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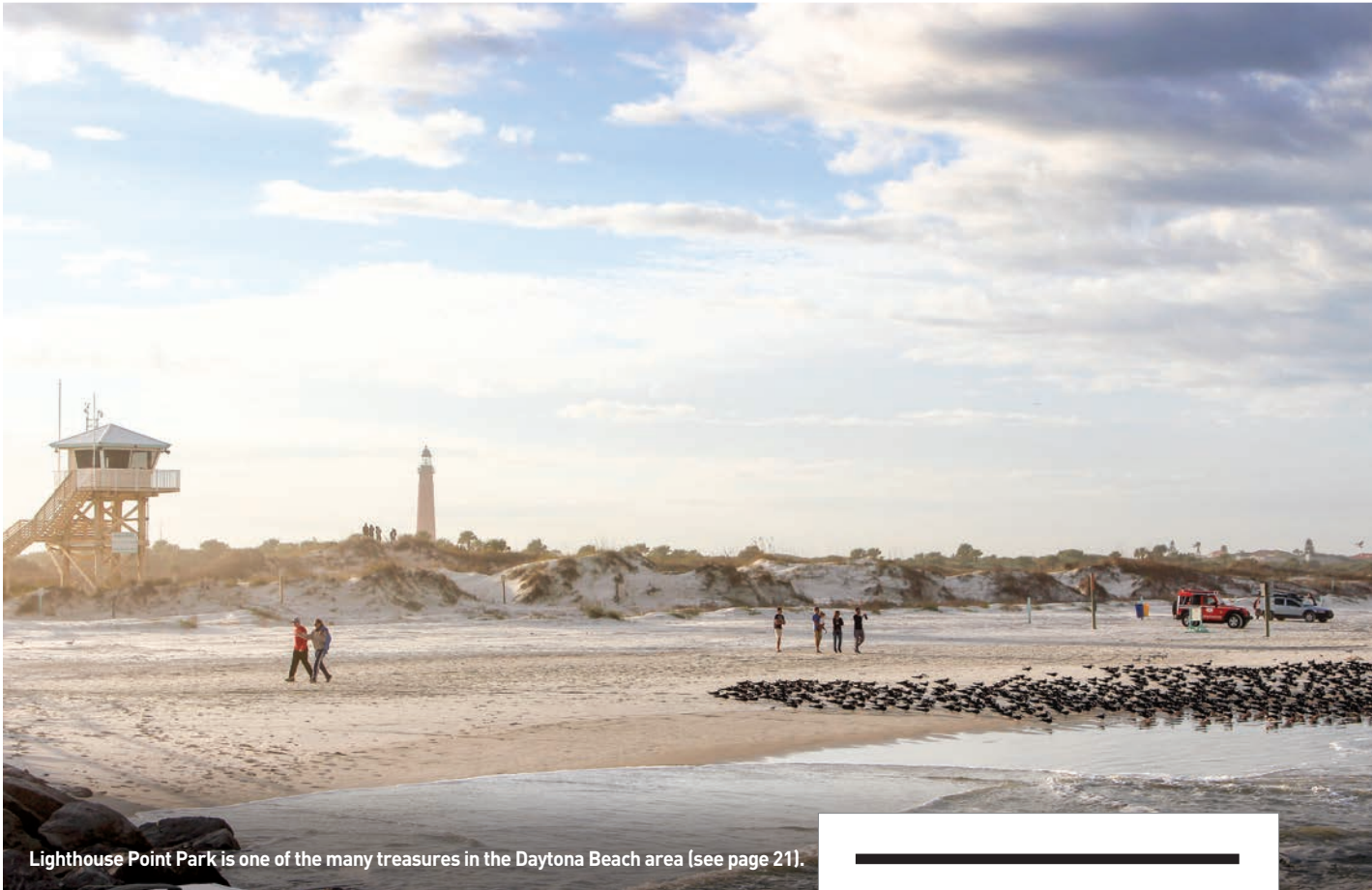
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Lighthouse Point Park is one of the many treasures in the Daytona Beach area (see page 21).



New RVS tire inflators from VIAIR are designed specifically for the RV market and are capable of inflating motorhome tires up to 130 psi. Pg. 18

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## ON THE COVER

Leisure Travel Vans Wonder W24RTB really shines at the RV park, where it is easy to maneuver into the campsite. Once at the site, owners can off-load bicycles from the Wonder's rear garage area (see test page 28). Photo by Shawn Spence.





By Kristopher Bunker

## A Different Look

**A**s motorhome enthusiasts, we tend to look at things a bit differently from most. While others prefer to spend vacation nights in stuffy motels, we opt to rest our weary heads on our own pillows, in our own mobile mansions. Rather than stand in line at crowded airports, we point our trusty steeds down the road toward the next pristine location. And where many may prefer fine dining in the big city, a tasty meal we prepared ourselves goes down best when eaten with our neighbors in the countryside on a moonlit summer night.

So, it should come as no surprise that our “outside the box” thinking extends to our everyday lives — while on vacation or otherwise — be it what to buy, where to go, or even what we do when we arrive at a destination.

We’ve likely all heard of Daytona Beach, Florida. And, while visions of high-octane stock cars turning left for hours on end, leather-clad bikers chugging down the streets or sunbathers in swimsuits indulging in spring break may fill many heads at the city’s mention, motorhome owners are likely to approach the sun-dappled paradise with a more discerning eye. In “Beyond the Sand and Speed,” beginning on page 21, we take a look at the “other” Daytona Beach. The one with a rich history of Native American beginnings, Spanish influence and even the story behind bottling one of America’s favorite carbonated treats. And though our journey does indeed take us among the white-sand beaches and stately lighthouses of Florida’s

eastern shore, it also brings us among the many cultures that have helped shape the area.

We also hold our motorhomes to a higher standard, expecting more versatility from our vehicles than the everyday commuters parked in our driveways (or towed behind our motorhomes, for that matter). The Leisure Travel Vans Wonder W24RTB in “A Wondrous Achievement,” beginning on page 28, is an example of that versatility. Based on the Ford Transit chassis, the new Class C is equipped with a dual twin-bed configuration that can sleep two separately, or can be combined into a single queen bed when the sun goes down. A table can be moved from front to back for livability options, and the split bath allows plenty of room for two to primp and preen simultaneously. But perhaps the highlight of the W24RTB is the rear exterior storage area, which is large enough to store two bicycles (wheels off), making the motorhome a

bit of a compact toy hauler, to boot.

We may wonder “How does that work?” more than the average Joe (or Josephine). “Brake Time” holds the answer to that question; provided, of course, you were inquiring about the air-brake system on diesel pushers. An in-depth explanation of system components, and their functions, can be found beginning on page 32.

We are problem solvers as well. Where many take manufacturer designs for granted, we wonder if any improvements could be made. Take a close look at the stock steering wheel positioning on your coach’s Ford F-53 chassis. If you think it looks slightly askew while at rest, you’re not alone. And, though this doesn’t portend any safety issues, it can become a nuisance, with delayed turn-signal canceling and some guesswork required while negotiating tight campground roads. Redlands Truck & RV’s Straight & Level Adjustable Drag Link has the solution in “Straight as an Arrow,” beginning on page 40. Here, we offer a step-by-step look at how the company gets things straight once again.

Rather than simply accepting things the way they are, or following the masses like so many sheep in the flock, motorhome enthusiasts are a curious bunch looking for many ways to enhance the lifestyle we so love. I wouldn’t have it any other way. **M**

### Contributors | June



**Ann Eichenmuller** is a Virginia writer who loves traveling with her husband, Eric, in their Minnie Winnie. Ann is the author of four books, including her recent mystery, *The Lies We Are* ([www.hightidepublications.com](http://www.hightidepublications.com)).

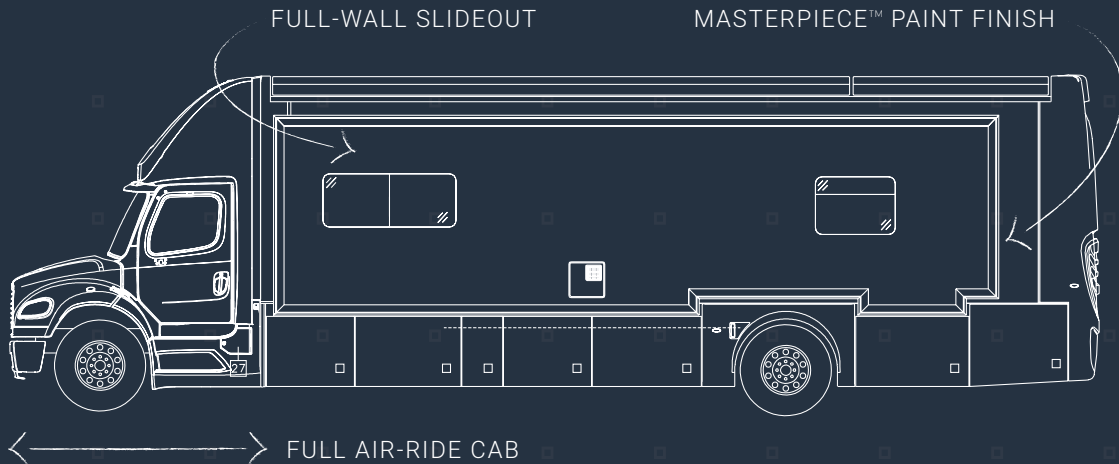


**A.M. Murphy** has been an avid camper since childhood. She lives and writes in the Great Smoky Mountains and loves motorhome traveling with her husband.



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

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## Have you ever been refused entry to an RV park because you drive an early-model motorhome? Do you think it's a fair practice for RV park owners to turn away such motorhomes, even if they are well-maintained and look new?

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



### Bad for Business

My wife and I own a 1999 Winnebago Adventurer in perfect condition. We have been asked to submit photos of our coach but have never been denied entry. In my opinion, RV park owners can run their business as they choose, but excluding folks solely based on model year is bad for business. I get it that the owner of a 2019 Newell coach isn't going to be comfy parked next to a 1972 Winnebago Brave, no matter what the condition.

**Scott Vahle | Redlands, California**

### Welcome, Cousin Eddie!

I used to stay at an RV park in Las Vegas with my 1989 Fleetwood Southwind. It was in good condition, but obviously not new. I bought a 2006 diesel pusher two years ago with 23,000 miles on it and it's always stored inside. Everyone who sees it

thinks it's a new motorhome. The last time I tried to get in to the same RV park, I found out it was under new management, and I'd have to send a picture of the motorhome, since it was more than 10 years old. I won't stay at an RV park that has these requirements. I guess some people would be offended if an older motorhome parked next to them. Personally, I wouldn't care if the Griswold's motorhome camped next to me.

**Jim Crozier | Morgan, Utah**

### Trending Now?

We have a 2001 Fleetwood Jamboree, and we were refused a reservation in 2016 at an RV park near San Jose, California, because our motorhome was more than 10 years old. I was shocked, because we had been staying at that park for the previous five years; our RV was more than 10 years old during

that entire time, but they had never had any objections before. When I politely pointed this out to the person on the phone, she said it was in their regulations, but they hadn't been observing the regulations before and now they were. I followed up with a letter of objection and got an apology, but no offer to allow us to return. Many of the RVs in that park were large, expensive, full-time homes for people, so we figured they had just decided they didn't want older motorhomes cluttering the neighborhood, no matter how well-kept-up they are. To date, this is the only park we have heard that from, but we are certainly more conscious of the possibility now. We don't think this is fair or right, but it might be an unfortunate trend, given the growing number of year-round residents moving into RV parks, especially the higher-end ones.

**Geri Zanon | Port Angeles, Washington**

## 2019 Guide to Dinghy Towing Updates

Every year, as we prepare our annual Guide to Dinghy Towing, we query vehicle manufacturers for the most up-to-date information available on flat towing, and every year, after we go to press, some of that information changes. It's quite common for vehicle manufacturers to change something on a vehicle that can affect its ability to be towed behind a motorhome, which is why you might see multiple printings of a vehicle's owner's manual. As always, the best place to confirm whether a vehicle can be flat towed behind a motorhome is the owner's manual *that came with the vehicle* or the version that corresponds to the date of manufacture of the vehicle.

Following are the most recent updates:

- **Ford 2019 Edge ST with 2.7-liter EcoBoost** is flat towable using the Manual Park Release procedure; do not exceed 65 mph
- **Lincoln 2019 Nautilus with optional 2.7-liter engine** is flat towable using the Manual Park Release procedure; do not exceed 65 mph
- **Ford 2019 Explorer with optional 2.3-liter EcoBoost** is **NOT** flat towable

Visual Letter to the Editor



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by Joe Schmidt



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**Judgment Day**

We have a 2001 Fleetwood Bounder in excellent condition. We won't live in a deed-restricted community, and aren't too keen on age-restricted communities, either, so you can bet we're not going to flock to campgrounds that require a photo of our rig. Why in the world would I want to vacation and relax in a campground where I'm being judged on my rig's age and appearance? Might as well just hang out a shingle saying, "Only post-2010, 40-foot, \$250K Coaches Need Apply." You don't need my business, thank you.

**Sharon Tagle | via email**

**Play the Numbers**

I don't think it is a good business practice to turn away customers with well-maintained, new-looking motorhomes based solely on the age of their coach. We own a '97 Country Coach that has zero leaks, dings or paint scratches. It's stored indoors and gets waxed and polished frequently (I am a retired firefighter). No one who sees it can believe that it's 22 years old. I've had trouble making advanced reservations at campgrounds with the 10-year-old rule; however, after explaining, and offering to email dated photos, they have given us a conditional reservation based on passing a visual inspection upon arrival. We have never been denied entry, and some park owners have welcomed us back and made a note in their reservation system to waive the age restriction. High-end RV resorts are not as flexible; age is just a number to those parks.

**Brian and Diane Stephens**  
Riverside, California





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**RV-park Snobs**

My first Class A motorhome was a 1999 Thor Infinity. I bought it in 2011, so it was already more than 10 years old. The exterior was chalky and the decals were faded. I purchased a kit from Poli Glow that brought much of the shine back, even the decals. When making reservations at some parks, I was asked to supply photos. I did this, and was never turned down, but at the

same time, while waiting for approval, made reservations at other parks. I was turned off by the request. I also felt that [the parks] may not like the color, or condition of my sewer, or electrical attachments.

