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TRAILER LIFE

FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

Right-Size Fiver

Winnebago's Compact Yet Roomy Voyage Lite



HOW TO

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A FUEL TANK

REPLACE
SLIDEOUT SEALS

UPGRADE
FENDER SKIRTS

INSIDE LOOK!



STARCRAFT SATELLITE

NORTHWOOD ARCTIC FOX



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Among Minnesota's eight national scenic byways, the Great River Road passes through Minneapolis, and the Grand Rounds drive encircles it. Page 46

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On the cover: The Winnebago Voyage Lite 25RKS rolls out its awning at Tampa's Florida RV SuperShow in January. Photo by Shawn Spence

Summer Heat

The dog days are often the best days to go RVing



Ah, the dog days of summer.... Although the expression now implies the hottest days of the year, historically, dog days meant when the Dog Star, Sirius, rises in the early-morning sky after not having been seen for a while.

With many RVers out camping during the dog days, it's a perfect time to vote for your favorite RV products and places for *Trailer Life's* 2017 Readers' Choice Awards. The sixth-annual online survey lets you voice what's hot and what's not, giving fellow RVers a heads-up on reader-approved recreational vehicles, accessories and destinations in 30 categories, including a new one for Toy Haulers. Voting is now live on our website at www.trailerlife.com/readers-choice.

Speaking of the *Trailer Life* website, we're delighted to announce that it has been freshly redesigned and is ready to deliver many of your favorite print articles as well as exclusive online content. Included are sections on RV Tech, RVs and Gear, Lifestyle, Tow Guides and Towing, RV Video and more. We hope you'll visit often.

Like the website, this issue is packed with new RVs, starting with the cover story (page 14). Back in January, we had an opportunity to take the Winnebago Voyage Lite 25RKS for a test at the Florida RV SuperShow in Tampa. This easy-to-tow midsize fifth-wheel has great features and build quality, and fits in campsites that are too tight for larger fivers.

In one of this issue's two Walk-Throughs, Bruce Smith looks at the Northwood Arctic Fox 25Y, a premium dual-entry trailer that's ready for cold country and loaded with storage space (page 24). Donya Carlson takes a peek at the nimble and affordable Starcraft Satellite 18DS (page 20). If you're interested in the Satellite, don't miss Bob Dawson's video review on our YouTube channel, TrailerLifeDIY.

We also have plenty of technical content this month. Because a strong cellular connection is essential for voice and internet use when traveling, we install and evaluate the new weBoost Drive 4G-X RV cell-signal booster (page 42). Tire blowouts and exposure to the elements can have a devastating effect on trailer fender skirts, and Ed Bolduc shows how easy it is to replace them (page 56). Bob Livingston swaps the stock 32-gallon fuel tank in a Ram pickup for a 55-gallon upgrade (page 32), and Bill and Jenn Gehr tackle slideout-seal replacement (page 52).

Wrapping up the August issue, Tom Watson tours Minnesota's network of scenic byways (page 46), and we visit a couple of classic East Coast destinations: Kenneth Dahse explores the Lake George region of the Adirondacks (page 26), and Jeremy and Stephanie Puglisi hit the beach in Cape Cod (page 36).

Regardless of the origin of their meaning, the dog days are great days for RVing. We hope you take advantage of them to visit your favorite summer destinations and discover some new ones. 🐕

— Chris Dougherty, Technical Editor

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Publisher Ann Emerson

Editor Valerie Law

Managing Editor Donya Carlson

Technical Editor Chris Dougherty

Senior Art Director Rick Damien

Production Director Bob Dawson

Production Manager Brenda Hutchinson

Marketing Manager Lorisa Pierson

Business Manager Katey Purgatorio

Publisher Emeritus Bob Livingston

Consulting Editors Chris Hemer, Jeff Johnston

Contributors Lisa Ballard, Ed Bolduc, Kenneth W. Dahse, Bill and Jenn Gehr, Bobbie Hasselbring, Stephanie and Jeremy Puglisi, James Richardson, Bruce W. Smith, Tom Watson

Vice President National Sales Terry Thompson
847-229-6759

RV Marketplace/Classifieds Katey Purgatorio
847-229-6756, katey.purgatorio@goodsam.com

Advertising Sales/Southwest Sue Seidlitz
847-229-6813, sue.seidlitz@goodsam.com

Advertising Sales/Southeast Kim Whitaker
919-412-6325, kim.whitaker@goodsam.com

Advertising Sales/Northeast Lou Cicirelli
954-297-9234, lou.cicirelli@goodsam.com

Advertising Sales/Northwest Scott Oakes
847-229-6758, scott.oakes@goodsam.com

Customer Service

Subscriptions (print and digital)

800-825-6861

trailerlife@cdsfulfillment.com

Editorial

info-ll@goodsam.com

www.trailerlife.com

GS MEDIA & EVENTS

President Mark Boggess

Vice President/Publisher Ann Emerson

Vice President/Advertising Sales Terry Thompson

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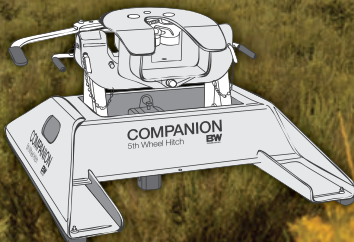
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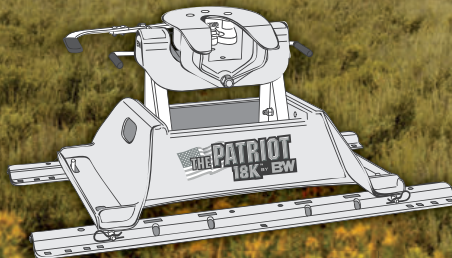
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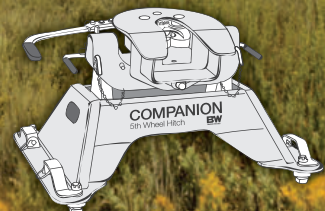
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Down East New Brunswick

We camped in the area described in June's "Down East Maine," and it is a wonderful place to visit. The towns, although a bit rundown in places, are still quaint and unique. I was surprised that Emily Fagan mentioned Campobello Island without mentioning Roosevelt Campobello International Park. It is a great look back into the early life of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, one of the most influential and important U.S. presidents, and certainly worth a visit for the beautiful grounds and historical significance.

Linda LaDuc, Clayville, New York

Just across the bridge from Lubec, Maine, New Brunswick's Roosevelt Campobello International Park preserves the summer home of the 32nd president and is managed jointly by the National Park Service and Parks Canada. Note that the "Down East Maine" sidebar identified Lubec's Sunset Point RV Park as a Good Sam Park. It is not.

In this issue's Roads to Adventure column (page 74), Lisa Ballard highlights another public park on property once owned by a Roosevelt chief executive — in this case, the 26th president. North Dakota's Theodore Roosevelt National Park occupies the ranchland of FDR's fifth cousin and the uncle of his wife, Eleanor. — Editors

Vis-à-Vis Vilano

My husband and I have been serious RVers since 2000, and in the past 17 years we have owned five different RVs.

Last year we purchased a Vanleigh Vilano. This is by far the best RV we have ever owned. At 34 feet, it is small enough for almost any



A+ Makes the Grade

Based on January's "Spice of the Southeast," we spent four very enjoyable days at A+ Motel and RV Park in Sulphur, Louisiana. The author's assessment of this facility was spot-on! The park was neat and clean, and the staff was first-rate. We make at least one trip a year to the Lake Charles area to visit family, and you can bet we will stay at this remarkable Good Sam Park whenever possible.

Alan and Chris George, Bartlett, Tennessee

If you missed Gary Wescott's tour of Louisiana's Cajun country, give it a read on our website at www.trailerlife.com/lifestyle/destinations/spice-of-the-southeast. — Editors



campground, but it has more room than our previous 40-foot fifth-wheel. We had a few minor problems, and the company sent someone to our campsite to fix them at no charge. We really love the Vilano, and you just can't beat the service.

**Mariann Groshans
Box Elder, South Dakota**

Regarding Bob Livingston's "Viva Vilano!" in the June issue, the Vilano 375FL looks like a great rig that's well-appointed and roomy with lots of options. I love the living-room-up-front floorplan. But after adding a washer and dryer, it could carry only a couple changes of clothes and maybe some paper plates.

Tony Acito, Granger, Indiana

Glass Mat and Plastic Vents

I really enjoyed Ed Bolduc's June article on RV batteries, "Charged Up," and learned a lot, but I want to make a correction. AGM stands for absorbed glass mat, not absorbed gas mat.

I also want to comment on "DIY Duct Covers" in April's 10-Minute Tech. I thought Sandra Campbell's floor-vent covers were one of the best ideas I've seen so far for RVs. I ran out immediately and purchased the magnetic paper. When I got back to install it in my trailer, I noticed that

the vents were made of plastic, not metal. I thought everyone would get a good laugh and could learn from my mistake.

John Charlier, Sobieski, Wisconsin

Wheeler Dealers

In June's "No Such Puck" letter, Kevin Morris commented that, although many truck dealers order well-equipped three-quarter- and one-ton diesel trucks, many of the vehicles do not include the factory prep package that has the puck platform in the truck bed. We ran into similar issues when looking for a tow vehicle prior to becoming full-timers and found our best option was to locate dealerships in other states that had what we wanted.

Many Montana and Wyoming dealerships order trucks with the heavy-duty tow package, including diesel engines, fifth-wheel-hitch accommodations, additional fuel tanks, integrated trailer-brake controls and some with rear airbags already installed. We found the exact truck we were looking for, ready to go.

Dean Compton, Middleton, Idaho 📧

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Pedestrians and cyclists on the Big River Crossing can observe barges and other river traffic, plus dramatic views of the Memphis skyline. (Right) LED lights display dynamic colors and patterns throughout the year for holidays and special events.

Big River Crossing

A nearly mile-long bridge connects Tennessee to Arkansas over the mighty Mississippi

article by James Richardson

One of Memphis' latest attractions for visitors and residents is the impressive pedestrian bridge across the Mississippi River. Named the Big River Crossing, it opened last October and is the longest public pedestrian bridge across the river. Built on an existing bridge, the crossing is also the country's longest active combination rail, bicycle and pedestrian bridge at almost 1 mile long.

Pedestrians walk, cyclists ride and skateboarders do their thing from Tennessee to Arkansas on the Big River Crossing. The span is attached to the still-in-use 1916 railroad bridge called the Harahan, a truss bridge with a storied history.

Four bridges cross the Mississippi at Memphis. The Frisco Bridge was built in 1895 for the railroad. The Harahan Bridge was originally a railway but added two automobile lanes on either side of the tracks in 1917. Wooden planks were added atop metal girders on each side of the bridge to carry single-file traffic in each direction.

In 1949 the Memphis-Arkansas Bridge opened and still transports Interstate 55 across the river. Then the Hernando de Soto Bridge, called the Big M because of its shape, opened in 1973 and is utilized by Interstate 40.

Users of the Big River Crossing can watch barges and riverboats



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BIG RIVER CROSSING

navigate under the bridge and get great views of the Memphis skyline. During special events, the bridge's more than 100,000 LED lights are programmed for colorful displays that reflect on the water.

Crossing the bridge is free and connects users to more than 70 miles of trails on the Arkansas side. The bridge is open daily from 6 a.m. until 10 p.m., and parking is available at nearby Martyrs Park.

Big River Crossing
www.bigrivercrossing.com

Tom Sawyer's RV Park
West Memphis, Arkansas
870-735-9770, www.tomsawyersrvpark.com



Great American Road Trip Contest

Jucy, a company that specializes in minivan-based RV rentals that sleep up to four people, is giving away road trips through the end of 2017. Entrants submit their “dream itinerary” — specifically ones that will impress the judges and include secret spots, places to travel on the cheap and off-the-beaten-path destinations that appeal to the company’s 21-to-35-year-old target audience.

The prize includes up to a seven-night rental of a Jucy mini RV from the company’s Los Angeles, San Francisco or Las Vegas branches, plus basic insurance, bedding for four, a kitchen kit, two camping chairs and applicable travel miles. Itineraries and photos from the winners’ trips will be featured on the company’s website.

Jucy RV Rentals, 800-650-4180, www.jucyrentals.com

You Decide the Winners!

Trailer Life’s sixth-annual RV poll

It’s that time of year again! Cast your votes in *Trailer Life’s* annual Readers’ Choice Awards where you share your knowledge with fellow RVers.

Each year we conduct an online poll of readers’ favorite RV brands, products and destinations. Take a few minutes to visit the voting webpage and tell us which vehicles, gear and places make life on the road easier and more enjoyable. Sharing your RV-lifestyle experiences can smooth the way for others, so be sure to cast your votes online.

Voting ends on September 20, 2017. We’ll announce the sixth-annual gold, silver and bronze winners in all 30 categories in the January 2018 issue.

2017 Trailer Life Readers’ Choice Awards
www.trailerlife.com/readers-choice



Open Range Lightweight Bunkhouse

Highland Ridge RV released a 10th floorplan in its Open Range Ultra Lite line, the 2018 UL2510BH, a compact and lightweight bunkhouse model. With a claimed unloaded vehicle weight of 5,380 pounds, the travel trailer offers sleeping for up to eight people and storage space normally found in larger and heavier units.

According to the company, the 29-foot 3-inch UL2510BH is the only bunkhouse RV of this size with a private four-bed bunk room with its own entrance and interior doors. The bottom bunk hinges up to provide an oversize storage area that’s directly accessible from the back-entrance door.

The kitchen has ample countertop space and room to



The open floorplan is evident on the 2018 UL2510BH, the newest model in the Open Range Ultra Lite line. The kitchen has a deep counter and features easy-access storage.



maneuver, and the living area features a 42-inch U-shaped dinette in the slideout. The bathroom offers a large shower, and the front master bedroom has a queen walk-around bed, a nightstand with drawers and a solid interior door.

The Open Range line is built with “more room, less weight” in mind, according to Highland Ridge. All Open Range Ultra Lite models have arched ceilings with a center height of 6 feet 10 inches, linoleum flooring throughout for easy cleaning, sliding windows for cross ventilation, 52-gallon freshwater capacity, 32-cubic-foot pass-through storage and two 7-gallon LP-gas cylinders. Base MSRP is \$27,913. Highland Ridge RV, 260-768-7771, www.highlandridgerv.com

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How Sweet It Is

Here's a way to keep most everyone in the family entertained: Take a flying leap on a chocolate-covered slip-and-slide! Jellystone Park Camp-Resorts across the country offer Chocolate Lovers' Weekends, which include chocolate-eating contests, chocolate crafts and sprinkler-slides slicked down with chocolate pudding, sometimes topped off with marshmallows.

The following RV parks celebrate chocolate this summer:

July 28: Big Prairie, Ohio

July 28: Madison, Florida

August 4 and 5: Elmer, New Jersey

August 4 and 5: Estes Park, Colorado

August 11 to 13: Akron, Ohio

August 11 to 13: Monticello, Iowa

August 11 to 17: Bloomington, Indiana

August 18 to 20: Nashville, Tennessee

Jellystone Park Camp-Resorts, www.campjellystone.com



PHOTO COURTESY OF JELLYSTONE PARK CALLEDONIA, WISCONSIN

NEWSWIRE

WILDLIFE CROSSING



Path to Safety

The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), in collaboration with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Nevada Department of Transportation, built and monitors the state's first wildlife-crossing project in Elko County, along U.S. Route 93. The project started in 2008 when researchers placed GPS collars on mule deer to study where wildlife typically crossed the highway and collisions took place. Crossing structures include three underpasses and two overpasses with 3 to 4 miles of 8-foot fencing on both sides of the highway. The overpass is filled in with dirt and vegetation wide enough that the animals cannot see the road, eliminating the fear to cross.

In addition to deer, species that use the crossing structures include elk, coyotes, bobcats, badgers, mountain lions, jackrabbits and pronghorn.

www.fws.gov

TEARDROP TRAILER



T@B 400 with Hydronic Heating

Based in Sugarcreek, Ohio, nuCamp RV, manufacturer of T@B and T@G teardrop trailers and Cirrus truck campers, has added an Alde Compact 3010 hydronic-heating and hot-water system to its T@B 400 teardrop trailer as standard equipment. The hydronic-heating system creates soft currents of warm air for even heat distribution throughout the interior, according to Alde. The system is quiet, compact at 13½x20x12¼ inches and powered by LP-gas or 120-volt AC when hooked up.

With a claimed dry weight of 2,690 pounds, the 15-foot T@B 400 has a queen bed, front and rear opening picture windows with screens and shades, nearly 7 feet of headroom, an integrated solar panel and a 30-gallon freshwater tank. Buyers can customize trim and graphics colors from a variety of choices.

www.nucamp.com, www.alde.us

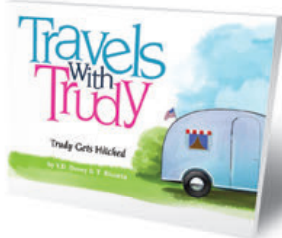


Best in the West Whitewater Rafting

Western River Expeditions (WRE), an adventure-travel company that escorts fun-seekers down rivers on professionally guided rafting trips in Utah, Idaho and Arizona, offers a variety of floating and paddling excursions. Participants soak up the sun on tours lasting from three to seven days on tame Class II to heart-pounding Class IV rapids.

