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On The Cover: Forest River's quad slide, Berkshire 390 BH diesel-pusher cruises through Lake Casitas Recreation Area in the Los Padres National Forest of Ventura County, California. (See Walk-Through on page 52.)
Photo by Chuck Campbell.

PREMIUM VIDEO ACCESS

Everyone knows “real men” don’t read instructions. For guys, assembling a new product and figuring out how it works is supposedly intuitive. After all, it’s a guy thing. Unfortunately, too many of us end up with our tails between our legs as we muddle through tricky situations trying to save face. I hate to tell you this, guys, but our actions, and those less graceful moments, usually don’t go unnoticed. How do you think we got that reputation, anyway?

Today’s technology is a game changer. Modern products are driven by high-tech circuitry and lots of buttons, and quite frankly, unless you have the mind of an 8-year-old, operational instructions are difficult to follow — at least for those of us with limited patience and fear of 200-page owner’s manuals. Add interesting interpretations of the English language when it comes to writing owner’s manuals and the process becomes even more complicated, sometimes even comical.

Recently I purchased a paper shredder that came with a printed instruction manual. Looking for language that described whether I could shred paper with staples, I found these lines: “Remove all paper clips and staples from paper before shredding. The [shredder] will cut staples, small paper clips and credit cards; however, proper discretion is recommended.”

No wonder guys don’t read the instructions. But we still need a way to find out how a product or system works without becoming overwhelmed. Beyond that, as motorhome owners, we need to know how to fix things when in the field.

For many owners, working on systems and accessories is a mystery. While instruction and repair manuals are useful, they sometimes add a new level of stress to a project. Questions like, “Can I really do this?” or “Will I screw things up?” may come to mind. To neutralize the mystery, I turn to videos. Before tackling a project I’m uncertain of, I’ll check for a video online that shows how it’s done. In



many cases, these videos are amateurish and thin on content, but there’s usually enough info for one to make a decision on whether or not to tackle the project.

Recognizing that the video trend is growing, *MotorHome* and sister publication *Trailer Life* built a new website that caters to premium-quality how-to content that is sure to change the way most of us tackle projects and gain knowledge about RVs and the lifestyle. Under the Good Sam/Trailer Life logo, we launched the website www.trailerlife.tv last year. During the introduction period we posted a number of how-to videos showing viewers useful tips and instructional information on many aspects of the RV lifestyle.

By the time you receive this issue, you’ll have an opportunity to subscribe to the next level of our video website, Trailer Life.TV Full Access. This new premium access on www.trailerlife.tv is earmarked to be the leading destination for technical RV video content. Here you’ll have unlimited access to videos on maintenance, installation of appliances and accessories and how-to workshops. Once you sign up, you’ll have immediate access to 10-plus hours of premium content featuring original expert tips and exclusive projects — all designed to take the mystery out of RV ownership. You’ll even be able to stream a full-length DVD of original content four times a year. Videos will be updated monthly.

And all this video can be viewed on your computer, tablet or smartphone. Log on to www.trailerlife.tv to learn about a number of special offers for Good Sam members. Regular price for premium access is \$29.97 per year.

Trailer Life.TV Full Access is just the ticket for guys who hate to read instructions. Now they can watch in privacy, learn the process and look like they know what they’re doing. And guys, don’t get too smug; the gals will be watching, too. ♦

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DO YOU RELY ON THE INTERNET WHEN SEARCHING FOR A NEW MOTORHOME? IF NOT, WHAT IS YOUR MAIN METHOD OF RESEARCH?

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

ONLINE DEALER SEARCH

When we decided to buy a new motorhome, I used the Internet not to locate a coach but to locate the dealer. We had looked at coaches on dealer lots and at RV shows and determined the Newmar Dutch Star 4010 was what we wanted. Since we couldn't find the exact unit in existing dealer inventory, we decided to order new. I knew the base price of the coach and also had the option sheet with retail prices of each option, so I knew the sticker price of the motorhome we would order.

I searched online for Newmar dealers and provided them with the specs of the coach, including options. Most dealers wanted to steer me to coaches in their inventory, yet none matched what I wanted. Some dealers would quote the price of the fully loaded coach. I had to remind them that all I wanted was to place the order and I would be there to pay for it when it came in. I finally found Midway RV Center in Grand Rapids, Mich., only 115 miles north of the Newmar plant. They were very easy to deal with and completely understood what I wanted. They also quoted a price far below the MSRP. I have referred anyone who asks to Midway RV Center.

SEAN AND SANDY SEARS | VIA EMAIL

ABSOLUTELY USE INTERNET

We searched for our third motorhome for a year, mostly on the Internet. I have an autistic son who loves motorhomes and loves to research units for sale. He was sending me daily reports on new or changed inventory from around the country. My eventual purchase turned out to be as good as it gets, but that was because of the exceptional service we received at the dealer.

I flew from Michigan to Phoenix, Ariz., to meet with Pete Leighton, owner of Main Street RV, to inspect the unit I was interested in. After looking things over, I had a long list of items that needed correcting, including a new set of tires. Bear in mind that this was a consignment coach. I left without signing a deal, but Leighton said everything would be fixed. He was true to his word.

My experience at Main Street RV was excellent, and in general, researching and buying a motorhome on the Internet works if you do it right. You need to travel to see the motorhome and do a thorough inspection. It's good to have some experience, so I wouldn't recommend it for first-time buyers. When you see the motorhome in person, take pictures of everything, as you will use these as reference for negotiations, and later for repairs or corrections. In the end, our adventure was a lot of fun, and we wound up meeting a lot of great people.

GERRY PARIJ | VIA EMAIL

ANOTHER ENERGY OPTION

In response to the February article "Boost Your Battery Bank," I want to point out that the goals the author cited — running a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) machine and heat — can be accomplished without the cost and trouble of a battery bank upgrade such as was described. For extended dry camping a large battery bank is worthwhile, but if you only need to get through a night or two at a time, making more efficient energy choices can eliminate the need for such an expensive and extensive retrofit.

If your CPAP machine has a wall wart or other in-line power supply, as opposed to straight power cord, then odds are you can obtain a 12-volt DC adapter for it for less than \$50. This is much more efficient than running off an inverter. I have run my CPAP off a 75Ah marine battery for 10 days and still had power to spare. For heat, look into an indoor safe catalytic heater, such as the Olympian Wave 3, 6 or 8. These heat a typical RV and use no electricity. They run from about \$250 to \$400 at Camping World. And replacing or supplementing your lighting with LED lights will dramatically decrease your power requirements.

Don't get me wrong; the information in the article was very good. But for most folks the same results can be achieved, without sacrificing anything and at a fraction of the cost and trouble, by making more efficient choices.

REX DEAVER | VIA EMAIL

CONTINUE ON PAGE 10

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CPAP HELP

I also use a CPAP machine and have a much more economical way to accommodate the use of it in the motorhome. It involves running a wire from a battery with a cigarette lighter on the end (it must be from a 12-volt battery). You can purchase a 12-volt converter as well as a 12-volt battery adapter cable, which connects to the CPAP machine, on the CPAP website at www.cpap.com.

Check the website to see whether your machine is compatible. This works fine and should not cost more than \$50 to \$60. The CPAP machine does not take a lot of voltage and I found that when I'm dry camping I run the generator daily to recharge all batteries anyway (I also use the moisture adapter).

Hope this helps other RVers who use CPAP machines in their motorhome.

JOHN BLECKER | SAN DIEGO, CALIF.

OUTLET ADVICE

The testing of AC outlets on the pole before plugging in to shorepower comes up often in the RV support columns but

the answer is usually incomplete. When problems are found, the park management should be the first report, but not the only one. Since many RV parks are away from major cities, a second report should be made to the local jurisdiction's electrical inspector. If the phone book fails to provide the number, any licensed electrician will have a phone number or email address. Electrical outlets are so common they are part of the background but are high on the list of things that can damage you or your motorhome. Think about the next person who will try to use the plug.

GEOFFREY PRUETT | PORTLAND, ORE.

FINANCING INFORMATION ERROR

The RV financing article, "Let's Make a Deal," in the January issue had some information that may be incorrect. At the end of the paragraph on who lends to full-timers it states that Alliant Credit Union requires an escrow account equal to one year's insurance premium as collateral and that it's returned at the end of one year of successful payments. However, according to Alliant, the insurance pre-

mium is kept for the duration of the loan, not one year. I know this because I just refinanced my motorhome with Alliant and the loan officer verified this information.

MIKE CIANCI | LIVINGSTON, TEXAS

From the editor: We contacted Alliant Credit Union and received the following response from Rich Holke, senior branch manager: We do not hold escrow and refund the amount after 12 months. We do hold one year's worth of insurance in an interest-bearing savings account and release these funds back to our members once the loan has been paid in full as indicated in Mr. Cianci's email to you. MotorHome regrets the error.

NEWBIE CONCERNS

My wife and I are recent purchasers of a used 35-foot motorhome. We are new to the RV environment and are excited about starting our travels once the weather breaks. The previous owner kept the RV in great shape, both in and out, and left me all of his owners manuals and maintenance records.

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Hi, my wife and I are full-time RVers traveling in a mid-level diesel pusher. In 2008 we were involved in a severe auto accident and as a result **needed to modify our coach to allow my wife easier access into and out of the coach.** We contacted HWH to see if it was possible to make a change to our RV to **allow it to kneel when she enters or leaves** the coach. The engineer at HWH suggested we might want to modify the coach with HWH's Active Air, which would not only allow the coach to kneel, but also give us a more comfortable ride, as well as automatic leveling. We evaluated our options and made the decision to add Active Air.

What a difference it made! **We now have auto leveling, both hydraulic and air bag, the option to kneel the coach when we stop, better ride control with no dipping or plowing in corners, and full control in strong cross winds. The Active Air also eliminated almost all of the rocking** as we travel on the highways and byways of America. An added feature not mentioned in the brochure is **the ability to tilt the coach for dumping holding tanks or to take on a full load of fuel.** Everything we ever wanted to do using our air bags is **as simple as pushing a button.** The system's auxiliary air pump even allows us to fill the tires on the car or bicycle without starting the motor home engine. **As a result of adding Active Air, we now have many of the amenities reserved for high-end coaches.** ”

Thank you, HWH.
Roland & Louise Davey

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He also left me stack of *MotorHome* magazines, which I read cover to cover to learn as much as I can. Now that I have gone through them all, I must say that I am scared to death. Of course I know these stories are a small percentage of all your readers, but incidences of breakdowns, flat tires, engine and transmission problems, coach appliance problems, campground and reservation issues ... all have me wondering how my own upcoming experiences will be.

It would be great if you can solicit your readers who can testify that after many years and many miles, that for the most part their travels have been worry free and the experience of a lifetime.

DAVID VAVRO | DELAWARE, OHIO

RECOMMEND REPAIR WORK

I was just reading the article "The Next Frontier" in the December 2012 issue. We participated in a 50-day Winnebago caravan to Alaska this past summer and enjoyed most of the places mentioned in the article. Although this is a rough excursion for the motorhomes, I highly

recommend it, as our time was well spent with new friends we will remember for the rest of our lives.

Our return trip took us on the Casiar Highway from Watson Lake, Yukon, to Prince George, British Columbia. In Smithers, B.C., we ran into a problem with our Freightliner chassis. We had a noticeable film of oil on our dinghy and discovered a rock had wedged itself between the engine block and oil filter, rubbing a hole in the oil filter. Needing a repair shop, I was given the name of Babine Truck and Equipment.

When I arrived early the next morning and explained our situation I was amazed by the response. Once the part number for a new oil filter was obtained, Babine Truck sent a mechanic to our campground within 15 minutes to replace the filter and lost oil. The mechanic went right to work and we were on the road within an hour of when we were supposed to leave the campground. If you're ever in need of diesel engine or chassis repairs in this area, I highly recommend Babine Truck.

**TOM AND NANCY ROCHELEAU
HOLLYWOOD, MD.**

PLEASED WITH SERVICE

During a camping trip to Illinois, we experienced extensive damage to our motorhome ceiling following a high wind and rainstorm. A tree limb pierced the coach cap on the passenger side and the interior ceiling sustained water damage around the vent and built-in TV as a result. Progressive Insurance had a claims adjuster, Stephanie Pappas, at our site the next day. She did a wonderful job and quickly handled the claim.

We elected to wait until we returned to Mesa, Ariz., for the winter to have the interior work completed. James Salesbury, an Arizona Progressive adjuster, worked diligently with us to get the best repair service available.

The Camping World Collision Center team of Manager Mike Pressler, Ken and Jason took care of everything. All the interior cabinets along with the refrigerator and microwave had to be removed to install the Ozite upholstery for the ceiling. They did a very professional installation job and everything was thoroughly cleaned afterward.

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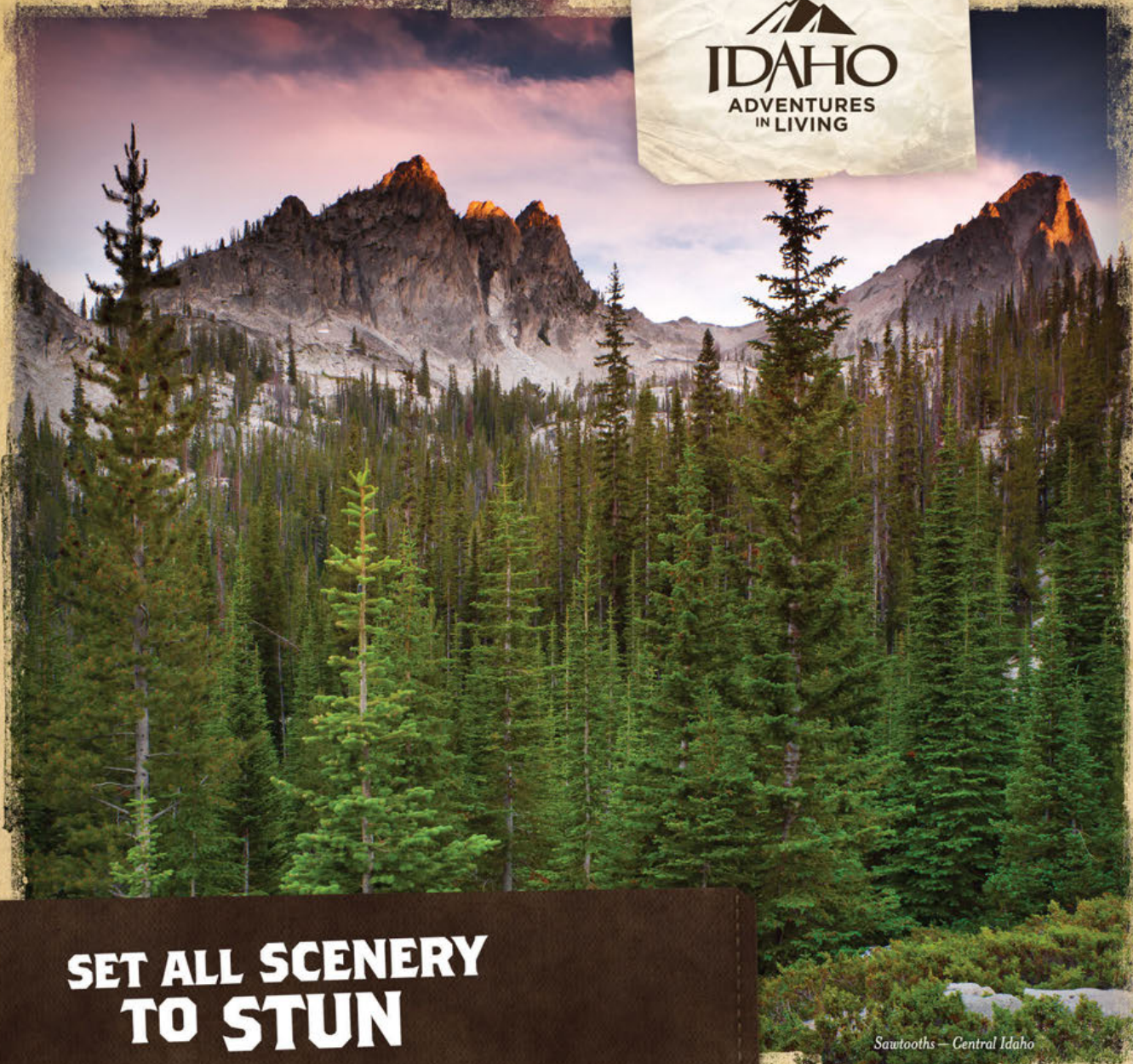
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The Progressive adjuster visited the collision center during the process and reported back to us. We are full-time RVers, so being displaced from our motorhome was a little stressful.

