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Visitors to Oregon's Rogue River Valley can enjoy scenic views and waterfront sites at The Point RV Campground in Emigrant Lake County Park (see page 21).

Furrion's backup-camera system provides a clear picture of the area behind the motorhome. Pg. 16



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ON THE COVER

Fleetwood's Jamboree 30D easily navigates twisty roads, such as this one at Joshua Tree National Park in California, thanks to the motorhome's REV Control Ryde (RCR) system — the result of a collaboration between REV Group and MORryde. Photo by Scott Hirko.



By Bob Livingston

Skechers, Crocs and Flip-Flops

I have always believed that things happen for a reason, and that my chance meeting with the then-publisher and owner of this magazine, Art Rouse, in 1971 was no accident. He gave me the opportunity to work in a field that I quickly became infatuated with after seeing my cousin's pickup camper, the first RV I had ever laid my eyes on.

Before that life-changing meeting with Rouse, I had pieced together my first RV, a van conversion, which was the predecessor of the Class B motorhome. It was a wonderful experience and immersed my wife, Lynne, and me into a lifestyle that would capture our hearts with a vengeance. As 20-somethings in a lifestyle that catered to mostly older folks, we were somewhat unique, and felt like we inherited a new group of mothers and fathers. Fast forward 45 years, and we're now just like those "old" people who once took Lynne and me under their wings, giving us the advice and friendship that cemented our love for RVs. Today, young RVers are no longer an anomaly, with the lifestyle becoming more appealing to millennials and Gen Xers every day. And as an RV photojournalist, it's been a privilege to have shared my stories and advice, and promote this amazing lifestyle with so many people — young and mature. Every day I pinch myself to confirm that indeed I have been lucky enough to pursue a passion as a career, but now it's time to step down as publisher of this great magazine and experience the RV lifestyle as a retiree rather than an employee.

So what will the next chapter of our lives look like? If we can wear Skechers, Crocs and flip-flops, we'll be there in an RV. As we prepared for retirement from the magazine, Lynne and I have been discussing the possibility of going



full time, and we will likely take that path. I will continue my role with this magazine as a consultant and a few of my articles will show up in these pages throughout the year. I will take on special projects for various RV entities, keeping my hand in industry product development and promotion. The RV industry has been our extended family, and for that we are deeply grateful.

I could easily devote most of this magazine to acknowledge and thank everyone who has made it possible for me to have such an incredible publishing career. It's been fun and an honor to work with so many great editors, artists and salespeople over the years, who have been more than just colleagues, but friends for life. Ann Emerson will be taking over the reins as publisher and Managing Editor Kristopher Bunker will pen this column. I'm confident that *MotorHome* magazine will continue to be your trusted source for information that enhances ownership and the RV lifestyle.

As readers of this magazine and our sister publication, *Trailer Life*, and members of the Good Sam Club, you have been my ears and eyes and have always been gracious. Whether you've encouraged me or disagreed with me, you've been loyal readers, and for that I am forever indebted.

It's going to be hard to get into a groove without pushing deadlines, but the memories of guiding and assembling this magazine, working rallies, giving seminars, creating a TV show, producing videos and testing hundreds of RVs will be implanted in my heart forever.

Thanks for the ride; it's been a good one indeed. As for Lynne and me, we'll see you in the RV park. **M**

Contributors | March



Donya Carlson is the managing editor of *Trailer Life*. She grew up camping and loves the outdoors. Previously, she was the managing editor of the motorcycle enthusiast and travel magazine, *Rider*.



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Dawn Wilson is a professional photographer and writer specializing in photography of high altitudes and high latitudes of the Rockies and Alaska. She currently travels full time in her motorhome.



Mary Zalmanek and her husband, Jim, enjoy traveling in their 2003 Safari Trek when they are not at home in Monument, Colorado. Mary is the author of *The Art of the Spark* (www.artofthespark.com).

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

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

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

Printed in the United States.

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If you stay in your motorhome during extremely cold weather, which brand/model allows you to remain in comfort without battling the elements? Are there any particular options installed to combat the cold, or do you have any tried-and-true methods of keeping the motorhome's interior toasty?

That's the question we asked in the December 2016 issue, and here are some of the replies we received.



Tips From a Pro

There is no brand/model that is best for harsh winters in an RV. You just need to use common sense. Some of the issues to be addressed are as follows:

- RV refrigerators don't function correctly when temps are below the 25- to 32-degree range; you'd need to install a cold-weather kit (and that is only good down to zero degrees Fahrenheit).
- Residential refrigerators don't function correctly below 42 F.
- Refrigerators that are located in slideouts will be affected the most by cold weather.
- Using LP-gas heat will cause a lot of interior condensation to develop, so make sure you open up a window slightly to combat this.
- Carry heat tape with you to wrap cold lines and pipe installation, especially if staying long term at a campsite.
- Don't keep water lines attached to a motorhome; just fill the water tank, disconnect the lines and store them.
- Don't keep drain valves open, as they may freeze in that position.
- Disconnect the sewer hoses and store them, as they will freeze as well. Since they are plastic, they may crack and be of no value afterward.
- Carry a heat gun to thaw frozen pipes at campgrounds, and learn how to use it correctly so you don't burst the pipes.
- Let faucets drip slightly so lines don't freeze up.
- Keep the water heater running.
- If staying for long periods of time at one spot, obtain larger LP-gas tanks, install skirts for the bottom of the motorhome and install a heat source for pass-through storage.

Paying attention to these items

will allow you to camp and enjoy in extreme weather.

Verone Jenkins | Columbus, New Jersey

Nestled in a Newmar

We live in Canada and have owned seven motorhomes. We have been RVers for 47 years, owning everything from a tent trailer to Class A motorhomes. We currently own our fourth Newmar diesel pusher. We have camped with our pushers in weather as low as 30 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, and have never had a freeze-up. Newmar units come with electric tank heaters as an option, though we have never had one. Our last two units have included the Oasis Hydronic Heating system, which works well because the systems include a fan-coil unit in the water-service area, and the unit itself keeps the basement nice and warm. We never leave home

Featured Letter

It's Curtains for You ...

Like many owners of a Class C motorhome, we utilize the above-cab bed for storage when not in use. There is a small set of curtains to hide the mess. But we also noticed how much heat or cold was coming from the cab area into the main living space, so we purchased a simple drapery rod and a set of insulated drapes. As our Jayco Seneca is a Super C, we were able to use 84-inch drapes with no modifications. We like the look, the better privacy and especially the insulated properties of the drapes.

Jim and Betty Stroh | Loveland, Colorado





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in winter without our water system being fully charged.

It is also important to travel with the furnace on when the temperatures drop below freezing. To the best of our knowledge, Newmar has some of the highest insulation R-values in the industry. This feature also helps to keep the unit cooler in summer. The windows in most Newmar models are dual-pane, which is very important to

help control interior temperatures.

In addition, we always carry a small ceramic heater to add some additional heat to the living area or wherever needed. It also helps to keep the blinds drawn, particularly at night. Our last three Newmars have been Dutch Stars. We highly recommend this brand for cold-weather comfort.

Wayne and Jean Ulrich | Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Cold-Weather Problems

You don't need extreme temperatures for there to be problems. All you need is a drop to 30 F. Keeping the inside warm is not the main problem, although LP-gas furnaces will quickly empty your tank and use a lot of electricity. A diesel hydronic system is the best way to keep the inside of your coach toasty, but they are a very expensive option.

The main problems are snow and ice on the outsides of the vehicle, especially the roof, slideouts and slideout-topper awnings, which won't retract properly unless they are clean and dry. And then try climbing onto a slippery rubber roof to shovel or sweep the snow and ice off! The ice you don't remove will bounce around and could damage the air-conditioner shrouds and vent covers or fall onto other vehicles. Ice forms on the outside compartment doors, which get damaged when you try to open them. Battery voltages drop, and if you don't use shorepower, you might not be able to start your generator if it gets too cold. Sewer hoses become brittle and may snap. Your water lines can freeze and holding-tank valves become very stiff. The motorhome can also sustain undercarriage damage from ice and potholes.

I have experienced all of those things during winter-weather travel and camping, so beware!

Jay Sigel | Via email

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Forever Fleetwood

We bought a 1986 Fleetwood Bounder, and all the basement storage compartments contained lights and were heated by the central heating/cooling system. We have never experienced any freezing of the plumbing or holding tanks. We spent two weeks during Christmas in Post Falls, Idaho, with temperatures in the 30s, and snow every day. We were hooked up to shorepower and kept the interior at 72 F. One concession we did make was to tape two-sided aluminum foil to the rear bedroom windows. When the motorhome was parked, we placed a cover over the front end to keep the cold air from creeping in, and to protect

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the engine and batteries. We made several trips from Texas to Wyoming, Montana and Idaho in the winters, and our Bouncer never failed us.

Norma McMinimy | Canyon Lake, Texas

Arctic Options

We purchased a Forest River 28-foot Sunseeker Class C, and made sure it had one very important option: the Arctic Package. With that option, all

three tanks (fresh, gray and black) are heated, and it has been a pleasure to be stuck in cold weather knowing that we'll be OK. Some things we also do are to set the furnace to 50 F at night, use an electric blanket and retract the living-room slide (which reduces the overall space that needs to be heated at night). Some of our family members live in central Oregon, where temperatures can drop to 10 F at night, but

we don't experience any problems.

R. Lewis | San Diego, California

Errata

Due to errors in the editing process, the January "Getting Aktiv" test contained some incorrect information. First, the Hymer Aktiv is not equipped with leveling jacks, so setup in camp should not take 30 minutes. Also, the skylight is intended to be closed while driving, which would eliminate the noise referenced by the author in the test.

Also, in the January "Passion in Action" article, we failed to include photography credits for the images. The images should be credited as follows: Photo of Gary Stone, credit to Karen Stone; photo of Marlene Brown, credit to Jim Brown; photo of Nan and Earl Miller, credit to Bob Card; photo of Sandy Pittman, credit to Randy Pittman; and photo of Debbie Wilson, credit to Tom Wilson.

We apologize for the errors.

Campfire Clouds

Do any other readers find the campfires in RV parks offensive?

We believe they belong only in campgrounds, but many RV resorts allow them, and most even include fire rings at each site. If you're downwind from a particularly smoky fire, it can sure ruin your stay. We urge others to please be aware that smoke travels, and your neighbors will appreciate your consideration. We also ask that RV park owners please consider banning them.

Richard Rayner | Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada

Question of the Month

Have you experienced excessive smoke traveling from the campfire of an RV park neighbor's site? How did you resolve the situation? And, do you think that campfires should be banned from RV parks/resorts, or do you have any suggestions on how RVers can be proactive about keeping unwanted smoke away from other sites at RV parks?

Send your comments to:

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

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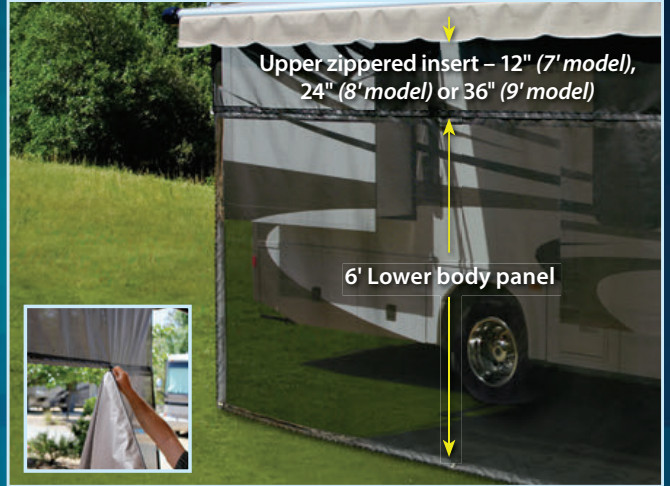
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14 ROAD FOODIE | 16 WHEELS & GEAR | 18 CROSSROADS



Rock On!

Visitors can hike, climb or paddle the day away among Prescott, Arizona's scenic Granite Dells

By Morey Edelman

Massive granite boulders surrounding Watson and Willow lakes create a majestic setting a mere 4 miles north of downtown Prescott, Arizona. Watson Lake Park encompasses this natural wonder and provides access to the Granite Dells, an amazing collection of ancient formations juxtaposed by the urban downtown area just minutes away. The park is run by the city of Prescott and has plenty of parking, picnic areas, hiking trails and even a 19-site campground (no hookups, but showers are available).

The highlight of the park is Willow Dells Slickrock Trail, which loops along the north shore of Willow Lake up and around the 1.4 billion-year-old boulders while offering numerous scenic vistas. While visiting the Dells, be sure

to keep your eyes peeled, as Native American ruins and artifacts are said to be scattered throughout the area. For waterborne exploration, canoe, kayak and stand-up paddleboard (SUP) rentals are available through Prescott Outdoors Adventure Rentals (928-925-1410, www.prescottoutdoors.com).

In addition to the park campground, there is also the Point of Rocks RV Campground, a private campground just a short walk to the Dells. Unlike the park's campground, which is open early April through early October, Point of Rocks is open year-round and offers full hookups.

For more information on Watson Lake Park camping, call 928-777-1122; for Point of Rocks RV Campground, call 928-445-9018 or visit <http://pointofrocksrvcampground.com>.

By Bobbie Hasselbring

Lighten Up with Lemons

The holidays are behind us and, if you're like me, all those sweets, cocktails and high-calorie foods have left you bloated, out of sorts and a little heavier than you'd like. My suggestion? Lighten up with lemons.

Lemons aren't a slim-down magic bullet, but they're a terrific way to add flavor to food and drinks without a ton of calories. You can add them to still or sparkling water, garnish food with them and use their juice and peels in dishes to ratchet up flavor. Peels can be grated and added to salads, chicken or fish dishes or blended into smoothies or soups for a citrusy twist.

And lemons are full of vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients and antioxidants. Lemons are high in vitamin C, folate (vitamin B-9), potassium, flavonoids and compounds called limonoids that may help fight cancer cells and lower cholesterol. They're also associated with good heart health and the citric acid in lemons may help prevent and break up kidney stones.

A quarter cup of lemon juice contains 31 percent of the daily recommended intake of vitamin C and 3 percent



Fresh lemonade is easy to make and delicious.

of folate — all for around 13 calories. A whole raw lemon contains 139 percent of the daily recommended vitamin C intake, and has 22 calories.

Lemons are available nationwide anytime, but winter RVers in Florida and the Rio Grande Valley of Texas will find inexpensive fresh lemons October–April. Lemons also keep well. Toss a couple in your RV's refrigerator and they'll last several weeks.

Have a favorite lemony recipe you'd like to share?

Email bobbie@realfoodtraveler.com with "Lemons" in the subject line.

LEMON CHICKEN

This is one of my favorite recipes from *Eater's Choice: A Food Lover's Guide to Lower Cholesterol* by Dr. Ron and Nancy Goor. Easy to make, this recipe is a blend of sweet and tart that'll become a favorite. And it contains only 223 calories per serving!

- 8 boned and skinned chicken-breast halves (I use bone-in thighs)
- Juice of 2½ lemons
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup unbleached flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons grated lemon peel
- ¼ cup brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice + 2 tablespoons water
- 1-2 lemons, sliced thin

▶ Place chicken in bowl and cover with lemon juice and marinate in refrigerator for several hours or overnight, turning occasionally.



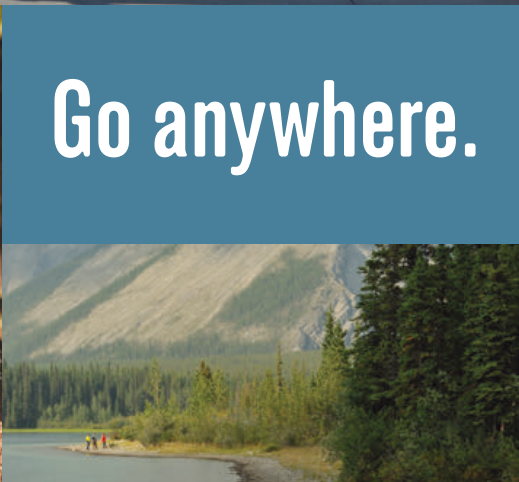
Preheat the oven to 425 degrees Fahrenheit. Put butter and olive oil in shallow baking pan and melt in oven (about 5 minutes).

Combine flour, salt, paprika and pepper in plastic bag. Remove chicken from marinade and coat each piece with flour by shaking it in bag.

Remove pan from oven and lower heat to 350 F. Place chicken in pan in single layer.

Peel the yellow peel (zest) from two lemons and chop fine with brown sugar in food processor (or grate and add to brown sugar).

Sprinkle lemon zest/sugar mixture on each chicken breast. Combine lemon juice and water and sprinkle evenly over chicken. Put one lemon slice on each breast and bake chicken for 35-40 minutes until cooked through.



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Shine On

Properly detailing your motorhome's exterior can be a time-consuming process (see "Detailing Like a Pro," page 57), but sometimes you simply need a quick fix on the road between major cleanings. ASI's waterless Spray & Shine! wash and wax allows users to spray the product onto a dirty motorhome, and simply wipe it off, leaving behind a thin layer of carnauba wax. Spray & Shine! is formulated to cut through dirt, road grime, bugs, tree sap or bird droppings that can accumulate after just a few days on the road. ASI claims the product works on glass, paint, chrome or any other nonporous surface. Plus, the fact that it's waterless means it can be used at many RV parks and campgrounds (depending on the facility's cleaning policy). MSRP: \$13.95 for a 16-ounce bottle.

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A Clear View of the Rearview

One of the most difficult things to master while maneuvering a large motorhome is the art of backing up. Because there is no rearview mirror, many drivers have a tough time adapting to only using the side mirrors. And there's not always a helper available to guide you. Furrion's FRC12TA-BL backup-camera system provides smooth, clear and continuous live video of the area behind the motorhome, so newbies and old pros alike can back into their site (or out of the driveway) safely. Using the latest long-range wireless technology, the waterproof 12-volt DC camera digitally locks to the 4.3-inch LCD display within a distance of 100 feet. The camera is shaded and adjustable to reduce glare, and also utilizes infrared night vision. Plus, Furrion's Vibrationsmart and Climatesmart technologies ensure the camera can withstand the vibrations of the road and extreme weather conditions. MSRP: \$399.

