

10 NEW CLASS C'S THAT MAKE THE GRADE

RV OOPS
AWARDS 2017

MotorHome

Travel, Tech, Lifestyle – For the RV Enthusiast

December 2017

PLEASURE CRUISE

TESTING THE PLATEAU TS

BRAKE TIME
SAFELY STOPPING
A DINGHY

**WEATHER
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The road climbing up Tucson's Mount Lemmon leads through a variety of ecosystems and a diverse collection of flora and fauna [see page 18].



These new 2018 Class C motorhomes offer the comforts of a Class A on a more familiar driving platform. Pg. 46

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ON THE COVER

The easy-to-manuever 2018 Pleasure-Way Plateau TS Class B made our test trip around the Lake Huron, Ontario, Canada, area rather enjoyable [see test on page 40]. Photo by Howard J. Elmer.



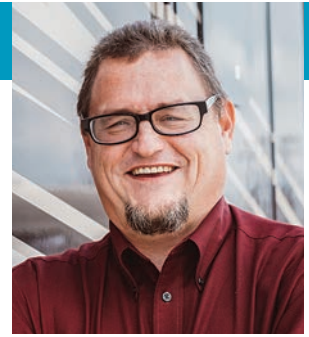


Photo: Mercedes Morgan Photography

By Kristopher Bunker

Check It Twice

Every year while I was growing up, as the holiday season approached I would watch the mailbox even more vigilantly than usual. I was looking for something that to me, officially kicked off the festivities. And, after what seemed like months and months of waiting (it wasn't), it would arrive. My early holiday gift: the Sears Wish Book catalog. Hundreds upon hundreds of pages of the latest in fashion, housewares, tools and the like. But of course, I wasn't interested in so much practical bric-a-brac; I was looking for something shinier and of much more use to a curious tot. I was looking for the toy section.

And, look I did. I spent hours thumbing through the pages, keeping careful notes about brand names, page numbers, and even batteries and accessories that were sold separately. I selected my favorites of the lot, and was sure to formulate a concise list of what I considered an acceptable haul from both my mom and dad, and also the guy in the red suit. Perusing that catalog always felt like a rite of passage each year.

And now, more decades later than I'd like to admit, I find that things haven't changed much. On the whole, most of us still love catalogs, especially at a time of the year when "lists" are so in vogue.

And who are we to deprive our readers — and ourselves — of such a holiday treat? This month's issue contains two such lists we know you'll find helpful in your shopping duties year-round. Perhaps you're hoping to find a new dinghy-braking system under your tree this year. To learn which one suits your needs best, you should turn to "Towing Safely," beginning on page 34, before adding one to your list. We discuss the ins and outs of the best auxiliary systems available, portable and permanently mounted. Or, if you find yourself in the market for an easy-to-handle Class C motorhome, check out "C's the Day," beginning on page 46. We take a close

look at some of the most exciting new-for-2018 models, featuring floorplans and amenities that have evolved well beyond their brethren from even a year ago.

But the fun doesn't stop there. This year the staff at *MotorHome* has selected some of our favorite products perfect for motorhome owners, and we have created an online catalog of our very own.

The 2017 Gift Guide, available at giftguide.motorhome.com, features shopping information on more than two dozen products, organized in varying price ranges, and including information on where and how to buy. It's the ultimate in one-stop shopping, and we hope you'll enjoy learning more about these fun new products.

Various facsimiles of the Wish Book pop up from time to time, sometimes as leaflets, sometimes a bit more substantial, but always a mere shell of what it used to be. We hope that our magazine — and the online gift guide — help restore today some of the whimsical magic those catalogs delivered so many years ago. **M**

Contributors | What RV-Related Gift Would You Like to Receive?



Morey Edelman A pair of Motorola T100 Talkabout 22-channel two-way radios (\$34.99) for when you're out of cellphone range and need your partner to help you get camped. These colorful radios have a range of up to 16 miles.



Ann Eichenmuller A Dometic Six-Bottle Wine Chiller (\$299.99), www.campingworld.com/shopping/item/6-bottle-wine-chamber/58117. This wine fridge has vibration-free electronics and is ready for connection to 12-volt DC or 110-volt AC power.



Emily Fagan A Magma nesting cookware set (\$319), www.campingworld.com/shopping/item/magma-10-piece-nesting-stainless-steel-induction-cookware-set-with-ceramica-non-stick/87907; and for "no campfire" zones, an LP-gas campfire ring (\$219.95), www.campingworld.com/shopping/item/camp-chef-del-rio-fire-pit/82520.



E. Don Smith When you spend a lot of time outdoors in a motorhome you need a great LED flashlight. The Olight R50 Pro Seeker (\$139.95) is rechargeable and has an included USB cable; <https://olightworld.com/led-flashlights/safety-and-self-defense/olight-r50-pro-seeker>.



Rosanne Wagstaff A multifunctional electric pressure cooker from Instant Pot (\$79.99-\$159.95) for the galley. These multiuse appliances are designed with a microprocessor and are programmable; <http://instantpot.com>.



Dawn Wilson Living on the road in my RV photographing wildlife means I am constantly in my hiking boots. A pair of LOWA Renegade GTX Mid hiking boots (\$230), www.lowaboats.com/womens/hiking/renegade-gtx%2C%2EAE-mid-ws.

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What steps do you take to protect your motorhome (and dinghy vehicle) from severe weather, both at the RV park and while on the road?

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



Feeling Helpless

We're from northern New Mexico. Recently we were caught in a horrific storm in Lamar, Colorado. It was our first night of a month-long trip to the East Coast to visit family. First the gale-force winds started, then the torrential rains, then the hail. The whole storm lasted an hour at maximum intensity. The hail was golf-ball size and came down for 20 minutes. We were in open space and the suddenness of the storm made it impossible to do anything but hunker down. The damage from the hail was primarily to the canvas toppers and the skylight. That's it on the coach. Though it sounded like rocks hitting our windows, they survived unscathed.

The little Honda Fit we were towing didn't make out so well, as it was left with about 20 pockmarks on the top and hood. I don't see what we could have done differently, even if we had some warning. These fiberglass coaches can take a beating. The car?

Well, that's what happens in a hail storm. The damage didn't affect its function, just its cosmetics, which can be fixed.

The worst thing was how scary it was and how helpless we felt during the storm. It was extreme for sure.

Peter J. Nagle | Ojo Caliente, New Mexico

Knowledge is Power

My wife and I have been RVers for 12 years. About 18 months ago we decided to sell our stick house and currently live in our 44-foot Class A diesel pusher in the Daytona Beach, Florida, area. We both work full-time jobs and take weekend trips often, and longer trips annually. My 89-year-old mother-in-law lives alone nearby. Last year, as hurricane Matthew grew in intensity off the coast of Florida with 130 mph winds predicted, we decided to pack up our home-on-wheels (with mom in tow) and head inland toward Atlanta, Georgia. We ended up in Bremen, Georgia, about 50 miles west of Atlanta when the storm was hitting our home area. Our plan worked perfectly, as we

never saw any rain or wind in the four days we were away, and my mother-in-law was excited to go on an unexpected road trip.

No matter where we are, I am always aware of the weather. With today's technology, it is easy to do. Several years ago, we were in eastern Arkansas and noticed the skies getting dark and ominous. We pulled off the road and, after checking the radar on my smartphone, I could see a line of heavy rain heading our way. I positioned the motorhome next to an empty building and waited out the storm. After about 45 minutes, we were back on the road again.

My best advice to new RVers is to be aware of the weather. Look at radar websites, and consult the Weather Channel for the forecast in the area you are heading. You don't have to obsess about it, but it is all part of planning when you travel by RV. I always build an extra day into our schedule when we are on an extended trip, "just in case." Better safe than sorry. If you are at an RV park, don't be afraid to get

Featured Letter

Hit the Road

We were staying in Indianapolis at a campground with no shelters and were worried about severe weather with hail and tornado activity coming our way. We pulled the slides in and unhooked our dinghy. We watched the radar on our smartphone and decided to head west, away from the storm in our dinghy, then go south to circle around the severe weather. On our return, we encountered more than 6 inches of pea-size hail on the expressway. The coach didn't sustain any damage, but it sure was an interesting evening.

Pete Beane | Kewaunee, Wisconsin



advice from your neighbors. RVers are probably the friendliest people you'll find in your travels.

Ray and Jayne Briggs | Daytona Beach, Florida

Errata

In our feature on tire-pressure monitoring systems ("The Air In There") in the September issue, we incorrectly stated the sensors on the EEZ RV Products EezTire TPMS 515 System utilize a lithium-ion battery. Though the monitor does use such a battery, the sensors are powered by CR1632 batteries. *MotorHome* regrets the error.

Let There Be Dark

My husband and I just returned from almost two months on the road, staying in a variety of campgrounds. We noticed a disturbing trend that we would love to see addressed in *MotorHome*. For us, one of the joys of RVing is enjoying the night skies. Suddenly it seems like every rig

is sporting one or more strings of "decorative" lights, many of which are very bright and left on all night. These extra lights are a deterrent to enjoying the stars and the natural settings. I suggest that campgrounds start posting "dark hours" to coincide with "quiet hours." That would do a lot to bring back the camping environment many of us are seeking.

Rebecca Taber | Oro Valley, Arizona

Question of the Month

What are your thoughts on decorative awning lights at RV parks and campgrounds? Are they whimsical conversation starters, or light-polluting nuisances? Have you ever had to ask a campground neighbor to turn theirs off? And do you agree that a "dark hours" rule is a fitting compromise?

Send your comments to:

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



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ESCAPES

One Cool Cooler ➔
New dual-zone Dometic offers 80-quart capacity, plus deep-freezing and Wi-Fi capabilities. [pg. 14](#)



12 ROAD FOODIE | 14 WHEELS & GEAR | 16 CROSSROADS



A Slice of RV History

A museum near Old Route 66 celebrates the early days of RVing

By Rosanne Wagstaff

Taking the great American road trip has been a passion for generations, and what better way to travel than in a motorhome? The Jack Sisemore Traveland RV Museum in Amarillo, Texas, is a fun walk through the evolution of today's homes-on-wheels. The personal collection of 15 motorhomes and travel trailers includes a 1921 Ford Lamsteed Kampkar, one of only five produced. Reminiscent of today's RVs, the Kampkar's foldout sides and tent-type toppers transform passenger seating into sleeping quarters. "Happy Max," the 1948 Flexible Clipper Bus (shown above) featured in the movie "RV" starring Robin Williams, is the showroom celebrity. Not to be outdone, the first-built Itasca prototype boasts 6,000 original miles and like-new condition. And who

knew that military vehicle builder, FMC, produced luxury coaches when the defense industry lagged? A 1976 FMC motor coach previously owned by cosmetics industry leader, Max Factor Jr., pays tribute to this piece of motorhome history.

Visitors are invited to step inside the RVs and experience the stories behind these vintage wheeled homes. Stroll back to the past through "campsites" decked out with antique lanterns, fishing poles and camping gear. A collection of historic dirt and street bikes is an added bonus for motorcycle enthusiasts. The 7,000-square-foot museum, tucked behind Mr. Sisemore's RV dealership, is free and welcoming. Enter the sales office and a staff member will direct you to the classic collection.

For more information, call 877-885-2751, or visit www.rvmuseum.net.

By Bobbie Hasselbring

Celebrate Cranberries

The fruit most associated with the winter holiday season is the cranberry. We eat cranberries jellied or fresh and whole as a tangy side dish alongside celebratory turkey, beef and pork. We put dried cranberries into stuffing and baked goods. And, around our house, we use cranberries to create an amazing frozen salad.

Cranberries are not only delicious, they're little health powerhouses. They're high in vitamin C, manganese and fiber. They're also rich in phytonutrients, especially antioxidants that help protect against cell damage associated with heart disease, cancer and other diseases. Some health authorities believe drinking cranberry juice helps prevent urinary tract infections.

These berries have an interesting history. Related to blueberries and huckleberries, cranberries are North American natives. Thousands of years ago, glaciers receded, carving out depressions that filled with sand and created perfect wetland bogs for growing cranberries.

Native American tribes made cranberries an integral part of their diets. They ate cranberries fresh, ground or mashed with cornmeal, and baked them into bread. They made pemmican, a winter survival ration, with cranberries mixed with wild game and melted fat. They added honey or maple sugar to sweeten the tart berries. They also used cranberries as medicine — as poultice to draw out poison and as a tea to calm the nerves.

In the 1600s, Native Americans introduced European Pilgrims to cranberries. Dutch and German settlers called them "crane-berries," perhaps because cranes ate them or because the blossom resembles the head and neck of a crane. Over time, the name was shortened to cranberry.

Because of their high vitamin C content, American sailors carried cranberries onboard ships. They kept them fresh in barrels of water and ate them to prevent scurvy.

In 1930, Ocean Spray, now a cooperative of more than 700 cranberry farmers, was formed. The company created a wide range of cranberry products like apple-cranberry juice and sweetened, dried cranberries, and dramatically increased demand for cranberries. Today, Americans eat nearly 400 million pounds of cranberries annually.

A longtime holiday tradition around our house is cranberry ice. It's a frozen cranberry concoction that's easy to make and



Above: This youngster enjoys trying her first fresh cranberry.

can be eaten as a side dish, salad or even dessert.

The recipe comes from Jeanne McLaughlin's "On a Shoestring: My Mom's Pie Kitchen." Jeanne ran a restaurant called My Mom's Pies, in Long Beach, Washington, on the Long Beach Peninsula. It was a local place selling dishes like chili, meatloaf and clam chowder. It was famous for melt-in-your-mouth flaky pies — and this amazing cranberry ice.

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

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

CRANBERRY ICE

Recipe by Jeanne McLaughlin, "On a Shoestring: My Mom's Pie Kitchen" (out of print).

- 2 15-ounce cans jellied cranberry sauce
- 3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice (if bottled, use 1½ tablespoons)

Topping

- 1 cup heavy cream, whipped
- ¼ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ cup powdered sugar

► Blend cranberry sauce and lemon juice in blender and put mixture into an 8-by-8-inch glass pan.

Combine whipped cream, mayonnaise and powdered sugar with a wire whisk.

Top cranberry mixture with the whipped cream mixture and freeze.

When frozen, cut into squares.



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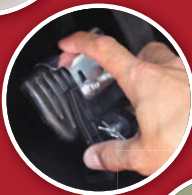
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Level With Me

To make keeping an eye on tank levels easier than ever, Garnet Instruments Limited has announced its new 709-BTP3 RV tank monitor. This new gauge features Bluetooth wireless technology, which allows owners to check their motorhome's tank levels via their smartphone or tablet thanks to a free downloadable app available on the App store and Google Play. The 709-BTP3 gauge monitors battery voltage, freshwater and holding tanks, and connects to the LP-gas sensor, plus it includes a water pump switch. The 709-BTP3 is accurate to $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch, according to the company, and only requires two wires to connect the sensors to the display. The sensors adhere externally to the holding tanks, so there is no impact from sewage buildup on the sensors, resulting in a more accurate reading. The sensors are designed to be shortened with the option to stack two sensors for larger tanks. MSRP: \$449.

Garnet Instruments | 800-617-7384, www.rvgauge.com

Road Warriors

DICA has rolled out a new jack pad product line for RVs. The Road-Warrior jack pads are constructed of thermoplastic material to provide 100 percent unbreakable support and, because they are waterproof and chemical-resistant, they won't absorb moisture, crack or splinter like wood blocks or jack pads, according to the company. RoadWarrior jacks are available in 12-, 15- and 18-inch diameter options with rated capacities from 25,000 to 50,000 pounds. The jack pads are designed to safely spread the load over the ground and prevent damage to paved surfaces, keeping the jacks from sinking into soft ground and providing a stable platform. Comfortable TuffGrip handles and lightweight construction make them easy to handle and store. MSRP: \$39.99 (12-inch), \$49.99 (15-inch) and \$69.99 (18-inch).

DICA | 844-286-7899, www.rvjackpads.com



Dual-Zone Dometic

Dometic has introduced the CFX-75DZW dual-zone capacity portable cooler that can be controlled via a smart device. With an overall capacity of 80 quarts, the CFX-75DZW provides enough space to fit up to 113 cans of your favorite beverage. The cooler is outfitted with two separate thermostats, meaning it can be utilized as a freezer, refrigerator or both. Temperatures can be set as low as a deep-freezing minus 7 degrees and up to 50 degrees Fahrenheit. The CFX-75DZW includes an intelligent automatic turbo cooler for fast initial cool down and temperature memory function for added convenience. The unit has been designed to provide enhanced quiet cooling performance regardless of ambient temperature, and has been fitted with reinforced corners, stainless-steel hinges and a robust lid lining for effective portable performance. MSRP \$999.99.

Dometic | 800-366-3842, www.dometic.com

Cover Coverage

A motorhome cover is a great way to protect your coach from the elements, but what protects the cover itself? Mold & Mildew Stain Remover Cleaner from Iosso Products is formulated for cleaning covers, awnings, tents and tarps, indoor and outdoor furniture cushions, carpeting and even patio umbrellas, prolonging the fabric's life and keeping things looking good. Mold & Mildew Stain Remover Cleaner is designed to also remove algae, bird and insect droppings, leaf tannins, dirt, grease, oil, and even many food and drink stains. Unlike harsh chemical cleaning agents, the company claims that Mold & Mildew Stain Remover Cleaner is gentle on the skin and has no harsh vapors, plus it's biodegradable and environmentally friendly. The cleaner doesn't contain bleach or chlorine, so it won't harm fabrics or alter their colors, according to the company. One small jar of Iosso Products' Mold & Mildew Stain Remover Cleaner makes 3 gallons of solution (enough to cover 150 square feet). MSRP: \$15.25; a 65-ounce tub yields 16 gallons of solution, covers 2,400 square feet and has an MSRP of \$75.