WRE is offering *Trailer Life* readers \$100 off per person on five-day rafting packages to Desolation Canyon, Utah, for departures August 1 and 8, 2017, and May through August 2018 (mention the discount during booking). Float down the Green River in the remote canyon, hike among Fremont petroglyphs, and experience the rugged terrain where Butch Cassidy and the Wild Bunch found the perfect hideaway. www.westernriver.com/desolation-canyon

Travels With Trudy



Travels With Trudy, a children's picture book about a travel trailer that loves the United States, is designed to amuse and educate. The 24-page hardcover book is written in rhyming verse by Y.D. Davey and illustrated by Tom Ricotta. Trudy the trailer, stuck in the back of a used-car lot, dreams of sights and cities, introducing kids to destinations such as Yosemite National Park, Mount Rushmore, Niagara Falls, New York City and Washington, D.C. Ultimately, Trudy gets her happy ending, and everyone is delighted. The \$15 price includes a 14-page coloring book and U.S. shipping. www.travelswithtrudy.com

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Out-of-the-Way Display

A Canadian couple asked the manufacturer of their new travel trailer to lower the sound system's display panel so they could read it. When the request was denied, they turned to RV Resolutions for help:

► Last September we purchased a 2017 Outdoors RV Black Rock 20RD from Kelowna RVs in West Kelowna, British Columbia. We took a two-night camping trip right away so any deficiencies could be dealt with before storing the travel trailer for the winter.

One thing we had a problem with was the sound-system control display and its location on the end of the kitchen cupboard near the almost 7-foot-high ceiling. A person standing under the display can't see the digital numbers for radio or clock use. Even Orest, who is 6 feet tall, cannot read the numbers.

When we took the trailer to Kelowna RV to have it winterized, the dealership put in a warranty request to cover the cost of a new cupboard end panel and labor to move the display down, but Outdoors RV refused, claiming that is how the trailer was designed. We feel the design was not checked sufficiently prior to production.

Johanna and Orest Protch, West Kelowna, British Columbia



THE COMPANY RESPONDS

After contacting Outdoors RV, we received the following reply from the manufacturer's service department:

The stereo in the 2017 Black Rock 20RD is mounted in an end panel of an overhead cabinet by the entry door. It is, by design, above the switches toward the top of the panel. The Protchs were able to view the trailer before they purchased it, and the stereo location is clearly visible.

Outdoors RV does not allow for alterations or modifications on a one-on-one situation. However, we have offered to send the dealer a new end panel and mount the stereo a few inches lower, and will cover this as "customer goodwill." Our design department is looking into this and will make a change if it is determined to be necessary on future builds.

**Todd Morton, Assistant Service Manager
Outdoors RV Manufacturing, La Grande, Oregon**

King-Size Clunker

A California reader was so pleased with his brand of travel trailer that he bought his third one on the spot, neglecting to test the bed:

► I purchased a 2017 Keystone Outback 328RL travel trailer at an RV show and picked it up at See Grins RV in Gilroy, California. The dealer was great and met all my expectations. This is our third Outback, and I have always been totally satisfied with this make of trailer.

After getting the trailer home, we found a problem. While putting a mattress cover on the king-size bed, I leaned on the edge of the mattress and put a dent in it. The dent stayed. My wife stretched out on the bed and said she could feel the springs and was very uncomfortable. She weighs 130 pounds and is not overweight. It hadn't occurred to us to try out the mattress during the walk-through, as this was our third Outback. I wound

up purchasing a new mattress so we could use the trailer.

The other day I received an email from Keystone about my negative input on a survey. I called Keystone, as the email suggested. The representative told me she was sorry I was unhappy and that I should have contacted the dealer. She was probably right, but I had no luck trying to contact the regional Outback sales manager, and See Grins RV is about a two-and-a-half-hour drive from our home and didn't install the mattress.

We feel we should be compensated for at least the cost of the inferior mattress.

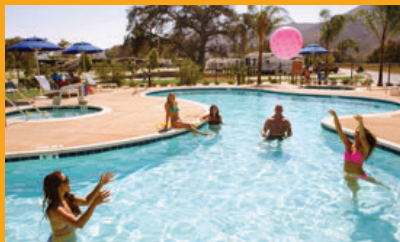
James T. Sefton, Oakhurst, California

Six weeks after forwarding James Sefton's request for compensation to Keystone RV Company, we received the following thank-you note from him:

► Shortly after RV Resolutions contacted Keystone, I received a call from the manufacturer. The representative offered a monetary solution, and I was more than happy with the amount offered. I received the check yesterday. I'm sure your intervention was the reason I received that call. Thank you for your attention to this matter, which ended with another happy resolution for one of your readers.

J.T.S.

NEED HELP? ► RV Resolutions is a forum for the settlement of conflicts between consumers and RV dealers and manufacturers, accessory suppliers and service providers. After exhausting all other resources without success, please send a typed letter to *Trailer Life* RV Resolutions, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Include copies of appropriate bills and correspondence as well as a self-addressed, stamped envelope.



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Voyage of Dis

Outfitted with attractive features, Winnebago's midsize fiver tucks into RV sites



Discovery

that are off-limits to larger fifth-wheels



People have many reasons for buying a fifth-wheel, whether they're new RVers or switching from towing a travel trailer. These can include a desire for more space in a shorter package, more homelike amenities or better handling on the open road.

With so many fifth-wheels to choose from, it can be tough to decide on the right one. After all, lengths run from the mid-20-foot range up to 44 feet, and models vary from small ultralights to grand full-timing rigs and toy haulers. From spartan to deluxe, and basic camping to multizone living, fifth-wheels cover all the bases. Finding the one that best suits your needs can take some work.

For RVers in the market for a well-built midsize fifth-wheel, the 2017 Winnebago Voyage Lite 25RKS may narrow that search. The roomy rear-kitchen model comes with a single slide and is nicely provisioned. After living in this fifth-wheel for more than a week, we came away quite impressed with the comfort features and functionality.

The Voyage Lite 25RKS has an overall length of 27 feet 6 inches, which means it can go most places with ease, including many state and national park campgrounds where finding space for bigger combinations is a challenge.

Entering the 25RKS through the right-rear door takes you into the kitchen and living area. We appreciated the space here, which is just the right amount of room, especially with the dinette slide deployed. We served dinner for four one night with no problems.

The 8-cubic-foot Dometic refrigerator is adjacent to the door, followed by the range, a double-bowl stainless-steel sink in the corner and a countertop that can be augmented by the freestanding dinette table, which can also be taken outdoors for eating under the awning. Two windows offer great visibility, and lighting is ample, with three under-cabinet LEDs conveniently controlled by a switch beneath the facing cabinet. Two electrical receptacles provide power to the kitchen — one by the range and the other on the end of the base cabinet by the dinette.

Cabinet space is also ample, with a three-drawer pack on the right side, a large drawer for pans under the range and a deep under-sink cupboard. Large cabinets with a shelf are above the counter, and a High Pointe microwave and the customary range vent with a light reside above the stove.

For additional sleeping, the dinette table legs fold up to make a bed suitable for two small guests or one 6-foot-plus adult. Below each bench seat is a large storage area, and there's a 120-volt AC receptacle to service the dinette.

In the living area, the vinyl-upholstered sofa bed is well stuffed and comfortable, and folds out into a nice 60-by-56-inch bed for guests with just enough room to get around the foot of the mattress. Above



The dinette-occupied slideout opens up the space on the main floor, and the freestanding table offers flexibility. A strap-down system secures the table when the trailer is in motion. The bench seats have storage space below them.

the sofa is a wall-mounted cabinet for general storage that does not extend to the ceiling, leaving the option for placing small items on top. The top of the cabinet is fitted with crown molding, which became dislodged when it was grabbed. Once tacked back in, it was no big deal, but it likely will not be suitable for holding items on top of the cabinet while in motion.

Next to the sofa is a large pantry cabinet for storing necessities. At the far

wall of the living area is what looks like a freestanding cabinet but is actually a permanently mounted entertainment center with the Jensen DVD/stereo and room for more components and other items. A flat-screen Jensen TV is mounted just above it, with a glass-door cabinet above the TV. The TV is fed by a standard King Jack antenna, as well as satellite and cable connections. Overall, the main living space is attractive and has a high-end look.

Steps lead to a short side-aisle hallway with an angled floor-to-almost-ceiling linen cabinet at the top, across from the bathroom door. The bathroom has a porcelain commode, a sink with a vanity and a corner shower with a sliding-glass surround. Entered from the hallway or the bedroom, the bathroom has room to take care of the necessities but almost no counter space, so swapping needed items from the vanity to the sink top will be required.

The bedroom features a 60-by-80-inch queen bed with a comfortable innerspring mattress that lifts to reveal under-bed storage. The front wall is rounded, leaving less space for traditional cabinetry above the head of the bed. In lieu of the overhead cabinet and nightstands is a cross-bed shelf with a 120-volt AC receptacle and a USB charging outlet. Wardrobe closets extend from floor to ceiling on both sides with a small drawer at the bottom. While different, this setup was quite workable, and we were able to reach the overhead shelf easily while lying in bed. Beneath the shelf is a centered LED light bar.

WINNEBAGO VOYAGE LITE 25RKS

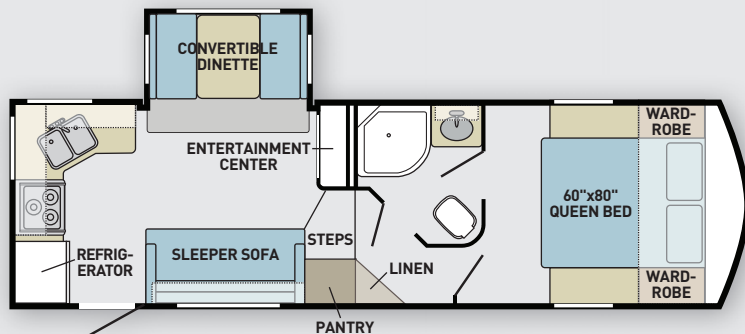


ILLUSTRATION BY BILL TIPTON

SPECIFICATIONS

2017 WINNEBAGO VOYAGE LITE 25RKS

Exterior Length	27' 6"
Exterior Width	8' 1"
Interior Width	7' 10"
Interior Height	8' living room
Construction	Aluminum cage with laminated, gelcoat fiberglass side walls, block-foam insulation, 5/8-inch five-ply tongue-and-groove-plywood subfloor and one-piece-TPO crowned roof
Freshwater Cap.	50 gal.
Black/Gray-Water Cap.	25/51 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	6 gal.
Refrigerator	8 cu. ft.
Furnace	30,000 Btu
Air Conditioner (1)	15,000 Btu
Converter	55 amp
Battery (1)	12-volt, group 27
Tires	ST225/75R15 LRD
Suspension	Leaf spring with Equa-Flex
Weight (freshwater, water heater, LP-gas full; no cargo)	7,540 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,580 lbs.
Axle Weight	5,960 lbs.
GVWR	8,500 lbs.
GAWR	5,000 lbs.
Cargo Carrying Cap.	960 lbs.
Base MSRP	\$35,698
As-Tested MSRP	\$39,271
Warranty	1 year

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(Above left) With its ball-type feet, the permanently mounted entertainment center looks like a freestanding piece of furniture and offers additional storage. The optional Jensen LED TV is mounted below a glass-front cabinet. (Above right) When converted into a bed, the sofa makes a comfortable sleeping area and leaves just enough room to get around the foot of the mattress.

LED lighting has become standard throughout the industry, and it is well-placed throughout the 25RKS. The fixtures, cabinetry, valances and fabrics contribute to the Voyage Lite's classy, modern feel. Vinyl flooring with a gray wood-plank design covers everything but a carpeted section of the bedroom. This color is great for hiding spills, as we found out during our stay, but the vinyl is easily cleaned and maintained.

Despite 80-degree daytime temperatures and 50 degrees at night,

the interior remained quite comfortable, especially considering that the fifth-wheel was parked in direct sun. The 15,000-Btu Dometic air conditioner kept it from heating up during the day, and the digital thermostat kicked over to the 30,000-Btu furnace to keep things toasty at night. The test unit was equipped with the optional Extreme Weather Package (\$428), and dual-pane windows are also available.

The exterior walls are framed in aluminum and clad in tan gelcoat, com-

plemented by attractive vinyl-graphics and a gelcoat fiberglass front cap with integrated LED lighting. A "Winnebago" chrome plaque on the rear adds a high-



(Above left) The well-designed rear kitchen has ample storage and counter space, which can be augmented by the movable dinette table. The attractive countertop surrounds a double-bowl stainless sink with a gooseneck faucet. (Above right) The master bedroom has a queen-size innerspring mattress and lift-up platform. The overhead cross-bed shelf includes an AC receptacle, USB-charging outlet and LED light bar.

(Right) In the bathroom the medicine cabinet and vanity are good-sized, but the counter has little room for toiletries. The double sliding-door shower is ample and tall enough for a 6-footer, thanks to the overhead skylight. Shelves provide spots for shampoo bottles and other necessities.

end touch. The standard 17-foot electric awning with LED lighting integrated into the roller tube makes for a nice place to shelter from the sun or avoid the dew in the evening.

Dark-tinted radius windows are also standard, as are the radius entry and front pass-through storage compartment doors. While the pass-through doors have slam-latch hardware, the front cab-over door utilizes positive thumb latches. The doors are held up with magnetic latches, which is a nice touch.

On the left side, in what looks like just an exterior shower compartment, all the trailer connections for water, satellite, cable, tank fill and tank flush, as well as the outside shower valve are contained. The sewage termination is



in the standard location, with valves up under the side compartment. The valve handles are located by the frame rail and a bit hard to reach, but this is necessary to keep the valves enclosed where it is warm as part of the Extreme Weather Package. An access hatch in the J-wrap on the bottom of the wall would have been a welcome addition here but is an easy add-on after purchase.

The Voyage Lite is built on the BAL NXG, or Next Generation, chassis. The NXG frame is different in that, instead of using a standard welded I-beam or C-channel frame, both of which are heavy and prone to rust, the NXG is made of modular huck-bolted pieces that have been fully washed and completely painted. The pieces are engineered for the specific application, and robotic

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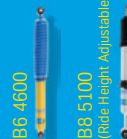
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welding ensures consistency. While it's still a heavy steel frame, the assembly system makes the NXG the most precisely engineered foundation currently in the industry.

Notably, even though the 25RKS is a lightweight unit, it still had adequate truck-bed clearance to fit comfortably behind a stock Ford F-350 FX4. Some light fifth-wheels have a reduced bed clearance to better mate with lighter trucks. With pin-box and fifth-wheel-hitch adjustments, this trailer should fit well behind just about any truck. It rolls on cast-aluminum 15-inch wheels with load range D tires, all riding on an Equa-Flex suspension, which is designed to improve overall ride quality

(Right) The utility center features city water, potable water-tank fill valve, black-tank flush, cable and satellite TV connections, and the outside shower/sprayer all in one convenient place. **(Far right)** An Equa-Flex rubberized suspension equalizer helps prevent trailer chocking and is designed to improve ride quality.

and towing smoothness.

The roof is clad with a TPO membrane, colored to match, and has an access ladder at the back. The standard front electric landing jacks are complemented by optional manually operated electric stabilizer jacks at the rear, with rocker switches in the front main compartment on the right side. While this is an unusual spot to have the switches, it eliminates the problem of switch failure in the rear due to crud and moisture exposure.

While limited on color selections, the Voyage Lite does have numerous

options, including the aforementioned freestanding table and chairs, and the LED TV; a bicycle rack is also offered.

Overall build quality is above par. Cargo-carrying capacity is 960 pounds with a full tank of freshwater and full LP-gas cylinders. Given the size of the fifth-wheel and its designation as a "Lite" unit, we're OK with this; just leave the rock collection at home.

The 2017 Winnebago Voyage Lite 25RKS is a roomy fifth-wheel that is nimble to tow and ready to take on outdoor adventures in comfort, style and quality. 🚐



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WALK-THROUGH: STARCRAFT SATELLITE 18DS

Satellite System

Starcraft's compact 18DS is ready for launch with a simple floorplan and all the comforts of home

For folks who like to keep it simple but don't want to scrimp on creature comforts, Starcraft's Satellite 18DS just may send you into orbit. With its curved body, front and rear, the Satellite is built with wind-cutting in mind. At a claimed unloaded vehicle weight of 3,055 pounds, the 18DS can be towed by most SUVs and small trucks. Fourteen-inch nitrogen-filled tires under fenders ride on a single axle, making for an interior width of a little over 6 feet.

Inside, the rear kitchen's countertop spans the width of the trailer, sliding windows let in plenty of ambient light, and there's sleeping space for three or four. With the slide that houses the 6-foot-long dinette and 4-cubic-foot refrigerator deployed,

the 20-foot 8-inch 18DS transforms into a Satellite with ample space. With the slide retracted, the bathroom door can be opened fully for access while en route.

We were impressed with the kitchen layout, the focal point of this travel trailer. A two-burner range resides in a neo-angle cabinet with pass-through storage to the outside and is next to the single-basin sink in an expanse of countertop that allows the cook to spread out. Additional counter space behind the range is large enough to hold a big fruit bowl and several loaves of bread. Within easy reach are the Dometic refrigerator-freezer and a convection microwave docked above it. The wood paneling on the refrigerator ties in well with the Warm Sugar Maple cabinetry.