Furrion, 888-354-5792, www.furrion.com



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Custer Products Limited, 800-490-3158,
www.custerproducts.com

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Corrosion can be devastating to an engine's cooling system, forming on water pumps and radiators to decrease efficiency and possibly cause overheating



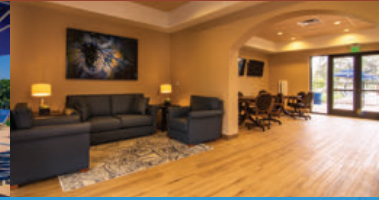
and premature parts failure. Prestone's Antifreeze/Coolant contains Cor-Guard corrosion inhibitors, and is designed to prevent corrosion up to five times better than the next leading branded competitor, according to the company. Prestone's Cor-Guard formula is available in two products: Prestone Concentrate Antifreeze/Coolant, which should only be used to fill radiators after a thorough flush and clean; and Prestone 50/50 Prediluted Antifreeze/Coolant, which can be added to any existing fluid to optimize the cooling system. The Antifreeze/Coolant offers protection from minus 34 degrees Fahrenheit up to 234 F. MSRP: \$8.95

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ESCAPES CROSSROADS

San Angelo, Texas

Waterlily Wonders

Lilies that grow in water, rather than in dirt, don't immediately sound like a reason to make the trip to San Angelo, Texas. Especially when you have to peer into huge vats of water rather than wander down scenic shady paths. But these multihued beauties had me yanking out my camera and raptly listening to the stories of NASA engineer-turned-waterlily breeder Ken Landon describing how he created new species in unheard-of colors. It's not just his spectacular flowers that amaze; he's even breeding lily pads capable of supporting the weight of an adult and that come in shades of green, maroon and bronze. He is also the creator of the Texas Dawn, which became the official waterlily of Texas in 2011.

Landon seems to relish the challenge of breeding the plants to meet every need — cold-weather tolerant, heat-tolerant, tiny blooms, huge blooms, few petals, large numerous petals and, of course, colors Mother Nature never intended. Visitors see only a tiny portion of his lilies, but his full collection is said to contain examples of the majority of the world's known wild species of waterlilies and thousands of hybrids.

Although he has been called the King of the Lilies, Landon doesn't like that title. "It's more about making the world a better place," he says. And certainly a more beautiful place.

For more information, call 832-274-3377 or visit www.internationalwaterlily-collection.com — Neala McCarten



Photo: Neala McCarten

Marion, Virginia

Hungry Mother State Park

Easily accessible from Interstate 81 in the southwestern tip of Virginia near the town of Marion, Hungry Mother State Park consists of 3,334 acres with a 108-acre lake. This park was dedicated in 1936 and is still a local favorite.

Hungry Mother offers 17 miles of hiking and bicycle trails, and the lake is popular for swimming, boating (non-gasoline only; rentals are

available) and fishing. Campgrounds adjacent to the park have full- and partial-hookup sites.

Of course, with a name like Hungry Mother State Park, there must be a legend of its name's origin: A mother and child escaped a Native American attack and sought food in the surrounding wilderness. The child wandered down to a creek and found help. The only words the child could say? "Hungry Mother."

For more information, call 276-781-7400 or go to www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/hungry-mother — James Richardson

Photo: James Richardson



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The Point RV Campground at Emigrant Lake County Park offers full-hookup sites and lakeside views just a few miles from downtown Ashland.

Going Rogue

Wine, chocolate and cheese combine with quaint charm and a famous theater scene during late winter in this southern Oregon river valley

By Bobbie Hasselbring

When RVers explore southern Oregon's verdant Rogue River Valley, it's often in the summer months, when they can fish and whitewater raft the area's wild rivers, hike in the mountains, cycle to wineries along winding valley roads or take in plays at the world-famous Oregon Shakespeare Festival. We decided to head to this popular destination in March, just at the close of winter and the beginning of spring. And we were surprised at just how lively and fun the "quiet" season is here in the land of the wild Rogue River.

As is often the case in our busy lives, we don't leave Portland, Oregon, until after work around 6 p.m. It doesn't take long before we've put city traffic behind us. The Rogue River Valley is about five hours south of Portland, and just a hop from the Oregon/California border. The valley is an oblong bowl surrounded by three mountain ranges: the Cascades, the Siskiyou and the Coast Range. Interstate 5 cuts through the heart of the valley, making it easily accessible

for RVers and, this evening, we make great time, quickly ticking off towns like Salem, Eugene and Roseburg.

It's late when we pull into Valley of the Rogue State Park in Gold Hill between Medford and Grants Pass. Perched at a bend in the Rogue River just off the freeway, this is a big campground with plenty of trees and more than 85 paved full-hookup RV spaces (23 pull-through sites) with fire rings and picnic tables, and we easily find a cozy space for the night. The park also offers flush toilets and hot showers and, while we're just passing through, we make a note that river access, a 1¼-mile hiking trail and an accessible 3½-mile trail (part of the Rogue River Greenway Trail that will eventually link Grants Pass and Ashland) make this a great spot for spending more time.

VALLEY OF THE ROGUE SP, OREGON



Getting There ➔

From Portland, to reach the author's first stop, Valley of the Rogue State Park, take Interstate 405 South to I-5 South. Continue for 253 miles. Take exit 45B for Valley of the Rogue State Park. Your destination will be on the left.

Gold History, Blue Cheese

We wake to sunny skies and, after a leisurely riverside breakfast, jump back onto I-5. About 10 miles southeast, we turn off at Central Point, a quaint farm town that still boasts a working downtown grain elevator. It's also home to Rogue Creamery, an award-winning, family-owned artisan cheesemaker. We pull into the ample parking lot the creamery shares with Lillie Belle Farms chocolates and Ledger David Cellars wine-tasting room (what could be better — cheese, wine and chocolate?).

In the cheese shop, we're immediately enveloped by the musky smell of blue cheese. Rogue Creamery sells cheese from all over the world and it makes cheddar, TouVelle (a type of American cheese) and its famous blue cheeses. Today, the creamery is sampling several blues, and I'm captivated by creamy, tangy Caveman Blue, so I pony up \$10 for a small sliver for the road. We also order a grilled-cheese sandwich to split, a bargain at \$5.

We head out Hanley Road, passing through farm fields and rolling hills studded with oaks. While the tem-

perature is still cool, signs of spring are everywhere — sunny daffodils poking through the moist soil, willows greening up and fruit trees dressed in a riot of pink and white blossoms.

We're headed to the Jacksonville Historic District, site of one of the first placer gold claims in the area. After gold was discovered here in 1851, Jacksonville flourished and was, for a time, the county seat. Beautiful Victorian homes and brick commercial buildings, including an impressive courthouse, sprung up. However, by 1884, the gold deposits were played out and the railroad bypassed the city. The economy slowed, and time seemed to stop here. Today, Jacksonville boasts more than 100 historic buildings, many of them trendy boutiques, antique shops, restaurants and coffee shops.

We park the motorhome in an RV-designated lot a few blocks from the center of town and walk along wooden sidewalks, peering inside well-preserved buildings and greedily snapping photos. After picking up a coffee and a cookie at GoodBean Coffee, we browse through fun antique shops and housewares stores.



A family enters the outdoor Allen Elizabethan Theatre, one of America's oldest Elizabethan theaters. Elegant, handmade costumes are on display at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival Welcome & Education Center.



Residents and visitors alike gather in a downtown Ashland square.

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We also hike a few blocks and up a steep road to the Jacksonville Historic Cemetery. This shady, 30-acre site is where some of the area's earliest pioneers are buried, including Margaret Love, the first person interred here in 1859. Jacksonville's cemetery is divided into several sections reflecting the city's early cultural divisions: Jewish (Hebrew), Catholic, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, Independent and Improved Order of Red Men, and the City section. Within the City section is Potter's Field, which houses the remains of blacks, poor whites, Native Americans, Hawaiians and Chinese. While most sites within the cemetery have headstones, some quite elaborate, none of the 133 graves in Potter's Field have individual markers.

Back downtown, we pop into the Umpqua Valley Wine Tasting Room to sample some local wines. The winemaker suggests we come back in the summer to experience Jacksonville's Britt Festival, a seasonal music festival that takes place at an open-air amphitheater. Named after pioneer photographer and Jacksonville resident Peter Britt, the popular concert series draws national pop, country, alternative and contemporary music acts.

Onto Chocolate, Theater

We drive a half-hour south to Ashland, a quaint, walkable town that's home to the world-famous Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF). We're coming back this evening, but the city's narrow streets aren't RV-friendly, so we head a few miles out of town to Emigrant Lake County Park and The Point RV Campground. This reservoir-based RV park is right on the water and, at this time of year, we have our pick of flat, blacktopped full-hookup spaces, complete with grass, a picnic table and a fire ring, all for \$30 a night.

After kicking back and enjoying our lakeside view for a while, we drive the dinghy to the Chocolate Maker's Dinner at the historic Ashland Springs Hotel. One of the reasons we came to the Rogue River Valley in March is the Oregon Chocolate Festival (March 3-5, 2017). This is one of the best celebrations of chocolate in the Northwest. As serious chocophiles, we know that the first night's chocolate-themed dinner is just the start of the fun.

The elegant Grand Ballroom in the Ashland Springs Hotel is the home to the sold-out dinner. The menu includes chocolate cocktails, grilled radicchio salad with cocoa nib dressing, oven-roasted branzini with bittersweet chocolate pecan fennel slaw, beef shanks in a chocolaty mole and, for



The audience gathers outside the Thomas Theatre before doors open for a matinee performance. Historic buildings in Jacksonville have been filled with boutiques, antique stores, cafés and coffee shops. The 90-minute Oregon Shakespeare Festival's backstage tour offers a fascinating look at the famous theater's inner workings.



dessert, espresso truffle cake. Yum!

Back at the motorhome, we collapse in a chocolate haze and wake the next morning to steady rain. No troubles because this is when we plan to attend the Oregon Chocolate Festival at the Ashland Hills Hotel & Suites just a few miles from Emigrant Lake.

The festival is a riot of chocolate goodness. More than 30 chocolatiers and pastry chefs from Seattle to San Francisco have come to show off their wares. There are chocolate truffles, bars, bonbons and more to sample. We also attend a number of chocolate seminars and demonstrations by chefs and chocolate experts, including classes on pairing chocolate and craft beer, making chocolate cheesecake bonbons and exploring chocolate from around the world. In the afternoon, we vote for the best chocolate dessert

and, my favorite, Black Truffle Dark Chocolate Molten Lava Cake, takes home top honors.

The next morning, we're grateful for cool, dry weather because we have reservations for a 90-minute backstage tour of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival, among the oldest and largest professional nonprofit theaters in the United States. Our guide, David, tells us that outdoor theater began modestly in Ashland in 1935 as a Fourth of July celebration. No one thought performing

“ We pass through farm fields and rolling hills studded with oaks. While the temperature is still cool, signs of spring are everywhere. ”



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GETAWAY

ROGUE RIVER VALLEY, OREGON

Shakespeare would be a hit, but the naysayers were wrong. Today, during its 10-month season, OSF employs 80 actors and 550 costumers, technicians, stagehands and others, including countless volunteers, to put on 800 plays for more than 400,000 guests.

David takes us behind the scenes, where a crew busily assembles a set, sound engineers adjust equipment and directors and stage managers confer over laptop computers. He tells us, during high season, theaters may change sets five times a day and that crews have only 2½ hours to get the work done. We head downstairs into the theater's bowels, peering into costume shops and wig and makeup studios. Finally, we step backstage and then onto the stage of the renowned outdoor Allen Elizabethan Theatre, where most of the Shakespearean productions happen. It's a thrill to imagine captivating audiences on this stage.

We bid David adieu and walk a few blocks to Lithia Park, a long, skinny urban oasis right in the middle of town. This shady, 93-acre park, filled with play structures, green spaces and a burbling creek, is a perfect respite during the valley heat. Today, it makes a great place to stretch our legs, and we work up a sweat hiking a couple of miles on the uphill trail.

We grab a quick burger at the RedZone Sports Bar & Grill before stopping at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival Welcome & Education Center to admire some elaborate costumes. An enthusiastic volunteer gives us the OSF season schedule, and we walk a few blocks to the Thomas Theatre, where we have tickets for "The Yeoman of the Guard." The theater is intimate, and every seat is a good one. This Gilbert and Sullivan comedy has been reinvented with a Western theme, and it's rollickingly funny.

It's been a full day, but before we head to the motorhome, we want to check out the valley's thriving wine scene that *Wine Enthusiast* magazine named one of the "10 Best Wine Travel Destinations." There are at least eight wineries on our Rogue Valley wine map and even more in surrounding valleys.



The Jacksonville Historic Cemetery provides a fascinating snapshot of the area's past. Deer like this spring fawn frolic freely in Ashland's Lithia Park.

We could spend an entire day driving from winery to winery or, better yet, book a wine tour and let someone else do the driving.

We stop at Weisinger Family Winery, on U.S. Highway 99 just south of town. As we taste the wine, the staffer tells us they began growing grapes as early as 1978 and bottled their first wine 10 years later, making them one of the oldest wineries in Ashland.

We gaze out at the surrounding grapevines realizing there are many more wineries to explore, plays to see and fascinating history to discover here than time left on this trip. We can also look forward to rafting rivers, catching fish, attending music festivals and hiking and skiing the mountains in the Rogue River Valley. So we clink glasses of mescolare, a smooth blend of grenache, cabernet and merlot, in a toast to the Rogue River Valley. We know we'll be back — winter, spring, summer and fall. **M**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Emigrant Lake County Park, The Point RV Park
541-774-8183, <http://jacksoncountyor.org/parks/Camping/Emigrant-Lake>

Oregon Chocolate Festival
541-631-2004, www.oregonchocolatefestival.com

Oregon Shakespeare Festival
800-219-8161, www.osfashland.org

Valley of the Rogue State Park
541-582-1118, http://oregonstateparks.org/index.cfm?do=parkPage.dsp_parkPage&parkId=76



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EXCELLENT ADVENTURES

Fantasy RV Tours gets Good Sam members up close to Florida beaches, bucking broncos and polar bears

For many Good Sam members, the purchase of a recreational vehicle is the fulfillment of a dream, the opportunity to experience the thrill of the open road in a home-on-wheels and check off bucket-list destinations. But the time and energy spent on planning routes, making campground reservations and buying tickets in advance, particularly on more elaborate road trips, can take some of the fun out of the experience. That's where professionally run RV trips can help. These organized group outings simplify planning by creating travel itineraries and booking RV parks and attractions so participants can make the most of their leisure time without the hassle.

With a new benefit launched last year, Good Sam members are entitled to substantial savings on caravan tours and rallies provided by Fantasy RV Tours, America's largest and most recognized RV-vacation operator. One of the great things about these trips is that, once travelers arrive at the rendezvous RV park, almost everything is already planned: campsites, events, show tickets, some meals and local transportation to and from events. Another advantage is that turn-by-turn driving

instructions are provided on all caravan tours, including interesting stops along the way and gas stations that are easy-in and easy-out. And, whether it's an RV-caravan tour or an event rally, participants have the safety and leadership of experienced guides along the way.

Here's a snapshot of three upcoming RV vacations from the Fantasy lineup — a world-class rodeo, a beach-hopping caravan and an unforgettable subarctic wildlife adventure.

Known for its Western pageantry and good old-fashioned fun, the annual **Calgary Stampede** is billed as the Greatest Outdoor Show on Earth. Alberta's largest city has created an exciting rodeo and grandstand event that attracts more than a million people every year. Elite cowboys and cowgirls from around the world compete for prizes, while hundreds of entertainers from across Canada put on a dazzling show. Good Sam members save up to \$75 on Fantasy's week of activities and area tours, including a trip to Banff.

Many RV snowbirds flock south to Florida for mild winters, warm coastal waters and sandy beaches that are perfect for strolling and gathering shells.



Fantasy has created a new **Florida Sunshine Getaway** that follows the gulf shore south to the Florida Keys and returns north along the Atlantic coast. It's a relaxing way to explore the different regions and enjoy the beautiful vistas, fresh seafood and great finds of the Sunshine State. Members save up to \$150 on the 35-day tour.

Fantasy's 15-day **Polar Bear Migration** is a thrilling RV caravan that has been compared to a *National Geographic* photo expedition. Tour takers travel north to Manitoba in their RVs to visit villages atop the tundra before hopping a train or plane to the town of Churchill and then boarding a specially designed Tundra Buggy to traverse the shores of Hudson Bay in search of polar bears in the wild. Returning south, the tour visits the provincial capital of Winnipeg. Members save up to \$250 on this RV trip of a lifetime.

► More information about these and other Fantasy RV tours is available at www.fantasyrvtours.com/goodsam. Fantasy also has a toll-free number, 800-453-9511, for answering Good Sam members' questions.

GOING PLACES WITH GOOD SAM

RV EVENTS

Throughout the year, the Good Sam Club brings members together at regional festivals, special events and organized camping outings from coast to coast. Don't miss the chance to connect with fellow members at the following RV-friendly club-sponsored gatherings:

FunFest

May 8 through 11

Washington Land Yacht Harbor RV Park
Lacey, Washington

Good Sam Fun Weekend

June 2 through 4

The Villages RV Park
Turning Stone Resort and Casino
Verona, New York

Rock, Ribs and Ridges Festival

June 24 through 25

Sussex County Fairgrounds
Augusta, New Jersey

Remington Ryde Bluegrass Festival

July 5 through 9

Centre County Grange Fairgrounds
Centre Hall, Pennsylvania

Montana Folk Festival

July 7 through 9

Butte Civic Center
Butte, Montana

Southern Oregon Kite Festival

July 14 through 16

Port of Brookings
Brookings, Oregon

Jenny Brook Bluegrass Festival

August 11 through 13

Tunbridge World's Fairgrounds
Tunbridge, Vermont

Maryland Children and Family Campout

August 11 through 13

Walkersville VFD Carnival Grounds
Walkersville, Maryland

► For the full schedule of Good Sam regional events, go to www.goodsamclub.com/events. The website also lists upcoming Good Sam State/Provincial Rallies where chapters and members get together for several days of camping fun, friendship and philanthropy.

RV SHOWS

Members save 50 percent on up to two admission tickets to all Good Sam-sponsored RV shows:

Good Sam RV Super Show

February 23 through 26

Phoenix International Raceway
Phoenix, Arizona

Harrisburg RV and Camping Show

February 23 through 26

Pennsylvania Farm Show Complex
and Expo Center
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Colorado RV, Sports and Travel Show

March 2 through 5

National Western Complex
Denver, Colorado

Rhode Island RV and Camping Show and Sale

March 3 through 5

Rhode Island Convention Center
Providence, Rhode Island

Virginia RV Show

March 10 through 12

Hampton Roads Convention Center
Hampton, Virginia

► To find out more and purchase half-price tickets online, go to www.gsevents.com.

RV TOURS

Members experience world-class events and must-see destinations on guided RV tours and rallies, sponsored by Fantasy RV Tours. Here's a sample of this summer's trips:

Alaska Your Way

June 26 through August 26

Start: Anacortes, Washington
End: Prince George, British Columbia

Calgary Stampede

July 5 through 11

McMahon Stadium, Calgary, Alberta

Best of the Canadian Maritimes

July 21 through August 16

Start: Bar Harbor, Maine
End: St. John, New Brunswick

► For details about Good Sam RV tours, visit www.fantasyrvtours.com/goodsam or call 800-453-9511.



Good Sam Days

Camping World invites Good Sam members to visit any of its more than 120 retail locations to celebrate Good Sam Days, April 6 through 9. During this four-day sales event, members can save money with exclusive discounts on popular RV supplies and outdoor accessories. Members who spend \$75 or more will receive a free umbrella, while supplies last.

► Visit www.campingworld.com to find Camping World SuperCenter locations and shop online. To take advantage of members-only offers on Good Sam Days, show a valid membership card to the cashier or enter the membership number when making a purchase on the website.

