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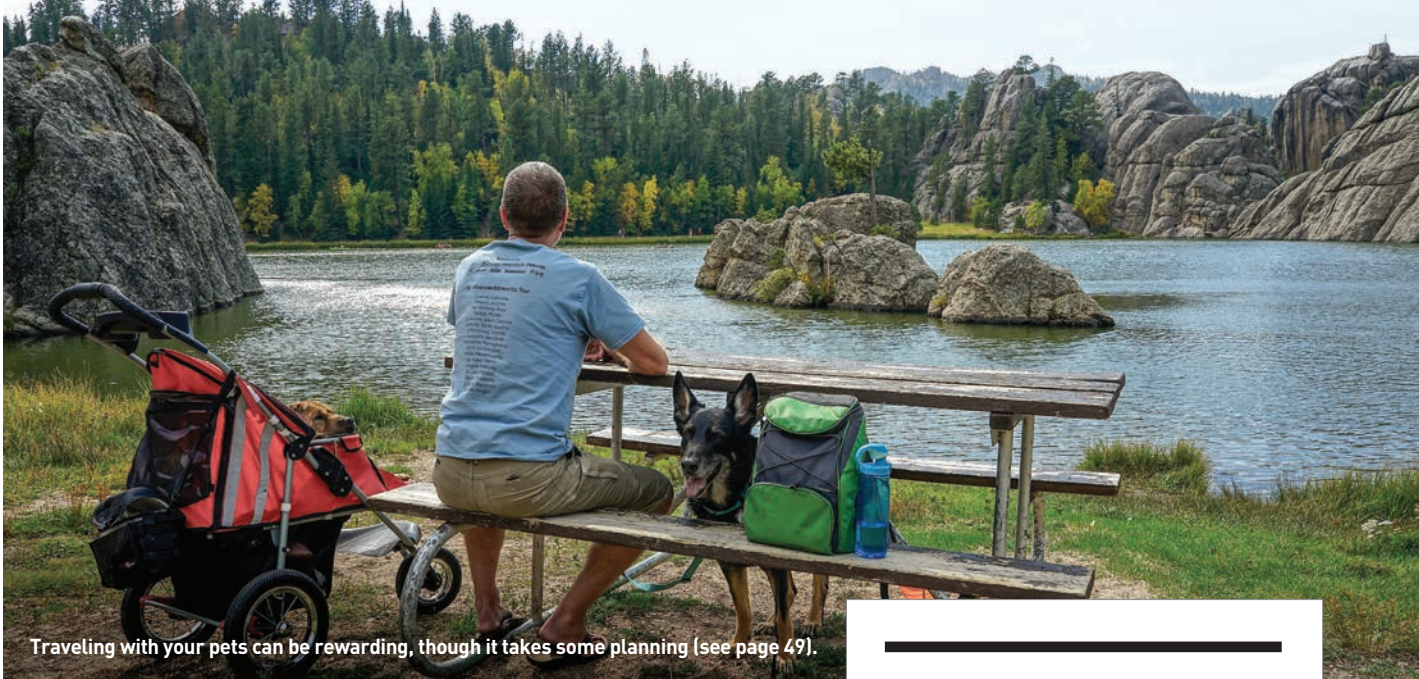
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Traveling with your pets can be rewarding, though it takes some planning (see page 49).



Selecting the right chassis for a motorhome is important to maximize livability features and ensure smooth ride and handling. Pg. 64

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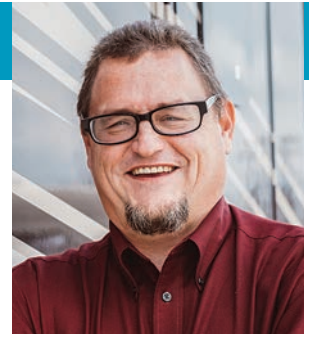
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Based on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis, the Coach House Arriva is equipped with the latest technology, leading to a pleasant ride and enhanced livability (see test on page 58). Photo by Shawn Spence.





By Kristopher Bunker

# They

**A**s I've said before within the confines of this column — and to most anybody who will listen to the ramblings of a middle-aged motorhome enthusiast — my parents were right. They really don't make things like they used to. In this case, "They" refers to motorhome manufacturers. At the risk of yet another cliché, today's motorhomes aren't your father's motorhomes.

My father's motorhomes, and my own, to an extent, were homes on wheels that allowed us the freedom to explore the country without the need for airlines, hotels and never-ending fast food trips. But, for the most part, what they didn't allow us was the ability to remain "plugged in," without actually plugging in. Sure, generators gave us the ability (albeit quite noisy) to power up our essentials; a cup of coffee or hot cocoa in the morning, lights when we needed to see the cards we were dealt in the latest game of Old Maid, or even the smallish refrigerators that kept our sodas and iced tea cold. Heck, we might even have been able to run the fan for a little while to let some of the hot air out of the motorhome.

But then those generators began to evolve, sipping less fuel and becoming quieter; eventually they began to cease smelling like a fuel station. They could even handle more power, as in, run the air conditioner during the day kind of power. But we wanted more.

As our everyday power

requirements increase, so, too, must our ability to seek alternative power sources. And, with the uptick in the popularity of Class B motorhomes and the freedom their respective owners so often seek, "They" began to research, test and implement improved ways of delivering power to our motorhomes without busting the bank.

As you'll read in "What's New," beginning on page 78, several manufacturers are debuting power solutions to help motorhome owners stay off the grid without sacrificing their electronic conveniences. Lithium batteries, solar power and upgraded inverter-chargers are becoming commonplace on many Class B's; it's only a matter of time before they dominate across the board.


This month's test motorhome, the Coach House Arriva (see test on page 58) Class B, boasts a solar-power system, inverter-charger and super quiet generator — technologies that have been around, yes, but no longer are they strictly reserved for those of

us with a healthy stock portfolio.

But motorhome life isn't all about lithium batteries and solar power. The majority of coaches still rely on conventional batteries, like those in the absorbed glass matt (AGM) install E. Don Smith performs in "Motorhome Battery Upgrade," beginning on page 72. A seasoned motorhome owner and noted wrench-turner, Smith takes us through the detailed replacement process of chassis and house batteries, offering first-hand insight along the way.

One of the primary benefits of the power our motorhomes receive is refrigeration; keeping food cold is a necessity. "Cold Spells," beginning on page 68, includes tips on how to keep a refrigerator running smoothly.

And finally, the word "power" can cause another reaction to motorhome owners. Larger chassis often result in more engine power and torque, so we've rounded up the top so-called "Super C" chassis beginning on page 64 to give you the skinny on each of these powerful machines.

Our newfound expectation of power is a good thing. As with any product, the more the consumer wants it, the more likely they'll find it. And, as demand has increased, the costs of such technologies have been dropping. And we can thank "They" for that. 

## Contributors | July






**Amy Burkert** and her husband, Rod, sold their house a decade ago, bought a motorhome and went full-time with their two dogs, Ty and Buster. They share their experiences at [www.GoPetFriendly.com](http://www.GoPetFriendly.com).



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**E. Don Smith** is a Tennessee-based freelance writer and photographer who has been a frequent contributor to *MotorHome* since 2006. He is the proud owner of a Tiffin Phaeton coach.

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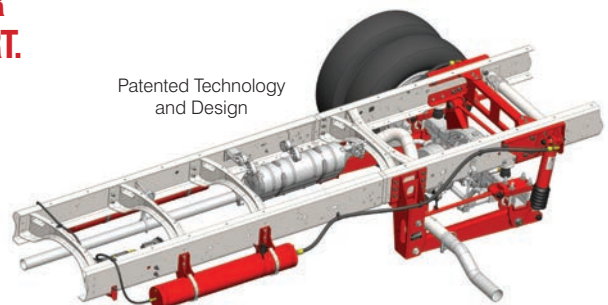


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## Have you installed a dump station at your residence for your motorhome? What were the most challenging aspects of the job?

Those are the questions we asked in the April issue, and here are some of the responses we received.

### “T” Time

We have installed a residential dump station at two of our previous homes; it does save a lot of time and money. After returning from a vacation, usually late at night, the last thing we want to do is find a dump station. We would dump early somewhere on the way home or after leaving the campground, but found we still wanted to use the facilities on the drive home. And once home, having to take the rig out again to dump was a pain.

The first thing you should do is check with your city, county and sewer service to make sure this is allowed. They may see it as an additional bathroom, especially where septic is involved.

Then find where your sewer line runs; hopefully there is a spot you can drive your motorhome next to that isn't paved over. Have a plumber dig a small hole down to the sewer pipe, cut a splice out of the pipe and install a T that goes above ground with a cap on it. Make sure the opening to the T is large enough for your RV sewer hose to go into. It can also be used as a cleanout of your residential sewer line, which is what you should tell your plumber you want it for. You might run into issues with old sewer lines that are clay.

**M. James | via email**

### Can You Dig It?

Back in 1980, my old sewer line was terracotta and clogged with roots. So, I dug up the entire 25 feet and replaced

it with 4-inch PVC. When I bought my RV, I dug down to the pipe near my driveway, bought a “street L” (a pipe with a curve toward the sewer), then cut two 8-inch sections of 4-inch pipe and bought two Felco couplers. I glued the 8-inch sections into each end of the street L, then cut into the sewer and removed a section of pipe equal to the length of the new street L. Once everything fit, I removed the new part and slid the Felco couplers on each end of the sewer line. Using some liquid soap on the PVC to allow the couplers to slide (since they have to be pushed completely onto the existing pipe), I then dropped in the new pipe and slid the couplers onto the stubs. Next, I tightened the clamps on the couplers while holding the street L upright and

## Featured Letter

### Follow the Rules

I did, indeed, install an RV dump station at home next to my driveway. During a major remodel of my house, for several months I was living in my Country Coach motorhome, which was parked alongside the garage. I was doing the exterior plumbing/sewage work myself, so I tied in a 50-foot section of 4-inch PVC sewer pipe to the main line that goes down to the city sewer in the street, and terminated the business end with a screw-on cap inside an in-ground basin (similar to those that would be used for a sprinkler system) next to the driveway.

With the excavation already happening, and the main sewer pipe exposed, it was a piece of cake, but even without that it would have been fairly easy to trench a path from the driveway to a main pipe tie-in. It all depends on how far you have to go, and perhaps renting equipment if it entails a lot of shoveling. And of course, be careful of buried power and gas lines. Call the utility companies before you dig.

A couple of caveats: I did check with the city plumbing inspector to make sure this was legal and inspected, and I do not use any formaldehyde or other chemicals in my RV waste tanks — only

natural/organic treatments (as it was explained to me, the dump/pipe system is not a problem by itself, but what gets dumped in it could be). So be sure to check with your city or county sewer department to verify the rules in your area. Of course, if you have your own septic system you can probably do whatever you want, but I'd still be wary of certain chemicals potentially getting into the ground.

My home dump station has proven to be extremely convenient and useful. It is nice to be able to use the facilities all the way home while traveling, and then empty when we get there.

**Mark Mazzitello | Maple Grove, Minnesota**





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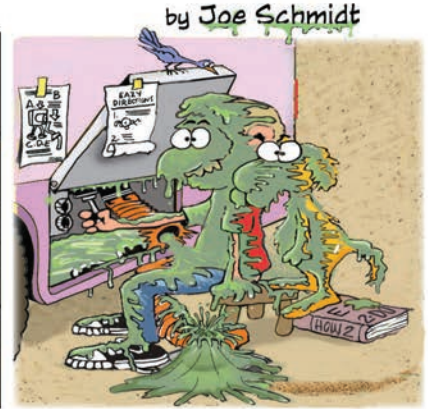
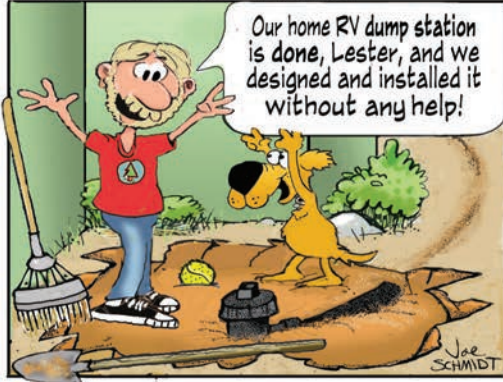
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Visual Letter to the Editor



by Joe Schmidt

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connected the up pipe to the L, making sure the height was above ground enough to attach a threaded fitting. All this digging was a lot easier when I was 40 years younger.

**Fred Kraus** | via email

### Go For It

I used to be a builder and have installed a dump station with full hookups at my home for my parents to use when they visited. The dump station is the same as a cleanout included in most sewer and septic systems: a 4-inch PVC pipe from the surface to tie into the underground sewer drain. These are some considerations and challenges:

1. Check with your local municipality. Some septic systems and sewer tap fees are established by the number of bathrooms in a home and the town may want more money or restrict the connection based on capacity. Occasional usage versus a semi-permanent connection can influence the answer. Since the connection is the same as a cleanout, the plumber and town may not require any paperwork.

2. Elevation. What you dump must use gravity to flow downhill; you need a spot that's above where you make the tie in.

3. Location. Find your cleanout — a 4-inch PVC pipe with a black rubber cap or white threaded cap about 5 feet outside your house (like the sewer connection in an RV park). Now look at where you want to set up your dump station and think about what's between the two. You'll need to dig a trench to connect the two locations; think about underground electric, water, cable,

phone, sprinklers, gas lines, etc. The more that's in the way, the tougher the dig can be. There are utility-location companies that will mark underground utilities for free (Call Before You Dig). They only mark the utilities location; they typically stop at the meters. Water lines between the meter, sprinkler lines, electric lines from your house to your pool pump, etc., are not marked.

4. How low do you go? I've seen sewer lines 20 feet deep. The deeper you go, the more expensive it will be.

5. A home dump station can absolutely be done. One thing that would work in all situations is a sewer ejector pump — a small tank and pump designed to pump sewage uphill. You could use such a system when all else fails.

**Scott Hunnewell**

Lookout Mountain, Georgia



### Paint It Black

This installation was very straightforward; I only spent \$18.90 on materials. I did, however, have to do some shoveling. Because we have a septic tank and are not connected to any town services, I did not contact anyone.

The drain from our home to the tank is a 4-inch sewer pipe so I went to Home Depot and bought a 4-inch T, 4-inch threaded female adapter, 4-inch cleanout plug and PVC cement. The pipe is only 6 inches below ground level where I elected to do this, so I did not require any additional pipe.

I needed to uncover at least 8 feet of pipe with a foot of clearance all around it in order to have the flexibility needed to insert the T. After cutting a section out of the pipe with a reciprocating saw, I thoroughly cleaned the outside a foot back on either side and roughed up the joint surfaces with

emery paper. I then propped both ends up using hoe and shovel handles slid under them. Now I could coat the joints with PVC cement and insert the T, releasing the handles after I made sure the opening was facing straight up. After installing the adapter and plug I tamped soil around the pipe. I painted it black, left it exposed, then purchased a solar accent light, cut off the bottom and everyone thinks it's just a light.

Now I have a cleanout access and dump station and nobody's the wiser.

**Jerry Merrifield**

Richmond, New Hampshire

### Down the Drain

In response to the question about a dump station, our home's sewer line out to the street has a cleanout plug as it leaves the house and then another plug inside a city-installed sewer



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## P.O. BOX

access box next to the curb. I simply pull up next to the box at the curbside, lift off the cover, remove the cap on the line, place my sewer hose in the 5-inch line and dump. I'm not putting anything into the system that doesn't normally go down the pipe and I pay my sewer bill each month.

**Robert Pulliam | Manchester, Tennessee**

### Master Macerator

We like to be able to use the bathroom facilities and kitchen sink on the last leg of a trip. I purchased a FloJet macerator pump kit. With minimal alterations to my household plumbing, I can dump tanks into my sewage system. With the correct discharge hose, you can pump up to 50 feet. You can also connect a second hose to the pump for fresh water so you can backfill the tanks and then pump them clean a second time. Even if you are not handy with plumbing, the alterations can be done by a plumber in an hour or

two in most cases. I would at least look into this option before considering the expense of adding a dump station to any household situation.

**Walter Troy | Worcester, Massachusetts**

### What's the Big Deal?

When we built our home, we had a dump added to the system. The dump is connected to the line between the house and our septic system. It has worked fine in the long run, but the reality is that we've only used it a handful of times in the past 11 years. The reason is that normally the places we go have a dump station and we prefer to use it rather than bring that stuff home. Plus, we have a free dump station located 6 miles away, so that's also an option. Cost-wise, it wasn't that much of an expense or challenge to have it installed when building the house. A side note: In another location we had a 50-amp outlet installed to connect our motorhome when needed. We use that much more

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than the dump station. It has come in handy when other RVers visit.

**Ken Harris | via email**

### Color Coordinated

We live in the city and use city sewer services. We bought a FloJet RV Waste Pump Kit from Camping World and a 100-foot garden hose from our local hardware store. All we do is hook up the FloJet along with the hose and run it down the exterior sewer cleanout drain next to our house. It works great! The garden hose just happens to be brown, so there's no mistaking it for a regular watering hose!

**Dodi Davies | Portland, Oregon**

### Launch Time

I would like to survey your readers as to how they handle the problem of towing a boat behind their motorhome without having someone else follow behind in a second vehicle for the purposes of launching and hauling out

the boat. On a long trip, this can be costly and keeps husbands and wives apart during a large part of their trip. I have often wondered why someone doesn't start a nationwide group of locals around each lake who would be willing to meet at your campsite and, for a fee, either launch or retrieve your boat. I can't help but think that others might be equally interested in the responses of your readers.

**Donnie Grinnan | Luray, Virginia M**

### Question of the Month

If you own a boat in addition to your motorhome, how do you handle launching and trailering duties? Do you bring a second vehicle dedicated to trailering the boat?

Send your comments to:

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## Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument

This national monument and UNESCO International Biosphere Reserve, set in the Sonoran Desert a couple of hours southwest of Tucson, Arizona, highlights the amazing organ pipe cactus. Although the plant is proficient south of the border in Mexico, the organ pipe cactus is rare to the United States because it is highly susceptible to frost. In addition to the organ pipe, there are acres of saguaro, ocotillo, Teddy bear cholla and other cacti species. From the many available scenic drives and hiking trails, you can tour this green desert for incredible vistas. The Kris Eggle Visitor Center is a good place to start when entering the monument; park rangers can be very helpful in

designing activities in the monument that match your interests and abilities. You'll also find displays of flora and fauna, as well as a short nature walk displaying some of the highlights of this area. The best option for camping is 1½ miles from the visitor center at Twin Peaks Campground. Although there are no hookups available, these sites (some big-rig friendly) are paved, level and well-spaced. There is a dump station on-site, as well as potable water. The restrooms include flush toilets, and some even offer solar showers. — *Morey Edelman*

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By Chuck Graham

# Sands of Time

It was nearing sunset on the Guadalupe–Nipomo Dunes National Wildlife Refuge ([www.fws.gov/refuge/Guadalupe-Nipomo\\_Dunes](http://www.fws.gov/refuge/Guadalupe-Nipomo_Dunes)) in northern Santa Barbara County, California. I was hunting with my camera affixed with a wide-angle lens for those perfectly groomed dunes where wind-lines appear as if someone used a ruler to draw them. I was also searching for wind-driven fish-hook-shaped dunes indicating deep troughs of sand that constantly evolve with each major wind event out of the northwest, a common occurrence along the scenic Central California coast.

What I did find was a majestic red-tailed hawk perched on the crest of a perfectly manicured dune. The sun was hanging low just above the Pacific Ocean, and the dunes were transitioning from a soft pink to deep orange hues. Eventually the raptor took flight, leaving a depression in the sand that gently cascaded into a steep trough, the only blemish on this ever-changing natural wonder.

The dunes stretch for 18 miles between Pismo Beach south to northern Santa Barbara County, making them the largest intact coastal dune complex south of San Francisco, California. The dunes themselves are the tallest on the entire West Coast, with some reaching 500 feet. The wind-sculpted coastal landscape houses 1,400 species of flora and fauna, from mountain lions to the hardy western snowy plover and giant coreopsis to bushels of silver lupine.

Needless to say, I was thoroughly mesmerized the first time I laid eyes on these stunning dunes back in the mid-1990s. I'm not alone, either. Over the years, Hollywood has agreed that these dunes make a brilliant backdrop for motion pictures. The original "Ten Commandments" was filmed here in 1923, and its movie set is still buried somewhere beneath those shifting sands. More recently

though, set pieces from "Hidalgo" and "Sideways" in 2004, and "Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End," in 2007, were filmed here.

Easy access to the dunes is located at the carpark inside the Rancho Guadalupe Dunes Preserve, which is within the refuge in northern Santa Barbara County. The refuge is open from dawn to dusk. From there, the 5.6-mile out-and-back beach-walk to Mussel Rock is worth every step with thundering surf, soaring California brown pelicans and scurrying western sandpipers along a remote, driftwood-strewn beach.

Not far to the north, just on the other side of the San Luis Obispo County line, is Oso Flaco Lake Natural Area. Managed by California State Parks, there is a \$5 parking fee to access one of the few freshwater lakes hidden within the dunes. It's an easy stroll beneath a canopy of tangled willows and wild roses until it meets up with a boardwalk that crosses over the tranquil lake. This is one of the best day trips and birdwatching locales along the Central Coast. Once across the lake, the path continues to the beach.

Not far to the north is Pacific Dunes Ranch RV Resort ([www.rvonthego.com/california/pacific-dunes-ranch-rv-resort](http://www.rvonthego.com/california/pacific-dunes-ranch-rv-resort)), a secluded RV park with the dunes literally at your feet — the sand dunes fan out as far as you can see. They're best experienced at sunrise and sunset, a great way to start or end any day trip along the Central California coast.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Guadalupe-Nipomo Dunes is the second-largest remaining dune system in California.

“The dunes stretch for 18 miles between Pismo Beach and Santa Barbara County, making them the largest intact coastal dune complex south of San Francisco, California.”