Hopefully we will not have to avail ourselves of repair services anytime soon, but we wanted *MotorHome* readers to know about the positive result we experienced.

**DEE AND LARRY BURKE
ASTORIA, ORE.**

BETTER MATERIALS NEEDED

America is so technologically advanced that now we are hearing news about automobiles that drive themselves. Even with our technical expertise there are still many minor problems on RVs yet to be solved. For example, motorhomes have headlights that fog up. This can be solved perhaps by buying a polishing compound but in some cases you have to remove the lens because the fogging is on the inside. Why do we have to do this in the first place?

Similarly, vent covers on RVs turn yellow and warp. The vent cover for my

washer/dryer was pure yellow before I replaced it and the access door to my diesel tank is fairly new and already it is warping and beginning to change color.

RV manufacturers don't get it. Either that or they just want the consumer to spend more. I think the manufacturers should use technologically more advanced materials. My RV is a 2004 — not too old. Do more expensive coaches have this happening? We volunteer from east to west, north to south and are in the sun a lot so I expect this to happen, but isn't there a solution?

GREY JEWETT | VIA EMAIL

QUESTION:

What motorhome material advancements would you like to see from RV manufacturers?

Send your comments to *MotorHome*, 3300 Fernbrook Lane N #200, Minneapolis, MN 55447; or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com. ♦

CONTACT MOTORHOME

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ASK A TECHNICAL QUESTION: Questions for our Coach & Powertrain column may be sent to *MotorHome*, 2575 Vista del Mar Drive, Ventura CA 93001 (please include your name, city and state). You may also email questions to tech@motorhome.com. Selected letters will be answered in the magazine, but time does not permit individual replies.

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For those who are at home on the road.

Georgetown's attractive NEW Prestige Package gives the look of full body paint, at a fraction of the cost.

- Georgetown's NEW stainless steel residential appliance package includes a 22.5 cu. ft. refrigerator, microwave and an undermount oven.
- The kitchen features custom LG solid surface countertops, and an undermount sink. Flush solid surface covers extend workspace over the sink and stovetop.
- A residential hand-laid glass tile backsplash is the perfect blend of decorator styling and functionality.
- Special touches like a gooseneck faucet with sprayer and LED accent lighting complete the look.

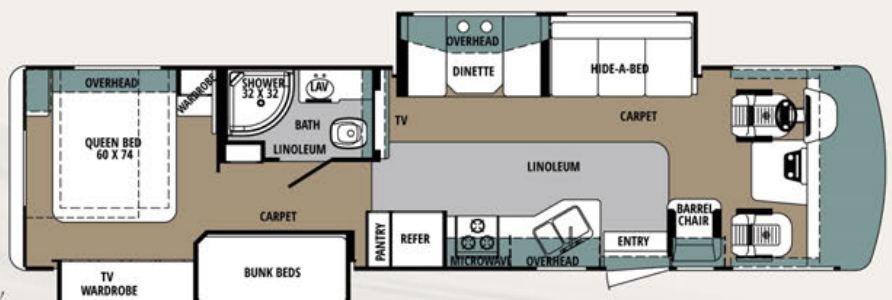


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escapes

by LAURA MICHAELS

ROAD FOODIE | WHEELS & GEAR | NOTEWORTHY | CROSSROADS

BLACKWATER BEAUTY

**Picturesque Falls
Nestled High in the
Allegheny Mountains**

Noted as one of the most photo-graphed sites in West Virginia, Blackwater Falls lives up to its billing with a 62-foot cascade fringed by red spruce and eastern hemlock. It's the tannic acid from these trees' needles and fallen branches that gave Blackwater River (and thus the falls) its name. A rocky, sandstone outcropping near the center of Blackwater Falls creates a distinctive formation around which the rushing water plunges and then flows through an 8-mile-long gorge within the Alleghenies.

Though Blackwater Falls is the signature attraction of Blackwater Falls State Park, located near Davis in northern West Virginia, it's not the park's only offering. Elakala Falls and Pendleton Falls are also worth a visit, and the view from Lindy Point showcases 45 acres of stunning mountain views into Blackwater Canyon. The park's campground offers 30 sites with 30-amp electric. For more information, call 304-259-5216 or visit www.blackwaterfalls.com.

TAKE A BAKE-CATION AT ZINGERMAN'S



Left to right: Zingerman's Bake-cation classes attract both experienced and novice bakers. The tilted mirror over the instructor's table made it easy for us to see exactly what Shelby, our baking instructor, was demonstrating. Yeast rolls rise before baking at Zingerman's.

The aroma of warm bread wafted over us the moment we opened the door.

We filed into a large classroom with cutting board-topped tables arranged into a rectangle. At each station were baking utensils, bowls, baking sheets and containers filled with ingredients, pre-measured for us. At the front of the classroom was a large tilted mirror so we could easily see the teacher's demonstrations.

Welcome to Zingerman's Bake-cation, one of the most enjoyable foodie vacations you'll ever take.

Bake! is the hands-on teaching bakery for home cooks offering single, short subject classes to weeklong Bake-cations (www.bakewithzing.com). Part of Zingerman's Bakehouse, the mission is to bring back the almost-lost art of home baking. And for RVers visiting southeastern Michigan, it's a great way to spend a day getting up-close-and-personal with the essentials of baking with fellow food lovers.

We joined a Zingerman's cookie baking class. The classes are limited to 12 so each student gets personal

attention. Our head instructor, Shelby, welcomed us and told us we'd be learning how to bake four different cookies sold in the Zingerman's Bakehouse — delicate Linzer cookies, hearty peanut butter cookies, a cutout butter cookie and, my favorite, chocolate coconut macaroons.

ALL LEVELS OF BAKERS

The class was a mixed group — young, old and in-between — with all levels of baking experience. There were folks like me who feel pretty comfortable around a mixing bowl. Then there were those who'd never baked anything, like John, a 40-something from New York, and Eric, a jock from North Carolina, who came because his girlfriend wanted him to learn to cook.

We spent the next couple of hours mixing, creaming, rolling and cutting cookies, chopping nuts and cracking jokes with one another. Shelby and his assistants moved through the classroom making suggestions and correcting little errors. Then our baking sheets, each labeled with our names, headed for

Zingerman's big commercial ovens.

The cookies were spectacular! Even Eric's Linzer cookies, some of which look like they were cut with a chainsaw, came out tasting great. The staff quickly passed around pink bakery boxes and helped us box up our cookies — two dozen of each kind.

As we drove away from Ann Arbor, we munched happily on our baked delights. Next time, we're planning on taking a week to learn how to bake some of Zingerman's fantastic artisan breads.

Know of cooking classes you'd like to share with your fellow road foodies? Let me know at hasselbring@bctonline.com (with "Road Foodie" in the subject line).





GHOST OF A MOTORHOME

Nexus RV, a factory-direct manufacturer of Class B and C motorhomes, introduced its newest model built on the Navistar International Terra Star chassis. The Ghost, a luxury “Super C” diesel motorhome, is available in a 34G triple slide floorplan and a 36G double slide floorplan, both with a 10,000-pound-rated hitch receiver for towing anything from a dinghy vehicle to a horse trailer. Standard features include a king bed, cabover bunk with 40-inch LED TV and 12-cubic-foot Norcold refrigerator with icemaker. Keep cool or warm things up with two 13,500-Btu ducted roof air conditioners and a 40,000-Btu furnace.

Outside, the Ghost is dressed in deluxe four-color body paint with clear coat and has an electric patio awning. Ghost Super C floorplans start at \$139,999.

Nexus RV, 855-786-3987, www.nexusrv.com

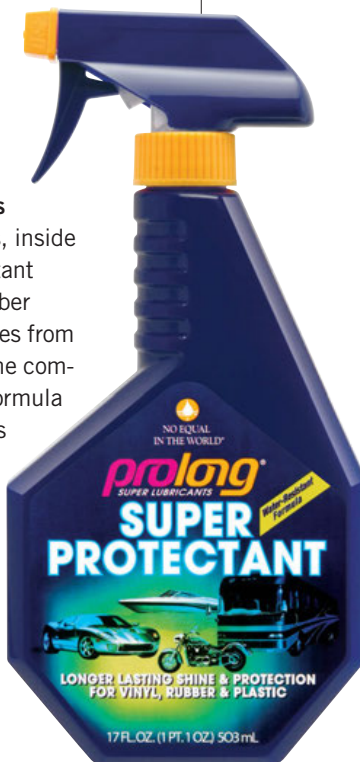
PROLONGED SURFACE PROTECTION

A new formula from **Prolong Super Lubricants** aims to protect and add shine to motorhomes, inside and out. Prolong’s Super Protectant is an instant detailer that is said to be safe for leather, rubber and vinyl, adding shine and protecting surfaces from cracking in hot or cold weather conditions. The company claims its enhanced Super Protectant formula is water-resistant and blocks out the elements for a more durable shine and longer lasting protection. During regular preparation and maintenance routines, simply spray the product on the chosen surface and easily wipe away with a terry cloth towel.

A 17-ounce Super Protectant spray bottle is \$8.99; a 1-gallon container is \$45.

Super Protectant is available at auto parts retailers or online at www.prolong.com.

Prolong Super Lubricants, 800-540-5823, www.prolong.com



MOBILE CHARGING STATION

Any motorhome can become a charging station with the **Hubbell USB Charger Receptacle**, which delivers USB and regular electrical power in a single device.

Besides two 15-amp, 120-volt AC outlets for traditional use, the receptacle is fitted with twin USB ports. The company said it’s the only manufacturer to offer such a device.

The receptacle is compatible with any USB 1.1, 2.0 or 3.0 electronic equipment to charge smartphones, digital readers, tablet computers, MP3 players, mobile phones or GPS units.

The Hubbell USB Charger Receptacle provides 3 amps of USB power and will also rapidly recharge a single tablet to 100 percent in five to six hours. Should the Hubbell receptacle become overloaded, it cycles off briefly and then returns to normal function without manual resetting. A green LED light indicates USB power availability. Offered in black, gray, ivory, light almond or white, it retails for \$49.99.

Wirecon Products by Hubbell, 475-882-4838, www.hubbell-wirecon.com



AN INSIDE LOOK AT MILLENNIUM LUXURY COACHES

Kicking off its 13th year of producing Prevost-based coaches, Millennium Luxury Coaches unveiled a new video series featuring the craftsmen who build these rolling mansions and the owners who buy them.

The series premier, viewable on the company's website (www.millenniumluxurycoaches.com) and "MillenniumLuxury" YouTube channel, focuses on a handful of staff members and captures the product from the perspective of the master craftsmen responsible for creating these custom coaches. The video also shares scenes of the coach build in progress and quotes from Millennium founders Nelson and Evelyn Figueroa. Episode two, "Confessions of a Coach Builder," will treat the viewer to a behind-the-scenes interview with one of these craftsmen who has made creating luxury motorhomes his life's work. Others will highlight Millennium's signature styles and innovations, rallies and events, and how customers enjoy their custom creations on the road.



NEW FACILITY FOR DAVE & LJ'S RV INTERIOR DESIGN

For years, brothers David and LJ Ast have been remodeling RVs and now



it's time for their business to get a new look. After six years at its previous location, Dave & LJ's RV Interior Design has relocated to a larger facility on Interstate 5 in Woodland, Wash. The new facility has almost twice as much showroom space and a five-bay service facility with room for up to 10 RVs.

Filled with everything imaginable to update the interior of an RV, the new Dave & LJ's showroom features an expanded selection of RV furniture brands, including Flexsteel, along with more flooring displays. RV satellite

systems, TV conversions, custom-built cabinetry and Auto Motion Shades also have expanded display areas. Co-owner David Ast said the larger facility with easy access off I-5 and plenty of RV parking puts the company in an ideal position for continued growth. For more information, call 360-225-7700 or visit www.daveandljs.com.

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News Briefs

The U.S. Forest Service has announced its fee-free days for 2013: June 8, National Get Outdoors Day; Sept. 28, National Public Lands Day; and Nov. 9-11, Veterans Day Weekend. "Your national forests and grasslands are a bargain any day of the year, but even more so on fee-free days," said U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell. "Whether you stay for a few hours or a few days, your public lands are some of the best travel bargains in the nation." Traditionally, fees are not charged on 98 percent of national forests and grasslands, and approximately two-thirds of developed recreation sites in national forests and grasslands can be used for free. The participation in fee-free days supports the efforts of President Obama's America's Great Outdoors initiative that aims to establish a 21st century conservation and recreation agenda.

Navistar RV, a subsidiary of Navistar International Corp., will offer the Cummins ISX15 engine on certain Monaco and Holiday Rambler coaches. The new engine option is a result of an agreement between Navistar RV and distributor Cummins Crosspoint LLC. The ISX15 is available for motorhome applications with 550- and 600-HP ratings and up to 1,950 lb-ft of torque. According to the company, its fuel system delivers maximum performance, regardless of engine RPM, and multiple injection events improve fuel efficiency and enable a smoother, quieter ride. With a standard engine brake and impressive power, the ISX15 is a proven and compliant engine. The release of the first Navistar RV with the Cummins ISX15 engine is timed for later this year.