I personally feel they are being a little snobbish. I have seen many older RVs that have been well cared for and look great. Some of us can't afford to purchase a new unit every few years.

Once we've found one that suits our needs, and we're comfortable with it, why trade?

Now I have a 2013 Thor Daybreak that we really like, so it'll be a few years before I have to worry about snobbish RV parks. Good luck to all the owners of older RVs; keep 'em rolling.

**G.A. Goguen | via email**

**Why Not the Trailers?**

I haven't been refused entry to any RV parks, but I understand why they have the restriction. The age of the motorhome isn't the issue, it's the appearance. My beef is that many of those campgrounds with motorhome age restrictions have old, shabby looking trailers and tow vehicles in the park. If there are more than a few, I always go back to the registration office and ask for an explanation as to why the age (appearance) rules don't apply to trailers. A few parks have been so bad, I've demanded my money back and gone elsewhere.

**Gerald Stratford | Granbury, Texas**

**Comfort Zone**

RV park owners have the right to admit as they see fit. As the owner of a 1988 Mallard Sprinter, [our motorhome] doesn't look new; though it is clean and in good condition, the decals are weathered. We have not had any problems to date; however, I can understand the dilemma, as we have passed up RV parks for their appearance. So in all, we just go with the flow. We are somewhat intimidated to park among the newer coaches. RVers should not take issue and stay in their comfort zone.

**Dennis and Joan Brown  
Colbert, Washington**

**Age is Not the Issue**

My wife and I, and our two pups, are on our second Class A. The first was a 2005 Damon Daybreak and the one we are in now is a 2009 Four Winds Windsport. We always try to keep our condo-on-wheels in good shape. While planning a trip to Florida, we did have to send the RV resort pictures of our 2005 Damon for them to approve. We

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were able to stay there without issue. We fully understand why RV parks are doing this and believe it's OK. I personally don't want to be at a place that allows RVs that look substandard; it brings down the neighborhood. Now we have our 2009 Windsport and it looks like it came off the showroom floor. We have no problem with 20-, 30-, 40-year old RVs, just keep them nice!  
**John and Tracyruth Lazorik | via email**

**Keeping Pace**

My wife and I have a 1987 Fleetwood Pace Arrow 27 Class A. We are the third owners and the other two are friends of ours. It does everything we need it to do and does so without busting the budget! We have never been refused entry, but we have had to send pictures on occasion to show condition. And we have had some come out to inspect it. It's a great looking unit. We had the stripes redone and the wheels have been powder coated to match the striping. It has 60,000 original miles,

but now that we have time, those will increase. Everything has been renewed, including a low-profile A/C unit and radial tires so it fits in one of our garages. We also belong to our local Elks Lodge and frequently stay at those facilities. Our toad is a 2007 Toyota Yaris presently being outfitted with a Roadmaster InvisiBrake. When the snow's gone so are we!  
**Robert (RC) and Liz Cunningham**  
 Bellingham, Washington

**Dollars and Sense**

We have an RV that is 15 years old. It still looks good and runs great and, yes, we are still making payments on it. We have never been turned away simply because we won't use those type of RV parks. Considering the cost of an RV, I don't see how parks can deny anything over 10 years of age. It generally takes more than 15 years to pay one off. We enjoy camping and we love our RV, but we don't want a newer one. When I see an RV park ad that states nothing over

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10 years old allowed, I think how rude the owners must be. What will be next — no old folks allowed? No, we do not think that is a fair practice.

**Dennis and Barbara Murtha**  
Graniteville, South Carolina

**Step Up**

I enjoy The Classic Ride series in *MotorHome* and have a question that pertains to the National RV Tradewinds featured in the April issue. Regarding the custom stainless-steel and glass shower enclosure shown in the Tradewinds, how does one access it considering the extended height of the base? I realize this is apparently not an issue for the present owners, but for some RVers, it would be an obstacle. Many RVs have elevated shower access that prohibits or limits those with mobility issues from using the shower. If Newmar can make a roll-in shower work in its mobility-friendly coaches, i.e., Dutch Star/Ventana 4311s and Canyon Star 3911, why wouldn't the RV industry adopt this practice across the spectrum of their vehicles?

**Steve Spear** | San Antonio, Texas

**Take a Seat**

We have a 2012 Forest River Sunseeker Class C motorhome, built on the popular Ford E-450 chassis. Of course, the cab and seats are provided by Ford. I've found that the seats become uncomfortable after 100 or so miles. That tends to make the rest of the day's drive less than enjoyable. Has anyone else had this problem? What solutions have they found? Are there more comfortable replacement seats available?

**George Woodside** | via email [M](#)

**Question of the Month**

Are the cockpit seats in your motorhome uncomfortable? Have you replaced them? Or, do you use cushions, covers, etc., to improve comfort? If so, which brands work best for you?

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view of the restoration of historic wooden ships, including the 60-year-old *Mayflower II*, a replica of the ship that carried Pilgrims to America. The project is scheduled for completion this year with the goal of returning the ship to Plimoth Plantation in Massachusetts in time for the 400th anniversary of the Pilgrims' arrival in 1620. Tickets to Mystic are \$28.95, with discounts for seniors and children. — *Mary Zalmanek*

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Photo: Mary Zalmanek

By Chuck Graham

# Otter Watch

I'll never forget experiencing my first southern sea otter encounter. I was kayaking down the rugged Big Sur Coast in Central California with friend Todd Potter, 52. With ocean temps in the low 50s, the kelp beds were especially thick while enjoying the cold, nutrient-rich waters. Suddenly an inquisitive otter popped up next to our kayaks, thoroughly wrapped in giant bladder kelp. It gave us a quick glance, followed by a demonstrative splash not to be seen again.

Prized for their fur, the densest in the animal kingdom, these marine mammals were thought to be completely extinct by the late 1800s. However, roughly 50 of them were discovered below the Bixby Bridge, along the Big Sur Coast, in 1938. Immediately, protections went into place to save those 50 animals. Today their numbers are relatively stable and hover around 3,100 animals, but they still face challenges like habitat degradation and pollution.

Summer is a great time to go on otter watch as moms tend to their young, fastidiously grooming their fur and nursing while wrapped up in kelp. Over time it's gotten easier to observe them, and there are three locations along the Central California coast where otters seek safe havens from the elements. Remember, though, that the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 protects animals like southern sea otters (also known as California sea otters). The required viewing distance is no closer than 50 yards.

**“Summer is a great time to go on otter watch as moms tend to their young.”**

## Port San Luis, Avila Beach

With a pair of binoculars you can easily watch from the beach or walk out on the pier to get a consistent look at otters rafting up in the kelp forest. There is an alternative here though: If you have your own kayak, the launch is very easy off the beach. If you'd prefer a guided tour, Avila Beach Paddlesports offers tours that are wildlife-rich within the region, (805-704-6902, [www.avilabeachpaddlesports.com](http://www.avilabeachpaddlesports.com)). There's also RV camping close by across from the pier.

## Morro Bay

You can literally drive right up to a group of otters inside Morro Bay. Once inside the harbor, drive out to Morro Rock and park in the dirt lot. On your left, calm waters typically prevail, allowing a raft of otters to roll, wrestle and groom ... or snooze the afternoon away.

## Moss Landing, Elkhorn Slough

Outside of San Francisco Bay, Elkhorn Slough possesses the largest tract of tidal salt marsh in the Golden State, and it's an important habitat for sea otters and other wildlife thriving in its muddy channels. Located just off State Route 1 in Monterey Bay, this is another place that offers an easy put-in for kayakers looking to experience sea otter behavior. There's a simple launch site inside the harbor at Moss Landing. If a guided tour is what you're after, then connect with either Kayak Connection (831-724-5692, [www.kayakconnection.com](http://www.kayakconnection.com)), or Monterey Bay Kayaks (831-373-5357, [www.montereybaykayaks.com](http://www.montereybaykayaks.com)).

**DID YOU KNOW?** Female otters typically give birth to a single pup, with care provided by the female for about 6 months.





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## Sleep on It

The new Comfortaire r3 bed from Sleep Number is the company's latest offering for use in RVs. The r3 mattress features Sleep Number's DualAir technology, which allows users to adjust firmness on each side of the bed. Additionally, the r3 mattress includes 1 inch of quilted hyper-soft foam to enhance mattress plushness, and contours to a sleeper in five places — head, neck, lumbar, hips and feet — to help reduce uncomfortable pressure points, according to the company. The r3 comes in five RV-compatible sizes and has a wireless remote that remembers user settings. The r3 is backed by Sleep Number's 25-year limited warranty. Available at Sleep Number stores, online and at Camping World. MSRP ranges from \$1,299 for a twin XL to \$1,999 for an RV king. **Sleep Number | 888-411-2188, [www.sleepnumber.com](http://www.sleepnumber.com)**



## Pump it Up!

VIAIR has announced a new line of portable tire inflators designed specifically for RVs. The four RVS tire inflators are the only portable compressors on the market that are capable of inflating RV tires up to 130 psi, according to the company. Each inflator comes equipped with a hose long enough to reach all the tires, a convenient carry bag and all necessary accessories. The new RVS line includes: 89P-RVS (for Class B motorhomes), 300P-RVS (for towables), 400P-RVS (for Class C motorhomes) and the 450P-RVS (for Class A motorhomes). MSRP ranges from \$82.95-\$424.95.

**VIAIR Corp. | 949-585-0011, [www.viaircorp.com](http://www.viaircorp.com)**

## Management Skills

Australia-based REDARC Electronics has launched The Manager30 battery-management system. The system, which has been available Down Under since 2014, is designed to charge and maintain auxiliary batteries by incorporating AC-, DC- and solar-power inputs, making it suitable for motorhome owners when camping off-grid or while plugged in to shorepower. REDARC claims that one of the key features of the 30-amp The Manager30 is its ability to power share, meaning it can charge an auxiliary battery from multiple power sources simultaneously. REDARC adds: "And, with 'Green Power Priority,' if solar is available it will charge using the maximum available solar power before topping up from another power source." The system is compatible with lead-acid, gel, calcium, AGM or lithium iron phosphate batteries. The Manager30 also includes a remote battery monitor and a load-disconnect controller. MSRP: \$1,193.99. **REDARC | 704-247-5150, [www.redarcelectronics.com](http://www.redarcelectronics.com)**



## Smart Surge Protector

Hughes Autoformers' Power Watchdog EPO (Emergency Power Off) combines Bluetooth technology with the automatic shut off and re-start of an energy management system, offering enhanced surge protection and making it easy to monitor live RV park power conditions using a free app on a smart device. The Power Watchdog EPO continuously monitors all power conditions, including low and high voltages, open neutral or ground, reverse polarity, volts provided by the park, amps drawn and total kilowatt hours used while plugged into power. In dangerous power conditions, the Watchdog will cut power to the motorhome, and an alert is immediately sent to the customer's smart device via Bluetooth. Power Watchdog EPO will keep the power off until the problem has been corrected and the appliances/accessories have been safe for 90 seconds. The unit also features replaceable surge protection, plus colored LEDs to make it easy for owners to verify proper power conditions. Power Watchdog EPO comes in hardwired and portable versions. MSRP for 30-amp models starts at \$225; 50-amp models start at \$256.



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The Museum of Arts & Sciences features exhibits from Daytona's history, including the original Coca-Cola glass bottle design and other memorabilia of the fizzy drink.

# Beyond the Sand and Speed

A fresh look at the lesser-known side of Florida's Daytona Beach

By A.M. Murphy

**O**n a quintessential sunny Florida day, my husband and I slowly wound our motorhome down Atlantic Avenue in the heart of Daytona Beach. We were immediately confronted by all the diversions that make this destination renowned. The city's nickname has long been the "World's Most Famous Beach." The name is an appropriate moniker given the area's international reputation.

Daytona Beach is most famously a mecca of motorsports and motorcycles, and of beach driving and bikinis. Lining the streets, we saw surf shops, trinket emporiums and party bars. The popular amusement-filled boardwalk was brimming with happy, sunburned tourists. Racing- and motorcycle-themed souvenirs hung in shop windows next to colorful beach towels and tiny string bikinis. There was the unique sight of cars leisurely driving on the hard-packed, white-sand beach, and the less unique sight of teenagers happily

munching from paper plates loaded down with funnel cakes and french fries.

Everyone seemed to be having a great time enjoying all of Daytona's signature offerings, but I was in the mood for something a little different. I decided to look past all the flashy and in-your-face fun to see what else Daytona might have to offer. I discovered that if you will peer curiously beyond the condos, wander with abandon up and down the residential streets, and even venture boldly down to where the Atlantic Ocean meets the Halifax River, you will find another side of Daytona. This alternative view of the famous beach town showcases the natural wonders of the area, takes you into maritime history and even recalls the fascinating lives of those who arrived first.

When businessman Mathias Day purchased thousands of acres of wild and abandoned lands on the eastern coast of Florida, his dreams of establishing a new community would have seemed to many onlookers to be both fanciful and bold. The year was 1871 and Day, an Ohio native and purveyor of farm machinery, saw an opportunity to create a settlement on the Florida coast near the Halifax River.

Prior to formal European settlement, the area

DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA

## ← Did You Know?

Daytona Beach is located on the eastern shoreline of Florida where the Atlantic Ocean and the Halifax River meet. Prior to the late 1800s the area was a wild and empty land traversed only occasionally by Seminole Indians and claimed by the Spanish Crown.

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# GETAWAY

## DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA

now known as Daytona Beach had been traversed by various groups of Native Americans, with no group in particular settling the area. Eventually the terrain was mapped by both Spanish and French explorers studying the whole of Florida. It was Spain that most frequently laid claim to the lands as part of the Spanish Crown's vast holdings in the region.