Good Sam *Perks*

A new money-stretching program rewards Good Sam members for renewing their club membership. Called Good Sam Perks, the program thanks members for their loyalty by providing access to one-time deep discounts, two-for-one deals and frequent-value savings from a variety of big national brands, small-town shops and everything in between. The Good Sam Perks website lists participating merchants and discounts, and a smartphone app makes it easy to access mobile-redeemable coupons. Good Sam Life and Elite members gain immediate access to Good Sam Perks.

► To find participating merchants, go to www.goodsamclub.com/perks.



🎉 **HAPPY CAMPERS** As the 50th anniversary celebration for Camping World and Good Sam came to an end last year, one lucky couple drove into the sunset in a new \$140,000 motorhome. Elwood and Janet Grabenbauer of Sioux Falls, South Dakota, were the grand-prize winners of a Thor Hurricane in the Golden Giveaway.

ALASKA'S PLAYGR

A summer motorhome trip across the famous Kenai Peninsula uncovers the ultimate in

Summer in Alaska is a dream for many RV owners, but finding available RV sites in a land that covers millions of acres can take a lot of preplanning. We knew months in advance that we would spend the summer traveling around Alaska, including along the Kenai Peninsula during peak salmon season, but our planning entailed no more than making sure we had the proper documents to travel through Canada and re-enter the U.S. We were going on the fly from there on out — not a single reservation made for a campsite prior to driving across the border into Alaska.

What we found along much of the Kenai Peninsula was an abundance of opportunities to park our motorhome and rest our weary heads from the hundreds of miles of driving between destinations at a plethora of RV parks, national forest campgrounds and even along the road. What we came home with was enough fresh salmon to share with friends and family, numerous wildlife photos to add to my stock inventory and a wealth of memories of

the beautiful Kenai Peninsula.

A drive on the Kenai Peninsula starts with heading south out of Anchorage, Alaska, along Turnagain Arm. Time it right if you can to catch the bore tide, a wave of water that floods back into the bay and attracts dozens of paddleboarders and surfers catching a rare Alaska wave.

Stop at the Tesoro gas station in Girdwood. It is the most-visited gas station in all of Alaska, and the last

chance for fuel for approximately 65 miles. Then head south.

In the months of June and July, the wildflowers along the Seward Highway just past the welcome sign for the Kenai Peninsula fill the mountains on either side of the road with vibrant shades of pink, purple and green. Lupines will blanket the landscape in shades of purple in June. Fireweed will cover the landscape in bright magenta in July. Getting off the road and taking a closer look at the meadows will reveal chocolate lilies, wild geraniums, yarrow and monkshood.

Make Seward your first town to visit. The jaunt to Seward is a pleasant and easy drive down the Seward Highway. Avoid visiting Seward during Fourth of July weekend, unless you like crowds. If you do, the town of Seward hosts a race where hundreds



OUND

RV sightseeing and adventure

of runners climb up the aptly named Mount Marathon.

Instead, visit Seward before the big weekend and check out the beauty of coastal Alaska. Start by catching one of the first-come, first-served spots in the six RV parks along the Seward Waterfront Park, or make reservations at Miller's Landing farther down the coast of Resurrection Bay.

After securing your RV spot, book a boat ride into Resurrection Bay, where you will discover a world full of sea birds, marine mammals and calving glaciers. Visit Kenai Fjords National Park by taking the only road that accesses the park; all other access points are via boat. This drivable point into the park provides access to the trails for Exit Glacier and the Harding Icefield, beautiful, must-see destinations within the park. On the way out



A flock of common murre, one of the many sea birds seen in Kachemak Bay near Homer, cover the rocks of Gull Island.

from Kenai Fjords National Park, stop at the Salmon Bake Restaurant for a tasty, warm meal after a long day of hiking. And finally, cruise around town, where you can visit the Alaska SeaLife Center, watch fisherman come in from their daily fishing trips and enjoy a tasty burger in the ambiance of a school bus at Red's Burgers.

After a couple of days in Seward, head back up the Seward Highway and turn left onto the Sterling Highway to continue exploring the Kenai Peninsula.

The next town you reach is Cooper Landing. For those wanting to test

their skills at salmon fishing, this area offers some of the best opportunities to fish when the pinks and reds are running, which typically happens through July.

An ideal spot for RV parking is at the Russian River Campground. This inexpensive national-forest campground provides access to the fishing boardwalk along the river. This is also a fantastic place to photograph bald eagles and brown bears fishing along the river.

Continue a little farther down the Sterling Highway and bypass the main road by driving through the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge. Here visitors have an excellent opportunity to see moose, black bears and spruce grouse.

Mark the town of Kenai as your

A boat ride and moderate hike takes you to Grewingk Glacier in Kachemak Bay State Park near Homer, the first state park in Alaska.



Getting There

To reach Anchorage via the Alaska Highway (from Dawson Creek, BC), take BC-97 North for more than 500 miles (becomes Alaska Highway). After another 400-plus miles, take AK-1/Glenn Highway Tok Cutoff. Follow more than 120 miles, then left onto AK-1. Anchorage is about 200 miles beyond.

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ALASKA'S PLAYGROUND



Bald eagles are common sights near Seward, where they may even land in the trees right outside of your motorhome. The Salmon Bake Restaurant on the outskirts of Seward offers a cozy atmosphere with warm, home-cooked food — the perfect stop on a cold, chilly, damp Alaska day.

next stop for your visit on the Kenai Peninsula. Dena'ina Athabascan Alaskans lived in the region for generations, but Russians changed the ambiance of the community when they settled in the area and built Fort Saint Nicholas in 1791. Established as a fish and fur trading post, Fort Saint Nicholas became the town of Kenai and slowly grew as the Russians built Russian Orthodox churches and other buildings to accommodate the few residents. A U.S. Army contingent took over the fort in 1869 and it became known as Fort Kenai.

But life along the coast of Cook Inlet was hard, and the fort was abandoned by 1871. As the fishing industry grew along the Kenai River and Cook Inlet, canneries became established near the former fort and the town of Kenai began to rise again.

Today, several of the original Russian buildings have been refurbished and provide an interesting look into the historical past of this once small fort that has become a hub of activity on the Kenai Peninsula.

For the RV traveler, Kenai is an excellent place to stock up on supplies at the local Wal-Mart, the only one on the Kenai Peninsula. Kenai also offers one of a few locations on the Kenai Peninsula to view caribou out on the Kenai Flats. And stop for lunch at the unique Burger Bus. Be sure to plan some time at this hot little outdoor restaurant because its popularity and tasty food create long lines.

A great place to camp near Kenai

Many large parking areas along Resurrection River provide great places for a quick lunch before heading into Kenai Fjords National Park.



is at Diamond M Ranch Resort, a Good Sam Park offering discounts, great amenities for the weary traveler and plenty of RV sites. Although booking early is always recommended by their helpful staff to secure the site of choice during the busy summer months, they do their best to accommodate RVs. To celebrate its 20-year anniversary, the resort is offering a 20 percent discount if a reservation is paid in full by May 2017.

After Kenai, try your hand at fishing again by stopping in Soldotna. By mid-July, the sockeye salmon typically run in the Kenai River at Swiftwater Park, a city park offering hiking, fishing access and a 40-site campground with a dump station but no hookups. Purchase a 24-hour pass from the City of Soldotna Parks and Recreation and take advantage of the long hours of daylight to fish for close to 20 hours.

Save some room in your freezer though, because your next destination on the tour of the Kenai Peninsula takes you to the "Halibut Fishing Capital of the World" — Homer, Alaska.

The farthest point south on the peninsula, Homer is a small fishing town with big potential for getting a large dose of Alaskan recreation.

First, take advantage of Homer's proximity to Katmai National Park and Preserve. This remote park, which is only accessible by boat or plane, boasts some of the best bear-viewing in the world.

Although my recommendation is to spend a few days in the park immersed with brown bears as they go about their daily activities, daytrips are also very popular. Beluga Air (907-235-8256, www.belugaair.com), out of Homer, is an excellent source for flying over to Brooks Falls in Katmai National Park for a daytrip to view bears fishing for salmon.

Another popular activity out of Homer is to take a boat trip through Kachemak Bay. Mako's Water Taxi (907-235-9055, www.makoswatertaxi.com) is one company that offers a variety of boat trips from just a few hours to a full-day program and to more than a dozen different destina-

tions. Visiting Kachemak Bay State Park, where you can hike out to a glacier; taking a tour of Gull Island with its population of nesting kittiwakes, common murres, puffins and other sea birds; or a trip to Halibut Cove will certainly keep you busy, and happy to have a comfortable motorhome to go back to at the end of a busy day.

For a slower day in the Homer area, consider visiting the 600-acre

Kilcher Family Homestead. Made popular by the television show "Alaska: The Last Frontier," brothers Atz and Otto Kilcher, along with their children, continue to farm the property along Kachemak Bay in a manner similar to how their father, Yule Kilcher, did when he homesteaded the land in the 1940s. It is a fun and low-key way to experience a little bit of homesteading in Alaska.

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The Salty Dawg Saloon is a popular drinking destination in Homer for locals, fishermen and tourists to relax. The moisture in the air of coastal Alaska creates some stunning sunsets, especially as a backdrop to abandoned boats and boat harbors in Homer.



Finally, no trip to Homer is complete without a stop for a beer at the Salty Dawg Saloon (www.saltydawgsaloon.com) on the Homer Spit. At almost any time of day, this small lighthouse-converted-to-bar location is filled with fishermen, locals and tourists happily blended together into a dark atmosphere surrounded by message-laden dollar bills tacked to every inch of wall space.

Homer offers several great places to set up camp. Full-service RV parks, such as the Oceanview RV Park in Homer, may fill quickly in peak season, so preplanning is recommended. We had luck going with Mariner Park, a first-come, first-served park right along the beach on the Spit.

Taking your motorhome to Alaska may not be as difficult as some say, if you prepare for the potential pitfalls. The entire Alaska Highway is paved, but due to the harsh winters, frost heaves and construction along the road are inevitable. This construction creates long stretches of dirt roads that will coat every area of your motorhome in dust and chip paint, especially if you are towing a dinghy behind. We found most drivers with dinghy vehicles covered the headlights, windshield and front bumper using everything from expensive covers to pieces of cardboard taped to the

vehicle. All seemed to do the trick.

A valid passport is required to drive through Canada and to re-enter the U.S. If you are bringing pets, make sure they are up to date on their rabies vaccine and, although we didn't need to show it, we made sure they had health certificates prior to leaving the Lower 48. If you are carting a boat, boat inspections will be required at the borders of British Columbia and Alberta.

After the long drive up the Alaska Highway to reach Alaska, take your time exploring once you are there. July is a fantastic time of year on the Kenai Peninsula if you are interested in bear-viewing or fishing. But June and August offer fewer crowds and lots of opportunities to sea kayak, hike, view wildlife, or just relax in the comfort of your motorhome in a landscape full of mountains, glaciers and wildflowers. **M**

For More Information

Diamond M Ranch Resort
907-283-9424,
www.diamondmranchresort.com

Kenai Peninsula Tourism
800-535-3624, <http://kenaipeninsula.org>

Miller's Landing
866-541-5739, www.millerslandingak.com

Oceanview RV Park
907-235-3951, www.oceanview-rv.com



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MISSOURI'S KATY

A delight for bicyclists, hikers and sightseers alike, this section of The Show Me St

Katy Trail State Park is the longest contiguous rails-to-trails conversion in the U.S. The park is 238 miles long and 100 feet wide. Lush forests provide shade for much of the trail. Running mostly along the banks of the Missouri River, it's relatively flat, with a mere 500-foot elevation gain over the length of the trail. The surface is crushed limestone, suitable for mountain bikes, hybrids, recumbents and road bikes. I'd wanted to ride the entire trail ever since we rode a short section of it in 2006 while attending an RV rally in Sedalia.

The only question was how. Should we use our motorhome as a base camp, moving it each day to a different RV park along the trail? Sign up with a tour organizer that arranges stays at bed-and-breakfasts and shuttles luggage to the next location? Pull a bicycle trailer

with all our camping gear? Register for one of the 350 spots on the Katy Trail Ride in June, sponsored by the Missouri State Parks? While all of the options had their good points, we chose the last one.

Online registration for the annual Katy Trail Ride opens March 1 each year. (The ride fills up quickly. If you want to go, register early.) The route goes from Clinton east to Saint Charles on odd years (when we did the ride), and reverses direction on even years. The overnight stops in between vary each year. Breakfast and dinner each day, tent-camping sites, hot showers and a gear shuttle are included in the registration fee. We also signed up for the optional shuttle back to our starting point.

When we were packing for our trip, we couldn't find our tent. Rather than buy a new one, we signed up with



Diners relax at the Bike Stop Café & Outpost, a full-service bike shop (bike rentals available) and cafe in Saint Charles. In the town square in Clinton, the life-sized Soldiers Memorial stands as a tribute to all men and women who have served their country. Patches of daylilies stood out among the greenery of the Katy Trail.

Trees along both sides of the Katy Trail provide welcome shade to bikers.

TRAIL

ate is a must-see for RVers

Padre's Cycle Inn, a service that provides the tent, sets it up in the afternoon and takes it down in the morning, provides air mattresses, chairs, towels, a cellphone charging station, cold water and snacks. Each afternoon our luggage was delivered to our tent. Dawn and Erica worked their fannies off for us, with a laid-back attitude and a great sense of humor. In retrospect, I was so happy we couldn't find our tent that Jim briefly wondered if I'd hidden it.

Since this five-day bike ride gave us an excuse to do a six-week RV trip,

we needed to leave the motorhome somewhere during our ride. Bucksaw Resort and Marina on Lake Truman near Clinton has 100 RV sites with full hookups. The resort was busy with fishermen who were there for the Bass Pro Shops Crappie Masters' Ultimate Challenge. We were lucky to get the last RV site.

During the week, I met several people who were driving RVs or other vehicles to support spouses or friends doing the ride. Registered nonriders can park their RVs (no hookups) on blacktop surfaces at each campsite location during the organized ride. If you opt to use an RV, check with ride officials for length restrictions. Detailed directions to support and gear (SAG) stops, which were about every 10 miles on the trail, and overnight locations are provided to registered nonriders. Depending on which cities are selected for overnight locations

each year, RV parks could be nearby or as far away as 20 miles or more.

Sherry Aden has supported her husband, Kerry, every year since 2001. She enjoys the art galleries, wineries and antique stores in the charming towns along the route, as well as the post-ride socializing. The towns of Hermann, Augusta, Mount Pleasant and Saint Charles are favorites with the nonriders. In 2011, *Forbes Magazine* named Hermann one of the prettiest towns in America. The Hermann Trolley picks up visitors at various locations and delivers them to five local wineries and a brewery, which would be a good alternative to driving an RV on some of the narrow roads.

Riders and nonriders alike looked forward to the activities available after each day's ride. We cooled off in the swimming pool at Liberty Park in Sedalia. For people who signed up early, a bus took them to Bothwell Lodge State Historic Site. Unfortunately for us, the tour was full by the time we tried to sign up. Several people who were on the tour gave enthusiastic accounts of the 31-room, 12,000-square-foot lodge built atop two natural caves. It's on my list of things to do the next time we bike the Katy Trail. Luckily for us, additional spots opened up on the optional tour of Warm Springs Ranch, the breeding facility for the Budweiser Clydesdales near Boonville. We enjoyed seeing the magnificent horses and drinking the



Getting There

To access the Clinton portion from Kansas City, take US 71 south. Just south of Harrisonville, take MO Route 7 south approximately 40 miles to Clinton. On the east side of Clinton, MO Route 7 crosses MO Route 52. Exit at MO Route 52 and head west .1 mile.

beer that's poured from the tap at 31 degrees.

One evening after dinner, Jim Denny, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) first Katy Trail manager, told us the trail's history. After flooding in 1986 damaged the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad's tracks from Sedalia to Machens, a new route was built and the right of way was to be abandoned. The DNR purchased the right of way with a \$2.2 million donation from Edward "Ted" Jones (son of founder of the Edward Jones investment company) and his wife, Pat. This was controversial with the landowners who had expected the land to revert to them. After much opposition, the first section of the trail opened in 1990.

Ed Bielik, the 86-year-old rider in our group, began hiking the Katy Trail in the midst of the controversy while it was being built. Often he would encounter barbed wire strung across the trail. He would throw his backpack



Warm Springs Ranch near Boonville offers tours of the breeding facility for the Budweiser Clydesdales. Bikers refill water bottles and eat snacks at one of the SAG stops, which were found about every 10 miles.

over the barrier and continue. Landowners were always friendly to him, even though they were opposed to the trail. He has hiked the trail six times, and has biked it 20.

The Katy Trail was as scenic as I'd imagined. We enjoyed views of the swollen Missouri River — flowing rapidly, muddy and dotted with flood debris — and the bluffs on the other side of the trail from the river. There

was ample evidence of recent flooding: swamped cornfields, downed trees, trail damage. Despite this, the area along the entire trail was beautiful. The forest was lush and dense. Patches of daylilies stood out among the greenery. We spotted cardinals and red-winged blackbirds. Jim identified the songs of eastern jays.

Most days the riding was as easy as I'd hoped, while one day it was as



The Sedalia Katy Depot, originally built in 1896 and restored in 1998, is a welcome sight to bicyclists in search of food or bike repairs.

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challenging as I'd feared. The first day, the 39-mile segment from Clinton to Sedalia, was the hardest for me, but the trail itself was no more difficult than any other section. If I told you all my excuses, you'd ask, "Would you like some cheese with that wine?" Suffice it to say I was slow. I passed three riders all day; the other 300-plus, which included two 10-year-olds and the 86-year-old man, passed me.

The second day (37 miles, Sedalia to Boonville) was awesome. I slept better, in spite of the heat and bedsheets that never dried in the high humidity. After six attempts by three bike mechanics, my brakes worked well. I felt a burst of energy, passing some of the people that flew by me the day before, even the 10-year-olds.

On the third day (69 miles, Boonville to Mokane), I felt strong for the first 50 miles. That's when I realized I'd left my helmet at the last SAG stop. Jim and I backtracked, adding about 6 miles to the trip. That night's campsite was about 1.5 miles from the trailhead up a steep, paved road. They offered a bus (fondly referred to as the "Shuttle of Shame") to the campsite, which we happily took.

On the fourth day (49 miles, Mokane to Marthasville), we had lunch at the Lost Creek Vineyard near Hermann after hearing rave reviews about the Missouri Wine Country. The



Near Rocheport, the Katy Trail offers dramatic views of the Missouri River on one side and its bluffs on the other.



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vineyard has 12 acres of Chardonel and Noiret grapes. We also stopped at an open house at the Peers Store about 5 miles before Marthasville. It opened in 1896 and served as a general store until 2012. Dan and Connie Burkhardt bought it in 2014. On hand for the occasion, Dan said, "I wanted to make something interesting along the Katy Trail instead of bulldozing it." While looking at the art and memorabilia, we enjoyed "hillbilly chamber music" performed by a trio called the Bluegill Buddies.

