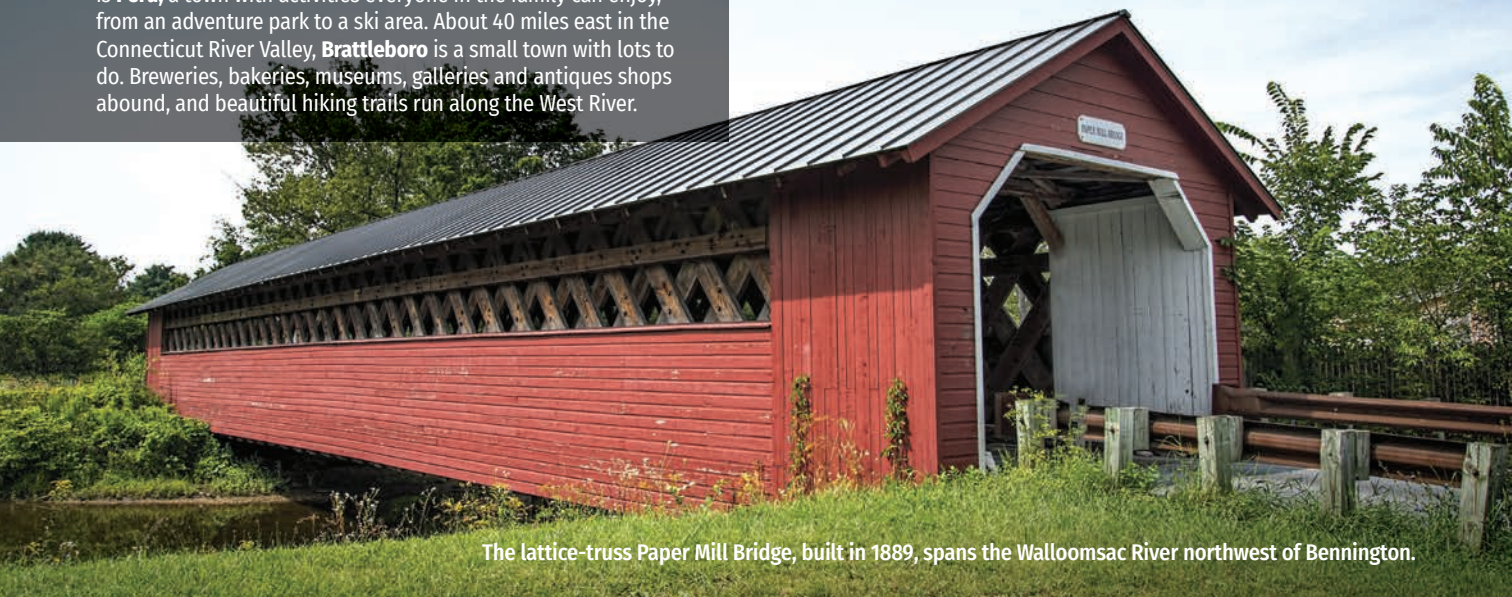
WOODFORD

Woodford State Park offers 76 campsites (no hookups) and has coin-operated hot showers and flush toilets. Open Memorial Day through Columbus Day weekends. www.vtstateparks.com

To find more RV parks and public campgrounds in southern Vermont and across North America, use the Find a Campground search tool on the Good Sam Club website. www.goodsam.com

+ PLANNING YOUR TRIP

Located on a mountain plateau about 8 miles east of Bennington, **Woodford State Park** makes an ideal base camp for day trips throughout southern Vermont. **Townshend**, about 52 miles north-east of Bennington, is worth the drive to visit the beautiful old church and covered bridge. Thirty-three miles north of Bennington is **Peru**, a town with activities everyone in the family can enjoy, from an adventure park to a ski area. About 40 miles east in the Connecticut River Valley, **Brattleboro** is a small town with lots to do. Breweries, bakeries, museums, galleries and antiques shops abound, and beautiful hiking trails run along the West River.



The lattice-truss Paper Mill Bridge, built in 1889, spans the Walloomsac River northwest of Bennington.

lines, aerial bridges, the Big Splash water ride and other attractions make for hours of fun. Chairlift rides to the summit and mountain bike opportunities add to its allure.

TASTE OF VERMONT

Southeast of Peru on Route 30 is Townshend, a quintessential New England town. Chartered in 1753, it is named after British politician Charles Townshend, whose tax initiatives intensified hostilities that eventually led to the American Revolution. Many of the original farms in the area still dot the lush countryside like sentinels of simplicity.

The town green, lake, antiques stores, and Lawrence's Smoke Shop and Country Store are attractions all on their own. The Smoke Shop offers a true taste of Vermont with a variety of smoked meats, cheeses and maple syrup, plus clothing and sundries. It's a great place to stock up for a campground feast.

Townshend is also known as the setting for Chevy Chase's comedic film *Funny Farm* about a writer who moves to the country for solitude but instead finds constant distractions.

Townshend State Park has a small rustic campground, lake, beach and hiking trails. The campground is not recommended for large RVs as there are steep and tight roads that are hard to navigate.

Two of our favorite sites are the beautiful Townshend United Church of Christ in the town commons and the Scott Covered Bridge just north of the commons on Route 30. Built in 1870, it extends 277 feet across the West River. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it recently went through a \$2.35 million renovation that restored it for pedestrian and bicycle use but not motorized vehicles.

HUNDRED-MILE VIEW

Farther south, on Route 9, the Molly Stark Byway, which runs west to east from Bennington to Brattleboro, is Hogback Mountain Scenic Overlook, known for its 100-mile view. A ski area that closed in 1986, the site was saved

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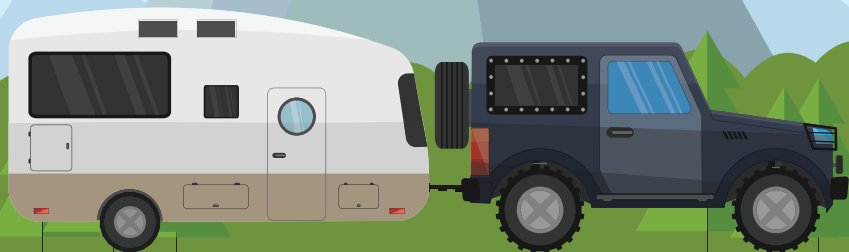
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†Processing fee of \$399 waived for refinance applications submitted by September 30, 2018. Official fees such as state title, state registration, FL doc stamp fee and/or UCC filing fees will apply.

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TRAVEL GATEWAY TO SOUTHERN VERMONT



The 306-foot Bennington Battle Monument towers above a statue honoring Revolutionary War colonel and Vermonter Seth Warner.

by the efforts of local residents and is now preserved as part of the Vermont Land Trust.

Hogback Mountain is open year-round for hiking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. The expansive view takes in the forested mountains of Vermont, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. The gift shop at the scenic overview, in operation since 1936, sells Vermont cheese and maple syrup.

A far cry from the stereotypical quaintness of rural Vermont is nearby Mount Snow, an extensive four-season ski resort with numerous dining choices, a scenic chairlift to the summit, downhill mountain-bike trails, seasonal festivals and an 18-hole championship golf course with beautiful mountain views.

After long days of exploring, we enjoy returning to the simplicity of camp for peaceful evenings in front of a crackling fire. There we can relive what we saw and discuss our next day's adventure. We always look forward to our trips to Bennington, the gateway to the beauty of southern Vermont. **TV**

Old-Fashioned Fun: The town of Peru hosts its annual country fair on September 22 this year with pony rides, clowns, cloggers, music, crafts, Vermont fare and baked goods.

PLUG-IN (HORSE) POWER

5-STAR TUNING'S POWER ENHANCEMENT FOR GAS ENGINES
LIGHTS UP THE TOWING EXPERIENCE

T **Traveling to places** like the Sierra, Olympic, Cascade, Rocky, Appalachian, Adirondack, Berkshire, and Green and White mountains can test the mettle of any gas-powered truck towing a sizable trailer or fifth-wheel. RVers are always on a quest for more power, but the high cost of trucks these days makes it paramount to consider modifications that will not damage the powertrain or create warranty

issues. While RVers want to get up the grades first, doing so may require engine tweaking, which can get expensive. Adding a power tuner from the gasoline-engine experts at 5-Star Tuning,

a company in Florence, South Carolina, requires almost no physical work, doesn't cost an arm and a leg, and can get the ponies galloping.

To delve deeper into how

Ready, set, RV! **1)** Here's something you don't see every day: RVs on a drag strip. **2)** Among the gas engines tested, the Ford F-150 with the 3.5-liter EcoBoost engine showed the most improvements with the 5-Star Tuning programming. Towing a toy hauler on the strip, the F-150's time was cut from 13.64 to 11.85 seconds, and speed went from 51.49 to 59.11 MPH. **3)** The loaded test trailer and truck, a 2012 F-350 with the 6.7-liter diesel, had a combined weight of 19,200 pounds. When tuned for daily towing, the combo crossed the ¼-mile sensor in 13.02 seconds at 53.07 MPH. Long-term testing showed improved performance accelerating to highway speed and no trouble maintaining speed on steep grades.