It's a tight fit in the wet bath, but everything needed is close at hand. The bathroom can be accessed with the slideout in.

A couple of inches of headroom are lost at each end of the kitchen where the ceiling curves down, so people taller than 6 foot 2 will have to watch their heads while standing at the kitchen counter.

The dinette, set midway between the kitchen and the front queen bed,



 Catch *Trailer Life's* video review of the Starcraft Satellite 18DS on our YouTube channel, [TrailerLifeDIY](#).



(Above left) Thick high-back cushions offer good back support. The freestanding table folds down to transform the dinette into a bed for one or two. **(Above right)** The rear kitchen's countertop spans the width of the 18DS, making for impressive preparation and storage space.

is wide enough to seat two or three, with additional backless seating at each end. The cushions are thick and large, offering good back support, but because of their height, they partially block the sliding window. A freestanding table can be moved around as needed and folds down to fit across the seats' brackets to convert the dinette into a bed.

A step away from the dinette is the queen bed with open floor space for large items you want to stow out of the way but still get to easily. Lifting the bed (no hydraulic struts) leads to additional storage that can also be accessed from the outside. Sliding windows at the head and foot of the bed provide airflow and make the space feel larger. A shelf serves as a nightstand and has a tall cubbyhole that can be a catchall for platters, magazines and shoes.

Across from the dinette is a wet bath with a 17-inch shower pan and a 6-foot ceiling height. There's no vent, but the gap at the top of the door allows shower steam to exit. A mesh caddy for holding bath products is attached to the wall, and a large mirror takes up about half the door. A shower curtain keeps the door and the TP attached to it from getting soaked.

The Satellite's Furrion stereo with USB and Bluetooth offers good surround sound with speakers inside and out. An LED TV is optional, as is a 13,500-Btu ceiling-mounted air conditioner and an electric A-frame jack. An 18,000-Btu furnace and a Fan-Tastic Vent are standard, and the 18DS is solar-ready.

We measured 7¼ inches ground clearance at the lowest point at the

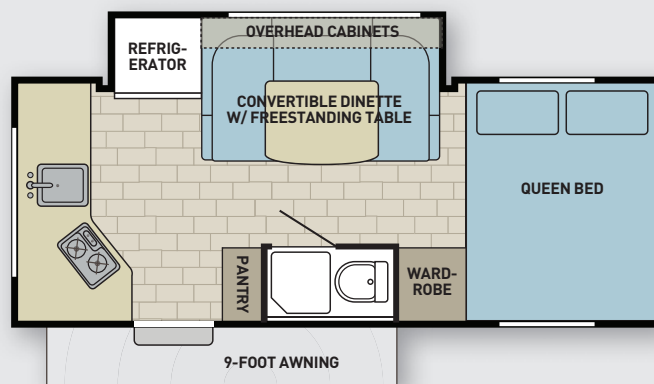
leaf springs on this model. While retracting the 9-foot electric awning, it's necessary to make sure the large grab-rail is not flush against the trailer, where it can interfere with the awning arm and damage it.

For off-the-beaten-path adventurers, an Extreme Package (\$742) includes 5 inches of extra ground clear-

ance, 15-inch off-road mud/snow tires, and an insulated, enclosed and heated underbelly, among other things.

Constructed of welded-aluminum framing, fiberglass side walls and metal backers, the Satellite 18DS is a well-rounded RV — literally and figuratively — with an aerodynamic design that offers everything needed for traveling in comfort while not going sky-high on the trimmings and price. 🚐

QUICK INFO



Exterior Length	20' 8"	LP-Gas Cap.	5 gal.
Exterior Width	6' 5"	UVW	3,055 lbs.
Interior Height	6' 6"	Hitch Weight	318 lbs.
Exterior Height	9' 4" (with A/C)	GVWR	3,790 lbs.
Freshwater Cap.	25.6 gal.	Base MSRP	\$16,912
Black/Gray-Water Cap.	24 gal./24 gal.	As Shown MSRP	\$22,539

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WALK-THROUGH: NORTHWOOD ARCTIC FOX 25Y

Four-Season Fox

Northwood's ruggedly built dual-entry trailer maximizes storage space and year-round livability



The rear-living-room design gives the space a bright, open feel. Built-in tables sit on both ends of the jackknife sofa.

RV manufacturers are constantly refining their travel trailers to better meet consumers' wishes and wants, resulting in floorplans, features, options and pricing that are attractive to even the most finicky shoppers. A great example is Northwood's Arctic Fox 25Y, a single-slide 30-footer with dual entry. The ruggedly built and elegantly appointed trailer has been one of the most popular-selling models in the company's premium line since the floorplan's debut a few years ago.

Built for four-season use, the 25Y is one of the heavier trailers in the class, with a dry weight close to

6,900 pounds. Its weight can be attributed to the robust steel chassis and welded, heavy-gauge boxed-aluminum framework covered with one-piece, multilayered composite-substrate walls filled with high-density foam-block insulation.

Storage space is a big part of the 25Y. The trailer has a large slam-latch access door on each side of the pass-through storage compartment under the front bedroom. Above the streetside end of the pass-through is a chute from the bedroom for dirty

laundry to be dropped into a basket. There're also a pair of convenient exterior storage compartments in the lower portion of the streetside dinette slideout and a narrow triple-shelf storage compartment just forward of the slide's picture window.

Dual entry is a welcome design for early birds and night owls, allowing entry to and exit from the front

(Right) The convertible dinette in the slide-out maximizes living space and allows for ease of conversation between the sofa and galley. (Far right) The queen-size mattress is on the firm side but quite comfortable. It's easy to get around the bed, and lifting it reveals storage space underneath.



The 30-foot Arctic Fox 25Y is one of Northwood's premium travel-trailer offerings with an aerodynamic design and a domed roof.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER



(Above, from left) Although the microwave is small, the 10-cubic-foot refrigerator-freezer, three-burner range and dual sink make up for it. On the street side, the glass-enclosed shower is roomy and bright with a skylight. The toilet is in a closet-size room on the curb side.

bedroom without bothering those in the aft living and kitchen space. Entering through the rear brings you into a wide-open living space with an L-shaped counter separating the galley from the jackknife sofa that spans the width of the rear picture window.

The layout and decor are very comfortable. All cabinetry appears to be well made, and the cabinet doors are solid wood. The curve in the dome-shaped 6½-foot ceiling eases any sense of claustrophobia, and LED lighting brightens an already airy interior.

The aforementioned slide moves the convertible street-side dinette, so there's bountiful walk-around space in the living room and kitchen area. A single push downward drops the table into the bed or bay-windowlike seating for guests. The layout also includes a pantry between the dinette and the

entertainment-center wall.

The optional electric fireplace with LED lights for flames creates a nice ambience on cold days and complements the 32-inch 12-volt DC LED TV and sound system that's standard on this model.

The galley is the traditional setup found in travel trailers, and the 10-cubic-foot RV refrigerator/freezer is a welcome upgrade. On the downside, the microwave is puny, and there's no option for a larger unit.

I loved the split-bathroom arrangement, with a closet-size private room for the porcelain foot-flush toilet located on the curb side and the glass-enclosed shower, washbasin, vanity and medicine cabinet in a bright,

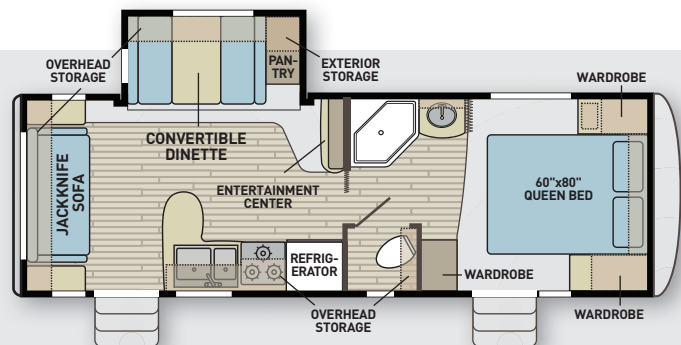
roomy streetside space.

The queen-size bed is comfortable, with plenty of walk-around room. The LED reading lights swivel, and the bed flips up to reveal a huge storage compartment for linens and other bulky items. Clothes are easily managed in the wardrobe closets that flank the headboard, and the clothes-hanger retainer strips are anchored in place so even the heaviest coats will stay put.

Northwood's designers and team that assemble the Arctic Fox 25Y should take great pride in what they have produced. As with most of the finer things in life, there's a cost for the added level of build quality, but the comfort and conveniences of the 25Y more than justify the expense. 🚐

QUICK INFO

Exterior Length	30'
Exterior Width	8' 6"
Interior Height	6' 6"
Exterior Height	11' 2"
Freshwater Cap.	57 gal.
Black/Gray-Water Cap.	35 gal./47 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
UVW	6,853 lbs.
Hitch Weight	760 lbs.
GVWR	10,000 lbs.
Base MSRP	\$42,797
As Shown MSRP	\$46,909



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NATURE MEETS CULTURE ON THE SHORES OF LAKE GEORGE IN THE SOUTHERN FOOTHILLS OF THE ADIRONDACK MOUNTAINS

Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1791 that, "Lake George is without comparison the most beautiful water I ever saw...." As someone who has been visiting Lake George for decades, I can attest to the accuracy of his observation. Known as the Queen of American Lakes, the pristine 32-mile-long waterway glistens in the sun as it caresses the rocky shoreline, embraces islands and dances beneath the forested Adirondack Mountains of New York.

Besides its stand-alone beauty, there are numerous things to do and see in and around Lake George. The area is home to two restored colonial historic sites, Fort Ticonderoga in the north and Fort William Henry in the south, as well as numerous hiking trails. Sitting on the southern shore within the town of Lake George is the Village of Lake George, a popular tourist spot that offers a cornucopia of experiences including dining, shopping, lake cruises, swimming at Million Dollar Beach, parasailing and a scenic drive

up Prospect Mountain, just to mention a few. All of this, plus both privately owned and public campgrounds make the region a wonderful RV destination.

Within a few miles are several RV parks and a pair of state-run campgrounds that include Hearthstone Point about 2 miles north of the village. As a young boy, I loved camping there with my family, swimming in the crystal-clear water and enjoying the excitement of the town. The campground had dirt roads then and was devoid of modern restroom facilities and showers. Much

has changed in the village and the campground, both of which now have modern amenities.

Since the Village of Lake George has become a major vacation spot, the southern part of the lake is more developed than the northern part. It is also where the action is. My wife, Linda, and I usually stay at the less-developed northern end, camping at the public Rogers Rock Campground. It is popular with RVers who do not require hookups.

Starting in the village, the 5½-mile Prospect Mountain Veterans Memorial Highway toll road leads to several overlooks on its journey to the 2,030-foot summit, where you are rewarded with a scenic panorama of the lake flowing around islands and lapping the shoreline. On clear days, the 100-mile, 360-degree view takes





in the vast wilderness of the Adirondack Mountains of New York and the Green Mountains of Vermont.

Also in town is Fort William Henry, rebuilt to its original 1755 specifications. The Lake George area and the historic two-story log fort served as settings for James Fenimore Cooper's novel *The Last of the Mohicans*. During the summer months, employees in period dress demonstrate what 18th-century life was like at the fort before its surrender to French and Indian forces. The retreating British-allied survivors were attacked in one of the worst massacres in colonial history. Subsequently, French General Louis-Joseph de Montcalm burned the fort to the ground.

A boat cruise is an enjoyable way to experience the lake itself. When our daughter, Shannon, was a little girl, we took the entire lake cruise, and we were enamored by the immensity and scenery of the lake and its environs.

(Above, from left) Two cyclists pedal through Ticonderoga Bicentennial Park toward the roaring falls of the La Chute River. Guests enjoy the Sagamore Resort pool and views of the historic hotel, originally built in 1883 and reconstructed from the ground up in 1894 and 1923 after fires.

With the sun warming our faces and the wind gently caressing us, we drank in the beauty of the islands dotting the deep-blue lake and the lush mountain forests on its shoreline.

The Lake George Steamboat Company offers a diversity of cruises on several different size boats, including lunch and dinner excursions. All of its boats, including a paddle-wheeler, have enclosed and outdoor observation decks, restrooms, snack bars, cocktail lounges and gift shops.

The village itself has numerous shops to visit and fine restaurants where you can choose everything from Mexican to Italian cuisine or just good old American steak. For the adventurous, parasailing offers an eagle's view of the town and lake as well as an adrenaline rush.

We always enjoy a walkabout through town, drinking it all in and then relaxing on the pier or catching some rays on the beach. If you are RVing with children, or still a child at heart, the Great Escape and Splashwater Kingdom is just south of the village on U.S. Route 9 in Queensbury. With more than 135 rides, shows and other attractions, including six roller coasters and a full water park, the Six Flags amusement park makes for a fun-filled visit.

The Village of Lake George can keep you busy for days, but the rest of the region shouldn't be missed. North of the village on the west side of the lake is Bolton Landing, a small town of 2,000 people with classic Adirondack-style restaurants, motels and shops. The 1869 Church of St. Sacrement, a stone building with stained-glass windows,

Take a step into the 19th century and cruise the scenic waters of Lake George on the *Minne-Ha-Ha*, one of the last steam-powered paddle-wheel boats in the United States.

derived its name from Lac du Saint-Sacrement, the original name of Lake George. During the French and Indian War, just before a major battle with the French, British Major General William Johnson renamed the waterway Lake George in honor of King George II.

One of the biggest attractions in Bolton Landing is the Sagamore Resort, named after a character in *The Last of the Mohicans* and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Opened in 1883, the resort sits on its own 70-acre island. There are eight restaurants, including several outside offering sweeping vistas of the glistening lake and mountains. Whenever we camp in the Lake George region, Linda and I spend a few hours savoring the ambience of the resort, enjoying an outdoor lunch and the views.

Bolton Landing also has two public beaches, as well as unique stores and restaurants such as the Indian Tepee Gift Shop and Bolton Beans, which serves

breakfast and lunch in a vintage railroad car. Boat rentals are available to explore the nearby narrows and its many islands, and there's swimming from the public islands. As a little girl, Shannon loved snorkeling in the clear water and observing the fish swimming around the rocks.

North of Bolton Landing is Tongue Mountain where Route 9N climbs through state-owned forest lands with 18 miles of trails, including the infamous 11.8-mile Tongue Mountain Loop Trail. Although the views of the narrows and lake are breathtaking, the trail is not for the casual hiker. It is rugged, and the area is home to rattlesnakes.

At the northern base of Tongue Mountain, an overlook supplies a panoramic vista of the lake and the mountains rising majestically into the blue heavens. From there it is a short, scenic ride to Rogers Rock Campground on the northern outskirts of Hague. Even if you are staying at another campground, Rogers Rock is worth a visit for its



STAY AND PLAY ON LAKE GEORGE

Getting to the namesake town and village on Lake George's southern tip is easy from exits 20, 21 and 22 off Interstate 87, about 50 miles north of Albany. Several full-service RV parks and a couple of public campgrounds operated by the New York Department of Environmental Conservation accommodate RVs near the village. Another popular state-run campground, Rogers Rock, is located near the northern end of the lake, just off State Route 9N past the town of Hague.

RV PARKS

Adirondack Camping Village

518-668-5226, www.adirondackcampingvillage.com

King Phillip's Campground

518-668-5763, www.kingphillipscampground.com

Lake George RV Park

888-982-3121, www.lakegeorgervpark.com

Ledgeview RV Park

888-353-5936, www.ledgeview.com

PUBLIC CAMPGROUNDS

Hearthstone Point Campground

518-668-5193, www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/24470.html

Lake George Battleground

518-668-3348, www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/24453.html

Rogers Rock Campground

518-585-6746, www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/24493.html

ATTRACTIONS

BOLTON LANDING

The Sagamore Resort

866-384-1944, www.thesagamore.com

LAKE GEORGE

Fort William Henry Museum and Restoration

518-668-5471, www.fwhmuseum.com

Lake George Steamboat Company

800-553-2628, www.lakegeorgesteamboat.com

QUEENSBURY

Six Flags Great Escape and Splashwater Kingdom

518-792-3500, www.sixflags.com/greatescape

TICONDEROGA

Fort Ticonderoga

518-585-2821, www.fortticonderoga.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Warren County Tourism Department

800-958-4748, www.visitlakegeorge.com

Mount Defiance gazes upon Lake Champlain and offers expansive views east to Vermont's verdant farmland and Green Mountain National Forest.

(Right) The fortress walls of the restored 1755 Fort Ticonderoga stand guard overlooking Lake Champlain and the New York countryside. Its silent cannons are reminders of the cost of freedom and those who have sacrificed to achieve and protect it. (Far right) Actors in period dress at the fort demonstrate how shoes were made.



beautiful beach and namesake peak. An impressive view of Rogers Slide, a cliff that appears to be one solid piece of stone, can be seen from the water. The campground rents canoes and kayaks; motorboat rentals are available just south of the campground.