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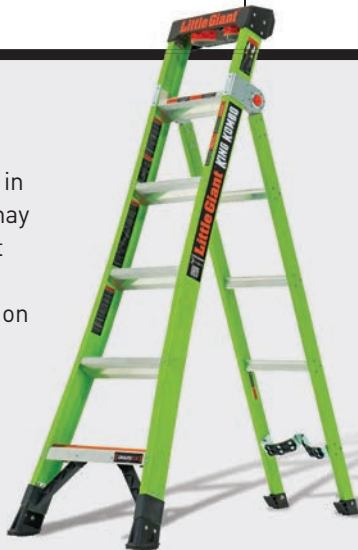
Music is an important part of the motorhome lifestyle, inside and out of the coach. ASA Electronics now offers the JENSEN JWM45 Two-zone Stereo. Owners can enjoy their own music collections with Bluetooth streaming, MP3 playback via USB and a front auxiliary input. Or, 30 AM/FM station presets allow music delivery the old-fashioned way. The built-in CD player also handles DVDs, while the rear HDMI and RCA outputs facilitate easy set-up to the TV, and also allow for JCOM protocol when using a JENSEN TV. The JWM45 features two independently adjustable speaker zones, meaning you can play audio through the motorhome's external and internal speakers, so you never miss a moment of your favorite song. The JWM45 is equipped with white LED backlight on the LCD screen and blue LED control buttons with adjustable brightness settings, and includes clock functions with alarm and sleep timer. MSRP: \$156.99.

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Considering the limited storage space in a motorhome, a conventional ladder may seem like a luxury item. But when that one item can perform triple duty as a stepladder, leaning ladder and extension ladder, it becomes worth its weight in gold. And, the King Kombo Industrial 6-10 foot ladder weighs only 23 pounds, stores at just over 6 feet long (and 2 feet wide at the base), and can extend up to 12 feet 8 inches, meaning the precarious trek to the roof up the skinny ladder on the rear of the motorhome is a thing of the past. Rated for 375 pounds, the King Kombo features fiberglass rails, a rotating wall pad to allow for safe use on motorhome side walls and palm buttons for easy adjustment. And it's backed by a 1-year limited warranty. MSRP: \$246.99.

**King Kombo, a division of Little Giant Ladder Systems | [www.kingkombo.com](http://www.kingkombo.com)**



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Guitars, clothing and other memorabilia from The Beatles are on display at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

## Cleveland Rocks!

Finding fun along the shores of Lake Erie in Ohio

By Mary Zalmanek

As the years whiz by, I find myself reflecting on earlier times in my life, when The Beatles were the hottest band and the view from the top of a Ferris wheel was thrill enough for me. For my birthday, my husband, Jim, indulged me with a trip to Cleveland, Ohio, to visit the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Cedar Point, an amusement park in nearby Sandusky.

We checked into Bayshore KOA in Sandusky for the first two days. It was a beautiful weekend, with temperatures soaring into the lower 90s. The park was filled with happy families enjoying kid-friendly activities and cooling off in the pool.

When we decided to include Cedar Point amusement park in our travel plans, I knew it was billed as the “Roller Coaster Capital

of the World.” I was determined to ride a few, even though it had been decades since my last amusement park visit. Upon our arrival, we rode the Sky Ride gondola through the Main Midway, then explored the rest of the park on foot, scoping out the options. The Top Thrill Dragster reaches 120 mph and climbs 420 feet in 30 seconds. Steel Vengeance is “the world’s first steel-on-wood hybrid roller coaster to stand over 200 feet tall.” It lasts 2½ minutes and has four inversions. We picked Corkscrew for our first ride because it wasn’t as high as some of the others, it only had three inversions and kids were allowed (at least 48 inches tall). Even though I screamed like a 7-year-old girl, I loved almost every second of the ride. Woo hoo!

On Sunday morning, we caught the 9:30 Jet Express ferry service to Kelleys Island, the largest of Ohio’s Lake Erie Islands. We brought our mountain bikes on the ferry so we could tour the island. As we were leaving the downtown area,

CLEVELAND, OHIO

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I laughed at a sign that stated, "Old dog, Young dog, Several stupid dogs, Please drive slowly." Since rented golf carts and bicycles seemed to outnumber the cars, the speed in this neighborhood was fairly slow anyway. The dogs were safe.

We rode our bikes to Kelleys Island State Park, with a beautiful sandy beach, then explored the North Shore Alvar State Preserve. Alvar is the term (derived from a Swedish word) for the unique limestone shelves on the shore. They are rare,

occurring only in the Great Lakes, the Baltic region and some islands near Sweden. Of the 120 alvar sites across the Great Lakes, this one is the "best-preserved intact habitat in Ohio." It's home to various wildflowers, lichen, a few stunted trees and the endangered Lake Erie water snake.

Nearby, we found the North Shore Loop Trail, an easy, 1-mile, blissfully shaded single-track hiking and biking trail on the north end of the island. Glacial Grooves, a National Natural Landmark, is near the trail. The

Above, left: Beautifully landscaped gardens line the Main Midway in front of the Arcade. Above, right: The north shore of Kelleys Island is a popular beach for waterborne activities.

unusual limestone grooves, which are 400 feet long, 35 feet wide and up to 15 feet deep, were formed by glacial activity 18,000 years ago.

The next morning we moved our motorhome closer to Cleveland. We stopped at Valley of Eagles Golf Course in Elyria to play 18 holes. We were able to park the motorhome just off the main parking lot on some gravel. There was plenty of space for us since we were the only motorhome there. We hit some balls in their indoor simulator, then tried our hands at Chippo, a fun way to practice chipping. It's described as "the glorious lovechild of golf and cornhole." The beautiful course is challenging, the fairways lined with picturesque waterways and mature forests. If you find any pretty pink balls in the Black River, they might be mine.

We checked into the American Wilderness Campground in Grafton for the next four nights. It's a Good Sam Park and the closest campground to Cleveland, only 35 minutes from downtown. We arrived mid-week when it's relatively quiet, but on weekends it's a popular destination for weddings, company picnics and family reunions.

Three days isn't enough time to explore all that Cleveland has to offer, so we made the best of our time. We started at the Cleveland Museum of Art, one of the most comprehensive art museums in the U.S. with more



Known as the "Roller Coaster Capital of the World," Cedar Point Amusement Park has 18 roller coasters ranging from mild to wild.



than 45,000 pieces in its collection. The museum's ArtLens app is handy for identifying artwork in the galleries and getting additional interpretive content. While we were delighted to see paintings by Monet, Van Gogh, Picasso and Warhol, the museum is so much more than art on the walls.

My favorite gallery in the museum was the Armor Court that featured field armor for a man and his horse from about 1575 in northern Italy, and several other suits of armor, swords and helmets. Other items that enthralled us for the entire afternoon included Egyptian coffins from around 900 B.C.; a bronze hollow-cast sculpture, most likely of Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, circa A.D. 180; and carpet designed for Louis XV's dining room in 1735.

Prior to dinner, we walked through downtown Cleveland. Children were playing in the fountain at Public Square. If we hadn't had dinner res-

Top, right: The Cleveland Museum of Art has more than 45,000 pieces in its collection, including this bronze hollow-cast sculpture, most likely of Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, circa A.D. 180. Below, right: Also on display is field armor for a man and his horse from about 1575 in northern Italy, plus several other suits of armor, swords and helmets.

ervations, I would have been tempted to kick off my shoes and run through the fountain with them. En route to the restaurant, we admired some of the city's landmarks. The nearby Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument is a tribute to men from Cuyahoga County who fought in the Civil War. The Arcade is a historic landmark that houses a variety of shops and restaurants, plus the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

We eventually made our way to Mabel's BBQ, where we shared delicious pork ribs, brisket and kielbasa. Chef Michael Symon (from television shows such as "Iron Chef America" and "The Chew") uses a locally made brown mustard in the



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Photo: Lake Erie Shores & Island

barbecue sauce, creating Cleveland-style barbecue.

Cuyahoga Valley National Park, a refuge of nearly 33,000 acres, is less than an hour south of Cleveland. We stopped at one of the most popular attractions in the park, Brandywine Falls, then headed to the Village of Peninsula, which sits in the middle of the park. From there, we rode our bikes on the Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail. The 85-mile trail extends north of the park to Cleveland and south to Bolivar. The canal, built between 1825 and 1832, provided transportation between Cleveland and Portsmouth. At Century Cycles, I replaced my worn-out biking gloves and learned more about the Towpath Trail. Century Cycles also rents bicycles for adults and children.

Another way to see the park is via the Cuyahoga Valley Scenic Railroad. The round-trip scenic excursion takes

Clockwise, from above, left: The fountain at Public Square in downtown Cleveland is a great place to cool off in the summer and to ice-skate in the winter. The Ohio & Erie Canal Towpath Trail in Cuyahoga Valley National Park is an 85-mile trail that extends north of the park to Cleveland and south to Bolivar. Formed by glacial activity 18,000 years ago, the limestone grooves at Glacial Grooves State Memorial are 400 feet long, 35 feet wide and up to 10 feet deep. American Wilderness Campground, just 35 minutes from downtown Cleveland, is a popular destination for weddings, company picnics, and family reunions.



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## GETAWAY CLEVELAND, OHIO

about 3½ hours. Bikers can load their bicycles at any of nine boarding stations, then ride their bikes back on the Towpath Trail. There are several other fun ways to experience the train, including tasting wine or beer paired with appetizers; solving murder mysteries; painting masterpieces while sipping wine; and enjoying four-course meals.

Do you remember “A Christmas

Story,” the 1983 holiday classic? The festive feature that made leg lamps famous was filmed on a soundstage in Toronto, but the exterior shots were filmed at a house in Cleveland. In 2004, the house was a month away from being torn down. It was listed on eBay for \$99,900, when similar homes in the neighborhood were going for less than half of that. Brian Jones made an offer of \$150,000, which was immediately



Photo: courtesy of the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame

Top: The Arcade in downtown Cleveland is a historic landmark that houses a variety of shops and restaurants, plus the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Above: The Moody Blues are among the legendary acts honored at the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

accepted. He spent another \$240,000 getting the house into shape. Within three months after the Christmas House Museum was opened in 2006, the debt was paid off. The complex now includes two other buildings housing a museum and gift shop. Our tour guide told us interesting stories about the movie. One of our favorites: The crate that delivered the famous leg lamp was too wide to fit through the door of the house. The box was cut to size, which changed the wording. In the movie, scenes with “THIS END UP” on the box were filmed on the sound stage; those with “HIS END UP” were filmed in the actual house.

Whenever I see the words “Oyster Bar” in a restaurant name, I want to eat there. Alley Cat Oyster Bar ([www.alleycatosterbar.com](http://www.alleycatosterbar.com)), which sits on the waterfront of the Cuyahoga River, offers a wide variety of seafood as well as meat entrées. A sense of contentment settled over us as we munched on fresh oysters, clams, and scallops while watching stand-up paddleboard-

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ers slide past us under a setting sun.

Finally, it was my birthday and time to visit the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. The tour bus, "J.C. Unit One," that Johnny Cash bought in 1979 and had customized was parked in front of the pyramid-shaped museum. In the Legends of Rock exhibit we saw videos, guitars, album covers, handwritten lyrics and clothing from some of my favorites: The Beatles, the Rolling Stones, Blondie and Heart. In the theater that played clips of Dick Clark's American Bandstand, memories triggered by song snippets transported me back in time to my high school prom, the big-hair days of the 1980s, and various parties, concerts and vacations. In 1986, the first performers were inducted into the Hall of Fame. Artists are eligible 25 years after the release of their first record. The first inductees included Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry and Ray Charles, among others. The Hall of Fame, with signatures honoring each inductee by year, contains many of the names you might expect to see. At the "Voice Your Choice" exhibit fans get to vote on who they'd like to see nominated.

For a special birthday treat, we dined at DANTE, an upscale restaurant in a former bank building. We had a private table in the Vault and shared some appetizers (charcuterie and duck

The house where parts of the 1983 classic holiday movie "A Christmas Story" was filmed is open to the public.

confit) along with an entrée of short ribs. It was a fitting end to our amazing week in the region.

Thank you, Cleveland, for providing so many opportunities to experience blasts from the past, and to thoroughly enjoy each moment in the present. **M**



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### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**A Christmas Story House and Museum**  
216-298-4919, [www.achristmasstoryhouse.com](http://www.achristmasstoryhouse.com)

**American Wilderness Campground**  
440-926-3700, <https://americanwildernesscampground.com>

**Cedar Point Amusement Park**  
419-627-2350, [www.cedarpoint.com](http://www.cedarpoint.com)

**Cleveland Museum of Art**  
216-421-7350, [www.clevelandart.org](http://www.clevelandart.org)

**Cuyahoga Valley National Park**  
330-657-2752, [www.nps.gov/cuva/index.htm](http://www.nps.gov/cuva/index.htm)

**Kelleys Island Chamber of Commerce**  
[www.kelleysislandchamber.com](http://www.kelleysislandchamber.com)

**Rock & Roll Hall of Fame**  
216-781-7625, [www.rockhall.com](http://www.rockhall.com)

**Sandusky Bayshore KOA**  
419-625-1495, <https://koa.com/campgrounds/sandusky>

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440-365-1411, <https://valleyeagles.com>

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# HIT THE MOTHER LODGE!

Traveling back through time on California's Golden Chain Highway

**M**y wife, Gayle, and I have been RVing since 1969 and we always enjoy finding new places to travel in our motorhome. One of those places was in Northern California, where we took 10 days to explore the length of the Golden Chain Highway with our dinghy vehicle in tow. Also known as California State Highway 49, and the Gold Rush Trail, the Golden Chain Highway affords unparalleled access to significant historical sites throughout most of the area known as the Mother Lode.

One important thing to keep in mind when traveling this route by motorhome is that there are three areas that are quite steep and have an abundance of sharp curves. If your motorhome is longer than 40 feet, is underpowered, or doesn't have low gears to assist with deceleration, we suggest you avoid these areas. Our 35-foot motorhome has an 8.1-liter Vortec engine, and we tow a 3,800-

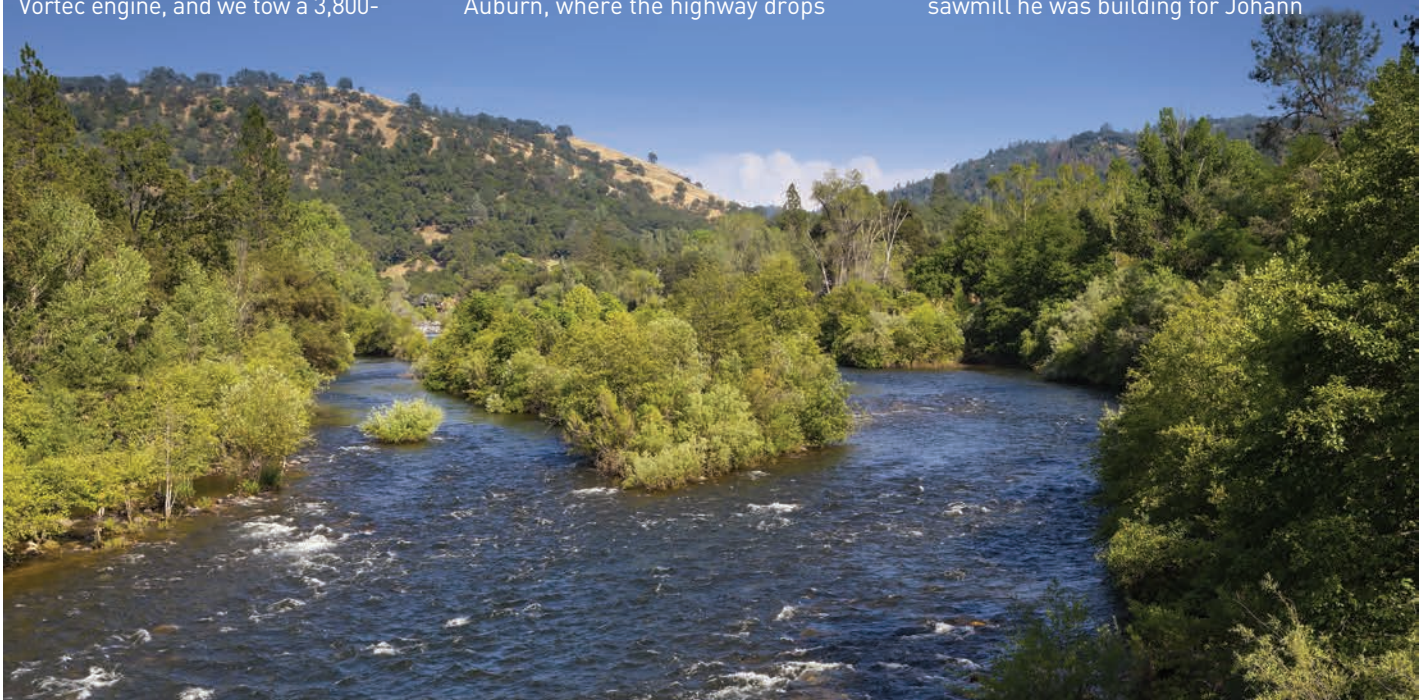
pound dinghy vehicle, and we were fine.

The three areas of potential concern are: 1) Far north of Mariposa, where the Golden Chain Highway drops down steeply to cross the Merced River inlet to Lake McClure (near Bagby Recreation Area); 2) New Priest Grade to the southeast of Moccasin Creek Fish Hatchery; 3) Between the towns of Cool and Auburn, where the highway drops

significantly to cross the north fork of the American River before heading steeply up to Auburn.

Having said all that, this route is perhaps the most scenic and historically interesting stretch of roadway we've ever encountered. For RVers who are not so interested in history, there are zip-lines, spelunking, horseback riding, lakes for fishing and water sports, and rivers for white-water kayaking and rafting. There's something to offer for almost everyone.

The events leading to the creation of the Golden Chain Highway began on a cold morning in January 1848, when James Marshall discovered gold at the site of a sawmill he was building for Johann



Photos: Ken Reid

Sutter, near Coloma. By 1849, word had spread far and wide.

Eventually, an estimated 300,000 people traveled from throughout the world to what would become known as the Mother Lode, hoping to strike it rich. They were eventually referred to as forty-niners. As the many small camps and towns sprang up during the gold rush, roads were created by the stagecoaches and supply wagons traveling between them. Those original routes were linked together like a chain, creating a scenic, mostly two-lane highway. It was named State Route 49, after those forty-niners. Today the entire route covers 326 total road miles, connecting a rich diversity of historic Mother Lode sites, and is referred to as the Golden Chain Highway.

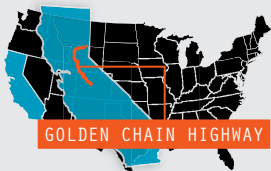
Beginning in Oakhurst, where it heads northwest from State Route 41, the Golden Chain Highway meanders first northwest and then northeast to its terminus at State Route 70, in Vinton. The counties the Golden Chain Highway passes through — heading north — include Madera, Mariposa, Tuolumne, Calaveras, Amador, El Dorado, Placer, Nevada, Yuba, Sierra and Plumas.

Clockwise, from right: Visitors to Columbia State Historic Park can board a stagecoach at this Wells Fargo office or pan for gold out of sluice boxes. Any trip to Coloma should include a visit to this replica of Sutter's Mill, where gold was first discovered in California.



The Mother Lode area was part of the Mexican territory of Alta California when gold was discovered. But it was ceded to the United States with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo on February 2, 1848. On September 9, 1850, California entered the Union as the 31st state and later garnered the nickname, The Golden State. The region, state and nation were all radically transformed by the quest for gold.

Native Americans who had lived in the area for thousands of years were displaced, enslaved, or killed (either through violence or diseases they had no resistance to); an estimated 100,000 died between 1848 and 1868. Deer and other game the indigenous peoples had traditionally hunted were slaughtered for food by the massive number of miners moving in to the area. Large areas of forest were clear-cut



## Mining Camps

We chose four RV parks for this trip, allowing us plenty of time to visit the points of interest along the route: Yosemite Lakes RV Resort, near the northwest entrance to Yosemite National Park; Marble Quarry RV Park, within easy walking distance of Columbia State Historic Park; Ponderosa RV Resort, situated along the scenic South Fork of the American River; and Scotts Flat Lake Campground, near Nevada City.



Portions of the Golden Chain Highway are steep and feature tight curves; plan accordingly.

for wood. The landscape was forever damaged, and streams were polluted by extreme mining techniques.

Those responsible included thousands of immigrants from around the world. Large numbers came from China, Mexico, South America, Australia and Europe. Social, economic and demographic factors were forever altered. By 1854, the San Francisco Mint was built. Gold bullion was used to create official U.S. gold coins for circulation. Banks and gold dealers began issuing “banknotes” in exchange for gold. The California gold rush also stimulated economies around the world — French prospectors sent an estimated \$80 million worth of gold to France. So it was that the gold rush in California radically impacted our historical development.

By exploring the areas this serpentine highway traverses, you can actually see, hear, smell, taste and feel many of the same things experienced by those early settlers. For example, you can pan for gold using the same methods, in the same locations, where some of the forty-niners made their fortune, knowing there is still a chance of finding more gold. Or visualize traveling the same route, through the same terrain, seeing many of the same things as those who were traveling on stagecoaches and buckboards. There are even restaurants that serve some of the same fare the miners hungered for. Or you can quench your thirst in a saloon with a sarsaparilla, just like back in the day.

Our trip was divided into roughly four segments, beginning at the south

end. We would set up base, then make day trips to our points of interest. That made the moves in the motorhome shorter and resort stays longer.

Our first home base was Yosemite Lakes RV Resort, near Groveland. A major consideration was its proximity to the northwest entry to Yosemite National Park (only 5 miles). And it is still within day-trip driving distance of places like Coarsegold, Oakhurst, Mariposa, Coulterville and Hornitos. Open year-round, this RV resort has 299 sites, plus a variety of cabins and yurts. Yosemite Lakes has lots of amenities that should accommodate the interest of most everyone (kids included). Spread out over 400 acres of meadow and beautiful pines, on both sides of the calm, clear water from the south fork of the Tuolumne River, it is well worth a visit. And, although it's not considered a part of the Mother Lode, we spent a day in Yosemite National Park before starting our day trips to

### ➔ **Call Ahead**

One important lesson we learned is to call ahead before making plans to visit California State Historic Parks and museums. We found that several sources of information — from fliers and even online — about hours of operation, admission and the like, were often incorrect.

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The blacksmith shop at Marshall Gold Discovery SHP shows the variety of products a typical "Smithy" would repair.

explore the areas surrounding the southern portion of the Golden Chain Highway.

From Yosemite Lakes, we recommend using your dinghy vehicle and starting at the small town of Coarsegold, south of Oakhurst. It got its name after prospectors found rough nuggets in the riffles of a creek leading to the Fresno River. The miners named it Coarsegold Gulch. From the camps around that site, a settlement and town were formed. Many displaced Native Americans from Yosemite and elsewhere in the Mother Lode were forcibly moved to that area. Some of their descendants still live on and around the Picayune Rancheria reservation. They own and operate the Chukchansi Gold Resort & Casino, about 5 miles south of Coarsegold.

