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OCTOBER 2014

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Destinations
New Hampshire to Nevada



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24



44



50

FEATURES

14 Photo Contest: The Best of the Best

Take an armchair trip through the lenses of RVers with the winning entries

18 Autumn Across America

Sample the fall colors and local flavor at 10 RV-friendly destinations that put their own distinctive stamp on the season

24 Thrills and Chills in New York

The little village with a big reputation, Sleepy Hollow gets spirited away each Halloween. This October bats will fly and heads will roll in the town made famous by Washington Irving's ghoulish horseman

30 Legends of the Fall

When the calendar flips to October in western Illinois, Pike County turns over a new leaf for a constantly changing kaleidoscope of autumn colors

38 Fox Mountain 325RKS

This fifth-wheel from Northwood Manufacturing offers a unique floorplan that makes the kitchen a priority

44 Wolf Pup 17RP by Cherokee

Forest River's diminutive toy-hauler trailer is a 20-foot sanctuary for outdoor enthusiasts

46 Lost & Found

Stay on track with one of these RV-friendly GPS units as your copilot

50 Keep Your Cool

Replacing worn-out fabric on a Dometic manual awning is a good way to restore shade and aesthetics

.....
Large round hay bales gathered at a dairy farm in Pike County, Illinois, signal the changing seasons and the colorful fall foliage. Page 30



DEPARTMENTS

4 Driver's Seat

Seeking Vivid Scenery

6 Letters

Readers respond loud and clear

9 Around the Bend

News, events, places and trends

12 RV Resolutions

Trailer Life is your referee

54 New Products

Goodies to improve the RV lifestyle

56 Performance Corner

Tech, accessories and news

60 Hands On

Smart RV Products' Fridge-Fix

63 RV Clinic

Answers from the *Trailer Life* tech team

70 Free Travel Information

Help with trip planning

71 10-Minute Tech

Now why didn't I think of that?

74 America's Outback

Alexandria, South Dakota



👉 EverGreen's Tesla toy hauler has plenty of sleeping room for a family and guests. Page 10

On the cover: Enjoying an afternoon at Ocean Mesa at El Capitan near Santa Barbara, California, with the Fox Mountain. Photo by Scott Hirko

Seeking Vivid Scenery

Fall is a great time to visit places where the turning leaves transform the landscape into stunning panoramas



As we move into fall, many of us will have to make decisions whether to stay on the road or put the ol' rig into storage. My preference is to continue traveling, although I have to schedule trips around publishing deadlines. Fall is a favorite time of year for me because the roads are less crowded and the scenery is quite spectacular.

Seeking places to visit where the fall color is vivid and inspiring has become an annual activity for my wife, Lynne, and me. Granted, the trees and vegetation out West are not known to be as stunning as those in the Midwest and East, but there certainly are a number of special places where our visual senses can be activated. For example, we love to travel up Monitor Pass in California's Sierra Nevada, just off U.S. Route 395. Hanging out in the trees can be pretty spiritual. Here, nature turns the scenery into brightly painted landscapes before the leaves abandon their branches for the upcoming winter. It's an amazing visual experience, but you have to watch the calendar and weather carefully; the peak fall color season is not very long.

There are many fall destinations that extend the travel season; check out our selection on page 18 and the article on autumn in Pike County, Illinois, on page 30. And, by the way, if you need help navigating to these and other locations, be sure to peruse the roundup of the latest GPS devices on page 46. I know real men aren't supposed to need directions, but I gave up on that mantra many years ago. I rely heavily on a GPS, and the ones that have campground information loaded into the memory and profiling capabilities are powerful traveling tools.

If you decide to give your RV a rest for a while, it's best to take inventory of any mechanical issues and make sure maintenance is up to date before heading to the storage lot. Surprises when it's time to get on the road again are not fun.

Target the tires for proper air pressure and protection from the elements, make sure the batteries are fully conditioned and set up a schedule for ongoing maintenance charging. Winterize, if needed, and take the necessary steps to control mold and mildew. Of course, if your rig is motorized or you have a fill station on your toy hauler, top off the fuel and add Sta-Bil to keep the fuel from deteriorating. If your awning has seen better days, replacing the fabric (page 50) may bring it back to life.