Rogers Slide is an awe-inspiring sight, especially when cliff jumpers are plunging off its face. Legend has it that when Captain Robert Rogers, a colonist serving in the British army, was chased by Indians, he slid down

the face of the 700-foot precipice to escape — thus the name. An unmarked trail behind campsite 181 leads to the summit where the lake and surrounding mountains unfold like an immense multicolored quilt stitched by the hands of Mother Nature. The hike requires about two and a half hours round trip but is relatively moderate.

In nearby Ticonderoga, a narrow, twisty toll road leads to the top of Mount Defiance where, like an eagle soaring through the heavens, you get

a panorama of the Lake Champlain Valley along the New York-Vermont border. From this vantage point, the lush farmland of Vermont seems to flow into the loving arms of the Green Mountains that rise to the east. It is easy to comprehend how British General John Burgoyne got the Americans to surrender Fort Ticonderoga when they realized he had his artillery aimed at them from Mount Defiance.

Below, the stone fortress of Fort Ticonderoga stoically stands guard over

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(Right) The fieldstone Valley View Chapel, built in 1901, exudes serenity in its pastoral setting just south of Ticonderoga. (Below right) At home in the forest on the northern end of Lake George at Rogers Rock Campground, open from mid-May through mid-October.

the countryside. Built in 1755 by the French, it was originally named Fort Carillon. The fort was referred to as Key to the Continent because it controlled access to Lake Champlain and Lake George. From 1755 to 1777, it was attacked six times and flew the flags of three nations: France, Britain and the United Colonies. During the Revolution, militia leader Ethan Allen and his Green Mountains Boys captured the fort for the rebelling colonies without firing a shot.

Today, the fort is a living museum that offers tours, re-enactments, historical exhibits, a boat tour and the King's Garden, one of America's oldest cultivated landscapes with brick pathways. A nearby ferry crossing to and from Vermont runs from spring through fall.

It had been quite a few years since our last visit to the Lake George region. As we headed back to our campsite, a smile swam across my face. Even though I had seen it all many times before, the deep-blue beauty of the lake, the expansive mountain vistas, the diverse historic sites and the multitude of activities to experience them once again captivated me. Our next visit to this scenic and storied region will be sooner rather than later. 🚐



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FILL 'ER UP

Titan's midship replacement fuel tank increases capacity while maintaining a factory fit and look

No one can dispute that trucks are getting better as new models are introduced and facelifts are implemented. Technology has motivated drivetrain performance to new levels, and it's hard to call interiors anything but plush. But one area, fuel capacity, has been pretty stagnant, and even taken a few steps backward in some cases. The industry has hung on to moderate-size fuel tanks for a long time, and in solo service, driving range is decent. But latch on a big fifth-wheel, and that range shrinks substantially.

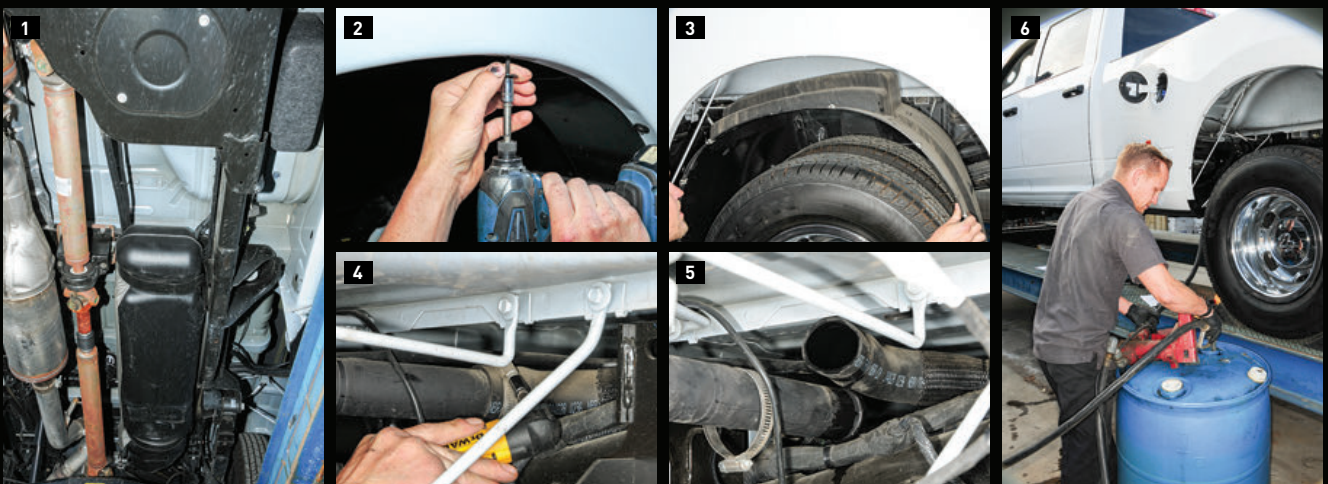
Commonly, trailer owners add a transfer-type fuel tank in the bed of the truck, which increases capacity by large numbers. Those who would rather use the space for carrying items in the bed look to companies like Titan Fuel Tanks for alternatives. Fortunately, Titan has

made a science of developing frame-mounted replacement fuel tanks for diesel-powered trucks, which greatly increases capacity.

When dealing with a tank swap, design tolerances are critical, so to find out just how practical it is to replace

the existing tank in a 2016 Ram 3500 dually with the Cummins engine, we contracted with Redlands Truck and RV, a service center skilled in heavy-duty RV repairs and accessory installs in Redlands, California.

The Ram truck was originally



1) The stock 32-gallon fuel tank fits neatly into the frame but does not fill up all the available space. 2) Screws holding the plastic shroud that covers the rear wheel well are removed and stored in a safe place. 3) Once the screws, pushpins and wire clamps are removed, the shroud is easily pulled out from the wheel well. 4) Removing the shroud provides access to loosen the filler and breather hose clamps. 5) Once released, the hoses can be separated. 6) It's best to run as much fuel as possible out of the factory tank before the install. The remaining fuel is pumped into a clean barrel using a system designed for this purpose.



equipped with a 32-gallon tank, which, interestingly, is smaller than some of the previous models. Better fuel economy offset some of the deficiency, but towing a fifth-wheel still meant more frequent fuel stops on longer trips. And since the front of the bed was fitted with a full-size toolbox to store needed items, there was no option for a transfer tank.

Among its lineup of aftermarket fuel tanks, Titan offers a replacement midship tank for 2013 to 2017 Ram 2500/3500 trucks with the Cummins

7) The strap holding the factory tank is released from its mounting bracket. Working under a lift is best, and using a helper to stabilize the tank makes it easier to disconnect hoses and the sender wire connector. 8) Hose connectors from the rear fuel filter are released before the factory tank is removed from the frame. 9) It takes two people to pull the factory tank down and away from the truck.

engine (part number 7030313) that increases fuel capacity to 55 gallons, moving the driving range to around 500 miles for the test truck. The tanks are made of military-grade, cross-linked polyethylene and have a 1/4-inch wall thickness. Undoubtedly, some people

are uneasy about "plastic" tanks, but keep in mind that the OEM community has been using polyethylene tanks for a long time, and it has a proven track record for reliability.

That point is driven home by watching the video on Titan's website showing a filled tank weighing 800 pounds surviving a 30-foot-drop test, which is comparable to a 30-MPH impact. According to the company, the tanks pass or surpass U.S. Department

10) Titan's midship replacement tank is much longer and about 2½ inches deeper than its factory counterpart. 11 and 12) The factory sender is secured with a ring that twists and locks. 13) Titan supplies a much harder aluminum ring (14) that uses nyloc nuts to hold the sender and O-ring in place.





of Transportation standards.

Some of the additional benefits of a polyethylene tank claimed by the company include no risk of delamination, the elimination of condensation problems and the ability to use biodiesel without fear of corrosion. There are no welds to crack, and the tanks are lighter than those made of metal. The tanks are made in America and protected by a lifetime warranty.

One of our concerns prior to ordering was the aesthetics of hanging a much larger tank on the frame. There's a huge difference in dimensions, but Titan has taken advantage of all the free space surrounding the smaller factory tank, leaving the replacement with only a 2½-inch differential in depth. While the new tank fills up just about all the voids, without interfering with drivetrain and

15) The side shield on the factory tank is not used on the replacement tank. The company claims that the increased wall thickness of its tanks (¼ inch) makes the shield unnecessary and stands behind that statement with a lifetime warranty. 16) The filler hose is removed from the factory tank for use on the replacement unit. Check for integrity before reusing. 17) The new tank is washed with clean diesel fuel to make sure nothing got in during transit. 18) Existing sender is mounted into the new tank, being cognizant of proper positioning.

exhaust components, there's no real difference in the look of the truck.

The tank is delivered in a sturdy box with all the necessary hardware to facilitate the install, including galvanized-steel mounting straps, bushings, rollover-safety vent valves and an O-ring to seat the existing sender. We were a little surprised that the sender and hose holes were not covered, so we washed the tank with fuel prior to the install, even though the inside looked clean.

Obviously, before taking on this project, it's best to run out as much

diesel as possible in the factory tank to limit the weight; the leftover fuel was pumped into a clean barrel. From here, the wheel-well shroud was removed to gain access to the filler and breather hoses, which were disconnected. The shroud is attached with screws and pushpins that must be retained for the reinstall. Wire clamps on each side of the shroud needed to be released to prevent damage.

Before removing the two straps that hold the factory tank in place, the necessary hoses and wires were removed. This is where a helper comes in handy, since the straps needed to be loosened and the tank supported to provide enough room for the technician to reach in and release some of the hoses. Although the process seems complicated, removing the factory tank took less than an hour.

Once the tanks were on the ground,



19) Once the O-ring is in place, the aluminum hold-down ring is secured with nyloc nuts, which are torqued to 20 ft.-lbs. After at least 15 minutes, the nuts must be retorqued to spec to seat the O-ring properly. 20) While an assistant holds the new tank in place, the galvanized-steel mounting straps, bushings and brackets (21) are prefit to make sure everything lines up. 22) Thread sealer is used on the bracket bolts before final tightening.

23) The filler and breather hoses are reconnected and hose clamps tightened. 24) Once everything is buttoned up, the tank is completely filled and checked for leaks, a step that is stressed in the accompanying technical bulletin.

the hoses and the sender were repositioned on the new tank. The factory tank has a cheesy steel ring with detents to hold the sender in place, while the Titan tank employs a solid aluminum ring that's bolted in place — a testament to quality and longevity. The O-ring seals the sender to the tank, and the nyloc nuts must be torqued to 20 ft-lbs. The instructions and attached label clearly warn that the nuts be torqued again after setting for at least 15 minutes. This gives the O-ring time to settle into position before final tightening, assuring the seal will not leak.

Mounting the new tank took a few grunts while hooking up the hoses, but using the helper made the job easier.



which coincidentally paralleled the time and mileage when the tank was installed. That was the only bugaboo in the process, due to a stubborn sender connector on the rear filter. Leak-free, we were happily on our way, knowing that the next fill-up will be much farther down the road.

The benefits of the extended-range

be accurate until the ECU is reprogrammed. This can be done at EFLive service centers (www.efilive.com) or Ford dealerships for its brand of trucks.

Installing a larger fuel tank will no doubt change the way you travel. 🚛

Titan Fuel Tanks

800-728-4982, www.titanfueltanks.com



25) The wheel-well shroud is reinstalled, paying careful attention not to lose the bolt clips (26) and pushpins (27). The shroud went back in place perfectly, and the wire clips on the back sides were replaced, finishing the job.

The tank fit like a glove in its allocated space, and the straps were positioned with little fanfare. After connecting the filler and breather hoses, the wheel-well shroud was replaced and the tank filled. Titan sends along a technical bulletin that strongly encourages the installer to completely fill the tank and check for leaks.

We also elected to change the front and rear fuel filters, in compliance with the factory service mandate,

fuel tank support the \$1,320 MSRP of the tank plus the labor costs, which can approach \$150 per hour. An extended driving range allows owners to take advantage of better fuel pricing and makes it easier to plan the day when fueling stops are not needed. It's fun to watch how slowly the fuel-gauge needle moves toward empty, but the onboard fuel economy and range readouts are set for the factory tank and will not

28) Titan's larger tank fit like a glove, occupying just about all the available space along the frame. There were no clearance issues with the drive shaft or the exhaust system.



SUMMER ON



INDULGING IN LONG, LAZY BEACH DAYS, OUTDOOR ADVENTURES AND MOUTHWATERING MEALS

We have barely unhitched the trailer at Atlantic Oaks Campground in Eastham, Massachusetts, and yet we are already climbing back into the truck. The sun is low in the sky, and the air smells like the sea. It's time for our family to kick off summer vacation in the most American way possible, by taking in a Cape Cod Baseball League game at one of the 10 fields peppered throughout the iconic peninsula.

The wooden-bat league has been a summer staple on Cape Cod since 1885 and attracts top collegiate talent from around the country each season. People argue the merits of the different baseball fields, but our vote goes to Veterans

Field, which has been hosting Chatham teams since 1923. Here we buy a cup of chowder, spread out a blanket and watch as our boys run around with their baseball gloves, hoping to catch a foul ball as a souvenir.

By the bottom of the ninth inning, we have settled into the spirit of the Cape Cod summer, and we know the days ahead will be filled with hiking, kayaking, swimming, biking, shopping and, of course, eating plenty of lobster rolls.

Our sticks-and-bricks home is not far from Cape Cod, yet it took us years to plan a trip here, having heard stories of exclusive enclaves and highways choked with traffic. When we finally visited for the first time, we instead discovered a magical RV destination, full of wonderful campgrounds and seemingly endless ways to while away the days of vacation.

Cape Cod holds a surprising variety of experiences and landscapes for a skinny spit of land extending 65 miles into



(Far left) From mid-June to mid-August, the Cape Cod Baseball League covers the bases with college athletes. **(Left)** Sandy Neck Light is one of 14 postcard-worthy beacons on the cape.

N CAPE COD



IS ALL PART OF THE CLASSIC SEASIDE EXPERIENCE ON MASSACHUSETTS' 65-MILE-LONG PENINSULA

the Atlantic Ocean. Visitors can kayak in kettle ponds formed thousands of years ago by receding glaciers and climb 252 feet to the top of the Pilgrim Monument in Provincetown. They can hike along marshy paths at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary and bike along the 25-mile Cape Cod Rail Trail, stopping for an ice-cream cone at any of a dozen charming towns.

Eastham nestles in what is often referred to as the quiet side of Cape Cod, about 30 minutes northeast of the bustling port city of Hyannis and 30 minutes south of quirky Provincetown. Here we are close to uncrowded

bay and ocean beaches, and often find ourselves picking a new one each day. First Encounter is our favorite bay beach, and we love to paddle around in kayaks while our kids play in the amazing pools created by the extreme tides of Cape Cod Bay. We visit Coast Guard Beach on the Atlantic Ocean side when we are in the mood for riding waves and spotting seals.

Cape Cod has quite a few options for campgrounds, but we have a personal favorite that calls us back again and again — Atlantic Oaks in Eastham. This Good Sam Park is comfortable and clean, but also quiet



(Top) The population of Provincetown, or Ptown, on the tip of Cape Cod, swells from 3,000 year-round to 60,000 in the summer months. **(Right)** North of Provincetown, the protected waters of Stellwagen Bank attract humpbacks, finbacks and other whale species.



CAMPING ON THE CAPE

From Plymouth to Provincetown, RV parks roll out the welcome mat. Here's just a sample.

BOURNE

Bay View Campground

508-759-7610, www.bayviewcampground.com

BREWSTER

Shady Knoll Campground

508-896-3002, www.shadyknoll.com

DENNIS PORT

Campers Haven RV Resort

508-398-2811, www.campershavenrvresort.com

EAST FALMOUTH

Cape Cod Campresort and Cabins

508-548-1458, www.capecampresort.com

EASTHAM

Atlantic Oaks Campground

508-255-1437, www.atlanticoaks.com

EAST WAREHAM

Cape Cod's Maple Park Campground and RV Park

508-295-4945, www.capecodmaplepark.com

PLYMOUTH

Sandy Pond Campground

508-759-9336, www.sandypond.com

SANDWICH

Peters Pond RV Resort

888-434-4381, www.sunrvresorts.com

FOR MORE INFORMATION

If you go, the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce Welcome Center in Centerville is a must-stop at the junction of U.S. Route 6 and State Route 132. 888-332-2732, www.capecodchamber.org



(Above, from left) Since 1946, the Art Costa family has been driving visitors through the dunes. On the northern end of the cape, America's tallest all-granite structure, the Pilgrim Monument, towers above the beach in Provincetown. To the south in Orleans, on the cape's inner "elbow," the Church of the Transfiguration hosts public tours and demonstrations of its classic E.M. Skinner organ.

and simple, and we always meet guests who have returned here year after year, even decades in some cases. With full hookups and pull-throughs, Atlantic Oaks can accommodate all rig sizes, but it is the location that makes this an ideal base camp.

Atlantic Oaks offers direct access to the Cape Cod Rail Trail, and we adore departing directly from our campsite for daily bike rides, peddling south toward Cape Cod National Seashore or north for a cup of our favorite coffee at Beanstock roasters. We also use the Rail Trail for frequent visits to Arnold's Lobster and Clam Bar, which serves the best hot lobster roll in all of New England.