The fifth day (38 miles, Marthasville to Saint Charles) started the same way the fourth day ended, with a thunderstorm. Around 5:30 a.m. as we were packing our bags, Dawn walked through the campsite yelling the news that the trail was closed due to flooding and the last day of the ride was canceled. We put our bikes on a truck and took a bus to Saint Charles.

While I would have liked to finish



A TASTE OF THE KATY TRAIL

Having neither the time nor the muscles to bike the entire 238-mile Katy Trail, we chose Hermann, Missouri, as our two-day base of operations. Centrally located on the bike trail, Hermann offers easy access to the trail along with some great wineries and restaurants. Hermann was founded by German settlers in the mid-1800s, who brought their customs, food and wine-growing expertise to this small town along the Missouri River, making this the perfect place for our small taste.

For our daytrip, we biked out of the City Park, across the bridge spanning the Missouri River, and started riding the Katy Trail, heading west. We completed 26 miles by bike, on the flat, well-maintained bike path, making for easy, scenic riding. During our ride we stopped along the river to read the well-documented trail signs, telling us where Lewis and Clark traveled and set up overnight camps.

Back in Hermann, it was time to relax, so we walked a few blocks from the City Park to Stone Hill Winery. Before Prohibition, this winery was the second-largest winery in the U.S. We took the guided tour that included the vast wine cellars carved into the limestone hill. Interesting to learn that during Prohibition, the wine cellars were converted to a mushroom farm. Not until the 1970s did the winery become re-established. The featured wine is from Missouri's unique Norton grapes, which make for a nice semidry red wine.

Following our tour, we stopped for dinner at the Vintage Restaurant, part of the Stone Hill complex. The Held family restored this winery and then opened the Vintage Restaurant in 1979. The restaurant has been nominated as one of the best German restaurants in America. Dinner was served in the former stables where we enjoyed outstanding German meals and complimentary wine. Up on the hill overlooking the town of Hermann, it is a lovely setting. 573-486-2221, www.stonehillwinery.com — Morey and Ruth Edelman

Photo: Morey and Ruth Edelman

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In Marthasville, riders relax in the shade of a tree.

RVing on the Trail

If you'd like to use your motorhome as a support vehicle for biking or hiking the Katy Trail, the following facilities are conveniently located. For a full list of camping options, go to <http://www.bikekatytrail.com/planner.aspx>.

Clinton Community Center (free parking, no hookups, showers available), located near mile 264.6 on the Katy Trail in Clinton. 660-885-2181, <http://www.clintonmo.com/#!parks-and-rec/c1yv>

Bucksaw Resort and Marina (full hookups), 17 miles to trailhead at mile 264.6 in Clinton. 660-477-3900, <http://www.bucksaw.com>

Missouri State Fair Public Campground (full hookups), located at mile 229 on the Katy Trail in Sedalia. 800-422-3247, <http://www.mostatefair.com/plan/public-campground>

Katy Roundhouse RV Park (full hookups), located at mile 189 on the Katy Trail in New Franklin. 660-848-2232, <http://katyroundhousecamping.weebly.com>

Cooper's Landing (electric and water hookups), located at mile 163.5 on the Katy Trail in Columbia. 573-657-2544, <http://www.cooperslanding.net>

Hermann City Park Campground (full hookups), 2 miles from trailhead at mile 100.8 in Hermann. There are 43 full-hookup sites and eight with electric only. 573-486-5400, <https://www.visitmo.com/hermann-city-park-campground.aspx>

Sundermeier RV Park (full hookups), located near mile marker 38 on the Katy Trail in Saint Charles. 800-929-0832, <http://www.sundermeierrvpark.com>

the ride, I was pleased that we had time to check out Saint Charles. In Frontier Park, a larger-than-life bronze statue of Meriwether Lewis, William Clark and Clark's Newfoundland dog, Seaman, reminds visitors that Saint Charles was the final embarkation point of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1804. Those famous explorers walked these brick-lined streets to buy supplies for their expedition. The historic and picturesque Main Street is still paved with bricks, but the frontier stores have been replaced by trendy shops and galleries. I bought a bottle of margarita-flavored white balsamic at an olive oil and vinegar emporium. We visited a quilt shop with so many pretty fabrics it almost made me want

to take up quilting. Jim and I each bought chocolates at two different candy shops; it's easy to justify such an indulgence after riding a bicycle 200 miles. I visited an art gallery featuring Missouri artists. The art was so beautiful and unique I gasped with delight.

Soon it was time to take the bus back to Clinton. We were thrilled to be back to our motorhome and luxuries like dry sheets, air conditioning and electric toothbrushes.

The Katy Trail Ride was a marvelous adventure. We'll do it again, perhaps independently, using our motorhome and allowing an extra week to check out nearby towns and attractions. It would be a spectacular ride with fall colors. **M**

Bucksaw Resort and Marina on Lake Truman near Clinton is popular with fishermen and boaters.



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Jam Session

Fleetwood's Jamboree 30D, appointed with Class A luxury and an outdoor entertainment system, lends itself to hanging out and reveling in style By Donya Carlson

Settled outdoors in cushy chairs under a 16-foot sawning on a cloudless sunny morning in Palm Springs, California, we watched as golfers concentrated, fixated on the ball. Silence first, followed by ahhhs, ooooohs, nooooo, whoops and cheers, and claps on the back. Behind us was our home away from home, a 2017 Jamboree 30D motorhome, with its Champagne Slate exterior. The color was apropos since we were living in style at Outdoor Resort Palm Springs, the night before toasting ourselves with glasses of champagne and proclaiming this was a great place to retire — at this site, in this motorhome.

But, alas, we aren't retired. So, we focused on the week we had possession of this Fleetwood Jamboree 30D Class C motorhome, backdropped by palm trees and parked on brick pavers bordering the golf course.

The 31-foot-8½-inch dual-slide Jamboree 30D is built on a Ford E-450 Super Duty chassis with a 6.8-liter Triton V-10 engine, which is a commonly used chassis for this size of

Class C. In this case, however, the rear portion of the frame rides on an airless MORryde rubber shackle suspension system, an industry-first for this class of motorhome. Fleetwood's parent company, REV Group, has partnered with MORryde to create the exclusive REV Control Ryde (RCR), a ride-and-handling system that works in concert with the factory leaf springs. RCR cushions the chassis, absorbs shock and increases suspension travel without the use of air bags. Anti-dive technology, also incorporated into RCR, reduces brake dive and stops the motorhome in a more controlled fashion under hard braking.

Could we tell the difference? You bet. Cruising down the highway, the ride was smooth and the drive quiet. The overhead cabinets barely rattled over bumpy roads, and other than a few chirps from the stove's glass top, the ride — and handling — were noticeably better when compared to a stock Ford chassis.

Wide running boards make stepping up into the carpeted

ABOVE: Driving the Jamboree was quite enjoyable, thanks to the REV Control Ryde (RCR) system. RCR is the result of a collaboration between REV Group and MORryde, and is designed to work together with the factory leaf-spring suspension to improve ride and handling.



cockpit easier, and from there it's a 10-inch step up into the living space. Driver and passenger seats with large armrests are made of Soft Touch vinyl that feels like leather and match the motorhome's jackknife sofa and dinette seating. Storage, cup holders, HVAC controls and a Pioneer stereo with Bluetooth and Sirius XM are housed in a dashboard adorned with a burlwood finish.

Stepping into the 30D via a 26-inch radius-corner entry door while gripping the strong (lighted) handrail, we immediately liked the inviting feel. Flush-mounted LED lighting graces the 6-foot-10-inch-high padded ceiling, and sunshine cascaded in from the 24-by-16-inch skylight. Dark, high-gloss raised-panel hardwood cabinet doors complement the tan Soft Touch jackknife sofa and dinette seating, while a tile backsplash pulls the color tones together. A 40-inch LED TV is mounted at the curbside end of the cabover bed.

With a queen-size bed in the rear, bunk beds, cabover bed, jackknife sofa and a dinette/bed that has a lift bracket to simplify raising and lowering the table, there's sleeping for seven to 10, depending on the size of the overnighters. The bunks and wardrobe for the master bedroom are housed in an 11-foot slide, and a door offers adults a retreat from the kids. The foot of the queen mattress is cleverly cut at an angle to create more walk-around space, and the pillowtop mattress was as comfortable as the one we have at home. Calling the space between the bed and side walls "walk-around" is an

Above left: Good lighting, an open feel and a jackknife sofa (not shown) across from the four-seat dinette with Soft Touch vinyl cushions are conducive to lounging. Above right: The proximity and angle of the range and microwave in relation to the countertop and sink make cooking up a meal straightforward. Sink covers offer additional solid-surface countertop space.

exaggeration — it's more like "squeeze-around," but I could get in there to make the bed, and there are nightstand tops on each side of the bed with handy cup holders.

Plentiful storage in the bedroom includes a wardrobe, drawers and overhead cabinets, plus a large countertop for whatever suits your fancy. I could step inside the underbed storage area to retrieve items thanks to gas struts that held the bed platform up; housed in this area are two ladders for the bunk and cabover beds. A 32-inch LED TV and DVD player also take up residence in the bedroom. And, so the kids don't feel left out, each of the bunk beds has its own DVD player (a \$915 option) with a 9½-inch flat-panel flip-down screen.

Deciding that I should give each of the beds a fair shot, I chose a different bed each night we stayed in the Jamboree. At the end of the experiment, it was decided that all of them were comfortable enough, although I had to sleep diagonally on the dinette/bed and the 5½-foot-long jackknife sofa, as both were too short for my 5-foot-9-inch frame. On the contrary, the bunk beds, because of the way they are situated adjacent to the refrigerator wall and protruding partway into the aisle, make these beds capable

Abundant storage, ample counter area and plenty of places to hang towels highlight the bathroom. The 22-inch-high toilet and big step into the shower lend themselves to taller RVers.

of accommodating people up to 6 feet 7 inches. None of the beds, though, came close to the exceptional comfort of the master queen mattress.

The 42-by-80-inch cabover bed is roomy and comfortable. There are no reading lights, but with the 40-inch flat-screen TV at my feet, it was almost like being in a movie theater. Under the TV is a shelf to park a bottle of water and snacks for nighttime nosherers. The cabover offered more headroom than the bunk beds and there's a privacy curtain as well.

An 11-cubic-foot residential stainless-steel refrigerator with top freezer and icemaker offered more



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The carpeted cockpit is set up for efficiency and comfort and features an attractive burlwood-finish dashboard. There are good nooks and crannies for stowing small and large items.

WHAT'S HOT

Inviting living area, efficient galley, outside entertainment system, grouped control panels by entry door, access to bathroom with slides retracted, roof-mounted awning

WHAT'S NOT

Tall toilet seat, high step into shower, weight issues, leveling-jack clearance, struts on cabinet doors above sofa too strong



than enough room for a week's worth of groceries. The large crisper drawer was a plus since lots of salads, veggies and fruit were on the menu. The two-basin sink with pullout sprayer faucet is housed in a solid-surface countertop set at a 90-degree angle from the three-burner Atwood range. This made it convenient to chop food, reach for a pan on the range without having to do more than turn, slide the chopped contents into the pan and return it to the range. The counter and range are at a good height at an inch shy of 3 feet, and a High Pointe convection microwave oven is located above.

When more countertop prep space was needed, I used one of the matching

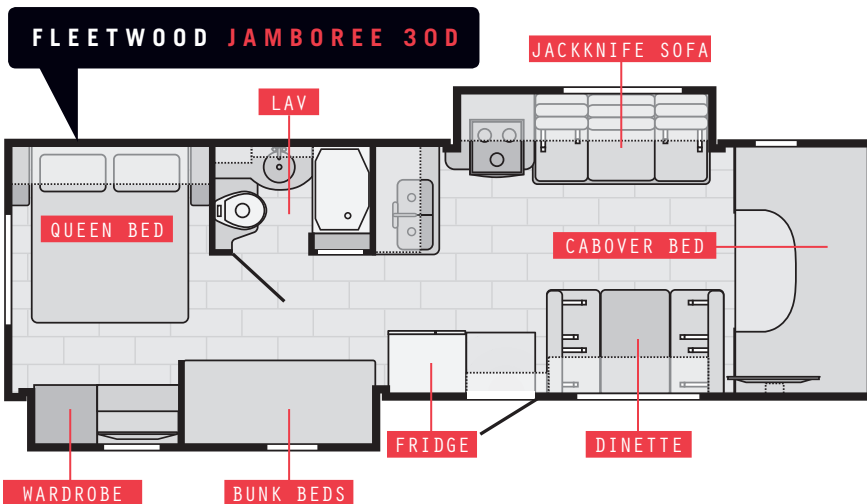
solid-surface sink covers, preferring to leave the other one off to keep a side of the sink open for rinsing food. Hot water reached the sink quickly from the nearby 6-gallon tank, and the 30D has a whole-RV water-filtration system. For one dinner with multiple dishes, I moved the whole shebang across the galley to the dinette, where I could spread out thanks to the large table.

The spacious cabinets above the jackknife sofa are not for the faint of heart; the unusually strong gas struts slammed the upward-opening cabinets closed with such force that fingers could get bent back in the hardware, so we left them open. The other cabinets and drawers on roller-bearing guides

worked great and we were impressed with the overall storage space.

For additional storage, the dinette seat's plywood top flips up. There are two seatbelts in the jackknife sofa and three in the dinette's seating (one with a child-seat tether) for a total of seven seatbelted positions in the Jamboree. A nice touch are the two cup holders on the table — each large enough to hold a bottle of wine — that kept drinks from getting knocked over during a rambunctious game of cards, and a shelf where we kept keys and cellphones. Hanging out in the living room with friends was enjoyable with the Jamboree's homey and relaxed setup and comfortable seating for six or seven. With the bright overhead LED lights off, toe-kick lighting adds to the peaceful ambiance. All lights in the 30D are LED, with the exception of incandescent reading lights over the queen bed, jackknife sofa and dinette.

During the day, with temperatures close to 90 degrees, the 15,000-Btu Airxcel rooftop air conditioner kept the interior comfortable. In the evening, we were able to switch off the A/C because the unit's three Fan-Tastic Vent fans with rain sensors did an admirable job keeping the interior cool. We noted that there is a plethora of well-located electrical outlets throughout the interior, including one inside the pantry across from the bunk beds. The





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Specifications

Chassis

Model	Ford E-450
Engine	6.8-L Triton V-10
Sae Hp	305 hp @ 4,250 rpm
Torque	420 lb-ft @ 3,250 rpm
Transmission	6-speed automatic
Axle Ratio	4.10:1
Tires	LT225/75R16
Wheelbase	214"
Brakes	4-wheel disc with ABS
Suspension F/R	Coil/Leaf springs/ REV Control Ryde
Fuel Capacity	55 gallon
Fuel Economy	10.17 mpg
Warranty	Basic 3 years/36,000 miles, Powertrain 5 years/60,000 miles

Coach

Exterior Length	31' 8.5"
Exterior Width	8' 6"
Exterior Height	12'
Interior Width	8'
Interior Height	6' 10"
Construction:	Aluminum tube framing, one-piece TPO roof, bead foam insulation, one-piece molded fiberglass front cap
Freshwater Capacity	60 gal
Black-Water Capacity	37 gal
Gray-Water Capacity	37 gal
Water Heater Capacity	6 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	14 gal
Air Conditioner	15,000 Btu with heat pump
Furnace	(2) 20,000 Btu
Refrigerator	11 cubic-foot
Inverter/Charger	1,200 watt/30 amp
Battery	(2) 6-volt deep cycle (chassis) (1) 12-volt (coach)
AC Generator	4 kW
MSRP	\$121,650
MSRP as Tested	\$129,223
Warranty	Limited 1-year, 15,000-mile coach; 3-year, 45,000-mile structural

Wet Weight

(Water and fuel tanks full, no supplies or passengers)

Front Axle	4,260 lbs
Rear Axle	9,660 lbs
Total	13,920 lbs

Chassis Ratings

GAWR, F/R	5,000 lbs/9,600 lbs
GVWR	14,500 lbs
GCWR	22,000 lbs
ROCCC	N/A

GAWR: Gross Axle Weight Rating

GVWR: Gross Vehicle Weight Rating

GCWR: Gross Combination Weight Rating

ROCCC: Realistic Occupant and
Cargo Carrying Capacity



The bunk beds and the wardrobe and dresser for the master bedroom are housed in a slide across from the bathroom. The master can be sectioned off from the bunks via a sliding door. Each bunk has its own DVD player and there are storage drawers at the base of the bottom bunk.

one issue we had was with the manual single roller nightshades, which were difficult to retract and likely a detail the dealer could handle.

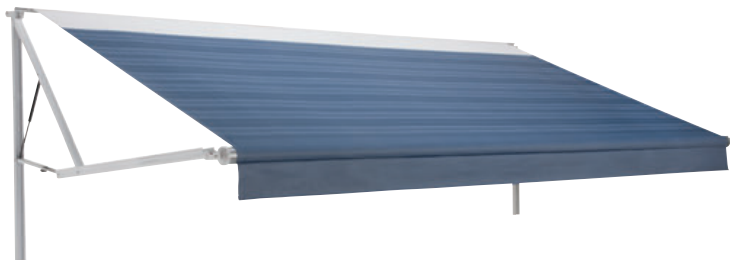
For when you want to spiff up, the 30D has two mirrors, one on the wardrobe in the bedroom (not full length) and the other on the medicine cabinet in the bathroom. The bathroom's vanity has ample countertop space with storage below and another cabinet above. Other niceties include good lighting, lots of towel racks and the Fan-Tastic Vent that did a good job whisking moisture out. The bathroom also features a raised shower and toilet (with sprayer) to accommodate plumbing and duct work. At 22 inches high, the porcelain throne on the pedestal makes great seating for tall people, but the height left a 5-foot-3-inch friend with her legs dangling. The toilet's height also makes it higher than necessary to be ADA-compliant. Ironically, the Jamboree is designed and clearly well-thought-out to accommodate a family but the toilet is an anomaly, as little ones will likely need a boost up on it.

Likewise, the first step down out of the shower can be a doozie for shorter people or for those with knee problems, with its 14-inch drop. That would make it a high step up into the

shower as well. None of this bothered me, but we did place a nonslip mat on the floor outside the shower to make sure we wouldn't slide on the floor with wet feet when stepping down out of the shower. Then there's the overhead metal shower frame to contend with that can be a head-knocker depending on your height. We simply paid attention while stepping in and out of the shower and had no issues. Once safely inside the shower, there is plenty of headroom at 6 feet 5 inches with the skylight, and the brushed-nickel handheld shower sprayer with shutoff valve is premium quality. The glass doors kept water from leaking onto the floor and a good-sized integrated shower caddy harbored various full-size shampoo bottles and washcloths.

Trotting off one evening to a potato bake at the clubhouse, we left the awning out and its LED lighting on. The LEDs are tied into a strip that runs along the fully wrapped fiberglass front cap and puts the finishing touch on the classy-looking motorhome. Plus, it made for a welcoming sight to come back to in the dark. The roof-mounted, integrated box patio awning with lateral arm is unusual for a Class C, and Fleetwood has skillfully replicated the awning case on the opposite side of the RV to make the radius roof symmetrical.