The Spanish eventually granted the land to Samuel Williams, who built a working plantation on the Halifax River. In the early 1800s, Williams' plantation produced bountiful amounts of sugar, rice and cotton. He also established large groves of citrus trees. In the mid-1800s the Seminole Indians, wanting to drive out the land owners and protest Indian removal efforts, burned down the plantation and subsequently the area laid neglected and decaying for a number of years. On occasion, a lumber company would temporarily establish itself in the area to harvest some of the large native live-oak trees for use in shipbuilding.

Where others saw empty and abandoned acres, Day saw opportunity.

Ponce De Leon Inlet Lighthouse is the tallest in Florida. Climb 203 steps to the deck of this National Historic Landmark for sweeping views.

For less than \$10,000, Day purchased the thousands of acres that were primarily lands of the defunct Williams plantation. Over the next few years the intrepid entrepreneur, along with a cousin and a dozen or so skilled workers, built close to 20 individual homes. They also constructed a general store, post office and a hotel called the Palmetto House. Whether it was the heat, the giant mosquitos, or the lack of modern amenities, few pioneers came to the area to share Day's dream. The slow settlement rate was more than Day could bankroll, and he eventually returned to Ohio.

A handful of the original pioneers who had settled in the Day-built homes stayed on and continued to maintain the fledgling settlement. The community was little more than a wilderness outpost. The area was wild terrain filled with swamps, thick stands of weeds and no easy access to other settlement areas. Despite



the harsh conditions, the settlers persisted. Finally, on a sweltering afternoon in June 1876, the men of the settlement gathered to vote on an official incorporation of the town. After much discussion they ultimately chose to honor the original settler, Mathias Day, with their selection of the name Daytona Beach for the nascent town.

Over time the primitive sandy paths lined with live-oak trees and palmettos slowly gave way to more durable streets, modern homes and storefronts. Finally, in the modern era, the area settled into its signature blend of unruly spring break teenagers, crowds of cheering race fans, high-rise condos and the roar of biker rallies. Eventually all these rowdy diversions took a toll on the city and it gained a reputation as being a bit shabby and struggling; a place fit only for a crowd in search of the raucous and rollicking. Now the famed city is once again in a period of renaissance where landmarks are being restored, neighborhoods rehabilitated and appreciation of the past cultivated. It was this historic and natural side of Daytona that I desired to step off the beaten path and explore.

Below, left to right: Injured sea turtles are returned to health at the Marine Science Center. The Seabird Sanctuary treats and releases thousands of injured birds each year while a handful, like this proud fellow, become resident ambassadors. Bottom: Open sunrise to sunset, Lighthouse Point Park's 52 acres include wide pristine beaches, picnic areas and a scenic jetty perfect for fishing.



# GETAWAY

DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA

Our first stop was the Museum of Arts & Sciences ([www.moas.org](http://www.moas.org)). The "MOAS," as it is locally referred to, is a campus of art, science and natural history exhibits. The main museum building contains a number of wings and galleries dedicated to American, Cuban, Chinese and African art, as well as large collections of antique furniture and decorative arts. A unique assortment of historic weaponry dominates one wing and includes Napoleonic swords, examples of armor and some intricately crafted firearms. The museum galleries also provide space to feature a number of visiting or rotating exhibits. An overview of current displays can be pre-viewed on the MOAS website. One rotating exhibit that I especially enjoyed during our visit was a display of vintage Florida postcards.

In one distinct area of the MOAS, we located the fascinating Root Family Museum. The Root Glass Co. created the original design of the classic glass



Above, left: Lighthouse Point Park and its surrounding areas are very amenable to bicycle or pedestrian exploration and many of those areas are also pooch-friendly. Above, right: A wing of the Museum of Arts & Sciences features collections of decorative arts and period furniture that recount American life in the 1700s and 1800s.

Coca-Cola bottle in 1915. The glass company competed against others to win the right to produce their bottle design for the fledgling Coca-Cola Co. It would not be an exaggeration to say that millions of people around the world would instantly recognize this famous bottle, with its green glass and curvy ribbed design. The MOAS prestigiously possesses one (of only two in existence) of the original prototype

bottles. The Coca-Cola collection also includes hundreds of other pieces of memorabilia related to the fizzy drink, including everything from historic advertising pieces to large-scale production equipment. The Root family also collected many other items of Americana, including full-size train cars, teddy bears, artifacts of American Indian heritage and relics from the Wild West period. All of the collections are perma-

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The MOAS has a number of other diverse offerings, like the interactive Charles and Linda Williams Children's Museum, a full-size planetarium that offers a variety of daily virtual trips out into the universe and the 90-acre Tusawilla Preserve. The preserve provides an opportunity to walk nature trails through indigenous gardens and plant life. A short walk or quick drive to the other end of the campus and fine art enthusiasts can visit the Cici and Hyatt Brown Museum of Art. The building houses a collection of art specific to the history and culture of Florida. The MOAS is a place you could easily adjust to any itinerary by spending just two hours or two full days visiting the campus. A variety of admission ticket options are available, and I noted that the campus had plenty of free parking that could accommodate motorhomes.

After leaving the museum campus we stopped for lunch at Our Deck

Down Under ([www.ourdeckdu.com](http://www.ourdeckdu.com)) which, as the name suggests, is a restaurant located just under the Dunlawton Avenue Bridge. The restaurant's outdoor deck has great water views and the seafood selections, which primarily revolve around various fried platters, are served in unpretentious and generous portions by a friendly staff.

Our next stop was the Lilian Place Heritage Center ([www.lilianplacehc.org](http://www.lilianplacehc.org)). This historic Victorian mansion is the oldest dwelling in beachside Daytona. The home is a quaint piece of the area's history that is maintained by the Heritage Preservation Trust of Volusia County. Tucked into a quiet and unassuming neighborhood on the banks of Halifax River, I managed to drive past the home three times before catching a glimpse of its unmistakable Victorian Italianate tower. Once I found my way into the small parking area, we were warmly welcomed by a guide who gave us a brief overview

of the home's charming history and welcomed us inside for a guided tour. The home was constructed by the area's original settlers. The building materials, including the stunning heart-of-pine floors, were brought in by boat on the river. The original owner, Lawrence Thompson, operated the local dry-goods store. The home was passed down through a number of generations before being lovingly restored by the Trust. Filled with antiques and local period artifacts, the Lilian Place provides a chance to step back into the time of the original founding of Daytona. The home also has some additional quirky history that includes visits by a friendly resident ghost, and a visit by famous author Stephen Crane (who wrote "The Red Badge of Courage"), who was literally washed ashore near Daytona and recovered at Lilian Place when his boat, the *SS Commodore*, sank in 1896. He later wrote about his time at Lilian Place in his acclaimed short story, "The Open Boat."

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## GETAWAY

DAYTONA BEACH, FLORIDA

After leaving the refinement of a Victorian mansion, my outside-the-box visit to Daytona Beach was about to take a turn to the wild side. No, I don't mean a late-night visit to a biker bar or a trip around the track at Daytona International Speedway. We drove the short few miles down to Ponce Inlet and the Marine Science Center ([www.marinesciencecenter.com](http://www.marinesciencecenter.com)), where we discovered that a treasure of natural and historic experiences is available in the Inlet area.

The Marine Science Center specializes in the rehabilitation of sea turtles and seabirds. Through the clear glass panes of the turtle hospital walls, I watched the veterinary treatment and care of injured and ailing turtles. As the turtles recover, they are released back into the ocean, healthy and ready to tackle life in the open sea once again. At the seabird sanctuary next door, thousands of injured birds of all species are brought back to full health. Those that are not able to be released into the wild become permanent resident-ambassadors of the facility. We saw numerous species of birds recovering in naturally appointed flight cages and wading pools. Guides provided us with additional information and interaction with bird ambassadors. After watching the care of the turtles and birds, we spent some time in the Marine Center's educational exhibit gallery to learn about current and historic aspects of local marine life. Finally, we went by the Center's touch pool. The shallow 1,400-gallon indoor pool allows visitors a chance to interact directly with some small marine life. I was able to handle, and learn about, a number of creatures, including some friendly stingrays, local fish species and cute hermit crabs.

After leaving the Marine Center it was just a few hundred yards to the entrance of Ponce De Leon Inlet Lighthouse & Museum (<http://ponceinlet.org>). The lighthouse, which was built in 1887 and is a National Historic Landmark, is the tallest in Florida. I challenged myself to climb the 203 steps to the gallery deck and was rewarded with incredible views

of the ocean, the river and greater Daytona. The lighthouse tower was just the beginning of our experience. In the converted woodshed and privy building, we watched a short film that provided an overview of the history and construction of the lighthouse as well as information on its keepers. Following the film, we explored some of the historic buildings and exhibits including the keeper's dwelling, the oil storage building and the most enlightening: the lens exhibit building. The Ayers Davies Lens Exhibit Building houses a number of Fresnel glass prism lenses and other lighthouse artifacts. It also provides a fascinating look at the history of lighthouse illumination, from the Pharaohs of Alexandria to modern times.

We could not conclude our visit to the Ponce Inlet area without a stop at Lighthouse Point Park. The park is 52 acres of preserved land that includes beaches, picnic areas, and an impressively long and scenic jetty. There was a \$10 entrance fee that provided admission for the day, and the park is open sunrise to sunset. After exploring some trails and enjoying the wide, pristine beach, the park's jetty afforded us a great opportunity to watch some determined fishermen in action.

The park and surrounding areas are very amenable to bicycle or pedestrian exploration and many areas are pooch-friendly. All that walking, exploring and climbing left us famished, so we walked quickly through the small picturesque Davies Park (named for the area's first mayor) and over to the Hidden Treasure Rum Bar & Grill (<https://hiddentreasurerestaurants.com>). The restaurant sits on the Halifax River and among a labyrinth of ancient oak trees. We enjoyed a dinner of fish tacos and clams in a relaxed setting with a lovely view of the water and the setting sun.

There are many campgrounds, RV resorts and state parks within easy driving distance of Daytona Beach. We opted to stay at Daytona's Endless Summer Campground ([www.endlesssummercampground.com](http://www.endlesssummercampground.com)), a well-kept and friendly park in nearby



Top: Daytona Beach Drive-In Christian Church welcomes visitors to Sunday service on the grounds of a former drive-in movie theater. Above: Campsites at Daytona's Endless Summer Campground, in nearby Port Orange, are well-kept and conveniently located.

Port Orange. After our busy days of exploring, we were tempted to skip our custom of visiting a local church on Sunday morning. I am happy we managed to rise and shine that particular Sunday to visit the Daytona Beach Drive-In Christian Church.

The church is located on the beautifully landscaped grounds of a former drive-in theater. As we pulled into the entrance, we rolled down our windows to be greeted by deacons with big smiles. The gentlemen provided us with Communion cups, service bulletins and instructions on tuning in. We pulled into a spot near the front and dialed our radio into the assigned FM station. The fellowship hall was offering donuts, coffee and the option of a seat inside the church building. We, like most other parishioners on this sunny morning, opted to simply sit back in our seats and listen to the services from the comfort of our dinghy vehicle. The non-denominational Christian church is located on South Atlantic Drive, in Daytona Shores, and heartily welcomes visitors.

This nontraditional church setting certainly provided a fitting end to our nontraditional visit to "The World's Most Famous Beach." **M**

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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# A Wondrous Achievement

Ford Transit-based Class C offers luxurious amenities and a whole lot of storage By Shawn Spence

**H**anging bicycles on the back of a motorhome comes with inherent risks. Will the rack be strong enough to handle the weight of the bikes? Is it certified for RV use? Are the handlebars scraping the exterior paint, and will they still be there after stopping for lunch on the road? Regardless if you are carrying a discount-store brand bike or a \$5,000 carbon-fiber racing machine, protecting your investment is important.

Leisure Travel Vans, part of Triple E Recreational Vehicles of Canada, has taken the worry out of those concerns with its all-new Wonder W24RTB Class C motorhome. The Rear Twin Bed model is one of three floorplans in the Wonder series and offers owners an exterior pass-through garage big enough to accommodate two full-size bicycles.

A heavy-duty 16-inch-by-5-foot slide-out tray can hold two bicycles

(folding or with all wheels removed) and a plethora of other items in its 67-cubic-foot rear storage area. Two small passage doors that lead to interior storage are located inside the compartment, and a box holding the unit's dual 6-volt house batteries provides easy access for maintenance. The optional exterior table (\$416) and ladder strap to the wall. Interestingly, the switch for the Carefree 11-foot awning is placed in the storage compartment. Note, too,

that the awning will catch lightly on the entry door if it is open.

The Wonder sits on a Ford Transit chassis powered by a 3.2-liter inline five-cylinder Power Stroke turbodiesel engine offering 185 hp and 350 lb-ft of torque and a six-speed transmission. Rolling across central Florida in mixed driving situations, the package delivered a respectable 15 mpg.

Owners of large Class A motorhomes looking to downsize will be thrilled with the ease of the driving experience of the Wonder, from the ability to quickly merge into traffic to the confident, comfortable handling of the steering wheel as the motorhome straight-lines down the highway even in moderate crosswinds. If you do drift

**ABOVE:** At less than 25 feet in length, the Wonder is a breeze to pull into any campground, and the optional table makes for a quick setup for meals.

**Clockwise, from right:** The Wonder's cleverly designed dinette table features two folding leaves and a swivel top for ease of access; it also can be moved to a second mounting location in the bedroom area for increased versatility or for more space when not in use. Dual 32-by-76-inch twin beds can be combined to create a queen bed suite. Deep storage is plentiful beneath the beds, and even offers adequate room to hang shirts and blouses. The galley features a drop-down Corian countertop extension for additional preparation space, as well as a deep sink and stylish stainless-steel backsplash.



over the line, Ford's Lane-Keeping System sends three pulses to the steering wheel to remind you to get back on course. Taking turns and curves are a dream, and the absence of sway and drift is attributed to the long 178-inch wheelbase. A nice addition would be the Ford Blind Spot Information System (BLIS).

Drivers will be able to pull into any fuel station that offers diesel and then pull right out, as piloting the Wonder feels more like driving an SUV than a motorhome. Ford's fill pipes for diesel and DEF are safeguarded by the closed driver's-side door. The 25-gallon fuel tank should keep owners on the road for comfortable distances without the need to make a fuel stop.