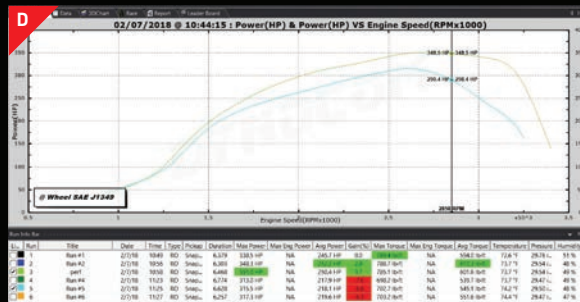
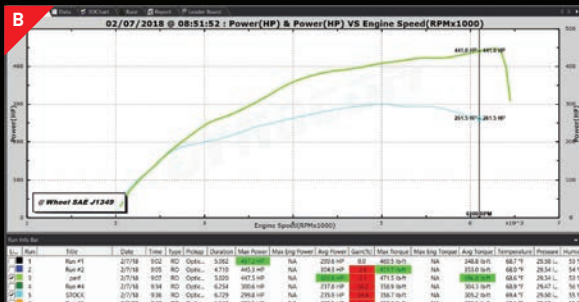
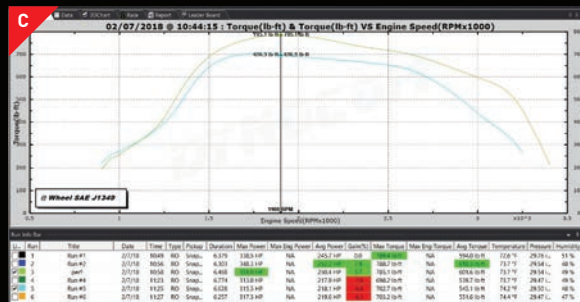
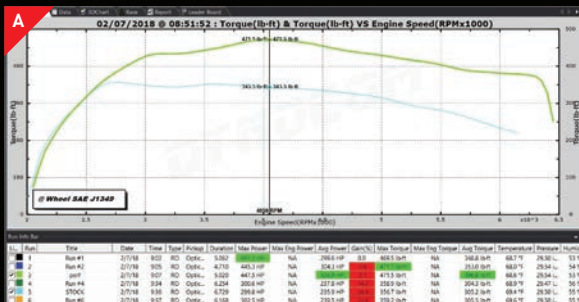


4) The F-350 diesel test truck was strapped down and hooked up to 5-Star Tuning's Dynocom chassis dynamometer. Electric fans were placed in front to facilitate engine cooling. The building is large enough for a truck and trailer to drive through. 5) The operator sits in the truck with a remote control for the Dynocom interface. The vehicle is tested three times for each session to ensure the readings are stable and accurate. One test with readings way off the mark would indicate an error or problem with the system. 6) The nGauge programmer is an advanced tuner and powertrain monitoring system that can be mounted to the windshield or built into the dashboard. 7) The SCT X4 PowerFlash unit was our choice for the diesel. Similar to the nGauge in performance, the X4 uses Wi-Fi for reporting and updating. Connecting directly to a computer allows the user to add programming from 5-Star.

it works its magic on modern engines, the company leased out a drag strip for a day to show how four different gas-powered trucks performed towing trailers with and without programming. As a bonus, we added our test truck, a diesel-powered Ford F-350, and our loaded travel trailer to the mix to see how the diesel

performed after installing a designated tuner (see "Power Stroke Performance" on page 77). Improving horsepower and torque can be complicated, considering modern vehicles are equipped with sophisticated electronics and emissions equipment, and fiddling with precise specifications can wreak

A, B) The Ford F-150 3.5-liter EcoBoost saw a 32.18 percent increase in torque from stock and a horsepower improvement of 49.27 percent after tuning. **C, D)** The F-350 6.7-liter diesel also saw significant improvement over stock. Torque moved up to a significant 785.1 LB-FT from 702.7 LB-FT, and horsepower increased from 315.5 to 351.0.



havoc on the road. Flashing, or reprogramming, diesel-engine computers is a proven method of adding desirable power, but not all providers have moved into the gasoline-engine space.

Truck manufacturers are in a never-ending contest to build the most powerful engines that will give their vehicles the towing-capacity crown. One way to get there is to reprogram the engine's computer software. The folks at 5-Star Tuning know the engineering limits of the engine, transmission and other truck components, and develop exacting changes to the programming to maximize the efficiency of the powertrain.

The company, which develops the software programming for many of the most popular tuners on the market, also markets directly to the public. The programming is the culmination of many years of testing, and much of that information is packed into 5-Star Tuning's proprietary products for gasoline and diesel engines.

5-Star's headquarters is a two-building complex in the heart of auto-racing country. One building houses offices and a shop, and the other is a custom-built dynamometer facility where the real magic happens. It's here where the company's engineers take the relevant information and design tuning specifications that increase the engine's horsepower and torque. Part of the strategy is to calibrate torque converter lockup, transmission shift points and air/fuel mixture. The improvements are very credible.

Our "track day" pitted four half-ton gas-powered pickups (three Ford F-150s and a Chevy 1500) and the aforementioned 2012 Ford F-350 stock diesel against each other, towing trailers, at Pageland Dragway in Jefferson, South Carolina. For this article, we concentrated on the performance of a 2018 F-150 with an EcoBoost 2.7-liter engine and a 2017 F-150 3.5-liter version of the same powerplant.

⚡ POWER STROKE PERFORMANCE

Although we concentrated on the EcoBoost-powered F-150 and recorded substantial horsepower and torque improvements with the 5-Star tuners, the company also gets accolades for boosting the performance of the Ford Power Stroke diesel in Super Duty trucks. The test truck performed fairly well out of the box, but mileage had suffered over the years. The idea was to inject new spirit into the Ford diesel and hope for better fuel economy, since the power-to-weight ratio was improved dramatically after the engine was recalibrated.

We submitted the 2012 F-350 4x4 with the 6.7-liter Power Stroke to 5-Star's tuning and dyno testing. The F-350's powertrain was completely stock. We weighed the truck and trailer before heading over to 5-Star, and the combination tipped the scales at around 19,200 pounds, as it was loaded for extended travel.

At full weight with stock programming, the F-350 did the ¼ mile in 14.26 seconds at 50.51 MPH. After tuning for daily towing, the combo crossed the ¼-mile sensor in 13.02 seconds at 53.07 MPH. That relates to roughly a 5

percent increase. In long-distance testing, fuel economy improved 1 to 2 MPG while towing on the highway when repeating most of the earlier travel route.

The programming was accomplished using the SCT X4 Power Flash unit with three custom tuning choices: Daily Towing, Performance (no towing) and Transmission Only. The loaded programmer has an MSRP of \$449.95. Like the nGauge used on the F-150, this tuner has multiple options and readouts, and is Wi-Fi connectible and updatable.

After the track test, the F-350 was run on the dyno with the trailer still attached, which was merely for convenience but workable with 5-Star's sizable drive-through bay. Marked post-tuning improvements in both horsepower and torque were recorded with this truck. Horsepower went from 315.5 to 351.0, and torque increased to a significant 785.1 LB-FT from 702.7 LB-FT. While the EcoBoost had more actual horsepower than the Super Duty at 441 horsepower, torque was only 471.5 LB-FT, a clear indication of the difference between a gas and diesel engine.



8) The 5-Star programming device plugs in to the vehicle's OBD-II port and can be left connected so it acts as a customizable digital-gauge readout. 9) The dynamometer control station shows all the vehicle data in real time and records the numbers for later analysis. The computer will immediately create charts showing vehicle performance. 10) A 5-Star Tuning technician shows the hand control for the dynamometer that he uses while running the tests from inside the truck.

These engines are serious power-generating machines based on a six-cylinder aluminum block. Note that these gas trucks had some hardware modifications, like Banks air-intake systems, which increased the baseline numbers from stock a bit, but the tuning comparisons tell the real story.

The F-150s were chosen because they were equipped with 10-speed

transmissions and performed better than the Ford 5.0-liter and the Chevy 5.3-liter V-8s right out of the box — although they did see marked improvement tuned over stock.

The 2018 2.7-liter EcoBoost is factory rated for 325 horsepower at 5,750 RPM and 375 LB-FT of torque at 3,000 RPM. The 2017 3.5-liter EcoBoost delivers 375 horsepower at 5,000 RPM and 470 LB-FT of torque at 2,500 RPM.

At the drag strip, conditions were identical for every run. Time and speed — stock and tuned — were recorded on the 1/8-mile track in the same manner as for vehicles competing at an NHRA drag-race event. In the end, the strongest gas truck, the F-150 with the 3.5-liter engine and the diesel truck were taken back to the shop and put on the dyno for two sets of tests, one in stock form and one with the 5-Star Tuning calibrations.

The F-150, a four-wheel-drive model, was paired with a Forest River Vengeance toy hauler that weighed 8,620 pounds. The truck had a Banks cold-air intake and cat-back exhaust upgrade. On the track, in stock tune, the truck and trailer did the 1/8 mile in 13.64 seconds at 51.49 MPH. The same truck and trailer, after tuning, ran the distance in 11.85 seconds at 59.11 MPH, a notable improvement in time and speed.

When we returned to the shop, we put this truck on the dyno to record power curves, and measure horsepower and torque gains. The goal was to establish percentages of gain when the tuner was in place. The dyno shop at 5-Star Tuning is a top-shelf facility, with dynamometer rollers built into the floor of a truck-size drive-through bay. It's even possible to dyno a truck with a trailer attached, as we demonstrated with the F-350 diesel.

Each dyno test consisted of three runs where the truck was accelerated to highway speeds to get peak horsepower and torque measurements. The computer reads the data from the engine and the dyno, and reports the results in both digital charts and graphs. Three runs for each test were necessary to make sure there aren't any wild swings or anomalies.

The 3.5-liter EcoBoost tested stock (with the intake and cat-back exhaust) at 299.8 horsepower at 6,100 RPM and 356.7 LB-FT of torque at 4,050 RPM. This is a marked drop from Ford's published numbers, even with the hardware improvements. After reprogramming

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MORE POWER TO YOU ❖ *The folks at 5-Star Tuning know the limits of truck components and develop exacting changes to the programming to maximize the efficiency of the powertrain.*

the onboard computer with the performance tuning, the truck produced a whopping 447.5 horsepower at 6,100 RPM, a 49.27 percent increase from stock, and 471.5 LB-FT of torque at 4,050 RPM, an improvement of 32.18 percent. The tuner programming remains within the engineering limits of the engine and meets federal emissions standards, according to 5-Star Tuning, noting that tuners are not legal in California for on-highway vehicles.