It's all about the options that make RV travel so flexible. 🚐

— Bob Livingston, publisher

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DID YOU KNOW?

According to a Recreation Vehicle Industry Association study by PKF Consulting USA, an international travel and tourism group, RV travel for a family of four is 23 to 59 percent less expensive than other types of vacations. Empty-nest couples traveling by RV save 11 to 46 percent.

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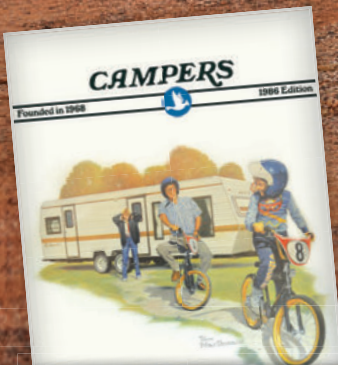
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Happy with KZ

Upon reading your August cover story on the KZ RV GoldRush Durango Klondike by Chris Hemer, I must say that the minor glitches were overamplified: a poorly located switch here, no nightstand there. I'm more concerned about the quality of construction, the durability factor and the dollar value (including residual) than those other things. Of course, the exterior look and floorplan are key purchase factors.

We bought a KZ new in 1995. It's still rock-solid from frame to aluminum roof, it's never had a major issue, and while we were camping last month we were offered nearly 70 percent of what we purchased it new for! Now that is value.

Rich and Gail Berte
Marlborough, Massachusetts

RV Security

As a snowbird, I was interested in Steve Statham's home security article in the August issue. Another great system not mentioned is offered by SimpliSafe (www.simplisafe.com). SimpliSafe is a cellular-based wireless system with a variety of components such as entry and motion sensors, smoke and CO₂ detectors, and freeze and water leak monitors. We have self-installed this system in our summer residence and are able to receive text and email messages from the SimpliSafe dispatch center, which monitors our system 24/7. Depending on which monitoring program you choose, they will also contact the local police and fire agencies if something is amiss. Another feature is that you can remotely access the control panel and check or modify the system settings while you are on the road.

Terry Callison, Carson City, Nevada

Arctic Fox Axle Weight

We received several phone calls and letters regarding the axle weight on the Arctic Fox 27-5L that we published in the August issue. We incorrectly listed it as 9,650 pounds; the correct axle weight is 7,782 pounds. We apologize for the confusion. – Editors

Heart of Dixie

I want to thank you for publishing the great article by Carl Calvert on Huntsville, Alabama, in your August issue. I was one of many Army reservists called up after 9/11 to serve at Huntsville's Redstone Arsenal. I could not have been placed in a more congenial city than Huntsville, Alabama! My duties were to last two-and-a-half years as the arsenal's operations director. I visited all the vast cultural and interesting sights of the greater northern Alabama area. This is truly the heart of Dixie!

On an opportunity to afford my subordinates some military experiences they otherwise would never have had, I arranged for the post's aviation crews (they patrolled the perimeter twice daily) to give UH-1 Huey helicopter rides to my faithful crew. We combined the best of Redstone's missions — aviation and rockets — by flying over the Huntsville U.S. Space & Rocket Center and other areas of the city. We hovered directly over the Saturn V rocket and were able to take photographs otherwise unavailable to anyone anywhere!

The hospitality of all the residents in Huntsville made an everlasting impression on me, and I stay in contact with many friends I made there.

I urge all RV enthusiasts to travel to this richly cultural

Southern city and its surrounding areas of Guntersville and Decatur on the beautiful and navigable Tennessee River. There are many car clubs in the area to pique one's interest — especially the Rocket City Mustang Club, whose name honors the city's unique history.