Part of the magic of this section of the cape is the presence of the national seashore and the resulting conservation of the natural landscape. On our first visit, the Salt Pond Visitor Center helped us understand the unique geological forces that shaped this region and gave us an increased appreciation of the kettle ponds, salt marshes and dunes that we have enjoyed so much on our trips. We made sure to set aside time for the educational movies and a tour of the museum, which highlights the history of whaling

in the surrounding area.

Our boys also love the Province Lands Visitor Center at the northern end of the national seashore, where they can climb up to the observation deck and take in a 360-degree view of the dunes and the Atlantic Ocean.

There are plenty of hikes in the national seashore, but we think the best one on Cape Cod is at the Wellfleet Bay Wildlife Sanctuary. The Boardwalk Trail leads through salt marshes, where we spot hawks, sea birds and hundreds of fiddler crabs. Taking the advice of locals, we time our hike to coincide with low tide, since the boardwalk gets covered with water when the tide rolls in. After the hike, we tour the nature center, where we learn about the research and conservation efforts at the sanctuary, see our first blue lobster and read aloud in the cozy children's book nook.

A scenic 20-minute drive takes us from this quiet nature sanctuary to an urban outpost exploding with personality and energy. Provincetown, or Ptown for those in the know, is full of art galleries and off-beat tourist shops. It is also home to the amazing Provincetown Public Library, known for the half-scale



model of the fishing schooner *Rose Dorothea* that resides in the middle of the children's section. The library's rotating art exhibits and annual book festival point to Provincetown's literary tradition of hosting famous writers such as Tennessee Williams and Eugene O'Neill during the summer months.

We walk a couple of blocks from the library to arrive at the Pilgrim Monument, built in the early 20th century to commemorate the spot

where the Pilgrims landed in 1620 before continuing to Plymouth. The view from the top is sweeping. Interior stones were donated by towns and organizations from around the country, so a scavenger hunt for familiar places is a fun way to pass the tower climb.

After the climb, it is finally time for a highlight of a Cape Cod vacation — a sunset ride through the dunes of the national seashore departing from Standish Street in downtown Provincetown.

Art's Dune Tours was founded in 1946, when Art Costa would drive customers through the dunes in his 1936 Ford woodie. Now his son Rob is running the family business with a fleet of Suburbans that carry guests through the dunes where we see the shacks of the Peaked Hill Bars Historic District. These shacks, built in the early 1900s to house members of the U.S. Life-Saving Service, have no electricity, running water or plumbing. Eighteen of the 19



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*A second Yamaha EF2000iSv2 is recommended to use the full capabilities of this model. Read Owner's Manual before operation. Specifications subject to change without notice. ©2017 Yamaha Motor Corporation, U.S.A. All rights reserved. Yamaha Outdoor Power Equipment, Circle 129 on Reader Service Card

shacks are now owned by the National Park Service, and people can enter a lottery for the chance to stay in one.

The dune tour ends at the beach, where our guide sets up chairs for us to enjoy the sunset. Our boys collect shells, while we snap pictures and enjoy some snacks and drinks we brought in a cooler. It is a one-of-a-kind experience in a one-of-a-kind destination.

The next morning we are up bright and early for another quintes-

sential Cape Cod experience — whale watching. Cape Cod has been named one of the world's top-10 places for whale watching largely because of its proximity to the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary where humpback, finback and minke whales return every season to feed in the protected waters.

Hyannis Whale Watcher Cruises, departing out of Barnstable, deliver a breathtaking wildlife-viewing

experience, but we are most impressed with the emphasis the company places on education and conservation efforts. An intern teaches our boys about whales, allowing them to touch a baleen and bones, and the guide explains why no sonar or bait are used to attract animals to the boat. We don't spend too much time in any one location so as not to disrupt the whales, and yet we are treated to fabulous demonstrations of breaching and blows.

The tide is right for us to stop in Rock Harbor on our way back north and watch the charter boats head out for an afternoon of fishing. The unique presence of pine trees as channel markers creates a visually stunning scene, and photographers will want to capture memorable images here.

After the boys play in the endless tidal flats, we stuff ourselves at Cap't Cass Rock Harbor Seafood, which flies under the radar as far as lobster shacks are concerned. The food here tastes like the sea in the best way imaginable. From bowls of clam chowder to scallop po'-boys to lobster rolls, we order far too much food and polish off every morsel.

And then it is time to tour the Church of the Transfiguration, directly across the street from Cap't Cass. This religious community, founded on the principles of the Benedictine monastic tradition, has been located on Cape Cod for more than 40 years. The church itself is a work of art, with limestone and tile murals designed to tell the story of Christianity. Tours are offered daily, except Wednesday, throughout the week, leaving from the gift shop, and there is an organ demonstration on Fridays after 3 p.m. The guide takes care to draw our children into the tour, and they are as spellbound by the architecture and art as the adults.

As we head back to the campground, it is impossible to resist planning a return trip. Time on Cape Cod offers the opportunity to combine lazy days spent in beach chairs with outdoor adventures and historical learning, activities that are seamlessly woven into the fabric of life on this Atlantic peninsula. Now we understand what all the fuss is about. 📱

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B ★★★★★
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Customer Rating ★★★★★
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Great outdoor accent lighting
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350 lb. capacity
Customer Rating ★★★★★
\$59.99 Compare \$257
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PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE SUPER COUPON
SAVE \$30
1500 LB. CAPACITY ATV/MOTORCYCLE LIFT Customer Rating ★★★★★
Lift range: 5-1/2" to 17"
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ITEM 61632/60536 shown
34018520



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34009117



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2 TON FOLDABLE SHOP CRANE Customer Rating ★★★★★
Boom extends from 41" to 61-3/4"
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ITEM 60388/69514 shown
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CENTECH SUPER COUPON
Customer Rating ★★★★★
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\$299 Compare \$69.99
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CELL POWER

THE LATEST WEBOOST DRIVE
4G-X RV CELL-SIGNAL BOOSTER
KEEPS RVERS CONNECTED
WHEREVER THEY ROAM

Industry surveys consistently show that RVerS want to stay connected, and they want the connection to be good. That's hard to achieve in areas where internet connectivity is poor and cellular signals are sparse. Campgrounds typically offer limited internet service because of local infrastructure, leaving cellular and satellite as the remaining options for connectivity. Satellite is extremely expensive and can be slow, based on speed packages, which leaves the best and most prevalent source of mobile internet the cellular network.

The major carriers continue to improve their cellular systems by upgrading to 4G speeds and adding towers to cover more areas, but in many places where RVerS like to travel, the towers can be far apart and blocked by topography.

To counter this dilemma, Wilson Electronics has been manufacturing cellular-signal boosters for years, and its newest offering, the weBoost Drive 4G-X RV, is its most powerful to date, providing up to a 32-times-stronger cellular signal



Drive 4G-X RV components include (left to right) an indoor antenna, a base booster unit and an outdoor omnidirectional antenna.

and increasing the reach by a maximum of 50 decibels, according to the company.

We recently installed and tested the system, which is designed for do-it-yourself setup. The unit will accommodate up to four users across all carriers simultaneously, enhancing talk, text and high-speed 4G LTE data, as well as 3G-network signals, as claimed by weBoost. We installed this kit on a Dutchmen Coleman travel trailer, but the installation process is basically the same on any RV.

The packaging is carefully thought out and designed to help guide the installation. Inside the big box are labeled and sealed smaller boxes marked A and B, along with easy-to-follow directions. To install the Drive 4G-X RV, you'll need a screw gun, drill, 1-inch hole saw, silicone or similar sealer, a set of wrenches and a tape measure. You can get power to the main unit by using the included AC adaptor to plug into an AC outlet (limiting use to when AC power is provided) or using the kit's DC wire harness. Wiring to a 12-volt DC circuit will require electrical tape and Scotchlok connectors or other DC terminals to make the connections.

The first step is installing the external omnidirectional antenna. This wide-band antenna is a marked improvement over previous versions, which required aiming. The best place on an RV to install the antenna is on the top of the ladder. This is not to say it can't be installed elsewhere, such as on a side wall or a custom-fabricated bracket of the installer's choice, but installing it on the ladder with the included hardware is the simplest option.

The next step is drilling a 1-inch through the side wall of the RV. Plan this step carefully, avoiding inner-wall structure and making sure both inner and outer holes will be in a good location. In this case, there was an inside cabinet in the upper-rear corner of the trailer, which made it easy to route the cable. Structure in RV walls always runs across the top of the wall, with studs running as frequently as every 16 inches (laminated walls may have far fewer studs, as a rule).

Make certain no wiring or piping interferes with the planned hole location before drilling. This may take some investigation. Tapping and pressing on the wall may be helpful, or using a stud finder (available at most home centers) will do the trick. It's best to start the hole with a small bit, to make sure there are no obstructions, and then



1) The weBoost Drive 4G-X RV comes in a series of boxes that make it easy to plan the installation. Instructions are simple, direct and ideal for do-it-yourselfers. **2)** We decided to mount the main unit behind the TV. Not only were there good places to run antenna cables, but with the TV booster circuit behind the panel, there was adequate 12-volt DC power to tap into. **3)** Once the location for the hole needed to route the antenna cable was determined, a pilot hole was drilled. A 1-inch hole saw was used to drill through the inside panel.

4) With the pilot hole drilled all the way through, the 1-inch hole saw was used on the outside. **5)** The antenna was installed on the ladder, the cable was routed through the hole, and the cover was placed and sealed. Zip-tie clamps attach the cable neatly to the trailer, with a loop for runoff so moisture can't get into the wall.



CELL POWER

use the hole saw, cutting the inside panel first, followed by locating the pilot hole on the outside and drilling from there. If you have any doubts about where to drill, contact the RV manufacturer for clarification.

The antenna kit comes with a clamshell cover. Once the cable is passed through the hole and run to the antenna, the cable is connected to the antenna, and the cover is positioned over the wire and hole for a test fit, pre-attaching the screws to the side wall. The cover is then removed, sealer is applied, and the cover is resecured.

The rest of the installation is simple. Run the wiring in an acceptable location to where the base booster unit will be installed, securing it with the included cable mounts and ties. The base unit needs to be in a spot where power is accessible and the antenna cables can reach it. The mount attaches to any surface, and the base unit snaps into it.

The inside antenna is a bottom-weighted, rubber-based tabletop

antenna. We drilled a hole in the side of the fireplace cabinet and ran the cable inside the cabinet to the base unit, which was mounted on the wall behind the TV. Again, the base unit can be mounted in a cabinet or any other dry location. The connections were made, and the installation was completed.

While the installation was done in a city environment, cellular service was spotty. In fact, a weBoost signal booster for home and office use had been installed at the location to serve the building. Inside the RV, cellular service had been one to two bars max, but when the new Drive 4G-X RV was turned on, as expected, the signal went to five bars.

The printed and online instructions

6 The bottom-weighted, rubber-footed indoor antenna found a home on the fireplace mantel, and the cable was routed through the cabinet. This was relatively simple because the cabinet was already disassembled for the Furrion entertainment-system installation that will be featured in *Trailer Life* this fall.



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7) The base unit was wired to the 12-volt DC system, so it is always on; a solar-charging system prevents battery discharge. When the trailer is in storage, the power cord is unplugged from the base unit, but a power switch could have been installed or the 120-volt AC adaptor could have been plugged into an adjacent receptacle.

8) During the test, bars increased from two to five, and placing calls and using the internet was fast and flawless. While this photo shows the phone next to the antenna, improvements were realized throughout the main cabin of the trailer.

show how to change the signal-strength meter on Apple and Android phones from bars to decibels to get a truly accurate reading. According to weBoost, a signal increase of just 3 decibels provides two times more power and signal amplification, so even a small increase can be the difference between a good call and a dropped one.

A point worth mentioning is that this is an open signal repeater, so, theoretically, the neighbors or other nearby

cellular users could piggyback onto your system. All this means is that they could benefit from the strengthened signal, not that they could use your data or cellular service.

The Drive 4G-X RV comes with a two-year warranty, carries an MSRP of \$499.99 and is available through the company's webstore and on Amazon. 🚚

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ST215 / 75R14 - 6PR

ST205 / 75R15 - 6PR

ST205 / 75R15 - 8PR

ST225 / 75R15 - 8PR

ST225 / 75R15 - 10PR

ST235 / 80R16 - 10PR*

*3 ply sidewall construction

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MINNESOTA'S

A LEISURELY SPIN THROUGH THE NORTH STAR STATE ON 21 SCENIC BYWAYS, FROM WELL-



Whether it's looking through an opening in the trees lining a shaded boulevard or gazing out beyond one of the city's many lakes, glimpses of the Minneapolis skyline appear from countless stops along the **Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway**. A completely urban drive, the route links a dozen metropolitan parkway systems and connects the downtown riverfront with the city's landmark chain of lakes. Passing through diverse neighborhoods, it meanders along the towering banks of the Mississippi and brings travelers within footsteps of legendary Minnehaha Falls.

The 52-mile corridor through Minnesota's largest city is just one of 21 state and national scenic byways crossing from border to border on nearly 2,700 miles of paved roads. Together they ribbon the state, creating a network of intimate routes that take travelers deep into the heart of Minnesota and give access to myriad landscapes, natural wonders and places of historic and cultural significance.

FAR WEST

Stretching 414 miles along Minnesota's western boundary, the **King of Trails** is the state's second longest scenic

byway. Once a path used by Native Americans and pioneers, the route was paved and dedicated in 1919. This royal road begins in Winnipeg, Manitoba, and extends south to the Gulf of Mexico, following U.S. Route 75 most of the way.

The Minnesota portion of the King of Trails showcases the state's rich geological history, passing the headwaters of both the Red and Minnesota rivers, crossing the Laurentian Divide and skirting the massive rock outcroppings at Big Stone National Wildlife Refuge. Near the southern border, the state's Native American heritage is showcased at

Pipestone National Monument. Visitors are introduced to the site where the unique red-clay stone used to make sacred ceremonial "peace pipes" is still mined.

Two thirds of the way down the King of Trails, the **Minnesota River Valley National Scenic Byway** heads east, following its namesake river for 267 miles through the state's prairie region, connecting river towns and cutting through rich agricultural country with pockets of woodlands and plentiful lakes and rivers. Several state parks and monuments provide glimpses of the area's natural beauty and cultural history.

SOUTHEAST

Scenic byways in southeastern Minnesota spotlight the unglaciated "driftless" region left from the last ice age. The steep valleys of the Root River system and the looming bluffs of the Mississippi River are two of the major

FINEST MILES

TRAVELED ROUTES TO REMOTE DRIVES THROUGH OPEN PRAIRIE AND ARBOREAL FORESTS



geological features along the 88-mile **Historic Bluff Country National Scenic Byway**, another of Minnesota's eight federally designated scenic routes.

Built in the 1920s, the byway passes through small rural towns with regional art galleries and Amish crafts for sale, and offers panoramic views from the towering limestone bluffs. More than 600 spring-fed creeks flow through the countless valleys, many of them in state parks with opportunities for trout fishing, canoeing and camping.

Near the Iowa border, at the southern end of Highway 56, the remnants of tallgrass prairies that once covered millions of acres across the Great Plains can be found along the 31 miles of the **Shooting Star Scenic Byway**. Beginning nearby in La Crescent, the Apple Capital of Minnesota, the **Apple Blossom Scenic Byway** passes a profusion of blossoming orchards each spring and roadside fruit stands in autumn.

Twilight casts a glow on Minneapolis, host of the 52-mile Grand Rounds National Scenic Byway, the country's longest continuous network of urban parkways.



MISSISSIPPI AND ST. CROIX RIVERS

Nearly the entire eastern edge of Minnesota is defined by scenic byways, with more than 450 miles paralleling the Mississippi River and Lake Superior from Iowa to Ontario. Five byways form a nearly continuous route that showcases the iconic river, massive freshwater lake and another landmark waterway, the St. Croix River.

Minnesota's longest byway, at 575 miles, the **Great River Road** follows the Mississippi and is part of a 10-state tourism network. Along its Minnesota route, travelers pass through Winona,

a cultural center for music, theater and art, and Wabasha, home of the National Eagle Center.

Not far from Minneapolis, the **St. Croix Scenic Byway** follows the Mississippi for 124 miles, beginning near the historic river town of Stillwater. The route offers breathtaking views of the deep, narrow canyon cut by the river to create the dalles at Taylors Falls. As the byway continues northward, the landscape transforms into the pine forests and aspen stands of Minnesota's north woods.

Used by seasoned motorists

(Above, left to right) Grand Rounds circles Minneapolis and comes to a city park with Minnehaha Falls as its centerpiece. Near the town of Taylors Falls, the St. Croix Scenic Byway parallels the eponymous river.

as a scenic shortcut to Duluth and points north, the **Veterans Evergreen Memorial Scenic Byway** is a 50-mile stretch of Minnesota Highway 23 that winds through rolling hills covered in coniferous forests of pine and spruce. Two of Minnesota's more ruggedly landscaped state parks, Banning and Jay Cooke, are at either end of the byway.

MINNESOTA'S NATIONAL SCENIC BYWAYS

Among its 21 scenic byways, the North Star State lays claim to eight national scenic byways. Selected by the U.S. Department of Transportation for their scenic, recreational, geological, cultural and historic virtues, these routes are considered the cream of the crop when it comes to on-the-road sightseeing.