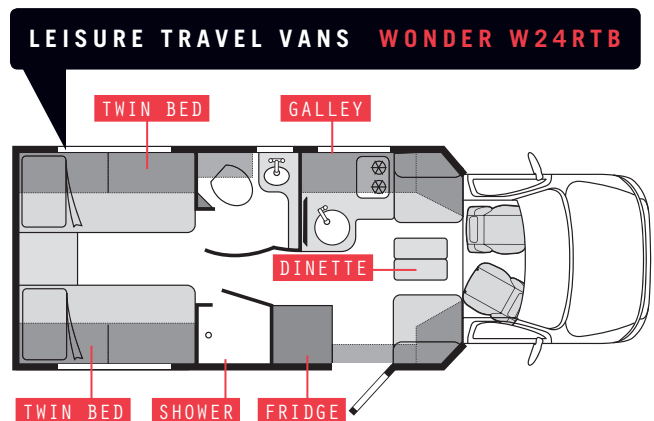
Unlike many other van-based chassis, owners will appreciate the ease of entry into the cab; they won't be looking for a grab bar or the steering wheel to pull themselves on board. A very tall windshield provides an excellent view of the highway as you settle into ultraleather

captain's chairs, and there is no readily apparent road or wind noise. You can crank up the Ford SYNC 3 with MyFord Touch, which features AM/FM, Bluetooth, voice navigation, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

The contemporary Euro styling of the Wonder will draw a crowd if the reaction from onlookers during our stay at Tropical Palms RV Resort, a mile from the Walt Disney World complex near Kissimmee, Florida, is any indication. While many new test motorhomes raise a few eyebrows, a small crowd gathered quickly around the Wonder to gawk at the styling and Euro Sport paint scheme, one of seven available. The smooth body features contoured side walls, a fiberglass flex roof, and aerodynamic integrated front and rear fiberglass caps. The Wonder's total length is 24 feet, 9 inches and the exterior height, including air conditioner, is just under 10 feet. A Class 1, 1¼-inch-square hitch receiver, limits towing to 2,000 pounds.

Chrome twist-and-snap latches lock the fiberglass

A unique bath arrangement offers privacy from the front of the floorplan, as well as plenty of room for the toilet and sink. The large shower is located across the aisle.





## LEISURE TRAVEL VANS WONDER W24RTB

compartment doors featuring top continuous hinges and gas struts. Besides the aforementioned storage garage and its 34-inch-wide, 42-inch-tall passageway, there is one additional storage compartment on the driver's side. Inside the utility bay are all of the fill and empty options; you will need to reach a bit to find the gray- and black-tank handles that are well behind the optional macerator. One nice touch is an LP-gas tank on/off switch, which is much easier to operate than the standard turn valve. The macerator is operated by a toggle switch on the main panel. The unit features a winterizing system with hose. The freshwater tank is 30 gallons, and the gray and black tanks hold 28 gallons each. On the passenger side is a quick-connect LP-gas fitting for a barbecue.

Directly above the service compartment is the Truma AquaGo comfort plus instantaneous water heater. Another option for this unit is the Cummins Onan 3.6-kW LP-gas generator (\$3,933). The generator can be programmed to automatically turn on and charge the house batteries when voltage drops to a set threshold. On top of the unit is an optional 400-watt flex solar panel (\$2,860; a 200-watt panel is available for \$1,430).

Another great option is the key fob (\$358) that locks and unlocks not only the driver and passenger doors, but also the entry door to the living space. No more fumbling with three or four similar keys to work the locks.

Upon opening the living area door, you will immediately find under-step storage for shoes, a great feature that helps to keep the interior clean. Stepping in farther, you walk into the galley, the most expansive in the Leisure Travel Vans line, and at first see the Corian counter extension that folds up to create the largest countertop found in any of the company's models. Other features include an integrated slide-out garbage bin and pull-out pantry. A large, deep circular single-bay sink provides plenty of room to stack plates and glasses if you decide to run out to catch the sunset or a bike ride and wash dishes later. A stylish stainless-steel backsplash runs the length of the wall behind the sink to help contain any runoff. A pull-down cover protects the standard two-burner LP-gas cooktop. The Natural Rift cabinetry provides ample space using deep full-pullout drawers, and curved Bianco White upper cabinets with soft-close hinges and handles hidden beneath to give an uncluttered look. The large pull-out

### WHAT'S HOT

Storage compartment with slide-out tray for two bicycles, split bath, versatile sleeping and seating areas

### WHAT'S NOT

Awning switch location, only two seat belts



pantry offers several shelves for canned and boxed goods.

Across from the galley is a Dometic 6.7-cubic-foot three-way refrigerator/freezer, and above it is a High Pointe 1,000-watt 1.1-cubic-foot microwave convection with nine preprogrammed temperatures.

The innovative dinette table features two folding leaves, providing extra dining space when needed, and sits on top of a removable swivel mount, which can be moved to an additional mount located in the bedroom area to create a secondary setting. There is a bit of a learning curve for using the table, as you may need to rotate it around a couple of times to find the right fit. The table does easily rotate for getting in and out of the comfortable chairs that are on either side. The leaves also make it easy for one person to sit and work on a computer while leaving the other chair open. The passenger-side captain's chair rotates to face the table, albeit at a lower position, but would be a comfortable spot for a guest to be involved in conversation or to watch the 28-inch Samsung smart TV that is mounted above the galley. The standard Winegard Connect 2.0 Wi-Fi extender and 4G LTE with integrated TV antenna keeps all of your devices connected; there's also prewiring for a satellite dish. A Blu-ray player with Bluetooth sound bar fulfills the entertainment package up front.

Walk toward the back from the galley and a split bath features a shower on the left with skylight and



Clockwise, from above, left: The Firefly Integrations multiplex system offers quick access to the Wonder's electronic controls and systems. Space beneath the entry steps allows placement of footwear to help keep the living compartment uncluttered. An exterior shower, plus water, LP-gas, sanitation and winterization systems, are easily accessible behind a compartment door.

# Specifications

plenty of headroom for those up to 6 feet tall. There is storage for toiletries and a drop-down rod to dry a towel. The shower door opens across the aisle and locks into place to close off the back of the motorhome, providing privacy to the bath and bedroom. Across from the shower is a room that houses the sink and a porcelain macerating toilet. An awesome design feature is the two-way mirror, which either stays in place offering a view out the window or flips across and locks into place to block the window for additional privacy.

The bedroom area has opposing 32-by-76-inch twin beds and there's a table for conveniently stowing beverages, a tablet or a book. The low-profile 15,000-Btu roof air conditioner with heat pump is centered between the beds. The bedroom area does rise up two steps, so owners will need to quickly learn to duck slightly when getting up to, and moving out of, the area. On the passenger side is a 24-inch smart TV.

Flipping over the table allows the twin beds to form a 64-by-76-inch slightly oversized queen bed. (Owners with animals may find the area beneath the queen bed suite a convenient spot for a dog or cat bed.) Beneath each twin bed is a rod for hanging shirts and blouses

and a series of deep storage areas with shelves offering plenty of room to store clothing and other items. Above each side are two long storage shelves with USB and 120-volt AC receptacles and white enclosed cabinets similar to those in the front of the motorhome.

Operating all the motorhome's systems is accomplished using the Firefly Integrations multiplex controls, which Leisure Travel Vans only offers in the W24RTB model and are located at the center of the interior. Above the entryway are the control panels for the Go Power! solar system, Xantrex 1,000-watt inverter and Truma AquaGo water heater. Additional peace of mind against thunderstorms is via an optional surge protector (\$455).

The Wonder W24RTB offers innovative storage and gets extra points for the use of space beneath the sleeping quarters. And Leisure Travel Vans doesn't skimp on the standard features. So, whether you're a first-time buyer or a seasoned motorhome owner looking to downsize, the W24RTB has a well-designed package, taking full advantage of Ford's Transit diesel configuration for a smooth driving experience. **M**

**Leisure Travel Vans**  
877-992-9906, <https://leisurevans.com>

## Chassis

Model	Ford Transit
Engine	3.2-liter I-5 Power Stroke turbodiesel
SAE Hp	185 @ 3,000 rpm
Torque	350 lb-ft @ 1,500-2,500 rpm
Transmission	6-speed automatic
Axle Ratio	4.10:1
Tires	195/75R16 LR-C
Wheelbase	178"
Brakes Front/Rear	4-wheel anti-lock disc
Suspension Front/Rear	Independent MacPherson strut/leaf springs
Fuel Capacity	25 gal
Fuel Economy	15 mpg
Warranty	3 years/3,000 miles basic; 5 years/60,000 miles powertrain

## Coach

Exterior Length	24' 9"
Exterior Width	7' 10.5"
Exterior Height with A/C	9' 11.5"
Interior Width	7' 5"
Interior Height	6' 5"
Construction	Contoured, vacuum-bonded aluminum-framed side walls; foam insulation; gelcoat fiberglass; domed, vacuum-bonded roof; steel-framed, vacuum-bonded floor
Freshwater Capacity	30 gal
Black-Water Capacity	28 gal
Gray-Water Capacity	28 gal
Water-Heater Capacity	Truma AquaGo comfort plus continuous
LP-Gas Capacity	13.2 gal
Air Conditioner	15,000 Btu with heat pump
Furnace	16,000 Btu
Refrigerator	Dometic 6.7-cu-ft 3-way
Inverter/Charger	Xantrex 1,000W XC Series
Batteries	(1) 12-volt chassis, (2) 6-volt house
AC Generator	3.6 kW Onan LP-gas
MSRP	\$120,120
MSRP as Tested	\$129,728
Warranty	2 years/24,000 miles limited coach; 3 years limited warranty structure

## Wet Weight

(Water and water heater, fuel full; no supplies or passengers)	
Front Axle	3,880 lbs
Rear Axle	5,620 lbs
Total	9,500 lbs

## Chassis Ratings

GAWR, Front/Rear	4,130 lbs/7,275 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	10,360 lbs/12,000 lbs
ROCCC	860 lbs
GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Gross Combination Weight Rating
ROCCC	Realistic Occupant and Cargo Carrying Capacity (full water, no passengers)



The large 67-cubic-foot "garage" area includes a slide-out tray that can accommodate two full-size folding or conventional bicycles (the latter with the wheels removed).

# BRAKE TIME

THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF AIR PRESSURE ARE KEY TO MAINTAINING STOPPING POWER

**T**here are numerous systems in a motorhome. Many of them we touch, use and think about nearly every day. For example, if the air conditioner or microwave were in disrepair, we would become aware of it very quickly. If, say, the TV goes out, some RVers would cancel their trip immediately. But we get in our beautiful motorhomes and drive across the country, and never give the coach's air brakes a thought. Although it can be argued that the brakes are the most important safety feature on a diesel pusher, most of us simply take them for granted.

Most large Class A diesel motorhomes use pressurized air for several key functions — the most important being air brakes and air suspension. While most automobiles use hydraulic fluid to actuate the brakes, Class A diesel motorhomes usually use air pressure, just like large commercial trucks. In addition to the brakes, the air bags used in the suspension system are also filled via the air compressor.

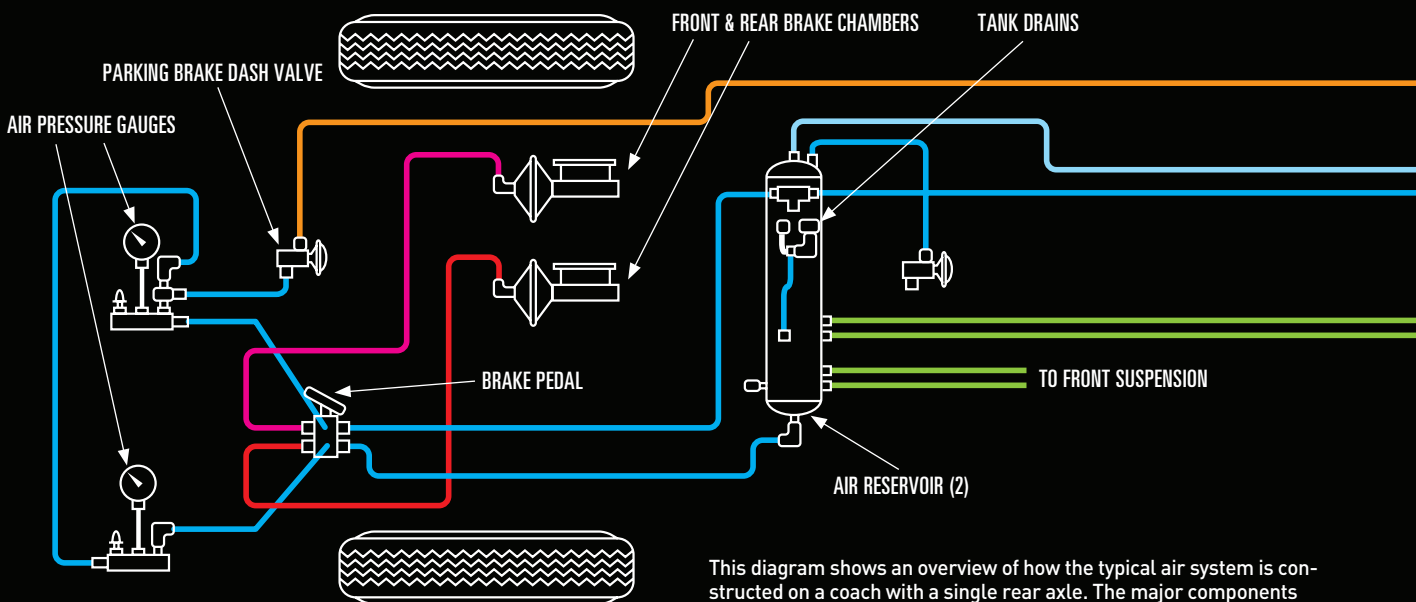
Most of the time this complex system of components works together

flawlessly to provide a smooth ride and powerful braking without the driver's involvement, which is the reason why most of us forget about them. But, if you want to be a knowledgeable motorhome owner, it's a good idea to have at least a basic understanding of the air system and how it works. Once you understand how these systems function, it will make you better prepared in the event of a problem and it will help you to maintain them.