To program the F-150, the company used an nGauge programmer from HP Tuners (\$679.95), which has a digital touchscreen device that can be mounted to the windshield using a suction-cup bracket or installed directly in the dash, if there's room. The tuner plugs into the OBD-II port under the dash and can stay connected or be removed after tuning. If left connected, it becomes a user-configurable digital information center and can display up to eight gauges at a time, picking from literally hundreds of OBD-II signals. The device has built-in diagnostics and can display engine codes to warn the driver of an issue. It is also capable of data logging, using a micro-SD-card slot, which is useful for intermittent trouble codes.

5-Star Tuning frequently offers multiple tunes for each vehicle, customized for improved towing, performance and, sometimes, fuel economy. In this case, the programmer is loaded with 87-Octane Performance/Tow, 93-Octane Performance/Tow and 93-Octane Performance selections. The company also offers a flurry of fuel-economy tunes and transmission-only tunes for the 2017 F-150 with the EcoBoost engine.

Choosing a brand and model of tuner from 5-Star revolves around features and vehicle compatibility. The range of tuners is fairly large, starting with a basic programmer with no adjustments and going up to those

with full-vehicle computer interfaces. The programming files in each unit are provided and designed by 5-Star Tuning, and the company's expertise supports a strong customer-service experience.

Getting the most horsepower and

torque from an engine is almost a rite of passage for truck owners. Those who prefer a lighter truck powered by a gasoline engine no longer have to envy the performance gains that were once reserved for diesels. 5-Star Tuning enhances the driving experience, especially during hill climbs. **TR**

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INFLATION WATCHDOG

TIREMINDER'S SMARTPHONE-BASED TPMS MITIGATES BLOWOUT DAMAGE

— by Chris Dougherty

SMART TPMS

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Tire blowouts are a constant concern for RVers, especially those with trailers that come with tires sourced from China or elsewhere overseas. While not all Chinese tires are bad, many of the unheard-of or

no-name brands are poorly engineered, and in some cases, they don't even have speed ratings.

These tires are susceptible to underinflation and overloading damage, and occasionally fail with no apparent cause. When a trailer tire blows out at highway speed, the carcass will separate quickly, often causing substantial damage to the wheel well and even the floor of the trailer. Other consequences can include damage to wiring and LP-gas lines.

While replacing poor tires with a trusted brand and maybe a higher rating will hedge your bets, the best way to prevent blowouts is to maintain proper inflation and loading. The only way to control overloading is to weigh the trailer axles at a public scale or, preferably, by wheel position. And the only way to determine if the tires are

properly inflated is to check the pressure based on the weight of the RV and the manufacturer's load and inflation chart or the maximum pressure embossed on the tire sidewall. But even if you do everything by the book, it's still possible to experience a tire failure from a road hazard or the poor quality of the road surface, and a tire-pressure monitoring system (TPMS) is your first line of defense.

A TPMS is a system with wireless sensors on each wheel position that electronically relay tire pressure, and in some cases, temperature, to a central monitor that can alert the driver to changes based on programming of the system. Aftermarket systems allow the user to set thresholds, and most have sensors that screw onto a tire's Schrader valve, though a few offer sensors that mount on the wheel, inside the tire. For monitoring trailer tires, a TPMS should ideally have a repeater installed on the trailer that can more readily pick up the signals from the trailer tires' sensors and transmit them to the main receiver in the tow vehicle.

TireMinder makes some of the more popular systems on the market. Its Smart TPMS is an elite system that consists of six wheel sensors, a hard-wired Rhino signal



GETTING STARTED

1) The process begins by inserting the batteries in the tire sensors, downloading the TireMinder app and charging the Bluetooth adapter. 2) The Rhino booster has a power cord with alligator clips  for a temporary connection. For a permanent connection, cut off the clips and use connectors to attach the booster to a fused 12-volt DC circuit. 3) Mount the Rhino booster in a location toward the front of the trailer to transmit the signal to the Bluetooth adapter in the cab of the tow vehicle. It can be mounted temporarily using the included cable ties or attached permanently using screws. 4) Install the sensors one at a time while using the app to program each wheel position.

booster for the trailer and a Bluetooth adapter that can be installed in the tow vehicle. A mobile app allows the user to program each tire sensor and receive the data on a paired smart device. When a tire's pressure and/or temperature goes out of the preset range, the system will send a notification to the device.

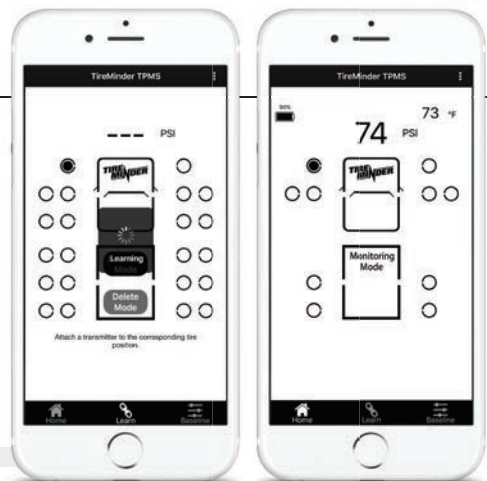
Additionally, the Bluetooth unit will flash a red light and sound an alarm.

The system comes with everything needed for installation, unless additional sensors are required for rigs with more than six tires. For the test installation, two more sensors were needed to cover the truck and tandem-axle trailer.

TireMinder provides sensors for brass, nickel or steel Schrader valves; aluminum sensors for tow vehicles are available but not commonly used. No RVs or trailers should have aluminum valves.

Motor vehicles manu-

5) The app programs the data into the Bluetooth adapter.
6) Once the system is set up, it monitors each sensor every six seconds for tire pressure and temperature.



factured after November 1, 2006, with a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,000 pounds or less (except duals) are required to be equipped with a TPMS that is installed at the factory. Many of these systems alert the driver

only if a tire is deflated below the factory specs. While the Smart TPMS is not compatible with these built-in systems, installing TireMinder sensors on the tow vehicle's wheels will allow the driver to monitor tire pressure on all tires using the TireMinder app.

Installing the TireMinder Smart TPMS takes about an hour, and instructions

SMARTPHONE TIP: An iPhone that is paired with the TireMinder app needs to be unlocked or the Do Not Disturb While Driving feature needs to be disabled for push notifications to work.

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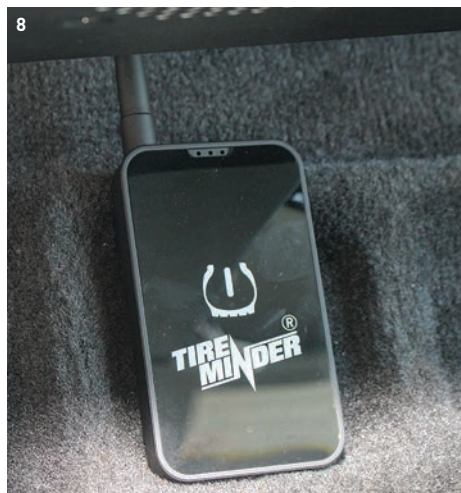
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7) When a tire is out of the set range, the system will send an alert to the smartphone or other paired device, including an Apple Watch. 8) In addition to notifying the user via a smart device, the Bluetooth adapter will signal problems with a flashing red light and audible alarm.

for setting up the system are spelled out in easy-to-understand language. The Rhino booster is best installed near the trailer A-frame and can connect to the batteries or the master battery-cutoff switch so the unit is powered down when the RV goes into storage.

The booster comes with cable ties for mounting, or it can be attached to a surface with screws. It has alligator clips to connect the positive and negative wires to a power source, or they can be removed and replaced with terminals (crimp or solder type) that can be attached permanently to a power source. While the booster is a low-draw unit, for safety's sake, we recommend attaching any device to a fused circuit and not directly to batteries in case the wiring is compromised and has a dead short.



In addition to the Bluetooth adapter, Rhino booster, tire sensors, cable ties and detailed instructions, the TireMinder Smart TPMS kit comes with a 12-volt DC USB power cord, hexagonal locking security nuts, spare O-rings and a carrying case. Two batteries for each sensor are included, and they are easily installed or replaced. Each battery should last about a year, and the company offers a free annual battery replacement. **TV**

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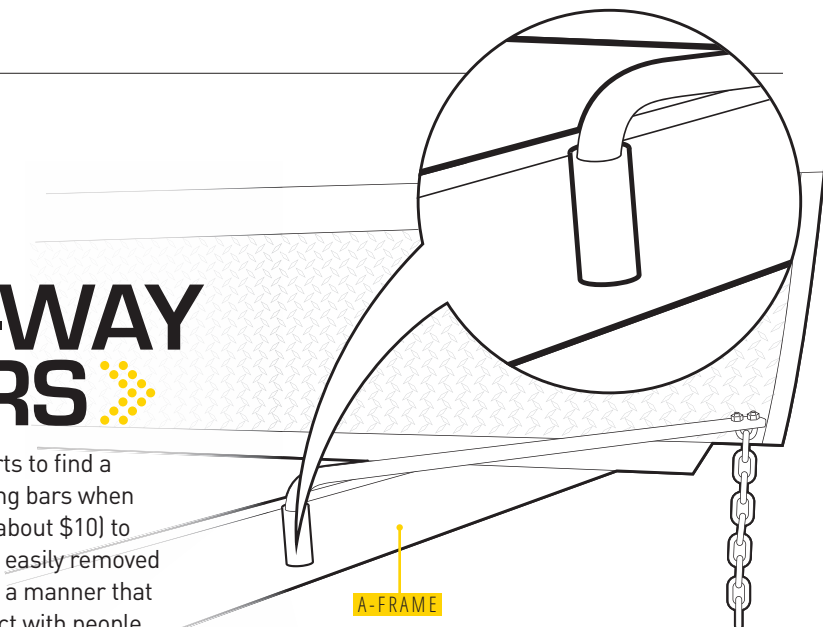
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OUT-OF-THE-WAY SPRING BARS

Here's an idea that emerged after repeated efforts to find a suitable way to manage greased round-bar spring bars when not in use. By welding a couple of 6-inch tubes (about \$10) to the A-frame of the travel trailer, the bars can be easily removed from the ball mount and stored out of the way in a manner that protects the greased ends from coming in contact with people, vehicles or dirt. I spray-painted the tubes flat black to tie in with the black A-frame.