Australian-based EarthCruiser has shipped its first all-terrain expedition RV to the U.S. through its Bend, Ore., facility. With vehicles now being purchased by Americans, EarthCruiser can finalize plans for manufacturing in Oregon. The diesel-powered exploration motorhome is built on a Mitsubishi Fuso 4x4 truck chassis. The interior features all-fiberglass cabinetry, large windows, quality appliances, an ergonomic kitchen and a double bed. The walls and roof are constructed from a temperature-insulating fiberglass composite. Also available is a solar panel array and a self-containment system that can sustain users for up to 10 days without support.

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Holland Motor Homes, Circle 106 on Reader Service Card

escapes | CROSSROADS

OLD WORLD CULTURE IN IOWA

Settled in 1855 as a separatist German society focused on a communal way of life, the Amana Colonies today draw hundreds of thousands of tourists to their craft shops and

restaurants clustered less than 20 miles west of Iowa City, Iowa. Seven villages make up the colonies, with Amana being home to many of the attractions. Visit the Amana Furniture Shop, where solid walnut, oak and cherry furniture are crafted on workbenches more than 150 years old, or browse the early country primitives of Amana Colonies Antiques. A general store, woolen mill and Millstream Brewing Company, Iowa's first microbrewery, are a few more reasons to visit this unique community.

Stop in the restored corncrib that houses the Amana Colonies Visitors Center for a closer look at the history behind these villages that together boast more than 30 sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The nearby Amana Colonies RV Park offers more than 400 RV sites and free Wi-Fi.

For more information, call 800-579-2294 or visit www.amanacolonies.com.



PHOTO: AMANA COLONIES CONVENTION AND VISITORS BUREAU

A LOOMING PRESENCE

The old mill has stood silent

for more than a century; though as you tour the three-story brick building in Lawson, Mo., you might think the 40 workers were just out to lunch. The machinery is here, many of the looms strung seemingly for work in progress. It was busy once, but today Watkins Woolen Mill State Park and State Historic Site is a National Historic Landmark and National Mechanical Engineering Landmark, the only 19th century textile mill in the country with all its original equipment still in place.

Founder Waltus Watkins came to Clay County, Mo., in 1839. An entrepreneur, he raised livestock, grew corn and other crops, and set large orchards on his nearly 3,700 acres. He also built a gristmill, sawmill, and in 1860, the woolen mill. For nearly 40 years the steam-engine-



PHOTO: GUY LOUIS SELBERT

run mill operated 10 hours a day, six days a week, consuming 40,000 pounds of wool a year filling orders for knitting yarn, blankets and other dry goods, but no clothing. Then, in the late 1890s, readymade clothes became available from catalogs and the old mill couldn't compete.

Today the mill, Watkins' home and other farm buildings are open for tours year-round. The adjoining park has a 100-acre lake encircled by a 3.8-mile paved path, and a wooded campground with 96 sites, a shower house, laundry and a dump station. **For more information,** call 816-580-3387 or visit www.mostateparks.com. — Pamela Selbert ♦



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Weber Jumbo Joe Charcoal Grill #69425
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Charcoal Grill Table #69426
Locks Jumbo Joe Grill #69425 (above) at a comfortable height. Stands 26¹/₂"H. Lightweight, durable metal construction. Three handy utensil hooks on each end.

Club SALE \$69.99 Reg. \$78.89 | 🚚



CLUB SALE \$22⁴⁹

Reg. \$24.99

Orange Folding Ice Bucket #70118
Durable polyester fabric with waterproof interior. 15 quart capacity. 11¹/₂"H x 11¹/₂" dia. Stores at only 3"H. | Ship Wt. 1 lb. | ♥



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Folds to 3"W for easy storage

Bamboo Folding Table #69496
Made of natural bamboo! Weather-resistant for use indoors or out. Easily folds in half for convenient storage. Stands 33¹/₂"L x 33¹/₂"W x 29¹/₂"H. Folds to 36¹/₂"L x 33¹/₂"W x 3"H. | 🚚



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Folding Director Chair #69429
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Blast Out Pressure Wash Concentrate #70029
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Reg. \$89.99

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TAKING THE HIGH ROAD TO TAOS

DISCOVER THE RICH HISTORY AND CHANGING LANDSCAPES OF THIS NEW MEXICO SCENIC BYWAY



PHOTO: DAVID BARBER

N

orthern New Mexico is a beloved destination. In addition to the high desert landscape, it has a unique cultural history. Unlike much of the United States, the first settlers (after the indigenous peoples) were the Spanish, who came north from Mexico in 1540, 80 years before the English colonists landed at Plymouth Rock. The Spanish continued their occupation of what they called Nuevo Mexico until 1850, when it became a U.S. territory, and the 310-year colonization by Spain left an indelible mark on the area.

The High Road to Taos, a 68-mile-long state scenic byway between Santa Fe and Taos, is one of the most impressive drives in northern New Mexico and makes a perfect day trip in a small motorhome or dinghy vehicle. Along the way, visitors can experience the stunning landscapes and diverse history of this region. It's especially good to travel in a motorhome, as there are few places to eat along the way and even fewer public restrooms.

Upon leaving Santa Fe and cresting the first rise two miles north, you'll be rewarded with the expansive vista for which northern New Mexico is known. Rolling red sand hills are dotted with juniper shrubs that seem to go on forever, with layered blue mountains in the distance. Along U.S. 285/84 you'll pass the Santa Fe Opera House, an outdoor venue partially protected from the elements by a stunning architectural structure.

Continue on 285, the main highway north to Los Alamos, Espanola and Taos, past small settlements with colorful names like Tesuque,



PHOTOS: NEW MEXICO DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

Top: The Rio Grande Gorge Bridge outside Taos spans 1,280 feet across and is the second highest suspension bridge in the country. Middle: Located on the High Road, the village of Las Trampas is home to the San José de Gracia church. Bottom: Bandelier National Monument near Los Alamos was home to the Ancestral Pueblo people for hundreds of years.



Top: With its high adobe walls and twin bell towers, San Francisco de Asis in Ranchos de Taos is one of the most photographed churches in New Mexico. **Middle:** The author takes a break on a gravel side road near Nambe, N.M., in his Winnebago View. **Bottom:** The village of Tyuonyi in Bandelier National Monument was once made up of 400 rooms occupied by approximately 100 people.



Cuyamungue and Pojoaque on your way to the High Road, which officially starts 16 miles north when you turn right on Highway 503 and immediately find yourself in a verdant valley, with green pastures and huge cottonwood trees. A left turn onto Highway 502 would take you west to Los Alamos, where the atomic bomb was developed in the 1940s. Near Los Alamos — and in contrast to the science labs — is Bandelier National Monument, home to native settlers thousands of years earlier.

The valley has both large gated estates and a rambling collection of old adobe structures, some abandoned. Passing the turnoff to Nambé Pueblo, turn left on County Road 98 to Chimayo at the sign reading “The High Road to Taos.”

The High Road is a spiritual experience, with three significant churches along the route. The first treasure is Santuario de Chimayo. This beautiful little chapel was built in 1816 and is a major pilgrimage destination, with more than 300,000

PHOTOS: DAVID BARBER

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PHOTO: DAVID HERRERA

Left: At 13,161 feet, Wheeler Peak is the highest in New Mexico and rises above the landscape of Carson National Forest.

visitors a year walking to the site, many of them during Holy Week. I encountered five pilgrims on my trip to Taos who had walked from Denver, Colo., 340 miles to the north. The soil is said to be sacred.

The original Santuario has grown into a complex of structures and outdoor shrines, many covered with small crosses to honor souls dear to the pilgrims. The Santa Cruz River flows along the north side of the church, adding to the ambience of the setting. You can park your motorhome in a large parking lot within a short walk of the church.

Continuing along CR 98 a short distance is Rancho de Chimayo, a restaurant and hacienda and a popular presence in the area since 1965. The restaurant features northern New Mexico cuisine and the hacienda offers fine rooms with great character for those not traveling in a motorhome.

The byway continues on Highway 76, past the small village of Cordova. The scenery changes to the New Mexico badlands as you leave the lush Santa Cruz Valley and move into the high desert mesa country, en route to the next highlight, Truchas. Truchas remains much like it was hundreds of years ago, a small village perched alongside a deep canyon. Today it is an artists' community, populated by painters, crafters and other artisans eager to show their work.

Las Trampas (or Trampas) is the site of the next church, San José de Gracia. Built between 1760 and 1776, it was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1970, and is a fine example of adobe religious architecture and a significant relic of the history of this region. Take in the striking forms of this building, with its clerestory windows and decorative interior. San José de Gracia is still an active parish church, open to visitors on the weekends.

Leaving Las Trampas, notice the ancient hollowed wooden irrigation channel on the right. Turning right on Highway 75, you pass Penasco and Vadito and enter northern New Mexico's third ecosystem, Carson National Forest. The view is dominated by the Taos Mountains, with Wheeler Peak towering over everything at 13,161 feet.



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Three miles east of Vadito, turn left onto Highway 518 and proceed on a winding 16-mile scenic drive through the forest to Rancho de Taos, the northern end of the High Road and the location of the most impressive of the three churches, San Francisco de Asis.

With its twin bell towers, massive adobe walls and arched portal entrance, San Francisco de Asis is one of the most photographed churches in New Mexico. A National Historic Landmark, the

mission church has been in continuous use since the late 1700s.

Before returning to Santa Fe by the Low Road, which follows the Rio Grande, take time to visit the Taos Plaza for shopping and dining, and historic Taos Pueblo, a mile north of town. An ancient multi-story adobe condominium, Taos Pueblo has been continuously inhabited for more than 1,000 years. The site is well set up to receive visitors, limiting where tourists can tread but allowing

photographs. It is one of the most painted and photographed dwellings in the world.

As you leave Taos on Highway 68, stop at the rest area five miles south of town for a look at the Rio Grande Gorge. Even with a camera, it is difficult to capture the impressiveness of this geological wonder, a giant expanse carved in the earth. (For those wanting an up-close look at the gorge, head north from Taos on Highway 64 to the Rio Grande Gorge Bridge. Rising 650 feet above the river and spanning 1,280 feet across, it is the second highest suspension bridge in the country.)

Leaving the overlook, you descend into the Rio Grande canyon and follow the river a third of the way to Santa Fe. Rafting is popular on the river, and you'll want to pull over at one of the launch areas to watch the excitement. I shared a picnic site with a group of rafters who had just completed their float, and they were all very enthusiastic about their adventure.

As you exit the canyon and leave the river at Velarde, take in the picturesque view of this fertile valley with its orchards and gardens among the red-roofed adobe homes and churches. Even though the entire route is only about 140 miles, it is a journey rich in history and changing landscapes, a pleasant day trip in northern New Mexico. And you can say you always take the High Road. ♦



David Barber roams the West in his Winnebago View motorhome with his wife, Kathy Van Inwegen, their dog, Doodles, and cat, Bogey.

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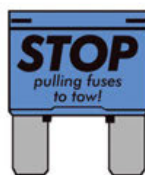


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PHOTO: COLORADO WOLF AND WILDLIFE CENTER



CALLS FROM THE WILD:

5 FAVORITE ANIMAL SANCTUARIES IN THE U.S.

by MARY ZALMANEK

When human populations overlap with wildlife habitat, it usually doesn't bode well for the animals. Sea turtles and boat propellers, eagles and power lines

— these combinations can be lethal. Keeping wild animals as pets can lead to disastrous consequences, usually for the animals and perhaps the owners, too. Fortunately for the animal kingdom, there are people whose mission is to preserve and protect wildlife. These inspiring folks care for abused, abandoned and injured animals in sanctuaries.

While exploring the U.S. in our motorhome, my husband, Jim, and I happened upon several such facilities. We started looking for other organizations that rescue and rehabilitate wildlife and educate the public. Here's a round up of our top five favorites.



COLORADO WOLF AND WILDLIFE CENTER, DIVIDE, COLO. (LIMITED RV PARKING)

Even before we met Darlene Kokobel, founder and president of the Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center (CWWC), we knew three things about her. First, she loves animals. As we waited at the visitor center, we read the heartfelt tribute Darlene wrote and had etched in stone about the two wolves that inspired the creation of one of the world's finest wolf sanctuaries. Second, she built a beautiful facility to protect and pamper these canids. We watched two foxes cross the SkyFox Freeway, a 60-foot walkway that rises

Clockwise from top: Chimps make tools from sticks to retrieve treats from an artificial termite mound at Chimp Haven. Colorado Wolf and Wildlife Center houses one or two wolves in enclosures ranging in size from one-half to 1 acre. Bev, a loggerhead sea turtle, spent five months at the Turtle Hospital in Marathon, Fla., recovering from a wound requiring a flipper amputation. She was released into the same area she was found. Mary Ellen Blanchard spends time with Lita, a disabled blue and gold macaw in the Parrot Garden at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary. Grizzly bears have a carefree life at the Wild Animal Sanctuary, the largest and oldest carnivore sanctuary in the Western Hemisphere.



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Above left: Horses at Best Friends Animal Sanctuary enjoy their days in the scenic pastures of Angel Canyon in Kanab, Utah. Above right: Lions relax on a structure in their large acreage habitat at the Wild Animal Sanctuary in Keenesburg, Colo.

13 feet above the entrance, affording them a bird's-eye view of visitors. Finally, she has a great sense of humor. A sign on the two-story fox house reads "Rooms for Rent — Rodents Inquire Inside."

Set on 35 wooded acres, the CWWC is home to 17 wolves, four foxes and two coyotes. Each enclosure, ranging in size from one-half to 1 acre, houses one or two animals. Wolves that are comfortable enough with their handlers to walk on a leash are rewarded with visits to the "Day Spa." They enjoy playing in the waterfall and the mental stimulation of new sights and scents of other wolves.

We took a Feeding Tour (adults \$20, reservations required), during which our guide told us about the history of each animal, including Sabin, a wolf-dog hybrid rescued from a college dorm. Sabin's diet consisted of pizza, nachos and beer. He was locked in the bathroom and drank water from the toilet while his keepers were in class. Most residents have more traditional roots, hailing from zoos and other commer-

cial and educational organizations.

A certification from the Association of Zoos and Aquariums enables CWWC to house endangered species. They acquired two Mexican grey wolves and four swift foxes from zoos in Colorado and Kansas.

At the tour's end, our guide encouraged the humans in his group to communicate with the canids. We threw our heads back and howled until wolves far and near joined in the chorus. My goosebumps outlasted their magnificent song.