There isn't a lot of owner-main-

tenance involved, so follow along and we will walk you through some basics. We will also show you how to test the motorhome's air brakes to ensure they are working properly. A good practice is to read the chassis owner's manual, where you'll find additional information specific to your motorhome. Also make sure the brake system is inspected at least annually by a specialized professional. While heavy-duty-brake-wear parts last a long time, corrosion from sitting can cause parts like slack adjusters to have issues.

The actual inner workings of the air system may seem simple on the surface, but when you dig deeper, it is actually more complex than you might think. The brake system of most diesel motorhomes consists of multiple components: the air compressor, an air dryer, one or more



This diagram shows an overview of how the typical air system is constructed on a coach with a single rear axle. The major components include the air tank, air dryer and air compressor. Systems may vary with regard to the exact location of the components.



## ON DIESEL-PUSHER COACHES

air tanks, the governor, multiple air lines and valves, and pressure gauges. There's also the brake pedal, parking brake switch and air brake chambers at each braking wheel. Some coaches have drum brakes on all positions, while others have disc brakes or even a mixture of the two, with discs on the front and drums on the rear. Normally, an owner is not involved in servicing the drums or rotors, and we suggest you leave that work to the professionals.

The heart of this system is the air compressor, and it is buried deep in the chassis close to, or mounted on, the chassis engine. Usually it is belt-driven or gear-driven directly



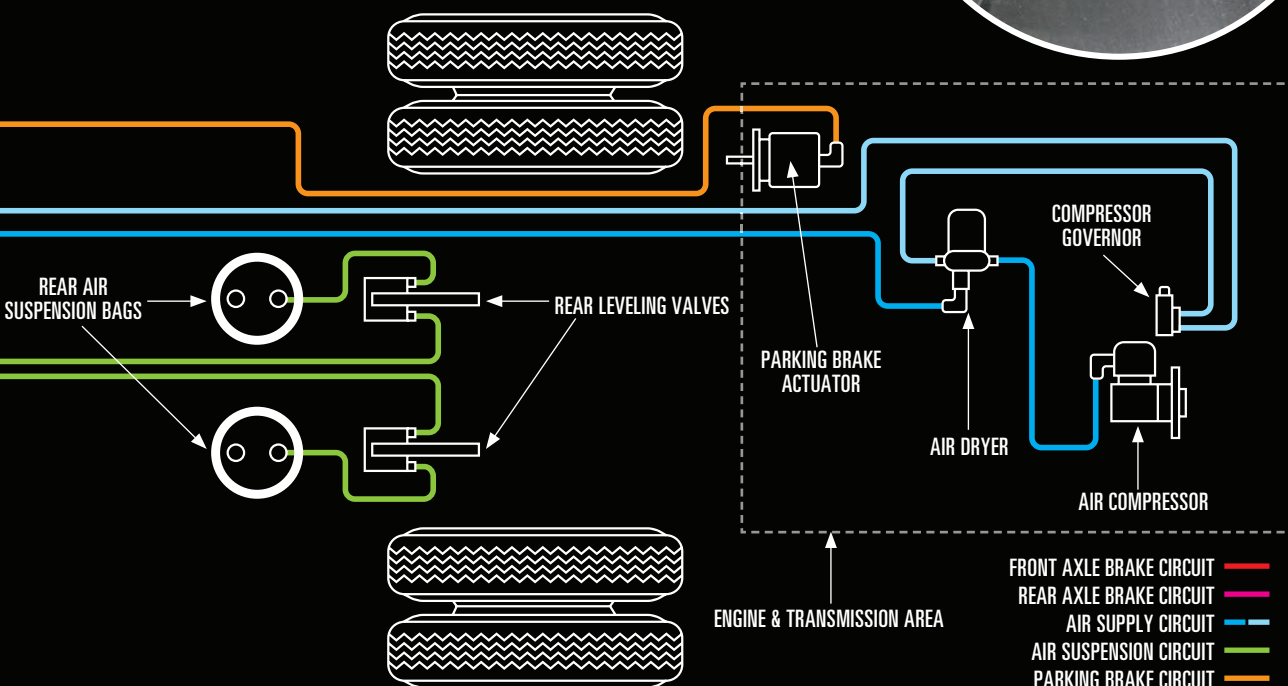
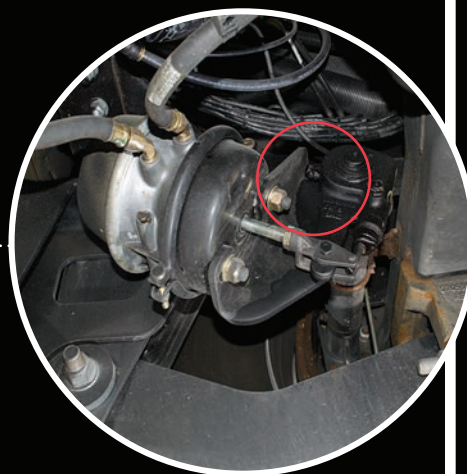
Above, left: This is what a typical air gauge set looks like on a motorhome. This Freightliner chassis has two tanks and two pressure gauges labeled 1 and 2. The gauges are displaying the normal operating pressure of 125 psi. Above, right: This is a typical brake cylinder mounted to the caliper on a front wheel disc brake. This motorhome has drums on the rear. With disc brakes, the brake cylinder is mounted directly to the caliper assembly.

off the engine. The air compressor generates the high-pressure air that is plumbed to the brakes and to the suspension's air bags. If your coach has air horns, they are also fed by the same air compressor. The air compressor pulls in air from the atmosphere, runs it through a dryer to minimize moisture, and sends the pressurized air to on-board air tanks, which is another part of the system.

Between the compressor and the

tanks is a governor — sometimes called an unloader — that helps prevent overfilling the tanks. The reason for the governor is that on a motorhome (unlike an air

Right: Shown is a rear brake cylinder and automatic slack adjuster on a rear-axle coach with air drum brakes. Note the grease fitting on the slack adjuster in the center of the red circle. Many manufacturers require different grease types for slack adjusters than those for the chassis, so make sure to use the correct one to avoid any problems.



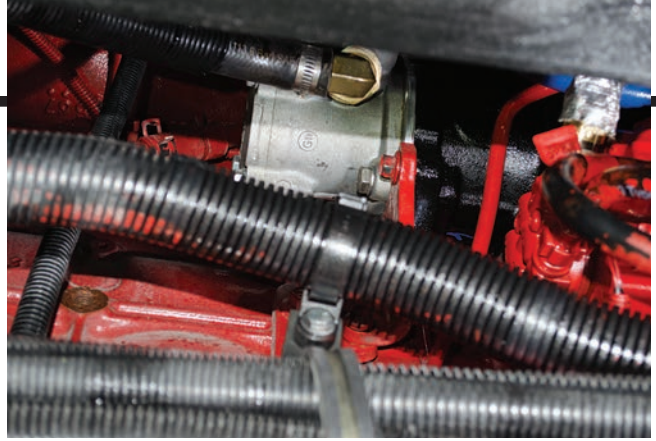
compressor in your garage), the compressor is on 100 percent of the time while the chassis engine is running. During operation, you may have heard the air system expel some air, which is the governor during its cutout cycle. Once the maximum pressure is reached, the governor releases some air along with the moisture and debris that has accumulated during its normal operation.

The next major components of the air system are the air tanks. In addition to storing a safe reservoir of air, they also consist of a safety valve (in case the governor fails and the tank pressure gets too high) and a drain valve. Even if the air compressor fails on the road, the tanks hold enough air to stop the motorhome several times as an emergency fail-safe. The tank-mounted drain valve is usually activated by a lanyard-type pull cord (some have automatic drain valves) under the front of the motorhome, and its purpose

**THE BRAKING SYSTEM CONSISTS OF TWO TYPES OF BRAKES: THE SERVICE BRAKE, WHICH ACTIVATES AS THE FOOT PEDAL IS DEPRESSED; AND THE PARKING OR EMERGENCY BRAKE.**

is to discharge the moisture that gets into the tank, thereby preventing the tank from rusting. Even though the system has a desiccant air dryer, the compressed air still carries some moisture into the tanks. This is because when the air is compressed it gets hot, and when it goes into the tanks it cools off and the moisture condenses as the air cools. This moisture needs to be removed. There is a schedule in the owner's manual indicating a change interval for the cartridge used in the air dryer. This is very important and should not be overlooked. The change interval for the air dryer cartridge is 36 months on the Tiffin Phaeton used to illustrate this article, for example.

There are usually one or two gauges on the dash that



Top: The engine-mounted air compressor on a Cummins 6.7-liter diesel engine is difficult to see. It is cooled by the engine coolant and is driven by a gear off the main crankshaft. Above: On many motorhomes, there is a lanyard pull cable (some coaches have two or more; this coach has three) attached to the air tanks. Pulling this cable manually drains the tanks of air and moisture, which reduces rust in the tanks. An awning hook can be used to help reach the lanyard. Freightliner suggests pulling the cord for 10-15 seconds every six months. The location may vary, so consult the owner's manual.

display the pressure of the air system, and during normal operation, they generally top out at around 125 psi. If the coach sits unused for several days, you might have noticed that when starting the engine, the chassis may emit a warning tone when the air-pressure is below the normal range. Once the tanks start refilling and reach 60 psi (ap-



Above, left to right: Pressing the knob releases the emergency or parking brake; pulling on the knob activates the brake. Before performing a brake test, make sure one or more wheels are chocked so the coach can't roll. Do not park behind obstacles during the test. When performing the emergency-brake test, a visual warning indicates that the air pressure has dropped too low and the emergency spring brakes have been automatically applied.

proximately), the warning will stop, the air bags in the suspension system will fill up and the coach will rise to normal operating height.

The braking system consists of two types of brakes. The first is the service brake, which activates as the foot pedal is depressed while stopping. This foot pedal is used

to apply braking pressure to all wheels to slow down the coach. The other brake type is the parking or emergency brake. Most motorhomes have a large yellow button or hand-operated valve on the dash (or on the console area) that controls the parking brake. The emergency brake button is labeled "Pull to apply parking brake, Push to release." The parking/emergency brakes work via a spring inside the brake chamber; if there is not enough air pressure in the cylinder to compress the spring,

it activates and applies full braking at each position where the emergency brakes exist. The purpose of this spring brake is to make sure that there is always braking available even if the air compressor and air tanks are drained.

There are several ways to "test" the brakes and you should make it a habit to do so on a regular basis. These are the exact same tests that CDL drivers do on large commercial trucks and are required to know in order to obtain their licenses. Once



Above: The air dryer on this Tiffin Phaeton is mounted on the driver's side frame rail just behind the rear axle. Shown is the top housing of a Haldex air dryer. Below: Under the black canister is the desiccant air filter cartridge, which should be changed (every 36 months on this particular chassis).



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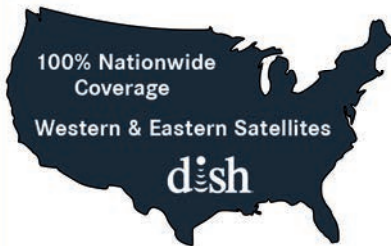
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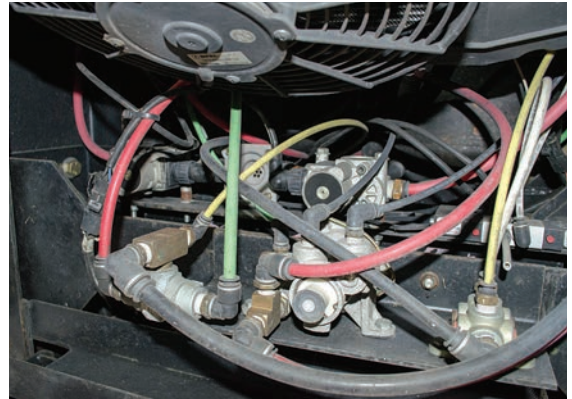
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## BRAKE TIME

Right, top: In the typical arrangement found on many coaches, the two air tanks are located near the front axle in between the frame rails. The lanyard cables are attached to the drain valves at the top left and bottom center. Right, bottom: Located near the air tanks is a complex arrangement of valves and controllers that operate the air suspension and air braking systems. These items do not require lubrication or adjustments and should be repaired or replaced at a service center experienced with motorhome chassis.



you do this a time or two, the routine can be done quickly and easily at the start of each trip. First, start the coach and allow the pressure to build to approximately 125 psi, then shut the engine off. This is the standard tank pressure on a motorhome, and you should never drive the coach until the air pressure is at 125 psi. Park in a safe and level area with no obstacles around the motorhome and chock one or more wheels. Turn the key on but don't start the engine. Push in the yellow parking-brake knob; this will release the parking brake and the wheel chocks you positioned will prevent the motorhome from rolling.

Leave the coach in this position with your foot off the brake pedal. After the initial drop indicated on the gauge, watch the air pressure until it stabilizes, then start a timer — it should not drop more than 2 psi in one minute. If it passes this test, press your foot on the brake pedal and apply firm pressure for another minute while watching the air-pressure gauge again. During this minute, the air pressure should not drop more than 3 psi.

Next, pump the foot brake pedal multiple times, and watch the air pressure gauge (on the dash) fall. Once it reaches a specified level, the chassis should produce an audible warning and/or a visual light. Keep pumping the brake a few more times.