Edge of the Wilderness

47 miles: **Grand Rapids to Effie**
www.edgeofthewilderness.com/eow-national-scenic-byway

Grand Rounds

52 miles: **Throughout Minneapolis**
www.minneapolis-parks.org/parks_destinations/trails_parkways

Great River Road

575 miles: **Lake Itasca to Iowa**
www.mnmississippiriver.com
www.experiencemississippiriver.com

Gunflint Trail

57 miles: **Grand Marais to Sea Gull Lake**
www.visitcookcounty.com/communities/gunflint-trail

Historic Bluff Country

88 miles: **La Crescent to Dexter**
www.bluffcountry.com/scenicbyways.html

Minnesota River Valley

287 miles: **Belle Plaine to West Browns Valley**
www.mnrivervalley.com

North Shore Drive

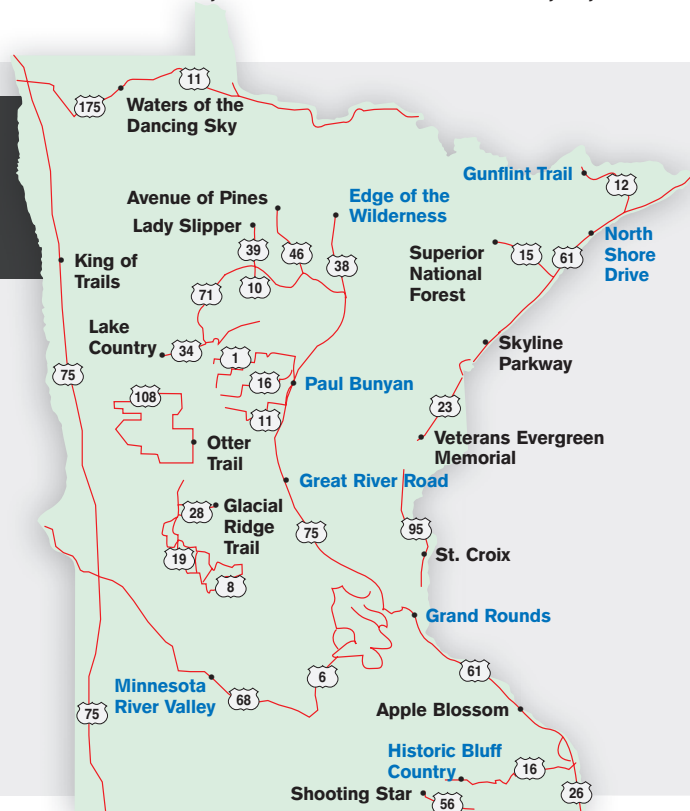
142 miles: **Duluth to Grand Portage**
www.superiorbyways.com/routes/north-shore-scenic-drive

Paul Bunyan

54 miles: **Pine River to Pequot Lakes**
www.paulbunyan.com/scenicbyway.org

National Scenic Byways

www.fhwa.dot.gov/byways/states/mn



(Right) From Canal Park in Duluth to the Canadian border at Grand Portage, North Shore Drive presents some breathtaking landscapes and passes seven state parks. Among them is the 2,200-acre namesake park of Split Rock Lighthouse (below), a picturesque landmark that towers above Lake Superior from its cliff-top perch.

LAKE SUPERIOR

Just under 20 miles long, the **Skyline Parkway** is the shortest of Minnesota's scenic byways. It offers stunning bird's-eye-view turnouts overlooking the port city of Duluth and the westernmost tip of Lake Superior.

Continuing north from Duluth is one of the state's, and the nation's, most scenic routes, **North Shore Drive**. For 142 miles, Minnesota Highway 61 follows the spectacular shoreline of Lake Superior, the largest of the Great Lakes. From the huge iron-mining structures at Two Harbors to the artsy feel of Grand Marais, North Shore Drive channels Minnesota's north-country character, charm and stunning grandeur. RV parks and state park campgrounds are spread out between roaring waterfalls and cascading rivers, many of which can be viewed from large turnouts.

A fitting North Shore climax is a visit to Grand Portage National Monument. The replica of the Northwest Company's fur-trading outpost and the adjoining Heritage Center offer detailed interpretations of the history and lifestyle of Native Americans and Voyageurs in this region of northern Minnesota and Canada.

NORTH WOODS

Two highways connected to North Shore Drive extend west into the region bordering the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. The **Superior National Forest** and **Gunflint Trail** scenic byways offer paved routes through remote reaches of northeastern Minnesota. The Superior National Forest byway heads west into the state's Iron Range region, and the



PHOTO COURTESY OF EXPLORE MINNESOTA TOURISM

Gunflint Trail includes an opportunity to hike Eagle Mountain, the highest point in Minnesota.

The 191-mile **Waters of the Dancing Sky** route travels east to west near the Canadian border. Named for the frequent arrays of Northern Lights viewable across the region, the corridor is Minnesota's northernmost scenic byway.

From Voyageurs National Park on the eastern end to the North Dakota border on the west, the byway passes through the Lake of the Woods region with its magnificent fall foliage and world-renowned fishing. The gleaming white-barked birch



SCENIC BYWAYS
RIBBON THE STATE,
CREATING A NETWORK
OF INTIMATE ROUTES
THAT TAKE TRAVELERS
INTO THE HEART OF
MINNESOTA AND GIVE
ACCESS TO MYRIAD
LANDSCAPES AND
NATURAL WONDERS.

MINNESOTA'S FINEST MILES

trees and vivid autumn colors in Zippel Bay State Park continue along much of the byway's reach across northern Minnesota.

INTERIOR

In the state's inland region, the **Paul Bunyan** and **Glacial Ridge** scenic byways showcase the glacially formed central lakes region. Commercial campgrounds and nearly a dozen state parks along the routes offer RV sites and other facilities.

Chippewa National Forest is showcased by the **Edge of the Wilderness**, **Avenue of the Pines** and **Lake Country** scenic byways, introducing travelers to a variety of wonders throughout this predominantly red pine forest, including the largest population of bald eagles in America, Minnesota's fifth-largest lake (Lake Winnibogish) and what's been called one of the best fall-color routes in the nation.

The **Lady Slipper** and **Otter Trail** scenic byways unite for 178 miles of glimpses into Minnesota's rich logging and agricultural heritage. Otter Trail furnishes its route with easily identifiable signs that guide travelers to landmarks and other attractions. Each byway has campsites that accommodate RVs alongside it or within a short distance, including 21 campgrounds in the Chippewa Forest alone.

Complete with paved highways, plentiful campgrounds and convenient hubs for stocking up on supplies, the Minnesota Scenic Byways network introduces travelers to the many wonders of the land of more than 12,000 lakes. 📍

IF YOU GO

While all of Minnesota's scenic byways are paved, many wind through remote areas and are narrow and sometimes shoulderless. In rural regions, especially in western and southern Minnesota, drivers should be mindful of agricultural machinery sharing the highways. In urban centers, particularly on the Skyline Parkway in Duluth, metro traffic and the sometimes narrow neighborhood streets may present a challenge to RVers towing larger trailers.

Explore Minnesota Tourism

The state tourism department offers an online database of scenic byways searchable by key word and distance from cities and towns. The site also features a searchable list of public and commercial campgrounds.

www.exploreminnesota.com/where-to-go/scenic-byways

www.exploreminnesota.com/places-to-stay/campgrounds

Minnesota Department of Transportation

The state transportation department supplies another helpful website for scenic-byway travel planning. A map plots locations, and links connect to additional websites that provide regional travel information.

www.dot.state.mn.us/scenicbyways

Good Sam Club

Good Sam's website offers tools for finding campsites in Minnesota and throughout North America, from full-service RV resorts and Good Sam Parks to municipal campgrounds and national and state parks and forests.

www.goodsamclub.com/travel/campgroundsandrmparks

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Features

- The SolidStep's innovative design permits the step to operate through a wide range of ride heights with adjustable leg extensions. The design also ensures that the steps stay parallel to the ground, reducing the potential for slipping or falling during use.
- The SolidStep design permits the step to stow inside of the entry door, keeping road debris and corrosion away while simultaneously permitting continuous skirt metal on the RV, enhancing the aesthetics of the coach.
- Recessed feet prevent trip hazard and maximize clearance for camping spot.
- Mounting screws provided for either wood or laminate floor applications
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SMOOTH OPERATOR

IF REGULAR SLIDEOUT MAINTENANCE DOESN'T DO THE TRICK, CLEAN SEAL MAY HAVE A SOLUTION

There is no question that slideout rooms have revolutionized RVing, adding space that can almost double the size of a travel trailer, fifth-wheel, motorhome or truck camper. Whether your RV is fitted with a wardrobe slideout or a full-wall extension, or multiple slides in the living room, bedroom, galley or dinette, maintenance and repairs are important. Defective seals, which are often overlooked, can be the root cause for operational problems.

By following regular maintenance guidelines and understanding where to acquire parts, if necessary, you can ensure slideout performance and protection from the elements. In the event the slideout seals fail, Clean Seal of South Bend, Indiana, offers solutions with an extensive line of sealing products for just about any RV.

Clean Seal has been manufacturing seals and gaskets since 1978 and supplies all types of edge guards,

roof-vent gaskets, pop-up camper seals, and door and window seals, as well as D-seals for various slideout applications. The company has even simplified the process by developing a single-wiper seal to fit most slides. Clean Seal's patent-pending Flip-N-Seal Slide Out Sealing System is unlike anything else on the market and fits a multitude of wall thicknesses. The 3M ST1200 adhesive is designed to keep the seals in place as long as the material is intact.

INSPECTING AND MAINTAINING SLIDEOUTS

Before ordering any type of seal, it's best to inspect the slides to determine if the seals need attention and make sure any issues that have caused the seals to become damaged are mitigated.

Start by checking the alignment. Ask a helper to extend and retract the slides while carefully watching the action of the seals and the motion of the slide room. If the slide has a topper

(cover), use a ladder and a bright flashlight to watch the way the seals perform under the fabric. Slide toppers are nice, but they don't prevent the seals from shrinking or rainwater from entering the RV.

Make sure the seals are not rubbing against sharp or protruding objects that can damage them. Many screwheads can be covered with EternaBond to protect the delicate seal material.

Measure the clearances on both sides of the slide to be sure it is centered in the opening. Slides that are not centered can apply added pressure that results in premature seal wear.

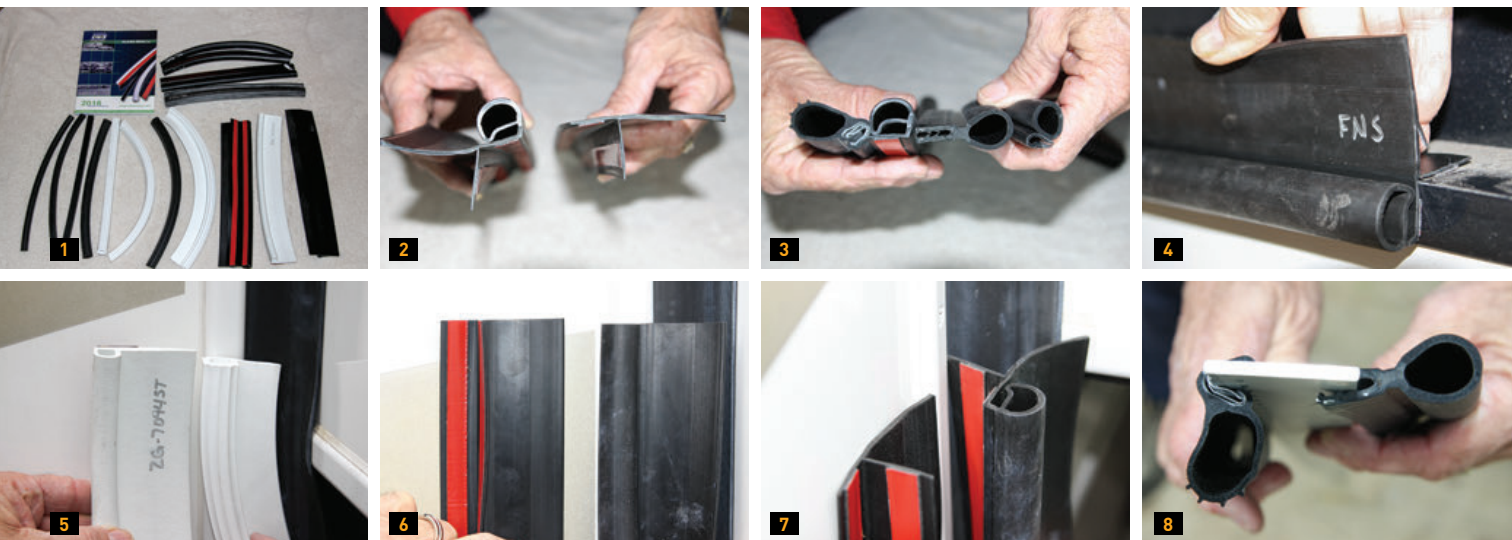
Examine the wiper seals for dirt and debris that can lead to damage when extending and retracting the room. For example, one small piece of a broken tree branch can damage the seals and even scratch the side of the slideout. It's best to repeat the inspection after camping under messy trees. It may be necessary to remove the slide topper to clean out debris and check the seals.

Examine the framework and moldings for loose screws or sharp edges that can harm seals. Repair any seals that are beginning to come loose before long-term damage occurs. A good weather-strip adhesive, available from 3M, makes it possible to reglue sections of self-adhesive seals that have come loose. With proper preparation, a dab of silicone rubber caulking

Slideouts dramatically increase RV living space, but the seals require regular maintenance and need to be replaced if they fail.



PHOTO BY SHAWN SPENCE PHOTOGRAPHY



can be used to repair a hole or a small tear. This repair may not last a lifetime, but it might last a fairly long time or get you out of a jam.

Once the seals are free of dirt and debris, apply a generous amount of Protect All Slide Out Rubber Seal Treatment or 303 Aerospace Protectant. Ozone, sunlight and smog have a propensity to rot neoprene, ethylene propylene diene monomer (EPDM) and latex rubber seals over time, and these products are designed to protect against UV radiation and help reduce friction, extending the life of seals. Treatment of the seals should be done at least three times a year. Silicone spray is not recommended for RV seals.

An unnoticed defective seal can cause a serious rain leak, resulting in wood rot and unsightly stains. Proper maintenance can extend seal life for several years. Servicing slideout mechanisms and adjusting the clearances play a big role in preventing seal destruction. Once the seals are damaged, the only recourse is to install new ones.

REPLACING SLIDEOUT SEALS

Preparation is the key to success when installing self-stick slideout seals.

9 and 10) Side views show the hollow core of the rain seal specifically designed to be flattened without crushing the seal permanently. **11 and 12)** After several years of sunlight and ozone exposure, slideout rain seals can deteriorate and become ineffective.

1) Clean Seal offers a multitude of seals and gaskets to fit many RV needs. **2 and 3)** Shown here are side views of some of the company's most popular slideout seals and a custom wiper seal. **4)** The universal Flip-N-Seal Slide Out Sealing System combines a wiper seal with a rain seal and is designed for easy application in most slideout rooms. **5)** Available in white or black, these two seals fit a multitude of Alfa fifth-wheel slideout rooms. **6 and 7)** Clean Seal utilizes a patented 3M self-adhesive strip on most of its slideout seals for a solid bond and long-term holding strength. **8)** Metal-reinforced edge-gripping seals are designed to last for the life of the RV.

Removal of self-adhesive seals can be a painstaking process taking several hours. Take your time and use either a plastic scraper or a razor tool, cutting the adhesive tape loose while pulling the seal back at a 45-degree angle.

Careful use of a razor blade with a slow jabbing motion will remove most of the tape as you go down the line. Acetone

will remove small amounts of the tape but not thick sections of glue. Using acetone will help loosen the adhesive, making it easier to scrape off. Be careful with the acetone, as prolonged contact can damage the paint.

The longest-lasting seal material is EPDM. This material is well known for its excellent resistance to ozone and



SMOOTH OPERATOR

aging. It also maintains flexibility at low temperatures, resists alkalis, acids and solvents, and is color-stable.

Start the installation by examining the intended area for any leftover

debris or uneven surfaces. Wipe the surface with a clean lint-free rag and alcohol. Allow the surface to dry before attempting to install the new seals. Note that Clean Seal recommends



13

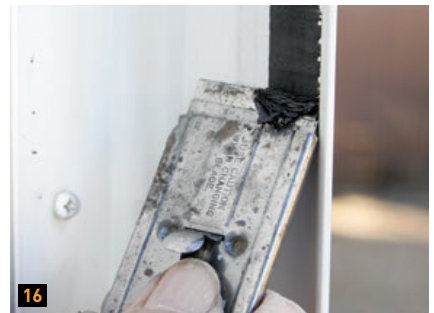
13 and 14) This 1996 fifth-wheel slideout seal has deteriorated beyond recognition. The universal Flip-N-Seal slideout seal provides an ideal replacement. **15, 16 and 17)** Whether you use a putty knife or a razor blade, or peel off the old adhesive by hand, all material must be removed before the new seal can be installed. **18)** As always, preparation is the key to success. Be sure to use alcohol to degrease and clean the surfaces before installing the new seals so the adhesive strips will form strong bonds.