CHIMP HAVEN, KEITHVILLE, LA. (LARGE PARKING LOT)

Physically and genetically, chimpanzees are the primates most closely related to humans. That's been to their disadvantage, as humans have infected them with diseases and tested drugs on them in the name of science. In 1995, a group of primatologists and business professionals joined forces to establish Chimp Haven. After President Bill Clinton signed the CHIMP Act into law in 2000, Chimp

Haven became the first National Chimpanzee Sanctuary. It provides lifetime care for chimpanzees that are retired from medical research, the entertainment industry or are no longer wanted as pets, and is the nation's only facility able to provide care for chimps with infectious diseases.

Situated on 200 acres of pristine forest in northwest Louisiana, the sanctuary allows chimps to live in large social groups in spacious, outdoor habitats. The 120-plus residents at Chimp Haven are living the good life. They went from sitting in concrete cages to climbing trees, swinging from branches and foraging for leaves.

In their retirement, these chimps do things just like chimps in the wild. Sometimes it's up to wild-born chimps to teach the captive born how to act naturally. Chimps make tools from sticks to retrieve treats from an artificial termite mound, much like their relatives do in their native Equatorial Africa.

While reputable sanctuaries like Chimp Haven don't breed their animals, that doesn't mean there haven't been a few unplanned pregnancies. Even though all the males are sterilized, three babies have been born over a five-year period. Much to the surprise of veterinarians, the tube that transports sperm had regrown in 12 of the 13 males. A new technique for vasectomies should prevent the tubes from mending back together.

Visitors are welcome on Chimpanzee Discovery Days, which are free and take place seven times a year — check the website for a schedule. Chimp Haven is located 28 miles southwest of Shreveport.



Best Friends Animal Sanctuary has two RV sites with full hookups.

5 MORE SANCTUARY STOPS			
SANCTUARY	WHAT TO SEE	COST	CONTACT
American Bear Association Orr, Minn.	More than 100 bears on 360 acres. Open only in summer. Limited RV parking available; call Nancy Glass to arrange transportation from parking lot.	\$8	218-757-0172, www.americanbear.org
Riddle's Elephant and Wildlife Sanctuary Greenbrier, Ark.	Six Asian and African elephants on 330 acres. Open first Saturday of the month, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., for a self-guided walking tour. RV parking available.	\$5	501-589-3291, www.elephantsanctuary.org
Kindness Ranch Hartville, Wyo.	Home to 60-plus animals previously used in laboratory research. Dogs and cats live in a home-like environment; horses and sheep in pasture. RV parking available.	Free tours	307-735-4177, www.kindnessranch.org
World Bird Sanctuary Valley Park, Mo.	300 bald eagles, owls, hawks, falcons, vultures, parrots and reptiles on 305 acres. Self-guided walking tours. Limited RV parking.	Free tours	636-225-4390, www.worldbirdsanctuary.org
Black Hills Wild Horse Sanctuary Hot Springs, S.D.	600 horses on 11,000 acres. On private tours, visitors can see hundreds of free-roaming horses, 100-plus petroglyph panels and Native American ceremonial sites. RV parking available.	Group tour \$50/person; Private \$150/person	800-252-6652, www.wildmustangs.com

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WILD ANIMAL SANCTUARY, KEENESBURG, COLO. (RV PARKING AVAILABLE)

Executive Director Pat Craig was 19 years old when he rescued Freckles, a jaguar and the “first lady” of the sanctuary. From that humble beginning in 1980, The Wild Animal Sanctuary has grown to be the largest and oldest carnivore sanctuary in the country. Located 30 miles northeast of Denver, the refuge covers 720 acres of open plains, housing more than 300 animals. These animals, which were rescued from illegal or abusive situations in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Bolivia, will receive lifelong care.

Our self-guided tour (adults \$15) began on an elevated walkway that stretches more than 4,800 feet in length. Visitors can use their cellphones to hear an audio tour with Craig telling stories about the animals they are seeing. As we walked the “Mile into the Wild,” we saw tigers, lions, black and grizzly bears, and wolves in large acreage natural habitats.

Because they are naturally solitary animals, when tigers first come to the sanctuary they are placed in the tiger roundhouse as part of their rehabilitation. Many

of them have never seen another tiger. In the roundhouse they get socialized to other tigers by being placed in individual pens in close proximity to their neighbors. The next step is for pairs of tigers to visit the tiger pool and play area. New tigers are introduced until a cohesive “family unit” is ready to move to their own 20-acre habitat.

At the end of the walkway, we came to the Bolivian lion habitat. When a law banning animals in circuses passed in Bolivia, 25 lions from traveling circuses found themselves free — and homeless. Animal activist and game show host Bob Barker stepped up with a large donation to provide transportation and housing to the lions at the Wild Animal Sanctuary.

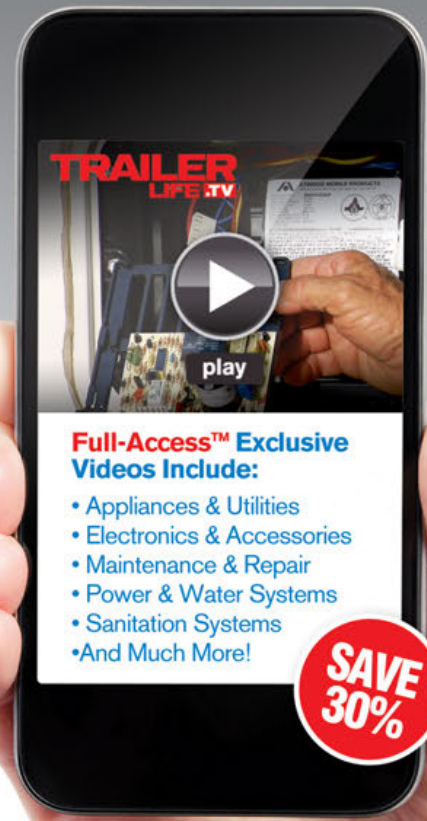
THE TURTLE HOSPITAL, MARATHON, FLA. (LIMITED RV PARKING)

The Turtle Hospital, founded in 1986, rescues sick or injured sea turtles, rehabilitates them, and releases them back into the wild whenever possible. Sea turtles sometimes get tangled in fishing line, ropes or nets, are struck by boat propellers, or develop intestinal impaction from ingesting plastic bags that look to

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www.wolfeducation.org

THE TURTLE HOSPITAL
305-743-2552,
www.turtlehospital.org

WILD ANIMAL SANCTUARY
303-536-0118,
www.wildanimalsanctuary.org

them like jellyfish. Sick or injured turtles float on the surface, unable to dive for food. As many as 70 sea turtles are rescued in a typical year; to date, more than 1,000 have been released back into the ocean.

We took a 90-minute guided educational tour (adults \$15, reservations suggested) of the hospital and sea turtle rehabilitation area. At the end, we got to feed the permanent resident sea turtles.

That's when we met Bubble Butt, the longest-term permanent resident, who was injured by a boat propeller in 1989. Her deformed shell left her unable to dive for food. She bobbed at the surface, hence the name Bubble Butt. A dive weight attached to her shell allows her to swim normally. Since the weight occasionally gets detached and must be reattached, Bubble Butt cannot be released.

When rehabilitated turtles are ready for release, it's time to party. People are invited to wave goodbye to the lucky turtle on a nearby beach.

BEST FRIENDS ANIMAL SANCTUARY, KANAB, UTAH (AMPLE RV PARKING)

It's not just wild animals that may need sanctuary. For abandoned, abused and neglected pets, Best Friends Animal Sanctuary must feel like heaven on Earth. The sanctuary sits within beautiful Angel Canyon, between Bryce Canyon and Zion national parks. Located on 3,700 acres and surrounded by another 33,000 acres leased from the Bureau of Land Management, Best Friends is home to more than 1,700 dogs, cats, horses, birds and other animals.

Some 30,000 people visit each year, and 7,000 of them volunteer. If we'd known how easy it is to volunteer, we would have made it 7,002. You can take an orientation class in the morning and volunteer that afternoon.

As it was, we took a free tour, which starts with a 30-minute video. Women, if you wear mascara, make sure it's waterproof. The sanctuary's 25-year history of reaching out to animals in need is told with heart-wrenching stories and images. What started with a group of friends' mutual desire to save animals and care for them on a small ranch in Arizona has grown into the country's largest no-kill sanctuary. It has also spawned a huge grassroots movement. The No More Homeless Pets Network has partners across

the country and more than 800 sanctuary animals are available for adoption.

The love for animals is evident everywhere, from the specialized octagon-shaped homes at Dogtown, to the picturesque pastures for horses and the residents' final resting places at Angels Rest. The cemetery is filled with loving tributes to the animals buried there. Visitors are comforted by the soothing sound of wind chimes, which have been placed as memorials. Each month a blessing ceremony is held for all sanctuary animals that died during that time.

The sanctuary has two entrances, with the south option being ideal for RVers. You don't want to bring your coach on the north entrance's steep and winding dirt road.

Two RV sites with full hookups — and an amazing view — are available. Be sure to book your spot in advance. RVers Linda and Jim Polk stayed in the RV park while grieving the loss of their beloved golden retriever. They thought volunteering would be good therapy for them. Then, when a border collie-Queensland heeler mix looked Jim in the eyes and wagged his tail, the dog won his heart and found a new home. The Polks adopted the dog and named him Boonedocker. ♦



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



RUSTIC RAMBLING ON MAINE'S LIGHTHOUSE COAST

EXPLORE THIS STATE'S
SEASIDE VILLAGES
WHILE SALUTING
ITS HISTORIC BEACONS

by CHRISTINE GOODIER



Top: Pemaquid Point Light Station is worth a drive off the beaten track and includes an on-site museum and art gallery. Above: Look for shady sites like this one at Shore Hills Campground in Boothbay, Maine, where modern amenities complement a rustic atmosphere. Left: Beautiful Portland Head Light in Cape Elizabeth, Maine, was commissioned by President George Washington in 1790 and is the state's oldest lighthouse.

Guardians or guides, sentinels or saviors — however we describe them, lighthouses are beloved coastal beacons. Like many motorhome travelers, my husband, Bob, and I will go out of our way to see them. Some Maine lighthouses can only be viewed from the water, but during our ramble up U.S. Route 1 in our Class B Sprinter van, we found historic beauties to admire up close.

SOUTH COAST

Gray mist sets a maritime mood for our first lighthouse sighting after we cross the New Hampshire border, leave Interstate 95 behind and head for the coast. From its large, free parking lot, Sohier Park offers a great view of the brick and cast-iron Cape Neddick Light Station. Built in 1879, this lighthouse is known locally as “the Nubble,” the name of the rocky island near the York River entrance where it perches.

Back on the road and headed north, we stretch our legs with a stroll through Kennebunkport and press on through Old Orchard, a beach town with an amusement park, pizza parlors and other kid-friendly diversions.

Our plan, though, calls for a few days’ stay at the adult-only (age 21 and older) Wild Duck Campground in Scarborough. Just eight miles south of Portland, this RV park is surrounded by a major wildlife habitat and entirely removed from big city bustle. We settle into a site on a peninsula overlooking Scarborough Marsh; at 3,000 acres, it’s the largest contiguous marsh system in Maine.

The following afternoon, we drive to Fort Williams Park (free admission and parking) at Cape Elizabeth in search of Portland Head Light, the oldest lighthouse in Maine. Commissioned by President George Washington in 1790, it seems instantly familiar to me, perhaps from wall art at Red Lobster restaurants. Like other visitors, we snap photos of the white stone tower set on a rocky point with red-roofed outbuildings trimmed in green. One is the handsome, two-story keeper’s quarters built in 1891 that is now a seasonal museum (adult admission \$2) displaying Fresnel lenses.

The next day we visit with old friends in Scarborough who are happy to play tour guide for the Portland area. On foot, we explore the city’s Old Port, where brick warehouses now contain galleries, restaurants and boutiques. These days, workboats share their lobster docks with pleasure craft and condos. We go to a favorite local hangout at Cape Elizabeth, the Lobster Shack at Two Lights, and linger over dessert in the warm sunshine at an oceanfront picnic table before saying goodbye.

After a shopping stop in Freeport the next morning we continue north on Route 1 to explore some of New England’s most scenic towns.

MID COAST

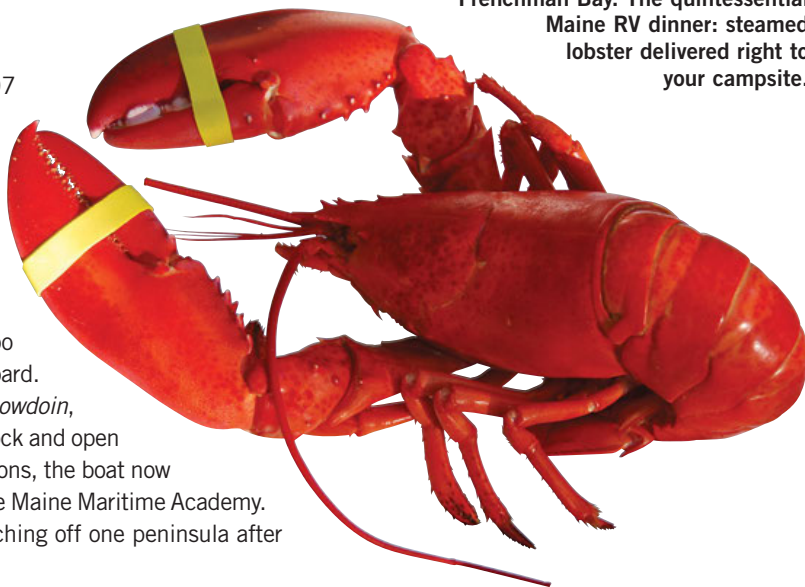
Bath has been a shipbuilding town since 1607 and is home to Bath Iron Works, which still builds vessels for the U.S. Navy. We pause for a half-day at the Maine Maritime Museum, site of our country’s only remaining wooden shipyard, and walk through exhibit buildings alongside the Kennebec River.

At an exhibit on lobstering, we learn some superstitious Maine fishermen consider it taboo to paint a boat blue or say the word “pig” onboard. Who knew? We step aboard the 1920 schooner *Bowdoin*, which happens to be tied up at the museum’s dock and open for tours. Designed and used for Arctic explorations, the boat now serves as an ambassador and training ship for the Maine Maritime Academy.

Intrigued by the state’s rocky fingers branching off one peninsula after



Top to bottom: The Olson House in Cushing, Maine, was the subject of many of Andrew Wyeth’s paintings, including “Christina’s World.” Passengers hoist sails as the schooner *Margaret Todd* cruises Frenchman Bay. The quintessential Maine RV dinner: steamed lobster delivered right to your campsite.



Right: The pink granite summit of Acadia's Cadillac Mountain is the highest point of the U.S. Atlantic Coast.

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BEFORE YOU GO

Many Maine campgrounds are seasonal, with sites starting at around \$40 to \$50 per night. A base camp strategy works well since backroads are best navigated in a dinghy or small motorhome. Reserve ahead for late June to early September.



another with scenic roads and villages to explore, we've made a plan to stay for a few days in the town of Boothbay. Rustic comfort waits at Shore Hills Campground, where shady sites and water views are complemented by modern amenities. Happy to avoid parking hassles, we leave our rig nestled in its site, board the green campground bus and take a short ride to the harbor.