Mariposa and Coulterville should also be on your list of important places to visit in the southern area. Mariposa is only about 26 miles from Oakhurst. There are many important historic sites in those areas as well as wonderful museums.

Traveling roughly north and northeast, our stopover for the next segment was Marble Quarry RV Park. From



the campground you can take a walk back in time — along a trail that leads about a mile through natural habitat damaged by hydraulic mining — and enter the historic town at Columbia State Historic Park. This important stop should be of interest to the entire family. Here, you can ride a 100-year-old stagecoach from the Wells Fargo office through bandit territory and experience a holdup; pan for gold; have a sarsaparilla in one of the saloons; and, depending on the time of year, experience some unique productions, like a working mining camp inhabited by characters who look and

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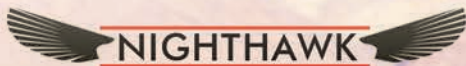
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## HIT THE MOTHER LODE!

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Additional points of interest can be found in and around the nearby historic towns of Sonora and Jamestown. If you have time, you may want to visit the areas of LaGrange and Chinese Camp, too. Not only are they of historical importance, but the LaGrange area in particular affords visitors ample evidence of damage done by dredging rivers for gold.

Other day trips could include points of interest in and around Angels Camp. One of those might be to the cabin where Mark Twain worked on his famous fictional story "The Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," published in 1865. That story led to the annual Calaveras County Fair & Jumping Frog Jubilee, held at the fairgrounds each May.

The next stopover we chose was the Ponderosa RV Resort. Roughly halfway between Placerville and Auburn, this campground is right on the banks of the South Fork of the American River, and only about a mile from Coloma. It would be hard to find a better location for kicking back and watching the water travel over rapids than this beautiful setting. There is an added bonus: being able to watch the many white-water kayakers and rafters going by.

The historic town of Coloma, and the Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park (where the gold rush began) is only about a mile from the resort. These two spots are must-sees.



Examples of period-specific Native American housing can be found at Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park.

Take the time to walk the trails through the park, on both sides of the Golden Chain Highway, in addition to visiting the most obvious points of interest in town. There are many less obvious ones that will otherwise be missed. Set aside the whole day to take it all in.

The last spot you might want to stay at (at least in the warmer months), is Scotts Flat Lake Campground. Situated on a scenic lake among the pines, this location offers a variety of activities for kids and grown-ups, especially during summer. We would definitely stay there again when in the area. It's northeast of Nevada City, adjacent to

### START AT THE VISITORS CENTER

For information about the history of the area where the southern part of the Golden Chain Highway begins, as well as the Coarsegold Historic Museum, Fresno Flats Historic Village, Raymond Museum, Sierra Mono Indian Village, Yosemite National Park (entering through the southern entrance) and more, check out the Visit Yosemite Madera County Visitors Center in Oakhurst located at 40637 Highway 41; 559-683-4636, [www.yosemitethisyear.com](http://www.yosemitethisyear.com).



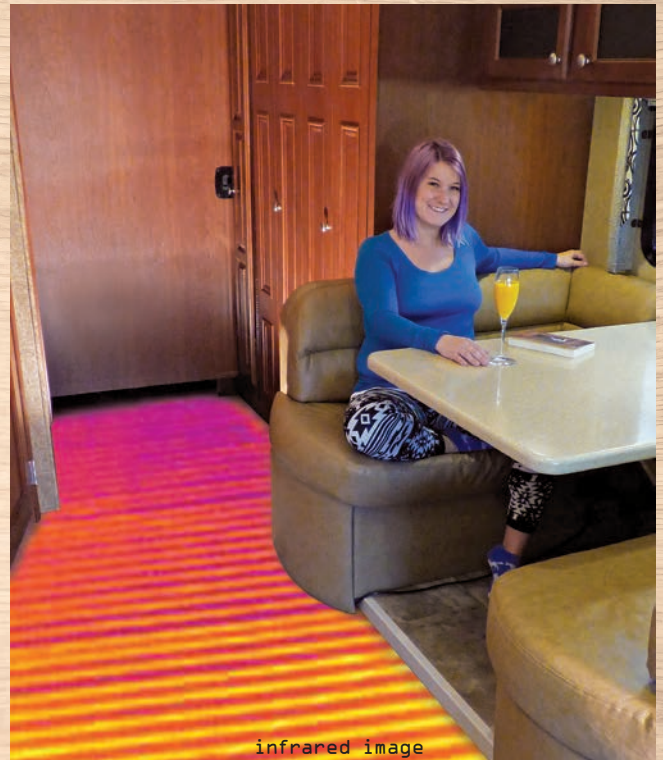
Scotts Flat Lake in Nevada City is a great place to enjoy water sports, whether it's while kayaking, fishing or a leisurely dip in the cool waters.

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HIT THE **MOTHER LODE!**

the lake; turn off the Golden Chain Highway at Scotts Flat Road.

Beware: Don't follow directions to Scotts Flat Lake Campground from a GPS device, MapQuest, Yahoo, or similar mapping service; they will lead you down a dirt road that isn't suitable for a large vehicle of any kind.

From Scotts Flat Lake Campground, you can take day trips to the area in and around Grass Valley and Nevada City. This campground is farther away from those locations, but closer to the northern terminus of the Golden Chain Highway. After taking a day trip to that end point, we didn't think it was worth the time and fuel. It is beautiful traveling through the Tahoe National Forest, but after a while, forest is forest. If traversing the last segment isn't of significant interest to you, you might check into a stay at the Nevada County Fairgrounds, which is less expensive and closer to Mother Lode points of interest.

We had a wonderful trip, learned a great deal and had fun doing it. Sure, the route could be driven in a day, but we suggest you allow enough time so you don't have to "rush" your tour of California's Golden Chain Highway. **M**

**For More Information**

**California State Historic Parks**

800-777-0369, [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)

**Columbia State Historic Park**

209-588-9128, [www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=552](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=552)

**Marble Quarry RV Park**

866-677-8464, <http://marblequarryrvpark.com>

**Marshall Gold Discovery State Historic Park**

530-622-3470, [www.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=484](http://www.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=484)

**Nevada County Fairgrounds**

530-273-6217, <http://nevadacountyfair.com/rv-park>

**Ponderosa RV Resort**

877-570-2267, [www.rvonthego.com/california/ponderosa-rv-resort](http://www.rvonthego.com/california/ponderosa-rv-resort)

**Scotts Flat Lake Campground**

530-265-5302, <https://orchardspringscampground.com/scotts-flat-lake-2>

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# ON THE WATER

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Antiques and boutiques; fish shacks and chowder houses, old-time diners and fine dining establishments; artisan galleries of custom furniture, pottery, myrtlewood bowls, blown-glass and decorative objects; and handcrafted candies, kitchen sweets and a cornucopia at farmers markets entice strolling town streets. Museums, memorials and the working waterfronts salute the past.

From north to south, six communities — Astoria, Garibaldi, Pacific City, Newport, Florence and Coos Bay — capture the magic of the past while catering to the present, but many others will beckon you aside. U.S. Highway 101 is the thread that unites. All six communities sit near fine campgrounds, private and public, with recreation at the doorstep.

## Astoria

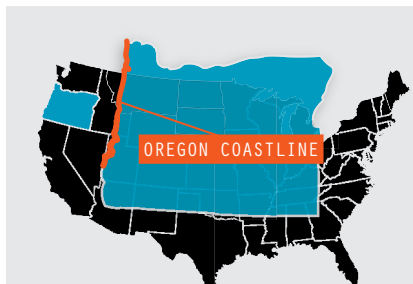
At the mouth of the Columbia River, the first permanent American settlement west of the Mississippi boasts a rich history. The story scrolls around the town's famous 125-foot Astoria Column atop Coxcomb Hill — a more engaging history you'd be hard pressed to find. Clatsop Indian

villagers, explorers, fur traders, sea captains and fishermen all contribute to the story. Cannery workers added a later chapter.

Much of early Astoria sat on pilings. In its heyday, 30 canneries stretched over the lapping waters of the Columbia River, whose bounty propelled Astoria to the salmon-canning capital of the world. Nordic and Chinese workers filled early employment roles. Women were a force until Bumble Bee Seafoods closed in 1980.

Decay, fire and modern growth have all but erased the once-booming enterprise, but three museums keep

the story alive. Hanthorn Cannery Museum, housed in an old run of cannery freezer bays, is like a rummage through Astoria's attic, with an authentic look at cannery life and the voice of workers on its auto-graphed Cannery Workers Memorial Hallway. The Columbia River Maritime Museum offers a polished presentation of all aspects maritime, including canneries. And, the Clatsop County Historical Society's Heritage Museum, in Old City Hall, explores life and lifestyle in early Astoria, including cannery work, a notorious



## What a View!

The coastal drive from Astoria south to Coos Bay is approximately 230 miles, and would take more than five hours driving straight through. Allow plenty of time to enjoy the scenery and, of course, to sample each of the unique communities.



# WATERFRONT

of Oregon's coastal communities

red-light district and artifacts related to the Chinese.

The Captain George Flavel House Museum gives insight into a sea captain's life. A musical melodrama tells of the waterfront's Shanghai past, and the end of February marks the FisherPoets Gathering (February 28-March 1, 2020). Working fishing boats, three Coast Guard cutters, and barges moving product up and down

the Columbia River show an unbroken maritime connection. Astoria's Riverfront Trolley extends views of the changing waterfront.

At nearby Fort Stevens State Park, the shipwreck skeleton of the Peter Iredale recalls the dangers of early seagoing. The park's enormous campground (174 full-hookup sites and 302 partial-hookup sites) is ideal for area stays, with ample recreation and

Top, right: California sea lions enjoy the sunshine at Charleston Marina, along the Cape Arago Highway. Right: Yaquina Head Lighthouse is one of two lighthouses (along with Yaquina Bay's eponymous structure to the south) in the Newport area.



Fishing boats such as these in Newport Marina are a common site along the coastal drive.



its own historical discovery related to America's coastal defenses.

### Garibaldi

Tucked into the hillside at the north end of Tillamook Bay, Garibaldi remains a rustic, rolled-sleeves fishing village, supported by commercial and sport fishing. A skyline smokestack with an unsettled future recalls a not-too-distant past, when a lumber mill coughed smoke, provided jobs and fueled the economy. Today, wood products play a much-reduced role.

Commercial boats and charters belly up to the docks with Dungeness crab, ling cod, rockfish, Tillamook Bay Chinook, and ocean tuna and halibut. Filet tables splashed with fresh catch become centers of conversation. Crabbers drop pots at the port and at Pier's End, the attractive mid-harbor boathouse — an old U.S. Coast Guard building (no entry) — viewed from shore and accessed by a narrow public fishing pier. Area clammers find suitable shores.

Between Garibaldi and Rockaway Beach, a tourist steam train, the

Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad, runs on tracks that once transported timber. Experience the train's rattle, whistle and blue smoke. Find the statue of Captain Robert Gray and you find the town's Maritime Museum.

As with most fishing villages, bringing in the sea's bounty was not without cost. A solemn Coast Guard Memorial sits at the port. Each Memorial Day weekend, townspeople and guests gather at the Memorial for the Blessing of the Fleet.

Camping can be found in town at the Port of Garibaldi RV Park (<http://portofgaribaldi.org/rv-park>), Old Mill RV Park & Event Center ([www.oldmill.us](http://www.oldmill.us)), and Harborview Inn & RV Park (<https://harborviewfun.com>); and the Barview Jetty County Campground (<http://reservations.co.tillamook.or.us>), a couple miles northwest.

The Oregon Coast Scenic Railroad lives up to its name while transporting visitors between Garibaldi and Rockaway Beach along tracks that once ran timber in the area.

### Pacific City

On productive Nestucca Bay, Pacific City grew up around salmon fishing, with the local salmon cannery turning out 12,000 cans a year. Other enterprises included timber and dairy. When bay salmon populations declined, the town looked to the sea. Enter the dory fleet.

The surf-launched, flat-bottomed boats allowed townspeople to ocean fish for salmon, and in its heyday hundreds of the crafts, aided by horse or motorized vehicle, launched from the sands. Today, dories used for



The author surveys the remains of a fishing vessel at South Beach State Park in Newport.

“ From north to south, these six communities capture the magic of the past while catering to the present, but many others will beckon you aside. ”



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## ON THE WATERFRONT



The waters around Pier's End — an old U.S. Coast Guard building in Garibaldi — are popular with local crabbers.

### A WHALE OF A TIME

Gray whales can be spotted along the Oregon coast year-round. In winter, they travel to the warm waters of Baja, California; in spring, they head toward Alaska; while summer and fall bring whales that feed along the coastline.

recreation and charters keep the tradition alive. On occasion and during Dory Days (July 19-21, 2019), look for them near Cape Kiwanda, fighting out to sea or storming in on the surf. Horns sound the speedy returns. Beach use is segregated to give boats a clear course.

Another Dory Days attraction is the oaring of the Double Enders (two-pointed boats) in the near-shore surf. The event is weather-dependent. Parking can be chaotic, so dinghy vehicles are recommended.

Pacific City's ocean, river and bay access have called since the Willamette Valley's settlement. The sandy spit at Bob Straub State Park erases cares, as do the cinnamon rolls, local brews and plates of seafood. Today, Pacific City defines itself as a "gentrified" vacation and living spot.

RV parks in town and Cape Lookout State Park on Three Capes Scenic Loop serve overnighters.

### Newport

On Yaquina Bay, Newport is perhaps the most completely married of old and new. Its waterfront marina sports a bustling boardwalk and holds shiny recreational craft and sea-tested fishing vessels; stacked crab pots and buoys push up against mural-painted walls; and waterfront processing houses face off with fine seafood dining. Aquariums; an "odditorium,"

undersea garden and wax museum; and boutiques and kitschy souvenir shops vie for tourist dollars. Barking sea lions crowd a waterfront dock, and tuna can be bought straight from the returning fishing vessels.

Two lighthouses (Yaquina Bay and Yaquina Head to the north), jetties and a Coast Guard Station record human efforts to tame the ocean. The list of names at Yaquina Bay State Park's Fishermen's Memorial Sanctuary speaks to a sea that is tameless.

A popular fishing pier, local brewery and a coastline of beach attractions, as well as the rest of town, keep visitors on the go. Camping is convenient with marina-based sites on the bay's south shore and others at South Beach and Beverly Beach state parks and at private facilities.

### Florence

On the central coast, Florence is the port city on the Siuslaw River. Its economy has been tied to lumber, lumber barging, commercial fishing and agriculture, and in recent years a gateway to Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area and a popular location



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## ON THE WATERFRONT

for retirement. By 1900, the town boasted a lumber mill, two canneries, a saloon, two groceries and a weekly newspaper. Early ocean shipping required tugs to pilot schooners over the changing bar into the river. Ferry boats provided river crossings. Some old buildings and clues to the one-time ferry remain. Bay Street's Victorian-style storefronts hold shops selling varieties and sweets.

Modern river crossings take place on a famous Conde B. McCullough bridge, the jewelry of U.S. Highway 101. The arching drawspan with four Art Deco bridge-operator houses exemplifies McCullough's mastery at blending aesthetics and function. Other McCullough spans include the McCullough Memorial Bridge in Coos Bay, Yaquina Bay Bridge in Newport and Umpqua River Bridge in Reedsport (to the north).

Motorhome visitors can stay at the Port of Siuslaw Campground & Marina (<http://portofsiuslaw.com/campground>) and easily stroll to shops and waterfront attractions. Other campgrounds lie along the Oregon Dunes coast.

Reedsport and Winchester Bay/Salmon Harbor (also north) extend discovery. Salmon Harbor is a modern port, active with fishing charters and recreational boats. It has plenty of slips for land cruisers as well. Camp within sight of the water and the squawk of gulls. Reedsport is ATV-



Top: Beverly Beach State Park offers 53 full-hookup campsites, plus 76 with water and electricity. Above: A successful fisherman cleans his haul of Dungeness crab in Newport.

and chainsaw-art central. Sawdust flies at the divisional chainsaw sculpture championships each Father's Day weekend (June 13-16, 2019). Florence celebrates rhododendrons in May and chowder in October.

### Coos Bay

First called Marshfield, the southern coastal estuary town and deep-water port Coos Bay now bears the name of the water on which it sits. Its contemporary industrial waterfront of railroad tracks, heaped wood chips and stacked logs, cranes and cargo containers, and arriving and departing ships echoes back to its days as a frontier transportation hub built on

Horse riders on the beach at Bob Straub State Park have a clear view of Haystack Rock, which rises 235 feet from the edge of the shoreline.





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ON THE WATERFRONT

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At the time of settlement, waterfronts were claimed for function and were loud, grimy, smelly and sometimes dangerous places. Today, towns recognize their recreational value. A prominent visitor center, a fine waterfront boardwalk, and the Coos History Museum on Front Street lend a fresh face to the Coos Bay waterfront. Historic buildings are receiving second life as museums, shops, eateries and even a brewery.

Coos Bay's sister city to the north (North Bend) and Shore Acres State Park have historical ties to area lumber magnates Captain Asa Simpson, founder of North Bend, and his son, Louis Simpson. Their ownership stretched all along the Cape Arago coast. Shore Acres, a formal garden on a coastal bluff, was once the enviable estate of Louis Simpson. The mansion is gone but the grand views remain.

At the old Sun Plywood Mill on the banks of Coos Bay in North Bend, The Mill Casino Hotel & RV Park (owned by the Coquille Indian Tribe; [www.themillcasino.com](http://www.themillcasino.com)) gives nod to old, while ushering in new. Besides a full venue of entertainment, the casino has a full-service campground.

Cape Arago Highway stitches together prime recreation and attractive shores, the fishing village of Charleston with its fish vendors and charters, Bastendorff County Park, Cape Arago Lighthouse, Sunset Bay, Shore Acres and Simpson Reef. A second playground, Oregon Dunes National Recreation Area, stretches north from Coos Bay/North Bend.

All said, working waterfronts enhance any coastal visit. **M**

**For More Information**

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# Paw Patrols

## A LOOK AT 12 OF THE MOST PET-FRIENDLY MOTORHOME DESTINATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

**W**hether you are new to motorhome travel with your pets or have been cruising along with your best friend for years, one thing is certain: pet-friendly attractions, parks and destinations make the trip so much better for everyone.

My husband, Rod, and I recently embarked on a 15,000-mile tour, along with our pups, Ty and Buster, to scout out the top pet-friendly destinations in 48 states and Washington D.C. The result of our travels is compiled in the new book, *The Ultimate Pet Friendly Road Trip* (available on Amazon, \$30).

RVers know it's always more convenient to stay near the attraction they're visiting — whether their pets are with them or not. But for the pet lovers out there, we present 12 of the top pet-friendly destinations in the United States that have RV parks in the immediate vicinity.

### Grand Canyon, Arizona

The Grand Canyon is one of the nation's most breathtaking attractions. And, even better, it's pet-friendly! Pets are welcome on a variety of trails, including the 13-mile South Rim Trail, parts of which are paved.

There are many lodging options for visitors with pets,

including campgrounds, RV sites and pet-friendly hotel rooms (for friends who don't own a motorhome). Of course, for everyone's safety there are areas that don't allow pets, but if you want to check those out, no problem. The South Rim Kennel is open daily and accepts dogs and cats for day or overnight boarding.



## Paw Patrols

### Custer State Park, South Dakota

Custer State Park encompasses an incredible 71,000 acres of landscape and wildlife — including a herd of 1,450 bison. Pet travelers in the mood for a drive should take the famous Needles Highway (use your dinghy vehicle here), which runs for 38 miles through spectacular rock formations and dense forests, before culminating at Sylvan Lake. The lake is encircled by a pet-friendly trail, with more challenging trailheads splitting off along the way. All told, there are more than 60 miles of pet-friendly trails throughout the park for various ability levels.

Custer State Park offers nine campgrounds, and most have sites with hookups, but they book up fast. The national forest campground at Bismark Lake can also accommodate RVs and is convenient to all the popular attractions, plus, the sites are easier to come by.

### San Juan Islands, Washington

Just off the coast of Washington state are the lovely San Juan Islands. Surrounded by snowcapped mountains, the islands are a patchwork of pine forests, stony beaches, lush pastures and fields,



and sparkling lakes. Whether you're planning to paddle, hike, or bike your island of choice, you won't be disappointed.

Four of the San Juan Islands are accessible by pet-friendly ferries, which also carry RVs of all sizes. However, the roads on the islands are narrow and RV parks are few. Those in smaller motorhomes will find camping options at the county parks on San Juan and Lopez islands, and at Doe Bay Resort on Orcas Island. Larger RVs can be accommodated at one of eight partial hook-up sites at the County Fairgrounds on San Juan Island. Or choose from the many RV parks and campgrounds on Whidbey

Above, left: Lush forests in the San Juan Islands are surrounded by snowcapped mountains. Above, right: Snow is also a common site at Medicine Wheel.

and Fidalgo islands, and hop the ferry in Anacortes for day trips to all the San Juans!

### Medicine Wheel, Bighorn National Forest, Wyoming

Bighorn National Forest runs south for 80 miles from the Montana/Wyoming border and encompasses more than 1 million acres. With elevations ranging from 5,000 feet to 13,189 at Cloud Peak, the range's highest point, the terrain is diverse.

Leashed pets are welcome to

**“ALL TOLD, THERE ARE MORE THAN 60 MILES OF PET-FRIENDLY TRAILS THROUGHOUT CUSTER STATE PARK.”**



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## Paw Patrols

explore all 32 campgrounds, picnic areas and more than 1,500 miles of trails along with you. One place to be sure not to miss is Medicine Wheel. Made of white limestones laid in a rim-and-spoke pattern, Medicine Wheel is believed to be the work of ancient ancestors and is revered as a sacred place by many. Pets aren't allowed on the path directly next to the site and should be kept quiet to respect its sacred nature.

### Dixie National Forest, Utah

Southern Utah has so much incredible beauty, but pet-friendly options aren't as abundant. Luckily, there's Dixie National Forest. Covering almost 2 million acres, Dixie has more than 1,600 miles of hiking-, horseback-riding and bike trails as well as 500 miles of fishing streams and 90 lakes. And, leashed pets are welcome to explore every inch with you!

The terrain is undeniably gorgeous,

Top: Ty and Buster pose in front of hoodoos in Utah's Dixie National Forest. Bottom: Leashed pets are welcome throughout the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge.

with elegant spires and burly hoodoos (tall, surreal rock formations also known as "fairy chimneys" or "earth pyramids") of red limestone and sandstone. And with elevation ranging from 3,000 to 11,000 feet, there are a variety of fascinating climates and ecosystems within the park.