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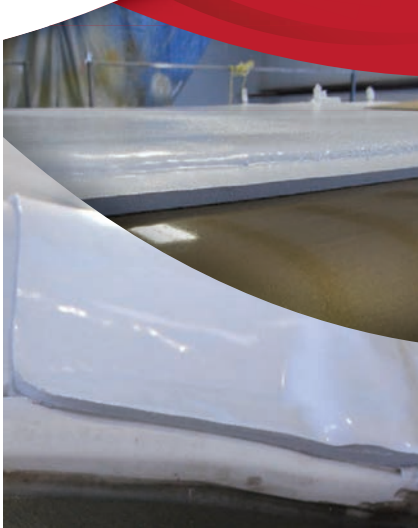
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ESCAPES CROSSROADS

Columbus, Indiana

Cummins Rebrands Onan Generators



In order to unify its brand strategy across its Power Systems business segment, Cummins Inc. has repositioned the popular Cummins Onan generator product line to now be included under the Cummins brand in the RV market. As a result, the Cummins and Cummins Power Generation brands will be retired.

"Looking to unify Cummins into one cohesive, brand, we decided that consolidating both products (engines and generators) into the Cummins RV family only strengthens the brand and more uniformly speaks to our manufacturers and consumers," said Jodie Wilson, marketing director at Cummins. "The brand changing will not affect product or service offerings, but will help us to continue on our promise of delivering dependability across the globe."

Onan will now be repositioned as an RV product line, with its new website and social media platforms serving as tools for RVers across the country to find relevant information like product specs and the sales and service locator. Cummins will also be permanently changing all Fun Roads branding to Cummins RV, meaning the Fun Roads brand will also be retired.

For more information, call 800-286-6467 or visit rv.cummins.com.

Fort Myers, Florida


Edison & Ford Winter Estates

Thomas Edison purchased property along the Caloosahatchee River in Fort Myers, Florida, to build a winter retreat in 1885. Within a year, he built the "Seminole Lodge" to spend his winters away from the cold New Jersey weather. Although Edison built his estate for winter relaxation, he was constantly working and later constructed a laboratory on his property to research botanical sources for rubber. His good friend, Henry Ford, purchased an adjacent home in 1916 to spend a couple of weeks each winter with Edison. They were such good friends that Ford gifted the initial production Model A to Edison in 1928. This car is still at the site and on display in the site's museum.

Edison Ford & Winter Estates is open every day except Thanksgiving and Christmas. There is an excellent museum showing many of Edison's inventions, the history of Ford's automobile development and displays

depicting Edison's quest for a source of rubber that could be grown in the United States. There are also tours of both Edison's and Ford's houses, and Edison's laboratory. The site includes more than 20 acres of botanical gardens, including trees that Edison planted 90 years ago.

Tickets for the site and museum can be purchased upon arrival or online. Parking is available for large motorhomes.

For more information, call 239-334-7419 or visit www.edisonfordwinterestates.org. — *Morey Edelman* 

Below: Tours of the Edison & Ford Winter Estates include stops at the museum and Edison's guest house.





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A bighorn ram relaxes in the morning sun at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum near Saguario National Park.

Animal Encounters

Visitors can discover a variety of wildlife among Arizona's varied desert landscapes

By Emily Fagan

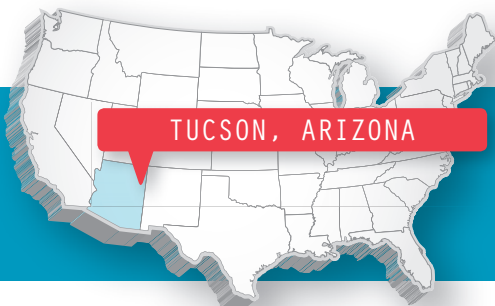
During our many winters in the Arizona desert, we have discovered that not only can we mingle with lots of fellow RV snowbirds, but there are all kinds of other birds and wildlife to spend time with as well. We are animal lovers, and we've found some priceless spots to wander into the desert or tiptoe down to the water's edge to view water birds, bobcats, raptors, and even wild horses and parrots.

To enjoy a little wildlife around the rig, we like to hang out a hummingbird feeder. A simple mixture of one part ordinary table sugar and four parts water attracts them within a few hours. We use a window-mounted feeder that attaches to the RV window with suction cups. This makes it easy to watch their antics through the glass from inside the cozy warmth of the RV. In desert settings, we find that a very shallow dish of water placed on the ground a short distance from

the rig also attracts all kinds of birds and furry friends, from Gambel's quail to roadrunners to cardinals and chipmunks.

One of the easiest places for viewing Arizona's native animals is at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson. Although these animals aren't living in the wild, their beautiful indoor and outdoor habitats and walk-in aviaries have been meticulously designed to resemble natural settings, and all of Arizona's animals — from mountain lions to coyotes and big horn sheep — can be spotted between the rocks and underbrush.

Twice a day, all winter long, this museum hosts a Raptor Free Flight show where raptors, owls and ravens fly by at close range while trainers hold out treats for them. We were thrilled to stand with a small crowd of visitors and watch a ranger release several birds to get their exercise and then return for a tasty morsel. A great horned owl flew silently just overhead, almost touching our upturned faces with its wingtips, and then grabbed a snack from the ranger's outstretched hand and took it to a nearby tree branch to savor at leisure.



TUCSON, ARIZONA

← The Wild Side

One of the easiest places for viewing Arizona's native animals is the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson. Follow Arizona Interstate 19 to the Ajo exit westbound. Follow Ajo Way until you reach Kinney Road (about 8 miles) and turn right. Follow Kinney Road for 7.5 miles and the Desert Museum will be on your left.



From far left: Hanging a hummingbird feeder filled with one-part sugar to four-parts water on or near your motorhome is a fun way to attract these colorful and feisty little birds. A great-blue heron waits patiently for its catch of the day at Blue Point Day Use Area in Tonto National Forest, 20 miles northeast of Mesa.

We arrived at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum just as it opened in the morning. This was an optimal time to go because all the animals were out and about eating breakfast, so they were visible in their enclosures. An hour later, once they had eaten their fill, many of them vanished because they laid down for a nap behind a tree or a rock and were impossible to see.

To see some of these critters in the wild, we took a drive along the stunningly beautiful Bush Highway that runs beside the Salt River between Fountain Hills and Mesa on the east side of Phoenix. There are many overlooks and National Forest day-use areas along the Bush Highway, and simply parking at any of them and walking down to the river can yield an exciting animal encounter.

At the Blue Point Day Use Area we hiked alongside the river and watched a great blue heron fishing. A little farther down the trail a friend of ours came face to face with a herd of bighorn sheep. Coon Bluff Recreation Area (seasonal overnight camping) is favored by cormorants as they stand

on rocks in the river for hours with their wings outstretched to dry off after they've been fishing in the water. Flocks of coots and ducks float about on the water's surface like little boats, leaving a small wake behind.

As we were busy watching these water birds at Coon Bluff, we heard the thunder of hooves behind us and looked up to see a herd of wild horses running past. What a thrill! This herd has been hanging around the Salt River for decades, and one rumor is that they are descended from the Native American's mustangs of long ago.

Around the corner at the Phon D Sutton Recreation Area (day-use only), I had the most extraordinary encounter with these unusual horses when I came across a small group of them grazing by the water's edge. A beautiful, leggy brown colt was with its white mother, nuzzling her and occasionally lying down in the grass near her to rest. I watched these horses interacting with each other at close range for nearly an hour.

The Phon D Sutton Recreation Area is at the confluence of the Salt River

and the Verde River, two of Arizona's major rivers, and we have watched bald eagles soaring overhead and we've seen snowy egrets and great egrets dancing together in the water while snatching fish from the depths with their long beaks. Very early one morning, before the sun was up, we spotted a bobcat among the rocks when it came down to the river for a drink.

Like the Salt River wild horses (which are probably more feral than wild), there is a resident flock of wild parrots in the Phoenix area that most likely originated with a few pet birds that flew the coop. These gorgeous little pink-and-green parrots are peach-faced lovebirds whose native home is in Africa. They like it hot and dry, so Phoenix is an ideal home for them, and they've discovered that the nesting holes pecked out of the stately saguaro cactus by flickers, native Sonoran Desert woodpeckers, can make a wonderful parrot home too.

Spotting a peach-faced lovebird peeking out of a saguaro cactus is

Huge flocks of sandhill cranes take up residence near Willcox, Arizona, and are easily seen at Whitewater Draw, especially at dawn or dusk.



GETAWAY

ARIZONA WILDLIFE

a sheer delight, and there are a few places they like to congregate. One area is the neighborhood in Scottsdale between Tatum and Scottsdale roads and between Cactus and Thunderbird roads. Another is in the trees outside of Albertsons supermarket on North Power Road in Mesa.

These little guys are very spirited and noisy, and they like the birdseed that residents put out in feeders. We find them by listening for their high-pitched squeals and looking for the flashes of their bright-green feathers as they fly from palm tree to cactus in the neighborhoods.

A native wild bird that residents have helped out a bit and made very easy to watch is the burrowing owl. Despite being fine flyers, these guys like to live in holes in the ground close to their rodent prey. In the city of Gilbert, southeast of Phoenix, owl lovers have installed burrowing owl-sized pipes at Zanjero Park next to the farm fields where the birds like



Above, from left: The Arizona-Sonora Museum adopts orphaned mountain lions. A wild horse gallops near Bush Highway east of Phoenix. A javelina saunters past at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum. Also at the museum, a great horned owl enjoys a treat during the Raptor Free Flight show.

to dine. These happy owls hunt mice in farmers' fields by night and lounge around at their human-supplied burrows by day. What a life!

Unlike other animals, there's no need to set an alarm clock to get a close-up view of the burrowing owls. We took a leisurely stroll down the

paved park path near noon and met a pair of owls at the entrance of almost every burrow in the park. We had to laugh as we saw one pair after another standing outside their homes because they looked like little old couples sitting on their front stoops in the city, watching the world go by.

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Another fabulous area in Gilbert for wildlife watching is the Riparian Preserve at Water Ranch. This is a series of very large effluent ponds where wastewater goes through a natural filtration process as it passes through the dense soil. Animals and birds love these ponds, so the town has built a series of walking trails all through the area, along with viewing stations. These viewing stations are chest-high walls you can hide behind

and peer over to watch the animals without them knowing you are there.

Photographers, joggers and nature lovers flock to this little watery oasis of nature in the middle of the desert suburbs. Early morning is best for viewing the animals, as that is the time they are most active. I was floored to stand right below a Harris's hawk as it scanned the scene from a tree branch high above me. It didn't seem too concerned about my presence

and simply stared down at me as I approached.

Out in the ponds we saw a showdown between several snowy egrets and great egrets as they sorted out their pecking order and decided who could stand where to do their morning fishing. Meanwhile several great-blue herons quietly stole one big fish after another out of the water.

Another form of wildlife watching at Water Ranch is the photographers.

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Coyotes can be found all over Arizona, and we have even spotted them in the streets on the desert fringes of the urban world of Scottsdale. Beautiful and remote Roosevelt Lake, about an hour east of Phoenix, is home to several herds of coyotes, and while staying out there, we laid awake in bed wide eyed as we listened to their haunting cries. On one early morning walk at the Windy Hill Recreation Area at the lake, we spotted a coyote just a few feet from us as it crossed the road ahead.

Southeast of Tucson, a special gathering of sandhill cranes takes place every winter near Willcox — the Wings Over Willcox Festival (January 11-18, 2018). These enormous and raucous birds take over the lake at Whitewater Draw by the thousands. We were blown away by the cacophony of noise these birds make as they call to each other over huge distances in the air and chat among themselves while

standing near the water.

Dawn and dusk are when they are most rowdy. Before the sun rises each morning, they take to the sky in huge groups, and the flurry of flapping wings and splashing feet is a thrill to see. Up in the sky, they fly in ragtag formations, either stringing out in a line or forming a “V” or “Y” shape of some kind. Flock after flock flies by as they commute from their overnight resting area by the lake out into the farm fields where they forage all day.

After sunset, when the sky is a vivid orange, they commute back home to their roosting area on the water’s edge. As each flock flies into view, a shout of welcome goes up from the birds that are already home as they exuberantly greet the incoming group with a riotous commotion. Wings flap wildly and feet flail on the water as the arriving birds find their landing spots. The din can be heard far and wide as each bird takes a place near its friends to stand on one foot and tuck its head under its wing for the night.

For those of us who are snowbirds of the RVing variety, all of these encounters with Arizona’s special

wildlife are enchanting. If you are an animal lover and Arizona is on your horizon for winter, check out a few of these remarkable spots and enjoy the squawks, squeaks and scampering feet of Arizona’s wild winter residents. **M**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Apache Wells RV Resort

480-832-4324, <http://www.cal-am.com/resorts/apache-wells/>

Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum

520-883-1380, www.desertmuseum.org

Desert Shadows RV Resort

800-595-7290, www.phoenixrvresorts.com

Far Horizons RV Resort

520-296-1234, www.tucsonvillage.com

Good Life RV Resort

480-832-4990, www.cal-am.com/resorts/good-life

Mesa Regal RV Resort

480-830-2821, www.cal-am.com/resorts/mesa-regal

Rincon Country RV Resorts

888-401-8989 (East); 800-782-7275 (West), www.rinconcountry.com

Sun Life RV Resort

480-981-9500, www.cal-am.com/resorts/sun-life

Wings Over Willcox Birding & Nature Festival

520-384-2272, www.wingsoverwillcox.com

Arizona is home to a variety of ecosystems, from lush Sonoran desert to rich pine forests, and several can be found on the road that climbs up Tucson’s Mount Lemmon.



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By Dawn Wilson

WEATHERING HEIGHTS

October in either in these regions. But regardless of what the calendar says, dealing with an unexpected abundance of the white stuff is the same in December as it is in late spring.

After the snow stopped about 40 hours later, we pulled out our arsenal of brooms, shovels, and wipers and went to work helping other RVers clean off their roofs and dig out their vehicles.

It is tough to give up precious storage space in our motorhome for shovels and other tools that might only be used a few times a year, but ultimately it is best to have the right tools to keep our coach and us safe from the elements.

One of the biggest challenges of a spring storm in the Rockies, or other places throughout the U.S. that experience adverse shoulder-season weather conditions, is that the snow is heavy and wet. This can potentially lead to damage on the motorhome roofs, slideouts and awnings. And as the snow begins to melt, it may start to seep into the seams on the roof and slideout seals.

So, my first tip is to consider if you can live without the extra space and retract the motorhome's slideouts when you hear about incoming weather.

Snow can fall at nearly any time; here's what you need to avoid disaster in camp and experience a winter wonderland



It was a beautiful May morning when I checked the weather forecast. It was calling for snow — 3 feet of snow. The snow would start later that afternoon and continue for the next two days.

We were in our 39-foot Fleetwood Discovery motorhome parked in a campground in Estes Park, Colorado. We were ready for the onslaught of the heavy, wet snow typical of the Rocky Mountains as we enjoy traveling in these regions. Snow in May is not

uncommon in Colorado, but that much snow caught several RV owners in the campground off guard, especially the ones who just traveled to Colorado from warmer, southern climates.

This type of seemingly unexpected weather may also be experienced in the higher elevations of Idaho, Utah, Montana, Washington and Oregon, and the northern states bordering Canada, such as Minnesota and North Dakota. It isn't uncommon for snow to start falling in late September or early



Next, you need a way to reach the higher portions of your motorhome. Some motorhomes have ladders on the back, some don't. Either way, you need something that you can use to reach above a slideout should you decide to leave those open during a storm.

There are a variety of ladder options out there. Ideally, you should have a ladder with nonslip grips on the steps but a good pair of snow or hiking boots will work too to prevent slipping as well as keep your feet warm and dry.

We keep an 8-foot, lightweight, fiberglass ladder strapped to the permanent ladder on the back of our motorhome while traveling, and then

tuck it under the coach while parked. The portable ladder gives us the option of moving it around the motorhome so we can reach any area, including the slides, rather than just those in arm's length from the roof. Walking on a wet or snow-covered roof can be very dangerous; using a ladder and reaching across from the sides is much safer.

You will also need tools and supplies for removing the snow. We keep a snow shovel in the basement storage area of our motorhome. It has come in very handy for shoveling a path through the snow, pushing heavier snow off of the roof, digging out the

vehicle and, on a few rare occasions, for shoveling dirt and sand out from under our dinghy-vehicle's tires when navigating off the beaten path. A snow shovel, such as the Backcountry Shovel from www.backcountry.com, is an excellent option. Most of these shovels will telescope down to about 18 inches and are extremely lightweight.