Like many Maine villages, Boothbay Harbor is tailor-made for leisurely strolls and loaded with delightful waterfront scenery. We cross the footbridge built in 1901 to link the west and east sides of the inner harbor, and walk past lobster docks to Fishermen's Memorial Park. I pause to read a plaque with a lengthy list of those who have lost their lives at sea since 1798.

Back at the campground, Bob places a phone order and builds a campfire while I melt butter and make a salad. At 7 p.m. on the dot, a young woman pulls up to our site to deliver two freshly steamed lobsters. As we spread newspapers on our picnic table and begin hammering, cracking and dipping, we agree this quintessential Maine dining experience is one to repeat.

Pemaquid Point Light in Bristol is next on our list, well worth the half-hour drive south of Route 1 and a \$2 entry fee that includes a Fisherman's Museum and an art gallery. We pull into a gravel parking lot large enough to handle motorhomes and admire the white lighthouse and keeper's cottage set atop a massive granite slab tilting down to the sea. We follow a path past pines and wildflowers and peer into the two small red brick outbuildings, a fog bell house and 1896 oil house.

Driving narrow byways back up the peninsula, we park to explore the docks at Round Pond and spot several enticing lobster pounds serving the freshest possible catch. But it's only mid-morning, so we continue on to the next peninsula, past gray and white clapboard saltbox cottages adorned with flags and geraniums.

Long ago, I owned a print of an evocative painting, "Christina's World," by renowned Maine artist Andrew Wyeth, so I jump at today's chance to see the Olson House it portrayed. Now a National Historic Landmark and part of the Farnsworth Art Museum in Rockland, the wooden farmhouse in Cushing appears much as it did when Wyeth painted the Olson siblings and their home from 1939 to 1968.

Our campsite for the night waits just up the road in Camden, so there's plenty of time to detour to another, lesser-known lighthouse near Rockland. It's our good luck to arrive at Owl's Head Light on a weekend when the tower is open and, for a suggested \$1 donation, visitors are allowed to climb to the top for a panoramic view of West Penobscot Bay below. Standing beside it, we watch the original glass Fresnel lens still flashing just as it has since 1856.

Camden is the picturesque New England village that 20th Century Fox chose as its movie location for "Peyton Place" in 1957. Motorhome travelers can stay just two miles away at Camden Hills State Park's popular campground. After a cozy, rainy night there, we drive to the 800-foot summit of Mount Battie and climb its stone lookout tower for a spectacular view of Camden Harbor and Penobscot Bay.

Back down below, we admire elegant windjammers at Camden's docks, browse Main Street's shops and pick up blueberry muffins to fuel the next phase of our road trip.

ACADIA NATIONAL PARK & DOWNEAST

Back in the mid-1800s, city-weary tourists began coming to Mount Desert Island for its uplifting salt air, seashores and forests, and the locals called them "the rusticators." Through donations of land by private citizens, the first national park east of the Mississippi River was created here in 1916 to preserve that restorative atmosphere.

Acadia has become a popular RV destination with good reason. There's plenty to do for all age groups and a dozen campgrounds are available in or near the park. Free Island Explorer shuttle buses that service most campgrounds allow you to leave the driving to someone else. We decide to divide our five-night stay between the national park's Blackwoods Campground and the Bar Harbor Campground close to Acadia's entrance.

To see the Maine coast from the water, we ride the free bus into bustling Bar

Harbor's Village Green and board the four-masted schooner *Margaret Todd* for a two-hour windjammer cruise through Frenchman Bay. Our captain invites passengers to help hoist the heavy red sails and Park Ranger Sonya Berger shares information about the park's history and wildlife.

Acadia has retained genteel remnants of bygone days, including 45 miles of carriage roads (closed to automobiles) with hand-carved stone bridges, all commissioned by philanthropist John D. Rockefeller Jr. After indulging in a posh outdoor lunch of lobster quiche with traditional popovers and strawberry jam at the Jordan Pond House restaurant the next day, we hop in a carriage for a mellow ride on those roads led by Clydesdale siblings Homer and Bea.

On the quiet west side of the island, there's a lighthouse to see. Bass Harbor Head Light stands guard by the sea and serves as the private residence for the commander of the local Coast Guard unit.

Near sunset on our last day in Acadia, we drive our motorhome up a narrow, winding road to the top of Cadillac Mountain, the highest point along the U.S. Atlantic

Coast at 1,530 feet. While walking a trail around the pink granite mountaintop, we spot the Porcupine Islands far below that we had seen on our schooner cruise.

Beyond Acadia on the mainland is the Schoodic section of the park and the region Mainer's call "Downeast," famous for evergreen wreaths and wild berries. We stop at Wild Blueberry Land and face a tough buying decision between owner Marie Emerson's blueberry scones, muffins or pies. They're all good.

We salute one final lighthouse near Lubec and the Canadian border, billed on a granite marker as the "Easternmost point in the U.S.A." West Quoddy Head Light's perky red-and-white barber pole stripes provide a cheerful finale to our quest as we turn the motorhome toward Canada. But there's a good reason to return: we've visited just six of the 60 beautiful beacons that grace Maine's lighthouse coast. ♦



Christine Goodier is a freelance writer and editor who lives on the North Carolina coast and travels with her husband, photographer Bob Goodier, in a Class B Sprinter motorhome.

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HOW SWEET IT IS:

SWEETWATER COUNTY, WYOMING



PIONEER HISTORY
MINGLES WITH
IMPRESSIVE HIGH
COUNTRY VISTAS

by BOBBIE HASSELBRING

Numerous turnouts accommodate RVers seeking breathtaking views from high above the Flaming Gorge Reservoir. Inset: Rocky Mountain bighorn ewes and lambs graze near Red Canyon Visitor Center.

The stallion turns and looks straight at us, ears perked, nostrils flaring, smelling our presence. One of about 250 mustangs in Wyoming's White Mountain Wild Horse Herd, he stands about 100 yards off the road and, as I sit in my motorhome peering through my spotting scope, my heart races. He is all muscle and sinew and his dark reddish-brown coat, accented by a long, black mane and tail, shines in the sunlight.

We'd wanted to spend some time in Wyoming, but rather than head to the usual hot spots like Yellowstone, Devil's Tower and the Grand Tetons, we craved less traveled roads. We opted for Sweetwater County, in the southwestern part of the Cowboy State that's home to the firecracker-red Flaming

Gorge, high desert vistas where *Tyrannosaurus rex* once hunted, some of the richest pioneer history in the country, and, of course, those magnificent wild horses.

Traveling from Oregon to Wyoming is a long trek and we leave later than we'd planned. We streak through the night and arrive well past midnight at Mountain View RV Park in Baker City, Ore. This Western-themed park has been owned and operated by four generations of the same family since 1959 and it shows. It's an oasis in the desert with shady trees and green grass, 73 sites (45 pull-throughs) with full hookups, laundry, showers, camp store, spa, outdoor pool and super-friendly management.

Refreshed, we spend the next day motoring





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Left: Flaming Gorge is a boaters' paradise for fishing, water skiing or motoring the open waters. Above: Winds that rise from the valleys near the summit prompt some visitors to bundle up as everyone gazes in awe. Below: The restored interior of a miner's home in South Pass City State Historic Site gives visitors a glimpse into this harsh life.

across Idaho through desert landscapes the color of golden wheat, punctuated by the green of sagebrush, and fields filled with corn and alfalfa. Just outside of Boise, the land changes into towering, flattop plateaus, many of them crowned with basalt columns that resemble fortress walls.

Dark clouds gather and, as the sun sets just outside of Twin Falls, the black sky fills with the crackle of lightening; flashing ribbons of electricity hit the ground and brilliant sheets of lightening illuminate the sky. The wind picks up and the rain begins, softly at first and then in a torrent. At one point, the deluge is so heavy there are whitecaps on the water flowing down the highway and I can barely see so I hit the emergency flashers and drop the motorhome's speed to 30 MPH.

The storm follows us right into Green River, Wyo., where we pull the motorhome into the Tex's Travel Camp, a bare-bones RV park right on the highway and both of us fall into exhausted dreamless slumber.

ON TO FLAMING GORGE

We wake to brilliant blue skies and golden rocks in fantastical shapes that surround the little town that's perched on the banks of its namesake river. The town boasts a historic train depot and a collection of surprisingly sophisticated public artworks along the city's streets. It's also the gateway to the Flaming Gorge National Recreational Area and, as we head out of town on Highway 530 south, we are treated to sweeping views of mountainous sage-

brush country, billowy clouds, and blue skies that seem to stretch forever. We're also immediately greeted by a herd of seven pronghorn antelope grazing along the road. Then there's a lone buck and another small herd of females and babies. Throughout our Sweetwater journey, these graceful ungulates become our constant companions in the desert landscape.

The Flaming Gorge Loop is a scenic byway that's approximately 160 miles long, encircling the 91-mile-long Lake Flaming Gorge and traversing the high desert plains of Wyoming and, to the south, the higher elevations of Utah's Uinta Mountains. Along the way, visitors pass through lush forests and vast canyons carved by the Green River and travel back through geologic time on the way to the Uintah Basin of Utah.

We get our first glimpse of the reservoir and turn at Buckboard Marina, which offers water-view RV sites with picnic tables and fire rings, and a boat ramp. The wind shelters speak to the breezes blowing off the water and antelope wander through unoccupied campsites. We make a note that this would make a nice place to spend a day or two.

We pass through the green Lucerne Valley, obviously irrigated with water from the reservoir, and stop at the historic Linwood Overlook, the site of a former town flooded by the dam that created the lake.

We pass into Utah and, at the town of Manila, turn southeast on Highway 44 toward Flaming Gorge Dam and its visitors





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HOW SWEET IT IS

center. We are in the Ashley National Forest and every few feet a sign identifies the geologic formation and epoch we're passing through — Jurassic, Entrada sandstone, alabaster from ancient tidal flats. It's fascinating and makes us want to know more.

As we push deeper into Flaming Gorge, dark red cliffs that give the area its name rise up around us and the motorhome strains against the steep climb and high elevation (6,000-plus feet). As we gain elevation, juniper and pine replace sagebrush, followed by fir and white-trunked aspen. We stop at Sheep Creek Overlook to give the coach a break and take some panoramic photos of the reservoir and red canyon walls.

At Carter Creek, we pass a sign stating this is the site of Utah's oldest fossils. We've traveled back in time more than 1 billion years.

We turn onto the road to Red Canyon Visitor Center and pass several lakes, including West Green Lake, and a number of primitive campgrounds with stellar canyon views. Along the roadside, a herd of Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep grazes, unconcerned about our passing. These animals were reintroduced to the area in 1938 and they're thriving.

The visitor center offers interpretive displays about the canyon and its animals along with drop-dead-gorgeous views of the water and cliffs below. All around the center are walkways and viewing spots perfect for photos. Below, speedboats, looking like toys, carve V's in the sparkling water. Flaming Gorge is a dizzying 1,700 feet deep and 4,000 feet wide and, in many places, you can walk right to the canyon's edge without fences to mar the view. We snap photos, hoping to forever capture the sense of grandeur we feel.

At Greendale Junction, we head north on U.S. Route 191 and meander down the canyon to Flaming Gorge Dam. Every 20 minutes, rangers give free, hour-long tours of the dam and allow visitors inside the power plant and onto spillway viewing platforms. It's here we also learn that the lake is famous for great fishing — fish as large as 50 pounds have been landed. Next time, we're bringing our poles.

The light is fading so we head for Mustang Ridge Campground, a lovely forested camp on a finger of the lake that offers electric hookups, showers and



Our first sight of a wild mustang stallion on the Pilot Butte Wild Horse Scenic Loop felt thrilling.

restrooms. Our paved site is large, private and surprisingly level, and we walk the dogs along the campground's quiet roads.

The following day, we continue north on 191, and pause at Antelope Flat Overlook for one last look at the gorge. The viewpoint offers the sweep of the desert basin, sculpted by wind and weather, down into the blue reservoir and to the red soaring cliffs below.

PIONEER HISTORY AND WILD HORSES

We pass into Wyoming and back to sagebrush plains and flat-topped plateaus crowned with endless blue skies. This is spectacularly big country and it can be harsh and dangerous. The distances are great and RVers should make sure they carry plenty of fuel, water and food — just in case.

We pull off at the Art Gallery of Time overlook. These eroded bluffs and plateaus overlooking Little Firehole Canyon are relatively young — about 45 million years old. In contrast, the rocks down at Flaming Gorge Dam that form the canyon's nearly vertical walls are 1.1 billion years old.

It's only 70 miles from Flaming Gorge Dam to Rock Springs, but the mileage is deceptive because there are so many turnouts with great views and wildlife such as hawks and antelope that it takes us a few hours to make the journey. Once in Rock Springs, we follow the signs to the town's historic district, a couple of blocks of turn-of-the-century buildings. It's Sunday, so the museum, located in an impressive two-story stone building that used to house the city hall and fire station, is closed. But we meander down to the "Home of Rock Springs Coal Welcome" arch and a little greenway beside a historic rail depot that features an old caboose and a poignant



As far as advanced adaptability goes, we did have one worthy opponent.

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memorial statue commemorating miners who lost their lives mining coal.

We head north out of Rock Springs toward the Farson crossroads of highways 191 and 28. Several important pioneer trails, including the Oregon Trail, the Mormon Pioneer, the Pony Express, and California National Historic Trail, parallel Highway 28 and there are historic markers and even original wagon ruts along the way. We pull out at False Parting of the Ways. As many as 500,000 people passed this way, braving untold hardships in their quest for new lives in the West. The two-lane dirt track of the Oregon Trail is clearly visible.

We pass the Continental Divide (elevation 7,550 feet) and turn off at the old mining town of South Pass City, a state historic site that gives visitors a taste of life here in the 1860s. The town site boasts about two dozen original buildings, including old cabins, a general store, schoolhouse, livery stable, and several saloons filled with antiques and everyday items people who lived here would have used. In the store, shelves are filled with coffee, washing powder and canned fruits. Card tables in one of the saloons are set with glasses of beer and whiskey, a peeled hardboiled egg, and half-smoked cigars. It's as if the miners and others who lived here have just stepped away. This summer, tours of the Carissa Mine, where residents worked, will resume.