As with most national forests, Dixie offers a variety of campgrounds to choose from. Our favorite is Red Canyon Campground for its proximity to the paved Red Canyon Bicycle Trail, excellent hiking trails and Bryce Canyon National Park.

### Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, Oklahoma

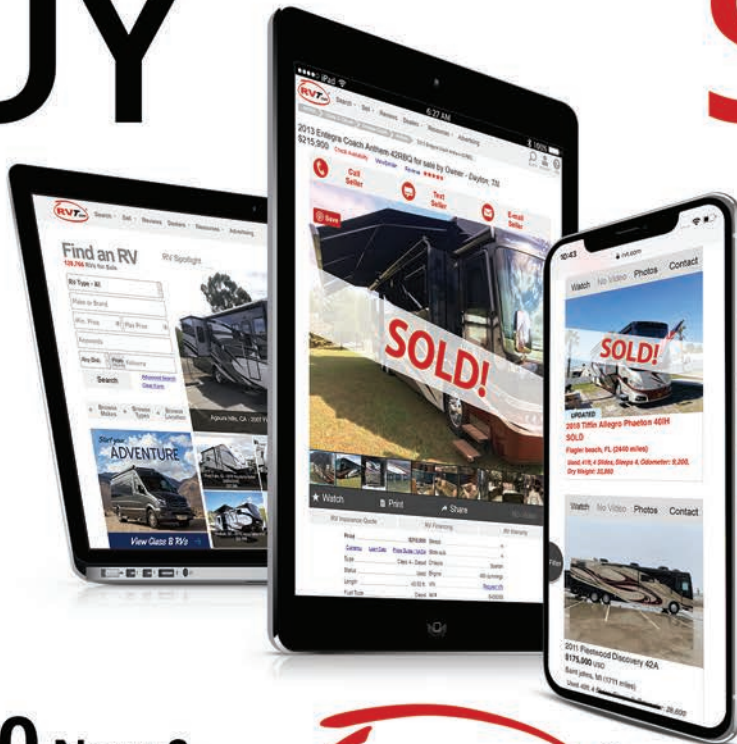
Located in southwestern Oklahoma, the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge is one of the few native mixed-grass



prairies remaining in the United States. The 20,000-acre refuge provides habitat for bison, Rocky Mountain elk and white-tailed deer as well as more than 50 mammal, 240 bird, 64 reptile and amphibian, 36 fish and 806 plant species. The refuge also boasts several lakes and, of course, mountains.

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## Fort Robinson State Park, Nebraska

An active military post from 1874 to 1948, much of the history of Fort Robinson has been preserved, making this historical site in the midst of incredible natural beauty an optimal pet-friendly destination. More than 22,000 acres offer rugged buttes, wild prairies and incredible stargazing at night.

Stay in renovated officers' quarters (pet friendly!) or pet-friendly campgrounds. On top of the history and terrain, the park offers lots of recreational activities like hiking, biking, fishing, swimming, Jeep tours, kayaking and more. Leashed pets are welcome throughout the park, trails and campgrounds. They aren't allowed in the lodge, exhibits, pool, or where food is served.



Leashed pets are welcome throughout the refuge on trails and in picnic areas. Campsites at Doris Campground are available on a first-come, first-served basis and most will accommodate RVs. Because of the abundance of wildlife within the park, 10-foot leash laws are strictly enforced.

## Monongahela National Forest, West Virginia

Dark green ridges and pastoral valleys paired with dramatic altitude variations make the Monongahela one of the most biologically diverse forests in the country. With 75 varieties of trees, 225 kinds of birds, 72 fish species, black bear, deer, beaver, fisher, bobcat, river otter, mink and eight federally threatened or endangered species, the forest is teeming with life.

One of the most popular attractions, Seneca Rocks, is comprised of elegant white and gray Tuscarora

quartzite formations rising more than 900 feet above the valley floor. Spruce Knob, another popular site, is the highest point in West Virginia.

Leashed pets are allowed in all developed areas, including the forest campgrounds and popular sites, unless otherwise posted or stated. Elsewhere within the national forest, pets may be off leash but under voice control. A word of warning, though: With so much wildlife, it may be better to keep your pets leashed — for his, yours and other animals' safety.

## Indiana Dunes, Indiana

It might surprise those who are unfamiliar with the area, but Indiana is home to one of the most beautiful stretches of lakeshore in the United States. This 15-mile shoreline features sparkling blue water, sandy dunes and 16.5 miles of trails through the dunes, ponds, marshes, creeks, prairie and forests.



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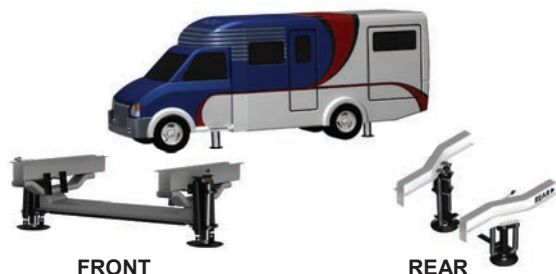
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**“ACADIA IS ONE OF THE MOST MAGNIFICENT AND PET-FRIENDLY NATIONAL PARKS IN THE UNITED STATES.”**

Leashed pets are welcome on the national lakeshore beaches east of Indiana Dunes State Park, in the picnic areas, campground and on most trails. At Indiana Dunes State Park, leashed pets are welcome on all trails, in the picnic areas, campground and on the beach east of the life-guarded area. Pets are not allowed on the swimming beach.

**Acadia National Park, Maine**

Acadia is one of the most magnificent and pet-friendly national parks in the United States; you could stay for weeks and never run out of places to explore! There are 100 miles of pet-friendly trails with varying degrees of difficulty. And some 45 miles of historic carriage roads (built and financed by John D. Rockefeller Jr.) offer options for biking or hiking through the valleys and mountains, past lakes and ponds, and along breathtaking cliffs. A 27-mile driving route also showcases Acadia

Acadia National Park in Maine welcomes RVers and their four-legged companions with approximately 100 miles of pet-friendly trails offering varying degrees of difficulty.

Park’s rugged shoreline.

Pets are welcome on most trails and in the free shuttles that buzz around the park. And having lunch, tea, or dinner on the lawn at Jordan Pond House Restaurant is a favorite of park visitors and their pets.

Acadia offers three campgrounds that will accommodate RVs within the park, and a plethora of private campgrounds are available in the area.

**Fort De Soto Park & Dog Beach**

On Florida’s Gulf Coast, south of Tampa, lie five small islands where history and nature combine to provide an enchanting getaway. The Fort De Soto Park campground offers a peaceful retreat, surrounded by more than 1,100 acres of forest and soft, white sandy beaches.

The actual Fort De Soto was built in

1900 to protect Tampa Bay, and today visitors can meander along a trail, stopping at educational stations along the way to learn about the history. Pets are welcome throughout most of the park and on all the trails, but not on the fishing piers or the public beaches. But that’s OK because pets have their own beach — the Fort De Soto Dog Beach, which is a quarter-mile stretch of beach just for the dogs to romp, splash and play then hit the doggy showers on their way out of town.

If motorhome travel with your pet interests you, don’t wait! Now is the perfect time to get on out there and do it. And above all, enjoy yourself. Don’t let the small stuff stress you out. After all, what could be better than an epic road trip adventure with your best friend by your side?



**Natchez Trace Parkway, Mississippi**

Stretching 444 miles from Natchez, Mississippi, to Nashville, Tennessee, the Natchez Trace Parkway follows the original Natchez Trace; a trail that was first used by nomadic hunters following bison herds; later by European trappers; and finally by early pioneers who took this route on their way home after bringing their goods down to New Orleans via the Ohio, Tennessee and Cumberland rivers.

In 1937 the trail became a unit of the National Park System. From thick forests to boggy cypress swamps, the parkway offers gorgeous scenery and a peek into the past. Along the way, more than 100 exhibits, interpretative signs and marked trails showcase the trail’s archaeological, cultural, historic and scenic significance. Leashed pets are welcome at all turnouts, picnic areas, trails and in the campgrounds located along the route. Pets are not allowed inside exhibits or structures.

◀ Doing the Trace is easy with pet-friendly campgrounds along the route.



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# TOP TIPS FOR TRAVELING WITH PETS



**Y**ou already know that traveling by motorhome is a great way to see the world. But have you considered that the same aspects you love about RVing also make it easy to take your pets along for the ride? It's no wonder that an estimated 50 percent of RVers travel with their pets!

First of all, traveling in a home on wheels is more comfortable for everyone. It's easier and more cost-effective to park and pop the slides than it is to schlep everyone to a pet-friendly hotel. Plus, your pets have the same spot to sleep each night — hooray for sticking to a routine! And most pets do better in familiar surroundings, which of course means you'll be happier, too!

As with any activities with pets, there are unique challenges and things to consider when taking your pets along with you in your motorhome. My husband and I have spent the past 10 years traveling the country in our Winnebago with our two dogs, Ty and Buster, so it's safe to say we learned a few things along the way. We have lots of great pet travel advice on our site, [www.GoPetFriendly.com](http://www.GoPetFriendly.com), but here are our top tips for anyone who's interested in hitting the road in an RV with their best furry pals.



## Organize Your (Pet's) Gear

Packing properly is a major factor in the success of your motorhome trip. This goes for your pets as well. A few weeks before you leave, start a list of the items your pet needs on a daily basis. Then, think about things he might need on an infrequent basis. If your pup can't live without his Thundershirt during storms, make sure to pack it!

## Plan Your Route

Traveling with a pet requires a bit more planning than just hopping in the rig to explore the open road. You'll want to make sure the campgrounds you book are pet-friendly and that any attractions you plan to see will also welcome your pet. Traveling will be much more fun for you both when your pup can go along to see the sights. While you're planning your route, be sure to note some pet-friendly restaurants as well, to give you options for dining out.

## Be a Courteous Pet Owner

This should go without saying, but be courteous. Pick up after your pet and observe pet policies. And be honest with yourself when it comes to your pet and how great of a traveler he may be. Dogs that bark nonstop don't make pleasant neighbors, and might not be well suited for motorhome travel. Try a night or two before you head out on longer trips to make sure your pet is a polite campground guest.

## Microchip and Tag Your Pet

Microchipping and making sure your pet has an ID tag on his collar are critical pet-owner responsibilities no matter where you are. But when you're on the road they are even more important. Make sure your contact info is up to date with the microchip registry, including your current cellphone number. The same goes for ID tags. Microchips are great but having an ID tag on his collar (and rabies tag, too, for that matter) will help anyone who finds your pet get in touch with you right away.

While you're at it, snap a few good, current photos of your pet so if he happens to go wandering about on his own, you have a photo to share. Get a couple of copies printed so you can easily distribute and/or make posters to hang up if the unthinkable occurs and you have to go on a hunt for your pet.


## Buckle Up For Safety

General RV safety requires that everyone inside the vehicle is always buckled up whenever the rig is on the move — and that should include your pets. This protects your furry family members in case of an accident, but it can also help prevent a crash. Free-roaming pets have a tendency to want to hang out near the driver and that can be a big distraction! Keep everyone buckled up (or crated) and safe while you're on the road.

## Bring Along Your Pet's Records

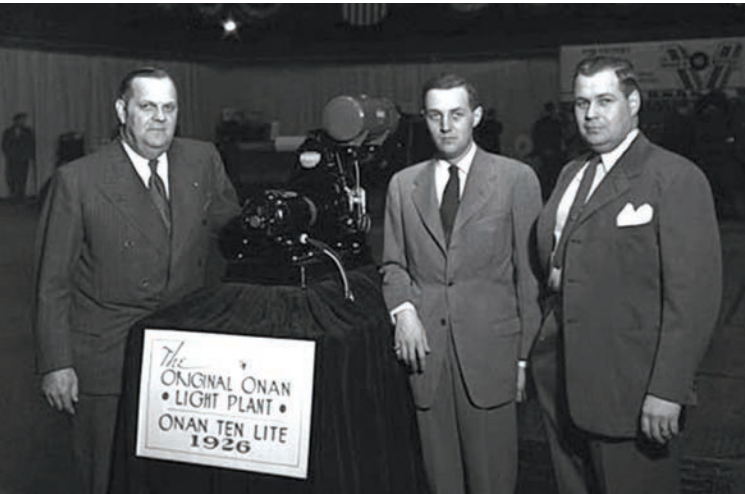
The last thing you want is for your pet to get sick or injured on the road and require an emergency vet visit. But if it happens, it will be easier for the veterinarian caring for your pet if you bring along your pet's medical and vaccination records.

## Give Your Pet a Safe Space

Even if your pet has exceptional recall and isn't likely to go running off whenever the motorhome door opens, strange things can happen when you're on the road. Consider using a folding playpen or pet gate to keep your pet away from the door while you're setting up or breaking camp. These are times when you're distracted with other activities, and keeping your pet contained will keep him from being underfoot as you're settling in or getting ready to depart. — Amy Burkert 



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ALWAYS ON



# You Have Arrived

Well-appointed Coach House Arriva offers Mercedes-Benz luxury and a smooth handling experience By Chris Dougherty

**T**he overwhelming popularity of Class B motorhomes is an interesting phenomenon. It wasn't too long ago that Class B sales were at the bottom of the list. That all has changed, and with the uptick in popularity and sales, the Class B has become everything from a four-wheel-drive outback adventurer to, in the case of the Coach House Arriva, a comfortable, technologically advanced touring vehicle for discriminating buyers.

When the *MotorHome* team arrived at the Coach House Factory in Nokomis, Florida, the company was wrapping up an owners' rally and things were a bit frantic putting the facility back together. Nevertheless, the Arriva V24-TB slated for testing was set up in the showroom delivery area. We were quickly greeted by Steve Gerzeny, the company's vice president, who proceeded to give us a tour of the company's higher-end offering.

While we in the RV industry may be getting used to seeing Mercedes-

Benz Sprinter vans around, walking up to this motorhome with the big three-pointed Mercedes-Benz star on the chrome grille is impressive, and certainly exudes the company's drive to dominate motorization on land, sea and air.

Built with the 170-inch wheelbase, dual-rear-wheel Sprinter with the 3.0-liter six-cylinder diesel and five-speed automatic transmission, the package oozes elegance, and certainly the warm welcome we received is commensurate with that ideal.

To evaluate the Arriva, we drove the motorhome back to Tropical Palms RV Resort in Kissimmee, Florida, to give it the once over. Tropical Palms' paved full-hookup sites and beautiful recreation and pool area, a mile outside of the Walt Disney World complex, made this assignment a "real challenge." Tough job, but someone had to do it.

## The Inside Story

The Arriva, undoubtedly, has the feel of an elegant home on wheels. Stepping inside the screened side door, which is part of an option package (\$1,500), it's clear that attention to detail is an integral part of the game with Coach House. The sliding screen door is mounted to a cabinet-matching stile from the step to the ceiling, with a fixed hook-and-loop mounted screen on the back of the galley countertop,

**ABOVE:** The Arriva's patio area features an electric awning and flat-screen TV, while the optional screen helps keep bugs out of the interior.

Right: The Arriva's well-equipped galley features a Dometic glass-top two-burner range and sink. The flip-up extension adds to versatility. Far right: The bathroom is exceptional for its space and comfort. Despite the compact overall floorplan, storage is ample, with enough floor space to get the job done.



which works well to keep the bugs out. But, when the weather is nice, extend the power Carefree Freestyle RM awning, and enjoy time on the patio watching golf on the exterior 22-inch LED TV that's mounted on a swing-away bracket. Don't worry ... there's another TV in the bed/living room.

The V24-TB (Twin Bed) is currently the only floorplan available in the Arriva. There are various floorplans available in the Class B segment, but so many squeeze a wet-bath amidships, which, for a 6-footer, is untenable. A motorhome should still be about livability, and the V24's rear dry bath and 26-by-24½-inch shower makes this about as livable for the members of the sasquatch club as can be had in a Class B. Across from the shower is the toilet and sink, with a wardrobe just aft of the shower with cubbies facing the rear door. Shut the doors, and you have an entirely private bathroom.

Forward of the bathroom is the combination living and sleeping space. The two 28-by-74-inch twin beds have thick back pillows, which turn them into available seating during the day and offer comfortable sleeping at night. If you prefer a king bed, the frame of the driver's-side bed slides over to join the passenger's-side frame; push the two cushions together, and you have a king bed in a Class B. Of course, doing this eliminates the hallway, so there's some crawling involved to get to the bathroom.

The galley is complete with a microwave/convection oven, Dometic gas cooktop and fold-down sink, a Dometic 6-cubic-foot three-way refrigerator-freezer, and a great pull-out pantry. There's plenty of cabinet and drawer storage to boot, and just forward of the refrigerator is a

cabinet with an additional fold-down desk/dining table for extra prep space. The desk and table are cherry and match the cabinetry. The countertops and vanity are solid-surface for easy care and longevity.

Both front seats rotate to become the dining seats and/or additional guest seats, and the driver's seat can also be used as an office chair at the fold-out table.

The Coach House cabinetry is designed and built in-house, which is not unusual. What is remarkable, however, is how the cabinetry is made. The core of all the cabinets is a polypropylene honeycomb sandwich panel inside a solid wood frame, with veneer applied externally. This creates a strong, yet lightweight, cabinet. The test motorhome had solid-cherry flat-panel cabinet doors with push-button locking hardware, which was attractive and functional. Inside cabinet storage is remarkably generous for a Class B, and with the weight savings, this motorhome hits a home run with a 1,730-pound realistic occupant and cargo carrying capacity with full water, fuel and propane.

The Arriva is a technologically savvy motorhome. Coach House has done a credible job equipping this rig for off-the-grid and internet-connected living. The 12-volt DC electrical system's foundation of dual Lifeline 6-volt AGM batteries is charged by a 160-watt Go Power! solar charging system,



Far left: The desk/table combination is a nice feature — especially when combined with the rotating front seats — and there's plenty of lighting for work. Left: The walk-in shower has enough room for a 6-footer and features integrated shelves for soaps and shampoos. Next-door, a closet is a great inclusion for towels, washcloths and clothing.



and the AC electrical system, which consists of a 30-amp shorepower supply, a Xantrex Freedom X 1,200-watt inverter/charger, as well as a Cummins-Onan 3.6-kW Micro-Quiet LP-gas generator.

The motorhome comes standard with an HDTV antenna with Wi-Fi, and there are USB, 12-volt DC and 120-volt AC receptacles throughout. The two TVs are fed by a standalone DVD player. While no smart TV option is installed from the factory, as in some other motorhomes, owners have the option to choose and add their own, like an Apple TV system, and network it with the Wi-Fi system.

On-the-road entertainment and directions are handled by a Fusion touch-screen stereo with integrated Garmin RV GPS programming and

The sleeping system is comfortable and flexible, as it can be set up as individual twin sleepers or put together to form a spacious king-bed configuration.

Bluetooth capability. Mercedes' basic steering wheel controls are tied into the stereo; however, this gets much better in the new 2020 Sprinter setup. A new electronic control system will be available in the next generation models.

Comfort and convenience aren't to be left out of the Arriva, either. Underfoot, Infinity luxury woven vinyl flooring (\$1,500) is a pricy but excellent choice. It's cushioned, slip-resistant, anti-fungal and easy to clean. All lighting and systems are controlled through a Firefly Integrations multiplexing system with smartphone app control. All the switch panels are touch-panels and are programmable, and the system integrates auto-generator start and HVAC control as well. The Dometic Penguin-II high-capacity air conditioner/heat pump's output is channeled through ceiling ducts and registers, which reduce noise and improve distribution. A 19,000-Btu furnace takes over heating when the temps dip below the mid-40s. And, remember that rear dry bath? Yes, well you can take a nice long hot shower courtesy of the Truma Aqua-Go on-demand hot-water system.

### Behind the Wheel

The Mercedes-Benz Sprinter has been a solid motorhome foundation for years and continues to be into 2019. The test motorhome was built on the older style German-built model. The legacy diesel chassis handled respectfully during our test, and even crosswind conditions on the interstate didn't present much of a handling issue.

### WHAT'S HOT

Appliance selection, dry-bath size, cabinetry, technology, realistic occupant and cargo carrying capacity, Firefly Integrations multiplex control system

### WHAT'S NOT

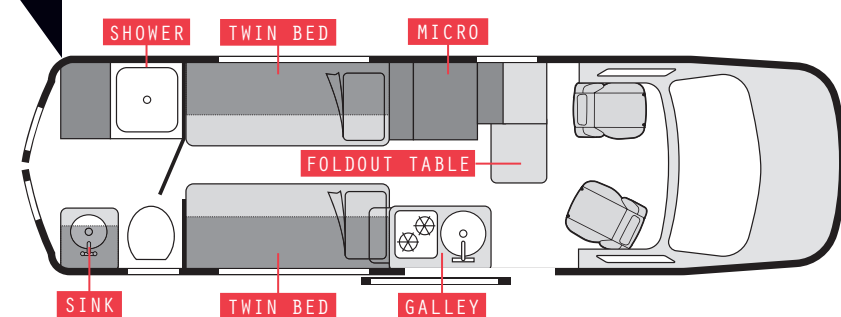
Lower-resolution (and non-smart) HDTVs, wheel liners rather than aluminum wheels, there's not one in my driveway



While having to use the original Mercedes-Benz seats on legacy-model Sprinters, owners can have them re-upholstered to suit the interior. But we learned from Coach House, which is a Mercedes-Benz Master Upfitter, that new models will have to retain the Mercedes-Benz seats in their entirety (including fabric) for safety reasons; the seats have electronics in them that are VIN-specific and that the computer recognizes, so they can't be replaced. That said, the most significant changes from the standard Sprinter are in the dash and electronics, including an integrated entertainment system with hands-free voice-controlled functionality and Wi-Fi connectivity. There are also some additional tweaks to the front end and an entirely new cab interior. The powertrain has seen some changes, including new seven- and nine-speed transmissions, a 3.0-liter diesel and a newly available gas engine.