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FLEETWOOD JAMBOREE 30D

Taking advantage of another lovely night and the 30D's outdoor entertainment center with a 32-inch LED TV and Jensen AM/FM/CD/DVD unit, we set up outdoors under the awning with bowls of popcorn to watch an action movie. Sound came clearly through the two speakers, and when I walked around to check the volume on the opposite side of the RV to make sure we weren't disturbing the neighbors, the sound was hardly noticeable.

The Jamboree 30D has an extraordinary amount of outside storage. There are multiple deep bins, and the chassis is designed to accommodate two pass-through compartments that would be splendid for storing large items such as chairs and a ladder. Unfortunately, after weighing the Jamboree on a certified scale, with water and LP-gas tanks full with no supplies onboard, we discovered that the rear axle was overloaded by 60 pounds. After discussing the weight

situation with factory personnel, we learned that engineers are working on carving out some weight to make the motorhome's generous storage capacity practical, without having to run with the gasoline and LP-gas tanks only partially filled, and without the need to limit the passenger occupancy of the floorplan.

Driving out of our site after a glorious week, the rear hydraulic jacks came in contact with the ground. Retracted, the rear auto-leveling jacks measured 4¾ inches off the ground, while the front ones had 5¼ inches clearance. This is another area where the factory will need to make some corrections.

Well-thought-out details in the Jamboree — like grouping the control panels by the entry door in a well-lit area and supplying labels that are large enough to read, plus access to the bathroom while both slides are retracted — get high marks. Additionally, the 30D is prewired for solar



The queen pillowtop mattress is exceptionally comfortable and the cloth headboard is a good place to prop against to watch TV or read, though the reading lights get hot to the touch.

panels and has an outside shower.

Reflecting back on the time spent with the Jamboree, we decided we were equally impressed with its indoor conveniences as well as the exterior ones. Although our small group of two spent a week at a luxury RV resort in the Jamboree, the 30D should also please families with kids who prefer RVing in more simplistic surroundings. **M**

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By E. Don Smith



DETAILING LIKE A PRO

Some expert tips to keep a fully painted motorhome looking great

If you are an owner who insists on keeping the full-body paint job on your motorhome looking like new, you have only two options: Spend a lot of money with a professional detailer; or learn all the proper techniques, buy the tools and products and do the work yourself. For many reasons I prefer the do-it-yourself method, and with years of detailing experience in the automotive world, I can tell you it's just one big step up to detail a fully painted, full-size motorhome. It may not be as easy as with a car, but if you have the time, patience and interest you can deliver the results of a professional detailer without the expense.

Detailing a fully painted motorhome must be done one step at a time, otherwise the job seems overwhelming. Unless you have a crew of two or three helpers, it's impossible to do all this work in a single day. Plan on spreading things out over a few days. If you want professional results you should follow all the steps we cover. If, however, you are happy with "average Joe" results, you can skip a few of them. The major steps involved in a full exterior detail are roof cleaning, bug removal, overall washing (including awnings), tire cleaning/protecting, clay-bar paint

decontamination (pro step), polishing/swirl removal if needed, paint sealing (pro step), wheel cleaning/polishing, glass cleaning and adding a water repellent to the front glass (pro step). If that list sounds like a lot of work, it is, but nobody cares more about your motorhome than you, so you will often produce the best results.

Commercial detailers are a great resource, but choose them wisely. They often skip many of the professional steps, and they may simply wash and wax the motorhome with a one-step product, which is not always enough to produce professional-looking results.

Of course, the main reason detailers are forced to skip steps is that most motorhome owners are not willing to pay the cost of a true professional job. Many times at rallies or on internet forums you may hear owners bragging about getting their coach detailed for \$150-\$250. If you have ever done a true pro-level job, you already know that it is impossible for a professional detailer to properly complete all these steps at that price.

Not everyone wants or needs a true professional multistage paint prep and decontamination, so feel free to skip those steps if that describes you. If you have ever touched the surface of a true show car, the paint is very slick and smooth, and it has tremendous gloss and reflectivity. This high-quality paint surface is no accident. One of the steps that produces these results is a paint decontamination that uses a detailing clay bar to remove tiny specs of contamination that will stick in or on the surface of the paint.

Fortunately, there is a simple way to test your fully painted motorhome's paint to see if it needs a clay-bar decontamination. Place a small plastic sandwich bag over your hand, and with your fingertips rub the bag over the surface of the paint. The grit you may feel is comprised of surface contaminants that need to be removed with a clay bar.

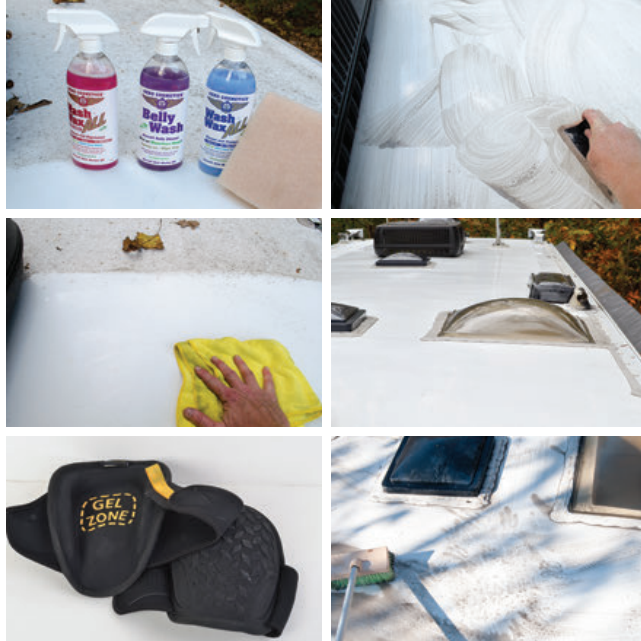
Another stage of detailing that is part of the pro package is paint polishing or swirl removal. Since a motorhome is large and difficult to wash, it's easy to resort to more aggressive methods to clean the sides of the coach, such as heavy-duty brushes like those used at truck-wash stations. These methods of washing (or improper drying practices) can leave swirls in the paint's clear coat, and from certain angles you will see a series of circular scratches that show up (particularly in darker colors). If you truly want a blemish-free surface, those swirls must be removed. That usually means a random orbital buffer must be used, and it also adds a complete step, or two in some cases, of polishing the entire motorhome to remove those swirls.

The last step in the paint aspect of detailing is the application of a true long-lasting automotive polymer sealant. Polymer paint sealants have become very popular in the automotive detailing world for several reasons: 1) They last longer than traditional carnauba wax products; 2) They are easier to apply and remove from the paint; and 3) They make cleaning the vehicle easier. These polymer sealants usually have no paint cleaners or polishes, and they tend to be a bit more expensive compared to an old-fashioned carnauba wax, but they are well worth the small added expense.

Don't assume the products you find on the shelf at the local parts store or discount store are the best products. There are some acceptable over-the-counter products on the market, but the best ones are usually found only at detailing specialty stores or online. As we walk you through the process we can't cover every possible aspect of detailing, such as exactly how to properly polish every type of paint or how to safely climb onto your roof, so always be careful. That means you need to exercise caution when you polish the paint with a buffer or use any other tool/product not recommended by the motorhome manufacturer. Always check with the owner's manual or the factory for specific instructions before proceeding with paint detailing. And, of course, exercise caution while climbing a ladder or walking on the roof of your motorhome, especially when the surface is wet.



▲ Clay bar is used by the pros to remove surface-paint contaminants.



Roof Cleaning

Detailing always starts at the top, so the first step is to clean the motorhome's roof. The steps shown here apply only to fiberglass roofs. Do not use this method to clean a membrane-style roof or else damage will occur. I have two techniques that I use with two different products, but I prefer the waterless method because it doesn't allow the dirt from the roof to run down the side of the motorhome.

Using Aero Cosmetics Belly Wash and its Aero scrubber tool, spray the cleaner onto a small 2- to 3-square-foot area. Next, use the scrubber tool to remove the dirt, then wipe dry with a clean towel. According to Brian Phillips, owner of Aero Products, the Belly Wash "is completely safe for use on fiberglass roofs and all sealants used on them when used as directed." In fact, Phillips has no concerns for using it on any solid roof surface. The scrubber actually comes from the cosmetics industry, Phillips says, and is the exact texture used to scrub faces. "It is safe for all painted and nonpainted surfaces and is safe for all the film coatings applied to many motorhome fronts to prevent rock chipping," he says. If one application doesn't work, step up to the heavy-duty Belly Wash cleaner and scrub it again. After each scrubbing, wipe the area dry with a clean towel. Repeat this process until the entire roof is clean. A good set of kneepads is also a big help for when you plan on crawling around on the roof for this project. If you encounter areas that refuse to clean up, try a Mr. Clean Magic Eraser pad.

If you choose the wet method, first wet down the entire motorhome, including the top and sides, to help dilute the cleaner and dirt that will get rinsed off the roof. Then spray a cleaner, such as Simple Green or Thetford Black Streak and Bug Remover, liberally on a small section of the roof. Scrub one section at a time with a medium poly-bristle cleaning brush mounted on an extension pole. Rinse each section completely, then repeat until the entire roof is clean. Since the roof is typically made from smooth fiberglass, be very careful while walking around because a wet, soapy roof can be very slippery.



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Motorhome Washing

Washing a motorhome is not a difficult task, but it does take some time, and the correct products. There are several ways to wash a motorhome, including a waterless method, but for a thorough cleaning of a really dirty coach you need to get it wet. First, spray the coach completely with water. It's best to wash the motorhome in the shade if possible, so plan for an early morning or later in the evening to prevent spotting. After wetting the surfaces, we use a hose-mounted foam gun that generates a lot of suds when used with a high-quality soap such as Optimum Car Wash. This high level of suds is critical to lubricate the surface and float the dirt off the paint while cleaning. Next, use a pole-mounted microfiber mitt or a very soft brush such as a Montana boar's-bristle model. Carefully brush or swab a small area at a time, starting at the top and working your way down.



Then rinse completely with water before moving to the next section. Since a motorhome is not flat it takes some work to clean obstructions such as awnings, slideout-awning covers and windows, so make sure

you swab around all those areas to get them cleaned. In order to prevent water spots, use a product like the microfiber mop system from Aero Cosmetics to dry off the flat surfaces after the final rinse.



Awnings and Slideout Covers

Awnings and slideout covers get dirty, too, so they must be cleaned as part of the detailing process. For the fabric awnings I use Griot's Garage Convertible Top Cleaner. It is specifically made for automotive tops and works great on acrylic/Sunbrella awnings while remaining gentle on the paint. Awnings positioned closer to the ground can be done on a ladder, while others may need to be done from the roof. First, wet the awning, then spray on the cleaner. Next use a soft-bristle brush or foam sponge to completely clean the awning or slide-topper, then rinse completely. Repeat this same process on all awnings and slideout toppers. If the fabric is heavily stained, follow the instructions on Sunbrella's website or your owner's manual for specific removal instructions.

Bug Removal

Bug removal on the front of the motorhome is another process that must be done regularly. One of my favorite products is Optimum's Power Clean. To use this product for bug removal, dilute it 3:1 with water and then spray it on a cool surface in the shade. Allow it to soak in a bit and then scrub with a bug-cleaning pad like this one from Griot's Garage, then completely rinse with water.

If you prefer a waterless method of bug removal, use Aero Cosmetics Wash Wax All and spray directly on the surface. Then scrub the surface with the Aero Cosmetics scrubber pad and wipe dry with a clean microfiber towel. This method is great when you are on the road or if you don't have access to rinse water.

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⊕ PROFESSIONAL STEP

Polishing and Swirl Removal

Paint-defect and swirl removal is one of those steps that really separates the pros. No, it is not easy, and yes, it takes a lot of time, but if you want the shine and swirl-free finish of a show car it's a necessary step. For swirl removal and polishing out paint defects there are two options. One is to use an all-in-one product. This means the product has polishing abrasives and a wax or polymer sealant built into one, such as Griot's One-Step Sealant. These all-in-one products offer good polishing and good paint protection, but to achieve true professional results the polishing needs to be separated from the sealing, and performed as individual operations.

I use an electric buffer from Griot's and a white (polishing) foam pad (use an orange light cutting pad if you have more severe defects), along with Griot's Complete Compound (use Griot's Complete Polish if you only have mild defects) to remove all swirls and to polish the paint to perfection. There are different polishes with different levels of "cut," and the density of the foam buffer pad is also important, so make sure to match the polish and buffing pad to the severity of the paint defects or else you can create more scratches than you remove. If you are not familiar with the buffing process, speak to a professional or view some of the many tutorials online.

After buffing each section of the paint, remove the residue with a high-quality microfiber towel. Repeat this process until the entire motorhome is buffed and free of defects. This could take between four and eight hours, depending on the condition of the

⊕ PROFESSIONAL STEP

Paint Decontamination

After the fully painted motorhome is washed and dried, it's time to turn your attention to paint preparation before polishing and sealing. This is one of the professional steps that is called clay-bar paint decontamination. Clay bar is a dense clay material that is slid across the paint using a barrier spray lubricant to protect the paint. The clay removes tiny particles of road tar, grit, acid-rain deposits, etc., that are stuck to the paint and not removed by normal washing. The result is a super smooth paint surface that feels as if it just rolled off the production line. It's best to wear thin protective gloves to keep the clay from sticking to your hands.

First, spray the clay and the paint surface in small sections (2- to 3-foot squares) with a surface lubricant such as Griot's Speed Shine. This lubricates

the paint and allows the clay to glide freely. Then flatten the clay (it works best if you keep it warm in a plastic tub of hot water when not being used) to a 2- to 3-inch-diameter piece that looks like a small pancake and work it lightly across the wet section of paint several times. If you feel the clay grabbing on the paint, you need more lubricant. After you have completed one section, dry it with a microfiber towel. Before moving to the next section, fold the clay several times and create a new pancake to ensure you keep a fresh section of clay against the paint. Take care to never drop the clay on the ground and if it gets too dirty you may need more than one piece to complete an entire motorhome, especially if this is your first time doing this step. Complete the clay-bar paint decontamination of the entire motorhome before proceeding to the next step.





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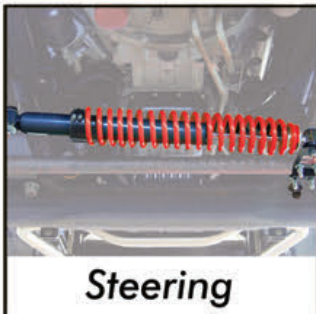
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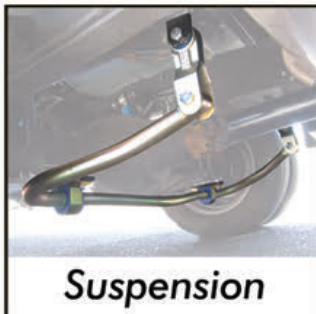
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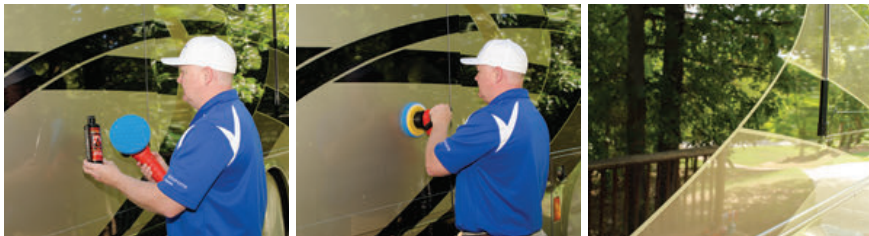
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exterior. Make sure to buy microfiber towels made specifically for automotive detailing. For wax or polish removal, I prefer a soft, medium to medium-plush pile, lint-free towel; 360-500 grams per

square meter (gsm); with a 75/25 or 70/30 blend. Most detail supply stores carry these, but one of my favorite suppliers is www.chemicalguys.com due to its great selection.



⊕ PROFESSIONAL STEP

Paint Sealing

After the paint is clayed and polished, it needs to be sealed to protect it from the elements. As with the other steps above, there are many options and products to seal the paint. The traditional method is to hand- or machine-apply a synthetic sealant to the paint and remove it by hand with a quality microfiber towel. For many people this is the only step used. For longer-lasting results I recommend using a synthetic polymer sealant. Some of my favorite and easiest to use polymer paint sealants (with no polishing abrasives) are Rejex Paint Sealant and Wolfgang Deep Gloss Paint Sealant. If you skipped the separate polishing and defect-removal step and want to use a traditional paint sealant, you will need to use one that also contains paint-cleaning abilities such as Duragloss Total Performance Polish #105 or Griot's One-Step Sealant. Most of these products will provide good coverage for four to eight months, depending on the environment.

The easiest way to apply a paint sealant to a large vehicle such as a motorhome is by using a power buffer and a blue or red foam pad made specifically for applying sealants. Place a small amount of the sealant on the pad and spread it out over each area, then let the polish completely cure before removing it. This sealant is so forgiving you can apply it to the whole side of the motorhome (in the shade) before removing it with a new, high-quality microfiber towel. In this step you are not polishing the paint, so do not apply pressure; simply allow the buffer to evenly spread the product to a thin, almost invisible layer on the paint. After curing, the sealant wipes off very easily and leaves a great, long-lasting shine. Each product may have different application and removal directions, so read the label of the polish and wax you plan on using and follow those directions.

Tires and Wheels

Now that the paint is cleaned and sealed, the next step is detailing the tires and wheels. The tires will need to be cleaned with a product made just for tires and then protected with a UV-rated protectant spray. Some tire companies recommend that tires are cleaned with only soap and water, so check with the manufacturer before proceeding. The wheels also need to be cleaned

and polished. Since motorhome tires usually age out before they wear out due to tread wear, it is very important to use products made just for tires. I use Griot's Rubber Cleaner and a brush or stiff sponge to wash away road grime and dirt. For the wheels, I use Griot's Wheel Cleaner and a foam or microfiber sponge. After the wheels are clean, they need to be polished to a high gloss (assuming they are uncoated





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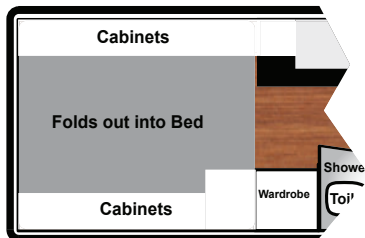
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aluminum wheels). Make sure the wheels are not coated aluminum before completing this step, or else you can damage the surface coating applied to some types of aluminum wheels. My favorite wheel polish is Zephyr Pro 40. When combined with the Mothers PowerBall foam polisher attached to a cordless drill and a roll or two of paper towels, you can easily produce a great-looking shine in about 20-30 minutes per wheel. All paper towels are not the same, so use Viva brand for best results.

After the wheels are cleaned and polished, it's time to apply a rubber dressing on the tires to protect them from UV rays. A longtime favorite of RV owners is 303 Aerospace Protectant. Since its ingredients don't include anything harmful to rubber, it won't accelerate tire wear or degradation like some tire dressings that contain petroleum distillates and/or silicone can do.