14



15



16



17



18



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19



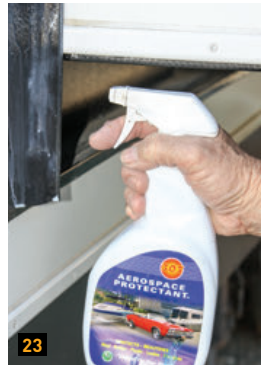
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22



23

19 and 20) Installing the rain seal in a straight line is not an easy task. Follow the edge of the slideout carefully before firmly pressing the seal permanently into place. **21)** All slideout moldings are installed with screws. **22)** If the screwhead is damaging the wiper seal, a little trick for smoother operation is to use a piece of EternaBond to mask the screwhead. **23)** Wiper seals are notoriously difficult to replace. To make the seals last longer, give them a quarterly dose of 303 Aerospace Protectant.

against installing any of its 3M self-adhesive seals or gaskets in temperatures below 60 or above 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

Peel off the release liner in 1- to 2-foot increments. This will prevent the material from contacting an unintended surface or picking up foreign matter. Press firmly while placing on a clean, dry surface. Do not stretch the seals during the installation; doing so will lead to delamination over time.

Installing seals on extended areas can be a bit of a challenge when trying to make a straight line. A good method is to use a 1x2-inch strip of wood or a straight edge clamped at either end of the slide to guide the seal into place. Gently run your fingers over the seals to ensure good adhesion. Allow 24 hours before retracting the slide.

Clean Seal's line of sealing products makes it possible to keep slideouts from leaking and operating smoothly. While it's possible for experienced DIYers to complete the job, it may be something better left to the professionals. Prices for the seals vary by style and length. 📞

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Fender-Skirt Fix

Replacing worn and broken trailer fender skirts is an easy DIY project, thanks to Icon Technologies

DIFFICULTY 1 2 3 4 5

TIME TO COMPLETE 30 MINUTES PER FENDER SKIRT

TOOLS NEEDED TAPE MEASURE, SCREW GUN, SCREW BITS, DRILL MOTOR, DRILL BITS, MASKING TAPE, SANDING BLOCK

Our 2013 Dutchmen Coleman travel trailer's sun-faded, scratched and cracked fender skirts had become an eyesore. A blown tire had left the right-side fender skirt badly scratched, while several cracks had formed on both skirts, originating from the mounting screws. A set of replacement fender skirts was overdue.

Our search began on Icon Technologies' website, a company that specializes in plastic products used in the RV industry including freshwater tanks, skylights, bathtubs and fender skirts. The website greatly simplifies the process of finding the correct replacement fender skirts. We started by printing Icon's Easy As 1-2-3 Fender Measurement Guide, which contains a diagram identifying the six measurements Icon uses and the corresponding letter identifier. We used a tape measure to take the necessary measurements and recorded them.

Returning to Icon's website, we clicked on a link to the company's online fender-skirt app, www.lookup-our-skirts.com. The app uses a simple three-step process. Step one requires choosing between single-, tandem- and triple-axle fender skirts. In step two, we identified the trailer's manufacturer. Coleman wasn't listed in the drop-down menu, so we selected Coleman's parent company, Dutchmen. The third step provided a list of fender skirts that might fit the trailer, along with measurement diagrams. By comparing the recorded measurements of our trailer's fender skirts with the diagrams, we



- 1) Start by removing the mounting screws in the original fender skirts and keeping them handy. The Icon replacements do not come with screws. Our screws were in good condition, so they were reused. 2) Depending on the design, a support might be used behind the lower center of the original fender skirt. A screw attaches the fender skirt to the support, either through the front or under the lower edge of the fender skirt, and needs to be removed.
- 3) The new fender skirts are predrilled with a 1/8-inch drill bit to prevent possible cracking caused by the mounting screws. Icon recommends predrilling, even if self-drilling screws are used. 4) The fender skirt is mounted in place, and the cut line between the slideout and the body of the trailer is marked with a strip of painter's tape. A screw is removed, and a spacer is placed between the fender skirt and the side wall to prevent damage while cutting.

found a nearly perfect match, which was available in six color choices.

Icon fender skirts can be ordered from any Icon distributor or reseller, or at www.icondirect.com. The fender skirts for our trailer sold for \$159 each, plus shipping, with a 10 percent discount for

ordering two. Prices vary depending on length, model and color.

Installation starts with detaching the old fender skirt by removing the mounting screws. Screws are often added under the bottom edge of the skirt and can be difficult to see. The top edge

DOUBLE TAKE » The new Icon fender skirts are nearly a perfect match for the originals, thanks to the website's three-step process for finding the right replacements.



(Right) Showing their age, the original fender skirts had scratches, cracks and fading after years of exposure to the sun and weather. (Far right) The Icon replacements give the trailer a fresh, clean look.



may have been sealed with silicone that will need to be carefully cut with a utility knife. Any sealer remaining on the trailer's siding can be removed with a plastic scraper and mild solvent.

Our replacement fender skirts had indentations where the mounting screws go through the skirt. The fender skirts should be predrilled before installing the screws to prevent cracking. We installed the center screw first in the existing hole in the siding. The remaining screw locations were slightly different from those on the original fender, requiring new holes to be made in the siding. This worked in our favor because some of the original screw holes had been stripped. If you use new screw locations, fill the old screws with sealant to avoid water intrusion via those holes.

The next step was to align the curved ends of the fender skirt with the radius of the trailer's bottom skirting (J-wrap). The curves on the bottom edge of the new fender skirts were slightly different from the originals, causing a small gap between the J-wrap and each fender skirt. We took a few minutes with a sanding block to slightly alter the curves in the fender skirts, resulting in a tight fit with the J-wrap.

On both sides of the Coleman trailer, the fender skirts mounted on slideouts, except for a small section that was cut off and mounted on the trailer body. We

used an oscillating tool with a saw blade to make the cut and a sanding block to remove burrs and sharp edges.

The final step was to carefully tighten all the screws until they were snug, without overtightening. Overtightening can cause cracking when the fender skirts expand and contract due to changes in temperature.

Installation was an easy one-hour job for both Icon fender skirts, and they give the trailer a more polished look. 🚐

Icon Technologies Limited
888-362-4266, www.icondirect.com

www.northwoodmfg.com

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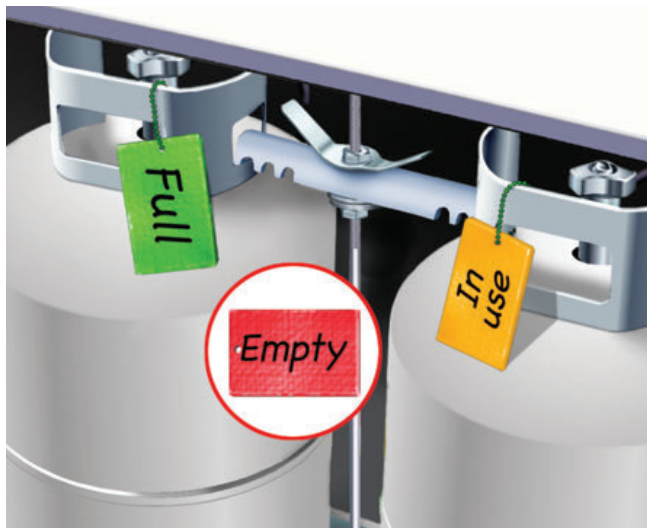
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LP-Gas Cylinder Tags

Since we don't use propane often, and the switchover handle is hard to see without taking off the cover, we needed something to help keep track of which cylinder is in use. And it had to be simple and bright.

I created cylinder tags by taking a piece of leftover foam poster board and cut three rectangular pieces about 2x3 inches in size. I covered one with red duct tape, one with green duct tape and one with orange duct tape from my inexpensive supply of tape from Dollar Tree. I punched a hole in one end of the tags and ran a reusable cable tie (aka zip tie) through each. I labeled red "Empty," orange "In Use" and green "Full."

The red tag hangs inside the trailer, to be used when an LP-gas cylinder is emptied, and I put the other two tags on the appropriate cylinders. We rotate them as the cylinders are used. The cost was minimal since we already had the materials on hand.

Kathleen King, Holly Hill, Florida



Underbed Doggy Den

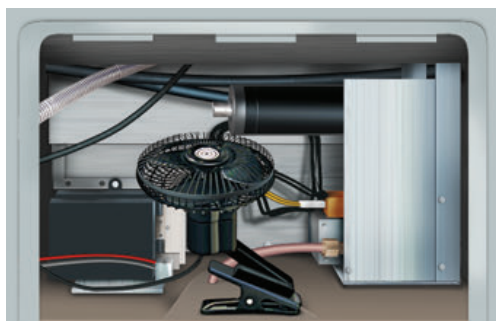
Hank, our dog, loves to hang out under our bed at home, but when we're in our travel trailer, he had nothing like that cozy, dark den. I fixed that by creating a box in the storage space under the RV's bed.

I measured the height of our bed at home and cut an access hole the same height through the 1/8-inch-thick paneling that lines the storage space of the RV's bed platform. I rimmed the rough edge of the paneling with black tubing that I split and forced over the cut edge. The tubing fits so tightly that it didn't need adhesive.

I built the box with 1/4-inch white pegboard and 1x2s, then secured it to the inside walls of the storage space with glue and screws. The pegboard allows the box to breathe.

Then I cut a piece of carpet for the floor of the new hidey hole. Although Hank likes the carpet, the space is big enough to fit a small dog bed or pad for cold nights. Of course, those cold nights will most likely find him up in the big bed with us.

Steven Smith, Palm Desert, California



Cool Idea for Refrigerators

With high summer temperatures, the refrigerator in my fifth-wheel was not cooling like I thought it should, so I bought a 12-volt DC fan at Walmart. At the refrigerator's rear-access panel, I hardwired the fan into the RV's 12-volt DC system and let it run 24/7 (thermostatically controlled fans for this purpose are also available), blowing hot air toward the top vent. The on/off switch remains in place, should I want to turn it off. Now the contents in the fridge are kept cooler.

Mark McGartland, Livingston, Texas

To send your submission, write to 10-Minute Tech, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036 or email 10minutetech@trailerlife.com. Please include an illustration or photo, if applicable. *Trailer Life* will pay \$35 for original 10-Minute Tech ideas. All payments require an SSN or FEIN.

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Lazy-Steering Fix

Tired of lazy steering and road wander? SuperSteer's SS180 idler-arm support assembly for 2011-and-up GM heavy-duty trucks can steer you straight. The made-in-the-USA idler-arm support is a direct replacement for the factory part for various 2500/3500-series Duramax Chevy/GMC trucks. The SS180 features a robust powder-coated cast-aluminum housing and tapered roller bearings, instead of the OEM sleeve bushings. According to the company, the tapered roller-bearing design is better at carrying loads and can be adjusted to remove side play for precise steering movement, improving steering response and reducing component wear. The bolt-in upgrade comes with all of the necessary mounting hardware.

MSRP: \$275

888-898-3281, www.supersteerparts.com
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Portable Security

The pocket-size LarryAlert connected alert device keeps a watchful eye on your stuff when you can't. The rugged, weather-resistant unit creates an invisible shield around motorized toys and equipment, instantly communicating intrusion or theft via a downloadable smartphone app available on Google Play or the Apple App Store. When someone enters the 3D-radar-protected area, the alarm mode is triggered, and a burst of 15 photos is sent to the owner's smartphone via long-range Wi-Fi. Siren mode can be programmed to activate when the protected area is breached, or the device can be kept silent. Photos can also be taken manually, and a record of the alarm is stored on the device and in the photo library.

MSRP: \$149

805-275-0190, www.larryalert.com
Circle 133 on Reader Service Card



Neat RV Sheets

Making an RV bed each night can be a hassle and a morning tangle of sheets and blankets. Enter the RVSuperbag, a clever solution that combines the feel of traditional bedding with the simplicity of a sleeping bag. Two comforters in one, the RVSuperbag is lined with ½-ounce nonallergenic synthetic insulation on one side for summer slumbers and 1-ounce insulation on the other side for winter use. Heavy-duty dual zippers open and close the sides. Removable Velcro-attached sheets are 200-thread-count poly-cotton. Optional 300- and 725-thread-count all-cotton upgrades make sleeping in your RV even comfier. Available in four sizes and many colors, the RVSuperbag is machine washable.

MSRP: From \$259.99

800-377-0707, www.rvsuperbag.com
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Made in America

There are dozens of Special Trailer (ST) tires on the market but only one radial that's made in the USA: the new Endurance from Goodyear. Available in load ranges D and E for towing heavy loads at highway speeds, the tires carry an N speed rating (87 MPH), which is considerably higher than the usual ST tire speed rating of L (75 MPH). Rugged fabric-steel construction improves durability and carrying capacity, and an inner liner minimizes air loss in trailer applications because of 100 percent halogenated butyl rubber, according to Goodyear. The tread depth and shoulder groove are designed to cool the tire under load, and scuff guards are claimed to protect the sidewalls from cuts, punctures, and typical wear and tear. The new trailer tires are manufactured at Goodyear plants in Alabama and North Carolina, and are eligible for Goodyear's tire-replacement limited warranty.

MSRP: From \$108. 800-667-8138, www.goodyear.com/en-US/tires/endurance

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Awning Archway

RVers love to roll out the awning, expanding their living space and enjoying the vista around them. But a good rain shower can create a puddle on top of the canopy unless one end is pitched lower than the other. Lippert Components' Awmbrella Awning Bows provide a remedy with rust-resistant aluminum extenders that span the awning and keep the fabric taut and arched to help shed water and debris. A two-bow kit supports awnings from 10 to 14 feet, and a three-bow kit handles 14- to 18-foot awnings. The 8-foot bows are easy to put in place, according to Lippert; 10-foot bows will be available soon.

MSRP: \$166.99/two-pack, \$238.99/three-pack

574-537-8900, www.lci1.com

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Quick-Change Antenna

The Quick Release Roof Mount Kit transforms a King satellite TV antenna from an RV-rooftop system to a portable one with the pull of a lever. The kit's permanently installed RV mount provides a secure place to fasten the antenna on the roof but allows the flexibility to remove it when needed. Trees shading the campsite? No problem. Want to take the antenna tailgating? No sweat. Simply flip the quick-release lever, lift the antenna from the mount, and off it goes. Made of automotive-grade plastic, the new mount fits King's Tailgater (Dish) and Quest (DirecTV and Bell) satellite antennas (models VQ4100, VQ4200, VQ4400 and VQ4500).

MSRP: \$109

952-922-6889, www.kingconnect.com

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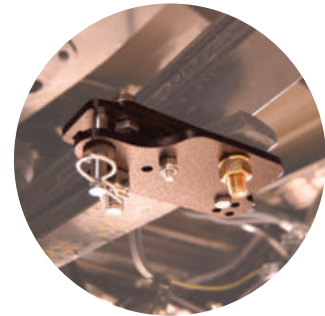
Let There Be Lights

Giving your campsite a soothing evening ambience is as simple as hooking a string of Jasco's Enbrighten Café Lights on your RV's awning. The energy-efficient 120-volt LED bulbs come in strings from 12 to 48 feet with a heavy-duty grounded cord. Enbrighten lights are wind-, water-, snow- and impact-resistant, and UL listed, which means they can be used year-round to spruce up the outside of your RV, adding a welcoming glow after the sun goes down. Suitable for indoor use as well, the light strings come with black or white cords and can be controlled by a mobile app or the GE myTouchSmart remote.

MSRP: From \$39.99

800-654-8483, www.cafelights.com

Circle 138 on Reader Service Card



So Long, Truck Sag

Owners of full-size Ford, GM, Ram, Nissan and Toyota pickups needing a little more lift from their truck's rear leaf springs may find the solution with a suspension upgrade from Torklift. The StableLoad Suspension Stabilizer enhances and complements the suspension, improving towing safety and handling, according to the manufacturer, and includes the ability to turn on and off the lower stabilizer to revert to the factory suspension when the truck is no longer towing or hauling. Now available for 2017 trucks, the kit includes hardware that bolts to the factory overload leaf of each spring pack with no drilling required.

MSRP: \$289

800-246-8132, www.torklift.com/stableload

Circle 139 on Reader Service Card


OIL VISCOSITY

Q My question is about engine-oil viscosity and recommendations. I drive a 2000 Chevrolet 2500 pickup with a 6-liter gas engine. About 90 percent of the time, it's pulling an 8,000-pound travel trailer, so it's working hard. The owner's manual recommends using 5W-30 engine oil. When I initially bought the truck several years ago, I tried using a 5W-30 fully synthetic national brand oil but was going through a quart of oil every 1,500 miles or so.

My mechanic suggested the oil I was using was too light. He claimed the only reason Chevrolet recommended using 5W-30 oil was to maximize fuel economy, not engine longevity. He recommended a minimum 10W-30 synthetic. I switched, and the oil consumption dropped dramatically.

Since then, several people have suggested I go to something even heavier, such as a 15W-40 (a popular oil for diesels), or even a 20W-50. What are your thoughts?