As expected, the Arriva has Mercedes-Benz driver assist systems, including collision prevention and blind-spot assist, which all worked as expected. Driver and passenger seats are the Mercedes-Benz comfort models and have armrests and heat in each. As we have reported in previous tests, the instrument cluster is simple and easy to read, even if the computer interface buttons take some acclimation for non-Mercedes drivers. The

COACH HOUSE ARRIVA V24-TB



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# Specifications

## Chassis

Manufacturer	Mercedes-Benz
Model	Sprinter
Engine	3.0-liter 6-cylinder turbodiesel
SAE Hp	190 @ 3,800 rpm
Torque	325 lb-ft @ 1,400–2,400 rpm
Transmission	5-speed automatic
Axle Ratio	3.92:1
Front Tires	LT215/85R16E
Rear Tires	LT215/85R16E
Wheelbase	170"
Brakes Front/Rear	Disc
Suspension Front/Rear	Strut/Leaf spring
Fuel Capacity	24.5 gal
Fuel Economy	16 mpg
Warranty	3 years/36,000 miles basic; 5 years/100,000 miles powertrain

## Coach

Exterior Length	24' 2"
Exterior Width	6' 6.5"
Exterior Height with A/C	9' 8"
Interior Width	5' 10"
Interior Height	6' 2"
Construction	Van chassis
Freshwater Capacity	31 gal
Black-water Capacity	13 gal
Gray-water Capacity	20 gal
Water-heater Capacity	On-demand
Propane Capacity	12 gal
Air Conditioner	15,000-Btu with heat pump
Furnace	19,000-Btu
Refrigerator	6 cu-ft
Inverter/Charger	1,200 watts/45 amp
Batteries	(1) 12-volt chassis, (2) 6-volt AGM house
AC Generator	3.6-kW
MSRP	\$150,046
MSRP as Tested	\$155,526
Warranty	3 years/36,000 miles

## Wet Weight

(Water and water heater, fuel, propane tanks full; no supplies or passengers)

Front Axle	3,680 lbs
Rear Axle	5,620 lbs
Total	9,300 lbs

## Chassis Ratings

GAWR, Front/Rear	4,410 lbs/7,720 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	11,030 lbs/15,250 lbs
ROCCC	1,730 lbs
GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Gross Combination Weight Rating
ROCCC	Realistic Occupant and Cargo Carrying Capacity (full water, no passengers)

TEST

## COACH HOUSE ARRIVA V24-TB



Clockwise, from far left: The microwave/convection oven and Dometic 6-cubic-foot three-way refrigerator-freezer sit between the fold-up desk and the slide-out pantry. Cockpit dash features a Fusion touch-screen stereo with Garmin RV GPS. The exterior hot and cold shower is handy for rinsing off the sand and dirt from the day's adventures before heading inside.

control stalks and dash controls are within easy reach; the HVAC controls are intuitive, and the temperature seems accurate. Six cup-holders between the front seats, if all used simultaneously, hold a selection of refreshments and ensure frequent rest stops.

## The Outside Story

In an interesting twist, the Arriva has maintained the full-side-wall glass appearance of the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter passenger van; however, the dark tinted glass features jalousie windows in appropriate places. When combined with the high-output roof fans, comfortable sleeping on cool nights can be ensured.

The Arriva has a pleasing appearance that isn't over the top, with all white paint and black trim. Fiberglass running boards on each side give this motorhome a sleek look, better access to the cab (of course) and also double as a nicely sized storage compartment on the driver's side. The stainless wheel covers are decent-looking, but on a high-end coach, we'd like to see aluminum wheels.

Under the awning, campsite RV amenities are everything you'd expect, including a 120-volt AC receptacle, propane gas quick connection for grills and gas fire pits, and the aforementioned LED TV, which lives just behind the sliding door.

The utility connections are located at the rear on the driver's side, and are

quite straightforward, with a twist-lock shorepower cord connection on the side of the motorhome, and the water, cable, and sewer connections located at the bottom corner. Electrically heated holding tanks (\$690) help to extend the camping season or keep tanks from freezing up while transiting south during the winter.

## The Final Word

Choosing a Class B motorhome is dependent on how you plan to use it. Unlike many floorplans, the V24-TB has a very livable design, with comfortable sleeping for two; a great bathroom, especially for a Class B; ample galley facilities; good entertainment options; and friendly road manners. Most at home on the road, adequate ground clearance will keep owners from fretting about campground maneuvers.

The Coach House Arriva V24-TB is a well-thought-out and well-built Class B, and the equipment chosen for this motorhome is excellent-quality, name-brand products with solid reputations. There's enough tech from the factory to satisfy most gadget geeks, while still being a great foundation to customize as desired. Luxury features and compact-but-highly-livable stature make it a good candidate for those who want to downsize without compromise. **M**

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# CHASSIS CONNECTION II

## BUSINESS IN THE FRONT, PARTY IN THE BACK: THE SUPER C MOTORHOME CHASSIS

**M**otorhome layouts used to be pretty clear-cut. If you wanted the biggest, you chose a Class A; if you wanted the most sleeping capacity for your family, a Class C was the obvious choice. Needless to say, those lines have blurred in the last several years, and there really are no rules of thumb anymore. If you can imagine it, it exists.

Case in point: the so-called “Super C” motorhome. Although these vehicles are technically defined as Class C motorhomes, they represent an amalgam of Class A space and commercial heavyduty (yes, we know that’s not an adjective, or even a word). The appeal of these motorhomes is obvious to their prospective buyers: A beefy gas engine or front-engine diesel you can hear and feel, a hood you can look down and doors on both sides of the cockpit. What may not be so obvious, however,

are the mechanical details of the chassis. Super C motorhomes are built on medium-duty commercial “cab and chassis” supplied to the RV builder by the original equipment manufacturer (OEM, i.e., Ford, Freightliner, RAM, etc.). Unlike a Class A motorhome chassis, which was designed from the beginning to be, you know, a motorhome, a medium-duty truck chassis was built for anything from ambulance to delivery-truck duty. As such, it typically puts toughness, serviceability and reliability ahead of comfort, and it’s up to the RV builder to make the chassis and cab comfortable for RV use.

A Super C coach is often the right choice if you have a heavy trailer to tow. Due to the commercial/industrial nature of the chassis and its higher gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) and gross combination weight rating (GCWR), towing and hauling

heavy loads are part of the unit’s DNA. A trailer with a brace of horses and their gear, or a trailer housing a race car and its associated shop and tools, for example, would be a great fit behind many Super C’s, but would seriously overload a traditional Class C motorhome.

Understanding what choices chassis manufacturers offer is also helpful when shopping for a Super C motorhome. For example, many offer a variety of engines and GVWRs so that price difference you’re witnessing between two “identical” motorhomes could be due to a base engine and chassis in one of them. It’s also important to test drive the unit you’re considering and compare it to other motorhomes on the same chassis. Some manufacturers may upgrade the suspension for a softer ride, and equip the cab with better seats, carpet and additional insulation, and that could be a reason for a price difference as well.

In this guide, we’re featuring the latest and most popular medium-duty chassis available, Class 4 to Class 6. We’re not going to be covering Class 8 (semi) cab and chassis-based motorhomes here for a couple of reasons: One, we don’t have room for all the choices on these pages, and two, if you’re shopping for one of those, you probably already know what you want, and the coachbuilder will likely give it to you.

With some careful consideration, comparison and driving, you’ll find the right motorhome on a chassis perfect for your needs and budget.



Ⓜ Introduced in March of last year, the 2019 Silverado 4500HD, 5500HD and 6500HD cab and chassis trucks promise ease of driving, serviceability and upfitting.





### CHEVROLET SILVERADO 4500/5500/6500 HD

<b>Engine</b>	6.6-liter Duramax diesel V-8, 350 hp @ 2,700 rpm, 700 lb-ft of torque @ 1,600 rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	Allison A1700MH six-speed, double overdrive
<b>Drive system</b>	2WD, 4WD
<b>Suspension front/rear</b>	Multi-leaf, available rear air suspension
<b>Brakes</b>	Four-wheel disc with ABS
<b>Wheelbases</b>	141", 165", 189", 201", 219", 231", 243" (Regular Cab); 175", 199", 235" (Crew Cab)
<b>Fuel capacity</b>	40 gal (standard); available 25-gal front fuel tank (total 65 gal)
<b>Payload range</b>	6,186 lbs-15,940 lbs
<b>GVWR range</b>	15,000 lbs-23,500 lbs
<b>GCWR range</b>	26,000 lbs-37,000 lbs
<b>Tow rating</b>	Depends on equipment
<b>Warranty</b>	3 years/36,000 miles limited chassis; 5 years/100,000 miles limited engine; 5 years/unlimited miles transmission

**OUR TAKE** Slow sales and the economic recession forced GM to cease production of its Chevy Kodiak and GMC TopKick medium-duty trucks in 2009. Having lost market share to its competition at Ford, Freightliner and RAM for nearly a decade, GM finally released its all-new Chevy Silverado 4500/5500/6500 HD, and it looks promising. Powered by the proven 6.6-liter Duramax diesel V-8/Allison six-speed transmission combo, the big Silverados have some thoughtful features that RV manufacturers and consumers are sure to appreciate. Seven cab-to-axle lengths ranging from 60 to 162 inches provide flexibility, and a fiberglass, forward-hinged "clamshell" hood facilitates servicing. Available in 2WD or 4WD, this chassis features a 50-degree wheel cut for easier maneuverability, and available factory rear air suspension for a smooth ride.

**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE** We haven't had a chance to sample a motorhome built on this chassis yet, but we expect to see more Super C's built on this chassis in the coming months. We'll have to reserve judgment until then, but things look good so far.

### FORD F-450/F-550

<b>Engine(s)</b>	6.8-liter V-10, 288 hp @ 4,000 rpm, 424 lb-ft of torque @ 3,000 rpm; 6.7-liter Power Stroke diesel V-8, 330 hp @ 2,600 rpm, 750 lb-ft of torque @ 2,000 rpm
<b>Transmission</b>	TorqShift six-speed SelectShift automatic transmission
<b>Drive system</b>	2WD, 4WD
<b>Suspension front/rear</b>	Solid Twin-Coil moonbeam/ solid axle with leaf springs
<b>Brakes</b>	Four-wheel disc with ABS
<b>Wheelbases</b>	145.3", 169.3", 193.3", 205.3" (Regular Cab); 167.9", 191.9", (SuperCab); 179.8", 203.8" (Crew Cab)
<b>Fuel capacity</b>	40 gal
<b>Payload range</b>	8,110 lbs-12,730 lbs
<b>GVWR range</b>	15,000 lbs-19,500 lbs
<b>GCWR range</b>	28,000 lbs-40,000 lbs
<b>Tow rating</b>	17,500 lbs-18,500 lbs
<b>Warranty</b>	3 years/36,000 miles; powertrain, 5 years/60,000 miles (gas); 5 years/100,000 miles (diesel)



**OUR TAKE** The Ford F-450 and F-550 have a long-standing proven reputation for reliability, and with the latest-generation 6.7-liter Power Stroke, are competitive with any other medium-duty truck from a power/torque standpoint. A variety of trim levels, from a basic XL all the way up to the luxury-leaning Lariat, offer a wide range of amenities and convenience features to choose from. Plus, if you have a problem or need service, help is just a Ford dealership away.

**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE** There's nothing really to add here. The 6.7-liter Power Stroke is quiet and powerful, and offers a selection of trim levels. Just inquire which trim level your motorhome is built on, as you may be able to get more features on another brand.



## FREIGHTLINER M2

**Engine(s)** ... Cummins B6.7 (6.7-liter), 200-325 hp @ 2,400 rpm, 520 to 750 lb-ft of torque @ 1,600-1,800 rpm; Cummins L9, 260-350 hp @ 2,200 rpm, 720-1,150 lb-ft of torque @ 1,400 rpm; Detroit DD5, 200-240 hp @ 2,200 rpm, 560-660 lb-ft of torque @ 1,400 rpm; Detroit DD8, 260-350 hp @ 2,200 rpm, 660-1,050 lb-ft of torque @ 1,400 rpm

**Transmission(s)** ... Allison 1000MH, 2000MH, 3000MH automatic

**Drive system** ..... 2WD

**Suspension front/rear** ..... Tapered leaf spring, Detroit or Meritor solid axle/leaf spring or air ride

**Brakes** ..... Hydraulic or air, drum or disc

**Wheelbases** ..... Customizable

**Fuel capacity** ..... (2) 50 gal-150 gal

**Payload range** ..... N/A

**GVWR range** ..... Up to 60,000 lbs

**GCWR range** ..... Up to 80,000 lbs

**Tow rating** ..... Depends on equipment

**Warranty** ..... 2 years/unlimited; engine, 3 years/250,000 miles

## FREIGHTLINER S2RV

**Engine** ..... Cummins B6.7 (6.7-liter), 300 hp @ 2,600 rpm, 660 lb-ft of torque @ 1,600 rpm; 340 hp @ 2,600 rpm, 700 lb-ft of torque @ 1,600 rpm; 360 hp @ 2,400 rpm, 800 lb-ft of torque @ 1,800 rpm

**Transmission(s)** ..... Allison 2100MH, 2500MH, 3000MH six-speed automatic

**Drive system** ..... 4WD

**Suspension front/rear** ..... Tapered leaf spring, Detroit solid axle/Airliner Air Ride

**Brakes** ..... Meritor Air Drum

**Wheelbases** ..... 179"-279"

**Fuel capacity** ..... 60 gal or 100 gal

**Payload range** ..... Based on finished motorhome

**GVWR range** ..... 26,000 lbs-33,000 lbs

**GCWR range** ... Based on finished motorhome (30,000 lbs-plus)

**Tow rating** ..... Based on finished motorhome

**Warranty** ..... 3 years/50,000 miles



ⓘ Built for the long haul, the Freightliner chassis is a proven platform that should last a lifetime in an RV application.

**OUR TAKE** Unlike the S2RV, which is specifically designed for RV use, the M2 is a commercial chassis, which may or may not be a good thing depending on what you're looking for. The M2 is available with a choice of engines, all the way up to, and including, the Detroit DD8 rated at 350 hp and 1,150 lb-ft of torque, while the S2RV

is offered only with the B6.7 Cummins (a 6.7-liter variant of what's available in heavy-duty RAM pickups), which produces a maximum of 800 lb-ft of torque. The M2 has a GVWR of 66,000 pounds from the factory, while the S2RV peaks at 33,000 pounds. On the surface, that sounds like the M2 is a better chassis, but beware:

The Detroit or Cummins L9 offerings in the M2 are undoubtedly noisier than the B6.7, and the M2's higher GVWR can mean a rougher ride. How the RV manufacturer spec'd the M2 when ordering, and the modifications/upgrades (if any) it made afterward, can make a big difference — so try before you buy. Also, the M2's interior is pretty basic

from the factory, so there will likely be differences in the way each RV manufacturer equips the cab.

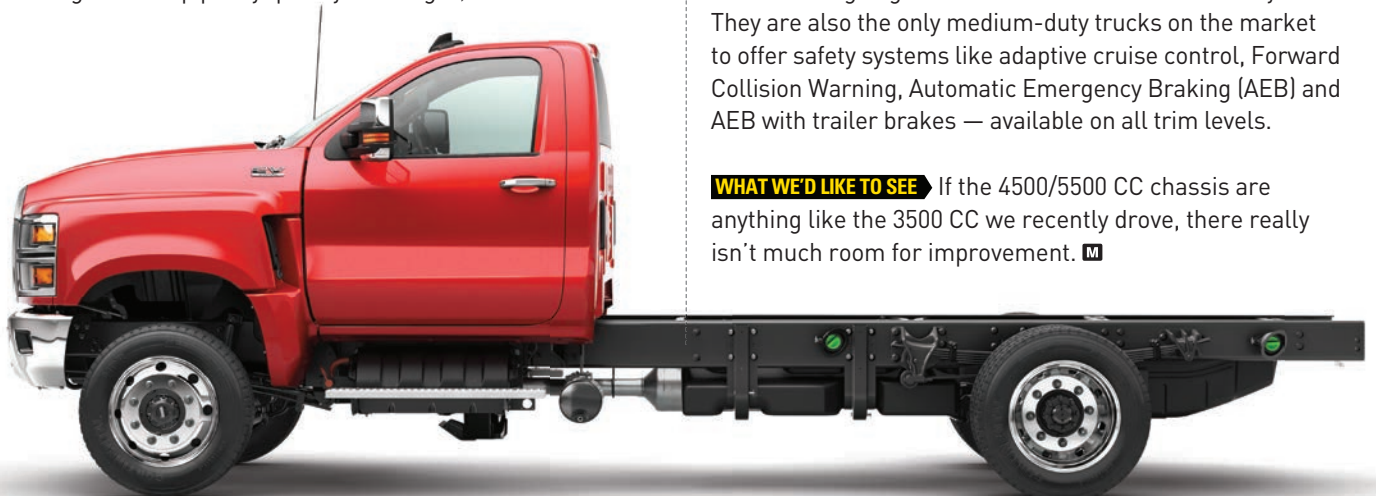
**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE** With a wide range of available chassis, engines and equipment, there's nothing much to wish for with the M2. It's a tough, commercial-based chassis that should last longer than you.

## INTERNATIONAL CV SERIES

<b>Engine</b> ....	International 6.6-liter turbodiesel V-8 (sourced from GM) 350 hp @ 2,700 rpm, 700 lb-ft @ 1,600 rpm
<b>Transmission</b> ...	Allison 1700, 1750, 2700 six-speed automatic
<b>Drive system</b> .....	2WD, 4WD
<b>Suspension front/rear</b> .....	Tapered leaf shackle (6,000-lb-8,000-lb GAWR) or parabolic tapered leaf (7,500-lb-8,000-lb GAWR)/Vari-Rate springs (11,000-lb-15,500-lb GAWR), International Air Ride (12,000-lb-15,000-lb GAWR, 2WD only)
<b>Brakes</b> .....	Hydromax four-wheel disc with traction control and ABS
<b>Wheelbase range</b> .....	141"-235"
<b>Fuel capacity</b> .....	Single, 25 gal; single, 40 gal; dual, 25 gal and 40 gal
<b>Payload range</b> .....	N/A
<b>GVWR range</b> .....	2WD 16,000 lbs-22,900 lbs; 4WD 17,500 lbs-23,500 lbs
<b>GCWR range</b> .....	26,000 lbs-37,500 lbs
<b>Tow rating</b> .....	Depends on equipment
<b>Warranty</b> .....	3 years/36,000 miles; engine, 5 years/100,000 miles; transmission, 5 years/unlimited

**OUR TAKE** ▶ This is a relatively new chassis for International, and we haven't even seen a Super C built on it yet, let alone driven one. But a body that looks like it was chiseled from granite, a forward-tilting hood, a 50-degree wheel cut and an accommodating interior show real promise in an RV application.

**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE** ▶ How about another engine choice with more torque? That 700 lb-ft from the lone engine offering will get used up pretty quickly in a larger, heavier coach.



## RAM 4500/5500 CC

<b>Engine(s)</b> .....	6.4-liter HEMI gas V-8, 370 hp @ 5,600 rpm, 429 lb-ft of torque @ 4,000 rpm (with six-speed automatic transmission), 410 hp @ 5,600 rpm, 429 lb-ft of torque @ 4,000 rpm (with eight-speed automatic transmission), 6.7-liter Cummins turbodiesel, 360 hp @ 2,800 rpm, 800 lb-ft of torque @ 1,800 rpm
<b>Transmission(s)</b> .....	Aisin AS66RC six-speed automatic/ZF 8HP75, eight-speed automatic (gas engine), Aisin A69RC six-speed automatic (diesel only)
<b>Drive system</b> .....	2WD, 4WD
<b>Suspension front/rear</b> ...	Solid-axle, three-link with track bar, coil springs, stabilizer bar/solid axle, two-stage longitudinal leaf springs
<b>Brakes</b> .....	Four-wheel disc with ABS
<b>Wheelbases</b> .....	144.6", 168.7", 173.5", 192.6", 197.5", 204.4"
<b>Fuel capacity</b> .....	52 gal (amidships 22-gal tank available for 74-gal total)
<b>Payload range</b> .....	6,330 lbs-12,510 lbs
<b>GVWR range</b> .....	15,000 lbs-19,500 lbs
<b>GCWR range</b> .....	26,000 lbs-43,000 lbs
<b>Tow rating</b> .....	18,020 lbs-35,220 lbs
<b>Warranty</b> .....	3 years/36,000 miles basic; 5 years/100,000 miles powertrain

**OUR TAKE** ▶ Redesigned from the ground up, well-equipped and more powerful than ever, the 2019 RAM 4500 CC and 5500 CC are going to be the chassis cabs to beat this year. They are also the only medium-duty trucks on the market to offer safety systems like adaptive cruise control, Forward Collision Warning, Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB) and AEB with trailer brakes — available on all trim levels.

**WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE** ▶ If the 4500/5500 CC chassis are anything like the 3500 CC we recently drove, there really isn't much room for improvement. **M**



# COLD SPELLS

How to keep your motorhome's absorption refrigerator running smoothly By Chris Dougherty

**M**otorhome owners are dependent on their refrigerator. In fact, not only is a refrigerator necessary for self-containment, most owners would probably cancel their trip plans if it quit working. It's easy to think that an RV refrigerator will be ready to go and be just as reliable as a residential version, but there are a number of issues that are exclusive to absorption refrigerators. Repairs, and possible replacement, are costly — to the tune of hundreds or even thousands of dollars.

Following are five of the most common practices that can cause an RV refrigerator to fail. As with most motorhome systems, reading the owner's manual and becoming familiar with the unit will go a long way toward preventing a food storage calamity.

## 1 Operating the refrigerator too far off level

An RV absorption refrigerator is dependent on heat and the proper flow of its refrigerant. Unlike a residential fridge that uses one chemical for refrigeration, an RV version uses ammonia, hydrogen, water and sodium chromate, which is heated to the boiling point and then cooled to absorb heat from the food storage areas. Heat is provided by an electric element or a propane gas flame.

This design is ages old and was commonly used before the advent of electric compressors and modern refrigerants. However, physics has a lot to do with its proper operation,

and while the cooling unit design has been fine-tuned over the years, it's still dependent on being "comfortably" level to operate properly, with tolerances of 3 degrees side to side and 6 degrees front to back.

If the refrigerator is operated off level then the heating of the boiler is uneven, creating hot spots where the sodium chromate can begin to precipitate out of the solution and form crystals or flakes in the solution. Once formed, the flakes always remain and can create a blockage. Once the blockage forms, the cooling unit becomes damaged and must be replaced at considerable expense.

Preventing the above malady can be accomplished by simply leveling the motorhome to a comfortable position. A proper posture requires that the

floor of the freezer be relatively level. This can be checked with a small bubble level. It may not be possible to achieve a perfect position, but if the bubble in the level is half in the center bull's-eye, the refrigerator will likely perform properly.