It's our last day in Sweetwater County and we're up early to see the area's famous wild horses. We drive south to Green River and onto Wild Horse Road, a 14-mile dirt and gravel track that runs between Green River and Rock Springs. Some people say it's rare to spot the mustangs, but, just 10 minutes into our drive, we see the first one, a dark stallion with a light-colored mane. Then it's two more and four more, a black, two reds and a gray. Before long, it's 10 horses, then a dozen. We see 19 of these beauties, including my stunning red stallion with the thick mane and tail that stands close to the road and looks squarely at me. They are fat, healthy and wild equines that love Sweetwater County — almost as much as we do. ♦



Bobbie Hasselbring is an award-winning travel and food writer and editor of www.realfoodtraveler.com, which covers authentic food and travel. Bobbie owns a 2003 Jayco Greyhawk SS Class C.

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BERKSHIRE 390 BH

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Setting new standards in residential luxury, Forest River debuted its new high-end diesel bunkhouse model, the Berkshire 390 BH.

The Elkhart, Ind.-based manufacturer rolled out four new quad-slide floorplans this year that take aim at the median sector of the luxury motorhome market. One, the 360 QL, is offered at 37 feet 9 inches in length, while a remaining trio that includes the 390 BH is 39 feet 9 inches.

Our walk-through subject possessed a lavishly outfitted bunkhouse layout with an eye-catching full-body paint job, along with an expansive front lounge with a 7-foot ceiling, sleeper sofa, convertible dinette and galley area framed by opposing dual slideouts.

A private streetside bathroom with shower and a curbside bunk bed alcove are located amidships, while a bedroom suite with 60-by-80-inch queen bed and spacious wardrobe closet with mirrored doors take up the rear of the coach.

As in the forward lounge, the bedroom is likewise generously graced with curbside and streetside slides.





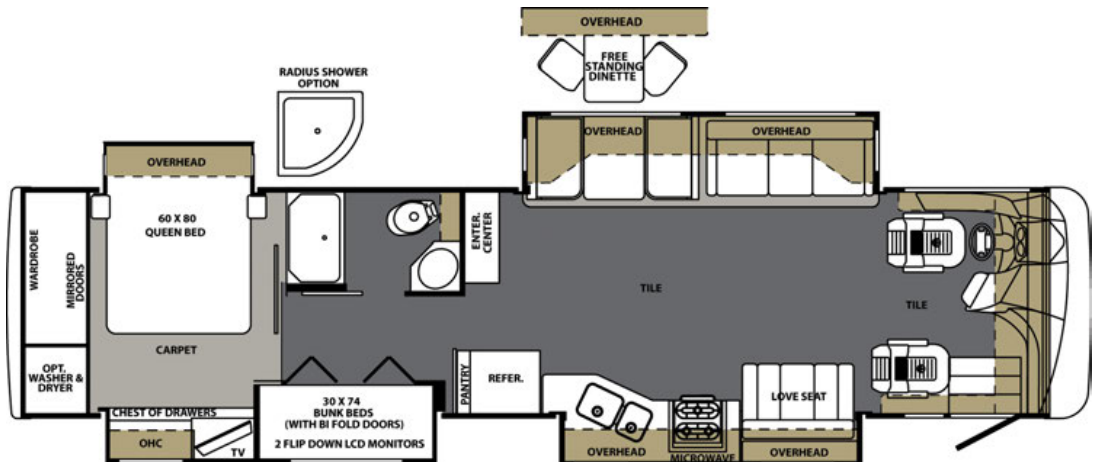
All Berkshire models are built on a Freightliner XC raised rail chassis. Powertrains include a standard Cummins ISB 6.7-liter 340-HP turbodiesel engine and Allison 2500MH six-speed automatic transmission as on the review coach, or an optional Cummins ISB-XT 6.7-liter variant rated at 360 HP, and backed by an Allison 3000MH six-speed transmission. Other noteworthy standards on all chassis include a 100-gallon fuel tank, air brakes with ABS, an engine exhaust brake and a full Neway air suspension.

Luxury comes at a cost, and the suggested base retail price on this model is listed at \$258,214. Though that number may seem relatively high, the coach includes many standard accessories and décor treatments often considered options on less expensive motorhomes. With only an exterior entertainment center (\$2,021) and basement storage slideout tray (\$1,087) listed as options, the asking price for our sumptuous and

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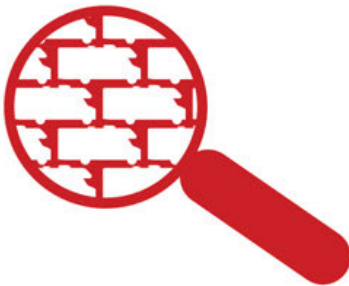
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Climbing aboard the Berkshire via its bus-style forward entry, you are treated to an attention-grabbing, ergonomically designed cockpit with wraparound dash that places controls and nine analog gauges at the driver's fingertips. Views out the one-piece panoramic windshield are expansive, with separate sun and blackout shades here, as well as throughout the rest of the motorhome.

Large exterior rearview mirrors, plus a dash-mounted monitor screen, provide adequate views behind and to the side of the coach. The only quibble we found here is that vision through the oddly placed exterior mirrors is sometimes obscured during turning maneuvers.

Flexsteel Ultraleather captain's chairs hold drivers and their passengers in soft comfort, while the copilot enjoys the added benefits of a power step well and footrest. When set up in a campsite, both captain's chairs can be swiveled rearward to supplement existing seating arrangements.

Sophisticated décor in the Berkshire 390 BH, which sleeps up to eight people, is no less than splendid. Three separate fabric treatments are available, along with two tones of hardwood cabinetry — either golden or vintage cherry. In the case of our walk-through model, it featured a warm and welcoming Carmel décor ensemble along with highly polished vintage cherry cabinetry, and stunning white porcelain tile flooring with decorative diamond



inserts forward of the carpeted bedroom.

Hanging out in the motorhome's front lounge promises to be a pleasant experience, enhanced by a 40-inch Toshiba LCD TV on the forward facing dinette wall. Plenty of seating is also available on the streetside, 6-foot convertible sofa or 32-inch curbside love seat.

The 390 BH boasts a well-equipped, residential style galley, which makes meal preparation and service an efficient and enjoyable experience. Above a recessed curbside three-burner gas range is a multifunction convection oven/microwave, and counter surfaces throughout the motorhome are decked in high-gloss, solid surface materials. Plenty of



cabinet storage is also afforded throughout this zone, and is supplemented by drawers that glide open and shut on ball bearing rollers.

Curbside bunk beds are enclosed by hardwood, bi-fold doors that provide excellent privacy. Each bunk also has a fold-down LCD monitor with built-in DVD player and wireless headphones to keep younger campers engaged for hours with games or movies. The bottom bunk lifts to reveal a large storage area underneath.

A full bathroom with porcelain toilet is conveniently situated between the galley and bedroom. The shower, a 30-by-30-inch corner facility, has a radiused, textured glass door and more than 6 feet of headroom. A modest washstand with medicine cabinet above is also included in this area.

Besides its walk-around queen bed, the rear bedroom is fitted with abundant drawer, cabinet and closet storage plus a standard 24-inch LCD TV. A lighted rear wardrobe with mirrored doors is also capable of hosting a stackable washer-dryer option.

Built for a group or just a lucky couple, Forest River's Berkshire 390 BH is generously appointed with almost every accessory imaginable. Luxurious camping and efficient, long-range travel are all possibilities in this plush, beautifully crafted motorhome. ♦



Chuck Campbell served 31 years as a sworn member of a state law enforcement agency before retiring. He is a frequent contributor to *MotorHome* and enjoys traveling in his Class C coach.

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THE COLD FACTS

RV REFRIGERATOR SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE ENSURES LONG-TERM RELIABILITY AND PROPER TEMPERATURE FOR FOOD STORAGE

by BILL GEHR

If you own an RV, chances are it's equipped with a gas/electric refrigerator. With the summer travel season on the horizon, now is the time to give your refrigerator a little TLC. Absorption refrigerators produce cold from heat, so it's imperative that all systems work together and function properly in order to maintain a desired temperature to prevent food from spoiling prematurely.

RV refrigerators have different maintenance requirements than home refrigerators. House models simply sit, whereas motorhome refrigerators must endure a strenuous existence of regular jostling, periods without consistent cooling and out-of-level situations. In addition, environmental factors such as high ambient temperatures combined with dust, dirt and rust truly challenge the operation of any absorption-type refrigerator throughout its service life. These combined stress points and other mechanical considerations make it important to service RV refrigerators annually.

OUTSIDE INSPECTIONS

Check all ventilation areas, including the roof vent, for bird nests, mud daubers, leaves and other debris. If your refrigerator is installed in a slide, inspect the upper side vent. Remove or open the outside/rear access panel to gain a clear visual to inspect the burner, electrodes and other components for spider webs, mud daubers and rust.

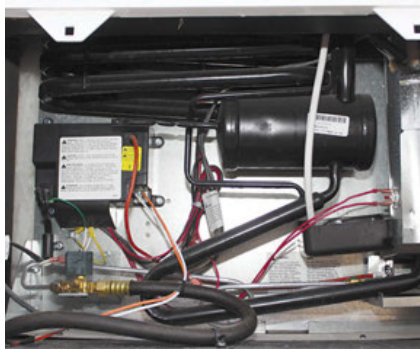
If your model has an icemaker, inspect the plastic water lines going in and out of the water valve. The water valve and lines



Front view of a typical, modern Norcold motorhome refrigerator.



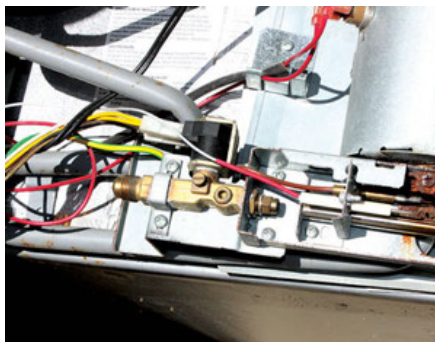
Rear view of a Dometic cooling unit, which wouldn't be seen after installation.



Rear view of a Norcold motorhome refrigerator.



Be sure the refrigerator's interior cooling fins are intact and evenly spaced for maximum cooling output.



With the cover removed, inspect the burner and electrode assembly for rust or debris that may adversely affect performance.



REFRIGERATOR MAINTENANCE

are located at the rear of the refrigerator and are visible from the rear access panel. The plastic lines deteriorate with age and can begin to leak. Manufacturers often install the furnaces below the refrigerator, where they are susceptible to serious damage should water leak into the furnace housing.

INTERIOR INSPECTIONS

There are a number of touch points that should be inspected inside the refrigerator. Since this should be an ongoing exercise, create a checklist to make sure a thorough inspection has been performed.

Start by looking at the refrigerator door gaskets to confirm they are not torn or out of shape. Be sure they are clean and are not sticking to each other. If they are, use a cloth saturated with mild soap and warm water to clean the gasket surface.

The metal interior cooling fins located at the upper rear of the refrigerator compartment should be intact and evenly spaced. If a fin is bent, it can usually be straightened out by hand. If one has become dislodged, it can be reattached by using a couple of metal screws.

The thermistor, clipped to one of the cooling fins, communicates with the circuit board when it reaches the set interior temperature. First on the list is to ensure the thermistor is securely in place. If it becomes detached, consult your owner's manual for proper repositioning.

Take a close look at the interior plastic liner of the refrigerator and the freezer compartments. There should be no visible cracks or warped areas that would contribute to a poor seal along the door gasket.

Preventative maintenance may well be the most important part of any RV refrigerator's health. Manufacturers sometimes require the completion of an annual maintenance inspection by a qualified technician. If these procedures are not followed and documented, the warranty will be void. Be sure to check the owner's manual for specifics.

Dirty burners are the root cause of most cooling failures. Every refrigerator requires a certain Btu to properly function. Gas pressure, rust and dirt can result in a reduced flame that, in turn, lowers the Btu and cooling efficiency. Clean the burner and the flue by using a vacuum cleaner and compressed air, being careful not



The water valve for the icemaker sits in a harsh environment and is often overlooked during inspection. Plastic lines on the inlet and outlet are susceptible to becoming brittle from heat and cold.



Above and below: This Norcold refrigerator's maintenance had been ignored for many years. Rust needed to be blown out of the burner assembly and flue.



to use excessive pressure. Once this has been completed, operate the refrigerator on LP-gas and look for a burner flame that has a strong blue color, without any trace of yellow. If there is yellow in the flame, this is an indication of improper combustion and you will need to clean the burner orifice using denatured alcohol and air pressure. Remove and fill the orifice with alcohol and blow it out with air pressure. Use extreme caution here; orifices are very

delicate. Do not drop them or use any type of sharp object to clear the opening.

If the burner flame still shows yellow after cleaning, an LP-gas pressure test will need to be performed at the refrigerator pressure tap. This test will tell you if the LP-gas regulator is working properly.

You should hear a slight crackle in most flames; large burners in double door models will have a much louder flame sound. Gas pressure is equally important. Since most owners don't have a monometer available to check their units, it's recommended that a qualified LP-gas technician perform a gas pressure and leak test annually, even if the refrigerator is working properly.

High altitude affects gas pressure and most manufacturers recommend running on electric only in elevations higher than 5,500 feet. If you are unable to run on electric, the pressure can be adjusted for altitude. When you drop down in elevation, make sure to readjust for operation in lower altitude.

The rear of the refrigerator is vented to the outside, thus attracting dust and dirt over time. Too much dirt buildup can adversely affect the cooling unit's efficiency. Take the time to blow air upward through the coils to dislodge any buildup. Always wear safety glasses and turn off the gas when servicing the burner assembly.

Servicing the refrigerator also requires proper voltage checks. DC voltage needs to be between 10.5 and 15.0 at the unit while in the ON position. AC voltage should be between 108 and 132.

RV refrigerators must be relatively level to operate efficiently. Level attitude should be within 3 degrees side-to-side, and 6 degrees front-to-back looking at the front of the refrigerator. Most refrigerators come with a simple bubble level that has parameter indicators. If the bubble is half in the center circle, the refrigerator should work fine. If you have to park temporarily where the refrigerator is off-level beyond the above parameters, turn it off until you start moving again.

Excess heat in high ambient temperatures can severely diminish cooling capacity. Motorhome manufacturers don't always install refrigerators to their required specifications, often times resulting in poor ventilation and build up of excess heat. If your refrigerator is installed in a slide,



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motorhome

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Beyond the unique one-piece shell, here are some of the other factors that make the downsized Platinum and Platinum II your best motorhome value:

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Visit the Coach House plant

If you really like RVing, then you should visit the Coach House factory, conveniently located just off I-75 near Venice, Fla. (see map). You are welcome to visit any time during regular business hours to see the latest models on display in our spacious showroom. Guided factory tours are also available; please call ahead. Coach House is the only RV manufacturer located in the state of Florida.



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Coach House offers you a better way to buy your motorhome: direct from the factory. Get one-on-one attention from courteous employees in a relaxed, pressure-free environment. See your Platinum being built in our plant. Receive a generous trade-in allowance for your current motorhome. Obtain on-the-spot financing (for qualified buyers). Learn how to operate your motorhome from the people who built it.



most likely your unit will have a cooling fan installed. This will be located at the back of the refrigerator on the coils below the condenser fins, helping to blow air up and out the upper side vent.