Another must-have tool to remove snow is a brush and scraper combo device. This is a tool that can be used year-round. In addition to the smaller brush with scraper we keep in our dinghy, we also keep an adjustable brush with squeegee in the coach. This type of brush extends up to 72 inches and telescopes down to almost half that size for storing. The extra length will help you clear off snow in hard-to-reach areas while also giving you a tool for cleaning windshields and higher areas of your motorhome throughout the year. The Adjust-a-Brush Quick Connect Brush System with Pole from Camping World is a good option.

Remember to stand your tools upright if the snow is still falling. You



Left: A long-handled brush and a snow shovel are valuable tools after the snow has fallen. Make sure they're easily accessible in the motorhome's basement storage for quick retrieval.

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might risk the chance of not finding your scraper and shovel in the morning if you lay them down on the ground and head in for the night.

Sprinkle a little pet-friendly, biodegradable ice melt on the steps to your motorhome and around the base of the steps. Water may drip in this area and collect around the steps. It will turn to ice when the temperatures drop in the evening, so take precautions for allowing ice to form. There are many options available; we use Paw Thaw Ice Melt, available at Wal-Mart.

You also need to make sure that you and your traveling companions stay warm and safe in the cold and snowy conditions as the snow falls and during the cleanup phase after the snow stops.

When the ground is warm and then experiences a snowfall, the snow that hits the ground first will melt and turn to slush. If the temperatures drop, however, this slush or the coating of melted snow on the ground may become very icy.

Even if you winter along the Mexico border every year, you'll want to keep a warm layer of clothing in your motorhome. This includes boots with good traction on the soles, a warm and waterproof jacket, hat and gloves. It may not seem like a logical thing to travel with when you are heading to your summer destination, but in Colorado, as well as other states with high-altitude campgrounds, snow can happen any month of the year. I have even seen snow fall on the Fourth of July in the mountains in Colorado.

And finally, make sure you have some fun after shoveling all that snow away. A warm cup of hot chocolate is an option, as is building a snowman and dressing it up as a festive campground mascot. **M**

Dawn Wilson (www.dawnwilsonphotography.com) travels full-time in her motorhome documenting, writing about and photographing the wildlife and scenic landscapes of the U.S. Follow her on Facebook at www.facebook.com/DawnWilsonPhoto.



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WHAT'S THE DUMBEST THING YOU'VE DONE WHILE RVING?

In several of last year's RV Oops Awards, well-meaning folks were engaged in friendly conversation with RVers who were driving through a crowded parking lot, departing a campsite or hooking up a trailer, causing some serious damage. Their friendly interactions led to the RVers being distracted at exactly the wrong

time, when focus was required to complete a task.

Two of this year's mishaps illustrate another concern with well-meaning folks — their helpful actions actually caused the mishaps. I saved them for last in our list of 10 Dumb to Dumbest things because, well, they are pretty dumb!

DUMB THINGS

#10 Mice are nice ... outside. One of our camping neighbors, Ron, had left his motorhome for a few weeks in the fall. Upon his return, mouse droppings were scattered throughout the living areas, and some of the water lines were chewed through. Fortunately, he had turned off his outside tap.

Ron discovered mice had entered through a port where his motorhome's water hose came into a utility compartment. From there, they likely crawled into the basement and found their way into the motorhome's interior.

After vacuuming up the droppings and repairing the damaged water lines, Ron set traps, catching two little critters, which he released — outside.

Helpful hint: Check for small openings under your coach, especially where the water hose and TV cables enter. Mice can enter through an opening as small as ¼ inch, about the size of a pencil eraser. Pack the openings tightly with steel wool and spray with a mixture of peppermint oil and water, a proven mouse-repellent.

#9 Black-water shower. Jim and his wife had been boondocking in their Class C for a couple of days before arriving at an RV park. Friends had invited them to dinner, so they immediately spruced up upon arrival. Since he had some time before dinner, Jim decided to hook up the sewer hose to drain the black- and gray-water tanks. He got out the hose and inserted one end into the sewer drain. Holding the

HELPFUL HINT: In addition to a black-water valve, it's prudent to have a separate gate valve at the end of the discharge pipe, and to keep it closed when boondocking and in transit.

other end, he rotated the cap from the discharge pipe. WHOOSH! Black water shot out all over Jim, who didn't even try to attach the hose until the gusher decreased to a dribble. He sheepishly admitted he "forgot to close the black-water valve while they were dry camping" ... and added "we were late for dinner!"

#8 Step lightly. Night had fallen in the campground when Linda decided to leave the motorhome to bring in the tablecloth from the picnic table. Outside was pitch dark, as she did not want to attract moths to their door light. The step switch was set so that

the steps would extend when the door opens and retract when the door closes. It always worked that way, until that night. Linda opened the door and stepped down ... and farther down until she landed hard on the ground. Fortunately, her only injury was a bruised ankle, which took the brunt of the fall. The steps had remained retracted.

A local RV repair shop replaced a faulty door switch. Even though the steps now extend reliably when the door is opened, Linda follows the advice in the instruction manual: "Always look down to make sure the steps are extended before stepping out."



"ALWAYS LOOK DOWN TO MAKE SURE THE STEPS ARE EXTENDED BEFORE STEPPING OUT."

#7 Best-before date. Alf was driving his Class A along a freeway when BOOM, the sound of a cannon reverberated in the back of his coach. Pulling over, he found that one rear tire had exploded, throwing a chunk of rubber through the wheel well, damaging an interior cabinet. With his flashers on, he drove slowly to the nearest tire shop, where the salesman recommended he replace all six tires. "Why all six? The tread is like new," Alf asked. "Because they are 10 years old. Most tire manufacturers recommend changing them after six or seven years, regardless of tread wear."

Alf occasionally checked his tires for inflation, cracks and tread wear but never for age. He assumed that by using his motorhome only during the summer months, his tires should last longer. Not so, he learned from the salesman. "Tires that sit for extended periods, especially on damp ground and in direct sunlight, will deteriorate quicker than those used regularly."

HELPFUL HINT: A tire's age can be determined by the last four digits of the DOT code, for example: 4217. The first two digits refer to the week of manufacture and the last two digits refer to the year, in this case the 42nd week of 2017.

#6 Fill 'er up. When Fred decided to give up RVing, he sold his diesel pusher to a man who had described himself as a long-haul trucker. Following the transaction, he spent a couple of hours explaining all the systems. A few days later, Fred got a call from the buyer who said the coach had stalled. After some discussion, the reason became painfully clear: The

buyer had put gasoline rather than diesel fuel in the fuel tank. Perhaps the trucker got distracted at the fuel pump at exactly the wrong time?

Fred didn't know the extent of damages, and he certainly didn't think it was necessary to tell a trucker to put diesel in the fuel tank. Diesel fuel, unlike gasoline, acts as a lubricant for the fuel-injection system. Running a diesel engine on gasoline will cause the fuel pump to overheat and damage the fuel-injection system.

Surprisingly, no standard exists for the colors used on pump handles at fuel stations; however, diesel handles are usually green, yellow or black. If your vehicle's engine is diesel, the fuel cap should be labeled "DIESEL" as a reminder to check the pump before adding fuel.

DUMBER THINGS

#5 Blown with the wind. Jack and his wife were offered the use of his brother's Class C for a trip to the Palm Springs, California, area. Since they were novice RVers, Jack's brother carefully went through all the systems, including how to manually extend and retract the awning. Off they went for a week of RVing, with Jack driving the motorhome and his wife following in their car.

Arriving at their campsite on a sunny day, Jack decided to extend the awning to provide shade while they had dinner. Near the end of the week, with the awning still extended, they headed out in their car on a sightseeing trip. While gone, the wind picked up ... really picked up! When they returned, much to their horror, their awning with bent braces was upside down on the roof. Jack got some fellow campers to help him get it back down and secured to the side.

To make things right with his brother, he arranged with an RV dealer to install a completely new awning at a cost of \$800, which his brother agreed to share because he neglected to tell

Jack to secure or retract the awning when leaving the campground.

HELPFUL HINT: Awnings are very susceptible to wind damage. If they are not well-secured with ground straps, always retract them when leaving the campsite for more than a few hours, especially in potentially high-wind locales.

#4 Things that go bump in the night. Greg's relatively new Class A had a large awning, which automatically retracted when it got windy. An anemometer (wind speed indicator), mounted on a pole attached to the roof, would send a signal to the awning motor if the wind speed exceeded a preset value. Greg said he enjoyed this feature if the wind picked up when he wasn't around, but not so much when he was barbecuing under the awning on a rainy day!

On one of their frequent trips to a state park for a weekend of relaxation, he and his wife arrived just after dark and chose a campsite that looked suitable for their coach. With his wife as a spotter at the rear, he backed into the site. Just as he cleared the road, they both heard a CLUNK sound coming from the roof. Looking up, they saw a low tree branch touching the roof, which they assumed had collided with their air conditioner. No worries, Greg said he would check it in the morning.

Later that night, it started raining. By morning, water was dripping from several ceiling lights in the living area and bedroom. To protect the carpets, they put pans under the drips and emptied them regularly ... hardly the relaxing weekend they had anticipated. When the rain finally stopped in late afternoon, Greg climbed up on the roof and saw that the low branch had knocked down his anemometer pole, leaving a depression and a hole in the roof. Rain had collected in the depression and ran through the hole onto the ceiling of their motorhome.

After covering the hole with duct tape, they packed up and returned home. Their RV dealer reattached the anemometer and **(continued on page 63)**



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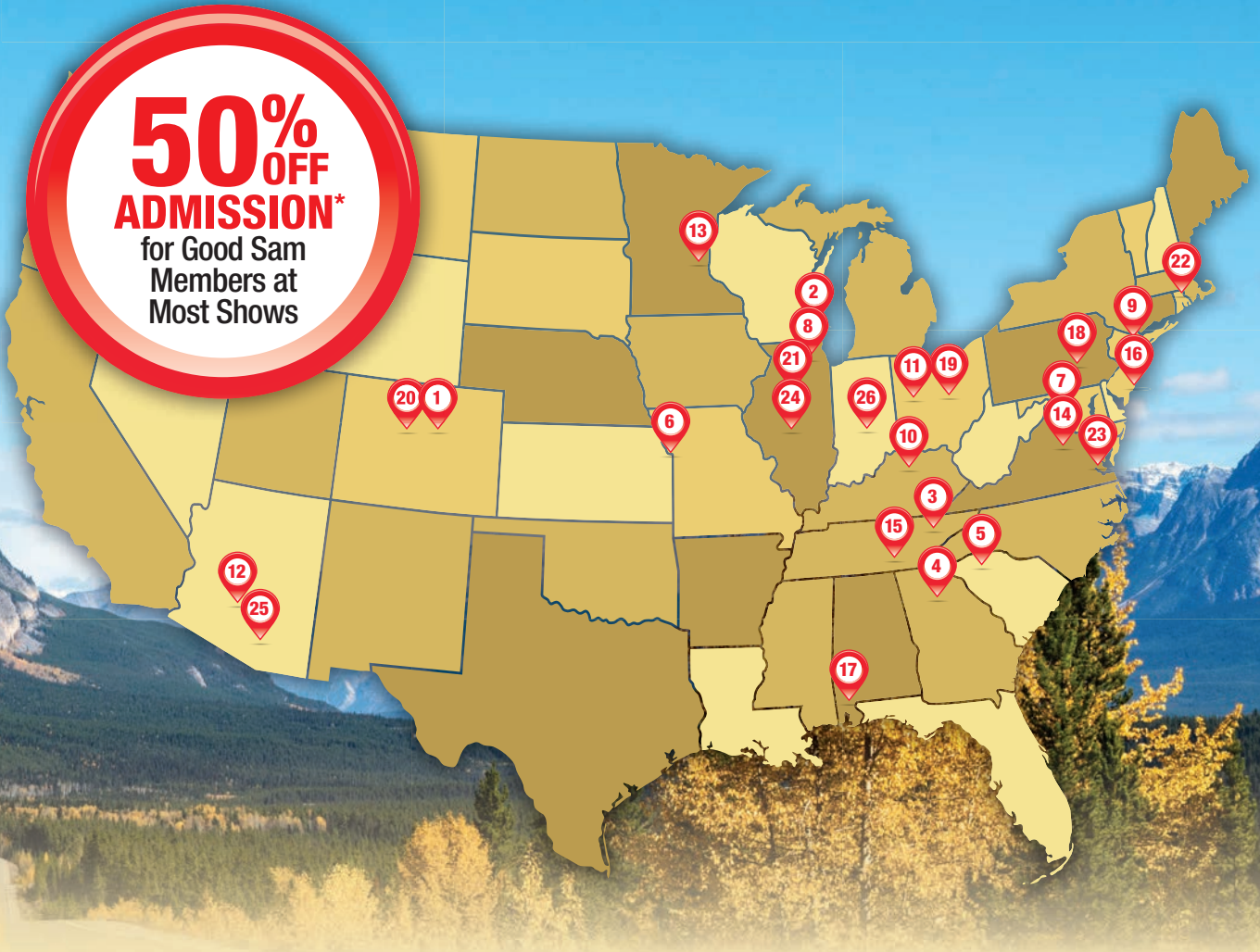


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Map#	Event Name	Dates**	Venue
01	Colorado RV Adventure Travel Show	1/4/18 - 1/6/18	Colorado Convention Center
02	Wisconsin RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Wisconsin Center District
03	Knoxville RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Sevierville Convention Center
04	Greater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

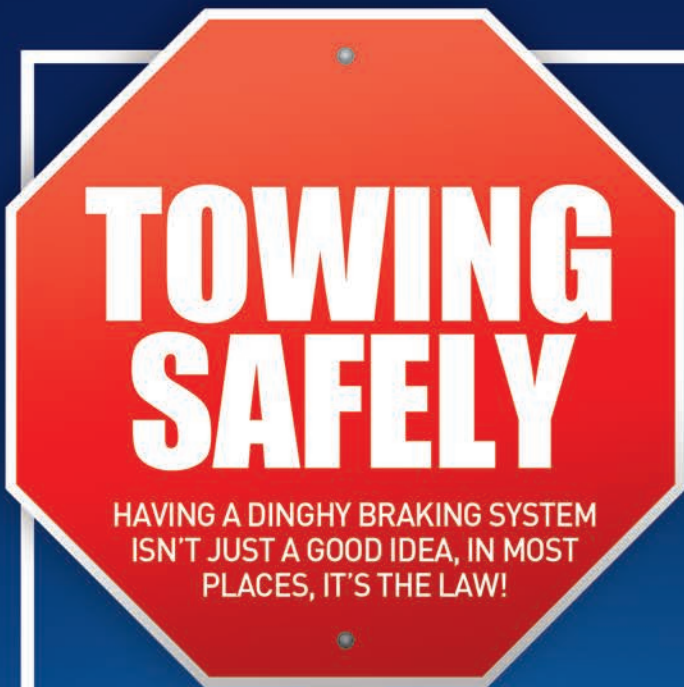
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Map#	Event Name	Dates**	Venue
14	Richmond Camping RV Expo	2/9/18 - 2/11/18	Richmond International Raceway Complex
15	Chattanooga RV Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Chattanooga Convention Center
16	Atlantic City RV & Camping Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Atlantic City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



The ability to flat-tow a vehicle behind a motorhome is a great convenience. Most owners select a dinghy vehicle that is lightweight, but even the lightest of vehicles can reduce the braking capability of a motorhome when towing, especially during emergency stops. To compensate for the extra weight, an auxiliary braking system on any dinghy setup is essential; understanding how a braking system works will make it easier to select the right system for your needs.

The Physics of Dinghy Towing

Towing a dinghy is a lot like towing a heavy trailer, with some notable exceptions. First, it is connected to the motorhome via an articulating armature instead of a fixed

frame connection. Also, it is being towed with all four wheels on the ground, which means the front wheels must be able to “steer” as it is being towed. Unless there is a method for activating the dinghy’s brakes during a stop, the motorhome has to provide the stopping power for not only its own mass, but for the mass of the dinghy as well. Additionally, in the event of a hitch or tow bar failure, and the car breaking away, provisions within the braking device will help bring the dinghy to a stop.

The Laws of Towing

In most states, anything towed behind another motor vehicle must have brakes. Some states have varying weight restrictions which dictate that vehicles and trailers over a certain weight must have brakes, or the combination must stop within a specified distance. Considering that RVers travel often from state to state, it basically becomes a legal requirement to have dinghy brakes.

Dinghy Braking Systems

There are many braking systems on the market, and choosing which one is best for you will take some research. Dinghy braking systems fall into two main categories: built-in and portable. Built-in systems generally consist of hidden components. They connect to the motorhome’s brake system, either through a direct tap into the air brakes or via a compressor module on a gas motorhome. Portable units are installed on the driver’s seat floor and clamp to the dinghy vehicle’s brake pedal. The ability to move the hardware easily to another dinghy vehicle makes this type of system very popular. Most dinghy brake systems have a breakaway switch and cable. Installation varies on the system, and the hidden or direct systems are typically the most complicated to install. Following are some of the top auxiliary braking units on the market.

Photo: Scott Hinko





Blue Ox Patriot II

Blue Ox's all-electric Patriot II is a portable, self-calibrating unit that installs on the driver's seat floor and attaches to the brake pedal. Once the wiring is installed, simply position the Patriot II, plug it in, attach the pedal clamp and turn it on. The 15-pound, self-contained unit provides inertia-based braking when the motorhome's brakes are applied. The unit comes with a two-way RF in-cab controller with extended range and a breakaway switch. As an option, a seat stiffener is available, giving the system a firmer surface to push against for more positive braking. The Patriot II is compatible with hybrid or other vehicles with continuous power-assist brakes. Control and adjustment of the system — along with error codes should there be a problem with the system — can all be accessed via the RF controller. MSRP: \$1,495.