Randy Beaty, Simi Valley, California



Fill 'Er Up

After having back surgery, I can no longer carry the 6-gallon water jug I previously used to add water to our RV's freshwater tank when dry camping at national parks. Now I use a couple of 1-gallon milk jugs to add water to the tank. Since it's difficult to pour the gallon jugs directly into the water fill, I discovered that a 16-ounce plastic soda bottle fits perfectly into the neck of the water fill. I cut a rectangular hole in

the side of a soda bottle to make a no-cost right-angle funnel, which makes it much easier to pour water from the jugs into the freshwater fill. It also works well for adding bleach to the tank for springtime water-system sanitizing.

John Van Atta, Texas City, Texas



Use Your Noodles

Our quick, cheap solution to keep water from puddling on the awnings over our fifth-wheel's slideouts is to use swim noodles. Three round swim noodles duct-taped together in a triangle works, but we found lock-together swim noodles at our local Dollar Store. After moving them around a bit to see what setup works best, we learned that using a couple of three-noodle bunches keeps the slideout topper

from sagging so water can run off. The number of bunches needed will vary, depending on the length of the slideout. Swim noodles are easy to pull out and store for travel, and a bonus is that our kids can use them for swimming when it's not raining.

Karen and Gilles Philippe, Winnipeg, Manitoba



TECH ED TIP

One of the most important things you can do to prolong the life of your RV is to maintain the sealants. Leaks, bugs and rodents kill RVs. Start on the roof and work your way down. Make sure the roof is in good condition, and check it anytime you suspect something may have hit it. Carry a roof-repair kit with you, and make sure the sealant is designed and approved for the type and brand of roof on your RV. Never use silicone on a membrane roof. Seal around windows and doors with a high-quality sealant like GE Silicone II Window and Door Caulk, Lexel or Geocel ProFlex RV. Any openings under the RV should be sealed with spray-foam insulation and/or a physical barrier such as a sheet-metal or undercarriage material matching what is on the RV.

—Chris Dougherty



To submit a DIY tip, email 10minutetech@trailerlife.com or write to *Trailer Life*, 10-Minute Tech, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Provide a selection of good-quality high-resolution photos. *Trailer Life* will pay \$35 for original 10-Minute Tech ideas. All payments require an SSN or FEIN.



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REVAMPING A VINTAGE 1976 TRILLIUM TRAILER NAMED JELLY BEAN

INVESTMENT ⚡ **Cost:** \$2,940 | **Time:** 1½ years

I fell in love the moment I saw her, our 13-foot 1976 Trillium 1300 trailer, in original condition and a diamond in the rough. Not only is she lightweight at only 1,500 pounds, she has all the amenities our family of four needs: a fridge, stove, furnace, bunk beds and a chemical toilet.

Once we took her home, I replaced the carpet with vinyl flooring and did a quick redecoration. I had so much fun that, after a season of camping, I decided to do a complete makeover. And so it began.

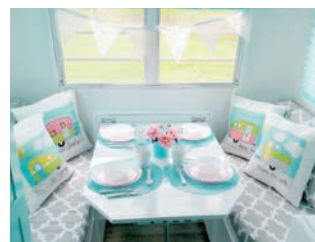
We spent a couple of Saturdays removing the windows, polishing the chrome, and replacing the wood frames and some screens. Then

I purchased wood and made new cabinet doors. We also rewired and redid the waterlines. We emptied the trailer and sent it away for two months to be professionally painted in aqua-blue tones, inside and out.

Then the real fun began — *decorating!* New curtains were added, and I reupholstered the cushions, sewed a quilt and pillows, and fashioned an awning. The kitchen backsplash is a peel-and-stick tile that took an afternoon to put up. We purchased outdoor furniture and painted it to match, and installed shiny chrome hubcaps.

Now our Jelly Bean is ready to be enjoyed by our family.

Tracy Robb
Branchton, Ontario



TRILLIUM IN BLOOM
Above, top to bottom: A fiberglass classic, the 1976 travel trailer is now an eye-catching aqua. The “diamond in the rough” needed more than a little polishing. New upholstery and decor brighten the dinette, and a chrome-look backsplash gives the kitchen more pizzazz.

RV RENOVATIONS

Have you modified your RV or remodeled it completely? Tell us about it in 250 words or less, including the total cost and time spent, and email your description to info@trailerlife.com. Include an ample selection of photos illustrating the project, along with your full name and mailing address. We'll pay \$50 for every RV Makeover we publish.

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**Information obtained from AAA of Colorado Plus RV plan at Colorado.aaa.com on 3/12/2018.

***Introductory rate available for new members only. The rate provided includes a \$10 Auto-Renewal discount.

¹According to TopConsumerReviews.com, available on TopConsumerReviews.com published on 3/12/2018.

[†]Standard membership does not provide benefits for Motorized RVs. If you wish to receive benefits for your Motorized RV, please purchase Platinum, Platinum+, or Platinum Complete. Motorized RVs are classified as the following RV types: Class A, Class B, Class C, Van/Truck/SUV Conversion, Bus Conversion.

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BLACKSTONE TABLETOP GRIDDLE \$99.99

When *Trailer Life*'s marketing manager and new RV owner Lorisa Pierson suggested including this 17-inch portable griddle on her list of "30 Must-Have Accessories for New RVers" on our website, we were skeptical. Sure, a propane-powered griddle is nice to have on an RV trip, but is it really a must-have? Turns out, Lorisa isn't the only one who's over the moon about the smallest of Blackstone's outdoor griddles. Online reviews from RVers almost unanimously rave about the lightweight, easy-to-carry cooker. It sets up quickly, and the built-in igniter fires things up fast. An H-shaped burner pumps out 12,000 Btu to heat the 268-square-inch steel cooktop for grilling everything from bacon, eggs and pancakes to burgers, steak and fish. The go-anywhere griddle runs on 1-pound propane canisters or connects to a 5-gallon cylinder with Blackstone's 3-foot Bulk Tank Adapter Hose (\$19.99). With its pull-out grease drawer and a single surface to wipe down, cleanup is a cinch.

www.blackstoneproducts.com



STAFF PICK ➤ It's the best thing ever for outdoor cooking — seriously! There's even a Facebook group that my husband, Ron, is a part of, and they share recipes and photos. — *Lorisa Pierson*

TRIBODYN ENGINE OIL \$74/GALLON

TriboDYN Performance Lubricants' 15W-40 Heavy-Duty Engine Oil is designed for high-performance diesel engines equipped with exhaust gas recirculation and diesel particulate filters using low- and ultra-low-sulfur diesel fuel. The multipurpose lubricant is said to keep engines clean and suspend soot in oil despite longer drain intervals. Two recent independent research studies concluded that the patented synthetic oil significantly outperformed other brands available in the North American and European markets.

www.tribodyn.com



BD DIESEL FLEXPLATE \$515

Flexplates are the power connection from the engine to the transmission, and over time they can fail. BD Diesel Performance's Power Stroke Flexplate is designed to replace the stock flexplate on 2003 to 2010 Ford Super Duty trucks. The black-oxide-coated billet flexplate is one-and-a-half times thicker than stock and said to be far stronger. It comes with a heat-treated, hardened ring gear and is compatible with all Super Duty and aftermarket torque converters.

www.dieselpowerperformance.com



ENERGIZER EZV3200RV \$1,099

The portable Energizer eZV3200RV inverter generator is right at home powering any RV with its built-in 30-amp RV receptacle (no adapter needed), and 12-volt DC and two 120-volt AC receptacles. Features include a remote start with a 100-foot range, automatic choke and throttle, and dual USB ports. Output is 3,200 watts/peak and 2,800 watts/continuous, run time is 15½ hours at 25 percent load, and sound level is 59 decibels at 100 percent load, according to the manufacturer. For easy transport, the eZV3200RV has wheels and a folding handle.

www.energizergenerators.com



ANDERSEN CAMPER LEVELER \$39.99

Throw away the boards. The Camper Leveler from Andersen Hitches is an innovative leveler-and-chock set that provides precise leveling of any RV trailer or truck-camper combo in increments from ½ to 4 inches. Slide the curved, tapered plastic leveler under a wheel on the low side, drive onto it until level, then put the matching chock in place to secure the position. The Camper Leveler handles tires up to 32 inches in diameter, including dual wheels, and loads up to 30,000 pounds.

www.andersenhitches.com

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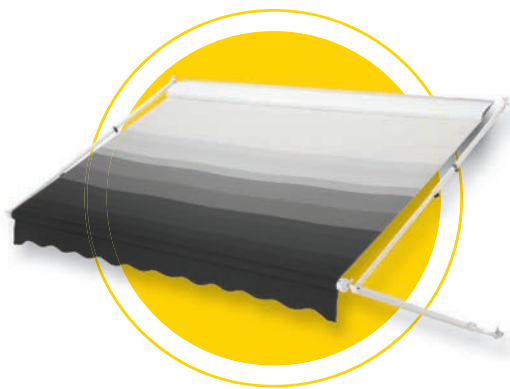
Installation/Equipment Requirements: Monthly fees and limits on number and type of receivers will apply. All charges, including monthly programming, pay-per-view and equipment upgrades, must be paid in advance; failure to pay by due date will lead to service disconnection within 24 hours. Miscellaneous: Offers available for new and qualified former customers. Offers subject to terms of applicable Promotional and Residential Customer agreements. Taxes or reimbursement charges for state gross earnings taxes may apply. Additional restrictions may apply.