Steve Spatola, Stockton, California



Stick to Trailers

I enjoy your magazine. Even though we have a travel trailer, I also receive *MotorHome* and, as such, wish you would keep the small motorized RVs out of *Trailer Life* ("First Class B's," July). As others have requested in their letters, I would like to see more reviews of smaller trailers. Overall, I always enjoy reading the travel and tech articles, as well as those written by Bill Graves.

Linda LaDuc, Clayville, New York

Towing a Popup

For my 70th birthday, my husband, Karl, and I put our spacious Eureka tent in storage and bought an Aliner Expedition, complete with two large dormers and a flush toilet. We are so enthused with our purchase and eager to see the USA. The only problem we had was finding the right vehicle to tow our new popup.

In the June issue, Chris Hemer gave the Toyota Highlander a recommendation for towing the TrailManor, but we found that this model SUV did not come with the seven-pin plug we required. The four-pin plug it comes with would not handle the braking system for the trailer and would not charge the battery while driving.

The company that installed previous hitches for us alerted us to the fact that, once you cut into the wiring harness, the car's electrical system warranty would be voided. Toyota agreed but still maintained that the four-pin plug was adequate. Because of this discrepancy, we wound up with the Toyota V-6 4Runner, which has a truck chassis, more suitable for the long, high haul. The Highlander has a Camry chassis.

We hope this information helps others in their purchasing. Thank you

for a wonderful forum for newbies and veteran RVers alike.

Norma Stehle, Hewitt, New Jersey



PHOTO BY LISA DENSMORE

America's Most Beautiful Drive

Having read Lisa Densmore's article on the Beartooth Highway in the May issue, we wanted to see this beautiful place in person. We drove from Yellowstone over Montana's 8,000-foot Colter Pass in early June, and the snow in some places was 10 feet high on the roadside. There are a lot of switch-backs and tight corners, and slowing

to 10 to 15 MPH was prudent. We were towing a 26-foot travel trailer with a 2014 Ram 3500 Cummins and had no problem climbing or descending using the tow/haul and exhaust brake. The downhill is very long and steep, but with the exhaust brake, the brake pedal was seldom used. Once down, there are several national park campgrounds on the left side of the highway.

**Floramaeh and Jim Orear
Pioneer, California**

More to Celebrate in St. Louis

As a lifelong St. Louisan, I thoroughly enjoyed Pamela Selbert's article in the July issue on the 250th birthday of St. Louis, Missouri. As she pointed out, many of our main attractions are free to the public. I have to tell you, though, that she missed one of the most important sites in our city. The Old Cathedral sits literally in the shadow of the St. Louis Arch. The

parish was formed in 1764, and the current church building was dedicated in 1834. We are now finishing the first complete restoration of the church since its dedication. It is open to the public daily from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Mel Doerhoff, St. Louis, Missouri

Decal Dilemma

Several years ago we bought a 27-foot fifth-wheel to replace a camper sitting on a 3500 Dodge Ram. We love the trailer! It tows like a dream, has lots of room for weekenders and gives us that wished-for home on the road. We named her Back 9 in honor of our second-most favorite game.

Sadly, the unit's decals, none too good to start with, became so faded and cracked we had an RV shop take them off, leaving, as we knew in advance, the not-quite-gone outlines of the manufacturer's name and model. Knowing a little about

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LETTERS

commercial art, I designed new decals but found having them made locally equaled a down payment on a new unit. Still, the Back 9's solid white is, well, solid white that gets whiter when we park next to a unit sporting Mona Lisa-quality baked-on art.

Anyone know of a decal-maker tucked away somewhere doing quality work for a used unit price?

Jim Marvin, Lemoore, California

Separation Anxiety

We have a Jayco hybrid trailer. On our last outing, we came down a dirt road on our way back from camping. When we got home, my wife noticed that the kitchen counter had pulled away from the wall about an inch. We called Camping World in Golden, Colorado, to make the repair. The unit was not under warranty, since it is a 2011 model. Camping World called us in about two

days and said the cost to repair this would be \$450. My wife suggested we call Jayco and talk to a service tech about the problem, which the folks at Camping World had never seen before. The Jayco service tech stepped up and said that the company would pay for half of the cost. That's a company that stands by its product! We would buy another Jayco just because of that experience.