Blue Ox | 800-228-9289, www.blueox.com

Hopkins Manufacturing Corp.

Brake Buddy Classic II

The all-new beige Brake Buddy Classic II is a compact, fully self-contained system. Other than the breakaway and alert system, there is no other permanent installation



required. Initial installation takes 15-30 minutes, and set-up time runs 3-5 minutes, according to the company. The 11-pound Classic II is a fully automatic system that performs self-testing and adjustment at the push of a button. Installation is pretty basic with the Classic II. Once the breakaway is installed, the unit's seat bracket is unfolded and placed on the driver's side floor up against the seat, and the Quick-Connect clevis is attached to the brake pedal. The unit is connected to power using a Quick-Connect Easy Pull connector and the AUTO-START button is pressed, beginning the self-test sequence and relieving the vacuum from the towed vehicle's brake booster. The Classic II works on all vehicles, including hybrids, according to the company, and includes a dinghy battery charger. An included alert system gives the motorhome driver instant notification of a braking event and an audible warning of a dinghy vehicle breakaway.

Although not available as of press time, the Brake Buddy Classic II should be available by the time you read this. MSRP: \$1,149.



Brake Buddy Select II

The all-new red Brake Buddy Select II functions much like the Classic II with a couple of technological additions. First, it features a dual-braking mode (either proportional or full braking). Second, an interactive wireless remote allows on-the-fly control of the Select II and selection of the braking level from inside the motorhome. When the Select II is

in full braking mode, it provides full stopping power at the dinghy, and when it's in proportional mode, it mimics the braking rate of the motorhome. This allows the driver to select the optimal braking level for the driving conditions. Installation of the Select II is basically the same as the Classic II, and the unit works on all vehicles, including hybrids, according to the company — and includes a dinghy battery charger. Although not available as of press time, the Brake Buddy Select II should be available by the time you read this. MSRP: \$1,499.



Brake Buddy Stealth

The Brake Buddy Stealth is a permanently installed system that offers additional features for those who also tow a trailer or are looking for as simple a dinghy vehicle hookup as possible.

Consisting of a main control box (the size of a large loaf of bread), the unit can be installed anywhere in the cargo area or trunk, with a cable and wiring that runs up to the front of the dinghy vehicle. A pulley is installed on the firewall, which routes a cable to a bracket attached to the brake pedal. A breakaway switch and a low-profile connector is mounted on the front of the dinghy. In the motorhome, a brake control is mounted under the driver's side of the dashboard. The Stealth controller will allow sensitivity adjustments as well as manual activation of the dinghy brake system. Additionally, with the push of a button, the remote functions as a trailer-brake control, allowing a trailer with

electric brakes to be towed by the motorhome without installing an additional control. Installation of the Stealth takes 3-4 hours depending on the vehicle, according to the company. Once the installation is done, connecting the dinghy to the motorhome is as easy as connecting the tow bar, the breakaway cable and the electrical cable. MSRP: \$1,099.

Brake Buddy, Hopkins Manufacturing Corp. | 800-470-2287, www.brakebuddy.com



Roadmaster Inc.

BrakeMaster

The BrakeMaster is a proportional system that connects directly to the motorhome's air or hydraulic braking system, mimicking the brake force applied by the motorhome. In a motorhome with air brakes, the system uses a valve installed into the brake system to divert air back to the towed car. An air hose is connected between the motorhome and dinghy. The hose runs through a small air reservoir installed under the hood, then runs to a brake actuator unit installed on the driver's seat floor, which then clamps to the brake pedal. The removable actuator has a quick-disconnect air line. A breakaway system is included.

The BrakeMaster can also be installed in motorhomes with hydraulic brakes, but the system is more expensive and requires additional hardware. A proportioning valve is installed in the motorhome's hydraulic brake system, and an air compressor and air tank are installed in a basement compartment. The hydraulic pressure in the proportioning valve opens the air valve, providing air to the dinghy brakes in correlation to the amount of pressure on the motorhome's service brakes. The dinghy side of the system follows the procedures for the air-brake-powered BrakeMaster. Installation of the system can be pretty complex, especially the hydraulic brake version, so plan on at least 4-6 hours. Connecting the dinghy to the motorhome once the system is installed is fairly straightforward. An air line (included) is attached to the air port on the motorhome and the front of the car. The actuator is then installed in the car once the brake vacuum has been bled off by depressing the brake pedal a few times. An LED wired to the brakelight or brake switch of the towed car illuminates on the dash of the motorhome when the brakes in the dinghy are applied. MSRP for motorhomes with air or air-over-hydraulic brakes (BrakeMaster 9160): \$800; MSRP for hydraulic brakes (BrakeMaster 9060): \$1,235.



Even Brake 9400

For those who prefer a portable system, Roadmaster's Even Brake

9400 provides proportional braking, matching the braking force of the motorhome. The unit features terrain-sensing logic that detects grades and rough terrain, and adjusts dinghy braking accordingly. The Even Brake is powered by an internal air compressor, using the air reserve to activate the brake actuator.

The initial installation is simple, taking less than an hour, and set up of the unit for towing takes just a couple of minutes. The system includes a wireless system monitor with LCD screen that provides continuous braking information. It also has a power-save function, which will report on a low battery condition in the dinghy vehicle. If the dinghy car's battery drops too low, the system will go into sleep mode, reserving enough power for emergency braking. MSRP: \$1,535.



Roadmaster 9700

The 9700 is an affordable dinghy brake alternative that applies preset-pressure braking to the dinghy when the motorhome's brakes are applied, or can be set to activate only in the event of a breakaway. The system works with most vehicles with power brakes, and has three braking pressure presets, activating when the coach's brakelights are activated. Initial installation takes less than an hour, and set up for driving takes a couple of minutes. It automatically protects the towed vehicle's brakes by releasing brake pressure after an extended period of braking, reactivating the next time the motorhome's brakes are applied. MSRP: \$1,200.



InvisiBrake 8700

The InvisiBrake is a fully automatic, permanently installed product that provides progressive braking when the brakelights in the towed vehicle are activated. The main unit is quite small, and can usually be installed under the driver's seat. Unlike most other systems that work on a dead brake pedal, InvisiBrake powers the dinghy vehicle's braking system, allowing for the full braking capabilities. Dead batteries are also not an issue with this system, as it will trickle-charge the battery while towing. And, according to Roadmaster, the system is compatible with any vehicle with vacuum-powered brakes, hybrids and vehicles with full-time power braking systems. The InvisiBrake also includes a two-stage motorhome monitor, which gives a visual and audible alarm in the event of a breakaway, and a visual reference of braking activity in the dinghy. The installation of the system is somewhat complex, given its hidden and hands-free nature. The main unit installs under the seat, and an air cylinder — which is about the size of a large cigar — is mounted nearby with a cable that runs under the carpet, through a pulley and to a bracket on the brake pedal. There are two wiring harnesses to install, as well as a vacuum line (for vehicles with vacuum-power-assisted brakes), which is routed under the hood and spliced into the power booster's vacuum line. Expect 5-6 hours for installation for this system, depending on the vehicle. MSRP: \$1,100.

**Roadmaster Inc. | 800-669-9690,
www.roadmasterinc.com**



RVi Brake RVibrake 3

The small footprint of the new high-tech, 10-pound, RVibrake3 allows easy transport and storage when not in use. The proportional RVibrake3 is the first to use audible voice prompts to guide the user in the proper set up and to verify that the set up, which takes 30 seconds, is correct. In addition to the voice prompts, the system comes with RVi's Command Center Tablet and hub. A 7-inch-screen tablet that's mounted in the motorhome cockpit communicates with the brake via Wi-Fi through an included hub, which also provides information for leveling the coach. The tablet communicates in real time, indicating when the unit is braking, that the set up is correct and if the breakaway switch is activated. All the parameters are accessible through the tablet, as are system support and RV checklist apps.

The RVibrake3 comes with everything needed to get going. Some vehicles may require additional hardware (included at no additional cost) for installation. Other accessories, like 12-volt DC extension cords, battery disconnects and a case, are available. MSRP: \$1,195.

**RVi Brake | 800-965-8527,
www.rvibrake.com**



SMI Air Force One

A permanently installed supplemental braking system needs to protect the air

supply of the towing vehicle, according to SMI. The Air Force One system accomplishes this using a series of check valves and a small air tank mounted under the coach. The dinghy side of the system consists of a control unit that is mounted under the hood, an air actuator that attaches to the brake pedal arm and a cable that is anchored to the firewall. Initial set up includes installing the actuator with anchor, the main unit housing the vacuum pump and reserve air tank for the breakaway system, an LED brake activation light and the coach connection on the front grille. The cable and wire are routed through the firewall to the main unit

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TOWING SAFELY

and to the battery. The LED brake activation light is mounted anywhere it can be seen from the motorhome's backup camera, usually on the rearview mirror of the dinghy. Alternatively, the company offers a 900 MHz wireless monitor (MSRP \$249.95), which can be installed in place of the LED; a transmitter and the wireless receiver mounts on the motorhome's dash and plugs into a 12-volt DC receptacle. On the motorhome side of the system, air valves are spliced into the brake system's air lines, the motorhome air assembly unit with air tank installed underneath the rig and an air line goes to the rear bumper area of the coach and is attached to an air fitting that will supply the dinghy. Expect installation time from 5-8 hours depending on the vehicle. The Air Force One requires no set up for towing, aside from connecting the air line when hooking up the dinghy to the motorhome. MSRP: \$1,249.95.



Stay-In-Play Duo

Similar to the Air Force One, the Stay-In-Play Duo uses a small actuator attached to the brake pedal arm, and a main unit mounted under the hood. The system provides inertia-based dinghy braking, activated by both the inertia of the vehicle and the brakelight signal from the motorhome. The main unit creates air pressure for braking, as well as vacuum to power the dinghy brakes. The kit comes with everything needed to install the system. Installation includes the main unit that is mounted under the hood, a control unit for mounting under the dash (where it can be reached for adjustment and for powering-on the system), the brake pedal actuator and the LED brake activation indicator light, which is mounted in view of the motorhome's

backup camera. Alternately, the LED can be replaced by the optional wireless remote (MSRP \$249.95). Overall installation should take around 4 hours, depending on the vehicle.



Delta Force

The Delta Force is the first and only dual-signal portable braking system on the market, according to SMI. Dual-signal capability requires two inputs for activation; braking proportion is provided by an inertia switch and the brakelight signal from the motorhome. This is said to substantially reduce the number of false brake activations. The Delta Force is a compact unit, with an intuitive control panel on the top with five vehicle profile selections. A BOOST button will increase the selected profile by 15 percent should the user need extra braking. The actuator is attached to the main unit with a ball and socket, allowing it to be folded against the unit for storage. Most portable units press against the driver's seat, which can cause inconsistent braking, according to SMI. The Delta Force is attached to the firewall via a tether and clip. When not in use, the tether tucks under a floor mat. Installation of the system requires tapping into the brakelight harness from the motorhome connection, installing a breakaway switch and the tether and mount under the dashboard. The system comes with a wireless CoachLink unit, which monitors brake activity and has visual and audible alarms in the event of a malfunction or breakaway. The Delta Force and the CoachLink units get their power from a 12-volt DC receptacle. MSRP: \$1,195.

SMI | 800-893-3763, www.smirake.com



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Pleasure Cruise

The 2018 Plateau TS is fun to drive and offers premium living for couples or small families by Howard J. Elmer

The Class B motorhome occupies a very specific niche in the RV world. Its compact footprint lends itself to easy driving, and its economical powertrain makes it great for long hauls — plus the interior design is a study in compact efficiency. If, however, you spend a lot of time in camp, you'll want to choose a different type of motorhome because Class B's are meant to be driven. Which is exactly how we spent our time in this new Pleasure-Way.

We picked up the 2018 Pleasure-Way Plateau TS in London, Ontario, Canada, and turned northwest toward Lake Huron and a few days of beachcombing, with a visit to a traveling rodeo thrown in just for fun. Affectionately known as the west coast of Ontario, Lake Huron offers up hundreds of miles of sand beaches that tie together a dozen beachfront towns that, in summer, attract sunbathers, sailors and folks eager for a dose of vitamin D.

Over the long weekend we drove nearly 500 miles. That's not because we had to but because sightseeing in a Pleasure-Way on any road is stress-free. Clearly, this motorhome is easy and fun to drive.

Touring through these beach communities, we were curious about what homes we might see down on the beaches. Often these access roads were single lane, twisting and winding around the dunes and points. Without hesitation,

we drove the Plateau down any road that appealed to us. It drives smaller than its length and, with its square shape and clear sight lines, it fit wherever we pointed it, or just about anywhere a car will go. For many folks this type of maneuverability offsets the compact space inside.

Pleasure-Way Industries was started in 1986 by RV dealer Dean Rumble as an answer to his frustration with the available Class B's on the market. Rumble found that his dealership was doing repairs and adding improvements to newly received motorhomes so often that it suddenly dawned on him that building a Class B his way was the answer to this problem. More than 30 years later he's still at it.

Pleasure-Way's 2018 Plateau TS, Rumble's latest model, is built on the diesel-powered Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis, supported by a 3500-series frame with dual rear wheels. The standard 3.0-liter turbodiesel engine is powerful and economical. With its substantial torque there was no lag on hills and it accelerated easily into highway traffic, turning in 17.9-second acceleration times from 0-60 mph. Fuel economy was also impressive with a best highway-only number of 18.7 mpg and a best combined city/highway consumption of 17.4 mpg.

The cab, built by Mercedes-Benz, shows off its commercial origin with features designed to make the lives

ABOVE: A private collection of antique IH tractors prompted a curiosity stop along the way to the beach.

of professional drivers who spend full working days in the truck more comfortable and efficient, and these features serve RVers as well.

The Plateau is one of six models available from the Pleasure-Way stable. Two are wide-bodies, and the diesel-powered Sprinter chassis is the underpinning for five out of six. (The sixth, the entry-level Lexor, is built on the Ram ProMaster chassis powered by the 3.6-liter Pentastar gas engine.)

The body on the Plateau is not much wider than the cab, offering clean sight lines from the side view mirrors. Access to the interior is via a large passenger-side sliding door, which not only serves as the entry, but opens up the living space to the outside. A cantilevered power box awning provides patio shade. The test motorhome was also equipped with a side and rear door roll-up screen (optional, \$780 each). These serve an obvious purpose and a nice feature in addition to the zippered entrance on the side door is a magnetic strip on the right side, which allows a quick one-handed pass-through and instant closing without touching the zipper.

Using the outside as an extension of the living arrangement is confirmed by the kitchen counter that extends into the door opening, making for a convenient serving station with food going out and dishes and condiments going back in. On the side of this

counter is a 7-inch touchscreen that controls all the lighting in the unit, the awning, pumps, HVAC, water heater and Fan-Tastic Vent. It also displays the levels and power stats in one place; a second touchscreen in the living/sleeping area duplicates these functions and is backlit for night operation. We actually found we could set the screen lighting to stay on and act as a nightlight. The only downside to this setup is that you have to sit up and scoot over to the touchscreen to turn reading lights on and off.

The floorplan gives the impression of a compact sailboat interior. A single aisle runs the length of the body with all available space, above and below on either side, utilized for storage or living systems. Turn right and you enter the driver's compartment; however, unlike a larger motorhome, it's not necessary to enter the cab from the living area.

Because the cab is utility-based with large entry doors and integrated step, driver and passenger access is easy. Standard comfort features found in the cab include adjustable driver and passenger seats (passenger seat can swivel 180-degrees to face the interior); tilt and telescopic steering wheel; full HVAC system; cruise control; high-beam assist; keyless entry; power windows, locks and mirrors; and Becker in-dash navigation and audio system with Bluetooth (includes a backup camera).



Below: Sink and stove covers increase counterspace and help keep the galley tidy.

Right, above: The main aisle in the Pleasure-Way allows access to the motorhome's many features. Right, below: The daytime king-bed configuration serves double duty as the lounge area and, with the table in place, the dinette.



Safety systems built into the Sprinter chassis are those most people expect in a commercial van, including four-wheel disc brakes with ABS, driver and passenger air bags, and smart steering-wheel controls. However, Mercedes has added other systems for the commercial market application of this vehicle which are also helpful safety features for RVers. A lane departure warning and an active steering system help resist side winds. Here, Mercedes acknowledges that driving a vehicle with a large side surface area in crosswinds can be trying. Rather than just leaving it to the driver to counter steer, the van actively works to keep itself straight, and if you do leave your lane it will let you know.



Above: The Sprinter's for-work-designed cockpit is comfortable and very practically laid out. The dash controls are straightforward and easy to reach.

WHAT'S HOT

Fully dry-camping functional, easy to drive, good handling, excellent fuel economy, compact systems provide all the luxuries

WHAT'S NOT

Touchscreen does away with light switches, commercial-drab plastics in the cab, backup camera angle image is very shallow



Other systems include a blind-spot assist that utilizes warning lights in the side mirrors; a collision prevention assist that uses radar to monitor the traffic ahead and offers a warning if the motorhome is closing too fast and, if you don't react it will also apply the brakes independently.