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AWNING OUTCOME

An Iowa reader asked RV Resolutions for help with reimbursement for what he considered a defective awning motor:

“I have been trying to resolve an issue on my Shasta Phoenix fifth-wheel after the motor on the electric awning failed and had to be replaced at a cost of \$858.19. I contacted the dealer and was told the trailer’s components had a one-year warranty, which had passed, and that I should contact the awning manufacturer, Dometic, about reimbursement.

I called Dometic and was told to write a letter to the customer-service department, which I did. I then received a letter from Dometic asking for additional support documents. After I supplied the requested information, I received a letter stating that the reimbursement request was denied, and that it did not make any difference how many times the motor had been used. Please let me know if you can help.

Dale Miller, University Park, Iowa

THE COMPANY RESPONDS

RV Resolutions forwarded Dale Miller’s circumstances to Dometic’s corporate office in Elkhart, Indiana, and received the following unattributed reply:

Dometic deeply regrets the confusion that was caused to Mr. Miller and has taken action to resolve the situation. After discussing options with him as to how he would like the issue corrected, Dometic will be compensating Mr. Miller. We are pleased to have come to a resolution.

Miller confirmed that he and Dometic had reached an amicable outcome:

“I heard from Dometic’s customer-service department and have since received a check for the full cost of the repairs. I am very satisfied with Dometic’s resolution. Thank you for resolving my dispute.

D.M.

Level Up

After canceling an order that didn’t ship as promised, an Ohio reader asked for assistance with getting a refund:

“I ordered a system from Bullseye Leveling after being assured it would ship two days after payment was received. Bullseye even offered a significant discount if I paid with a check rather than a credit card. The company was quick to answer every phone call and email prior to the purchase, but once my \$1,750 check was cashed, communication stopped.

After weeks of no word on the status of my order, I canceled it. The company replied that it was going to “refrain” from processing my refund.

Matt Keechle, Maineville, Ohio

A few weeks after reaching out to Bullseye Leveling, we received the following note from Matt Keechle:

“I have received a full refund from Bullseye. Thank you for helping me get my money back.
M.K.

Putty Dispute

Frustrated when the manufacturer’s warranty didn’t cover a roof problem on their new fifth-wheel, a

Nevada couple came to RV Resolutions for help:

“We purchased a new Keystone Cougar fifth-wheel from Sierra RV Super Center in Reno, Nevada, in February 2017. While staying in the trailer last September, we noticed yellow patches on the roof where the frame brackets go across it. Keystone told us the problem was ours to fix by taking the yellowed fill putty off the roof and replacing it. Representatives of the company called it “regular maintenance.”

Since then, we’ve researched the issue of yellowing Keystone putty, and there are others with a similar problem. If you can give us any assistance with this matter, it would be greatly appreciated.

Karen and Kenneth Grimes
Fallon, Nevada

THE COMPANY RESPONDS

We contacted Keystone RV and Sierra RV Super Center, and heard back from the latter:

Sierra RV good-willed the customers’ complaint and corrected the problem. The Grimeses were grateful for our gesture and remain satisfied customers.

Catherine MacDonald, CEO
Sierra RV Super Center
Reno, Nevada 

NEED HELP RESOLVING AN RV ISSUE

RV Resolutions is *Trailer Life’s* forum for the settlement of conflicts between consumers and RV dealers and manufacturers, accessory suppliers and service providers. After exhausting all other resources without success, mail a typed letter to *Trailer Life* RV Resolutions, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Include copies of appropriate bills and correspondence along with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Selected letters will be edited and published unless otherwise requested.

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TOW-HAUL MODE

Q I have a 2003 Chevy Silverado and am trying to find out if the tow-haul mode works well on steep grades of 10 percent or better. We have covered some mountain ranges when we were in Montana, but after having traveled the country in an 18-wheeler, I know there are steeper downhill grades. Before I get to one, I would like to see if you have some experiences to share. If needed, what engine brake would you recommend?

Mark Bevill, Blanchard, Louisiana

A Online owner forums are your best source of this type of user-experience information, Mark. Tow-haul mode doesn't much care what grade is being tackled; it works when it's engaged, regardless of the degree of slope. A steeper grade will, of course, cause the rig to accelerate, necessitating more use of the service brakes. As for an aftermarket engine brake, stick with a known brand such as BD, Banks or Pacbrake. Owner forums are also a good source of exhaust-brake user information.

Tight Squeeze

Q We have a 2013 Winnebago SunnyBrook Sunset Creek 296RE 32-foot travel trailer and want to put a 55-inch sleeper loveseat in the living area. I cannot find any 55-inch-wide sleeper loveseats or oversize chairs on the RV-furniture websites, but I did find one on Amazon. It is the Stone & Beam Kristin round-arm sleeper chair. The depth and height of the chair are both 37 inches, and width is 55½ inches.

How can you fit this chair through the narrow RV door of about 28 inches? Is it possible if you take the four wooden legs off?

Sharon Cleveland, Fort Worth, Texas

A Removing the legs will clearly gain a few extra inches of clearance, as will removing the door unit, Sharon, but the only way to truly answer this question is for you to see the product in person and take some measurements. Contact Stone & Beam for the location of the nearest dealer,

and you might be in luck and find one of the chairs in stock. If not, you may be able to order it from the dealer on the contingency that it's able to fit into the RV. If the chair reclines, you may be able to work it though the doorway with some extra maneuvering.

If the swivel chair shown on the floorplan is there in your trailer, the area is going to get a bit crowded with the addition of a sleeper chair, but I'm sure you've figured that out already. Be aware that the chair you have in mind weighs 95 pounds, and that's all weight behind the axles, so you need to keep an eye on the trailer's hitch weight to be sure too much weight is not shifted rearward. And, for that matter, be sure you don't overload the trailer if it's close to its gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR).

In a pinch, the chair may fit through a large window, but that involves removing the window and the extra expense and labor involved.

Fifth-Wheel Height

Q We have a 2014 Keystone Cougar 25RKS that we really enjoy using. Our tow vehicle is a 1999 Ford Power Stroke. When I hook up the fifth-wheel to the truck, there is

a great deal of slant on the trailer, so I was wondering if I could adjust the pin box to sit lower on the trailer to have a more level ride and less wind resistance.

I have read the owner's manual for the trailer and cannot find any information on the clearance between the bed of the truck and the trailer. I also tried to find the information through Lippert and MORryde, but had no success there, either.

Is there a standard rule for the clearance, and are there things I should watch for if I were to lift the pin box?

Tom Luksha, Sheridan, Montana

A This is a question we answer every couple of months, Tom, as it's a popular concern among our readers. We usually recommend that people maintain at least 6 to 8 inches of clearance between the truck-bed rails and the underside of the front section of the fifth-wheel. This allows the truck and trailer to move independently on rough terrain or when traversing a steep gas-station driveway, for example. The only drawback to raising the trailer's hitch

READER'S TIP: ENLIGHTENING RODENT CURE

➔ The Chihuahuan Desert is infested with rats and mice. They love trailers and fifth-wheels. We tried everything we ever heard of or read about to keep them out, to no avail. After years of trying to end the problem of chewed wires and water tubes, nests in the water heater and drawers, and droppings everywhere, I realized there was one thing rats hate. **Light!**

I strung seasonal lights under our fifth-wheel and left two lights on inside. It's been four months now, and there's no sign of rats inside, and none in the underbelly covering, a favorite place for them. I leave the trailer plugged in, as it is next to the house. Perhaps solar-powered lights could be rigged up for those who cannot leave their trailers plugged in.

Paul Weinbaum, Las Cruces, New Mexico

There are lots of cures for keeping rodents out of RVs, and this one is used by many people who stay put for a while or camp in areas where the critter population is high. LED rope lights plugged into a timer work well. The availability of lower-cost LED lights in many shapes and sizes means RV owners don't need to spend a lot on electricity.

box or lowering the truck's hitch is not allowing enough clearance.

The best way to ensure an even ride is to raise the trailer suspension. Your trailer may have height adjustments built into the spring hangers, or you can flip the axles, and even install a lift kit if necessary. Many RV service centers or trailer shops should be able to help you out. Just be careful of the trailer's overall height when you're done.

Cherokee Tow Rating

Two weeks ago I purchased a 2018 Jeep Cherokee and had a trailer hitch and seven-way wiring harness installed by the local Jeep dealership. As per Jeep's website, at that time you could order a Cherokee with a towing package, so I asked the dealership to install one. But now they cannot tell me where to install the brake controller with the brake-light wire. They just installed the wiring harness with the power wire going to the battery but left everything else disconnected.

I purchased this vehicle to tow a 3,200-pound trailer because, according to *Trailer Life's 2018 Guide to Towing*, the 2018 Jeep Cherokee, with a towing package, can tow 4,000 pounds. I confirmed this on Jeep's website. Now Jeep has removed all references to the 2018 Jeep Cherokee towing any more than 2,000 pounds, and I am stuck with a vehicle that is not able to tow my trailer, while I could have with the truck that I traded in.

I thought you would like to know that now the towing guide is incorrect because of what Jeep has done. I am left without any way to connect a brake controller on my Jeep Cherokee.

I enjoy your magazine and the information you provide. But you need to know that Jeep has changed the towing capacity, because it does not know how to connect a brake controller and is too lazy to find out and give its customers the help they need. I think the RV community needs to be aware that Jeep does not understand that there are many of us who have smaller travel trailers and need a small SUV that works around town

when not used for towing.