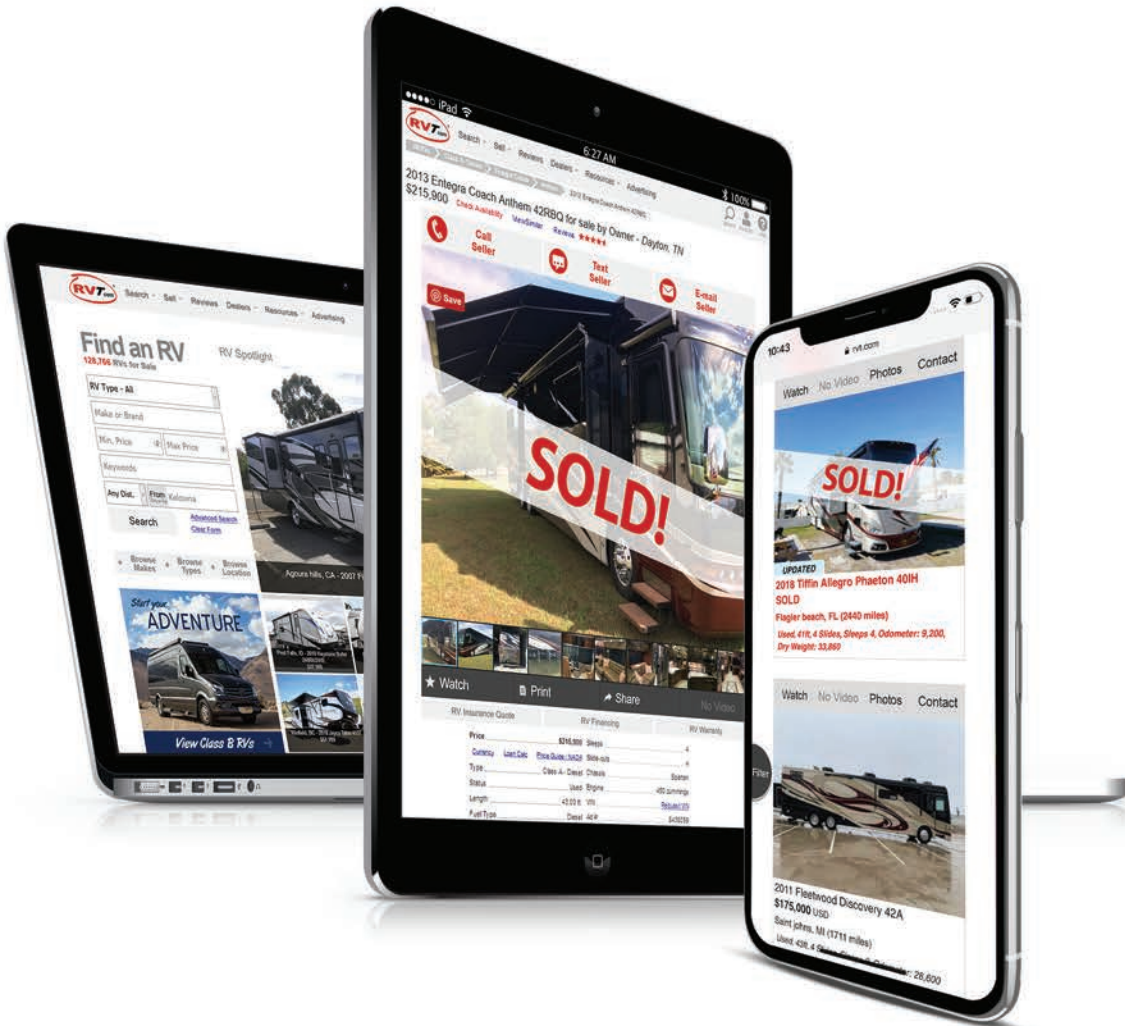
Once the air pressure falls a little lower, the brake chamber will no longer have enough air pressure to hold the parking-brake spring back and the parking/emergency brake will activate. When this happens the yellow parking brake knob will pop up. This indicates that the system is working correctly and that in an emergency, the brakes will automatically apply.

Finally, start the engine and allow the air system to reach full pressure. In order to check the function of the brakes, set the emergency brake and then remove the wheel chock. With the engine running, put the motorhome into gear and try to move the vehicle forward. The emergency brake should prevent the coach from moving. If the coach fails any of these tests you should not operate it until the leaks are professionally repaired.

Although this primer may not make you an air-brake expert, it should provide enough information to test the motorhome's brakes, drain the tanks and recognize major problems. Understanding the system is half the battle, so remember to perform the above brake checks before every trip. Safety is no joke when it comes to being able to stop a 40,000-plus-pound motorhome. **M**

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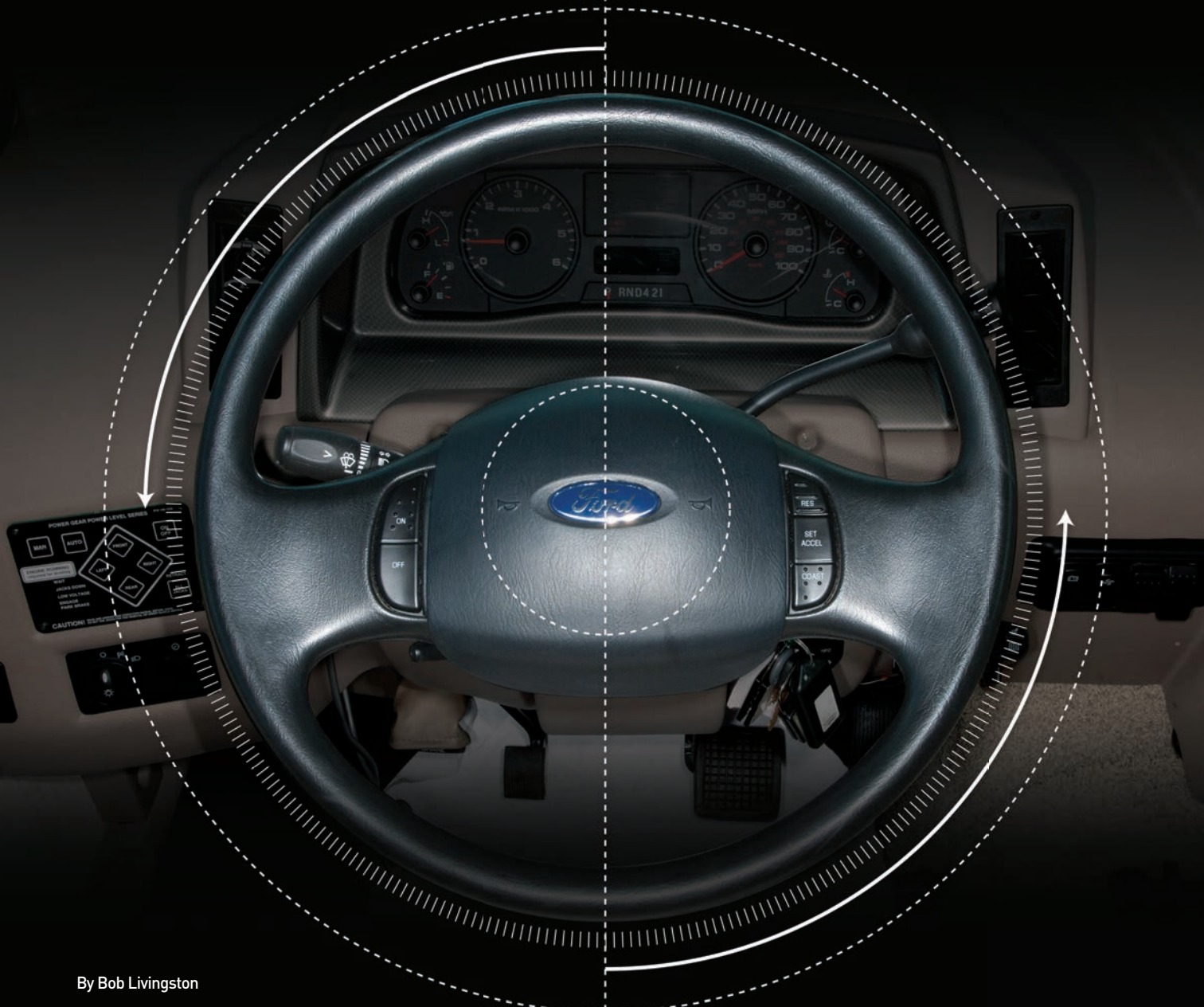
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By Bob Livingston

# STRAIGHT AS AN ARROW

New adjustable drag link makes it simple to center the steering wheel on Ford F-53 chassis



**P**iloting a motorhome has its own set of idiosyncrasies and one of them is contending with a steering wheel that's not straight. The off-kilter position is not a deal breaker, but most of us would rather have a steering wheel that doesn't feed on our obsessive-compulsive disorders. While a crooked steering wheel doesn't present driving-safety concerns, it does create a few pitfalls, and Redlands Truck & RV in Redlands, California, has developed a proprietary product, the Straight & Level Adjustable Drag Link, that fixes this malady.

In some cases, a steering wheel that is not centered affects how well the turn signals are cancelled, attributed to detent locations in relation to the position of the steering wheel. Not knowing when the wheels are exactly straight is another issue, which can be problematic when negotiating tight RV park sites. And last, but not least, if you're like me, a crooked steering wheel is simply an irritant — exacerbated by a preference to have certain things symmetrical.

There is a more complicated fix, but it isn't pretty. Mechanics have to loosen the front axle and chain it to a solid post that's cemented into the ground and horse it into position until the steering wheel is straight. In some cases, the axle

[1,2] Steering wheel on this Ford F-53 chassis was not straight from the factory. After installing the Straight & Level Adjustable Drag Link, the steering wheel was returned to center, matching the position of the wheels. [3] Factory drag link can be accessed from the openings between the front left wheel/tire and frame.



[4] New Redlands Truck & RV Straight & Level Adjustable Drag Link is made from three sections: two adjustable ends and a middle sleeve. [5] Cotter pins are removed from the castle nuts on both ends of the factory drag link. [6] Once the cotter pins are removed, the castle nuts are loosened with a ratcheting wrench. They are fairly tight, so using a longer wrench will make the job easier. [7] There's just enough room to remove the rear castle nut by hand (once loose). [8] Tapping the original drag link ends directly with a small hammer did not do much good here, so a pickle fork was first employed. [9] Once it was clear that the pickle fork and hand hammer were not going to work, an air hammer was attached.



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[10] The air hammer and pickle fork were still not convincing enough to break the ends loose, so following old-school mechanical protocol, a larger hammer was used, which did the trick. [11] After breaking loose the ends, the drag link is simply removed [12] from the front suspension. [13] New drag link is assembled on the ground next to the factory part to match length. [14] Adjustable ends are threaded into the center sleeve, making sure the spacing is even. Once accomplished, the new drag link (top) will be similar in length to the stock part [15].

holes for the leaf spring locators have to be grinded to facilitate the correct adjustment. Other, less invasive, fixes require cutting the stock drag link and adding an adjustable sleeve (using a commercially available kit). Both solutions are rather expensive, eating up at least 1½ hours of labor time.

The Straight & Level Adjustable Drag Link from Redlands Truck & RV simplifies this task dramatically and carves much of the cost out of the process. Installation can be accomplished in 45 minutes and the retail price of the new drag link is \$495.

When designing the new drag link, Redlands' motive was to make it strong and durable, so the company uses a ¼-inch tube wall to meet the self-prescribed specifications. The drag link consists of three parts: the center section and two adjustable ends, the latter of which are replaceable in the unlikely event they become worn; jam nuts keep the ends in place. By contrast, if the factory drag link needs replacing, the cost for the new part is quite expensive and often not in stock. The ends also have Zerk fittings for injecting the proper lubrication, and they are designed to make it easy to attach the nozzle of a grease gun.

Installation is straightforward but working on your back can make the project more difficult. Be prepared to use some brute



16



17



18

[16] Articulating end makes it easy to position threaded stud into rear steering linkage. [17] Adjustable end is placed into the front linkage, which is much more accessible. Castle nuts are replaced and tightened to specification [18].

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[19] New cotter pins, provided with the kit, are put through castle nut and threaded stud after lining up the holes (which is done during tightening). [20] & [21] Provided Zerk fittings are threaded into the ends and tightened with a small open-end wrench.

strength, if necessary, to remove the stock drag link. That's because the ends may need some convincing to break loose from the linkage. On the test motorhome, the mechanic had to enlist the help of a pickle fork to break the ends loose, and even after attaching to an air hammer, the ends remained stubborn. You know the old adage about using a bigger hammer? Well, that's what it took to pop the ends. The mechanic at Redlands has replaced numerous drag links and said some are harder to remove.

Once the old drag link is removed, the rest of the job goes quickly. When assembling the drag link, the threaded ends are spaced evenly, making sure the final length is close to that of the stock counterpart. After placing the new drag link's threaded studs (the ends rotate to help line up the fit), the castle nuts were tightened properly and new cotter pins were secured.

A helper centered the steering wheel and the mechanic below turned the drag link until the length was correct. The jam nuts were then tightened and the motorhome was road tested for final adjusting. When done, the steering wheel was straight, matching the position of the front wheels.

The Straight & Level Adjustable Drag Link can be installed on any year Ford F-53 chassis with gross vehicle weight ratings (gvwr) from 16,000 to 26,000 pounds.

Sometimes the little things in life make us happy; in this case, returning the steering wheel to center was simple enough and helped make driving the motorhome more pleasant, and you don't have to be obsessive-compulsive to realize the benefit. Now, about those little things inside that are not perfect ... **M**

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[22] Grease is pumped into the tie-rod ends using a hand pump and long flexible nozzle. Zerk fittings are positioned to accept lube nozzle with little fanfare. [23] After securing the new drag link, the center section [24] is turned by hand until the assistant in the cockpit confirms that the steering wheel is straight. Jam nuts [25] are then tightened with a big wrench. Final adjustment is made during a road test. [26] Torque Seal is applied to all the nuts to indicate everything has been tightened to specs.

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## FROM GOOD TO GREAT

AN OREGON COUPLE EMBRACES DOWNSIZING AND GOES FULL-TIME IN A 1986 COUNTRY COACH DIESEL PUSHER THEY RESTORED THEMSELVES

**A decluttering craze** is sweeping the country. Whether you are a "Konvert" to the Marie Kondo method of minimalization ("The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up") or a fan of the Julie Morgenstern "inside out" theory of organization ("Organizing from the Inside Out"), chances are you've taken a long, hard look at all the possessions crowding your life. You could spend your money on a consultant to help you prioritize your belongings, or you could follow in the footsteps of RV enthusiasts like Tim and Licia Good and move into a motorhome instead. Nothing clarifies what is important like trying to store everything in a space of less than 400 square feet.

Above: The new two-part lacquer paint in three different shades gives this vintage fiberglass coach new life. Right: Tim and Licia Good have made this 1986 Country Coach their full-time home.