Stability and traction controls are always on and work in the background to keep the motorhome going straight in all weather conditions. They are designed to brake each wheel independently and automatically to prevent an unintended spin-out.

The seating position in the cab is comfortable, and the seat height and large windshield offer excellent sight lines. In fact, the Sprinter is just tall enough to let the driver see over most

of the traffic in front. Driver's seat, steering and mirror adjustments were equally good for big or small people. Gauges and knobs are large and well marked and the layout simple and ergonomic. The automatic shifter is a short stick on the dash above the driver's right knee and easy to use without ever looking. Storage is found in the doors, in the dash, center stack and above the sun visors, again speaking to the Sprinter's commercial origins.

Most features in the Plateau body do double-duty. The wet bath has a step-in floor pan and waterproof surfaces per usual for a shower enclosure. The living room doubles as the bedroom thanks to a motorized couch that folds flat for sleeping. This is also the same seating used for

the eating area, and the dining table can be removed to accommodate cushions between the fixed ottomans to complete the 70-by-76-inch bed.

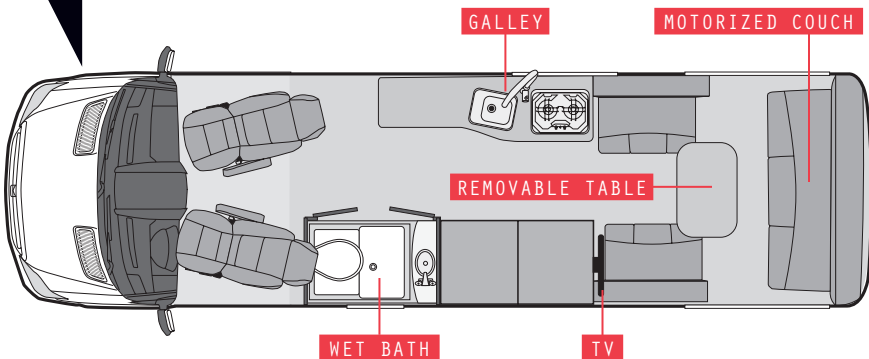
Making the bed is simple and quick, and the sleeping surface is comfortable for two, with the only exception being the separations in the cushions. An extra comforter or egg crate foam under the bottom sheet will help here.

The standard 24-inch flat-screen TV is wall-mounted and can be viewed while sitting or lying down. Signals are fed to it from the Winegard Rayzar digital antenna, a direct cable hookup or from the standard Blu-ray player.

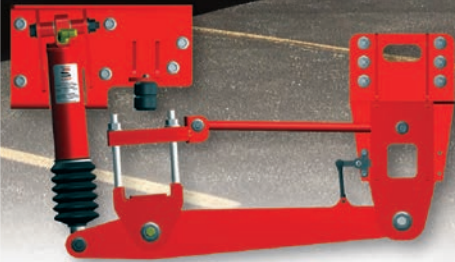
The nature of a Class B means space is at a premium, but occupants don't have to miss out on any comfort features; smart design sees to that. This assessment also includes a few things you can't see such as an Eco-lon smart lithium battery system, 2,000-watt power inverter and an on-board 2.5 kW Onan LP-gas generator. The test unit was also equipped with an optional 285-watt solar package for battery charging. Other support components include a tankless on-demand Truma Aqua Go water heater and underbody LP-gas tank where you'll also find a standard barbecue quick connector.

The galley is another model of efficiency, yet it feels surprisingly large, in part because of the Corian counter

PLEASURE-WAY PLATEAU TS



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Specifications

Chassis

Manufacturer	Mercedes-Benz
Model	Sprinter 3500
Engine	Bluetec 3.0L V-6 diesel
SAE HP	188 hp @ 3,800 rpm
Torque	325 lb-ft @ 1,400-2,400 rpm
Transmission	5-speed automatic
Tires	LT215/85R16
Wheelbase	170"
Suspension	Front struts, rear leaf springs
Tow rating	5,000 lbs
Fuel Capacity	24.5 gal
Warranty Chassis	3 year/36,000-mile limited
Warranty Engine	5 year/100,000-mile limited warranty (includes Mercedes-Benz roadside assistance)

Coach

Exterior Length	22' 9"
Exterior Width	7' 11"
Exterior Height	9' 8"
Interior Height	6' 3"
Construction	Van body
Freshwater Capacity	30 gal
Black-water Capacity	12 gal
Gray-water Capacity	35 gal
LP gas Capacity	8.16 gal
Air Conditioner	11,000 Btu
Furnace	16,000 Btu
Refrigerator	6 cu-ft, 3-way
Inverter/Charger	2,000 watt
Batteries	(1) 12-volt chassis, Lithium-Ion house
AC Generator	2.5 kW LP-gas
MSRP	\$139,035
MSRP as Tested	\$150,345
Warranty	5-year/ 60,000-mile limited

Wet Weight

(Water & Heater, Fuel Tank Full; No Supplies or

Passengers)	
Front Axle	3,700 lbs
Rear Axle	5,220 lbs
Total	8,920 lbs

Chassis Ratings

GAWR, F/R	4,080 lbs/ 7,060 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	11,030 lbs/ 15,250 lbs
ROCCC	2,110 lbs
GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Cross Combinations Weight Rating
ROCCC	Realistic Occupant and Cargo Carrying Capacity (Full Water, Fuel, No Passengers)



Above, left: The wet-bath design in the Plateau makes good use of every available inch of space. Above, right: The kitchen counter extends into the large side door opening, creatively making the outside part of the unit's living space.

that extends into the side doorway, plus a flip-up extension on the living room side and the covers for the stove and sink. The two-burner flush-mount stove has a splash guard that flips up next to the deep sink and an integrated matching countertop cover.

Swivel around and you face the three-way two-door fridge/freezer right above it. Storage above the windows is found in the natural maple cabinetry with radius doors. The cabinets are nicely finished and the doors can be held open with top-mounted hardware. Below the kitchen counter, drawers and cupboards are equally well finished with excellent hardware.

Storage space in the Plateau, as in most Class B's, is also at a premium; however, the available space is well designed and has good access. Just don't figure on taking a whole winter's worth of gear south with you. Unless, of course you tow a trailer, which is a possibility. The standard hitch receiver is rated to handle up to 5,000 pounds and the spirited diesel engine opens up a number of recreational possibilities for the Pleasure-Way owner, like towing motorcycles in summer and snowmobiles in winter.

Outside, utility hookups are

located together nicely, placed at waist height. Dump valves are hidden behind a simple latched door in the attractive ground effects that extend to around 6 inches wider than front tires but is flush with the rear duals. Just don't get too close to curbs. There is also an outside shower. It takes less than five minutes to hook or unhook the utilities making it no big deal to leave the park and use the motorhome to go shopping or tour the neighboring area.

After I weighed the Pleasure-Way at the truck scale I noticed that the front axle weight on my ticket was just 380 pounds less than the published gross axle weight rating (GAWR). So, while this suggests a good transfer of weight, back to front, on the unit, owners should be aware that cargo and passengers should be shifted rearward to keep that front axle from being overloaded.

So, a few concluding observations on the Plateau. It really is a quick getaway vehicle: quick to set up, quick to pack up, and quick and easy to handle in traffic. And, perhaps most importantly, you'll quickly come to enjoy every mile you drive in this Pleasure-Way. **M**

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C'S THE DAY

NEW 2018 MODELS OFFER IMPROVED LIVABILITY AND THE LATEST IN ON-BOARD TECHNOLOGY

While December means family get-togethers, gift exchanges and holiday playlists to most, we here at *MotorHome* get excited for yet another reason: a new model year is upon us. True, many models have already been introduced over the last couple of months, but the festive season means even more complete information (and hands-on opportunity) is available from the manufacturers, enabling us to further showcase the latest trends, models and upgrades.

The Class C segment has enjoyed a strong, consistent performance throughout 2017, with the most recent report as of press time pegging a 23 percent growth in shipments over the previous year. Class C's are a solid choice for RVers who want all the amenities of a Class A, but prefer the familiar ride and handling characteristics of a cutaway (truck or van) chassis. And as they continue to include (or even surpass) the features of Class A models, we have selected a handful of the top entries for the 2018 model year in the pages that follow.



COACH HOUSE INC.

Coach House motorhomes are sold direct from the factory in Nokomis, Florida. The 2018 272XL FR features two slideouts, one in front containing dual power recliners, and the other in the rear, housing the queen bed. The brand-new dual front recliners (hence the FR designation) feature individual swivel tray tables that provide for dining or other activities and then swing out of the way when it's time to recline and watch TV. The 272XL FR is available with an optional extended galley that provides the choice of more food-prep and cabinet space,

or an additional swivel-recliner, which affords a great viewing angle of the standard 32-inch HD TV. The galley includes a three-way refrigerator, a convection microwave, stainless-steel sink, solid-surface counters and abundant cabinetry. The roomy bathroom features a shower, porcelain toilet and lavatory sink. Like all Platinum motorhomes, the 272XL FR is built with a one-piece fiberglass shell reinforced with carbon fiber, resulting in a motorhome that is noticeably quieter and more durable than others in its class, according to the company. Platinum motorhomes come equipped with a long list of standard features, including a generator, auxiliary batteries, hitch receiver, stainless-steel wheel simulators, nav system, LED lighting and many more.



Chassis	Ford E-450 Super Duty
Engine	Triton 6.8L V-10
Fuel Capacity	55 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs
Exterior Length	26' 10"
Exterior Width	8'
Exterior Height with A/C	10' 5"
Wheelbase	176"
Freshwater Capacity	37 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Capacity	25 gal/ 27 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	15 gal
Base MSRP	\$167,659

Coach House Inc.
800-235-0984, www.coachhousesrv.com



COACHMEN RV

The newly redesigned Orion T24 RB provides flexibility and versatility thanks to its eco-friendly and fuel-efficient Ford Transit chassis powered by a 3.7-liter, V-6 gas engine. As its designation implies (the T is for Traveler), the Orion is easy to maneuver on the road, and its tight turning radius makes parking at the campground or the market a snap. The Orion comes equipped with standard features such as a roomy rear bath that runs the width of the motorhome, an electric actuated queen bed up front, Euro-style dinette with belted swivel chairs and flip-up dinette, and a three-way refrigerator in the galley. Additional features

include a pantry in the galley, a 32-inch LCD TV with DVD player, large undermount galley sink and backup monitor on the rearview mirror. Outside, color-infused laminated side walls and a molded fiberglass front and rear cap give the Orion 24 RB a contemporary look with long-lasting exterior construction. Additional exterior features include an armless power awning, exterior entertainment center, LED lights and a standard Onan generator.

Chassis	Ford Transit T350
Engine	Ford 3.7L V-6
Fuel Capacity	25 gal
GVWR	10,360 lbs
Exterior Length	24'
Exterior Width	7' 10"
Exterior Height with A/C	10' 4"
Wheelbase	156"
Freshwater Capacity	28 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Capacity	32 gal/ 32 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	10 gal
Base MSRP	\$89,900

Coachmen RV
800-353-7383, www.coachmenrv.com



JAYCO INC.

For improved ride and handling, Jayco has equipped the 2018 Greyhawk Prestige 29MVP with the company's JRide Plus package, which includes Hellwig Helper Springs, rubber isolation mounts, a computer-balanced driveshaft, front and rear stabilizers and Bilstein shock absorbers. Highlights include a 30-by-82-inch panoramic front window, walk-around queen bed and 16-foot awning. Also of note are an 84-inch-high padded ceiling, vinyl flooring, a Dream Dinette, solid-surface countertops and a water-filtration system. The cab's Garmin Infotainment system (RV GPS/AM/FM Bluetooth plus removable 6-inch touchscreen display) is part of the Customer Value Package, which also nets owners a 24-inch LED TV in the bedroom, plus an exterior entertain-



ment center, frameless windows and automatic hydraulic leveling jacks, to name a few. Overnight guests are treated to a standard tri-fold sofa in the living area, while an optional drop-down cab overhead bunk is also available.

Chassis	Ford E-450
Engine	Triton 6.8L V-10
Fuel Capacity	55 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs
Exterior Length	32' 6"
Exterior Width	8' 4"
Exterior Height with A/C	11' 6"
Wheelbase	223"
Freshwater Capacity	47 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Capacity	32 gal/ 41 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	16.5 gal
Base MSRP	\$123,523

Jayco Inc.
574-825-5861, www.jayco.com



LEISURE TRAVEL VANS

The Wonder Front Twin Bed (FTB) is Leisure Travel Van's new Class C featuring a front twin-bed design that allows owners to customize their sleeping configuration. The W24MB features two 32-by-76-inch twin beds that can also slide together to form a single bed that's wider than a residential queen. The beds double as the seating area and offer a great view of the swing-out 28-inch LED TV with Bluetooth sound bar and Blu-ray player. The galley is located amidships and has been outfitted with a two-door 6.7-cubic-foot fridge and convection microwave, allowing for plenty of storage space on the large solid-surface countertop. The large rear bathroom includes a 30-by-32-inch enclosed shower, making it easy for two people to prep for a night on the town. Interior storage is impressive, with ample European-style cabinets galore featuring accent doors designed to be scratch-resistant, anti-fingerprint and even antibacterial. The Wonder rides on the Ford Transit cutaway chassis and is powered by a 3.2-liter Power Stroke turbodiesel. The vehicle features contoured side walls, a fiberglass flex roof, and integrated front and rear fiberglass caps.

Chassis	Ford Transit 350
Engine	3.2L I-5 turbodiesel
Fuel Capacity	25 gal
GVWR	10,360 lbs
Exterior Length	24' 9"
Exterior Width	7' 10.5"
Exterior Height with A/C	9' 11.5"
Wheelbase	178"
Freshwater Capacity	34 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Capacity	37 gal/ 28 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	13.2 gal
Base MSRP	\$108,550

Leisure Travel Vans,
Triple E Recreational Vehicles
877-992-9906, www.leisurevans.com



PHOENIX USA RV

Based in Elkhart, Indiana, Phoenix USA RV has been manufacturing factory-direct, easy-to-drive motorhomes for nearly two decades. The company currently offers nine floorplans, all on a chassis that is only 93 inches wide for increased maneuverability. Phoenix motorhomes begin with a basic layout that can be customized based on the buyer's needs. The Phoenix Cruiser 2552 shown here is a twin-bed layout with a bathroom that spans the full rear wall. The single slide opens up the living area, and contains the refrigerator, seating area and overhead storage. The rear bathroom is equipped with a corner shower, sink and lav, plus a wardrobe, while both twin beds have their own shirt closet and overhead storage areas. The living room can be configured with a booth dinette or a sofa with a pantry and slide-out bin storage. Buyers can also opt for a Euro chair in addition to the sofa or booth. Phoenix offers a popular convenience package that contains the most sought-after living conveniences, including a 4-kW Onan generator, 13,500-Btu A/C with heat strip, Class III hitch receiver, leather captain's chairs,

a convection microwave, a 32-inch LED smart TV, DSI gas and electric water heater, carbon-fiber dash and drink tray, electric entry step, and heated and remote outside mirrors, to name a few. Phoenix says the longer wheelbase of its motorhomes translates to a shorter overhang in the rear, adding to on-road stability. All Phoenix Cruisers come standard with LED interior lighting and an 1,800-watt inverter.

Chassis	Ford E-450
Engine	Triton 6.8L V-10
Fuel Capacity	55 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs
Exterior Length	27' 10"
Exterior Width	7' 9"
Exterior Height with A/C	10' 1"
Wheelbase	206"
Freshwater Capacity	45 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Capacity	35 gal/ 23 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	10 gal
Base MSRP	\$117,000

Phoenix USA RV
877-754-8535, www.phoenixusarv.com

PLEASURE-WAY INDUSTRIES

Perhaps known primarily for its Class B's (see test on page 40) Pleasure-Way has transferred that success into the easy-handling 2018 Plateau XLTS Class C. The Plateau XLTS boasts luxurious finishes, a spacious and well-appointed bathroom, a flexible and comfortable dining/sleeping arrangement, and generous inside and outside storage, all in a relatively compact package. The floorplan's main attraction is the rear power sofa bed with two lap belts that

is easily converted into a 74-by-74-inch memory-foam sleeper. Three large windows in the rear lounge area offer panoramic views of the surroundings, while two front workstations and a full-size bathroom make the Plateau a good choice for interior versatility. The list of upscale standard equipment includes 200Ah Lithium-ion auxiliary batteries, a Truma AquaGo Comfort Plus on-demand water heater, and dual 7-inch touch-screen control



panels provide automatic temperature control and auto generator start, plus the lighting control/dimming, tank level indicators and awning control. All countertops are solid-surface and all furniture is ultraleather, while solid-maple cabinetry comes standard on all Pleasure-Way motorhomes.