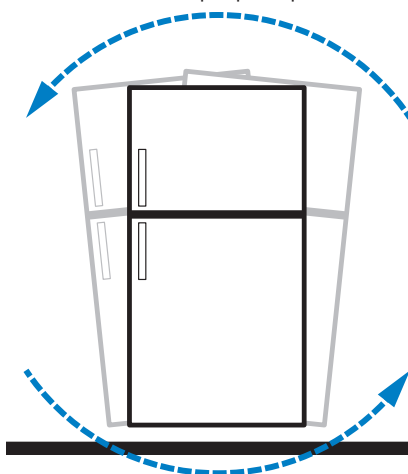
**PRO TIP:** It's best to turn the refrigerator off when parking temporarily on an unlevel surface, such as while shopping or sightseeing.

## 2 Using a refrigerator in severely cold temperatures

In the past, not too many people used their motorhome in arctic or below-freezing conditions, so the operation of the refrigerator was never considered. However, in recent years, manufacturers have been building four-season-capable motorhomes, based on a demand from RVers who want to extend their adventures into the winter cold. Unfortunately, RV refrigerators aren't built to handle this well.

According to Dometic, a major supplier of absorption refrigerators to the RV industry, in temperatures below 25 degrees Fahrenheit, the refrigerant may get so cold that it can begin

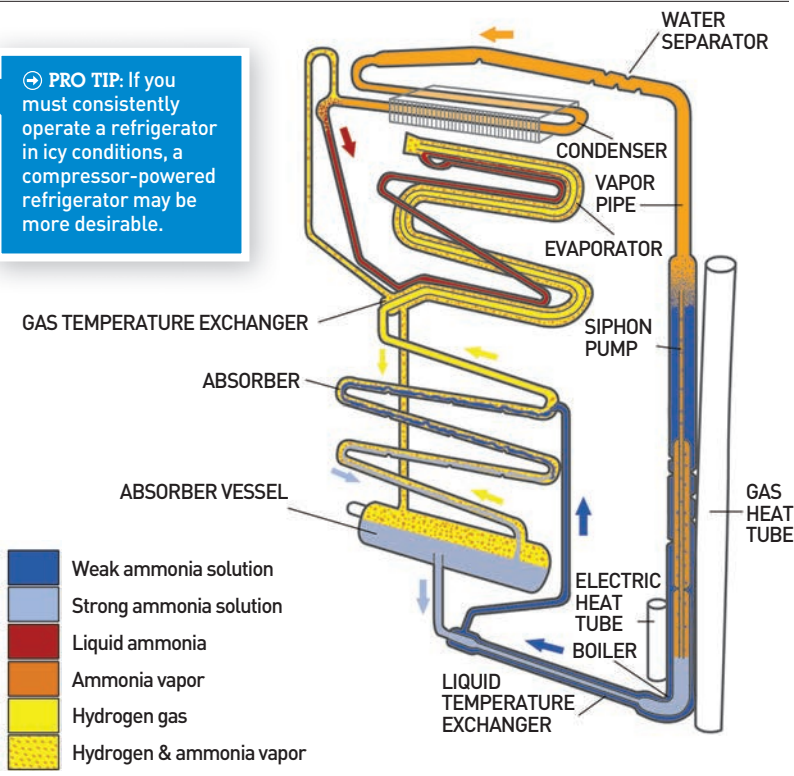
For the refrigerator to operate properly and avoid damage, it must be operated in a comfortably level position; within 3 degrees side to side, and 6 degrees front to back. A bubble level set on the freezer compartment floor is the best place to check refrigerator attitude. When the boiler isn't level, the coolant can be overheated, which causes the sodium chromate to precipitate into flakes and eventually lead to a blockage. The same thing can happen if the refrigerator is used in ambient temperatures below 25 degrees Fahrenheit.



to “gel up and not flow through the coils as intended.” Heat applied to the gelled refrigerant will be uneven, (much like when running in an unlevel condition) and can solidify, damaging the cooling unit. As a result, the company advises customers not to use the unit when it’s below 25 degrees outside, let alone in subzero temperatures.

Dometic refrigerators have a low-ambient temperature control that helps the refrigerator continue operating in cold conditions, but not below aforementioned temperatures. The difficulty here is maintaining ventilation to the cooling unit while keeping it warm enough to operate. An absorption cooling unit requires free-flowing air, as well as ventilation for the propane-fired boiler, which is why there are vents on the outside walls and roof for the refrigerator. Close the circulation off, and not only will the cooling unit “suffocate” and not work properly, but there would be a hazard from the propane flame and carbon monoxide exposure.

👉 **PRO TIP:** If you must consistently operate a refrigerator in icy conditions, a compressor-powered refrigerator may be more desirable.



**Above:** Coolant consists of ammonia, hydrogen, water and sodium chromate as a rust inhibitor. The solution is heated in the boiler, water is removed, and it’s cooled in the condenser. As it travels down, liquid ammonia and hydrogen and ammonia vapor flow through the evaporator coils absorbing heat — continuing to cool and condense — to the absorber tank, and the process begins again.

### 3 Low (or lack of) 12-volt coach battery power

The very foundation of any motorhome electrical system is the battery bank. RVs are built with a 12-volt DC (direct current) electrical system that powers the lighting, ignitors, circuit boards and so on. An RV refrigerator will not run without 12-volt DC power, even when plugged into an electrical hookup. And, as with any RV appliance that malfunctions, diagnosis always begins by verifying that the energy sources are correct, including propane pressure and the proper electrical voltage.

Many RVers, especially those who leave their motorhomes parked on seasonal or permanent campsites, ignore their batteries and sometimes disconnect them altogether. If the power should go out in the park, especially when you’re not there, the result can be a biological disaster inside the refrigerator that can

result in a total replacement. No matter what you do, the smell will likely remain.

It’s best to maintain (with proper conditioning) at least one or two house batteries at all times. If they are flooded lead-acid batteries, check the distilled water level frequently, and make sure the charger is working correctly. That way, if the power in the campground goes out, the power for the refrigerator’s circuit boards will remain on, allowing the unit to switch from AC to propane, for instance, and to run for many hours while the power is out. Even a temporary lapse in DC power will cause the fridge to shut down, and once it does, it will not restart automatically when power is restored.

👉 **PRO TIP:** A great way to make sure your food is safe is to use a refrigerator thermometer that records high and low temperatures, like those available from Amazon.



An RV refrigerator requires 12-volt DC, 120-volt AC or propane gas to heat the cooling unit, and 12-volt DC to operate the electronics at all times. Having the correct gas pressure and electrical supply coming into the unit are essential for proper operation.

### 4 Poor Ventilation

As previously mentioned, ventilation is the name of the game with absorption refrigerators. To meet the ventilation requirements, the refrigerator cabinet should have been designed specifically for the refrigerator. The tolerances for space on the sides, top and rear of the fridge are exacting for proper operation. If the spacing and baffling of an RV refrigerator is done improperly by the RV manufacturer,

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**MAINTENANCE: ABSORPTION FRIDGE**

performance issues can occur.

The ventilation of the refrigerator can be affected by many factors, some being more obvious than others. The side and roof vents are sized and placed specifically for the model of refrigerator. These specifications may need modifying if a different model is installed. The baffling in the back is also essential to maintain airflow. The outside vents must never be blocked.

Common blockages range from a tarp or RV cover, to wasp nests and piled up leaves. It's not uncommon to see people block off the side vent openings on RV refrigerators in cold weather, which cannot only suffocate the unit but can be dangerous.

**PRO TIP:** If the refrigerator is not operating properly in hot weather, consider adding a fan kit to the backside.

**5 Lack of Maintenance**

Refrigerator maintenance is outlined in the owner's manual, but most folks never read it. Most of the maintenance is pretty simple, but failing to do it can shorten the life of the refrigerator.

Keeping the interior and back of the refrigerator clean is very important. The plastics inside the fridge can hold odors and can get grungy over time, but the real issues are mold and

mildew, which can be health hazards. When the trip is over, empty the refrigerator, turn it off and clean the interior with Clorox wipes. Leave the doors open so it can defrost and dry. Once everything is dry, secure the doors using the hold-open locks.

The rear of the refrigerator is open to the outside, so make sure the vent openings are clear of all debris, nests and excessive dirt. Check the burner housing for excessive rust, and vacuum out (with the flame off) as needed — excessive rust, especially on the burner, warrants a professional inspection.

Lastly, it's essential to make sure the propane regulator is functioning correctly. This can only be done using a manometer by a propane gas or RV technician.

**[1]** Once the refrigerator is empty, wipe down surfaces with Clorox wipes or a similar cleaner. **[2]** There's a lot of dirt around the back of this unit, but the burner and igniter are nice and clean, and the gap is correct. **[3]** The production of rust is typical for a boiler tube that is used frequently (think barbecue grill). The rust must be removed to make sure it doesn't plug the burner.



**PRO TIP:** Spraying a fine mist of a bleach and water solution on the inside surfaces will help prevent mildew.



An RV absorption refrigerator is an expensive appliance that no one wants to replace arbitrarily. However, its ability to function properly requires proper maintenance. Doing so will keep your vittles nicely chilled — and safe to eat. Operational situations that cannot be resolved must be checked by a certified technician, but there's still plenty you can do to ensure greater longevity. **TM**



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# MOTORHOME BATTERY UPGRADE

Lifeline offers AGM models for house- and starting-power needs

By E. Don Smith

**A**lthough it is unpopular, battery maintenance is a necessary part of motorhome ownership and something that is required to keep a motorhome and its systems functioning correctly. After all, monitoring motorhome batteries and ensuring they are adequately charged and filled with distilled water is not a task that most owners enjoy.

In the past, most motorhomes came from the factory with 12-volt starting batteries (usually one or two) that are typically gel or sealed flooded lead-acid (FLA) batteries. For the house batteries, banks were usually comprised of two, four, six or even eight 6-volt FLA batteries.

There are many reasons for the widespread use of 6-volt FLA batteries in motorhomes. They have a low initial cost (because of their use in golf carts), they

allow for a long life in deep-cycle applications, they tolerate high-discharge applications well, and they can be maintained inexpensively by the addition of distilled water.

But, the drawbacks of FLA batteries are numerous as well. The first issue is the constant need for “watering,” which is checking and refilling of the cells with distilled water. These 6-volt FLA batteries are also prone to corrosion in the battery bay; they require an upright mounting position in a vented cabinet and they self-discharge at a high rate, which means they must be conditioned properly. For example, an FLA battery can discharge 5-10% a month as opposed to absorbed glass mat (AGM) batteries’ low rate of 1-3% a month. Other problems with lead-acid batteries include safety because of the potential exposure to battery acid when refilling. FLAs are also subject to acid leaking when overcharged and must be isolated from electrical equipment due to flammability concerns from off-gassing.

A recent trend has been to replace both the house and starting batteries with AGM batteries, which eliminates





## BATTERY WIRING EXPLAINED

Following are examples of common wiring methods to get the most out of your motorhome's battery systems.

the arduous task of maintaining the old-style FLA 6-volt batteries. AGM cells utilize a fiberglass mat or pad that absorbs the electrolyte, which means there is no chance of spilling, which allows for placement in odd positions (basically anything but upside down). Another big advantage of AGM batteries is the lack of corrosion — and they are much less prone to sulfation. Plus, they can be charged more quickly due to their lower internal resistance. While 6-volt FLA batteries are easily frozen if left uncharged, AGM batteries are not prone to this common problem, and they are much more vibration-resistant. AGM batteries perform best when only allowed to discharge down to about 50% of their capacity, which is about 12 volts, so those who boondock need to make sure they keep that in mind when setting up the inverter or autostart generator, and an adequate charging system.

After careful consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of various battery types, we decided that life without battery watering would be very appealing, so we started shopping for new 12-volt AGM starting batteries and 6-volt deep-cycle AGM batteries for the house. There are several brands of AGMs on the market, but after some research and discussions with the experts, we turned to Lifeline.

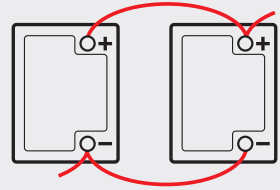
Lifeline batteries are well-reviewed and a market leader among RV owners, and they are also used extensively by the U.S. Army, Navy, Marines and Coast Guard, as well as the FBI, CIA and the U.S. Border Patrol. Another important part of our decision is that Tiffin (the manufacturer of the Phaeton motorhome we used for this install) even offers Lifeline AGM batteries as an upgrade direct from the factory. If they meet the stringent requirements of an OEM, that means they must work well.

Lifeline AGM batteries have several interesting features. First, they all have lifting handles. If you have ever installed batteries in a motorhome, you know that moving them in and out can be a difficult task. With built-in rope handles, this task is much easier. The next thing we noted is their universal battery terminals. Not only are the terminals lead-free, they are made of a highly conductive copper alloy, and they include all the bolts and washers (also copper alloy) needed for connecting cables. These copper-alloy terminals and fasteners are corrosion-resistant and offer low electrical resistance for maximum conductivity. Lifeline also uses much thicker grids than

### PARALLEL

To increase capacity but not voltage, connect the **positive** terminal from one battery to the **positive** terminal of another battery, and the **negative** terminal to the **negative** terminal.

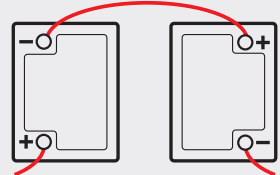
Batteries.....	Two 12-volt/80 amp-hours
Total Voltage .....	12 volts
Total Capacity.....	160 amp-hours



### SERIES

To increase voltage but not capacity, connect the **positive** terminal from one battery to the **negative** terminal of another battery.

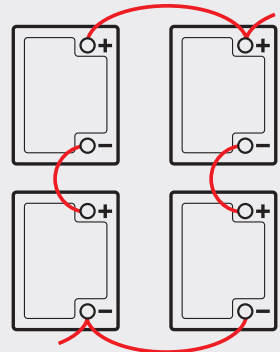
Batteries.....	Two 6-volt/200 amp-hours
Total Voltage .....	12 volts
Total Capacity.....	200 amp-hours



### SERIES/PARALLEL

To increase voltage and capacity, connect two batteries in series and two batteries in parallel.

Batteries.....	Four 6-volt/200 amp-hours
Total Voltage .....	12 volts
Total Capacity.....	400 amp-hours



### ⓘ Keep in Mind

Parallel combines amps, not voltage.  
Series combines voltage, not amps.  
Series/parallel combines voltage and amps.

most AGM manufacturers (1.0 inch versus .050 inch) for longer life, and they use a thick and strong battery case to ensure it stays straight and supports the panels inside the battery.

AGM batteries require a slightly different charging profile compared to most 6-volt FLA batteries, but nearly all modern inverters (and many converters in motorhomes without an inverter) installed on motorhomes have a setting to properly charge them so that shouldn't be a problem for most owners. The 12-volt AGM starting batteries are usually charged by a 120-volt AC trickle charger when in storage, so even if yours is not currently compatible, they are inexpensive and easily changed, if needed. The Tiffin Phaeton 36QSH used for this upfit was already converted to an AMP-L-START charger several years ago, and it is fully compatible with AGM batteries.

The Phaeton had two Group 31 starting batteries, so we selected the Lifeline GPL-3100T (average online price: \$361.20 each) for replacement. It offers 950 cold cranking amps (when tested to IAW battery council standards) at 32 degrees Fahrenheit, and like all Lifeline batteries, is built to aircraft standards. Not only is this battery made in the USA, it also offers an impressive five-year warranty, and since it has the same footprint as the previous batteries in the Phaeton, it was a perfect fit.

**⚠️ INSTALLATION TIP**  
 To prevent short circuits on the battery posts, install terminal covers on the positive terminals of the batteries.

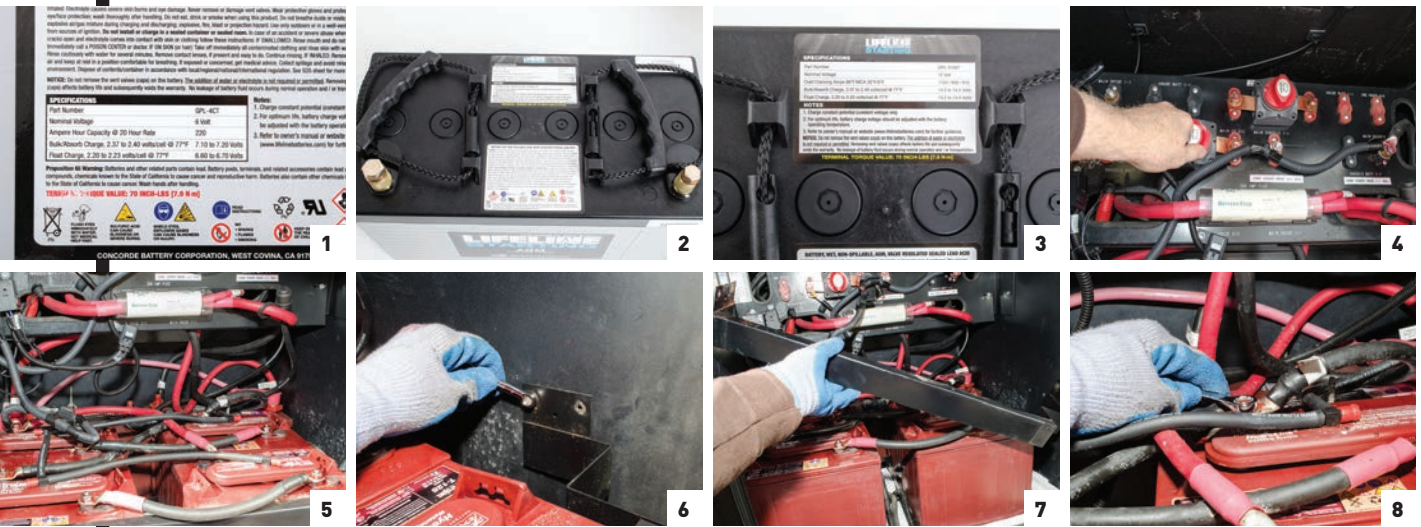
For the house batteries, four Lifeline GPL-4CT batteries (average online price: \$358.75 each) were installed. The GPL-4CT is a deep-cycle AGM battery offering 220 amp-hours (AH) at 20HR rate, so with four of them wired in series/parallel a 440AH capacity is achieved with all the advantages of an AGM battery.

While the installation is not difficult, keep in mind that these batteries are heavy and lifting them out and installing new ones is a challenge if working solo. Also, there are several safety precautions to be aware of before starting the installation. Since you will be potentially working with battery acid, safety goggles and nitrile-coated work gloves should be worn.

Another caution revolves around the proper choice of tools. Using short wrenches prevents them from touching two different terminals and creating a short. Another option is to use electrical tape around the unused end of the wrench. Since a battery can't be turned off, not much can be done to render the terminals safe, but there are precautions to help prevent shorting any terminals. When performing this work, it is best not to wear any jewelry, including metal rings or necklaces that could come in contact with the battery terminals. Also, make sure your sleeves do not have any metal zippers or snaps that are conductive.

Before working in the battery bay, make sure to disconnect the coach from any source of external power. This means unplugging from shorepower, turning off the generator and making sure it is not in auto-start mode, turning off the disconnect switches between the batteries and the coach and turning off the inverter. Solar panels must be disconnected from the batteries, using the provided switch in the system. Even if your solar panels do not have a disconnect switch, they will have an in-line fuse that can be removed.

The tools required for this project include basic wrenches/sockets to remove the batteries and the brackets that hold them in place as well as a cordless drill. You will also need sandpaper and paint to remove any existing corrosion from the metal brackets attached to the batteries. A wire brush can be used clean the terminals before installing them on the new batteries. Another handy item is a voltmeter. It's also best to have a notebook and pen handy to sketch the current wiring of the motorhome's batteries, or shoot a cellphone photo; doing this will make installation with the correct wiring a breeze. Following is a step-by-step look at installing new AGM batteries:



[1] The Lifeline AGM house batteries have an impressive 220-amp-hour capacity, which is equal to, or better than, the old FLA batteries. Also note that the charging parameters are printed right on the battery. Make sure the inverter/charger supports these voltages for maximum performance of the battery bank. [2] In addition to the superior battery terminals used by Lifeline, each battery has a pair of lifting handles built into the top. [3] The 12-volt AGM starting batteries have 950CCA at 32 degrees Fahrenheit, and require a float charge of 13.2-13.4 volts, so make sure the trickle charger is up to the task.

[4] Before starting the install, make sure to turn off all breakers, battery disconnects, auto-generator start and the solar panels (if any). [5] Note the current battery bay wiring and make a sketch that shows how the batteries are physically placed and which length wires go where. This will serve as a guide to allow you to reconnect everything correctly. Detailed photos with the camera on your phone also work. [6] Before these batteries can be lifted out, the front bracket that holds them in place was removed. It was noted that the screws and the bracket itself was starting to corrode, so those items will have to be addressed later. [7] Once

the screws were removed from the front battery-retaining bracket, it was taken out of the battery bay. Notice these wires have red and black bands on the end to indicate they connect to a positive or negative terminal. [8] Depending on the layout of the battery bay, the next step is to disconnect the starting and the house batteries from the motorhome (negative cable first). The house batteries here are in the front, so the house battery negative cable was located and removed from the battery bank. Fortunately, our cables are labeled from the factory. If not labeled, use masking tape and mark each one before moving.

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[9] Next, the house battery positive cable was removed, disconnecting the bank from the coach. [10] Carefully remove the interconnected cables from the battery bank one by one until the batteries are separated. Remember, a battery can't be turned off, so the cables are "hot" until completely removed; the terminals are always hot. If the batteries have a temperature sensor for the inverter charger, remove and put it aside for now. [11] Carefully remove the house batteries by lifting them out of the battery bay and then remove the battery retaining brackets. There was a lot of corrosion here, which will need to be sanded and repainted before reassembly. [12] With the house batteries removed, the starting batteries were removed. To get there, the metal straps that hold them down need to be unbolted and the metal floor plate removed. All of these parts need to be sanded and repainted before reuse.