➤ **PROFESSIONAL STEP**
Glass Cleaner and Sealing

If your motorhome's windshield glass is not clean, it makes driving harder and more annoying as you try to peer through smudges, streaks and bug splatter. For these reasons, detailing glass properly is just as important as detailing the rest of the motorhome. There are many good glass cleaners

on the market, but two of my favorites are Stoner Invisible Glass (aerosol version) and 3M Glass Cleaner. First, clean the glass completely inside and out using Viva paper towels, old newspaper pages or a new microfiber towel. If there are hard-water deposits or etching on the glass, you may have to attack it with a buffer or by hand polishing with a product like Meguiar's

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Water Spot Remover.

After the glass is squeaky clean you should then use a water-repellent spray to make driving in rain a lot easier. The application of a water-repellent spray will make the water bead up and roll off the windshield, greatly increasing visibility. Rain-X has been a favorite of mine for many years but it can be tricky to apply and remove without streaking. If you struggle with streaks, I have found that using Optimum's Opti-Seal sealant is not only easier, but it lasts longer as well. Simply spray it on a foam pad sparingly, wipe it on the surface

evenly then buff any residue off with a microfiber towel. This product flashes off the surface almost instantly so there is very little residue to wipe off if applied properly. It also really helps to use it on the driver's side window and the rearview mirrors.

Once you've completed all the steps, take some time to appreciate how great your motorhome looks. Not only does detailing help retain that showroom shine, but keeping the motorhome clean can help increase the longevity of many of the components, and will only add value should you decide to trade in for a newer model. **M**

Sources

303 Aerospace (a Gold Eagle product)
800-367-3245, www.goldeagle.com

3M Auto Care
877-666-2277, www.3mauto.com

Aero Cosmetics
800-927-4929, www.washwax.com

Duragloss
336-229-6480, www.duragloss.com

Griot's Garage
800-345-5789, www.griotsgarage.com

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800-227-5538, www.stonercarcare.com

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The industry's annual trade show reveals the latest and greatest of all things RV

Each year, the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) hosts a national trade show to showcase the latest offerings from RV manufacturers. The event — held at the Kentucky Exposition Center in Louisville — may not be open to the public, but is a great opportunity for industry insiders to catch a glimpse of what's hot for the upcoming model year. Manufacturer representatives are on hand to answer questions and discuss exciting new floorplans and features, while dealers, media representatives and others race up and down the aisles like kids in a candy store, kicking tires, opening cabinets and flipping switches.

This past December's show revealed a number of growing trends in the motorhome segment, most notably a surge in popularity for Class B motorhomes due to their ease of driving and appeal to those entering the RV market (or looking to downsize). As you'll read in the following pages, this segment has come a long way from years past, resulting in attractive, feature-rich models that offer a surprising amount of residential amenities in a sleek, fuel-efficient package.

That's not to say that Class A's and Class C's went unchanged. Dozens of new models and floorplans with a focus on improved ride and handling, storage and livability were on display, and are likely on the road already as you read this.

Though there were also some other exciting new vehicles that had previously been introduced at various shows across the country, the following is a representative view of what's trending in the year ahead.



Coachmen Crossfit

One Class B motorhome generating quite a bit of foot traffic was Coachmen's new Crossfit. The motorhome, built on the Ford Transit chassis with a 10,360-pound gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), has been designed to complement the company's popular Galleria that's built on the Sprinter chassis. The big news? The Crossfit comes in at an MSRP below \$100,000 (albeit just a hair, at \$99,995). That's quite



Built on the Ford Transit chassis, the well-appointed Coachmen Crossfit Class B (right) has an MSRP below \$100,000.

an accomplishment. "To have an MSRP there, with this type of quality, that's a great place to be," said Mark Steele, general manager of Coachmen's Class B division. "The Transit drives really nice, so you get a great platform at a really nice price point." But that's not the only thing that has the Crossfit turning heads. "For starters, it looks great," said Steele. "The cabinetry is solid maple, same as we use in the Galleria. There are some differences apart from the chassis, though. We're using blue LED mood lighting for the cabinets, and we use a multiplex lighting system for our wiring," a decision, Steele says, that "gives owners the ability to control things like the lights and awnings from inside the coach or around the campfire." Standards on the 22D — the only floorplan available as of press time — include a two-burner LP-gas cooktop and a 19-inch LED TV. A wet bath — plus 30-gallon/15-gallon/18-gallon fresh/gray/black tanks, an up to 200-watt solar system and a standard gas AC generator — make the Crossfit a solid choice for a couple or small family.



Dynamax Isata 5

Dynamax has always been well-known for its durable construction, and especially its flashy exterior designs. The Isata 5 on display at the show was no exception. "All of our exteriors are designed by Dean Loucks, a local artist who does a lot of power boats and race cars," said Joe Eash, West Coast sales representative for Dynamax. "We also do all our own painting in-house, and we're one of the few — if not the only — Class C manufacturers who do so," he said. The 2017 model year represents the first time the Isata 5 is based on the RAM 5500 chassis. What's not new is that "it's got a Cummins, which all of our Super C's have, so it's an easy transition," said Eash. "The big news on the Isata 5 is



that it's offered in four-wheel drive," said Eash, making Dynamax "the only company in the business that offers 4x4 in this segment," he said. The Isata 5 is available in two 36-foot floorplans, and features a GVWR of 19,500 pounds. Both units come pretty well-loaded from the factory, with a handful of options — including the \$6,600 factory four-wheel-drive choice — available; custom configurations are also possible. MSRP starts at approximately \$180,000.



Forest River Berkshire Legacy 340BH

While Forest River has offered the Berkshire Legacy for several years, the Elkhart, Indiana-based builder completely revamped it for the 2017 model year. According to Forest River Diesel Division GM Dave Carpenter, it's a ground-up redesign — starting with the use of 22.5-inch polished-aluminum wheels rather than the typical stainless-steel wheel inserts. Other exterior upgrades include new front and rear caps, a slide-out AC-generator tray and side-hinged bus-style compartment doors.

"We've added a lot of features that we think bring a significant advantage to the consumer," Carpenter noted, including a Truma continuous-flow water heater, full multiplex lighting system with a touch screen, Samsung TVs, 15,000-Btu A/C units (the front unit includes a heat pump) and full fiberglass showers.

Available in three floorplans — the 340BH bunkhouse model, the bath-and-a-half 360RB and a two-bath bunk model, the 38C — the Legacy is built on a Freightliner chassis with a 340-hp engine and a 27,910-pound GVWR. MSRP for the 340BH starts at \$240,453.

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Gulf Stream BT Cruiser 5245

When Gulf Stream initially introduced its BT Cruiser brand in the fall of 2015, it found a ready audience — but as Bob FitzSimmons, general manager of Gulf Stream’s motorized division recollected, he soon wanted to add a few specific floorplans.

“When I came over to the motorized side, one of the first things I said I needed was a couple of smaller BT Cruisers that had beds in them,” said FitzSimmons. “Some of our smaller units relied on jackknife sofas for sleeping; I thought there were more people out there in today’s market that were looking for a smaller unit but wanted a bed in it.”

What Gulf Stream’s designers came up with was the 5245, an open floorplan incorporating a full-wall streetside slideout that’s home to a rear queen-size bed, wardrobe and dinette — in a unit that measures just 26 feet bumper to bumper. Directly across from the bed is a full bath, with the galley taking up the rest of the unit curbside; additional storage and a 32-inch TV are set into the cabover portion of the B-plus-style motorhome. Built on a Ford F-350 chassis — it also can be ordered with F-450 underpinnings — the 5245 offers buyers a 12,500-pound GVWR; MSRPs are in the low \$80,000s. The 5245 joins five other floorplans in the BT Cruiser lineup, which stretch from 22 to 32 feet in length.

Hymer Sonne and Aktiv 2.0

Joining the Aktiv (see “Getting Aktiv” test in the January issue), Kitchener, Ontario-based Erwin Hymer Group North America (EHGNA) has added two new units to its lineup of Class B motorhomes built on the RAM ProMaster chassis. The Aktiv 2.0 — a longer version of the Aktiv — and the Sonne (pictured) made their debuts at the show and serve as the high and low ends of the now three-unit Hymer Class B lineup.



Built on the ProMaster 1500 short van and paired with the 3.6-liter V-6 engine, the Sonne comes in at a base MSRP just shy of \$90,000.

Mike Snell, EHGNA’s vice president of sales and service for both motorized and towables, said the Sonne is “A couple’s coach or one-person coach.”

“It’s very versatile,” he continued. “It has a separate shower that can be converted down into a storage cabinet for household goods or even as a place for your dog if you want. The doors open up to create a massive yet private bathroom. It packs a lot of storage and functionality into a small space.”

With a similar layout to the Aktiv, the Aktiv 2.0 (\$98,534 MSRP) is on the longer chassis and therefore adds a precious couple more feet of interior space, which Snell said was put to good use.

“You can get it with the old-style bed that we had with the first Aktiv, which had tons of storage when the bed was folded up, but now you can sleep north-south as opposed to east-west. We also are offering an optional electric sofa in the back,” Snell explained, adding that EHGNA will debut another unit sometime in the late summer with the same floorplan as the Aktiv, but on a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis.

Leisure Travel Vans Wonder

Long known for its high-end compact motorhomes built on the Sprinter chassis from Mercedes-Benz, Leisure Travel Vans/Triple E turned to the Ford Transit for its introduction of the Wonder, a unit coming in at 24 feet 9 inches long and 7 feet 10 inches wide. Sales Manager Dean Corrigan, pointing out the Wonder’s \$110,000 MSRP is roughly \$25,000 less than the rest of the Leisure lineup, said the company simply wanted to add a second chassis option for buyers. “They love our stuff, but not everybody was a Mercedes-Benz fan. We’ve done business with Ford for 50 years with our Regency line on the E-450 chassis, so it’s fun to be back with Ford again,” he said, adding the Wonder is on the 5-liter



diesel Ford Transit chassis with a six-speed transmission.

“It has two really cool features: a full residential 60-by-80-inch queen-size Murphy bed, and it has the residential rear bathroom with a stand-up shower, toilet and sink — all separate. We’ve done a modern look to it so everything is hidden, all of the appliances,” said Corrigan.

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Newmar King Aire

While admittedly it's difficult to argue that a coach starting at an MSRP of \$887,250 ought to have all the bells and whistles, the 2017 King Aire by Newmar incorporates everything an outdoor enthusiast could want — and then some — along with the near flawless execution of a highly engineered redesign.

On the outside, Newmar's top-of-the-line King Aire features redesigned front and rear caps with full LED head- and taillights, a cut-and-buff full-paint finish and one of the tallest basements in the Class A segment.

Powered by a 600-hp Cummins ISX diesel engine, the coach is built on a Spartan K3 tag-axle chassis with independent front suspension and a hydraulic leveling system from HWH Corp., which also supplied an all-new motorized front-entry step. The chassis receives further backing from Newmar's STAR Foundation proprietary steel superstructure.

Again, numerous updates on the inside are what one should expect from a luxury coach — including a 50-by-34-inch fully tiled shower with massage sprays and foot wash — but Newmar is especially excited about the coach's new



dashboard and digital instrument panel. Developed in conjunction with Astheimer Ltd., a German design firm that includes Ferrari among its clients, the dashboard features a configurable "Digital Dash" display monitor, two 12.1-inch touch screens that can provide 360 degrees of outward visibility and a wireless nonslip charging pad. There's also Newmar's Comfort Drive with Passive Steer technology. A custom-tuned, 11-speaker JBL audio



system, contrasted cross-stitching and exclusive fabrics from the Ralph Lauren Home Collection complete the cockpit.

Thor Motorcoach Miramar 35.3

Thor's 35.3 model is the latest addition to the gasoline-powered Class A Miramar line, adding a sixth floorplan on the Ford F-53 chassis.

"The big thing about the 35.3 is you get the 'L' sofa, something you would expect to find in a diesel product. We're bringing that over into our higher-end gas models," said Wes Bogan, marketing manager for Thor Motor Coach. "It gives you that feel of a separate living area — you're not stuck with that feeling of 'it's a kitchen, but it's the living room.' This really feels like a living room. That's the big bonus. The fireplace adds to the ambiance, plus you get the drop-down overhead bunk for added sleeping area." The



designers also took the sofa position into account, angling the 40-inch television to improve visibility from any place on the sofa.

The Miramar is 36 feet 10 inches long and has a GVWR of 22,000 pounds. It has a base MSRP of \$160,350.



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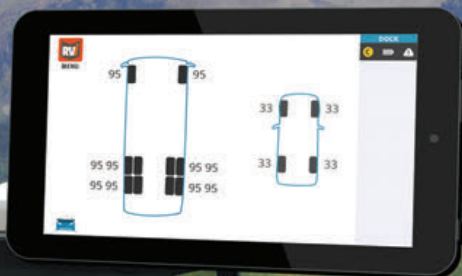


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Thor Motorcoach Quantum KM24

With the new KM24 floorplan, Thor has expanded its popular Quantum Class C motorhome line to include the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis. The KM24 is one of seven Quantum floorplans for 2017, but is the first diesel option in the line that, until now, had been built only on the Ford E-450 chassis or on the optional Chevy chassis with gasoline engines. The BlueTEC 3.0-liter V-6 turbodiesel engine puts out 188 hp and 235 lb-ft of torque, and it easily moves a motorhome that is one of the shortest offerings in the Quantum line (measuring 24 feet 8 inches). It's also the lightest, with a GVWR of 11,030 pounds.

The Quantum KM24 offers a full-wall triple-track slide, queen-size bed, Dream Dinette sleeping area and a bunk over the cab, taking advantage of a built-in skylight.

"In the Quantum you get higher-class cabinetry than is typical in Class C or Class B motorhomes. You also have a rear bath with a nice full-size shower. Typically in a small coach you're cramped for space, so that's a nice feature," said Bogan.

The 2017 KM24 features an MSRP starting at \$114,000, and is available with several interior décor options, two cabinetry options and two exterior "HD-MAX" graphics options.



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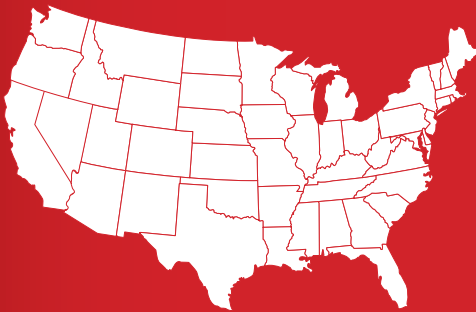
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Winnebago Era 70M

Joining the rear sofa bed 70X and the versatile 70A with the Flex Bed System in the Winnebago Era lineup, the 70M made an impressive debut at Louisville. The Class B, with an MSRP of \$138,000, rides on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis with a "Murphy+ Bed" slideout. The 24-foot-3-inch-long unit features 44-gallon freshwater, 22-gallon black and 25-gallon gray tank capacities — a sharp increase over the 70A and 70X capacities. While the rear bath is refreshingly spacious and the midlevel galley along one wall and European-style cabinetry and refrigerator along the other are well-appointed, the key feature of the 70M is its 52-by-75-inch motorized Murphy+ Bed. When not in use, the bed is tucked away in a slideout in favor of a sofa and removable pedestal table. At night, the table is stowed away, the sofa folds into itself and, with a touch of a button, the bed lowers for a comfortable night's sleep.



Winnebago Vista 27PE

Sitting on Ford's F-53 chassis and powered by its Triton V-10 engine, the Vista line of Class A motorhomes by Winnebago saw the addition of two new floorplans, the 32YE and 27PE, at the show. While the 32-foot-11-inch-long 32YE features a king-bed slide in the rear and a dinette/sofa bed slide in the living area, the 27PE's two streetside slideouts nearly run the length of the 28-foot-8-inch-long unit. The rear slide houses a king bed opposite a bathroom, while the midway slideout holds a galley as well as a 42-by-73-inch dinette, which can transform into a bed. Opposite the midslide is the entry door, flanked by a refrigerator, sofa bed and overhead cabinets. Vista MSRPs start at \$97,525, and the chassis has an 18,000-pound GVWR. **M**

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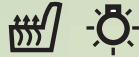
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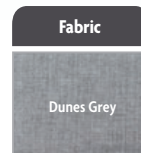
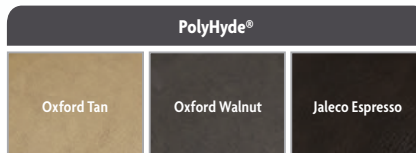
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A motorhome is parked in a wooded area with white blossoms. The motorhome is white with brown accents and has "Diplomat" written on the front. The scene is set in a forest with many trees and white blossoms, likely cherry blossoms, in the foreground and background. The lighting is bright, suggesting a sunny day.

SPRING HAS SPRUNG

Preparing for the upcoming travel season will help ensure all systems are in tip-top condition and ready for service without hiccups

As the snow and ice melt in the northern climes, and the travel season officially arrives across the country, we all begin thinking of taking our motorhomes out on the road. But before we can go for that first trip, there are several things we need to take care of to be sure the motorhome is ready, and that it will give us trouble-free use throughout the season.

Uncovering and Checking the Major Systems

For those who have had their motorhomes protected by a cover, the first step is obviously to remove it. Be sure to take care while removing the cover, and to perform the task when everything is dry, if possible. If the cover remains wet or damp, set it out in the sun to dry before rolling it up and putting it

back in the storage bag to prevent mildew from forming. Also, if any damage has occurred to the cover, this would be a good time to patch or replace it.

Inspect the exterior of the motorhome for any damage that may have occurred during the winter. Check the roof carefully for puncture holes from things like fallen branches, icicles and so on. This is

also a great time to reseal the roof seams using the proper products for your motorhome's type of roof. While you're at it, wash and treat the roof. Products like Protect-All rubber-roof cleaner and treatment, Thetford's one-step cleaner and protectant, Dicor rubber-roof cleaner and treatment are all good choices, depending on the type of roof on your motorhome. If your motorhome is equipped with a fiberglass or aluminum roof, clean it as you would the sides of the motorhome.

Speaking of the side walls, do a thorough inspection, again, for damage. Wash and wax the outside of the motorhome. It's a bit of work but is worth the effort in the long run. Open



Spring is the optimal time to clean and reseal the roof of your motorhome. Be sure to use the proper sealant for the roof type.

all the exterior compartments and check for signs of leaks, rodents, etc., and deal with any issues you find. Spring also is a great time to empty out the exterior compartments and rearrange and clean things for the season.

Many people remove their motorhome's batteries for the winter season to protect them. Spring is a good time to clean and, if necessary, repaint the battery trays and then charge and reinstall the batteries. Be sure to check the water level and refill with distilled water, if necessary. If there is any concern as to the batteries' states of charge, this would be a good time to get them checked. Many parts stores and RV dealers have advanced battery-diagnostic equipment that show battery condition.