Chassis	Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 3500
Engine	3.0L V-6 turbodiesel
Fuel Capacity	26 gal
GVWR	11,030 lbs
Exterior Length	22' 9"
Exterior Width	9' 1.5"
Exterior Height with A/C	10' 9"
Wheelbase	170"
Freshwater Capacity	28 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Capacity	17.4 gal/ 20.4 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	10.4 gal
Base MSRP	\$145,470

Pleasure-Way Industries
800-364-0189, www.pleasureway.com



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RENEGADE RV

Renegade's Valencia is built on the S2RV chassis from Freightliner Custom Chassis Corp., which Renegade claims is the first Super C chassis to be designed from the ground up specifically as a motorhome chassis. The Valencia boasts impressive horsepower and torque compared to Freightliner's M2 chassis, but don't let its brutish construction fool you: The Valencia is said to have superior ride and handling characteristics resulting from its custom-tuned front and rear suspension system. In addition, the chassis has a single 100-gallon fuel tank mounted in the rear between the frame rails, offering greater fuel capacity, better cruising range and easier fueling via a single fuel fill on the driver's side of the coach. Inside, the Valencia has been outfitted with solid cherry hardwood cabinetry and trim. The motorhome is available in two floorplans, including the 38RW shown here, which sleeps up to nine and features an overhead bunk, dinette and sofa in the living area, and standard king bed and large wardrobe in the master. Nearly all amenities are standard, from the full-body paint, to the stainless-steel appliances (including a 19-cubic-foot residential refrigerator), to

solid-surface countertops to the dual 15,000-Btu roof air conditioners with heat pumps. Other highlights include an upgraded cab sound system, color side- and rear-vision cameras, upgraded LED lighting, a 40-inch LED TV with a soundbar home theater system and Blu-ray player in the living room, plus a 32-inch LED TV in the bedroom and standard outside entertainment center.

Chassis	Freightliner S2RV
Engine	Cummins ISB 6.7L
Fuel Capacity	100 gal
GVWR	31,000 lbs
Exterior Length	38' 1"
Exterior Width	8' 3.25"
Exterior Height with A/C	12' 6"
Wheelbase	279"
Freshwater Capacity	150 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Capacity	75 gal/ 75 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	20 gal
Base MSRP	\$230,860

Renegade RV
574-966-0293, www.renegaderv.com

THOR MOTOR COACH

If you're looking to bring along motorcycles, ATVs or even a snowmobile, the Thor Outlaw 29J is a Class C toy hauler with a drop-down queen-size bunk in the garage area and luxurious appointments throughout. The 8-by-8-foot garage also houses a storage area and a 32-inch LED TV, plus it acts as the gateway to the rugged patio deck that allows owners to further enjoy their outdoor adventure environment. The full galley offers all the comforts of a conventional Class C, including a 6-cubic-foot refrigerator, microwave convection oven, large single-basin sink and pantry. A pop-up countertop outlet and charging station in the galley is evocative of more expensive motorhomes, as are the porcelain toilet in the lav, the on-demand water heater and whole-coach water filtration system. The 29J includes a total of four TVs (including one in the exterior entertainment center), meaning the big game is never too far from front and center, while a stereo system in the garage keeps the tunes playing. Nice touches up front include swivel leatherette captain's chairs, a touch-screen dash stereo and a windshield privacy curtain. Also standard is a ladder for the overhead bunk, while a cabover child safety net is an available option.



Chassis	Ford E-450
Engine	Triton 6.8L V-10
Fuel Capacity	55 gal
GVWR	14,500 lbs
Exterior Length	31' 1"
Exterior Width	8' 3"
Exterior Height with A/C	10' 10"
Wheelbase	219"
Freshwater Capacity	40 gal
Black-/Gray-Water Capacity	30 gal/ 34.5 gal
LP-Gas Capacity	10 gal
Base MSRP	\$121,050

Thor Motor Coach
800-860-5658, www.thormotorcoach.com





TIFFIN MOTORHOMES INC.

Yes, you read that right. Tiffin, long known for its quality Class A motorhomes, recently entered the Class C market with the introduction of the Wayfarer. Built on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis, the Wayfarer 24 BW is highlighted by the large rear bedroom, which sports a queen bed with memory foam mattress, two deep nightstands and two wardrobes, with plenty of space to walk around. There's also an optional entertainment center or bunk-bed configuration. The split bathroom puts the 32-by-34-inch shower curbside, while lav, sink and overhead storage are streetside. The fully equipped galley offers a sink, two-burner stovetop and microwave, plus a 5-cubic-foot gas/electric refrigerator. Thoughtful appointments like on-demand hot water, solid-wood curved cabinetry, LED lighting and Spyder multiplex wiring, speak to Tiffin's tradition of upscale amenities inside, while the exterior features two seamless slideouts to help prevent leaks, a fiberglass roof, Durashield Titan rock-chip protection and full-body paint to round out the look of luxury while increasing longevity. An exterior TV takes care of campsite entertainment, while a standard 3.2-kW diesel generator keeps the power flowing. The Wayfarer is equipped with SumoSprings ride assist to help smooth out the bumps. The standard Driver Assistance Package provides lane-keeping assist, collision prevention and high-beam assist. And, at less than 26 feet in length, the Wayfarer is easy to drive and handle on the road or in camp.

Chassis	Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 3500	
Engine	3.0L V-6 turbodiesel	
Fuel Capacity	26.4 gal	
GVWR	11,030 lbs	
Exterior Length	25' 7"	
Exterior Width	7' 6"	
Exterior Height with A/C	11' 4"	
Wheelbase	170"	
Freshwater Capacity	32 gal	
Black-/Gray-Water Capacity	27 gal/ 33 gal	
LP-Gas Capacity	16 gal	
Base MSRP	\$131,618	

Tiffin Motorhomes Inc.
205-487-4710, www.tiffinmotorhomes.com



WINNEBAGO INDUSTRIES INC.

The new Winnebago View 24D expands the living space with the touch of a button opening a large slideout and powered Murphy-plus bed, resulting in a versatile floorplan with extra sleeping space for a couple of overnight guests. A full galley makes meal prep easy, while swivel cab seats provide additional seating options in the lounge and dining area. The slide also houses the dinette and the Murphy bed, which folds up during the day and, combined with the removable table, becomes a comfortable seating area to view the TV, which is located directly across on the galley wall. Speaking of the galley, it offers a large amount of counterspace, a dual-basin sink, cooktop, microwave and refrigerator, plus a pantry to hold your foodstuffs. The rear full-wall bathroom is sectioned off via a sliding door, and offers a 23-by-34-inch shower, sink, lav and wardrobe. A powered patio awning enables owners to take the festivities outside in the fresh air. But perhaps the main attraction is the View's diminutive stature, allowing RVers to travel in comfort most anywhere without worrying about size restrictions.



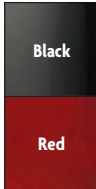
Chassis	Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 3500	
Engine	3.0L V-6 turbodiesel	
Fuel Capacity	26.4 gal	
GVWR	11,030 lbs	
Exterior Length	25' 8"	
Exterior Width	7' 6"	
Exterior Height with A/C	11' 1"	
Wheelbase	170"	
Freshwater Capacity	30 gal	
Black-/Gray-Water Capacity	40 gal/ 34 gal	
LP-Gas Capacity	13 gal	
Base MSRP	\$134,763	

Winnebago Industries Inc.
641-585-3535, www.winnebagoind.com 📄

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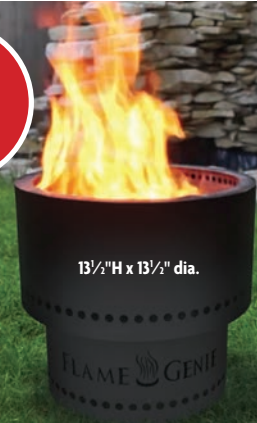
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Fits all standard
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Strap for easy
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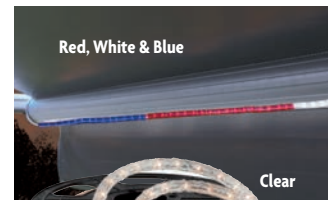
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By E. Don Smith



A CLEAR VIEW

Installing the correct windshield wiper blades — and maintaining them properly — allows for 20/20 road vision

If you clock a lot of time behind the wheel peering through the windshield while driving your motorhome, you already know how important a good set of wiper blades can be, but there is a lot more to know about this topic beyond simply replacing the blades. Wiper blades are subjected to all sorts of detrimental conditions, so it's no wonder they need replacing as often as they do. For most of us, wiper blades are not at the top of our list of favorite things to take care of, therefore they often go completely overlooked.

Unlike many items inside your motorhome, wiper blades are outside all the time and usually in direct sun, which of course has a negative effect on their lifespan. When bugs, dirt and grime get on the windshield, the blades move back and forth across the debris until it is removed, but in the process the fine rubber blades become damaged and frayed, thereby reducing their effectiveness and longevity. When the rubber on the blades gets old, or if the wiper arm becomes damaged,

the result is poor performance. Sometimes the blades leave streaks on the windshield, while other sections of the windshield are untouched. This condition makes it very difficult to see through and even harder to safely drive the motorhome. When one section of the glass remains covered with water, your vision in that area is reduced while other areas may be cleared with each wipe. Another problem with worn or damaged wipers is chatter. Chatter is when the wiper bounces across

the windshield instead of traveling smoothly as it makes its way back and forth across your field of view. All these conditions are symptoms of problems with the wiper blades or wiper arms.

One of the most important things you can do to prolong the life of your wiper blades is to keep them, and your windshield, clean.

If you allow excessive amounts of dirt and bugs to accumulate on the windshield, the wiper blades are negatively affected. So, if you are not in the habit of cleaning your front glass, you should add that to your list of things to do. Part of that cleaning process should include the critical area at the bottom of the glass where the wipers sit when not in use. As you drive — or even while your coach



1



2



3



4

is parked — the wiper blades are pressed against the windshield, which forms a trap for dirt and grit to accumulate.

When parked (or while the motorhome is in storage) the wiper blades should be completely protected with wiper covers. Camping World carries ADCO Tyvek wiper-blade covers for less than \$10 that will be designed to prolong the life of the blades. Not only do the covers keep dirt and grime from forming on the delicate rubber blades, they also protect them from UV damage and keep them off the potentially hot glass when the motorhome is parked in the sun. We suggest you keep a set of these in your basement and every time you stop for a few days, slip them

[1] One of the best (and easiest) things you can do to prolong the life of a motorhome's wiper blades is to keep the windshield clean. This includes paying special attention to where the blades press against the windshield [2]. Protect the blades from dirt, debris and damaging UV rays by using a wiper-blade cover, such as this one from ADCO [3]. A streaky windshield can mean a total wiper-blade replacement is in order, or simply that the existing blades need a thorough cleaning [4]. A disposable wet tissue does the trick nicely.

on. They are super easy to use and are universally sized with an easy-on easy-off hook-and-loop system to speed installation.

When not properly cared for, one can expect wiper blades to fail in as little as six months, but if you follow these tips they will last in the range of one to three years before needing replacement. Not only does this save you money, it means more miles and more smiles as you enjoy the improved performance they will provide in the rain. Another thing

that can really improve the performance of your wipers is to keep your windows treated with an exterior water repellent. A good application of water repellent on the glass when combined with properly operating wipers will make driving in the rain far less stressful and safer.

If you recently replaced your blades but they are already streaking or not wiping well, they may need a good cleaning. Simply use a disposable wet tissue to remove dirt from the blade. If you prefer, you can



5



6

[5] Wiper blades come in varying sizes, so be sure to purchase the correct length for your motorhome. [6] This shows the difference in the TRICO style connector on top and the Bosch, which we prefer, on the bottom. The Bosch connector seems much more secure and in a high-torque application, such as a motorhome with a very long wiper arm, we want the most secure connection possible to ensure the blade stays in place.



use any standard nonabrasive window cleaner and a clean towel to wipe off each blade. TRICO suggests cleaning the blades every time you fuel-up the motorhome for maximum blade life. If you have decided it's time to replace the blades, brace yourself for a whole lot of choices as you start to shop for new ones.

The first thing you need to know when shopping for new blades is the length of the blades. On most Class A motorhomes both sides have the same size blades, but that's not always the case, so measure your blades before you go shopping. The next thing you will need to know is what type of connector the wiper arm uses. As you can see in the photos,

[7] In order to remove the ANCO Contour J-hook-style wiper blade previously installed on this coach, we first located the plastic tab and pressed it to release the catch that holds the blade on the arm. [8] While holding the tab down we slid the wiper arm toward the open end of the J hook on the wiper arm. [9] Once the wiper blade is removed it can be discarded to prepare for the new blade to be installed. [10] Shown here is a photo of the wiper arm and the 9-by-4 mm J hook that is used on this motorhome. Once you determine what style of connector your motorhome has, you can then shop for a wiper blade that will fit that particular connector.

this coach uses what is known as a large J-hook-style connector (9-by-4 mm). Other models may use a smaller 9-by-3 mm or even a 12-by-4 mm hook size. These dimensions refer to the width of the arm, first 9 mm or 12 mm and then the thickness of the metal, 3 mm or 4 mm. So, if you have a caliper you can easily measure yours before shopping. If that is not confusing enough, in addition to the hook style there are some wiper arms

that use a side pin, nut and bolt or a bayonet-style connector.

Once you know the size and connector type you can head out to Camping World or a local auto parts store to shop for your new blades. Although RV dealers often have a

Hook, 9-by-3 mm

Hook, 9-by-4 mm



The dimensions listed on J-hook-style connectors refer first to the width of the arm, and then to the thickness of the metal. These figures are needed, in addition to the overall length, to ensure you purchase the right wiper blades for your motorhome.

model directory for RVs, don't expect an auto parts store to know what a Tiffin Phaeton is, which means you need to either bring your old wiper blade or know the exact size and type so you can select your own.

For the last few years we have read that many owners have opted for a 28-inch blade instead of the factory 32-inch and in some cases that makes finding a new blade much easier. Most auto parts stores will carry a 28-inch or even a 29-inch blade but it's much more difficult to find one that's 32 inches. Just make sure you check the path of your wiper blade to ensure the size you choose provides you with 100 percent visibility. (Caption 5 on page 55 illustrates the length difference between a 28-inch blade and a 32-inch model.)

Years ago, all wipers were made out of a metal frame with several smaller frames attached to it with each of those smaller frames pivoting

on a pin. The idea was to make a frame that could conform to the shape of all windows so that the wiper stayed pressed against the glass for better water removal. Today a lot has changed, and almost all automotive wipers are made with a single flexible polymer frame called a beam blade. These new beam-style blades are curved, which allows them to stay in contact with the glass even using really long wiper blades. Some of these new beam-style blades have an aerodynamic shape that utilizes the airflow as you drive down the road — it helps keep the wiper pressed firmly against the glass. The downside of these is they are built in a way that prevents refilling the blade insert. So, when a beam-style wiper blade wears out you are forced to replace the entire blade. (The caption 6 photo on page 55 shows a conventional frame wiper on top from TRICO and a Bosch



[11] Here we are starting the install process on the Bosch ICON beam-style blade. This is one of our favorite connectors of the group because it uses a clamshell design as an added safety to prevent the wiper blade from coming off the arm once installed. Open the clamshell and insert the J hook through the opening on top. [12] Allow the J hook to enter into the plastic connector and slide the wiper toward the end of the arm until it snaps in place. If you find resistance getting the J hook into the connector it could be because you are trying to install a 9-by-4 mm hook into a connector made for a 9-by-3 mm hook. This Bosch was the easiest of all the units we tested to install. [13] Finally, close the outer clamshell over the arm for a very secure connection. Both Bosch wiper blades tested use this style connector, which was our favorite one of the group. [14] If you are using a wiper blade without the clamshell, follow the same procedure and guide the hook into the connector until it snaps in place. Shown here is the TRICO Onyx with the built-in airfoil to help keep the blade against the windshield. This, along with the other TRICO Premium blades we tested, was all very good but the connectors are more difficult to use than those on the Bosch blades.

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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

WIPER-BLADE MAINTENANCE

beam-style frame on the bottom.)

As we shopped for 28-to-32-inch wiper blades we quickly realized that the market is dominated by several major brands — ANCO, Bosch, Rain-X and TRICO — which seem to represent the vast majority of blades on the market. In some parts stores, a particular brand may have three or more models with different features and prices.

We purchased eight different blades with two of them having a conventional frame and six other beam or frameless models. The least expensive was the 28-inch Weather-beater from Rain-X at \$16.99, while the most expensive was the 32-inch TRICO RV heavy-duty model from Camping World at \$29.69. Most of the wiper blades we purchased were in the \$21.99 to \$26.99 range. Our goal was to buy a wide range of products, but of course it's impossible to gather every model from every reseller on the market. After spending a lot of time installing, using and uninstalling these wiper blades over the course of several weeks, we really learned to appreciate the differences in the various models. As a result, here are our overall favorites: No. 1 is the Bosch ICON, second is a tie between the TRICO Onyx and the TRICO Force. Both of the TRICO blades have the airfoil shape as well as treated rubber for a smooth wipe across the glass.

Depending on the type of arm and wiper blade your motorhome has, the installation could differ from ours, but the overall process remains similar. And of course, be sure to always follow the manufacturer's instructions. **M**

For More Information

ANCO

<http://ancowipers.com/finder>

Bosch

www.boschautoparts.com/en/auto/wiper-blades

Rain-X

www.rainx.com/blade-size-finder

TRICO

www.tricoproducts.com/Drivers/FindYourWiperSize

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Customer Rating ★★★★★

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• 1060 lb. capacity
• Weighs 235 lbs.