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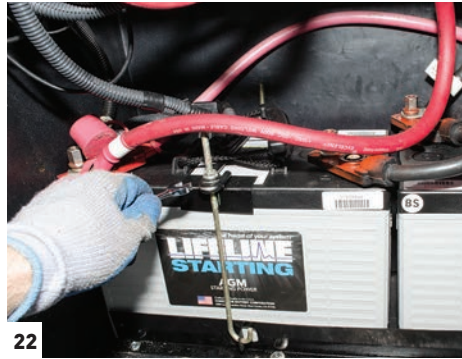
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[13] Just as with the house batteries, when removing the 12-volt starting batteries, the negative cable (not shown) was disconnected before the positive cable. Having these cables labeled really speeds up the process. [14] The alternator charging cable that is connected to the starting batteries is removed and put aside for reinstallation later with the new batteries. If the coach has a chassis battery charger, mark those cables and reinstall properly. [15] Once the chassis batteries are completely unwired, remove them from the battery bay. [16] Most likely the battery bay will need cleaning. This Tiffin Phaeton has a poly liner covering the battery bay so it can be easily cleaned and does not require repainting since it is not metal. Depending on how the bay is constructed, it may require cleaning, sanding and/or painting. [17] Before reinstalling the batteries, we used a wire brush on the battery terminal lugs to make sure they were free of debris. Having a clean connection is very important to good electrical conductivity. [18] When installing the new Lifeline

AGM starting batteries, first connect the positive cable of one battery to the other, then install the cable connecting the two negative terminals. Note the use of the Lifeline copper alloy bolts to connect the cable directly into the battery terminal. The correct torque as specified by Lifeline is 70 in-lbs (note this is not 70 ft-lbs). This is a parallel battery connection between the two batteries, which means the negative posts of each battery are connected and the two positive terminals are connected. This gives the electrical effect of one large 12-volt battery with almost 2,000CCA. [19] After the two chassis batteries are properly cabled, the positive terminal of one starting battery is connected to the motorhome's positive cable as well as the alternator cable and trickle charging cable shown here. [20] The last step in replacing the starting batteries is to connect the main negative cable to the negative terminal of the new starting battery bank. Double-check the connections, test the voltage and install the positive terminal covers.



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[21] Before replacing the old metal retaining brackets, a cordless sander was used to remove all the corrosion before repainting with rust-resistant black paint. They don't have to be painted perfectly, but a few coats of high-quality paint should be applied. With the use of AGM batteries, this should be the last time these brackets will need painting. [22] After screwing the bottom bracket back in place with new stainless-steel self-tapping screws, the top mounted brackets were positioned and tightened down. [23] When placing the new house batteries into the battery bay, make sure they are oriented (with regard to the positive and negative terminals) exactly as before because the battery cables are made to fit that particular layout. The repainted brackets were then screwed into the floor using a cordless drill. [24] The last step to physically hold the batteries in place was to install the front battery-retaining bracket. After being sanded and repainted, the bracket was screwed into place using a cordless drill and it looks almost new again. Note that every battery has the handy lifting handles on top.



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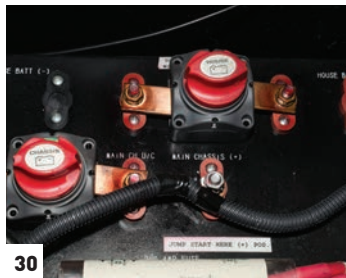
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[25] Copper alloy bolts and washers were used to cable the new Lifeline batteries. [26] When reconnecting the house batteries, start with the series connections first, routing the positive of one battery terminal to the negative terminal of the other one in the pair. Then do the same with the other pair before making the parallel connections, which are positive to positive and negative to negative. Make sure to carefully follow your photos and sketch. [27] After reinstalling the positive house battery cable to the correct positive terminal, the last connection is the house battery negative cable to the battery bank. All of these bolts on the battery need to be torqued to 70 in.-lbs. [28] If the inverter has a temperature sensor in the battery bay, make sure to install it per the manufacturer's instructions. Here it is mounted to the side of one of the 6-volt house batteries using double-sided automotive tape. It can also be mounted to the negative terminal along with the house battery cable. [29] After the batteries are wired in series/parallel, it is easy to check the wiring by placing a volt-

meter's leads on the positive of one pair and the negative of the other pair. This is the same location as the house battery cables are to be connected, and it should show approximately 12.75 volts. [30] After completing the wiring and confirming it is correct, there are a few more steps before connecting the motorhome to shorepower again. First, turn on all the breakers and battery disconnect, and turn on the auto generator start feature, if so equipped, and any other function previously disabled. [31] Depending on the inverter/charger, the setup menu will have to be accessed to change the house battery type to AGM. If the motorhome has an auto-start generator, make sure to change it to 12 volts as the auto-start point. [32] Another setting to check on the inverter is the battery capacity. This motorhome now has 440AH capacity and 500AH is the closest setting in the inverter's menu, so it was left as is. If the inverter has a "Max Charge Rate" setting, make sure it is at 100%. Due to the lower internal resistance of the AGM batteries, it should always be set at the highest rate. **M**

# WHAT'S NEW?

MOTORHOMES, CONCEPT VEHICLES AND PRODUCTS THAT HAVE CAPTURED THE ATTENTION OF RV ENTHUSIASTS

**A**ll right, enough's enough. We at *MotorHome* are always striving to be your eyes and ears on the scene, forever in search of exciting new motorhomes, products and concepts. We pound the pavement, visit with manufacturers and even make phone calls (remember those?) to keep us up to date. More often than not, we can roll the results out in a series of spotlights spread throughout the year, filling pages with the latest and greatest. But sometimes, there's just too much to hold on to, and we feel the need to share our findings with you as soon as possible.

**And lately, there's just too much good stuff out there to hold back anymore.**



## MODVANS CV1

New manufacturer ModVans introduces the Ford Transit-based CV1, which offers owners the versatility to reconfigure the interior. The second-row rear seats are leather captain's chairs with a separately removable middle seat (each with a seat belt). The seats have two install positions: In Camp Mode, the seats

are installed against the driver's wall to maximize interior space; in Transport Mode, the second-row seats are installed facing forward as in a traditional van or SUV to maximize comfort. Livability is delivered with a portable full-height toilet (with integrated 6-gallon black-water tank), 3-cubic-foot compressor-style refrigerator and dual-burner propane

stove. When night falls, pop the top and enjoy the multilayer foam mattress, while the kids sleep "downstairs" using cushions on the bed frame that's stored behind the second-row seats. Power is supplied with a generator and available 300-watt solar system. MSRP starts at \$97,500.

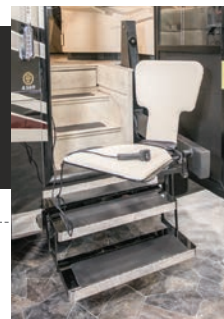
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## NEWMAR CORP.

Newmar is making waves with the introduction of the company's first Class C, the **2020 Super Star**. The Super Star features a full-air-ride cab for an improved ride, plus a full-wall slideout for increased living space. The exterior is adorned with the company's full-body-paint Master-piece finish. Inside, Newmar has created an open, airy front end with a large skylight-type window. Interior appointments include solid-surface countertops, tile flooring, upgraded cabinetry, a king bed and plenty of storage. Built on the Freightliner M1 chassis, the Super Star is powered by a Cummins 350-hp diesel engine. MSRP, base: \$350,828.

Newmar is also highlighting its mobility lineup aimed at improving accessibility for owners. The **Dutch Star 4311** is equipped with a remote-control BraunAbility lift that stores beneath the floor. Additional accessibility features include a power access door, wide aisles throughout, a power-adjustable dining table, large master bath with roll-in shower and an available dishwasher, in addition to the luxury appointments expected in a Newmar Dutch Star. MSRP, base: \$433,753. Newmar Corp. | 800-731-8300, [www.newmarcorp.com](http://www.newmarcorp.com)





## SURGE GUARD WIRELESS LCD

The potential for unstable, uneven or “dirty” power makes a surge protector a must-have when hooking up at the RV park. Surge Guard is a popular choice for motorhome owners and has rolled out a wireless LCD display. Compatible with Surge Guard models 34931 and 34951 in 30- and 50-amp configurations, the new wireless display makes it easy to monitor the status of a motorhome’s power source without the need to venture outside. Users can scan through current power data, fault notification and previous fault viewing from the comfort of the living area. The monitor works using three AAA batteries and has a range of up to 100 feet.

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## THOR MOTOR COACH

### Thor Tuscany Concept

Thor Motor Coach recently showed off a one-of-a-kind Tuscany concept diesel pusher. The unique Tuscany showcases the usual upscale features of Thor’s luxury pusher, but ups the ante using sustainable, all-electric energy solutions. The concept vehicle houses a generator-free power system that uses lithium batteries and includes a high-voltage alternator, a big inverter and solar panels, and leaves out the generator for a lighter-weight and less bulky system.

The concept Tuscany was also outfitted with some luxuries that will eventually make their way to consumers later this year. New contemporary interior options include embossed alligator leather furniture accents, bleached wood-grain, heated porcelain tile flooring and modern cabinetry. And, in the cockpit, a new



Infotainment system from Garmin features a 15-inch integrated touch-screen display that will be standard in all 2020-model-year coaches.

**Thor Motor Coach | 800-860-5658,**  
[www.thormotorcoach.com](http://www.thormotorcoach.com)

### Thor Sequence Class B

Thor has entered the Class B market with the introduction of the Sequence. Originally developed as a concept vehicle, Thor decided to showcase the Sequence in order to gain valuable feedback. As a result, the new RAM Pro-Master-based Class B is set to be available to consumers this July. The motorhome features dual twin sofas at the rear and a wet bath; four total seat belts allow for safe family travels. For techies, there’s intuitive Rapid Camp+ multiplex wiring, a 7-inch touch-screen dash stereo that is Apple Carplay or Android Auto-enabled and Winegard’s Connect 2.0 4G/Wi-Fi system. A 200-watt solar charging system allows for an additional energy source for boondocking.



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**WHAT'S NEW?**



## WINNEBAGO INDUSTRIES

Winnebago's new four-season **Boldt Class B** motorhome is built on the new Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis and powered by a 3.0-liter V-6 turbodiesel. The motorhome's Pure3 Advanced Energy System eliminates the traditional RV generator, instead relying on lithium battery technology and the ability to utilize solar power for enhanced boondocking experiences. Available in two floorplans, both have a wet bath and feature Flex-Bed convenience. MSRP: TBD.

In support of the National Park Service's "Find Your Park" campaign (<https://findyourpark.com>), Winnebago has teamed with the National Park Foundation (NPF) to produce a limited-edition **NPF Travato Class B**. Winnebago created a bold, new Travato design inspired by the NPF that features exclusive graphics and also includes Winnebago's Pure3 Advanced Energy System to increase the potential for adventure off the grid.



The new Winnebago **Forza 34T AE** floorplan focuses on accessibility. The 34T AE features a wheelchair lift with an 800-pound capacity and controls that let wheelchair users independently enter and exit the coach with a key-fob remote. Other wheelchair-friendly improvements include expanded hallways and toilet areas, and a roll-in shower with assist bar, accessible faucet controls and an adjustable showerhead. The Forza's reachable appliances, systems monitor, light and generator switch placement and a power transfer seat option enhance accessibility. MSRP starts at \$341,124.



MSRP for the standard Travato starts at \$114,455.

**Winnebago Industries Inc.**  
641-585-3535, [www.winnebagoind.com](http://www.winnebagoind.com)

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Xantrex helps increase off-grid capabilities with its Freedom eGEN system. Currently available on the Coachmen Galleria Class B motorhome, the Freedom eGEN integrates advanced technologies, including solar power, to offer cleaner, greener and quieter battery power. The system includes lithium batteries, an intelligent battery management system, an auxiliary alternator, multistage voltage regulator and Freedom SW inverter/charger. Contact Coachmen for pricing.

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<sup>2</sup> Processing fee of \$399 waived for refinance applications submitted by July 31, 2019. Official fees such as state title, state registration, FL doc stamp fee and/or UCC filing fees will apply.

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# IT'S ALIVE!



Brad says that motorhome life in Flatnose Frank helps bring the family closer and that it “Connects us with each other.”

A 1972 REVCON 250, DUBBED FLATNOSE FRANK, IS RENOVATED TO SHOW-STOPPING GLORY AND BECOMES MORE THAN THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

**S**ome people travel hundreds of miles and search for years to find the perfect motorhome, but not Brad and Monica Johnson. Their 1972 Revcon 250 not only found them — like a stray dog, it followed them home.

The couple first noticed the motorhome when taking turns transporting their son to his baseball games. It was parked on the side of the road and appeared to be abandoned. The more he and his wife passed by, the more their interest in the vintage motorhome grew.

“It really intrigued me,” Brad admits, explaining that the body reminded them of an Airstream

trailer, but otherwise it didn’t look like any motorhome they’d seen before.

That is because the Revcon was the brainchild of John Hall, a former Airstream engineer and stepson of its founder, Wally Byam. In 1968, Hall created a revolutionary design using a large Oldsmobile engine and front-wheel drivetrain under a lightweight aircraft-aluminum body. The unique-looking Class A motorhome was the first of its kind, and a forerunner of the iconic GMC. Unfortunately, Brad says, this Revcon was “just a heap,” in a state of total disrepair.

A week passed during which the motorhome, parked illegally, went from having a yellow tow warning to a red tow notice. The next time they drove by, the Revcon was gone. The couple thought about trying to track it down, but they didn’t know where to start, and besides, they weren’t even in the market for an RV. Then, a few days later, they saw the Revcon again, this time parked just a block from their house. The Johnsons took it as a sign.

Brad and his son stopped by to leave a note on the windshield inquiring if the Revcon was for sale. To their surprise, the owner popped out. Someone had given the



The Revcon, originally designed in 1968, was the first front-wheel-drive Class A with a lightweight aluminum body.

# The Classic Ride

motorhome to him, and he had clear title.

"I told him if it started, I'd be interested in buying it. He told me it would, except the ignition was missing," Brad laughs.

The owner explained that the motorhome had been stolen, and transients had been living inside. He agreed to get it running and they agreed on a price of \$1,000. Since there was no driver's seat, the owner delivered it to their house while perched on a bucket.

"We were afraid he was going to crash through our garage," Monica says half-jokingly. "We weren't sure the motorhome had any brakes."

A second concern was the motorhome's length. The Johnsons' driveway measured 25½ feet, and there was an ordinance against parking any vehicle that extended over the sidewalk. Their Revcon, which they affectionately dubbed

Flatnose Frank for its appearance and its Frankenstein-like collection of parts, came in at — you guessed it — exactly 25½ feet, another fortunate coincidence. But while it could be parked legally in their driveway, there was no question that the Revcon in its current condition was an eyesore.

"We were a little worried about what the neighbors would think," Monica admits.

To their surprise, the Revcon became "an amazing catalyst" for meeting people in the neighborhood, many of whom took an avid interest in watching Flatnose Frank's renovation. It was a process that took "1,000 hours of research and 1,200 hours of labor" according to Brad. The

Below, from far left: The exterior of the 1972 Revcon shows its age after years of neglect. The cockpit area before the renovation. The rest of the interior was full of trash and debris when first purchased.






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Johnsons began by gutting the coach, a job that Monica says should have been done wearing hazmat suits. The interior was filthy and stuffed with trash. Almost nothing was salvageable. It took two days and a U-Haul trailer, but once it was empty, they began to see Flatnose Frank's true potential.

Mechanically, the Revcon's original Oldsmobile Toronado 255-cubic-inch engine was in amazingly good shape, as was the TH425 transmission. Brad, a lifelong car guy, did the necessary maintenance and repair himself, replacing all the hoses and belts, and replacing the shocks. He also had a new custom exhaust system made. In terms of major RV systems, Brad installed a Suburban furnace and a Dometic air-conditioner with heat pump. But while Brad was confident he could handle the wiring and plumbing, he had limited construction experience. The Johnsons asked a crew of contractors who had worked on their home to do the

Revcon's subflooring and rough-out the cabinets, and then Brad completed the finishing work. The result is a bright, contemporary-looking interior with some very practical uses of space.

The dinette table includes a telescoping air-rise pedestal from a boating-supply company, allowing the dinette to transform into a bed without the need to be attached to a wall. The two rear sofas have 200-pound-capacity sliding hinges, so they can function separately as full and twin beds, or quickly combine into a king-size bed. They installed an on-demand water heater, Atwood gas stovetop/oven and the largest available Dometic three-way refrigerator. The couple chose vinyl plank flooring and Formica countertops, reasoning that both were light and easy to maintain.

"I was super weight-conscious," Brad says, aware that one common mistake in vintage renovations is overloading the interior, which can affect



### FEED MY FRANKENSTEIN

A few vintage Revcons can be found on the used market, but their condition varies widely. An unrenovated unit is available for as little as \$2,000, while one in fair-to-good condition is \$15,000-\$18,000. It is difficult to gauge a cost for a total renovation like Flatnose Frank's, since the Johnsons did much of the labor, but experts in RV renovation estimate anywhere from \$30,000 to \$50,000 for a complete restoration.

▲ It took 40 hours of labor to strip the top half of the exterior and another 18 hours of polishing to bring back the aluminum's mirror shine.

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## The Classic Ride

safety and drivability.

The interior design was all Monica's. She chose a durable gray tweed fabric for the cushions and a yellow paisley for accents. Rather than rely on RV products, the Johnsons "retro-fitted" items from home-improvement stores, like the Kraus faucet, the tin tiles behind the stove and the window shades. Up front, the driver and double passenger seats were upholstered in black leather, and the area was carpeted in gray. An extensive dash rebuild completed the cockpit area.

While Flatnose Frank may be beautiful on the inside, it is the Revcon's exterior that really turns heads. It took 40 hours to strip the top half of the motorhome and another 18 hours for Universal Metal Polishing of Alameda, California, to bring out the aluminum's shine before Frank was ready for the paint shop. The couple found that traditional RV painting prices were out of their budget, and instead reached out to Fleet BodyWorx in San Jose, California. Brad says the staff there "fell in love with the project," doing the roof, bodywork and paint, and even custom-fabricating bumpers. The couple chose Lexus Nebula Gray Pearl paint, a metallic color they love because its shade changes with the light. They added a black stripe, black wheels and chrome lug-nut caps. The resulting look is vintage and futuristic at the same time, a style the Johnsons call "Retro Modern."

The renovation was completed last fall, a year-and-a-half after it began. That doesn't mean they won't keep improving Flatnose Frank. The motorhome currently has three 12-volt batteries on board and a 100-watt solar panel, which they hope to increase to 500 watts to improve its boondocking ability. They also haven't installed a TV, though that's an addition they are in no hurry to make. They are enjoying taking trips with their son, who is now in high school, and point out that camping "connects us with each other," which was their goal from the beginning. Long term, the Johnsons would love to be full-time RVers, with



**Top:** The gray tweed cushions contrast nicely with the white cabinets and bright yellow accents. **Middle:** The newly designed interior includes sleek white cabinetry for plenty of storage and a large three-way Dometic refrigerator. **Above:** The double passenger seats, a feature in the original Revcon design, were upholstered in black leather.

Brad, who is employed in the Silicon Valley, telecommuting from the road. Plus, they want to share Flatnose Frank with the world, something they didn't envision when their Revcon first followed them home.

"We are pretty private, and we didn't intend to build something that would attract people," Brad laughs. But they have found that Frank is a conversation piece everywhere they go, helping them to form and build new relationships and touch people's lives in ways they never imagined. It makes every trip an adventure.

Brad sums it up, "Frank has blessed us. We are looking forward to seeing how he is going to bless others."

Which makes this 1972 Revcon 250 much more than a Classic Ride. **M**

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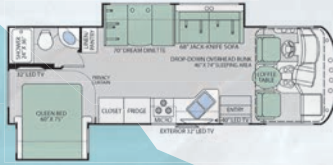


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## Dishwashing al Fresco

Since we often camp without the benefit of sewer hookups, we enjoy outdoor dishwashing to keep the gray-water tank from filling too quickly. I fashioned a wash station using 2-inch PVC pipe, connectors and threaded ends, plus stand-alone plastic basins to go with our folding aluminum table. I place the setup directly under the outside shower faucet and use one plastic basin for wash water and the other for rinse water. We keep the dishwashing liquid, a bottle of chlorine bleach (to add a capful to the rinse water for sanitizing), a drainage rack and dish towels in the compartment next to the outdoor shower. Another advantage of outdoor dishwashing is that it tends to become a social event and I get lots of help with the dishes. When not in use, the setup breaks down quickly for easy storage.

**Randy Gutacker** | York, Pennsylvania



## Walking Sticks

After one of the upholstered panels fell off the wall in the cockpit area of my motorhome, I needed to glue it back into place. Problem was, I didn't have any way to keep pressure on it while the glue dried. I used adjustable walking sticks, butted up against the panel and a board on the opposite pillar, to create pressure on the area until the glue bonded. It worked so well I also used the method on the panel below the window.

**Klaus Golombek** | Bellingham, Washington

## The Classics: Sleep In

During the summer months it's nice to sleep in and keep the inside of the motorhome darkened later than 5:30 a.m. Our coach has a frosted-glass window in the door, so the sun would shine in and awaken us at sunrise. To provide an easily mounted blackout-window covering, I attached one side of a hook-and-loop fastener horizontally to the top of the doorsill and the other to one edge of a dark, thick bath towel. Now, when it is time to turn in for the night, I press the top of the towel to the mating hook-and-loop fastener on the window and no light comes through. Sleep well!

**Bob Gaido** | Irvine, California

## Laundry Day

I never look forward to the tedious task of cleaning the round foam air-conditioning filters. I usually throw them in the kitchen sink and swish them around, which can take some

time and produces questionable results. So, I got the idea of throwing them in the washing machine. I used the hand-wash cycle and gentle spin, and they turned out looking new. Just

a little air drying and they were ready to be put back. Surprisingly, there was no mess left in the washer, and the process saved a lot of time and effort.

**Corky Bennett** | Louisville, Kentucky



### Have an Idea?

Quick Tips is looking for submissions. Please send your ideas to: *MotorHome* Quick Tips, 2750 Park View Ct., Ste. 240, Oxnard, CA 93036, or email [letters@motorhomemagazine.com](mailto:letters@motorhomemagazine.com). Photos must be high-resolution, at a minimum of 1,400 by 1,400 pixels. If your tip is published, you will receive \$35. All payments require an FEIN or SSN.

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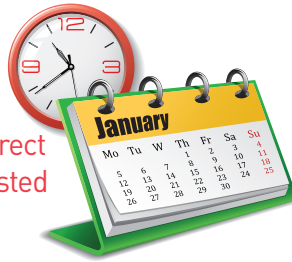
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## Bracket Buster

With his motorhome sidelined due to an incorrect bracket for the jack assembly, a reader requested Hot Line's assistance. He wrote:



“ My wife and I bought a new 2017 Winnebago Navion Class C motorhome in March 2017 from Guaranty RV in Junction City, Oregon. We had Guaranty RV order and install an HWH hydraulic leveling system for the rig. The system was working properly until the following May, when the passenger-side rear hydraulic jack was damaged after I hit a deep pot hole that caused the jack to drag. The damage was diagnosed in June 2018 by Guaranty RV, and it was decided that the jack assembly needed to be replaced. They ordered a replacement assembly from HWH, but when it arrived, the mounting bracket didn't fit. It's now January 2019 and Guaranty RV hasn't been able to obtain the correct mounting bracket.