"You do have to learn how to live effectively," Tim explains.

With the average house size increasing from 983 square feet in 1950 to nearly 2,500 square feet today, it's no wonder we feel a little overwhelmed by the stuff all that extra space can hold. For some RV enthusiasts, scaling back to full-time life in a motorhome can be difficult, but it's a challenge the Goods have embraced. All it took was some thoughtful planning and a lot of hard work.

The Oregon couple made the decision to downsize after their kids left home. They liked the idea of a motorhome versus a condo because of the flexibility it gave them to spend time traveling and visiting their young grandchildren.

Still in their 50s, Tim and Licia also realized that giving up regular 9-to-5 jobs for a more nomadic lifestyle meant finding an affordable coach. They started exploring the used market, and since they always liked the retro look, they focused their search on unique, vintage RVs. The Goods researched everything from a GMC to a Blue Bird, eventually narrowing their scope. They wanted a unit big enough to live in but small enough to fit comfortably in older public parks. It took a year to make up their minds before they finally settled on a Country Coach.

The Goods were specifically interested in the custom-built Country Coach units from the early 1980s. The Country Coach was built on a Gillig chassis and powered by the Caterpillar 3208T diesel, and included upscale options for that era like a Bendix air ride system, diesel generator and integrated leveling system. Because



Sanding and prepping the exterior of the 38-foot Country Coach for its new paint job took two months and a little help from the Goods' friends.

only a small number were produced, they are also rarities on the used market. It took another year to find the motorhome they wanted, and they eventually purchased a 38-foot Country Coach in 2016 from a dealer in Arizona. The price was \$14,500.

Except for basic maintenance, the Goods' Country Coach was mechanically sound and road-worthy from day one. Inside, the two original 13,500-Btu Dometic air conditioners with heat pumps and 1,500-watt inverter also performed perfectly. The motorhome even had a working back-up camera. The galley was surprisingly modern given the motorhome's age, including Corian counters with inlaid wood framing, a microwave convection oven, four-burner stovetop, three-way refrigerator and separate U-line icemaker. Another plus was the cabinetry, all solid pecan hardwood with a cherry-wood finish, giving the coach a rich, custom appearance.

"I'd never trade it for anything else. It's like a wooden cabin on

wheels, with everything so beautifully done," Licia says.

Tim agrees. "The motorhome was so well built and had so much in it we didn't have to add much, just restore what we obtained."

In terms of systems, restoration included updates to plumbing, the electrical system and ducting. The couple replaced most of the plumbing with PEX pipe, adding SharkBite quick connects at vulnerable joints. They added new breakers for all 120-volt AC systems and revamped the electrical bus. Digital thermostats replaced the originals for the LP-gas furnaces, and new 4-inch R-6 insulated hoses replaced existing ductwork throughout the coach. Interior upgrades included new wallpaper in the bathroom, reupholstering the couch and dinette, and making new Disney-themed blackout curtains. They also replaced the RV mattress with a full-sized residential queen. In keeping with their plan to stay within a budget, the couple did

### JUST RIGHT

The 38-foot Country Coach had a purchase price of approximately \$300,000 when manufactured. There are very few of these units on the used market, but if you are able to find a similar model, expect to pay between \$15,000-\$20,000. If not, the lessons from the Goods' restoration can apply to any well-built vintage coach. The key, as Tim says, is doing the research and finding the motorhome that is right for you.

▶ Although 38 feet in length, this Country Coach fits comfortably in many older state and national park campsites.



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## The Classic Ride

all of this work themselves, spending a total of about \$8,000 on their entire restoration.

"If we didn't know how to do something, we YouTube'd it and figured it out," Tim notes.

"We really enjoyed doing it," Licia adds.

The biggest job came when the couple tackled the coach's exterior. The fiberglass was showing its age, with some cracking and fading. The couple decided on a new full-body paint job. The new color scheme gave the Country Coach new life while keeping the retro look. With its renovated exterior, Licia says their vintage RV draws attention, and plenty of questions, wherever the couple goes.

"Everybody talks to us!" she laughs.

For those who love the look of a vintage RV but are skittish about the renovation process, Tim has some advice.

"Any motorhome can be restored. Choose what you like and make it what you want."

When tackling a renovation, he recommends you collect as much information as you can about your rig. Clubs can be helpful, though with models like the Goods' that weren't mass-produced, it may be more difficult to find assistance. Remember that most components are used in a variety of motorhomes, so find out which models duplicated some of the parts and seek out advice. You can also reach out to the manufacturers of those systems for information. Most importantly, Tim says, remember to enjoy the process.

As for the whole downsizing project, the Goods credit the Country Coach's design with making that transformation easier. They point to features like the small pole-mounted table that turns the captain's chairs into a usable breakfast nook when in camp, and the NuTone Kitchen Center, a counter-mounted motor that drives all their kitchen accessories (like a blender, food processor and coffee grinder). In addition, the ample interior storage has allowed the couple to keep all the comforts of home. In fact, Licia



Top: The bedroom cabinetry and wood paneling have the feel of a ship's cabin. Above: The pull-out under-counter cabinet and counter-mounted NuTone Kitchen Center help save space in the motorhome's galley.

is now going through those spaces and doing additional decluttering. Her new rule? "If I haven't touched it for a year, it's gone!"

Both Tim and his wife are enthusiastic about the change full-timing has brought to their lives. Their emphasis is on time together, with family, and in their Christian ministry, a far cry from when both had busy careers.

"I found I was working more for the toys than I was for myself," Tim says.

Now he works to supplement the couple's traveling kitty by temping for a nationwide agency, picking up short-term accounting jobs as needed. He considered telecommuting instead, but decided he would rather have clearly delineated hours. That way, down time in the motorhome is still stress-free. And Tim points out there is a contentment that comes with a decluttered, streamlined existence.

"We really love to live simply."

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## DIY Striping

I purchased a 2001 Winnebago Brave that was sun-faded on the outside. I wanted to improve the exterior, but didn't want to spend an arm and a leg doing it. After contacting the manufacturer for a new decal set (not available), pricing a full paint job (\$5,000-\$8,000) and researching a vehicle wrap (\$2,000-\$4,000), I decided to restripe the outside myself. I didn't remove the decals as I knew how difficult that would be. With the help of a friend, I used the existing decals as a template and rough sanded them with steel wool, and then cleaned them with denatured alcohol. I ordered vinyl automotive tape from [www.lettersunlimited.com](http://www.lettersunlimited.com) in colors that matched the originals in size and width. The tape can be cut to fit any size, so I measured all of the stripes and ordered two rolls of the tape (one for each side).

We started on one side, and using a mix of dish detergent and water, laid each of the stripes over the existing decals, spraying and smoothing the bubbles out as we went. For the larger swooshes, I bought 6-inch-wide rolls of vinyl and overlaid them horizontally from the bottom up, overlapping each 1/8-inch so water would run over the lap joint. Once the tape was on, using a razor blade and a steady hand, we cut around the decal shape (NOT into the fiberglass). You can see the shape through the new tape by the shadow of the overlaying decal. We did the whole job for less than \$400, in about 12 hours.

**Ken Bishop | West Jordan, Utah**



## Nailed It!

The kitchen drawers in our Winnebago Sunstar would slide open when driving around curves. After much discussion and searching for solutions, my husband came up with a simple idea. He put a ring screw into the cabinet face and one slightly lower into the side of the drawer face. When on the road, I drop a nail through the holes in the companion ring screws, which prevents the drawers from sliding open.

**Jacqueline and Henry Buzan  
Spring Creek, Nevada**

## The Classics: Ring My Bell

Have you ever had people tell you that they came over and knocked on the door of your motorhome and got no answer? Usually it's because you are in the bedroom and couldn't hear them.

I solved this problem by purchasing a wireless doorbell. The doorbell button was attached beside the door and the doorbell receiver was mounted in the bedroom. They are attached with double-sided tape that is included. Both the button and receiver use batteries. The doorbell is available at any home-improvement store.

**Elaine Shelton | Livingston, Texas**

## Neat DEET

Do your old plastic headlight lenses have that dull, cloudy look that comes from years of sunlight exposure, leaving you with far less illumination than when new? Before you turn to an expensive commercial product or service to

rejuvenate or replace them, try this first. Spray bug repellent containing DEET directly on to the outside of the headlight glass, then immediately wipe off with a rag or paper towel (no need to scrub or leave on). The cloudy film comes right

off, leaving the headlights much clearer. Then wash with soap and water. And since we all carry bug repellent with us anyway, this will cost less than a dollar. Be sure to test it in a corner first.

**Paul Fryer | Belleville, Ontario, Canada** 



### Have an Idea?

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

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## Leaky Roof

As the repair bills began piling up after the roof sealant on his 14-month-old coach failed, a reader turned to Hot Line for help. He wrote:



“ Last November, I purchased a new 2018 Thor Chateau 28Z from RCD RV Supercenter in Pataskala, Ohio. In January, I took the coach in to RCD for service before a trip. I informed them that there was a leak in the roof. Tom, in the service department, later told me a technician had found that the sealant around the air conditioner and around the front cap had cracked, allowing water to enter the motorhome. He also informed me that RCD would not cover the \$500-plus repair cost under warranty, and neither would the manufacturer. He said it was my responsibility to have been monitoring the deterioration of the sealant on the roof. I called the warranty division at Thor Motor Coach and was informed that the company was not responsible for the repair. Thor also says it is the responsibility of the owner to inspect the roof to find problems. Under protest I paid the bill, but upon further inspection of the motorhome I found more water damage under both sides of the front cap. I was given an estimate of more than \$800 to repair this damage. No one ever told me about sealant failure issues. I would have taken the motorhome to RCD for the inspection(s) if I had been so informed. Can Hot Line help?

**John Baus | Lancaster, Ohio**

We asked Thor to reconsider, and received good news from Baus.

“ I sent a letter to Hot Line requesting help with leak issues on my Thor Chateau. I was contacted by Thor Motor Coach and was advised the manufacturer would reimburse the full amount for the repair.

**J.B.**

*Note from our technical editor: While this worked well for Baus, there are lessons to be learned here. First, make sure to read every word of the owner's packet and warranty. Second, roof seals are considered a wear item, and must be checked every 90 days, or any time a leak or damage to the roof is suspected. Because of the lead time required for dealer service, plan ahead to get inspections and touch-ups done using manufacturer-approved products. More permanent solutions include sealant tape or a roof replacement.*

### Puddling Awning

All wet due to what he feels is a poorly designed patio awning, a reader asked Hot Line for assistance. He wrote:

“ I have a 2008 Tiffin Allegro Bus. The awning started acting up, so I took it to La Mesa RV in Sanford, Florida. The technicians determined the awning motor was bad, so I agreed to replace the awning for \$2,861.48. The original awning type was no longer available, so they installed a Dometic awning. When I tested it, it worked beautifully.

The next time I was camping and it rained, I noticed a huge pool of water had accumulated on the awning. I used

a broom to force the water off from underneath. Since that time, there's been a big wrinkle in the middle of the awning and I can't leave the awning extended even in the slightest of sprinkles, as it will pool again.

I contacted Dometic, which looked at pictures and said to have a repair shop call for instructions. I took the coach to La Mesa RV in Fort Myers, Florida. The technicians there saw nothing wrong with the awning other than the fabric was stretched and told me that it should only be used for sun shade and never rain protection. I have had motorhomes since 2007 and never had an issue with awnings in the rain. The [previous awnings I owned] were always pitched and rain ran off one end (or activated the dump arm if rain was heavy). I can't risk leaving the coach with the awning out at this point.

**Bill Green | Punta Gorda, Florida**

Awnings should always be retracted in wet weather. Not doing so can often result in the experience Green is having. We contacted La Mesa RV, and its service representative reiterated that fact.

We reviewed Mr. Green's letter, and have also reviewed our service records and awning installation procedures. We have determined that the awning was properly installed and had the maximum pitch that was allowed under the circumstances/application. Awning care during inclement weather is the responsibility of the user.

**J. Castro, Customer Relations Manager, La Mesa RV Center Inc. San Diego, California**

### Take Action Contact Hot Line for Help

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

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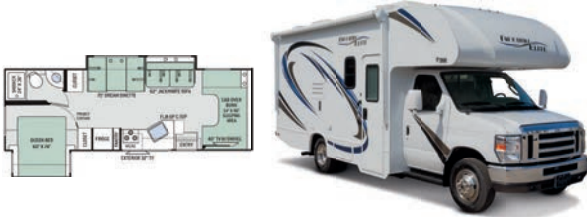
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By Ken Freund

## Electric Vehicles

**Q** With the proliferation of electric vehicles coming, I was wondering if you could entertain ideas for their use with motorhomes — such as towed vehicles, smaller motorhomes, using the motorhome to charge a car while hooked up and driving, etc. I look forward to my *MotorHome* magazine online every month. Thank you for your excellent publication.

**Ross Arnold | Oakbank, Manitoba, Canada**

**A** As my principal role in writing this column is to help readers diagnose and repair existing problems, I'm not very comfortable in foretelling the future; however, I'll give it a try, with no guarantees.

Winnebago already has an electric coach that, while designed for commercial use and featuring limited range, could be adapted to private motorhome service. I think that the major vehicle manufacturers will be introducing various electric-powered vans and light trucks designed for commercial use. If the range is adequate, these could conceivably be converted to motorhome use in the same way these petroleum-fueled models are upfitted.

Before electric vehicles can be towed behind



motorhomes, they need to be designed, tested and approved for such operation to avoid damage to drivetrains (just like gas and diesel models must be). Presently they are not.

Recharging an electric vehicle requires a very high-wattage alternator charging system, which far exceeds existing charging systems fitted to motorhome engines. It may be possible to use onboard gensets to charge electric vehicles, but one of the drawbacks to this is that generating electricity in this manner is quite inefficient, higher polluting and more costly per kilowatt, compared to power from the grid. Also, campground operators may not appreciate people using vastly greater amounts of power than a typical RV to charge their vehicles. It's likely this will lead to overtaxing the power systems and higher rates at RV parks and campgrounds. It will be interesting to see how this all shakes out in the future.