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PORTLAND SUPER COUPON

7 AMP ELECTRIC POLE SAW 9.5" BAR

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1 TON CAPACITY FOLDABLE SHOP CRANE

• Boom extends from 36-1/4" to 50-1/4"
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Customer Rating ★★★★★

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BADLAND SUPER COUPON

Battle Tested

2500 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH WIRELESS REMOTE CONTROL

Customer Rating ★★★★★

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Customer Rating ★★★★★

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NEW

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HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

STEP STOOL/WORKING PLATFORM

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE 65%

350 lb. capacity

\$199.99

Compare \$57.55

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#1 SELLING JACKS IN AMERICA

RAPID PUMP® 4 TON HEAVY DUTY STEEL FLOOR JACK

• Weighs 105 lbs.

Customer Rating ★★★★★

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drillmaster SUPER COUPON

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72" x 80" MOVING BLANKET

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LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 3/15/18*

SUPER COUPON

TILTING FLAT PANEL TV MOUNT

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE \$85

176 lb. capacity

\$149.99

Compare \$99.99

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LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 3/15/18*

SUPER COUPON

SOLAR ROPE LIGHT

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE 66%

\$9.99

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LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 3/15/18*

VIKING SUPER COUPON

JUMP STARTER AND POWER PACK

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE 16%

NEW

\$69.99

Compare \$84.19

ITEM 62749

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LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 3/15/18*

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20 TON SHOP PRESS

Customer Rating ★★★★★

• Pair of arbor plates included

SAVE \$220

\$149.99

Compare \$369.99

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• 5 mil thickness

Customer Rating ★★★★★

SAVE 53%

\$5.99

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AN INTRIGUING TRANSFORMATION

A FLORIDA COUPLE RESTORES THEIR 2000 COUNTRY COACH 40 FOOTER TO BETTER-THAN-ORIGINAL GLORY

This article is one in our continuing series looking at motorhomes that have stood the test of time and can still make dreams come true. Each has earned the right to be called "the classic ride."

The decision to go full-time in a motorhome is usually a complicated one, involving years of planning and preparation. That is, unless you're Clay and Debi Ratcliffe. In less than 12 months, they went from not even thinking about purchasing a motorhome to living in one, and they will be the first to tell you that it has been quite a ride.

Their adventure began in 2016 when a friend suggested they look at his 2000 Country Coach Intrigue. He knew the Ratcliffes spent a lot of time away from their New Smyrna Beach, Florida, home, promoting and filming offshore boat racing for Clay's business. In fact, they were working on a project in Key West, Florida, and living out of their 42-foot boat when the idea of the RV came up and they

decided to take a look.

At first glance, the 40-foot Intrigue did not impress. It had been sitting unused for years, and all of that time in the Florida sun had caused significant fading and checking of the exterior decals as well as heat damage to the south-facing windows. Fortunately, the condition of the interior was a little more promising. Expecting what they call the "claustrophobic feel" of the darker woodwork often seen in older motorhomes, the Ratcliffes were thrilled to see the Country Coach's bright-white cabinetry. Other pluses were the open floorplan and the roomy rear bedroom with a queen-size island bed. Yes, the carpet, tapestry valances and gold fixtures were dated and, yes, the body definitely needed work,



Debi and Clay Ratcliffe relax inside their renovated Intrigue with their puppy, Cody.

but all of those things could be changed. More important were the mechanical and structural integrity of the Intrigue. With only 34,000 miles on the Cummins 350 diesel engine and six-speed Allison transmission, working systems throughout and no sign of leaks or other structural damage, both of them felt the Country Coach was worth restoring.

"I guess you could say we saw its

Owner-designed graphics combine with custom high-performance marine paint to make this Country Coach one of a kind.



Photos: Eric Eichenmuller



potential,” Debi says.

There was only one problem. The Ratcliffes had fallen in love with the Keys and were about to buy a house there, and there was no place on the lot to park a motorhome. Clay pointed this out to Debi, and his wife’s reaction surprised him.

“She said, ‘Then let’s scrap the house’,” he remembers, laughing.

Clay wasn’t so sure.

“He asked me if I thought I could be happy living in a motorhome,” Debi says. “I told him, ‘As long as we’re traveling.’”

The decision made, they settled on a price of \$32,000 and began the process of downsizing their possessions to fit their new home. While living on a boat had accustomed them to smaller spaces, the Ratcliffes still had a condo in New Smyrna Beach, three storage units and a rented airplane hangar, which Clay referred to as his “man cave.” They pared down their belongings to only what could fit in the Country Coach and a single 10-by-15-foot storage unit; a process that Clay admits was harder for him than it was for Debi.

At the same time, they began the renovation of the Intrigue. Clay’s work with offshore racing convinced

Above: The rear bedroom features mirrored cabinet doors and a roomy queen-size bed. White cabinetry, an open floorplan, and pale gray carpet create a bright and inviting interior.

him that any paint that could stand up to saltwater, UV rays and speeds in excess of 180 mph on a powerboat would be perfect for a motorhome. He contacted a DeLand, Florida, performance-marine-paint facility and then he and Debi worked on the design. Clay favored red and black, and after looking at dozens of RV exteriors, Debi knew she wanted softer graphics than those found on most modern motorhomes. She drew out her idea for the sides, emphasizing “a free look, not real tight,” and they took their concept to their painter, who designed a continuation of Debi’s sketch for the Country Coach’s rear panel as well.

The process of prepping and painting took weeks, including removal of the decals and extensive sanding where their presence had etched the surface. This was followed by the application of four coats of a high-performance paint and 11 clear coats, with wet sanding between each one.

“You can run your hand over it, and it feels seamless,” Clay notes.

It also looks stunning. Our first glimpse came while in a campground on our way back from a solar eclipse

trip in South Carolina. As we drove past the Ratcliffes’ Intrigue, we stopped to stare at our reflection in all of those glistening clear coats and knew we were looking at the next classic ride.

Our conclusion was confirmed when we stepped inside the Country Coach the following morning. The interior’s white color scheme is in sharp contrast to the dark exterior, a surprising visual twist that makes the living area seem larger than you might expect with a single slide. The dated tapestry valances and slideout inlay had been replaced with a light gray ultraleather, and the couple had installed a contemporary aircraft-grade carpeting to match. All of the gold hardware had been replaced with stainless steel as well, and together with the original white cabinetry and white ultraleather upholstery, these changes created a sleek, modern look. It also blended perfectly with the existing tile floor and gray-and-white solid-surface countertop in the galley.

All the appliances, including the two-burner stove, convection

GONE COUNTRY

Country Coach was founded by Bob Lee, formerly of Caribou Manufacturing (which later became Monaco). He owned the company until 2002, and the high-end motorhomes built by Country Coach during that era have a reputation for quality construction. A 2000 Intrigue in good condition sells for between \$45,000 and \$69,000 on the used market, making the Ratcliffes’ purchase a great deal. They estimate their total investment with all upgrades came in at less than \$100,000.

▶ The 2000 Country Coach Intrigue with original decals and awning.



Photo: Clay Ratcliffe

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The Classic Ride

microwave and refrigerator were original, though the coach did sport a clunky 1990s TV that needed to be replaced. The TV was built into an area over the dash and stuck out far enough to be a head-banger when entering the coach. Clay had recently removed the old unit and was rebuilding the cabinetry around it to make room for a new flat-screen monitor. While some minor renovations like replacing the TV and a few remaining gold fixtures were ongoing, the majority of the work had been completed. Debi says the entire process was made “more interesting” by the fact that they were living in the coach while much of the work was done. She is quick to note that while the couple did “the little things” like replacing hardware themselves, the larger jobs were left for skilled craftsmen.

“We were blessed to find people who were good at what they did,” she says gratefully.

Another blessing was the support of Country Coach’s parts department staff, with whom Clay has been in frequent contact. He emphasizes the importance of being thoroughly familiar with your coach, from reading the owner’s manual to being involved with maintenance and mechanical work. The couple jokes that they don’t just drop the Intrigue off at the shop — they drop off Clay, too. A self-professed “gearhead,” he watches everything that is done so that he can better understand his motorhome.

Knowledge has also been key in Debi’s transition to the RV lifestyle. She was surprised to find how many women did not drive their own motorhomes. She immediately signed up for an RV driving course, an experience she credits with her comfort behind the wheel.

Another key to the transition has been the purchase of a 33-foot trailer to haul the couple’s Cadillac Escalade and their two motorcycles. The custom design includes side fold-down “wings” that allow the bikes to be unloaded without having to first remove the SUV. Clay admits he spends a lot of his time working on the



The mirrored backsplash and an emphasis on white gives a sense of space in the bathroom.

trailer and jokes that it has become his new “man cave.”

“Sometimes you each need a brief break when you’re sharing 320 square feet,” he laughs.

The trailer increased their total length to nearly 74 feet, requiring Clay to call ahead for permits as they travel, and leading the couple to get handheld radios to assist with parking. Typically Clay will give directions from the ground while Debi maneuvers the coach and trailer, a system that has caused quite a stir in some campgrounds. Their favorite story involves pulling into a very narrow Key West campsite at 11 p.m.

“Everyone had their lights on, and all of these men came outside, looking panicked. Debi laid it in perfectly so the dual wheels were just 1 inch from the edge of the pad,” he says proudly.

“They didn’t see Clay with the walkie talkie,” Debi laughs. “All these men were watching a blonde park the coach!”

It takes only a few minutes with Debi and Clay to appreciate how much they are enjoying their motorhome. In less than 14 months, they have transformed their 18-year-old Country Coach into a showplace, and it, in turn, has transformed their lives. That is the power of a great motorhome, and what makes this 2000 Intrigue a classic ride. **M**

(continued from page 30)

replaced the entire ceiling, which was costly but covered by insurance since the loss was “sudden and accidental.”

#3 Such a deal. An elderly man had been living for many years in his older Class A at a Florida RV resort. Unfortunately because of ill health he had to be admitted to a long-term care facility. He asked his neighbor, Jeff, a snowbird who rented a park model annually, “If you want my coach, you can have it for a dollar, provided you remove it from the site within a week.” Although the engine wouldn’t start, “it seemed like such a deal,” that Jeff couldn’t pass it up. For \$500, he had it towed to a storage lot, where it remained until the following season.

When Jeff returned south in the fall, he had the motorhome towed to an RV repair shop. Much to his dismay, it needed major repairs: engine, transmission, brakes, exhaust system, tires, batteries and the list went on, adding more than \$30,000 to the \$1 motorhome. After rebuilding his motorhome to a roadworthy condition, Jeff’s limited finances prevented him from fulfilling his dream of “hitting the road.” In the end, he was forced to sell it — at a considerable loss.



HELPFUL HINT: If you’re thinking of buying a motorhome at a price that’s too good to be true, it probably is.

For the first time in the history of this column, each of our final two awards are rightfully shared between two people — the RVer who reported the



HELPFUL HINT: A spotter should look up as well as to the sides and back of the rig to ensure adequate clearance when backing into a campsite. Low branches are especially problematic in smaller and more primitive campgrounds such as those found at state parks.

mishap and the unwitting friend who caused it. Drum roll, please!

#2 A partial hookup. Getting ready to depart a campground in his coach, Paul was hooking up the dinghy vehicle when his neighbor, Ed, offered assistance. As Paul was putting in the left tow-bar pin and hooking up the cables, Ed inserted the right pin.

About 100 miles down the road, all appeared fine until he crossed a very rough, narrow bridge. Immediately afterward, he glanced in the right-side mirror and noticed that his dinghy was riding on the shoulder, as if attempting to pass. Carefully stopping, he went back to discover that the right pin was gone, most likely because Ed had not pushed it all the way in until it locked.

Paul remarked, “Thinking back on the bridge crossing, if my car had been off to the side just before the bridge, it probably would have climbed the guardrail and landed in the river, not to mention other possible damages to my motorhome.” A scary thought indeed! Fortunately, he was able to obtain a hitch pin nearby and was soon back on the road with his dinghy safely attached behind.

Paul learned a valuable lesson: “Don’t accept help with departure duties from anyone without checking their work.”

DUMBEST THING

#1 Water woes. While at a campground in his Class B motorhome, Rick’s galley faucet stopped flowing. In the process of trying to diagnose the problem, an impromptu group excursion came up with some camping buddies and he decided to go along. When he got back and opened the door, a flood of water came cascading out. His dog was standing on the dinette table; no doubt

thankful he didn’t have to doggy paddle until his rescue. Rick had left the faucet open and it never occurred to him to take the stopper out of the sink, “since there was no water flowing.”

Rick shut off the tap at the campground hookup and mopped up the water; then he left to “blow off some steam” with his buddies. Another friend, who saw Rick turn off the outside tap, thought he would be helpful by turning it back on. Several hours later, Rick returned and opened the door to another cascade of water! He had again left the faucet open with the stopper still in the sink, “since there was no water flowing!”

Apparently, a piece of plastic had become lodged in the faucet, shutting off the water. For some unknown reason it shifted, allowing water to resume flowing. Rick said, “I will never, ever leave the stopper in my sink again, except to do the dishes.”

Two floods in one day — with a little help from a friend — definitely warrants our top RV Oops Award for this year!

These last two awards illustrate that many of the friendly folks we meet along the way are more than willing to lend a helping hand. Ultimately, of course, responsibility for successful outcomes rests with the RVer who accepts help — which means it’s always a good idea to check that the job was done properly.

The author thanks all of this year’s winners for sharing their stories so that others can benefit from their mistakes. And now for the moment of truth! Whether you’re a novice or a seasoned roadie, think back over your RVing history. Have you ever done something dumb that you wish you hadn’t? Be honest ... almost everyone I ask comes up with something! Feel free to share your story with me by email (captmac@shaw.ca) and I’ll try to include it in next year’s RV Oops Awards. **M**



Run a Lap

I didn't like the plastic lock available to secure my new — and expensive — surge protector. So, I purchased two 3/8-inch-by-2-inch lap (repair) chain links and a lock. The repair links need to be placed in a vise and spread open with a large screwdriver or pry bar. After fitting one over the surge-protector cable and another over the shorepower line, press them closed with large pliers. Insert the lock and you have added anti-theft protection for less than \$20.

Mike Sivila | Grass Valley, California



Flying Flags

Looking for a fun, inexpensive and easy project to embellish our motorhome, I made flags of all the places we visited this summer. I purchased self-stick foam squares from a craft store, stuck them together and drew with an indelible marker (or cut out) a shape to symbolize each camping trip. I then strung them on ribbon and hung them from the motorhome's awning. The shapes are weatherproof and are instant conversation makers.

Pat Lasus | Via email

Classic Clothespin

I've had problems with the rain gutters on my motorhome in that the water just runs down the side of the motorhome and leaves streaks. Even after I put on the gutter extensions it still didn't get the water far enough away from the side to stop the streaks. So, I put clothespins on the extensions, and that seemed to work just fine. Be sure to remove them for travel or they will blow off.

Martin Ashurst | Quartzsite, Arizona

Off the Cross Bar

While inside the motorhome at night with the lights on, people who are rude enough to walk through your campsite can easily see through the screen door. I decided to remedy that by making a custom curtain (that matches the décor) that I installed on a Screen Door Cross Bar (part No. 35872; MSRP: \$15.89) from Camping World. Simply measure the width of the screen door and measure down from the cross bar to the desired fabric length and then hem all sides. Sew some loops on the top to fit over the cross bar to provide some privacy. The curtain also helps to prevent your dogs from barking at every little thing that passes by.

Peggy Straka | Rialto, California 



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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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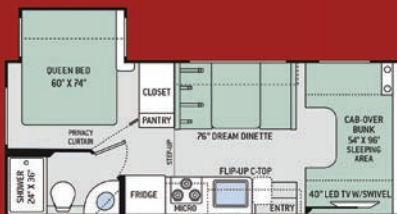
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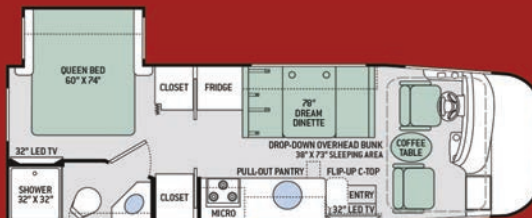
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Electrical Zap



Feeling burned after an extended-warranty provider wouldn't reimburse her for electrical repairs to her motorhome, a reader asked Hot Line to step in. She wrote:

“ In October 2016, we purchased a 2015 Itasca Navion from Reliable RV in Springfield, Missouri. At that time, we also purchased a Mechanical Protection Plan (MPP) service contract for \$4,150, along with MPP Club Plus for \$1,210. When we took the motorhome to Dauphin Island, Alabama, in March, we experienced many problems. The air conditioner did not work, the refrigerator did not get cold, the water heater did not work and the Jensen [stereo] unit did not work. We took the motorhome in for repairs, and the cost came to \$451.03. We were not reimbursed, as the insurer said these were all electrical problems, even though electrical problems were said to be covered.

In April, we spoke to Jennifer Brazeale, the Reliable RV finance manager who sold us the extended warranties, and she said she would work on the problem. We have emailed and talked with her on the phone. We were told at various times that she was still working on it. Then we were told that the repairs would be covered. The check was to be sent in May. Can you help us?

Diana French | Alexander City, Alabama

It seems there was a bit of confusion between the warranty company and French, so we sent a letter to Reliable RV.

The company responded:

Thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. I was unaware of this matter until we received this letter in the mail. So, let me apologize for the delay in coming to a resolution.

After discussing the matter with MPP, the claim was denied due to a poor prior repair done to the electrical system as reported by the servicing company. In order for claims to be approved, they must be presented in a manner that is consistent with proper maintenance. The Reliable RV employee did not understand that there was an issue with prior repairs, which led to the denial. That is why she initially said the claim would be covered.