David W. Meadows, Pearl, Mississippi

I checked the Jeep website, David, when I saw your letter, and you're right. It shows that the Cherokee can tow up to 2,000 pounds. The *2018 Guide to Towing* lists the same Cherokee at a maximum of 4,500 pounds tow rating with the 3.2-liter V-6. To run this to ground, we reached out to our contacts at Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA). Jordan Wasylyk, product PR manager for FCA's U.S. subsidiary, responded:

"We have not changed the tow rating. A 3.2-liter with the tow package is rated at 4,500 pounds for 2019, as it was in 2018. The 2.0-liter has a 4,000-pound rating with the tow package. If the customer just added a hitch to a non-trailer tow-equipped vehicle, the rating is still 2,000 pounds. The tow package (\$795 MSRP) includes other upgrades: a 3.517 final drive ratio, seven- and four-pin wiring harness,



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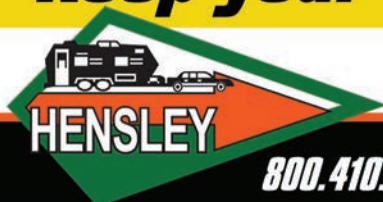
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RV CLINIC

auxiliary transmission oil cooler, Class III receiver hitch, full spare tire, heavy-duty engine cooling and a trailer-tow wiring harness."

Clearly, the ratings listed on the website are incomplete. If your vehicle was equipped from the factory with the tow package, then the ratings as listed in the *Guide to Towing* would be accurate. Without the proper equipment as noted above, however, the rating drops, and the Jeep dealer should have been apprised of this information and passed it on to you.

Vehicle manufacturers can make tow-rating changes well into the model year, and in some cases, as illustrated above, there can be discrepancies published online. That's why it's always important to check more than one source, communicate with the manufacturer via its Facebook page or ask at the dealership for up-to-date information. In this case, our 2018 *Guide to Towing* is correct.

Failed Flooded Battery

Before leaving on a one-night camping trip, the electric jack on our 2014 Jayco White Hawk failed to raise, so I used the standby manual crank-up method. After returning home, I decided to see what was up.

I checked the battery, even though the lights worked. When I removed the battery cover, I found the box was full of water. The connections from the electric jack were unrecognizable, and one of the battery terminals was also ready to fall apart. The inline fuse was a little blob of rust.

I removed the battery, took it to a parts store for testing, and, naturally, it was dead as a doornail. I purchased a new deep-cycle battery, inline fuse holder, pack of 20-amp fuses, battery connector and electrical tape. Before replacing the battery, I drilled several holes in the bottom of the battery box. I replaced the wiring, fuse and battery terminal, and it worked.

Harry Holden, Covington, Georgia

Thank you for relating your situation and the fix, Harry. It's a simple solution that's a good idea. It's puzzling how that

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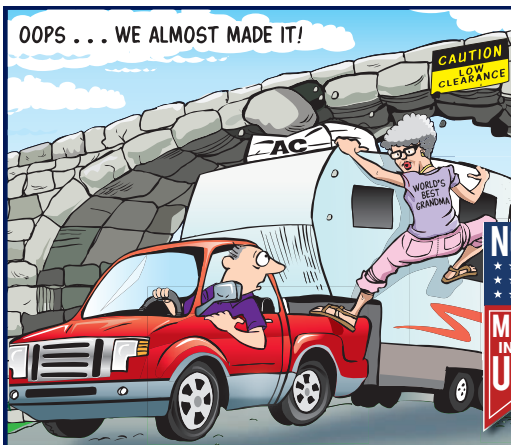


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RV CLINIC

much water entered the battery box, though. A typical battery-box lid doesn't have any holes in it, so it sheds water, and there's enough side and end overlap that the rainwater should not be getting in as long as the lid and battery are adequately strapped down. It's possible that the air swirling around between the tow rig and trailer combined with water kicked up by the tires caused the water to be blown up and under the box-lid overhang. In any case, drilling a few holes in the bottom solves the problem.

COMMENT: TRAILER JACKING

➔ I have a fifth-wheel trailer made by Kustom Coach RV Centre in Canada in 2000. I ran across an article in *Trailer Life* about not lifting a fifth-wheel by the axle but to use the frame. I know that it's not a good idea to lift in the axle center, but I have done it several times in the past with no problems. What little paperwork I have about the trailer does not mention any problem, and I am wondering if this is a recent issue caused by companies that have reduced the quality and strength of components. Most require lots of blocking to replace a flat on the road.

James Cooper, Calgary, Alberta

Trailer manufacturers include safe and recommended tire-changing instructions with their units, James, and they should be specified in the owner's manual. It is generally not recommended to lift a trailer by the axle for several reasons, such as the axle is round and the jack head is flat, so it's easy for the jack to slip. Some owners, or those with advanced mechanical skills, have modified jacks with special cradles or other metal heads to securely grip the axle.

Lifting by the axle, if the jack is placed inboard from the springs, can bend the axle because it's not designed to support that load. In short, it's best to follow the manufacturer's recommendation, and that usually means lifting the trailer by the frame. Yes, some extra blocking may be required, but that's better than having a serious accident or bending the axle, resulting in an expensive replacement.

Tire Pressure Increase

Q After a number of costly blowouts, I decided to get a tire-pressure monitoring system (TPMS) for my travel trailer. After using it for a few trips, I do not know why I did not get one sooner.



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RV CLINIC

One thing that has me puzzled is the amount of air pressure that builds up in the tire after having rolled down the road a few miles.

My trailer's tires call for 60 psi for maximum load. I also assume this means 60 psi is the safe running pressure for the tires. I always fill the tires to the max load recommendation before starting on a trip. After starting out each day at 60 psi, the tires rise to about 68 to 70 psi, then hold steady. The tire temperature usually rises to about 10 degrees above ambient.

Is it safe to run at 70 psi, or should I reduce starting pressure by 10 pounds so that on the highway the tires are at 60 psi?

George Hagedorn, Los Alamos, New Mexico

A Stick with the 60-psi cold-inflation pressure, George, as cold inflation is the value used as the reference point by tire manufacturers. It's normal for tires to warm up and have their pressure increase somewhat during travel, and this kind of increase is always accounted for by the tire manufacturers, so it's nothing to worry about. Your diligence regarding cold-inflation pressure will help keep the tires intact and deliver a long service life, so keep up the good work.

Tire Pressure, Take Two

Q In an effort to make our towing experience safe and comfortable, I've evaluated my hitch configuration and trailer weight distribution, and upgraded the tires on my truck to a higher load rating. All of this has paid off, none more than the new tires, in my case.

Additionally, I consulted the tire and weight data sticker on the side of my travel trailer to determine the proper pressure for the RV's tires. The sticker specifies ST205/75R14C tires inflated to 50 psi cold. However, to my delight, I discovered four ST225/75R15 tires installed on my brand-new travel trailer. I assume bigger is better, right? The sidewalls of the actual tires show a maximum psi rating of 80 pounds. Not knowing exactly what figure to follow, I've kept the tires at 60 psi cold.

Unscientific speculation with a friend resulted in two theories, one being that raising the air pressure would create a stiffer tire, reducing the chance of sway, much like a tire with a higher load rating delivers improved stability. The second theory suggests that lowering the air pressure would put more tire in contact with the road, creating a more stable condition for the trailer. I plan to test both theories in increments of 5 PSI. I'd like your advice.

Michael Gregory, Carterville, Illinois

A It's not unheard of but relatively rare that the tire-inflation and load-capacity sticker on a new RV does not match the tires. When this happens, the NHTSA generally issues a recall notice to have the RV manufacturer provide the correct sticker and data. Contact your selling dealer, and the next time you are in for service, explain your situation or ask the technician to help set the correct data label.

Weigh your trailer's axles and divide the weight figure by the number of tires. This tells you approximately how much each tire is carrying. Check the tire manufacturer's load and inflation tables for the tires. It's possible you may not need the full 80 PSI on the tire sidewall. Lowering the pressure somewhat, still allowing a reasonable weight safety margin, means the tires will be a bit more flexible and save some wear and tear on the trailer and its contents. A "safety margin" means if you need 65 PSI per the tables to carry the weight at each tire, go up by 5 PSI to add some margin of safety. This is not a hard and fast figure, just an example, and the tire weight and load chart findings will guide your judgment on this.

Be sure the wheels are rated to handle any tire pressures in excess of the 50 PSI listed on the original data label. Somewhere on the wheel, probably stamped in the metal on the back side, you'll find something like "maximum pressure: xxx PSI" and "maximum load: xxx pounds." Since someone made the swap from the original 14-inch wheels and tires specified on the data label to the new 15-inch rubber you found on the trailer, it's reasonable to deduce that the

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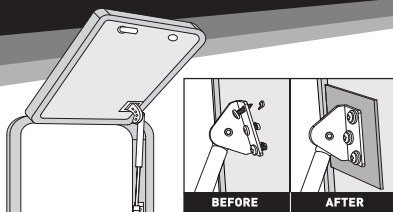
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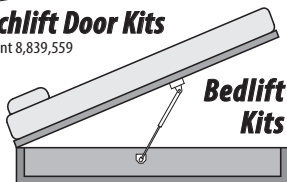
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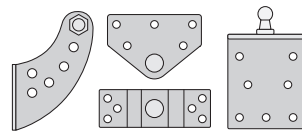


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in an unsafe way. If the wheels are
underrated, they should be replaced
with models that are higher rated at
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I have one of those infrared handheld
thermometers. After a short trip with
my Jay Flight Swift, I measured the
temperature of the center of the rims on
the trailer and compared the readings.
One wheel was 50 degrees higher than
the other three. I greased the wheel that
was hot and tested it, and it was in line
with the other three. I gave the other
three wheels a small shot of grease to
be safe. Looks like one wheel did not
get greased properly. The simple test
saved me from a breakdown on the way
from northern Illinois to Florida.