John Goldsmith, Chilliwack, British Columbia



A Fuel economy is, in fact, a driving factor behind the seemingly too-light oil recommendations made by the vehicle manufacturers, John. Check your owner's manual for oil recommendations under different driving conditions, and you'll likely find that, under severe service, something like the 10W-30 you're using, or even 15W-40, is recommended, so you aren't hurting the engine by using higher-viscosity oils. The 20W-50 would probably be overkill, however. I appreciate your mechanic's recommendations, but if in doubt, always refer to the oil chart in your owner's manual.

HALF-TON FIFTH-WHEEL TOWING

Q After borrowing a set of scales to set up my Prime Time Avenger ATI 27DBS with my 2016 F-150 with Eco-Boost, I am wondering how people are legally pulling fifth-wheels with half-ton trucks. It would be hard, if not impossible, with the listed pin weights of even "lightweight" fifth-wheels to come in under payload capacity with a family of four in the truck. I want to make the switch to a fifth-wheel someday for our weekend adventures, but I'm finding the weight is restricting me from doing so. What am I missing?

Bryan Pollock, Newfane, New York

A You aren't missing anything, Bryan. It's true that a light-duty pickup has a limited payload capacity that hampers its ability to haul a family-size fifth-wheel trailer along with a full passenger and cargo load. Some of those other light trucks you see hauling fifth-wheels are probably overloaded from the man-

ufacturer's standpoint, but that's how some people choose to tow.

You're doing the right thing by paying attention to the weight figures and manufacturer ratings. Going by the book, you may not be able to find a fifth-wheel with comparable interior space and accommodations to your travel trailer while also avoiding an overloaded situation. Perhaps, after considering all the factors, sticking with a travel trailer might help you avoid making an expensive switch to a larger pickup.

MORE END-CAP FADING

Q I have read several letters in *Trailer Life* about readers' problems with end caps fading on trailers and fifth-wheels. I have a 2013 Keystone Montana fifth-wheel, which is white, but the front end cap is noticeably faded.

For years, the auto industry has been clear-coating vehicles, and they stay bright and shiny year after year. Also, fiberglass cars stay the same.

Why doesn't the RV industry adopt that process for end caps?

Ed Kausch, Oxford, Michigan

A Autos stay shiny longer because their finish is paint over a steel or fiberglass body, with clear coat sometimes applied over that paint, Ed, and the fading and chalking you see on an RV end cap is the gel-coat finish that's part of the base fiberglass going bad. Some RV manufacturers apply paint over the fiberglass, and that can help add years to how long the RV looks good. The quality of the gel-coat finish has a lot to do with how long it lasts, although factors like indoor versus outdoor storage, regular waxing and such also contribute to durability.

About all you can do is have the fading end cap(s) buffed and polished, keep up with cleaning and waxing, and provide protection from the sun when in storage.

TROUBLE WITH ROOF BUBBLES

Q We purchased a 2015 CrossRoads Cruiser Aire fifth-wheel in 2016 from a local dealer. We love the trailer, but, unfortunately, due to health issues,

TECH EXPERT



JEFF JOHNSTON: Jeff served as technical director of *Trailer Life* for 20 years and has been an RV enthusiast, mechanic and writer since he could hold a wrench.

we have taken it out only five times so far. We also purchased a carport, so it would not be subject to the harsh sun down here in Texas.

While cleaning it, I discovered some small bubbles on the roof. There were three of them, and they were about 4 inches long and 1½ inches wide, with two others along the front cap. I took the RV back to the dealer, and the tech guy said he didn't believe there was a problem. He steered me to some Dicor cleaner and UV protectant, and some roof putty. I would like to believe him, as this dealer has been great to work with, but the warranty on the trailer is almost up, and if there is something the manufacturer should take care of before other costly issues arise from a bad roof, I would like to address them ASAP.

Charles Reyna, Livingston, Texas

A Small bubbles in a rubber RV roof, even on a new RV, unfortunately, are fairly common. They indicate that some of the adhesive used to secure the roof membrane in place has given up the ghost, and that allows the roof to bubble upward when traveling. The natural airflow over the roof tends to pull the rubber up and cause the bubbles. As long as the bubbles stay small, they aren't a problem, but if they get significantly larger, they'll need to be repaired.

You might want to get assurance, preferably in writing, that if the bubbles expand, partly because the dealer "didn't believe there was a problem" with the smaller bubbles, the dealer will take care of them as a previously unresolved warranty matter.

HIGH-WIND TRAILER TIPPING REVISITED

Q This concerns "High-Wind Trailer Tipping" in the May RV Clinic. While it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to predict the tipping point of an RV on the road, I did find something that might help if high winds were predicted while the RV was stationary.

A hurricane came through last fall, and I was concerned about the wind on the RV. Prior to the arrival of the storm,

I filled all the holding tanks and fresh-water tank with water to lower the center of gravity and add ballast. By doing this, it added approximately 1,236 pounds to the bottom of the unit. Fortunately, the winds were not as high as predicted, and nothing happened.

Other folks who live in tornado- and hurricane-prone zones might want to consider this option. It's a cheap way to add a little peace of mind.

Randy Ryman, Loris, South Carolina

A Thank you for the suggestion, Randy. Readers who live with occasional high-wind situations could find your idea worth pursuing the next time things get rowdy with the wind.

TRUCK AND TRAILER WEIGHT

Q I weighed my Dutchmen Voltage 3305 fifth-wheel toy hauler. Here's how I did it, as the scales in our town are long and not divided into three

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separate scales:

- Truck only with the trailer attached: 10,920 pounds
- Truck and trailer attached: 25,420 pounds
- Trailer only: 16,440 pounds

Does this work in figuring out what is necessary? I am buying a new single-wheel-drive (SRW) Chevy Silverado 3500 HD longbed 4x4. According to the Chevy book, this new truck can pull a fifth-wheel with a maximum weight of 17,000 pounds. According to my calculations, it is 560 pounds under the capacity, which leaves me some room for what I didn't load in the trailer when weighing it.

I will weigh the trailer again when I get the new truck. If it isn't raining when I do it, then I will take my UTV out and weigh it separately to see how much I am putting in the garage or cargo area.

Richard Roper, Oroville, California

A You're partway there, Richard, and it's great that you're taking a methodical approach to assembling a good truck-and-trailer combination. However, there are a few details that need to be straightened out.

First, we don't entirely know if that 16,440-pound trailer weight you measured was fully loaded and ready to go camping or empty of some essential cargo such as the UTV, or if it included the fifth-wheel pin weight. You'll need to check the trailer's gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) and compare that to its weight, including its pin weight, to know how much payload capacity you have left for the trailer's cargo.

When making a truck-and-trailer towing matchup, it's a good idea to use the trailer's GVWR as the target towing weight. That way, even if you load the trailer all the way to its GVWR, there's less chance of exceeding the truck's tow rating and overloading it. If you use the trailer manufacturer's fantasy weight figures, such as dry weight or delivered weight, which usually don't include fluids and may not include options, and certainly don't include cargo, you can exceed the truck's tow rating fairly easily.

With that in mind, and since you plan on purchasing a new truck anyway, it's probably a good idea to consider a du-

ally rather than an SRW truck, because you might be exceeding the truck's rear-axle capacity. A dually has a higher payload capacity, and with four rear wheels tends to be more stable when towing. We would hate for you to purchase the new SRW truck only to find out that it is overloaded by your Voltage fifth-wheel.

In any case, the next time you visit the scales (even if it's a single-platform scale), do the following measurements and weigh the combination loaded and ready for a camping trip:

- Truck and trailer both on the scale. Compare this weight to the truck's gross combined weight rating (GCWR) to see where it stands on overall weight.
- Just the trailer axles on the scale. Compare this figure to the trailer's gross axle weight rating (GAWR) to see how much capacity is left before exceeding the trailer's GAWR.

- Position the trailer so you can drop its landing legs on the weigh scale, along with its axles still on the scale, but keep the truck's rear axle off the scale. This gives you the trailer weight, which you can compare to its overall GVWR to see how much payload capacity is left on the trailer. Deduct the trailer axle weight from its overall weight to learn the trailer's hitch weight.

- Weigh the truck by itself, then weigh just its rear axle. Compare its rear-axle weight to its rear-axle GAWR to learn how much load capacity you have to accommodate trailer-hitch weight.

By taking these steps, you can determine how much capacity your truck and trailer have, and remain within safe margins while towing. Good luck!

SLIDEOUT-CABLE BLUES

Q I have a 2016 Bullet Premier travel trailer made by Keystone and had the same problem as Ed Regan in June's "Jerking Slideout" letter. His trailer is also made by Keystone. After one of the slideout cables was replaced under warranty, the slide started jerking, mainly while going in but also while extending.

The dealership was no help. They said they called Keystone and did not know why the slide jerked, but they thought it would get better as I used

it. At least they did not claim that was the way it was supposed to work. I took a long trip, and the jerking got worse. While at a campground, I checked several cable slides on other RVs that worked well, according to their owners. All of the cables were of equal tension, and mine were not.

A mobile repairman who has replaced many slideouts came out, and he explained that my RV's slide moves across a narrow nylon strip the width of the slide. If the cables are not at just the correct tension, one side will grab and then the other, which causes the jerking. He adjusted the tension and lubricated the entire underside of the slide with silicone spray. He actually polished the lubricant on so there was no residue. He said you could also use wax, but no WD-40 or other such lubricants that can attract grit. These will cause trouble and also get your carpet dirty. And, yes, the slide has worked well ever since.

My son has the same trailer as Ed Regan, and his RV's slide does not jerk at all. Another thing I discovered is that, on this type of slide, it will work better if you extend the slide before you set the stabilizing jacks. The jacks cause the frame to bend enough to put most of the slide weight on the outer sides of the nylon strip, putting more strain on the slide motor. I know this is against the instructions, but I found this to work better for my RV's slide.

Cliff Reitz, Lake Wales, Florida

A Thank you for relaying your experience, Cliff. Slideout problems are a frequent, if unwanted, part of RVing, and it's good to hear you found a realistic solution to your situation. We hope this information can help some of our readers.

TIRE BLOWOUTS AND AXLE ALIGNMENT

Q In 2012, we bought a Keystone Montana 3400 fifth-wheel. The first trip we took, it blew two tires, resulting in damage to the wheel well on the trailer. When it was time to replace the tires, we upgraded to (supposedly) better tires. In five years, we have replaced all of the tires at least three times. We have tried



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everything we know including checking tire pressure prior to each trip and driving below 60 MPH. All these practices have not helped. We have had the siding and wheel well repaired more times than imaginable. The blowout before the last was very costly. After the repairs were completed, we went on a 150-mile trip. As usual, a tire blew on each side. This is frustrating!

We have called Keystone, and their advice was to take it to a dealer. We have been taking it to the same dealer we bought it from every time. What can we do to save our sanity?

Bette Gurule, Surprise, Arizona

Q I have a 2012 Keystone Montana Mountaineer 358 RLT. Recently, the driver's-side rear tire showed extreme wear, much more than the other three tires. I have read differing opinions on remedies, specifically whether an axle (if that is the cause) can be "realigned" or if it should be replaced. I've read that the axles can be bent to achieve correct alignment, and that if you bend an axle it may have a tendency to return to its former contour or it may actually be weakened.

Brad Nelson, Helena, Montana

A Your stories are unfortunately quite common, Bette and Brad. Trailer-axle realignment can be effectively and successfully performed by a qualified shop. Poor-quality trailer tires, combined with assorted overloading and alignment problems, have caused many RVers a lot of grief. You said you pay attention to tire pressure and such, and that's terrific. Our first and obvious question is, have you weighed your trailer, fully loaded and ready for the road, at a certified scale? You might be surprised at its real-world weight. Check that figure against the trailer's GVWR, and make sure the axles aren't overloaded by checking the trailer's axle weight against its GAWR.

Goodyear has a new made-in-the-USA Endurance trailer tire that may be a viable option the next time you need a replacement. Be sure to have new tires balanced before any long drives. Balancing the tires can cure a world of ills. If

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everything else is ruled out, take your trailer to a frame and alignment shop that's accustomed to working with RV trailers. It's a bit of a haul for you, but Henderson's Line-Up in Grants Pass, Oregon, has a lot of experience aligning trucks, motorhomes and trailers.

It's possible the axles are significantly out of alignment. If the leaf-spring shackles and spring eye bushings are significantly worn, it can allow the entire axle and spring assembly to shift enough to throw the tires out of alignment, and it doesn't take much to cause odd tire wear. If the axles aren't parallel, the tires are constantly scrubbing the pavement and fighting each other. Likewise, both axles need to be perpendicular to the hitch pin.

The axles could be somewhat bent due to overloading, or one could have been bent during a rigorous curb encounter. A good shop can repair any alignment problems including bending an axle as needed. Adjusting an axle may not repair the cause of the problem; it may just correct a side effect. For example, if the axle was bent because the trailer is dramatically overloaded, fixing the axle won't cure the overload. That's why you need to check all other factors, such as trailer weight versus GVWR, when attacking the problem. Give an alignment shop a try, and you may find the tire problem is at least reduced. And drop us a line to let us know how it goes. We'd like to report further on this.

BOONDOCKING BATTERIES

Q I'm considering two methods of keeping my RV's batteries charged while boondocking for a month or two. I have an onboard Onan 5000 and two 6-volt golf-cart batteries in my 2016 Keystone Montana High Country. The panel board is model WF-8930/50, and according to the internet, the converter is a WF-8965. I also have a Honda 2000 portable generator and a 2- to 15-amp battery charger. But the batteries won't get above 12.8 or 13 volts. So I'm considering changing out the factory converter to a BD1265 C from Best Converters. I'm also looking at a new **(continued on page 72)**

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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

(continued from page 67)

battery charger to use with my Honda 2000. Any advice to help keep the batteries charged would be appreciated.

Harold Harris, Bakersfield California

A If your trailer's converter isn't keeping the batteries charged and it's a fairly new 2016 trailer, it's something your dealer needs to take care of. You should not need to buy a second charger to maintain the batteries when you have a perfectly good converter onboard. Use of a second charger and generator while dry camping works, but again, your main onboard generator should be able to charge the batteries fully by way of the converter.

Many factory-installed converters don't do a very good job of fully charging, maintaining and conditioning batteries. A new high-quality converter with a multistage charging system is a great investment that will pay off handsomely in the long run. If you feel the need to upgrade something, replace your converter with a higher-end model that includes multistage "smart charging" because that works best and takes care of the batteries.

It's a bit more investment, but have you considered a solar-battery charging system? Since you live in a frequently sunny part of the country, solar-battery charging makes sense. A modest solar array and good-quality charge controller would keep the batteries in good shape for as long as you want to boondock. Even a modest array, say in the 200- to 300-watt range, will do wonders for keeping batteries charged, and without any generator noise. Web search your local area, ask for other RVer references for a local RV solar shop or try the pros at AM Solar in Springfield, Oregon, for some advice about a solar-charging setup. It's the best accessory you'll ever buy for your trailer. 🗨️

HAVE A QUESTION? » Email rvclinic@trailerlife.com or write to RV Clinic, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. Include your full name and hometown. Selected letters will be answered in the magazine, but time does not permit individual replies. No phone calls, please.

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North Dakota's Simple Pleasure

A wildlife habitat, Theodore Roosevelt National Park pays homage to the 26th president

For the past six summers, my husband, Jack, and I have traveled from Montana to upstate New York following Interstate 90, but we veer north and south of that major motorway to break up the trip. We've visited only one place twice, 70,000-acre Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP) near Medora, North Dakota.

TRNP is a sleeper in the national park system. I knew little more than its name before my husband suggested it as a pit stop on our annual cross-country journey. "There's great wildlife-watching there," he promised.

One of my passions is photographing wildlife, so I happily agreed to an afternoon stop, which turned into a two-night stay. There was much to see, starting with a sprawling prairie-dog town. Those furry Lilliputians kissed, danced and plucked blades of grass with their handlike forepaws. They sat up like little humans, yapped at each other and lounged in the sun.

"Let's keep moving," suggested Jack, after two hours and 200-plus frames. "If we don't have a photo of these cute critters by now, it's not going to happen."

We rolled down the road for two minutes, then paused to watch a mule-deer buck, its antlers half sprouted and covered with velvet. A quarter-mile later, a doe eyed us warily from behind some tall grass.

"I bet she's got a fawn," mumbled Jack as he scanned the bushes: "There!"

From Bison to Bambi

A buffalo roadblock stalls traffic (top), and a mule-deer fawn shyly emerges from the bushes. For visitors staying overnight, the national park has two year-round campgrounds, Juniper and Cottonwood, that accommodate RVs.

Just to our right, the spotted baby stepped gingerly from its hiding place. With a few plucky stots, it followed its mother deeper into the sage. Jack turned from the deer to continue driving, but no such luck. At just that moment, a herd of bison wandered into the road.

In 1883, Theodore Roosevelt, a scrawny, bespectacled city slicker, visited what was then the Dakota Territory to hunt bison. He fell in love

with the rugged Badlands and the physical demands of life there, and bought the first of his two ranches, which are now part of the national park. A year later, after the tragic deaths of his wife and his mother, he returned to North Dakota, seeking relief from his grief. His experiences there influenced his conservation policies as president from which we all benefit today.

This year on our annual journey to the Adirondacks, we've already made plans to stop at TRNP for a third time. Thank you, Teddy, for laying the groundwork to not only create and conserve our public lands but also to allow people like us to experience them, each in our own ways. 📷



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