In order to resolve this issue, we have decided to reimburse Diana French the \$451.03.

Jim Rothfuss, RV Director, Reliable Imports and RV | Springfield, Missouri

French later added:

“ Thanks for your help with the reimbursement from Reliable RV. We tried for more than four months on our own, and got nowhere. Each email promised help or a check in a mail, but nothing happened until you wrote a letter.

D.F.

Awning Failure

When a motorhome's awning failed to extend after only a handful of uses, a reader turned to Hot Line for help.

He wrote:

“ I bought a new 2013 Winnebago Vista in June 2013 from RCD RV Supercenter in Delaware, Ohio. I only used the motorhome eight times since that date, and the Dometic awning has been used less than 10 times.

In February 2017, I drove the motorhome to Florida for a month's stay. I extended the awning upon arrival and left it open for about two weeks. When I pushed the button to retract the awning it would not operate. I called Charlotte RV Center in Punta Gorda, Florida, to repair the awning motor, at a cost of \$925.31.

The technician informed me the motor failed due to a manufacturing defect, as the unit had twisted itself in two. I sent the unit to Dometic so it could evaluate the failure. Even though the awning was past the warranty period, I am asking for at least partial reimbursement of this repair.

John E. Baus | Lancaster, Ohio

This is a sticky situation, given that the motorhome (and its awning) were no longer under warranty. Because motorhomes are sometimes used only on occasion, such failures can be quite frustrating to owners, who still may consider their products as “like new” even though, in this case, the motorhome was four years old.

But, since the failure appeared to be the result of a manufacturing defect, we passed along the request to Dometic.

We heard back from Baus a short time later.

“ The difficulty obtaining a refund was remedied: Dometic sent me a check.

J.B. M

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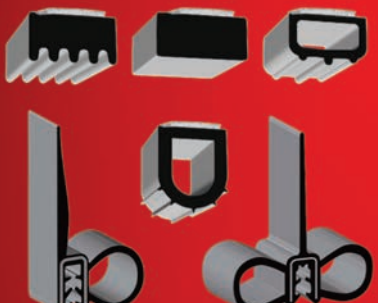
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While every effort is made to maintain accuracy and completeness, last-minute changes may occasionally result in omissions or errors.

By Ken Freund

Power for a CPAP Machine

Q As a follow-up to September's "Using CPAP Machines" letter, I also have a need for a CPAP machine. Partly for me and mostly for my better half (no more snoring, that is). We have a 2017 Winnebago SunStar LX 35F, and when on battery power, the electrical receptacle by the nightstand is not converted to 120 volts AC. I have to plug in an extension cord into the converted receptacle by the TV. The issue here is that my wife has tripped over it at night. She has at times pulled the CPAP machine off the nightstand and wakes me up with the air tube wrapped around my neck. Is there a way that I can make the receptacle on the nightstand connect to the inverter? I'm sure there are others who have the same question.

Michael Muir | Twinsburg, Ohio

A Taking a look at the wiring schematic for this motorhome, it appears that your nightstand is in the



slideout on a completely different circuit. In order to have the nightstand receptacle be serviced by the inverter, you'll have to rewire at the power distribution panel. I suggest that you take the motorhome to your nearest Winnebago dealer, preferably the one you bought it from, explain your situation, and see what it can do. Wiring diagrams are available on the Winnebago website, at <http://winnebagoind.com/resources/manuals>.

Leaky Light

Q We own a 2003 Winnebago Adventurer 35U. Last spring, we found water dripping on the dash. After a little exploring, I discovered a broken clearance lamp that was not noticeable from the ground. I figure it must have been struck by a bird on the last trip out.

The fix should have been simple: two screws, a \$10 lamp and a gasket. After taking the lamp to three dealers in the Tulsa, Oklahoma, area I'm not having any luck. Camping World called Winnebago and found that the vendor is out of business. No problem, Colaw salvage is only 125 miles from Tulsa. Colaw was willing to help and asked me to send pictures. I sent some photos with a tape measure showing dimensions, but they couldn't help. Salvage yards that I found on the Internet also couldn't help. They all want to sell front clips, not a \$10 lamp. These five front lamps are recessed and

can only be replaced with the exact lamp. I'm told it is illegal to drive with duct tape over the recess. I would appreciate any help or direction you can give; we have been shut down this year for want of a \$10 lamp.

Joe and Gwen Russell | Sapulpa, Oklahoma

A It can be frustrating when something like this occurs. But don't give up RVing because of it. Very few police will stop you for one clearance light being out, and most of them would accept your explanation that you are trying to find one because they are discontinued. In the worst case, you might get a fix-it ticket or small fine. The lights don't have to match, they only have to be working and DOT-approved. I suggest that you go to the nearest auto parts store and find the closest light that will fit, and install it. Then fill the space around it with sealant. During your travels, stop at RV salvage yards (you can find them with a Google search) and inquire if they have something. Good luck.

Surround Sound ... Doesn't!

Q We have a 2006 Class B Gulf Stream Vista Cruiser with a 2.7-liter turbodiesel. I bought it a year ago and have been unable to get the surround sound speakers to work. On the radio knobs, I do see the surround sound speakers, and TV/video, etc., but haven't had any luck. I've checked the fuses, etc. Before I take it to a shop, I just wondered if anyone has had the same type of problem.

Jack Adam | Bay City, Michigan

A You didn't mention if you have any sound at all, or what brands of components you have currently installed. When the motorhome was new, it came with a Flip Down TV/DVD/CD/FM entertainment unit with four speakers. The issue is most likely with this unit, unless the system has been replaced since it was new. If you don't have the original owner's packet or the manual for the TV, I recommend looking up the make and model on the

Internet and searching for the manual where you can check the trouble-shooting information.

Make sure the source of the sound is OK (i.e., the TV). Next trace the wiring and confirm there are no speaker switches in the circuit somewhere, which are often located in a cabinet. It's possible the TV and dash stereo share the same speakers. Then, if that doesn't work, check all the wiring connections for the TV and each speaker.

If I had to hazard a guess, I would say there's either a speaker switch somewhere (or a relay of some kind) or there's a problem with the output of the TV.

Refrigerator Makes Battery Go Dead — Tip

In your answer to Mike Morgan ("Refrigerator Makes Battery Go Dead") in the September issue about his refrigerator drawing too much 12-volt DC power, you didn't mention the possibility of a climate control heater on his refrigerator being the problem.

We don't know what brand of refrigerator he has, but my Dometic has a climate control heater that draws 12-volt DC power and the company recommends turning it OFF when a charging source is not available.

Doug Wolf | Pueblo, Colorado

Thanks for reminding me of this feature, Doug. It uses a lot of 12-volt [battery power] to heat up the refrigerator wall surface so that it doesn't allow moisture in the air to condense and drip down. Folks with this feature should turn this function off when camping without hookups.

Stationary Use

Q I have a 2015 Fleetwood Bouncer gas motorhome. This winter I will be parked on gravel in an RV resort for about six months without moving. Usually I move around. Is there anything I should do while parked to maintain the motorhome?

Karen Manning | Boise, Idaho

A There are a number of things to do. I suggest that you add fuel stabilizer, such as STA-BIL, before parking. Also, exercise the generator according to its owner's manual instructions. Make sure both the engine and house batteries are kept properly charged and full, using distilled water as needed. In addition, be sure tire pressure is kept at specified levels. If you're staying in cold weather, winterize the motorhome's plumbing system for local conditions.

Squeal on Startup

Q Why does my 1993 Fleetwood Bouncer squeal loudly every time I start the engine? The squeal lasts for up to four minutes. What can cause this?

Mike "Doc" Holliday | Via email

A This problem is almost always caused by a slipping drivebelt on the front of the engine. When you first start the engine, the alternator goes to a high charge mode to try to return the power to the battery that was expended during cranking. This takes several minutes, typically. Hence there is more load on the belt at this time. As the belts get old they stretch slightly and harden, which can cause them to slip. You should be able to confirm this by having an assistant start the engine while you stand in front with the hood open, listening for the direction of the noise. Given the age of your motorhome, and the fact that it has been slipping so much, I suggest that you replace the belt.

Ford Fuel Pump Failure Comment

In your September issue, I read Dwayne Neal's stalling problem ("Ford Fuel Pump Failure?") he was having with his 1992 Itasca with the Ford 460. I had a similar problem with a 1995 Ford 460 in a National Dolphin. After several years of dealing with the same issues as Neal, I determined it was not the fuel pump, but the idle control valve. This valve is located on the manifold directly below the throttle

body, and costs around \$50 to replace. In my case the engine would run fine at highway speeds, and would falter and die when coming to an idle. Yes, it would appear to be the fuel pump, but the motor would run perfectly at load and highway speeds with no lack of power. As it came to idle, the motor had a poor idle, sometimes backfiring. As in Neal's case, allowing the motor (and attached idle control valve) to cool down would solve the problem until next time. There was a recall on these fuel pumps years ago, and I can't help but think Neal's motorhome already has the new pump. I wanted to pass this along to everyone because replacing the fuel pump is quite an expense and might not be necessary.

Mike Johnstone | Middletown, Iowa

Thanks for writing, Mike. Electrical components often start working again after cooling down. A key difference here is that when the fuel pump is bad, the engine won't have enough power to run well under load. The idle air control valve simply meters how much air goes into the engine and sets idle speed according to engine computer commands. Before a fuel pump is replaced, the fuel pressure should be tested under load and the pressure regulator tested as well, along with checking the fuel filter. By the way, I have heard from several owners of these rigs that they had to replace the pumps more than once.

Ford Fuel Pump Failure — Tip

The September "Ford Fuel Pump Failure?" question rang a bell for me. I own a 1986 Chieftain that went through the same symptoms in hot and/or high-altitude driving. At first it would quit running at anything below a half-tank of gas. This coach was built before ethanol was used in gasoline and the hose that held the lift pump in the tank had partially dissolved, dropping the pump to the bottom of the tank. I replaced the hose and the pump, resolving that problem, but then the hot weather and high-altitude problems began. I am a mechanic with

more than 40 years of experience. I have a new laser thermometer that can read the surface temperature. When the hesitations reared their ugly head, I grabbed the thermometer and checked several surfaces in the fuel system. First, the fuel tank was 155 degrees Fahrenheit (at an ambient temperature of 80 degrees). The fuel line alongside the engine (6 inches from the exhaust manifold at 500-plus degrees) was 210 degrees, which is hot enough to cause vapor lock. The pump in the tank was fine, as it was new. After lengthy testing and changes, I finally put an end to the problem. First, the fuel tank was between the tailpipes, with 5 inches of spacing on both sides. I installed reflective aluminum shielding between the tank and pipes and also on the front of the tank to dissipate the radiant heat before it got to the tank.

Next I added reflective aluminum shielding between the manifold and the inbound fuel line. These changes made a difference as the fuel tank is now only 5 degrees above ambient. However, the problem was still not completely solved; in stop-and-go traffic the engine end of the fuel system was still too hot. I relocated the mechanical fuel pump line that runs to the carburetor from between the engine block and the water pump to out over the valve covers, then forward and down to the mechanical pump. I covered that line with aircraft fire shield that insulates and protects the line. Then I added an electric fuel cooler that turns on when the engine oil temperature hits 190 degrees and stays running until the engine is shut down and the oil temp falls back to 185 degrees. The cooler is in the line between the mechanical fuel pump and the carburetor. The fuel-line outlet temperature is 30 degrees cooler than the inlet. Follow-up testing has proven that the vapor lock is cured. New rigs probably don't have these problems with the advent of the fuel-injected engine and today's technologies, but vapor lock is a villain on the older rigs.

Bob Doughty | Earlville, Illinois

Thanks for sharing your solution to this vexing problem, Bob. These steps

should help readers with vapor lock problems. The situation is exacerbated by ethanol in gasoline, which lowers the boiling point of the fuel. Fuel-injected engines have much higher fuel pressures than carbureted models, and the higher pressure raises the boiling point of the fuel, often preventing vapor lock in electronic fuel injection (EFI) models.

Possible Overcharging

Q We recently took our first road trip in our 2014 Fleetwood Southwind 34A. We found that the engine alternator applies 14.2 volts DC to the house batteries at all times, from start in the morning to lunch. Then, if we're driving in the afternoon, the voltage remains at the same 14.2 volts DC. The house batteries use water far more quickly than in our prior trips of only a few hours. It would appear the voltage should taper down to something like 13.6 volts DC at some point.

I recently lost a cell in one of the 3½-year-old 6-volt house batteries, so am looking to replace them, possibly with AGM (which won't lose the water but may still be overcharged). But first, I'd like to resolve why the house battery charging voltage doesn't drop. My one and only idea is using the battery-disconnect switch to isolate the house battery while driving. I have no idea what items in the motorhome will still have power; i.e., is there power for the refrigerator controller to turn the LP-gas on and off?

Chuck Peterson | Glendale, Arizona

A The only part that can cause overcharging by the alternator is the voltage regulator connected to it. (In a rare case I did once find that a faulty ground connection also caused this condition.) Typically, quality voltage regulators have temperature compensation circuitry, which should drop the voltage as full charge is reached. However, if the battery with a bad cell was connected when you were measuring charging voltage, it's possible that the voltage regulator was trying to compensate for the load

created by the bad cell. Since you know the battery needs to be replaced (fully charge the new battery before installation), do that first and then retest charging voltage. The refrigerator and LP-gas valve and leak detector will not operate if the house battery is turned off, so it's better to resolve the problem than try to work around it.

MaxxFoer Comment

I have 2012 Monaco with a MaxxFoer 10 engine, and have had problems. I have not read much about this engine in your magazine. The big problem I had was the EGR cooler leaking into the oil system. I took the motorhome to International dealers and RV shops to do the repairs and service, and was always dissatisfied with the quality of workmanship. This summer I went to Brattain International Trucks in Eugene, Oregon. Its service manager, Dave Heath, and shop mechanic knew what needed to be repaired to make it run in a proper manner. There were many error codes that needed to be erased, and computer updates to be performed. I also learned that the Navistar computer on the motor does not interface well with the Monaco computer. I want to tell all MaxxFoer owners to make sure their service center has the knowledge to work on their motorhome, as they are not trucks.

Melvin Jones | Surprise, Arizona

The main reason you don't see much about that engine in this column is because I don't get many reader letters with problems from them, which is a good thing! I'm glad to hear about a shop that does a fine job and am happy to share that information. I'm glad you got it fixed. **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.



Small Things

How a simple word opens the door to the best of traveling by motorhome

By Alan Rider

While scientists may debate the finer points, I can say with a high degree of confidence that something about the way our brains are wired just predisposes us to focus on the big stuff. And I'm no different.

You see, when I started this column I thought it would be all about those broad themes — fascinating people, grand vistas — that we normally associate with traveling by motorhome.

And sure, we've had plenty of that, what with meeting the very embodiment of Samuel Langhorne Clemens aboard one of the last genuine paddlewheel riverboats still plying Mark Twain's mighty Mississippi. Not to mention staring up at an arm of our Milky Way galaxy so bright it cast its own shadow on a moonless night during the Grand Canyon Star Party. I could go on, but 'nuff said.

What has surprised — and frankly delighted — me though are the many small things that have occurred between here and there; some so trifling they scarcely seemed worth recounting at the time, the things I now consider to be the real gifts of motorhome travel.

Like the neighbor in an adjacent space in a Rapid City, South Dakota, RV park who — after seeing my city-water connection repeatedly turn into a not-so-decorative fountain after

several attempts at getting hooked up — casually walked over and asked if I'd like some help with that. Being on the edge of ripping out what little hair I had left, I was glad to let him have a go at it. Turned out to be a faulty washer, which my new friend not only happened to have in his tool kit but also was more than happy to install for me gratis. And, *voilà!*, the water show was over just as the last rays of the sun sank below the aptly named Black Hills.

Now I tell you this story not because it's some wise admonition to keep spare parts on hand, but because it represents something more fundamental and vastly more important. You see, it was nothing less than a simple-but-ever-so-welcome example of undiluted human kindness.

As we hurtle toward the gift-giving holidays ahead, I'd like to suggest that we look, not for opportunities to buy more stuff we probably don't need anyway, but to give something that may cost us little but may well prove to be of incalculable value to the receiver.

Now, when you stop to consider it, there is a two-part test of whether an act is kind or not. First, acts of kindness are largely unexpected; otherwise they would be just another transaction of daily life. Second, an act of kindness must come from a truly selfless place. Which is not to say you can't get something out of the exchange — because you almost certainly will, even if it's only a sense of having made a positive deposit into your own karmic piggybank.

As usual, this is hardly a new idea. In fact, its best summation — the phrase "Above All Else, Be Kind" — goes so far back, its origins are lost in the mists of time. Which, like all other good notions, gives it true staying power.

Am I good at taking advantage of all these opportunities to share kindnesses as I go about my travels? Well, frankly, no. But it gives me one more small but significant thing I can look forward to as I'm out there exploring The Road Ahead. **M**

“As usual, this is hardly a new idea. In fact, its best summation — the phrase ‘Above All Else, Be Kind’ — goes so far back, its origins are lost in the mists of time.”

Kind Rewind ↻

Right: From a visit with Mark Twain to a lively Grand Canyon star party, life in a motorhome has allowed the author a first-hand look at what makes RVing so special.



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