**Ron and Carolyn Baker
Evergreen, Colorado**

On the Road Again

My wife and I have enjoyed your magazine for many years. We decided to send you a letter offering special thanks to some folks who prevented a sad early ending to a wonderful trip.

While enjoying a Fantasy RV Tours caravan to Alaska on the Richardson Highway going from Tok to Valdez, our fifth-wheel's rear tire got a flat, which escalated into a big problem.

We called Good Sam Roadside Assistance, and two mechanics got our RV to Chris Rietveld's automotive repair shop, named Your Place or Mine, in Copper Center, Alaska. Rietveld and his helper had to get parts, grind the old metal off, align and weld new brackets, remove and replace the old spring mounting bolts and spacers, and remount the axle and two tires.

At the same time that the repair work was being done, Rodney at Alaskan Auto in Valdez located two new load range G trailer/light truck tires in Anchorage and arranged for overnight delivery. Mark's Repair in Valdez put the two new tires on the trailer.

Thanks to MOR/ryde suspension, Good Sam Roadside Assistance, Chris, Rodney, Mark, our fellow caravan members and our faithful tail gunners, Mark and Joanie Ernst, we were able to resume and enjoy our tour of Alaska with minimal interruption.

**Larry and Mary LeMont
Charles Town, West Virginia**

TALK TO US! Write to: *Trailer Life*, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036 or email info@trailerlife.com. Please include your full name and location.

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Child's Play in Florida

Fort Myers Beach hosts the 28th annual American Sand Sculpting Championship, where tons of sand is stacked and packed into intricate shapes

article and photos by Dave G. Houser

Every November since 1986, dozens of the world's best sand sculptors have converged on the sandy shores of Fort Myers Beach, Florida, to match artistic skills and creativity in the American Sand Sculpting Championship — and they'll be back again November 21 to 30, 2014, for the 28th event.

Building sand castles — usually seen as child's play — has increasingly captured the interest and imagination of adults. Major contests, such as the one in Fort Myers Beach, attract thousands of spectators, drawn by the sheer beauty and intricate detail of sculptures formed so amazingly from the simple mixture of sand and water.

Most contests are organized into categories: solo and doubles, professional and amateur. On opening day, solo sculptors are assigned a 10-ton mound of sand, while two-person teams start with 20 to 25 tons. Then begins the rigorous process of shoveling, stacking and packing known as the "pound up," followed by long hours, sometimes days, of shaping and carving.

A daily admission fee of \$5 gains you access to the roped-off staging area on a stretch of talcum-powder-fine sand beach behind Pinchers Crab Shack and the Wyndham Garden



(Above) Spectators marvel at the creations of more than 30 master sand sculptors in Fort Myers Beach each November. (Right) Beachfront camping at Red Coconut RV Park.



Hotel. For an event schedule, drop by the Fort Myers Beach Chamber of Commerce mobile information center that's housed in a cleverly repurposed 1967 Airstream Caravel travel trailer named Roxy.

Observing some 30 sculptures taking shape is just part of a busy schedule of activities. The Quick Sand Speed Sculpting Contest pits master sculptors against each other in a series of 10-minute "sculpt-offs." Sculpting demonstrations and lessons offer another opportunity for interaction as master sculptors share the tricks of their craft with guests.

Make plans to take in some of Fort Myers' other well-known attractions during your stay, including the Edison & Ford Winter Estates. As one of the nation's 10 most visited historic sites, this beautifully restored complex of homes, gardens, a laboratory and museum offers valuable insight into the lives of Thomas Edison

and Henry Ford, two of America's leading inventors and industrial pioneers. A visit to the Fort Myers' Calusa Nature Center, with its museum, aviary, nature trails and planetarium, will open your eyes to southwest Florida's natural history.

Should you just wish to get away from it all, head south from the sculpting site to nearby Lovers Key State Park. Here you'll find a shimmering 2.5-mile-long beach that the Travel Channel voted the fourth best in Florida — perfect for sunbathing, swimming and shelling.