**Albin Brandstetter | Springfield, Oregon**

Seven months is a long time to wait for a bracket. But, it helps to have Hot Line in your corner. Immediately after we sent a letter to HWH Corp., we heard from Brandstetter:

“ Within a few days after the company received Hot Line's letter, a manager called the service advisor at Guaranty RV and promised to ship the correct parts promptly. He did, and the hydraulic leveling system is working perfectly again.

**A.B.**

### Hanging by a Thread

Out of pocket by what he feels was the result of a long-ago repair gone wrong, a reader asked Hot Line to intervene. He wrote:

“ I bought a 2009 Tiffin Allegro Bus powered by a Cummins ISL9 425-hp engine in March 2016. Shortly after the purchase I noticed the check engine light (yellow) coming on intermittently. Tiffin suggested I take the coach to the nearest Cummins

service center. On April 21, 2016, I took my motorhome to Cummins Atlantic in Spartanburg, South Carolina. The technicians there found some problems, including pin corrosion in the ECM, some leaking exhaust-manifold gaskets, and a warped exhaust manifold and crankcase breather filter that needed replacement. Upon completion of the services recommended by Cummins, I was presented an invoice for \$4,543.85.

Two-and-a-half years after the repairs, I experienced a red engine light that immediately de-rated and shut down my coach. I had the motorhome towed to Ken Wilson Sterling Trucks in Canton, North Carolina, for repairs.

When technicians inspected the coach, they found the exhaust pipe

from the turbocharger to the DPF was fractured in the accordion section. They also noticed that the turbocharger was missing one mounting stud and that the nuts from two of the remaining studs were missing; in other words, the turbocharger was hanging on by only one nut, which was loosely fastened. I paid \$5,687.05 for repairs.

There is no way that a turbocharger can come loose, as mine did, during normal operation. When the service records were checked, we noticed that Cummins Atlantic had installed a new exhaust manifold in 2016, and therefore had to remove the turbocharger and then reinstall it on the new manifold. It is my opinion that if the turbocharger nuts were properly installed and torqued when attached to the exhaust manifold (by Cummins Atlantic in 2016) there would be no way a stud would come out and two other nuts be completely missing, and therefore I would not have had to replace the turbocharger/exhaust section incurring a nearly \$6,000 bill for repair.

**Fred G. Smith | Rosman, North Carolina**

Always keep meticulous records of previous repairs. Once the problem was diagnosed by certified techs, Smith's only recourse was to use the records he kept to attempt to recoup some of his money.

We soon heard back from Smith:

“ On January 2, Cummins Atlantic agreed to [reimburse] me \$3,119. On February 22, I finally received a check for that amount. Thank you!

**F.G.S. 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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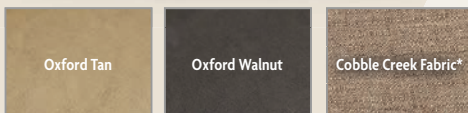
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By Ken Freund

## Tire Compounds — Revisited

**Q** This is in regard to my “Tire Compounds” letter in the June issue. Thank you so much for the information [that different tire types result in different ride characteristics]. Can you offer info on what compound tire I should purchase, maybe in a Goodyear or Michelin tire? Also, would it be OK to run a softer tire up front, with the Dunlops in the rear?

**Roger Speigner | Dothan, Alabama**

**A** Motorhome tires are expensive, and while I recommend that owners use tires designed specifically for motorhomes to get the best ride and service life, now that you have these tires, I suggest that you keep them for cost reasons. As long as they are properly inflated for the loads (using a load-inflation table), they should provide satisfactory service. Installing

motorhome-specific tires to the steer axle may be a reasonable compromise if they really bother you. I want to make it clear that rubber compounds will make little difference in ride quality; they mainly affect traction and wear. Sidewall stiffness is a much more significant variable between motorhome and truck tires. You might find Michelin’s website helpful ([www.michelinrvtires.com](http://www.michelinrvtires.com)).



### Electric Motorhomes

Considering that Mercedes-Benz is in the process of electrifying its Sprinter (possibly in partnership with Tesla), and the popularity of the chassis, that innovation should be interesting for Class B and C motorhomes. Other manufacturers should soon follow this undeniable trend.

**Yvan Jérôme | Laval, Quebec, Canada**

*As I mentioned in “Electric Vehicles” in the June issue, there are electric or hybrid chassis undergoing development. Of course, major challenges include initial cost, weight and charging during a road trip.*

### Ignition Switch Failures

**Q** We have a 2001 Georgie Boy Suite on a Workhorse chassis that we bought new. Several years ago it wouldn’t crank right after I made a stop on the road. I had to replace the ignition switch that’s down inside the steering column. The same thing happened again

recently and I had it replaced again. Last month I was having trouble cranking it and it was bad again. The shop has not determined what is causing it. Can you give me any help?

**Don Taylor | Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania**

**A** *This was a common problem because there is too much current routed through the ignition switch, which will burn the internal contacts, eventually causing switch failure. You’ll need Workhorse part no. W8002085 to make the repair. It’s available from Ultra RV Products, [www.ultrarvproducts.com/W8002085-Updated-Ignition-Switch-Kit](http://www.ultrarvproducts.com/W8002085-Updated-Ignition-Switch-Kit). It consists of a kit with relays to reduce current through the switch. This fits 2000-2005 Workhorse chassis.*

### Towing a 2019 Hyundai Veloster

**Q** I bought a 2019 Hyundai Veloster Turbo Ultimate with six-speed manual shift and I’m thinking about flat towing it behind our Leisure Travel Vans Unity 24MB motorhome. My research shows that previous manual-

shift Velosters are towable through 2017. I believe Hyundai did not make this model in 2018, but came out with a slightly “redesigned” Veloster for 2019. In talking with Blue Ox and Roadmaster folks last October, they had no idea whether or not the 2019 Veloster would be towable, so they couldn’t comment on availability of baseplates, or even if the previous model baseplate would fit. My Hyundai owner’s manual only describes emergency/temporary towing. My local Hyundai dealer will neither confirm nor deny compatibility for flat towing. Same story from the folks at Hyundai America/California. The dealer, when pressed about warranty issues, said such related repairs would probably be at “dealer discretion.” Any comments?

**Robert Fresh | Wichita, Kansas**

**A** *I always recommend that prospective buyers who intend to dinghy tow verify capability by reading the exact owner’s manual. The 2019 model is not officially approved by Hyundai for flat towing (and is not*

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included in our 2019 Guide to Dinghy Towing for this reason). If a vehicle is factory-approved for dinghy towing and a warrantable failure occurs, which is not due to negligence on the part of the operator, related repairs should not be at dealer discretion. But if it's not approved for towing, it's a gray area.

### Tire Inflation Tip

**Q** We have a 2003 Newmar 40-foot motorhome. The tires are Michelin XZA2 size 295/80R 22.5. The maximum psi is 120. I was told by my tire dealer to put 120 psi in all six tires, but the ride is very hard. My coach's front axle weight is 11,240 pounds, and the rear is 18,560 pounds. The chassis is a Freightliner XC. What air pressure should I have in my tires?

**John Mason | via email**

**A** Your tires were designed for all position over-the-road heavy truck use, not motorhome applications. They're intended to provide long wear and low rolling resistance, but not necessarily a soft ride. However, they are very overinflated, based on the weights you provided. These pressures should be verified when the coach is fully loaded. Michelin provides an online load-inflation table at [www.michelintruck.com/michelintruck\\_en\\_us/assets/pdf/load-and-inflation.pdf](http://www.michelintruck.com/michelintruck_en_us/assets/pdf/load-and-inflation.pdf). According to this, for the tire size and weights you provided, you should be able to run 80 psi front and 75 psi rear, which will soften the ride.

### Flat Towing a 2012 Chevy Captiva

**Q** We purchased a used 2012 Chevy Captiva LT V-6 with a six-speed automatic transmission. I installed a baseplate and wired it for flat towing. My problem is with the fuse that needs to be removed when towing so that the battery doesn't drain. The instructions in the owner's manual don't match the actual instrument panel fuse box. I know that this Captiva is a clone of the 2009 Saturn VUE, which I've seen being

towed behind many motorhomes. So someone out there knows what fuse or fuses need to be removed.

**Jerry Scantlan | via email**

**A** Yes, the Captiva is nearly identical to the VUE. The information I have indicates "remove the 2-amp IGN SW fuse from the instrument panel fuse block and store it in a safe location." This should keep the battery from running down, since the IGN needs to be in the ACC position when towing.

If you are still unsure which fuse to disconnect, temporarily remove a battery cable and connect an ammeter between the cable terminal and battery post. Then switch on the ignition and note the amp draw. Remove fuses until the current drops to almost nothing. The fuse that does that is the one that needs to be removed during towing. This works for any vehicle.

For convenience, you might want to install a switch such as the one listed online at [www.campingworld.com/roadmaster-fusemaster-fuse-bypass-switch-for-towed-vehicles-20-amp-mini-fuse-13quot%3B-harness-length-68568.html](http://www.campingworld.com/roadmaster-fusemaster-fuse-bypass-switch-for-towed-vehicles-20-amp-mini-fuse-13quot%3B-harness-length-68568.html).

### Circuit Breaker Concern

**Q** I have a 2001 Monaco Diplomat motorhome. Sometimes the switch on the battery charger clicks out for no reason and I have to reset it. It will kick off while plugged in to shorepower, or sometimes when using batteries only. I have only had the coach for a short time and I'm still learning how to operate all the works.

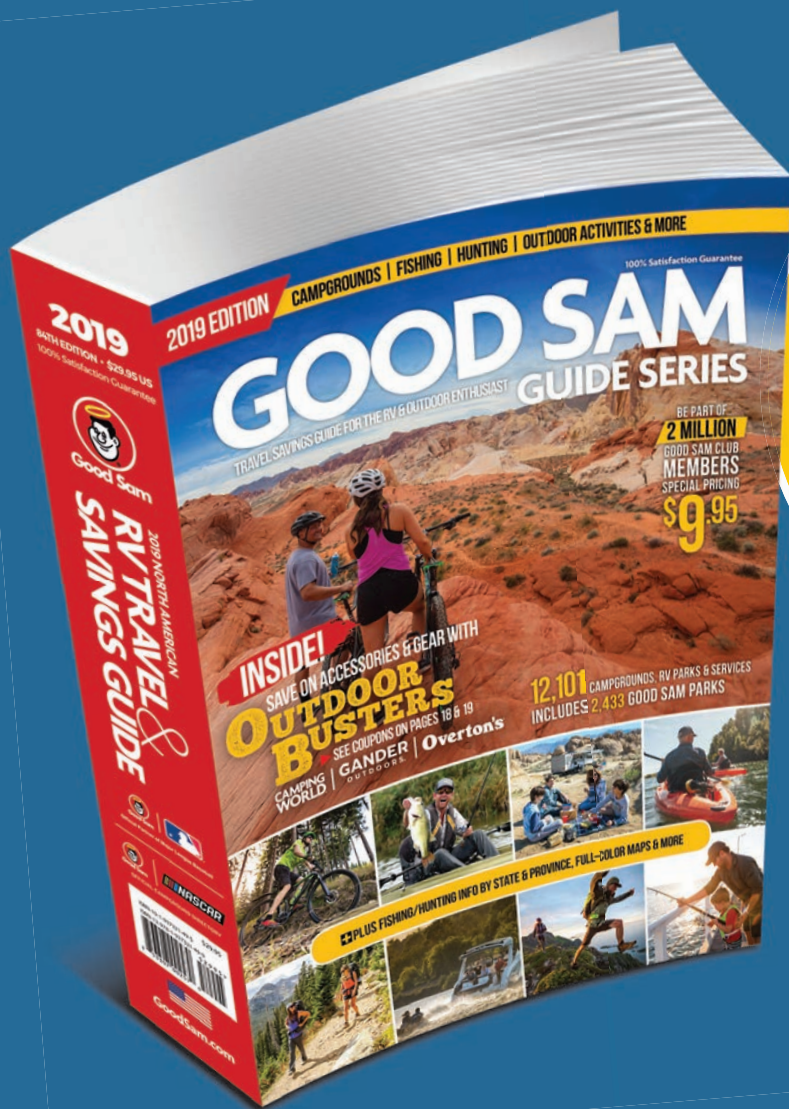
**Patricia Laney | via email**

**A** I assume you mean a circuit breaker on the Trace inverter/charger. Sometimes, a circuit breaker will go bad, especially when they have been tripped a lot or are old. They may trip below their rated setting. I suggest that you (or a qualified RV technician) temporarily put an ammeter in series with the output and monitor amperage. It could be that something is drawing excess current, such as old batteries.



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Trace became Xantrex, and reaching out to their customer service will be helpful in diagnosing this issue. <http://xantrex.com/power-products-support/overview.aspx>

**Propane Gauge Malfunction**

**Q** I purchased a 2018 Fleetwood. It had a few issues, which have been taken care of by Fleetwood or the

dealer, but there's one issue they have pushed back to me to deal with. The motorhome's propane gauges, both on the tank and inside the coach, don't register the volume. The dealer ran a magnet over the tank and the float apparently jumped and registered. But it still doesn't work. I was told to contact Suburban, but I can't find a site for the company. Do you have any ideas?

**Dan Chase** | via email

**A** The tank needs to be emptied to access the sending unit which, from the description, may be faulty. It should be covered under warranty; check with Fleetwood. Suburban Propane has branches nationwide and a location finder at [www.suburbanpropane.com/locations-delivery/find-a-location](http://www.suburbanpropane.com/locations-delivery/find-a-location).

**Radiator Inspection**

I've read *MotorHome* for several years and I don't remember ever reading about the need to clean the radiator. I have a 2001 Endeavor by Holiday Rambler, which is a diesel pusher with a rear radiator. After having a radiator failure and a \$6,000 repair bill, I realized that washing the radiator after every road trip was an important maintenance issue. The failed radiator was clogged with dirt, as was the charge air cooler above the radiator, and the dirt buildup was the main culprit in its failure. The repair facility showed me the radiator and the amount of accumulated dirt that caused the problem. After each trip, especially if I ran into rain or snow, I wash the radiator with a garden hose (no pressure washer, as that will destroy the radiator) and always see a lot of brown water running off the bottom of the radiator. This is a simple process and should lead to a cooler running engine and longer life for the cooling system. This problem is a major issue with the rear radiator as the dirt and grime from the rear wheels are thrown up and the cooling fan pushes the mess into the radiator. I hope this is helpful to fellow travelers, and I doubt that this is an issue with a front radiator gas coach, but a radiator wash wouldn't hurt.

**Robert Moenart** | Pinckney, Michigan

Sorry to hear about your expensive lesson. Actually we have written about this several times recently, but if you missed it, others did, too — so it's worth mentioning again. It's good to spray some liquid detergent onto the dirty surfaces and let it soak in before spraying water. Warm water works better.

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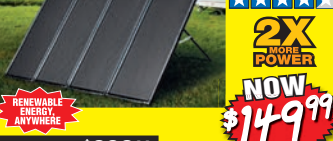


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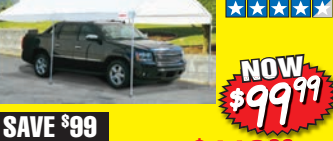


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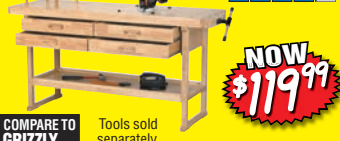


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### What's That Smell?

I have been RVing for more than 30 years and have had six RVs. My latest is a 2006 motorhome, which I bought new. I started to get periodic odors from the black-water tank. I religiously empty the tank and use a deodorant product upon each draining of the tank. I called a local RV tech about this and he asked if I had ever changed the

vent cap. I didn't know there was one; in fact I've learned that there are two: one under each sink. This device vents the sewer pipe. He told me where to look and, behold, I found a black screw vent cap under my sink. It's about 3 inches long and, in my case, 1¼ inches wide. I was told there is also a 2-inch size. I went to the local hardware store and asked for an RV vent cap and was surprised they had it. I replaced

each and now there are no suspicious smells. It's a quick job to replace.

**Steve Adkins | Auburn, Washington**

*Thanks for writing and sharing your tip. We get a lot of letters regarding holding tank odors and this is one solution. In your case, the odors you were getting were from the gray tank, not the black tank. The vents you replaced are called anti-siphon trap vent devices (ASTVDs) that service the sinks. If the flapper is worn on an ASTVD, odor will come in.*



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### Noise When Raining — Tip

After reading the "Noise When Raining" letter in the February issue, I thought my past experience may be of help. I have a Thor A.C.E. motorhome and had the same problem. I contacted Thor and they sent me a different style grille to replace the one on the unit. I'm not sure of the science behind it, but it worked and eliminated the noise. The new grille is a metal mesh and it replaced the original, which was a thick plastic one. Hope this helps.

**Joe Murphy | via email**

*Thanks for sharing your experience. Very often manufacturers don't advertise such solutions; you have to ask.*

### Ford Quits When Hot — Comment

In "Ford Quits When Hot" letter in the September 2018 issue, there is a problem with a Ford 460 quitting when hot. One might check the magnetic pick up in the distributor.

**Frank Szewc | West Seneca, New York**

*Yes, sometimes electronic components fail when they get hot, and start working again after they cool off. This can be a problem with other models, as well.*

### Small Solar Panel

**Q** We have a Class C motorhome and tow a 2008 Saturn with a Roadmaster hitch

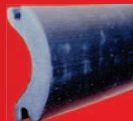
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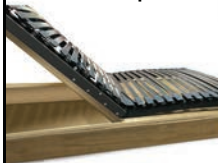
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## COACH & POWERTRAIN

(continued from page 100)

system. The Saturn's battery goes dead, and Roadmaster doesn't provide a trickle charge as part of this system. I purchased a 5-watt 12-volt DC solar trickle charger panel for the Saturn that plugs into the cigarette lighter. I asked Roadmaster and was told that I might screw up the wiring system or computer in the car. What do you think? I need a live battery for my brake system.

**Robert Cameron | Kansas City, Kansas**

**A** *It shouldn't damage the electrical system, but a 5-watt solar charger won't keep up with an auxiliary braking system; your dinghy will still have a dead battery. You should run a charge line from the motorhome. Roadmaster offers a kit to keep the battery charged: [www.roadmasterinc.com/products/accessories/charge\\_lines.html](http://www.roadmasterinc.com/products/accessories/charge_lines.html).*

### Super Singles

**Q** Have Class A motorhome manufacturers ever considered placing "super single" tires on their chassis? I have noticed more and more 18-wheel semis with them.

**Conrad Stein | Dane County, Wisconsin**

**A** *If they have, the manufacturers haven't mentioned it to us. They might make sense in some applications, but that setup requires different tires and wheels in some different wheel positions. The simplicity of using one size wheel and tire in all positions, plus the security of having a second tire in duals to help maintain control when a dual tire fails, seem like good reasons to maintain the status quo. **M***

## Have a Tech Question?

### Contact our experts:

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

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## Going Fast

A half-dozen places to see before they're gone

By Alan Rider

**R**egular readers of these motorhome missives will know that I am a champion of life in the slow lane. Years on the road have taught me that you see more, feel more and experience more when traveling at a leisurely pace.

There are some things worth stepping lively for, however. Like completing the 2.5-mile hike to the top of the 10,457-foot dormant volcano they call Lassen Peak (530-595-4480, [www.nps.gov/lavo](http://www.nps.gov/lavo)) in time to watch the sun set and the full moon rise simultaneously. An unforgettable sight.

Perhaps the best argument for getting a move on though, is all the equally memorable places on this planet that are going fast. In some cases, they are quite literally disappearing before our eyes. Climate change is altering the landscape around us even as we speak, which means that, for some of our most-coveted destinations and adventures, it may soon be now or never.

Topping that list for me would be seeing the polar bears of Churchill, Manitoba, Canada (800-665-0040, <https://everythingchurchill.com>). Each fall the bears gather in and around this small village above the Arctic Circle to wait for the pack ice to form on the waters of Hudson Bay so they can head out to hunt ringed seals. Every extra day the relatively warm waters of the Arctic Ocean keep these ivory-colored

carnivores on the shoreline threatens the very survival of their species.

Lest you think the damage from warming oceans will only affect life in the Arctic, I direct your attention to the spectacular coral reefs off the coast of the Florida Keys. Visiting Biscayne National Park (305-230-1144, [www.nps.gov/bisc](http://www.nps.gov/bisc)) toward the northern end of this 170-mile-long reef system — the third longest in the world — sooner rather than later is a smart idea as the tiny creatures that build and maintain the reef are rapidly succumbing to rising water temperatures that cause a slow death known as coral bleaching.

Those examples aside, it's not just wildlife and unspoiled natural wonders that are at risk. Rising sea levels also mean the so-called "king tides" that currently inundate the streets of coastal cities like Charleston, South Carolina, twice a month will become

regular, even daily, occurrences.

Then there's the startlingly rapid disappearance of the southern Louisiana coastline, where cartographers say the equivalent of a football field of land is lost every hour. See for yourself along the state's scenic byways (<https://byways.louisianatravel.com>) before these changes wipe out entire communities, like Isle de Jean Charles, and their traditional Cajun way of life.

Even parts of the country that seem out of reach of the rising oceans will feel the sting of climate change. If you've never seen the gigantic trees of California's Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks (559-565-3341, [www.nps.gov/sekil](http://www.nps.gov/sekil)), bear in mind that even slight changes in the delicate microclimate that supports them would be a serious threat to their future.

Same goes for the more intense heat waves and longer droughts predicted in the decades to come. Ogling the colorful wildflowers that carpet the ground in places like Death Valley National Park (760-786-3200, [www.nps.gov/deva](http://www.nps.gov/deva)) each spring is likely to become an increasingly rare opportunity.

While there's still no reason to hurry in your day-to-day travels, these scenarios do lend a definite urgency to our explorations, as they give new meaning to the phrase "going fast" along The Road Ahead. **M**

**“ Perhaps the best argument for getting a move on though, is all the equally memorable places on this planet that are going fast. In some cases, they are quite literally disappearing before our eyes. ”**

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Even slight changes to the climate can have a dramatic effect on flora and fauna, including the forests of California or even the polar bear population found in Churchill, Manitoba, Canada.





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