Tom Bucolic, Lake Zurich, Illinois

Those infrared thermometers are terrific
diagnostic and monitoring tools, Tom, as
you've discovered. We always have one
handy for exactly the type of inspections
you do. It's great that you made effective
use of one on your trip. A wheel can get
warmer than its counterparts for more
reasons than just a grease problem,
of course, including dragging brakes
or bearings that need to be properly
adjusted, apart from adding grease. It
would be a good idea to have that one
wheel checked to be sure there's not
something more sinister going on with
it. In addition, be sure to perform your
usual annual wheel-bearing repack
service; those greasable hubs don't
substitute for repacking bearings. **TL**

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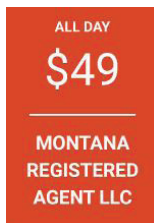
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READER SERVICE

ADVERTISER INDEX

RS # ADVERTISER PAGE #

101	5 Star Tuning	5
102	AP Products	49
103	ASA Electronics.....	19
104	B&W Trailer Hitches	15
116	Banks Power	44
105	Blue Ox	53
106	Boar Wheel Company	86
107	Camco, Inc.	78
	Camping World	68-69
	Camping World RV Sales	67
	Champion	27
	Classifieds	102-103
	Clearsource	96
152	DampRid Moisture Absorbers	21
109	Dethmers Manufacturing	20
110	DieselSite	39
111	Dish Network	89
112	EEZ RV Products	98
133	Energizer.....	66
113	Escape Trailer	14
114	Fast Master Products.....	5
115	Furrion	11
117	Geico	24
118	Giraffe G4 Systems.....	96
	Good Sam Club	97
	Good Sam Extended Service Plan	95
	Good Sam Media and Events	98
	Good Sam Roadside Assistance	87
	Good Sam RV Loans	74
	Good Sam Travel Assist	83
	Good Sam VIP Provided by	
	GMAC Insurance	30
	Good Sam Visa	80
	Harbor Freight Tools	104-105
119	Heartland Recreational Vehicles, LLC	7
120	Hensley Manufacturing Inc.....	38
121	Hensley Manufacturing Inc.....	94
	Honda	61

154	Hymer.....	56
137	iBall Hitch Cam	99
123	Icon Technologies	79
124	Innovations Housing	34
125	Jayco	59
127	Lance Campers.....	2
128	Lavario Washer Corporation	55
129	Leisure Systems Inc.	35
130	Lippert Components	36
131	Lippert Components	73
132	Maxxis International	32-33
134	MORryde	47
	New York State RV Show	91
135	Northwood Mfg.	52
136	NuWa Industries	12
138	Park It 360	54
139	Progress Manufacturing, Inc.	93
140	Progress Manufacturing, Inc.	99
141	Progressive Insurance	8
142	Purple Line LLC	94
143	Rear View Safety	13
145	RV Armor, Inc.	31
	RV Marketplace	100-101
108	RVibake by Danko Mfg.	48
147	RVRoof.com	26
144	Roadmaster	23
	Select Comfort	45
	SimpliSafe.....	82
122	Starcraft.....	43
	Suburban	85
	Texas Renaissance Festival	38
146	TireTraker	93
148	Transfer Flow Inc.	65
149	Travel Lite RV	108
150	Truck System Technologies	86
126	Venture RV.....	107
151	Winnebago Towables	37

EDITORIAL PRODUCT INDEX

RS #	MANUFACTURER	PAGE #
155	Airstream	25
156	Northwood	16

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

HARBOR FREIGHT

QUALITY TOOLS AT RIDICULOUSLY LOW PRICES

900 Stores Nationwide • HarborFreight.com

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC **SUPER COUPON**

21 GALLON, 2.5 HP, 125 PSI VERTICAL OIL-LUBE AIR COMPRESSOR

Air delivery:
5.8 CFM @ 40 PSI
4.7 CFM @ 90 PSI

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$149⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$229**
HUSKY MODEL: C201H

SAVE **\$79**

ITEM 69091/61454
62803/63635/67847 shown

20087208

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

PITTSBURGH **SUPER COUPON**

#1 SELLING JACKS IN AMERICA

RAPID PUMP® 3 TON STEEL HEAVY DUTY LOW PROFILE FLOOR JACK

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

• Weighs 73 lbs.

COMPARE TO **\$149⁹⁹**
TEO MODEL: TEOB012

SAVE **\$70**

NOW \$79⁹⁹

ITEM 62326/61282/61253 shown

20083892

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

SUPER COUPON

FREE **WITH ANY PURCHASE**

PITTSBURGH

1" x 25 FT. TAPE MEASURE

COMPARE TO **\$6⁹⁸**
KOMELON MODEL: LAG25W

• Thumb Lock
• Rubber Wrapped Case

ITEM 69080/69030/69031 shown

LIFETIME WARRANTY

20163574

Cannot be used with other discounts or prior purchases. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 12/14/18 while supplies last. Limit 1 FREE GIFT per customer per day.

SUPER COUPON

20% OFF

ANY SINGLE ITEM*

20160557

Limit 1 coupon per customer per day. Save 20% on any 1 item purchased. *Cannot be used with other discounts, coupons or any of the following items or brands: Inside Track Club membership, Extended Service Plan, gift card, open box item, 3 day Painting Lot Sale item, compressor, floor jack, saw, saw blade, storage cabinet, chains or cables, trailers, trencher/shovel, welders, Admiral, Ames, Bauer, Cobra, CoverPro, Dayton, Earthquake, Fischer, Hercules, Icon, Jupiter, Lynx, Poudre, Predator, Tailgater, Viking, Wilson, Zurich. Not valid on prior purchases. Non-transferable. Original coupon must be presented. Valid through 12/14/18.

HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

72" x 80" MOVING BLANKET

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$5⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$19⁹⁹**
BLUE HAWK MODEL: 77280

SAVE **70%**

ITEM 69505/62418/66537 shown

20100656

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

drillmaster **SUPER COUPON**

4-1/2" ANGLE GRINDER

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$9⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$28⁹⁹**
PERFORMAX MODEL: 2411-1

SAVE **65%**

ITEM 69645/60625 shown

20103316

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

BADLAND ZXR **Battle Tested** **SUPER COUPON**

12,000 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH REMOTE CONTROL AND AUTOMATIC BRAKE

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$299⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$699⁹⁹**
WARN MODEL: 96320

SAVE **\$400**

ITEM 64046/64045/63770 shown

• Weighs 86.4 lbs.
• 21" L x 10-1/8" H

20105862

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

SUPER COUPON

16" x 30" TWO SHELF STEEL SERVICE CART

• 220 lb. capacity

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$29⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$78⁴³**
EDSAL MODEL: SC2016

SAVE **61%**

ITEM 60390/5107 shown

20106717

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

PORTLAND **SUPER COUPON**

1750 PSI ELECTRIC PRESSURE WASHER

• 1.3 GPM
• Adjustable spray nozzle

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$79⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$174⁴⁴**
BRIGGS & STRATTON MODEL: 20800

SAVE **\$94**

ITEM 63255/63254 shown

20110638

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

CENTECH **SUPER COUPON**

AUTOMATIC BATTERY FLOAT CHARGER

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$4⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$9⁹⁹**

ITEM 64284/69955/69594/42282 shown

20114361

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

COVERPRO **SUPER COUPON**

10 FT. x 17 FT. PORTABLE GARAGE

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$169⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$270**
SHELTER LOGIC MODEL: 7637T

SAVE **\$100**

ITEM 62859/63055/62860 shown

20114498

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

CHICAGO **ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS** **SUPER COUPON**

10" SLIDING COMPOUND MITER SAW

• Powerful 15 amp motor

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$84⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$117⁹⁹**

ITEM 61972/61971 shown

Blade sold separately.

20115758

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

PORTLAND **SUPER COUPON**

7 AMP ELECTRIC POLE SAW 9.5" BAR

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$59⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$99⁹⁸**
WORX MODEL: WG309

SAVE **\$39**

ITEM 68862/63190/62896 shown

20118590

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

WARRIOR **SUPER COUPON**

3 PIECE TITANIUM HIGH SPEED STEEL STEP BITS

• Drill 28 hole sizes from 1/8" to 3/4"

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$8⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$12⁹⁹**

ITEM 69087/60379/91616 shown

20122166

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

EARTHQUAKE XT **SUPER COUPON**

20 VOLT LITHIUM CORDLESS EXTREME TORQUE 1/2" IMPACT WRENCH KIT

• 4.0 amp hour battery

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$239⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$259⁹⁹**

ITEM 63852/64195/63537 shown

20124697

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

18" x 12" MOVER'S DOLLY

• 1000 lb. capacity

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$79⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$109⁹⁹**

ITEM 61899/63095/63096/63098/63097/93888 shown

20129603

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

CHICAGO **ELECTRIC WELDING** **SUPER COUPON**

125 AMP FLUX-CORE WELDER

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO WELD

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$99⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$149⁹⁹**
IRONTON MODEL: 45433

SAVE **\$50**

ITEM 63583/63582 shown

20131593

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

SUPER COUPON

3 PIECE DECORATIVE SOLAR LED LIGHTS

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$7⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$17⁸⁵**
YARDS & BEYOND MODEL: APA001234V1AAK

SAVE **55%**

ITEM 60561/69462 shown

20133848

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

PITTSBURGH **SUPER COUPON**

1 TON CAPACITY FOLDABLE SHOP CRANE

• Boom extends from 36-1/4" to 50-1/4"
• Crane height adjusts from 82" to 94"

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$99⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$199⁹⁹**
IRONTON MODEL: 46218