### Electric-vehicle Dinghy Towing

**Q** I am considering towing a dinghy behind my Tiffin Breeze, after years of loading either a gas-powered scooter or an electric bicycle on a rack off the back. However, I do not think I would consider anything other than an all-electric car or small SUV. I have not seen anything on towing electric vehicles, maybe because the technology and market is changing very rapidly. Any ideas if "electrics" are a towable option and if they are, any drawbacks?

**Chuck Fraley | Carlsbad, California**

**A** So far none of the full-electric vehicles are approved by their manufacturers for four-down flat towing, which is probably why you haven't seen anything on this

*subject. As more vehicle manufacturers enter the all-electric arena, there may be some that design and approve towing their models. As it is now, you would need to use a trailer to tow an electric vehicle.*

### Wandering Diesel

**Q** My wife and I reside in Southern California and own a 2016 Thor Palazzo 33.4 diesel pusher that's equipped with a Cummins 300-hp engine. Since new, the motorhome has had a tendency to wander, requiring almost constant adjustments to steering in order to keep tracking correctly. Could it be me, or is this a more common problem among some, if not all, Class A's? I will admit, the adjustments I make to keep on track are slight, not wild swings from side to side. If there is a solid solution to

this issue, especially without breaking the bank, could you recommend the hardware and/or dealer network necessary to help correct this problem? It's very tiring on long drives.

**Art Guy | Oak Park, California**

**A** Usually, we hear more complaints about gasoline-powered coaches wandering, and not so much with diesel pushers. First, I would check the easy stuff, like tire inflation. Weigh the coach when it is fully loaded for a trip, and get individual axle weights. Then, using tire load-inflation charts for the specific tires on your rig (you can find them on tire manufacturer websites), adjust pressures to the actual weights on the tires. Your coach is on a Freightliner XC chassis, which has a three-year, 50,000-mile warranty. It's probably close to the time limit, so I



suggest that you take it in to be checked over. Have them check wheel alignment and play or looseness in the steering components, suspension, etc. One potential weakness on the XC chassis is the steering bellcrank, which is known to wear prematurely. If your motorhome's is loose, consider upgrading to a SuperSteer bellcrank, which is available from SuperSteer (888-898-3281, [www.supersteerparts.com](http://www.supersteerparts.com)). I also suggest that you have someone who is very experienced driving diesel pushers take it for a test drive.

### Charging Line

**Q** We have a 2019 Entegra Esteem 29V motorhome. It has a seven-way RV plug. The No. 4 terminal is called a charge line, and has battery voltage when the engine is running. I am towing a 2012 Jeep Wrangler. Can I use this line to charge the battery in the Jeep?

**Dave Truitt | via email**

**A** Yes, you can use it for a charging line for the Jeep. Use a minimum of 10-gauge wiring to carry the current with minimal voltage drop. Make sure the charging line has a 30-amp circuit breaker at each end. The reason for this is that a short circuit could cause a fire, since high-amperage battery power is available at either end. Any good RV shop should be able to handle this easily.

### Slow Fuel Filling

**Q** We are enjoying our second Class C motorhome built on a Ford E-450 chassis with the V-10 engine. With the first, a 2004 Coachmen, I found that often I was unable to fill the gas tank before it automatically shut off and refused to top off. I attributed it to local gas station pressure settings and learned to go to stations where this would not happen. We are now in a 2017 Thor Four Winds with the same chassis and motor, and the frequency

seems even greater. Is this a coach problem that you have addressed in the past, or is it a gas station problem?  
**Rod Widger | Springfield, Missouri**

**A** Yes, I have addressed this a number of times with various chassis. The chassis manufacturers provide the coachbuilders with a fuel tank and filler assembly, but the final installation is performed by the coachbuilder and varies based on the body design and filler neck location. Often, the hoses behind the side wall are routed so they create kinks or low spots where gasoline collects and blocks flow, shutting off the gas pump early. Inspect the hose routing and adjust as needed, and I suspect your problem will be solved.

### Backing a Dinghy

**Q** My wife and I were driving along a narrow, one-lane road in our 32-foot Winnebago, towing our Honda



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## COACH & POWERTRAIN

CR-V. After about 15 minutes I could not find a place to turn around. I tried to make a U-turn and found out I needed 3 more feet. I backed up about 2 feet and looked in the rear-view mirror and saw the Honda front wheels at about a 45 degree angle. I unhooked the CR-V and had my wife drive and follow me to the campground.

Since then, I have been wondering if my wife would have been behind the wheel of the Honda and held on to the steering wheel, would I have made the 3 feet I needed to make the turn? Would she have been able to hold the wheels straight?

**Stan Smith | Fountain Valley, California**

**A** Without the dinghy running, it's difficult to turn the steering without boost from the power steering. It might be possible for her to anticipate how the front wheels need to be angled while you are backing the coach, but it's best (and safest) to detach the vehicle temporarily, then turn it around separately, and then reconnect it after the motorhome is headed back in the other direction.

### A Slideout That Won't

**Q** We have a 2004 37-foot Coachmen Class A Santara with three slides. In the summer, when the temperature is in the 80s, the main front slide will not work until after the motorhome has set at least an hour after we have driven it. The two back bedroom slides work without a problem. We camp at Brown County State Park in Indiana a lot. That's about a 90-minute drive from our house. When we start to set up and deploy the slides, it may barely move, then stop. After we let the motorhome set for a while, the slide will come out. This problem has been going on for at least eight years. It's as if something has to cool down. I have taken it back to the dealer several times and they have not been able to correct this problem. I have also called Coachmen and they can't help. I don't know what else to do.

**Gary Scott | Mooresville, Indiana**

**A** Sufficient battery voltage is crucial for the motors to operate and your coach is old enough that corrosion of electrical connections may be a factor. Have you tried deploying the slide after the coach is plugged in to shorepower, or the generator or chassis engine is running? Take a look at all the pertinent electrical connections to see if they need to be cleaned or tightened. It would also be helpful to take voltage and amp readings at the motor to see if it's browning out the system, or what the amp draw is. The larger room requires more power, too, which might have something to do with why the largest slideout has the problem. Have you tried to manually open the slideout room to determine if it's jammed for any reason?

Sometimes these rooms go out of adjustment, or begin hitting something when they operate. If the room is on rollers, make certain the rollers roll freely. I suggest you carefully feel how hot that motor is when you first arrive, and compare it to the others. Perhaps heat from the exhaust or other source is overheating it, or the motor itself is faulty. I believe you have Powergear brand slide mechanisms by Lippert. Here is a URL for the online manual: [www.lci1.com/assets/content/support/manuals/Slideouts/pg\\_82\\_S0503.pdf](http://www.lci1.com/assets/content/support/manuals/Slideouts/pg_82_S0503.pdf).

### Tire Compounds

**Q** We own a 2007 Damon Astoria that we purchased 2½ years ago. We had to buy tires, not knowing they were that important, except for size. I was sold a Dunlop SP 160 255/70R 22.5, 140/137M, LR-H. It says test inflate to 120 psi and the tire store (which is primarily a truck tire center) recommended I run them at 115-plus psi. After reading an article about tire compounds and weight ratings, I wondered if I had bought the wrong tires, because they have a harsh ride over ridges and/or small bumps. I tried to Google info on tire compounds and what's needed for my motorhome and can't find anything. Any advice would be greatly appreciated.

**Roger Speigner | Dothan, Alabama**

**A** The SP 160 tires you chose are designed by Dunlop for commercial regional haul duty on trucks. Tires designed for truck service can be used on motorhomes, but since the two types of vehicles have different needs, it's best to stick with tires specifically designed for the task at hand. Truck use requires stiffer sidewalls for load bearing and longer wear for high mileage, whereas motorhome tires often reach an age where they need to be replaced due to weathering rather than worn-out tread. A softer carcass for a more comfortable ride is a higher priority than wear on motorhome tires. Harder rubber compounds tend to wear longer, while softer compounds provide better grip and perhaps a slightly softer ride. Tire manufacturers often consider rubber formulas and compounds to be proprietary information; they don't typically share it or make it available to the public.

### Auto Park-brake Problems

**Q** I have a 1995 Winnebago Vectra and have problems with the auto park brake not holding. I took it to a mechanic who said the pump was bad and replaced it for \$1,200. It worked better, but then the auto park light kept coming on. I took it back to the mechanic and he put a switch in it; when the switch is pushed in the light goes out, and when I pull it out the light comes on. The auto park now is barely working. I don't know who to take it to.

**Charles Ramsey | via email**

**A** If you have one of these brakes you will likely have problems. Ultra RV Products is knowledgeable about these systems and offers technical advice and upgrade kits to solve the problems with these units. Call 800-417-4559, or visit [www.ultrarvproducts.com/RV-Braking-Upgrades/UltraStop-J71-J72-Auto-Park-Brake-Upgrades](http://www.ultrarvproducts.com/RV-Braking-Upgrades/UltraStop-J71-J72-Auto-Park-Brake-Upgrades).

### Towing a 4WD Subaru

**Q** We have a 31-foot Winnebago Class C with two slides. I have run my Jeep Wrangler's wheels off

and I'm looking at a Subaru to replace the Jeep. I can't find any experienced sources to give me an opinion on towing the four-wheel-drive Subaru.  
**Jerry Edwards | Conway, South Carolina**

**A** Unfortunately, these Subarus are not factory-approved for towing. The all-wheel-drive systems can be severely damaged by flat towing. Check out MotorHome's online dinghy towing guides: [www.motorhome.com/download-dinghy-guides](http://www.motorhome.com/download-dinghy-guides). Select the model years you are interested in and peruse the listings of vehicles that are factory-approved for towing. Always double-check with the manufacturer and/or consult the vehicle owner's manual before purchasing.

### Conditions May Vary

**Q** Thank you for the "Flush with Confidence" article in the June 2018 issue. I was particularly interested in the **(continued on page 63)**

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(continued from page 59)

mention of bacteria versus formaldehyde-based toilet treatments. After doing a bit of research, formaldehyde apparently indeed is biodegradable and breaks down fairly quickly.

Next time you run an article like this please add more info on how long these treatments last. We dry camp in a Class A for about a month in hot conditions. It seems that the bacterial-based treatments don't last more than a week or two. The formaldehyde-based treatments may do better because they don't rely on an organism surviving for a month in 100 degree conditions. But, more information on the effect of ambient heat and time duration on the performance of tank treatments would be very welcome. Once we decamp and head down the road, we can smell sewer gas in the cab area no matter how much treatment I pour down the toilet. For long periods of dry camping, should I be re-treating the tank periodically?

**Lauren Carly** | via email

**A** Each coach and the conditions under which it is used determine what is needed, so it would be difficult to report with any degree of accuracy on how long a specific product lasts at a given temperature. Hot weather is a major factor that accelerates the growth of odor-causing microbes. The length of time between dumping is also a factor; it's unusual to go as long as you do without dumping the tanks. Most RVers dump their tanks about every week or so. If you are having problems with holding-tank odor, it is indeed a good idea to treat the tank with additional chemicals to control the smell. You may also consider a powered plumbing vent to draw waste gasses out of the holding tank. **M**

**Have a Tech Question?**

**Contact our experts:**

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

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# Just Putting Along

Mini-golf is a big deal in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

By Alan Rider

It's been said that "Golf is a good walk spoiled." If you're a golfer, chances are you can relate. You see, it's been my experience that many golfers come to a point where they just grow weary of chasing a dimpled white orb down fairways that seem to grow longer with every round.

I know because I reached that point several decades ago. Between the never-ending frustration of shanked tee shots and rummaging around the rough looking for that elusive lost ball (usually to no avail), it simply wasn't all that much fun anymore.

But what if there was a way to distill what many believe is the most challenging part of the game into a format where the time involved is counted in minutes instead of hours? That foreshortened format — along with the likelihood that success will be measured in laughs-per-hole rather than strokes — helps explain the popularity of miniature golf.

Now, admittedly, it's not like mini-golf (aka putt-putt) is a new invention. The history of the sport — and it *is* considered a sport, as you'll read later — dates back to the earliest years of the 20th century.

From big-city rooftops to resorts like Seabreeze Amusement Park just outside Rochester, New York, where the 1930s-vintage miniature golf course (585-323-1570, <http://parksidediner.com/miniature-golf>) is listed in the National Register of

Historic Places, the popularity of mini-golf has grown dramatically even as the number of people playing traditional golf has declined. There are thousands of miniature golf courses across the U.S., and the World Minigolf Sport Federation boasts members from 30 countries.

In the U.S., there's no place better to work on your game than Myrtle Beach, South Carolina (800-356-3016, [www.visitmyrtlebeach.com](http://www.visitmyrtlebeach.com)). With more than four-dozen mini-golf courses in this seaside community, you could play a different layout every day for six weeks and still not hit them all.

From common mini-golf obstacles like spinning blades of waist-high windmills to exotic attractions like a volcano that regularly "erupts," there's something for everyone here. As pastimes go, miniature golf courses in Myrtle Beach are as colorful and varied as the rainbow of golf balls you're

offered by the teenager in the entrance booth.

While miniature golf may be a pleasant way to spend a balmy afternoon to you and me, there are folks out there who take this game far more seriously. And for good reason, as there's more than pride and bragging rights on the line each time they tee up the ball.

Many of these competitive types gather here each fall for the US ProMiniGolf Association Master's tournament (<http://prominigolf.com>; October 9-12 this year). On the line is a cash purse of \$20,000, a possible spot on Team USA and a coveted green jacket, rewards that attract putters from all walks of life.

Whether you hope to compete in these big leagues or just show up the rest of your foursome, past tournament winners have one word of advice: practice. Naturally, being able to hit the ball in a straight line is important, but it's far from the only skill you'll need to develop.

Topping that list is a knack for studying the course and developing the right "touch." Primarily that means learning to control the speed of the ball and adapt it to the unique challenges of the hole you're playing.

Regardless of whether you end up playing mini-golf for fun or sport, here's wishing you many holes-in-one as you're putting along The Road Ahead. **M**

**“Whether you hope to compete in these big leagues or just show up the rest of your foursome, past tournament winners have one word of advice: practice.”**

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Photos: Visit Myrtle Beach



View of the Superstition Mountains



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