If your refrigerator is not in a slide, chances are a fan is not needed to keep exterior temperatures cool. If you spend a lot of time in extremely hot weather, installing a fan is generally a good way to improve cooling efficiency and avoid heat saturation, which will stop cooling. Dometic has a fan kit with a thermostat available for most models. Part numbers 310870574 and 3108705751 will fit most units. They can be adapted to fit a Norcold as well.

If a fan kit is not available, a 5-inch computer cooling fan can be adapted to fit either Dometic or Norcold refrigerators. Some of these cooling fans have an even higher output for better cooling. A good way to help cooling is to install an on/off switch in conjunction with the thermostat, allowing the fan to run before temperatures get high enough to affect efficiency.

GENERAL TIPS

Whenever possible, pre-cool the refrigerator for 8 to 10 hours before loading it with food so you're not trying to cool the food and the warm refrigerator at the same time.

Cool and freeze food at home before loading it into the refrigerator/freezer so it doesn't have to overcome room temperature.

Pack food loosely. Most RV refrigerators don't have fans to circulate the cold air, although portable aftermarket fans can help. If you don't have enough room, consider taking along an ice chest, which can be used for items such as cold drinks. This also reduces the number of times the refrigerator has to be opened to grab a drink.

Cover all liquids and food to help prevent condensation or frost buildup on the interior fins. Allow hot or warm liquids to cool prior to placing them in the refrigerator or freezer compartment.

Limit the number of times you open the doors whenever possible. Cold air escapes every time a door is opened. Plan on removing or restocking food as much as possible at one time. Also avoid covering the shelves with foil or large pans, as this will diminish the circulation of cold air.

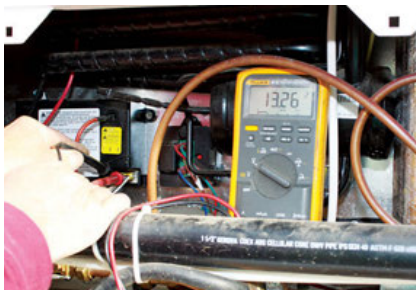
Keep an eye on the cooling fins. When they ice up, cooling efficiency will



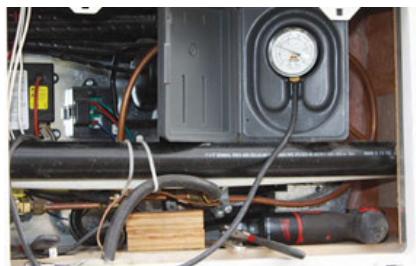
Excess rust will likely cause an early failure of this cooling unit.



After servicing the refrigerator, you should see a blue flame without any trace of yellow.



During service, use a reliable multimeter to make sure voltage remains within the manufacturer's parameters.



Accurate gas pressure must be measured with a manometer at the refrigerator's pressure tap during service.

be reduced. The temperature may be set too high or the door gaskets may not be sealing, thus allowing moisture to creep inside. Not sure whether your door gaskets seal properly? Close the doors on a dollar bill and pull the bill out slowly; you should feel a slight resistance.

Defrost the freezer from time to time to help boost freezer performance. Absorption-type refrigerators are auto defrost but they are not frost-free.

Check the interior temperature often

as conditions change. When the refrigerator is at its coolest point, set a glass of water with a thermometer in it on the top shelf inside the refrigerator for the most accurate reading; 35 degrees Fahrenheit is a good temperature. A wireless digital thermometer is an easy way to keep tabs on interior temperatures.

If you notice the smell of ammonia, turn off the refrigerator immediately, open its doors and all the windows and roof vents in the motorhome. Ammonia is very caustic and can ruin the metal shelves in the lower compartment. Eventually, the ammonia will diminish. If this happens while on a trip, once the smell is gone, empty the refrigerator and close the doors until you get home and make a service appointment. At this point the refrigerator will cease to function and the cooling unit will need to be replaced.

RECALLS

Manufacturing processes can sometimes derail and although not intentional, defects can be dangerous. Fortunately, recalls are for the life of the refrigerator. Although some RV service centers may inspect your refrigerator and repair a recall during a service appointment, it is the responsibility of the owner to be diligent about knowing whether the refrigerator in the coach falls under a specific recall and requires service.

Norcold has several models under recall. Go to www.norcold.com/recall, and check your model and serial number, or phone Norcold at 800-767-9101. When calling the manufacturer, be sure to have your model and serial number ready. Norcold also requires the serial number on the cooling unit that's located at the rear of the refrigerator on the lower, right side.

Dometic also has several models under recall. Go to www.dometic.com/recall or phone 888-446-5157.

Following these basic guidelines will help ensure RV refrigerator longevity. If you're not comfortable with performing refrigerator service on your own, take the motorhome to a qualified service professional. Even if you don't do the inspections yourself, being better informed is cool. ♦



Bill and Jenn Gehr, along with their two Boston bulldogs, are full-time RV adventurers who enjoy sharing their technical knowledge with fellow enthusiasts wherever they travel.

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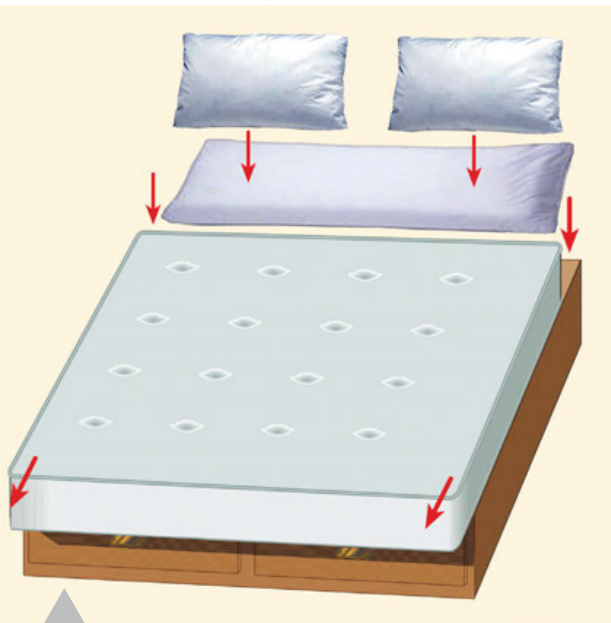
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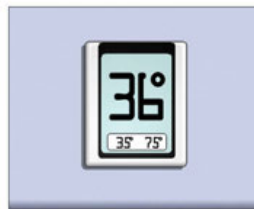
NAVISTAR



EASY BED EXTENDER

One complaint about the beds in RVs is the short queen mattress. They don't work if you're more than 5 feet 9 inches tall. I came up with an easy solution. After extending the slide, pull the mattress forward. Then put a \$10 body pillow at the head of the mattress and place your regular pillows on top of the body pillow. That way your feet won't hang off the end of the bed. In travel mode, place the body pillow on top of the bed, push the mattress forward and retract the slide.

DALE CAGENELLO | HARWINTON, CONN.



SIMPLE TEMP CHECK

I wanted to keep an eye on the temperature inside the refrigerator, but I didn't want to keep opening the door all the time to check it. I bought a wireless thermometer at Wal-Mart for about \$10. The sensor goes inside the refrigerator and the display unit goes on a wall nearby so I can see it at a glance.

**DAVID DORSEY
NEWARK, DEL.**

NIGHTTIME READING SHADE



Our motorhome's queen-size bed is equipped with two reading lamps overhead, with separate controls. Even with just one lamp turned on it makes the area too bright for one person to sleep while the other reads. To

eliminate this problem and keep peace in the household, my solution was to install a sunshade (the kind used for driver's-side window sun protection) in the center of the overhead cabinet between the two reading lamps. I bought the shade from an RV store and installed it with two wood screws. Now my wife can read in bed and my side is dark enough to sleep.

DICK SMITH | PALM DESERT, CALIF.



FLAT-SCREEN TV RETROFIT

In my older motorhome (a 1995 Monaco Windsor) the TV in the bedroom was the old tube type located in a recess in the wall. It was incompatible with the new digital over-the-air signals so I wanted to replace it with a digital flat-screen TV. Rather than try to shoehorn the new TV into the recess, I built a hanging door of cabinet-grade plywood. The flat-screen TV was mounted directly to the door using the holes normally meant for a wall mount. It was necessary to get long screws of the proper size in order to go through the plywood door. Holes were cut in the door to match the power cord and signal connections. This not only solved the TV problem, but also added a new cabinet for storage.

DUANE JOHNSON | HENDERSONVILLE, N.C. ♦

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Quick Tips, *MotorHome's* monthly column of handy, simple tips by fellow RVers, is looking for submissions. Please send your favorite do-it-yourself ideas to: *MotorHome* Quick Tips, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001, or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com. Be sure to include photos, illustrations or drawings, if necessary. If your tip is selected for publication, you'll receive \$35.

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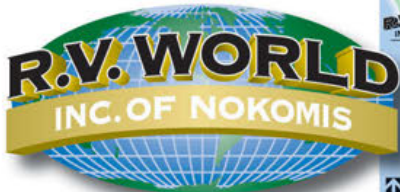
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HANDS-ON | by BOB LIVINGSTON

WAXING MADE EASY

Shurhold's Dual Action Polisher uses an oscillating head to prevent damaging burns on painted surfaces and fiberglass

Keeping the exterior of a motorhome clean and waxed is a never-ending process. Many of us store our rigs outside, subjecting the exterior to harsh elements including dirt, soot, bird droppings and hours of intense sunshine. Every time I get ready to wash and wax a motorhome I think about that famous line in the "Karate Kid" movie: "Wax on wax off." Repetitive motion is something I'm not fond of.

Shurhold Industries feels our pain. The company specializes in RV cleaning products, and its Dual Action Polisher takes the drudgery out of waxing a motorhome. I've always been impressed with the skill of professional detailers. They fling a large rotary buffer with great precision. But a rotary buffer in the hands of an inexperienced user can lead to burns and swirl marks that can ruin the look of a beautiful full-body paint job. Shurhold's Dual Action Polisher eliminates those concerns by using a 6-inch oscillating head that prevents casual users from making costly mistakes. The polisher uses quick-change pads with hook-and-loop backing and has a 20-foot power cord, which provides good versatility in movement.

Out of the box, the 6-inch head looks pretty small when up against the side wall real estate of a big motorhome, but the process actually goes fast, especially when compared to hand waxing. Six speeds allow the polisher to handle different detailing chores: waxing/buffing, polishing/cleaning and removing paint defects and swirls.

Once the surface is clean and dry, wax is applied using a black foam polishing pad that sticks to the backing plate via hook-and-loop material. The reusable pad does a good job of applying the wax, and for this evaluation we used the company's Pro Polish Wax, which is a polymer-based product that has no talc or fillers. Talc-free means no white powder to wrestle with when buffing off the product. Handling the buffer is comfortable, especially with the D-handle in place.

After the wax is applied to a workable area it's buffed off to a professional looking shine using the Brite Bonnet Final Polish Pad. This pad is designed to fit over the waxing pad; a vapor barrier inside the polishing pad keeps the wet wax from seeping into the shaggy microfiber "fingers" that remove the excess wax as it buffs the surface to a shine. Stretching the bonnet over the pad takes some finesse and can get a little messy if too much wax is left on the waxing pad.

The Pro Polish Wax (\$22.98 for 16 ounces) is formulated to repel water, protect against environmental factors and inhibit UV exposure. While the results are impressive following application, the test of time will prove the wax's value. The Pro Polish Wax is designed for fiberglass, gelcoat, clear coat (full-body paint) and aluminum.

Included with the Dual Action Polisher in the standard kit are the backing plate, D-handle, side handle, extra carbon brushes (for the motor) and necessary tools for using the buffer. It sells for \$150 but can be found on the Internet for less money. Replacement polishing bonnets are \$11.98 and a waxing pad two-pack retails for \$23.98.

No doubt this buffer beats the monotony of "Wax on, wax off."

Shurhold, 800-962-6241, www.shurhold.com





Hot About Cool Air

ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN A REFUND FOR EXPENSES THEY BELIEVED WERE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF A GARAGE THAT HAD SERVICED THEIR COACH, TWO READERS CONTACTED HOT LINE. THEY WROTE:

Last July we were at an RV park in Menifee, Calif., when our rear rooftop air conditioner stopped working. We called RV SuperCenter in Temecula, Calif., and spoke with Dustin McConneha, a service writer. We gave him the A/C's model and serial number and asked him to order a new one.

Once the new unit arrived, a technician came out to the RV park to install it. We made sure it put out cool air and paid him the \$100 deductible; our aftermarket insurance paid the balance.

A couple of months later, we were at an RV park in Silverton, Ore., when we set the front and rear A/C on the electric heat position. The front unit put out warm air, but the rear unit only put out cold air. We pulled out the manuals and found the new rear A/C did not have the electric heat option.

We called Dustin at RV SuperCenter and told him the technician installed the wrong unit. He checked his paperwork and found that he ordered the correct A/C but was shipped the wrong one.

Dustin agreed to order the correct model and install it at his shop. We told him we were in Oregon, approximately 1,019 miles away. We asked Dustin to consider reimbursing us for our return trip. The diesel fuel alone was approximately \$635, let alone the inconvenience of having to cancel our vacation and the unnecessary wear and tear on our rig. We stopped our vacation and headed back to RV SuperCenter.

The new A/C was the correct model. Again we asked Dustin if they were going to reimburse us for our expenses and trouble. He just smiled and said nothing.

When we returned home, we sent a letter to Brian Seitel, director of parts and service, and asked him to compensate us for our troubles and expenses. He offered to split the cost of our \$635

in expenses. I said that was not acceptable. So we are asking Hot Line for help to get our fuel money back.

**VERLYN AND DEVRA EISERT
AUBURN, CALIF.**

Hot Line contacted RV SuperCenter regarding this situation for any help it could offer to the Eiserts. Sometime later, we received the following missive from the Eiserts, which explained the conclusion of their case. It read:

Thank you for your intervention. Before Hot Line sent a letter to RV SuperCenter, they were only willing to compensate us \$317.50, which equaled 50 percent of the \$635 diesel expense it cost us to return to Temecula for them to install the correct air conditioner.

After RV SuperCenter received Hot Line's letter, we received two calls: one from the parts manager and one from the parts and service director. They were both eager to settle for \$635 and would be mailing a check out that day.

V AND D E

TOW TRUCK TROUBLE

Having no luck in securing a promised reimbursement, two readers turned to Hot Line as a last resort. They wrote:

Last September, on our way to Myrtle Beach, S.C., we had a serpentine belt break on our motorhome and lost all power. We managed to get off the highway and called Coach-Net, our roadside assistance provider. It was 3 p.m. on a Saturday. After two hours of trying to get a tow truck to take us to the nearest Chevrolet dealer, the Coach-Net representative told us a tow truck could not come until Monday morning. Therefore our coach was left unprotected in a no-parking overnight area.