SAVE **\$100**

ITEM 69512/61858/69445 shown

20133331

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

PITTSBURGH **SUPER COUPON**

16 OZ. HAMMERS WITH FIBERGLASS HANDLE

LIFETIME WARRANTY

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

YOUR CHOICE \$2⁹⁹

COMPARE TO **\$4⁹⁹**

ITEM 47873 shown

20135833

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

HARDY **SUPER COUPON**

POWDER-FREE NITRILE GLOVES PACK OF 100

• 5 mil thickness

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~\$7.99~~ **NOW \$5.99**

COMPARE TO VENOM **\$9.99**

ITEM 61363, 68497, 61360, 61359, 64417, 64418, 68498, 68496 shown

20177644

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

KRAUSE & BECKER **SUPER COUPON**

AIRLESS PAINT SPRAYER KIT

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$169.99~~ **NOW \$214.99**

COMPARE TO GRACO **\$299**

ITEM 62915/60600 shown

20182698

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

PREDATOR **SUPER COUPON**

8750 MAX. STARTING/7000 RUNNING WATTS 13 HP (420 CC) GAS GENERATOR

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

ITEM 68530/63086/63085 shown

ITEM 68525/63087/63088, CALIFORNIA ONLY

• GFCI outlets

~~NOW \$529.99~~ **NOW \$599.99**

COMPARE TO HONDA **\$2,699**

MODEL: EM6805X2AT

20183637

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

Lynxx **SUPER COUPON**

40 VOLT LITHIUM CORDLESS BRUSHLESS BLOWER

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~\$139.99~~ **NOW \$119.99**

ITEM 64716, 64481/63284 shown

COMPARE TO DEWALT **\$199**

MODEL: DCBL1908

SAVE \$79

20184483

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

STEP STOOL/WORKING PLATFORM

• 350 lb. capacity

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$199.99~~ **NOW \$299.99**

ITEM 62515/66911 shown

COMPARE TO GPL **\$514.5**

MODEL: H-21

SAVE 61%

20186159

LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

PITTSBURGH **SUPER COUPON**

CLICK-TYPE TORQUE WRENCHES

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

• Reversible

LIFETIME WARRANTY

YOUR CHOICE \$99

DRIVE	ITEM
1/4"	2696/61277/63881
3/8"	807/61276/63880
1/2"	62431/239/63882

COMPARE TO HUSKY **\$84.97**

MODEL: H20TWA

SAVE 88%

20190054

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

PITTSBURGH MOTORCYCLE **SUPER COUPON**

1000 LB. CAPACITY MOTORCYCLE LIFT

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

• Diamond plate steel platform and ramp

• Lift range: 7" to 29-1/2"

~~NOW \$299.99~~ **NOW \$399.99**

COMPARE TO DIRECT-LIFT **\$799.99**

MODEL: 873100

ITEM 69904/68892 shown

SAVE \$500

20191661

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

THUNDERBOLT solar **SUPER COUPON**

100 WATT SOLAR PANEL KIT

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

2X MORE POWER

~~NOW \$199.99~~ **NOW \$149.99**

ITEM 64335, 63585 shown

20197366

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

PITTSBURGH **SUPER COUPON**

32 PIECE SCREWDRIVER SET

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$5.99~~ **NOW \$31.97**

ITEM 61259/90764 shown

20204157

LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

CENTRAL MACHINERY **SUPER COUPON**

8", 5 SPEED BENCHTOP DRILL PRESS

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$499.99~~ **NOW \$649.99**

COMPARE TO BUFFALO BLACK **\$110.95**

MODEL: OPUL

ITEM 62520/60238 shown

20208616

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE **SUPER COUPON**

MECHANIC'S ROLLER SEAT

• 350 lb. capacity WITH DRAWERS

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$499.99~~ **NOW \$629.99**

ITEM 64548/63762 shown

20209708

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

12 VOLT MAGNETIC TOWING LIGHT KIT

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$9.99~~ **NOW \$44.24**

ITEM 63100

20210556

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

SUPER COUPON

10" PNEUMATIC TIRE

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$3.99~~ **NOW \$5.99**

COMPARE TO FARM & RANCH **\$7.81**

MODEL: FR1055

ITEM 69385/62388/62409, 62698/30900 shown

20217990

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

COVERPRO **SUPER COUPON**

10 FT. x 10 FT. POPUP CANOPY

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$54.99~~ **NOW \$64.99**

COMPARE TO GUIDESMAN **\$99**

MODEL: 153207

ITEM 62898/62897/62899 shown

20223326

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE **SUPER COUPON**

12 VOLT, 150 PSI PORTABLE INFLATOR

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$16.99~~ **NOW \$19.49**

ITEM 63109/4077/63152 shown

20224117

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

PITTSBURGH **SUPER COUPON**

40 PIECE, 3/8" DRIVE SAE AND METRIC SOCKET SET

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$3.99~~ **NOW \$4.99**

ITEM 63015/61328/47902/62843 shown

20231235

LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

Bauer **SUPER COUPON**

10 AMP DEEP CUT VARIABLE SPEED BAND SAW KIT

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$143.99~~ **NOW \$99.99**

COMPARE TO DEWALT **\$299**

MODEL: DWM120

ITEM 64194/63763/63444 shown

20239612

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

SUPER COUPON

AMMO DRY BOX

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$3.99~~ **NOW \$6.99**

ITEM 63135, 61451 shown

COMPARE TO RANGEMAXX **\$9.99**

MODEL: 1312-92

SAVE 60%

20241660

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC **SUPER COUPON**

3/8" x 50 FT. RETRACTABLE AIR HOSE REEL

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$59.99~~ **NOW \$79.99**

COMPARE TO KOBALT **\$99**

MODEL: SGV-AIR184

ITEM 64685/69265/62344/93897 shown

20243075

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 12/14/18*

CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS **SUPER COUPON**

VARIABLE SPEED MULTIFUNCTION POWER TOOL

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

~~NOW \$24.99~~ **NOW \$27.99**

ITEM 63113/62867/63111 shown

20246155

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*Original coupon only. No use on prior purchases after 30 days from original purchase or without original receipt. Valid through 12/14/18.

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 ☑ **TAKE THE FALL**

Taylor Creek Trail dazzles with an autumn canopy of orange and yellow leaves set against an imposing red-rock backdrop.

Zion's Golden Age

Come September, nature's colorful brushstrokes put a shine on Utah's oldest national park

— by Emily Fagan

One of the most visited national parks in America, Zion is an awe-inspiring land of towering rock walls that rise up on either side of Utah's Virgin River. Autumn is a wonderful time to go because the desert landscape has cooled enough to make the many hikes comfortable, even in midday. However, the popularity of this season also makes

it extremely crowded. We were thrilled when we found a quiet trail that took us deep into a kaleidoscope of fall colors.

Although it was a gray September day when we drove the short 5-mile Kolob Canyons Road, the vibrant shades of red and orange on the lofty rock faces were magnificent. The road offered scenic lookouts at every bend, but it was when we got

out and hiked the easy Taylor Creek Trail that we became immersed in the unique experience of Zion in autumn. Every step was cloaked in the flaming colors that mark the end of summer.

➔ **If You Go**
Make sure to check accessibility at www.nps.gov/zion. The Kolob Canyons visitor center, parking lot and scenic drive are in the middle of a seven-month renovation. 

VENTURE RV

Sonic Lite | Sonic | SportTrek | SportTrek Touring



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LEVELING SIMPLIFIED!
Level Your RV on the First Try!
LevelMatePRO
Venture's Virtual Leveling System

Venture RV's lightweight travel trailers were created from the ground up using a rather unique philosophy in this industry; design units the way you'd want to camp in them! They were designed by campers *for* campers.

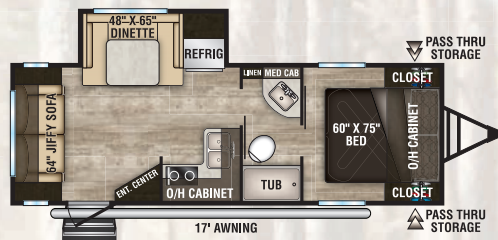
Our product managers, engineers and sales staff and families all actively enjoy the great outdoors and constantly use our products, thus making them the best, most practical

and affordable choice in RVing, bar none!

All in all, we believe you'll find the perfect Venture floorplan to suit your family's needs. See you at the campsite!

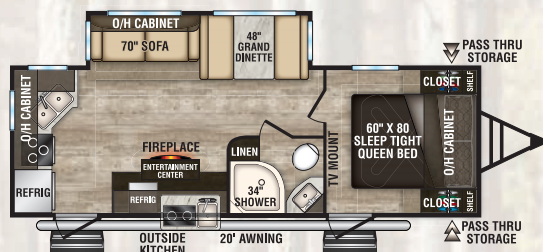
Sonic SN231VRL

Only Weighs 4,200 Pounds!
One-Piece Seamless Fiberglass Roof!
82-Inch Interior Height!
Sofa & U-Dinette!
Walk-Through Bathroom!
Island Queen Bed!



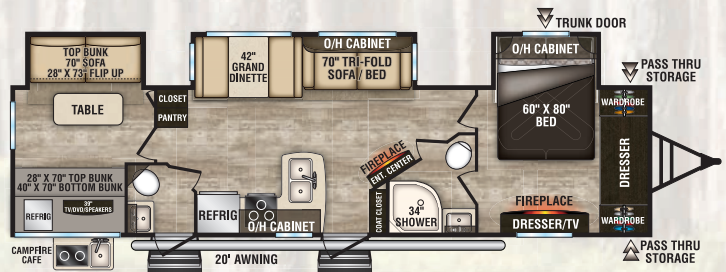
SportTrek ST251VRK

Only Weighs 5,940 Pounds!
Rear Kitchen Floorplan
Outside Kitchen
Entertainment Center across from Sofa!
20-Foot Awning that covers both Entry Doors!



SportTrek Touring Edition STT343VBH

Queen Bed Slideout!
1 1/2 Baths!
4 Bunks!
Outside Kitchen w/Refrig, Sink, Cooktop & 40-Inch TV!
20-Foot Awning that covers both entry doors!
Cargo/Bike Rack!



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