Chassis and generator services should be completed in the fall just before storage, but now is the time to check everything over again, including the usual suspects like the fluids, belts and so on. Always look around the engine and generator before starting them to check for mouse nests, especially if you live in an area that's prone to rodent infestations. In particular, check the air-cleaner housing and ducting, as rodents seem to enjoy using those spaces as storage warehouses. Visually inspect the tires, check air pressures and adjust accordingly. Turn on all the exterior lights to ensure they're working.

Once the prechecks are completed, start the engine and generator and do a running check of all the mechanical systems, including the jacks, power awnings and slideouts. Before setting out for a long distance, test drive the motorhome. Follow a short route and ensure the steering, brakes, suspension and so on are performing as they should. Most such systems don't just mysteriously break by themselves during winter storage, but it's easy to check things out locally before hitting the road for a long trip.

Photo: Karen Dougherty



Left: The range is a frequent nesting and feeding spot for mice who have invaded the motorhome while in storage. Make sure this area is clean, and consider lining it with aluminum foil for easy cleanup, being careful not to cover any ventilation openings. Right: Mice and rodents will often find winter refuge in engine and AC generator compartments. Check all openings as well as the tops of engines, air-cleaner housings and so on for signs of an infestation. Here, there was so much nesting and chewed wiring that the generator had to be removed for cleaning and repair.

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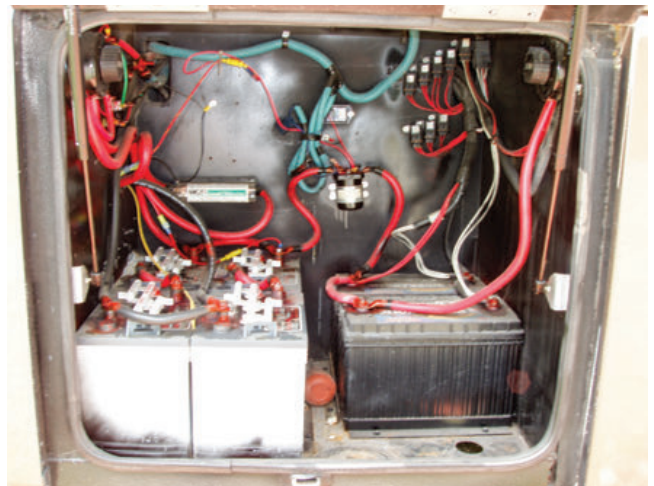
All the exterior vented propane-burning appliances should be checked for cleanliness, and to be sure insects haven't made nests in the burners. A visual inspection is usually adequate, and a small mechanic's inspection mirror may help with this process. Some small spiders are attracted to the smell of ethyl mercaptan, the odorant used in LP-gas, and will sometimes build small, silky webs in the burn chambers and valves. If you see these, clean them out using a small flue brush. Don't ever stick anything into the small gas orifice on a water heater, as it can alter the size of the opening, creating an uncontrolled increase in the amount of LP-gas released into the appliance. Watch the appliance carefully during the test run; if it misfires, shut it down and hire a certified RV technician to disassemble the system and thoroughly clean and test it. In order to inspect the burner in most furnaces, the appliance must be disassembled, which requires special training, and should be left to a professional. If the furnace malfunctions, again, contact a certified RV technician for assistance.

Dewinterizing a Standard LP-gas Water Heater

Motorhomes with a simple water system that includes a standard LP-gas water heater should follow these basic instructions to dewinterize. These procedures are assuming that antifreeze has been used to protect the system, so it is necessary to try to prevent antifreeze from getting into the water-heater tank. (Once antifreeze gets into the water heater, you'll be smelling it, tasting it, and seeing foaming from it for a long time. It's harmless, but annoying.)

First, make sure the water-heater bypass is still in winterizing mode. There are different types of bypass kits installed in motorhomes, so check the owner's manual or contact the manufacturer if you're not sure which type is on your motorhome. Next, hook up the fresh-water supply to the motorhome and turn on the water to pressurize the freshwater system. Make sure to thoroughly flush the entire system, including all faucets, low-point drains, toilets, washing machines, icemakers, etc. Once clean water is flowing through all the faucets, and there are no leaks or other problems present, it's time to move on to the water heater.

The outside drain plug was probably not reinstalled in the tank after last season's draining and winterizing. In this case, reverse the bypass kit and let some fresh water flow out of the drain, then shut off the water and install the plug or anode rod back into the tank. This flushes any stale water and collected minerals out of the bottom of the water-heater tank. Once the plug is back in, turn the water on back at the hose, return to the water heater and open the relief valve using the spring-loaded lever. Once water comes out, release the valve so it closes. Check for flow-through of the hot-water system in the motorhome, then test-fire the water heater to be sure the flow is true. If your motorhome is equipped with a three-valve bypass



Top: When dewinterizing, flush the entire water system, including the low-point drains, to remove any remaining antifreeze or contaminants. **Bottom:** Battery maintenance is essential. Once the batteries are reinstalled (if they've been removed), check the electrolyte level and fill with distilled water, if applicable. Seal the terminal with battery-terminal spray to prevent corrosion. If there's rust on the battery trays or in the compartment, consider removing the batteries and repainting the compartment.

kit, make certain the middle valve is closed. Dealerships get many calls about tepid water from the water heater only to find out the middle valve was accidentally left in the open position.

Make certain water is flowing from every discharge point, including exterior showers and low-point drains and, if the motorhome is outfitted with a washer/dryer prep but no washer, hook a hose up to each of these valves and flow water into a sink, the washer drain or outside the motorhome. Stale water and antifreeze can remain in these lines and taint the freshwater.

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Dewinterizing a Tankless Hot-Water System

Dewinterizing a motorhome with a tankless water system is simpler because there is no tank to flush. Systems like this include those from Aqua-Hot, Oasis and Truma. Just hook up the freshwater hose and proceed to flush the system, and follow the brand-specific instructions in the owner's manual. Once everything is buttoned up and water is flowing throughout the system, you can test-fire the water-heater system.

Sanitizing the Freshwater System

I am a stickler about keeping the water as clean and usable as possible, so its quality is just like at my residential home. To do this, two things must happen. First, the incoming source of water must be filtered and clean, whether the water is going into the city-water connection or the freshwater holding tank. Second, the

a 30-gallon tank, you would add 2 gallons of solution, etc. Then fill the tank to the top, turn on the water pump and run the solution through the entire plumbing system until you can smell chlorine from each faucet. Allow the solution to sit in the system for at least four hours (one hour if using the 100-ppm mix), or overnight. Then drain the freshwater tank completely, and flush the entire system with fresh water. Draining the water-heater tank will speed things up a bit.

Flushing the system will remove most of the chlorine. Water-freshening solutions are available in liquid and tablet form and are designed for this purpose, but the leftover chlorine will actually dissipate quickly and is harmless after the system has been flushed. Baking soda can also be used to remove the chlorine taste and smell. Simply add a box of baking soda that's been mixed with water in a bucket into the tank and fill the tank with water. Allow the baking soda to work

“TEST ALL THE SAFETY SYSTEMS, AND CHECK THE DETECTORS FOR EXPIRATION DATES. INSTALL NEW BATTERIES IN ALL BATTERY-POWERED SAFETY MONITORS.”

water system must be sanitized at the beginning of the season.

There are a couple of ways to sanitize the system. The old-school way is to make a bleach solution to run through the water system. The other is to use a water-freshener product on the market, sold through Camping World or other RV parts suppliers. In either case, follow the directions on the bottle.

The bleach solution is quite simple and works like a champ, and is completely safe. Simply mix ¼ cup plain household bleach to 1 gallon of fresh water. If you have a known dirty-water system (rotten egg smell from hot water, etc.) you can increase this to a 100-ppm solution by increasing the solution to ½ cup per gallon of water. Add one gallon of solution to an empty, preferably flushed, freshwater tank, for every 15 gallons of tank capacity. So, if your motorhome is outfitted with

overnight, drain the tank and flush with water. The plumbing system is now clean and sanitized.

Dewinterizing and Checking the Interior

First and foremost inside is checking for any rodent infestation and removing any nests and debris left behind. Now is a good time to see if you can find where the rodents came in and seal these areas from the outside. Do a thorough cleaning of the motorhome as necessary, including inside and under cabinets, windows and so on. Clean and check the operation of all the appliances. If the motorhome is equipped with an LP-gas range, be sure to lift the top to check for signs of intruders and clean thoroughly. Lining the area under the burners with aluminum foil is a good way to help with cleaning. Just cover the bottom,



Flush the water system with fresh water before opening the bypass valves on the water heater to eliminate any residual antifreeze in the system. Consider flushing the water heater before reinstalling the drain plug on the outside of the motorhome.

but do not cover any of the holes in the sides of the pan.

Make sure the refrigerator is clean and mildew-free. Clorox or similar wipes are great for this. Power up the refrigerator and let it run for a day or two, switching power-source modes to make certain they function properly. If the motorhome is equipped with a residential refrigerator, simply clean and run it.

Test all the safety systems in the motorhome, and check the detectors for expiration dates. Install new batteries in all battery-powered safety monitors at the beginning of the season. Make sure all the emergency exits operate properly, and look at the fire extinguisher(s) to make sure there is no damage. Test the valve by pushing in the small plunger. Take the fire extinguisher off the wall, invert it for a few seconds, then return it to its bracket. Check all the interior lights, test all the gadgets for functionality and you're ready to move in for the season!

As always, be sure to check the owner's packet for any special instructions, especially if you own a higher-end or more technologically equipped coach. Always use caution when working on ladders or on the roof, and if you're uncomfortable with the height, or any of the procedures outlined herein, have a certified RV technician do the work for you.

Spending a day working on the motorhome at the beginning of the spring will help ensure the most enjoyable RVing experiences possible all season long. **M**

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By Ann Eichenmuller

ROAD WARRIOR

A CLASS C WINNEBAGO REMAINS ONE COUPLE'S MOTORHOME OF CHOICE AFTER MORE THAN 25 YEARS

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

Everyone remembers their first time. Whether it was a Class A, B or C, we all think back fondly to our earliest adventures in a motorhome. For our family, like so many others, that first experience took place in a Winnebago. The company sold its first motorhome in 1966 for roughly half the price of its competitors, a strategy that quickly catapulted Winnebago to the top of the list of leading RV manufacturers. In fact, there were so many Winnebagos on the road by the early 1970s that the company's brand name was often used as a generic term to refer to all motorhomes. If a classic ride can be determined by

sheer numbers of owners introduced into the RV lifestyle, then the ubiquitous Winnebago has an unquestionable place on that list.

For Don and Claire Wilson, the Micro Warrior was not only their first motorhome — it has also been their last. They purchased the 1990 micro mini nearly 26 years ago, and after 140,000 miles, they still won't part with it. Yet the RV lifestyle wasn't even on their radar until the year that they bought it.

"We'd never even been in a motorhome before," the couple admits, laughing.

Don was looking at the possibility of early retirement, and



The Wilsons travel with their English springer spaniel, Danny Boy. The motorhome helps the family to unplug and get away.

unbeknownst to Claire, had started researching RVs. When he finally broached the topic, Claire wanted to know just what they would do with a motorhome.

"He said, 'Well, we could park on the beach in Mexico,'" Claire remembers, and she has to admit he made a pretty good case.



The Micro Warrior's small size makes it easy to handle and park.

The Classic Ride



Above: With a double sink and four-burner stove, the Micro Warrior's galley is compact and usable. The comfortable cabover bed makes optimal use of space.

With romantic thoughts of Pacific sunsets in mind, they began searching for an RV. They were looking for something easy to drive that could double as a second car, and with a 20-foot-7-inch length and a width just over 7 feet, the Micro Warrior drew their attention. The diminutive Class C's fuel efficiency was also a factor in their decision. The Warrior, built on a Toyota chassis with a standard V-6 engine and four-speed automatic transmission, averages a respectable 14 MPG and had already developed a reputation for reliability. The Wilsons were considering buying a new unit when they stumbled upon a year-old Micro Warrior parked outside an RV dealer's lot with a for-sale sign in the window. The owner was there negotiating a trade-in for an Airstream, but Don was able to make her a better

offer, picking up the nearly new motorhome with 7,000 miles on the engine for \$22,000.

"We have had wonderful luck with it," Don says enthusiastically. "Except for regular maintenance, it has never had a problem."

The interior of the Micro Warrior is not luxurious, but it offers all of the necessary amenities in a compact package. The cabover bunk provides a comfortable sleeping area without a loss of floor space, allowing the unit to have a roomier rear bath with a shower. Seating in the main living area is provided by a velvet-covered swivel chair and a dinette that conveniently converts into a guest bed for excursions that include grandchildren. The galley is small but functional, including a four-burner LP-gas stove, a double sink

and a Norcold refrigerator/freezer. Climate control is provided by a roof air conditioner and a 12,500-Btu furnace. The light oak-look vinyl veneer cabinetry and stain-resistant pale blue carpet and upholstery are all original and have held up well to decades of wear.

While the Wilsons have been happy with most aspects of their Micro Warrior, Don's one wish would be to increase the capacities of the fuel and the water tanks. The motorhome's spec sheet lists the main gas tank as 17.2 gallons, which means stopping frequently to fill up on long trips. In addition, the unit's freshwater capacity is only 18 gallons (including the water heater), and both holding tanks top out at 14 gallons each. The Wilsons do a lot of dry camping, and they know they must carefully monitor their usage before refilling with potable water and accessing a dump station. Still, they see this as a minor

WINNING WARRIORS

The Winnebago Warrior line included a Class A, traditional Class C and the Micro Warrior, all advertised as "a sure cure for sticker shock." In 1990, a new Micro Warrior listed with a base price of \$27,600. While these units can still be found for as little as \$2,500 online, prices have increased as they have become a popular alternative for young first-time buyers and vintage-RV enthusiasts. The average selling price of a 1990 Micro Warrior today is between \$4,000 and \$5,000, but a low-mileage Micro Warrior in excellent condition can fetch up to \$14,000.

► The Toyota chassis and V-6 engine combine to give the Micro Warrior a respectable 14 MPG.





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The Classic Ride



The Micro Warrior sports a roomy rear bath. Though the small gray- and black-water tanks fill quickly, the Wilsons can easily maneuver the diminutive motorhome to the dump station.

inconvenience, since moving such a small, self-contained unit takes relatively little effort.

The only modifications Don and Claire have made to their motorhome are the addition of reading lights and the installation of an extra 12-volt DC outlet in the dining area. While many new motorhomes come complete with multiple high-definition flat-screen TVs, media players, satellite antennas and theater-style surround-sound systems, the Wilsons have not even installed a single TV.

"We bought this motorhome to get away," Claire says. "We read, play cards, play games and just talk."

And get away they do. That initial promise of parking on the beach turned into a month in Mexico when Don retired. Since then, the couple has traveled extensively throughout the United States, including trips to Key West, the Grand Canyon, Glacier National Park and Jasper, and lots of visits to see their son in Texas. They've even been to Canada. The couple is just as fond of local camping, taking frequent two-week trips to nearby state and national parks and often heading out into the desert to enjoy the seclusion. Perhaps most impressive, they have traveled all these miles on a single

initial investment made more than two decades ago. I had to ask — what advice would they give to a couple in the same situation they once were, considering the purchase of a small, affordable motorhome to pursue the RV dream?

"I'd tell them to make sure they had a good marriage," Don jokes.

Claire agrees that the Warrior can be close quarters, especially when you factor in the Wilsons' English springer spaniel, Danny Boy. However, while bigger and more opulent RVs have been all the rage for years, a new generation of buyers is now turning to more compact and affordable motorhomes, and Claire notes that their vintage Warrior is now garnering plenty of attention.

"It's not unusual for us to come back when we've parked somewhere and find a note under our windshield asking if we want to sell," Claire says.

The answer, of course, is "No." Like many other motorhome owners that we have met, the Wilsons have learned that the joy of camping is not about how much you take with you but about how many memories you bring back. That is why they will continue to stretch their horizons aboard their 1990 Winnebago Micro Warrior, an original classic ride. **M**

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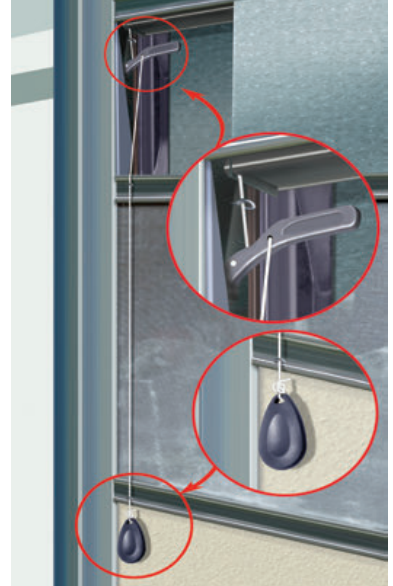
Latch Lengthener

The door to our motorhome is midcoach, adjacent to the front slideout on the left. The door opens against the slide when it is extended. While camping, we keep the outside door connected to the slide. For my wife (who is a little more than 5 feet tall) to get into the RV, she has to climb two of the three outside steps to reach the screen-door latch, pull it down, hold on to the edge of the door, step back down, open the door fully and climb back up and in. Not the safest, especially if she's carrying something.

To remedy this, we drilled a small hole in the screen-door latch (inside). We installed two screw eyes along the screen trim: one just below the latch, the other near the bottom of the door. We ran a thin, braided nylon cord from the hole in the latch, down through the screw eyes to a key fob on the bottom.

Now, standing on the ground, she just pulls on the key fob, which not only unlatches the door but also opens it so she can climb the step and get in.

Art Szustak | Cleveland, Tennessee

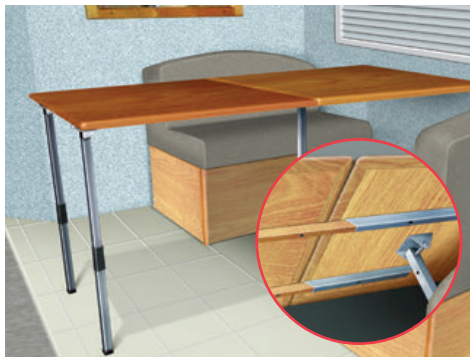


Wood Working

I carry a selection of wooden blocks in my motorhome to put under the leveling jacks in case I park on a slope or over a soft spot. It can be difficult to position the blocks properly, and can often require bending down and reaching across a number of times, which can be hard on your knees and back.

To make the process easier, I cut a hole and a trench near one end of each block, and then I use my awning rod to position the blocks exactly where I want them under the motorhome jacks. If you don't already have an awning rod, they are readily available at RV supply stores.

Chuck Call | Canyon Lake, California



Clutter Buster

In the September 2016 issue, I read a lot of complaints about motorhomes not having enough counterspace. I did not see any real solutions, so I thought I would submit what I did to add counterspace. I constructed a simple addition to the dining table made from ¾-inch plywood, two 1-inch aluminum square channels and folding legs. We now have more room to eat, and we can also use the extra table space as a catchall and/or workstation. The extension does need to be removed before travel and then put back in place when parked, but we've simply made those tasks a part of our routine.

Fred Ouellette | Waco, Texas 



Have an Idea?