The representative then stated that because she could not get us towed to a safe location she had made reservations for us at a local motel. She said we would be reimbursed at \$58.76 a night for a total of \$117.52, which we would get back as soon as we sent in the receipt.

On Monday morning, the tow truck arrived but the driver damaged the rear U-joint when he disconnected the drive-shaft, letting it fall to the ground and costing us \$267 to have it replaced. We are not asking to be reimbursed for this, just for what we were told we would get: \$117.52 for two nights of lodging.

**ROBERT AND MARILYN WACHTLER
GREENBACKVILLE, VA.**

Hot Line contacted Coach-Net to help resolve the Wachtlers' dilemma. We received the following response from a company representative. It read:

Thank you for sharing the feedback you received from the Wachtlers. We strive to always provide RVers with service that exceeds their expectations, but if someone is not satisfied in any way, we appreciate the opportunity to address the situation.

Once we received a copy of the Wachtlers' letter, we investigated and found their claim for hotel reimbursement had been denied because their Emergency Trip Interruption benefit only covers expenses incurred due to a collision. However, of course we will stand behind the information provided by our representative and will reimburse the hotel expenses.

The letter also mentions damage the Wachtlers believe was caused by the tow provider. The service providers who provide emergency road service are independent contractors and therefore any claims for damage must be filed against the service provider.

We have spoken to the Wachtlers to inform them that they will be reimbursed for their hotel expenses and that we will be assisting them with their damage claim. Based on our communication with them, it is our understanding the Wachtlers are happy with this resolution. We are glad that we were made aware of the situation and that we were able to respond to our members' concerns.

**LISA DAVIS
CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
NATIONAL MOTOR COACH/COACH-NET
IRVING, TEXAS ♦**

TO CONTRIBUTE TO HOT LINE, please refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 14.



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Deep-Cycle Batteries Needed?

I have read different opinions about batteries. Most articles say to replace coach batteries with deep-cycle replacement batteries. Why should a coach battery be replaced with the expensive deep-cycle type? I know rigs are usually sold with deep-cycle batteries, but are they needed? Why should the coach batteries be replaced with more expensive deep-cycle batteries if the owner will only be using the coach where electrical service is available, such as an RV park?

I have been RVing for 40-plus years and have never replaced my batteries with deep-cycle batteries. I have always had excellent service from the regular heavy-duty automotive-type batteries. I seldom boondock, but have done so without any problem. If an owner does boondock often, then he probably should use the more expensive batteries. I have saved many dollars by using the regular automotive-type batteries.

GLENN RIEDEL | BURLESON, TEXAS

Virtually all coach batteries in new motorhomes are of some type of deep-cycle construction. Deep-cycle batteries are built with more robust plates designed to withstand deeper discharges than automotive engine-starting batteries. Motorhome manufacturers don't know whether the owner will dry camp or use campground hookups exclusively. Therefore, they have to equip their coaches for the more rigorous use without hookups.

When technical writers advise readers on what types of batteries to use, unless the coach owner mentions that only RV parks with hookups will be used, the assumption is they want to get the most power from their batteries. Typically, in addition to recommending deep-cycle coach batteries, we also recommend the use of dual 6-volt batteries in series, rather than a pair of 12-volt batteries in parallel.

In your case, less-expensive automotive batteries may serve fine and cost less over their life for your light-duty

needs. You may even be able to use just one 12-volt battery and save even more.

VOLTAGE METER PROBLEM

I have a 2000 Dutch Star diesel motorhome with a 330-HP 3126B Cat engine on a Freightliner chassis. My problem is on a pull going uphill the voltage meter shows the batteries are discharging. Let off the accelerator pedal and the gauge goes back to normal. The gauge moves every time I press the pedal up and down, but it doesn't go into the red zone. I've had my coach in the garage two times for what appears to be a faulty reading, and have paid more than \$150 to find out that the alternator is putting out the correct voltage, but they have no answer to the problem. Could it be as simple as a faulty gauge?

DON SISSON | LONG LANE, MO.

What you need to do is determine if the gauge is faulty. Run two test wires to the back of it and use a handheld digital voltmeter to check actual voltage going to the gauge. The odd part is that indicated voltage drops as en-

gine speed increases. Before spending any more money chasing this problem, test the gauge. If the gauge reading is considerably off from the test gauge, replace the dash gauge. If voltage readings are similar on both gauges, have the voltage regulator tested and look for bad connections, particularly the heavy cables and ground straps.

PAINT PROBLEMS

I purchased a 2006 National Dolphin with full-body paint in the fall of 2011. Since then the paint has chipped off in little circles all over the body, and there are areas that have something oozing from the surface that has the consistency of tree sap or rubber cement. What could be causing the paint to chip, and what are my options for fixing it?

DAVE BOSLAR | SCOTTS, MICH.

I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but the paint problems you are having may be quite expensive to repair. There is a lot of preparation time required with a repaint. I suggest you take it to several body shops that work on motorhomes for their inspections, opinions and estimates. It is likely that sun and weather deteriorated the finish and exacerbated some problems with the original paint.

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ROUGH DIESEL AND CHARGING LINE

I have a 2005 Coachman Class A with a 300-HP diesel. When I start the coach on cold days it will start out at 750 RPM and after a few minutes rev up to 1,500 RPM and run rough, sounding like it's cutting out. Then I tap the accelerator pedal and it goes back to normal RPM. It will do this several times until it warms up. Is this normal for this engine?

Also, I would like to run a charging line to my dinghy vehicle (Chevrolet S10 Blazer) with a diode in the circuit. Where would I connect my wire from the coach, and to what connection would I connect to on the dinghy?

LARRY BANKSTON | VIA EMAIL

The engine should not be cutting out during warm-up, and the idle should be fairly stable. I suggest you take it

CONTINUE ON PAGE 71

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to an authorized dealer for that engine to have it checked.

A charging line should be run from the main alternator output terminal into a 30-amp auto-reset circuit breaker, via 8-gauge insulated cable to the electrical plug at the rear. Then it should run via the plug to the positive terminal of the dinghy's battery, with another identical circuit breaker right near the battery. This will protect the circuit from shorts anywhere along its path. Check with the manufacturers, such as Remco, Blue Ox and Roadmaster, that sell hardware for dinghy vehicle towing. Chances are good they may have exactly the diode-equipped, battery-charging kit you need, along with wiring instructions.

GUMMY GENSETS

Your answer to Ed Graveline in March ("Genset Grief") about genset carburetor gumming referenced a product — Start Your Engines — that I will try. Do I add it to the motorhome fuel tank, or somehow add it directly to the genset carburetor? It would be rather diluted in my 35-gallon gas tank. Your answer also included the oft-heard recommendation to exercise the genset monthly. How does one do this if the RV is stored over winter in below freezing temperatures with the battery stored inside to keep it from freezing and to charge it periodically, which is also often recommended? I could reinstall the battery monthly, move the coach outside the storage area so I could run the genset where the exhaust can escape, then return the rig to the storage area and remove the battery until the next time. I store my motorhome with a full tank of gas to reduce condensation. I also use fuel stabilizer. If I run the genset every month, will I need to refill my gas tank in order to keep a full tank?

DONALD NELSON | ACCOKEEK, MD.

As I mentioned in "Genset Grief," you can run the generator out of fuel until it stalls. Then you won't have to worry about starting it during storage. You might consider installing an inline fuel shutoff valve if your generator doesn't have one. Otherwise, you could temporarily clamp the rubber fuel line until the engine stalls. The Start Your Engines product is more aimed toward cleaning gum out of the carburetor if you forget to take storage measures, while products like STA-BIL are designed to prevent it from happening. If you use

Start Your Engines, you'll need to put it in a small temporary tank and run the genset off that tank. You could also install a manual fuel selector valve that allows you to run off the main tank, temporary tank, or shut off all fuel to the genset.

If you keep the batteries charged, there's no danger of them freezing in the temperatures you get in Maryland. I suggest you use a maintenance charger, rather than trying to remember to put a regular charger on and then having to make sure it doesn't overcharge.

The reason for keeping a tank full is to reduce the amount of air above the fuel, because temperature changes result in moisture condensing out of the air and into the gasoline. The small amount of fuel used to warm up an engine won't make a significant difference.

BULLDOZER BATTERY

My 1984 Vogue II Class A came with one Cat (bulldozer) battery in it. How does it compare to four golf cart batteries? The Cat

CONTINUED ON PAGE 79



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Propane seems virtually essential to our motorhome lifestyle, but it comes with an element of risk: the possibility of flammable gas leakage. Thus, monitoring our LP-gas system is one of the more important maintenance steps.

It's really an ongoing process. One of the best propane detectors is the human nose, but all new motorhomes are fitted with electronic propane leak detectors.

Propane in its natural form (refined from crude oil) is odorless, but for safety's sake a source of odor (ethyl mercaptan) is mixed with the fuel prior to distribution. If you've never smelled propane, a quick familiarization is advised. Open an unlit stove burner for just a second, and sniff. You'll never forget the odor.

Propane detectors are located at floor level where they will sense leakage and sound a shrill alarm. They should be replaced about every five years, or as indicated by the detector manufacturer, and should be tested before every trip. Use an unlit

beginning with the gas range; that connection usually is located beneath the stovetop. If bubbles appear, use two wrenches to tighten the connection and recheck for bubbles and odor. Then, wipe the connection clean.

Motorhome propane systems usually consist of a steel pipe (manifold) under the coach that is attached to the LP-gas pressure regulator and thereby to the tank with a flexible pigtail. Tied into that pipe are several sections of copper tubing or flex



tubing that feed upward or outward to appliances. All connections should be outside the coach except the one for the gas range.

Check for leaks at attachment points at both ends of each feeder tube for each appliance. Also, check for leaks at connections from the tank to regulator and from the regulator to manifold.

With no obvious source of gas leakage, if propane odor or an alarm still occurs, make sure you don't have a trash can or a dog bed near the sensor, which could cause false alarms. The sensors are sensitive to various kinds of emissions. Check to see if the sensor is more than five years old, and replace if necessary.

If you've found and corrected a leak, it's still a good time for a pressure drop test in which an RV repair shop can check the



ability of the system to retain gas pressure. A pressure gauge or a U-tube water column manometer is used during the test, which should be performed annually even if a leak has not occurred. The test also will determine if gas pressure is correct. ♦



matchless torch for a couple of seconds to shoot a dose of butane into your sensor; the alarm should sound.

Anytime your detector's alarm sounds and/or you get a whiff of propane anywhere in your coach, exit immediately, leave the door open, turn off the propane at the tank along with the motorhome's house battery kill switch, if so equipped. Use your sense of smell to check for propane odor outside the coach.

When propane odor has dissipated, check the gas range to make sure an unlit burner wasn't inadvertently left on, which is a common cause of propane leakage and odor.

If the stove valves are closed, you'll need to locate the source of the leak. If you're near an RV repair shop, this may be the time for a visit. If you're a do-it-yourselfer, open windows, mix a couple of squirts of dish soap with hot water and turn on the propane. Use a brush to create soapsuds around each propane connection,



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battery has 925 CCAs. There's not enough height to install golf cart batteries, so could I install three deep-cycle marine batteries (625 CCAs) to have the same voltage power and performance? What do you recommend, and what CCA? I have installed a 3,600-watt Vanner inverter, and am planning to install two 130-watt solar panels.

JIM STARNIS | VIA EMAIL

Ratings of cold cranking amperes (CCAs) are a measure primarily of interest for engine-starting batteries, not coach batteries. For coach batteries, the more important rating is reserve capacity or amp hours. I suggest you stay with the same engine-starting battery type that you have for your pusher engine. Three 12-volt batteries in parallel are less robust and require more maintenance, terminal cleaning, etc. However, for heavy-duty coach power with a big inverter and large solar panels, the four golf-cart batteries may be your best bet.

AUXILIARY START ... DOESN'T

We have a 2008 Tiffin Allegro Bay on a Freightliner chassis and the auxiliary start circuit is not working. I've checked all the circuit breakers and they are working. I have three fuse boxes in the front engine compartment and two boxes next to the steering column and none of these fuses are labeled. I have been in contact with Tiffin and they haven't been able to help. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

ROD ROEMER | VIA EMAIL

At first I advised Roemer to follow the heavy cables from the batteries until he got to some big relays. They should be the ones he's looking for, as the circuit does not have fuses. Roemer replied: "I narrowed the problem down to the two charging/booster solenoids, but haven't had time to fix them. I'm not sure how to test a solenoid to determine if they are functioning properly. When activated I'd think they should make some type of noise, but I hear nothing to indicate they are working."

My follow-up advice: To test a solenoid (relay) apply 12 volts DC to the small terminal and, of course, the unit needs to be well grounded. It should click and then the two large terminals should have continuity between them. There also needs

to be a signal (voltage) from the auxiliary starter switch to the small terminal on the relay when the button is pushed to activate the relay.

RADIATOR RESERVOIR REPLACEMENT

I need a radiator reservoir tank for my 1993 Southwind. Where can I buy one, or is there one that can be adapted to fit?
OSCAR PERALES | MCALLEN, TEXAS

You didn't mention what brand chassis you have. In 1993 the Southwinds were available on Ford, GM and Oshkosh chassis. If it is on a Ford chassis, go to Ford. If it is on a GM chassis, try www.workhorse.com. For Oshkosh, try Find It Parts, 888-312-8812, www.finditparts.com.

FUEL PUMP FAILURES

I have a 1997 Fleetwood Southwind 34L Class A motorhome. The fuel pump failed at 53,000 miles in 2004 and then again at 73,000 miles in 2009. Each time the motorhome had to be towed and the fuel tank dropped and the pump replaced (about \$900 plus towing each time).

Is there a switch that can be installed on the fuel rail with a light that would let me know that no fuel pressure is the problem, and could an external fuel pump be installed as a backup to avoid a tow and not get stranded along the highway? I have concerns that I'll get stuck again.

**WILLIAM J. MCCUTCHEON
BRADDOCK HEIGHTS, MD.**

You can get inexpensive test kits that take a reading from the Schrader valve on the rail. I did some checking but wasn't able to find a low-pressure warning switch readily compatible with your fuel rail and pressure. There are some concerns with mounting an external fuel pump. The stock in-tank pump is cooled by being in the fuel. Also, you would need to find a pump that the fuel can flow through all the time, or else you'd have to crawl under the coach and manually switch the hoses over. Perhaps a reader may have done these modifications. If so, we'd love to hear of it, including sources and part numbers. ♦

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 south central Colorado is the little
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 for its isolation and high desert beauty.
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 Cristo Mountains, capped by an overnight
 snowfall. As I drank my morning coffee the
 silence in this desert world was deafening.

Burns and Diane Rafferty
 Lisle, Illinois



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