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

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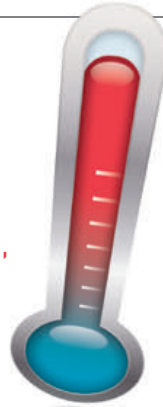
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Fridge Failure

When his new motorhome's refrigerator consistently failed to operate properly while the rig was on the road, a reader sent a letter to the motorhome manufacturer to solve the problem. After not receiving any response, he turned to Hot Line for help. He enclosed a copy of the letter he had originally sent. It read:



“ I was a proud owner of a 1995 Winnebago Vectra. Based on my experience and the reputation of Winnebago products, I purchased a new 2015 Itasca Sunstar 27N. This coach has been a problem from day one. The Norcold refrigerator will not operate in transit.

I took possession in September 2014. Soon after, a number of issues arose, including the faulty refrigerator and three separate recalls.

The continuing problem with the Norcold refrigerator is the most frustrating. Stationary, the refrigerator registers 37 degrees on electric or propane, slide in or out. However, in transit, after two hours of driving, the thermometer maxes out at 70 degrees and cold air escapes near the door handle. The dealer checked gaskets and found them to be acceptable.

Winnebago customer service has attempted to resolve this problem, and Norcold suggested a flue cap be installed. I paid \$476.90 out of pocket to do so, but the problem persisted. Winnebago said a similar problem was resolved by replacing the refrigerator, so I was advised to contact the dealer. The dealer said it has done all it can do and that I should contact Winnebago. It seems no one is taking responsibility for this issue. Since the Winnebago name is on this coach it would be expected that your company and not me would take the lead in fixing this problem.

Robert De Nicholas | Little River, South Carolina

Hot Line sent Winnebago a copy of De Nicholas' letter, along with a request for assistance. After some back-and-forth communication with Winnebago and De Nicholas, we finally heard back from De Nicholas one last time.

“ After two years of frustration in getting my refrigerator to work properly while in transit, due to your intervention, a new fridge was installed on November 21, 2016. I am convinced that Hot Line's involvement has at least for now resolved my problem.

Keep up the good work and

thanks for being there for me and many others.

R.D.

Shower Surround

At a standstill trying to get a reimbursement for a shower surround that failed due to what he considered

faulty installation, a reader turned to Hot Line for help.

“ I'm writing regarding a problem with the shower surround on my 2015 Minnie Winnie 27Q Class C, which I purchased in May 2015. I purchased an extended warranty, but found that it does not cover the interior.

The problem with the shower surround was due to a finish screw at the top being pulled in too tightly, which resulted in the fiberglass splitting and cracking.

I took the unit to the dealer, RCD Sales in Hebron, Ohio, where a new surround was installed for \$975.65. I feel in all fairness that this amount should be reimbursed, as quality control missed with its inspection.

Raye Dusenberry | Zanesville, Ohio

After initially denying the claim due to the motorhome being out of warranty, Winnebago received our correspondence asking to reconsider. We received a copy of its reply:

This is in response to the letter you addressed to *MotorHome* magazine regarding your shower surround.

After further review of your file, we do not believe there is anything you could have done to prevent the crack in the shower surround. Although your Minnie Winnie had exceeded the limited warranty at the time of the repair, in the interest of good customer relations, we will reimburse you for the repair expense. I will be submitting a reimbursement request in the amount of \$975.65.

**Angie Gerdes, Service Advisor,
Winnebago Industries Inc. **

Take Action

Contact Hot Line for Help

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

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By Ken Freund

Dinghy-Towing Questions

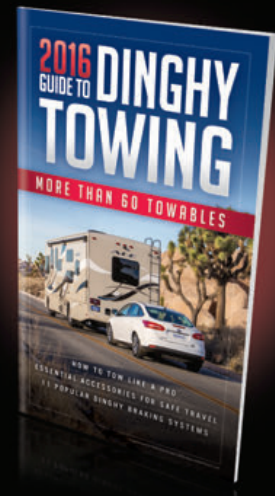
Q What small car is best to tow behind a 24-foot Thor Citation with a Mercedes diesel? Are front-wheel-drive (FWD) or all-wheel-drive (AWD) cars OK? And, which is easier to hook up and unhook: a tow hitch or a dolly?

Howard Husselman | Horse Shoe, North Carolina

A There is no one “best” small car for towing, as each has its pros and cons, and these factors vary for different people. For example, someone very tall might consider legroom as a top consideration, while someone else might favor cargo space or off-road ability or powertrain type. In general, the lighter the vehicle, the better it will be for towing behind your motorhome. Be sure to stay within the manufacturer’s weight limitations.

While most owners probably agree that a tow bar is easier to hook up and use than a tow dolly, tow dollies (or

trailers) are necessary for vehicles that were not designed to be towed on all four wheels. While many FWD vehicles with manual transmissions are towable, many FWD automatics and most AWD vehicles are not towable as produced by the factory. You need to carefully read *MotorHome’s* annual Guide to Dinghy Towing, which lists vehicles approved by their manufacturers for towing along with answering many other questions, and it is also available on our website at www.motorhome.com.



Rumbling Noise

Q We just bought a 2017 Forester 3011DS, with a Ford E-450 chassis and a V-10 engine, that has less than 1,000 miles on it. It’s new from a dealer and I hear a rumbling sound when going 45 MPH or more. At first it seemed like it did it mostly when I was pressing on the gas to go uphill. Now it is also doing it when I let off the gas. Have you heard of this problem before?

Allan Blair | Fredericksburg, Virginia

A Chances are that it’s a normal sound, and you may not be familiar with the new motorhome and the noises it makes. However, because things can go wrong, it’s always good to check it out. Motorhomes are generally a lot noisier than passenger vehicles when they’re going down the road. Without my being able to hear it, and not knowing even what area of the vehicle the noise is coming from, it’s

pretty much impossible to diagnose by email. I recommend that you take it to the dealer and have someone test drive it with you, so that you can determine what the noise you’re hearing is. My best guess is exhaust noise. I’d like to hear back from you after it’s diagnosed.

Equalizer Hitches on Motorhomes

Q I’m a snowbird who lives year-round in my RV, which is a 2006 Winnebago Minnie 31C Class C motorhome. It’s on the 2005 Ford E-450 chassis, with the V-10 engine. It has standard suspension (no air shocks).

The owner’s manual states: CAUTION! Do not install a frame equalizing type hitch on your vehicle. Max. hitch pulling capacity: 5,000 lbs. Max. tongue weight: 350 lbs.

I have a 12-foot-long Cargo Mate two-axle cargo trailer that I used last year to transport my motorcycle. The trailer, fully loaded, has been weighed

and is not overloaded (3,850 pounds). I have inquired about this at three different Ford dealers, a Camping World and several independent hitch-installation shops. None of them had an explanation for not using an equalizing hitch on my motorhome. I used an equalizing hitch to tow this trailer last year, with no mechanical towing problems. Without the equalizer hitch the rear of the motorhome goes down about 2 inches. The only problem I had was the electric trailer brake was wired wrong. I’m still trying to find the correct wire for the electric brake. Winnebago only uses two colors of wires from the cab, yellow for positive and white for negative. At the rear of the RV, there are about eight yellow wires and one white wire.

Ray Russell | Yuma, Arizona

A Equalizer-hitch installations create torque loads that are fed into the towing vehicle (upward loads) that are considerably stronger than those generated by a weight-carrying

hitch. Additionally, the equalizer hitches place rotational torquing loads on the receiver and frame rails, etc. It must be understood that the frame rails on a chassis are not the only components carrying trailer hitch loads. In a motorhome of the type you have, the floor, back wall, side walls and roof all share parts of the stress because of unitized construction. These stresses are the engineer's concern with an equalizer hitch, which may exceed the design's structural limits under certain operating conditions, and one that the average technician or dealer probably wouldn't be knowledgeable or concerned about. If the loaded trailer actually weighs 3,850 pounds, and hitch weight should be about 10 percent of that, or 385 pounds, you are slightly above the factory-recommended limit of 350 pounds. By culling out a few items, you should be able to bring the weight down to within limits. You might need to store something heavy in a storage compartment, etc. However, don't move the heavy stuff to the back of the trailer to reduce hitch weight; this could cause a dangerous sway condition. Air bags could be used to bring the rear of the motorhome back up to level instead of using the equalizer-hitch function.

Air-Conditioning Parts Source

I am writing in response to the "A/C Compressor Failure" question in the December 2016 issue. For older RVs that have experienced A/C component failures, I must recommend an excellent gentleman, Richard, and his site www.soldbyrichard.com. He is very knowledgeable and seems to have all the odd parts older RVs require. With his parts and knowledge I was able to overhaul my own 1997 Holiday Rambler's air-conditioning unit with no previous experience.

Paul Cicerone | Tampa, Florida

Thanks for sharing this tip, Paul. Parts for older models can be hard to come by, and this may help a few readers.

Tire Cupping

Q I'm wondering if I'm doing something wrong. On our first motorhome, a 2008 Tuscan, the front Goodyear G670 tires had to be replaced at 23,000 miles with severe cupping on the shoulders; the service center blamed it on bad shocks, which were replaced. I just took our new coach, a 2015 Entegra, in for alignment due to noticeable vibration at 45-55 MPH. I am being told the alignment was good but I need to replace the front Goodyear G670 tires at 22,000 miles because minor cupping on the shoulders is causing the vibration. Both coaches were properly weighed and I maintained inflation per the Goodyear load/pressure chart for this series. Neither coach displayed a pull or other signs of misalignment while driving. I've heard rumors about shoulder wear issues with the G670 series and considering Michelin instead. Any advice?

Bob Garrett | Young Harris, Georgia

A Vibrations that start above 45 MPH are generally caused by tire imbalance, not alignment. Cupping (a scalloped indentation in the tread surface that repeats around the circumference) can be caused by several factors, but once they are cupped they stay that way, even if you rotate them to a rear position. Some chassis designs tend to be more prone to this than others.

Basically, the tire is bouncing up and down or oscillating as it rotates at speed. This can happen because the tire-and-wheel assembly is out of balance because the shock absorbers are weak (which can include fairly new original equipment) due to loose suspension or steering-linkage parts or wheel bearings that allow the tire to wiggle or wobble as it spins; misalignment or incorrect inflation can also affect this and cause the wear to occur on the edges, etc. Several of these factors working in combination can also cause cupping. I suggest that you rotate the tires, and start fresh with tire balancing, a thorough inspection of the

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front end and an alignment check. Keep an eye on tire inflation and wear, and avoid bumping curbs or hitting potholes as much as possible.

Tire-Failure Recourse

Q My Class C motorhome was equipped with Michelin tires. They are three years old and had 27,000 miles on them. I experienced two tire blowouts on the front, within four days, on two different interstates. They were both very violent blowouts that caused quite a bit of damage to my coach. My question is, what recourse do I have for the tires? And also for the body damage that also occurred?

Joyce Coffey | Via email

A Generally, there are several steps you should take with tire failures. Check the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website (www.nhtsa.gov) and the tire manufacturer's website (or check with a dealer of the brand) for safety recalls. If there are none on that series of tire, you should check if the tire is still in warranty.

The tires in question should be inspected by an expert to determine the cause of failure, so they should not be discarded. Depending on the cause of failure and the age of the tire, the tire manufacturer may (or may not) offer an adjustment. The same goes for the body damage. For example, if the tires were damaged due to overloading or underinflation, it may decline responsibility. In that case you might pursue your insurance carrier for damages. Finally, if you have exhausted other avenues, you can consider taking the matter to small claims court. Most jurisdictions have websites where you can find out how to file.

Running the Roof Air Conditioner

Q In the December 2016 issue, you replied to a person who had trouble fixing their dash air-conditioning unit, saying "In a pinch you can run the generator and roof A/C." I am

a relatively new RV owner (one year with a wonderful 2004 Itasca Sunova). I thought, not knowing otherwise, it was OK to run the generator and roof A/C while driving. It would seem that the dash A/C only wouldn't cool a 28-foot or larger RV. Please advise others and me about this subject.

Dave Rueschhoff | Lawrence, Kansas

A There's nothing wrong with running the generator and roof air conditioner. However, I prefer to only use it if the dash air is unable to keep the passengers comfortable. When you are driving, you have to run the motorhome engine anyway, so there's less total wear and tear (and lower fuel consumption) than running both the generator and roof air.

Brighter Lights?

Q We have a 2015 Newmar 3921 Canyon Star and I am very unhappy with the headlights. I can't believe that I am the only one with a complaint. Is there anything I can do to improve the lights, for example, different bulbs or adding on additional running lights? Please advise.

Udo Koch | Forked River, New Jersey

A That's a nice motorhome, and it already has a pair of low-mounted driving or fog lights.

First, have you checked that all the lights are aimed properly? If any are aimed poorly, fixing that would be a cheap solution. Next, I would take a headlight bulb out and determine what type and wattage it is. Some people install higher wattage aftermarket bulbs; just don't go too far, as the increased heat can cause problems, along with dazzling oncoming drivers or those who you pull up behind in traffic.

Another option is upgrading to HID lighting in either the headlamps or driving lights or both. HID lights use slightly less current, yet produce a more powerful light beam. Before doing so, check with the Department of Motor Vehicles to verify that what you're doing passes safety inspection.



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Engine Pre-Lube?

Q In reference to the "Diesel Storage" letter (December 2016) regarding starting engines that have been in storage for 30 days or more, I contacted my Cummins rep here in Seattle and he stated the later engines, such as my ISF 400, do not have a way to disconnect the fuel-shutoff solenoid. He suggested that I search to see if someone sells a system that would circulate the oil before the coach is started. Any information on such a system?

Dale Wilkins | Gig Harbor, Washington

A Yes, there are a number of products made for this. One is Insta-Lube Engine Pre-Lube Kit available at www.engineprelube.com. This one is fairly easy to install, and not too costly.

Batteries Keep Going Dead — Tip

This is in regard to the letter "Batteries

Keep Going Dead" in the December 2016 issue. I had a similar problem in Alaska with a 1998 V-10 Rexair motorhome. There is a wiring junction connector under the engine on the passenger side that can go bad. I was lucky, as my tech had seen this problem before.

Douglas Bell | Glendale, Arizona

Thanks for writing, Douglas. Actual owner experience with motorhomes is hard to beat. This will likely help others.

Another Satisfied Reader

I just wanted to say thank-you for your tech advice in the "Tire Failures" letter in the September 2016 issue. We had a blowout on our 2013 Sunseeker. I checked the rest of my tires and found out they were all under recall. I contacted Michelin's website to get an authorized tire dealer and was happy to see my local Discount Tire Store was authorized.

(continued on page 112)

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** Information obtained from AAA of Colorado Plus RV plan at Colorado.aaa.com on 11/9/2016.

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I made an appointment, and three days later we have a total of seven new tires. I will continue to keep my subscription for many years to come thanks to your handy information.

Jim and Karen Fischer | Bloomington, Minnesota

I'm glad to hear this; it makes my day when this column helps people. Thanks for writing, and for others out there, check the NHTSA site regularly.

Low-Voltage Concerns

Q I keep hearing of the dangers of voltage, sometimes below 104, at older RV parks. We have a 2016 Tiffin Allegro with a Surge Guard that I understand provides protection for high-voltage spikes, but I don't know about low voltage. Several people recommend upgrading to a Progressive Industries EMS. As a newbie that understands little about electrical components, I'm somewhat confused. Is an upgrade overkill?

Lou Martin | Via email

A Progressive Industries' top-of-the-line model does have over- and under-voltage protection. It is being discontinued, and a new model is coming out, so you might be able to save some money if you get the older model. Whether you need it depends a lot on when and where you use your motorhome. If you frequently connect to older campground wiring, especially in hot weather when everybody is running their air conditioners, this could be a good investment. You should at least be using a gauge that monitors voltage, and check it before hooking up to shorepower. **M**

Have a Tech Question?**Contact our experts:**

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

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Walk On The Wild Side

Interspecies interactions can make for lifelong memories

By Alan Rider

A few years back, I packed up my rig and motored all the way to Southern California for one simple reason: I was looking to get a big, wet kiss. Now, before you go off thinking I'm some sort of love-starved loony, you might want to inquire just who it was I was so intent on smooching: The short answer is that it was an exotic, heavyset girl named Allua.

Okay, truth be told, Allua is a snow-white, 2,000-pound beluga whale that makes her home at SeaWorld San Diego (seaworldparks.com/en/seaworld-sandiego). We were brought together by the park's Beluga Interaction Program, where the highlight of the 20-minute session is when the whales — which always seem to be smiling like they're up to something, now that I think about it — swim up to plant a great big wet one on each participant's cheek. And, let me tell you, kisses don't come any bigger and wetter than hers.

While I'm unlikely to forget her cold, rubbery lips, I can tell you that this is just one of the memorable interspecies interactions I've had over the years. And the best part is that you can have them, too.

That's because SeaWorld's beluga love fest is just one example of the many animal encounter programs out there.

Take the Backstage Penguin Pass and Sea Otter Experience programs at New Orleans' Audubon Aquarium of the Americas (800-774-7394, www.audubon.org),

audubonnatureinstitute.org/aquarium), for example. I've waddled around with endangered African penguins here, and would go back to do a meet-and-greet with the otters in a heartbeat.

Then there was the Dolphin Discovery program at the Dolphin Connection (888-251-3674, www.dolphinconnection.com) in the Florida Keys. Rubbing the smooth bellies of Atlantic bottlenose dolphins was fun, but being able to actually swim with them in their tropical lagoon is an experience I won't soon forget.

I've had my share of adventures with land-based creatures too. Like having an exclusive audience with the cheetahs at Winston, Oregon's Wildlife Safari (541-679-6761, www.wildlifesafari.net). Heck, my son — a longtime cheetah lover — even has a work of art

on his wall painted by the paws of one of these lithe cats. Lions and tigers and bears (oh my!), plus giraffes, hippos and elephants are all waiting to meet you on your visit here.

Look, the point of telling you this is simple: I encourage you to take advantage of these programs wherever you find them. You name the critter, and odds are some zoo or aquarium offers an experience that will allow you to meet them face to furry little face. Seek them out online, or just check into it on your next visit, and I think you'll be surprised with what you find.

The one thing all these animal encounter programs have in common is that they allow us to mingle with species we're unlikely to even see anywhere else. Which is a neat thing in and of itself.

Then there's the more metaphysical aspect. Namely, that they allow you to look into the eyes of another sentient being, and know that they're looking back as curious about you as you are about them.

It is largely immaterial where you go and which creatures you choose. What matters most is that you take the time to have a true interspecies interaction, however brief.

Ultimately, you can't help but be a richer person for having done so. Which, when it comes right down to it, is sort of the reason we're all out here traveling along The Road Ahead. **M**

“ You name the critter, and odds are some zoo or aquarium offers an experience that will allow you to meet them face to furry little face. ”

Animal Magnetism ☺

The Backstage Penguin Pass at Audubon Aquarium allows visitors to meet endangered African penguins up close and personal. The author gets his smooch from Allua, a 1-ton beluga whale, at SeaWorld.



Photos: courtesy Audubon Aquarium / SeaWorld San Diego



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