Beachfront camping at its best is available at Red Coconut RV Park, 239-463-7200, www.redcoconut.com, located on Estero Boulevard just minutes north of the sculpting site.

For more information, call 209-454-7500 or visit www.fmbandsculpting.com.



Tesla Toy Hauler T3950

Powersports enthusiasts who want luxury and plenty of sleeping space should check out EverGreen's new triple-slide Tesla T3950 toy hauler.

The 43-foot, 6-inch fifth-wheel features a living area that sports a 9-foot, 3-inch recliner sleeper sofa and a queen-size loft bed, while the master bedroom has a standard pillowtop queen bed with a king option. The 12-foot garage has room to sleep four more when the motorcycles/ATVs are parked outside, and even offers its own half bath. The living area measures 10 feet 6 inches wide when the slides are open, and exterior height is 13 feet 1 inch.

In the galley, a full-size stainless-steel sink with a gooseneck faucet is set in the 77-inch kitchen island, and a dishwasher is optional. An 8-cubic-foot double-door refrigerator is standard, with a 12-cubic-foot as an option. There's a stainless-steel three-burner range with an oven,

a 30-inch microwave and lots of pantry space.

Outer walls are vacuum laminated using ComposiTek panels. EverGreen claims that its six-point leveling system makes hitching and unhitching hassle-free. Storage isn't a problem with the large basement pass-through that's accessed via slam-latch baggage doors. The Tesla T3950 carries 174 gallons of freshwater, gray-water capacity is 40 gallons, and black-water capacity is 80 gallons. MSRPs range from \$70,000 to \$100,000, depending on floorplan.

EverGreen Recreational Vehicles
574-825-4298

www.goevergreenrv.com



NEWSWIRE

SWEEPSTAKES



Road Trip Giveaway from Winnebago and Little Debbie

Winnebago Industries announced a partnership with Little Debbie snack cake brand to award a two-week vacation in a new Winnebago Minnie Winnie motorhome. The Minnie Winnie Class C offers sleeping flexibility, a fully equipped galley and a comfortable living area. Back panels of Little Debbie Oatmeal Creme Pie cartons provide details about the Road Trip Giveaway, which runs through November 30, 2014. Monthly first-prize winners will be awarded the Road Trip board game, and second-prize winners receive Jamie Jenson's *Road Trip USA* book. Additionally, 100 winners will receive Winnebago coolers.

For more information or to enter the Road Trip Giveaway, visit oatmealcremepies.littledebbie.com.

WISHMOBILE



Make-A-Wish Partners With RV Dealership

California-based Mike Thompson RV has supplied the Make-A-Wish Foundation with a "Wishmobile" motorhome that will travel throughout Southern California to promote and encourage donations to Make-A-Wish, which grants wishes to children ages 2½ to 18 years old with life-threatening medical conditions. Mike Thompson RV has set a goal of raising \$100,000 this year through various community and RV events and activities. David Revere, marketing manager for Mike Thompson RV said, "We have grown to know the Make-A-Wish family and now understand the amount of time and resources needed to grant each wish. That knowledge has empowered us to work harder and commit to raising more funds this year."

NATIONAL PARK



America's Favorite Place

Based on an online poll conducted by ABC's *Good Morning America* TV program, Acadia National Park in Maine has been crowned America's Favorite Place for 2014. Acadia National Park Superintendent Sheridan Steele said, "This designation recognizes the park's extraordinary scenic beauty and opportunities for hiking, biking and paddling. We owe a big thanks to our many partners for helping us protect the park's resources and maintain visitor facilities." The park is comprised of 48,000 acres of mountains, lakes, wetlands and islands along Maine's central coast. Within the park's boundaries are 45 miles of turn-of-the-century carriage roads and stone bridges that are free of motor vehicles. Runners-up were Chicago's Lakefront, Glacier National Park, Gulf Shores and Lake Tahoe.

PHOTO BY JAN KRONSEL

Ford Updates 2015 Super Duty and Expedition

Ford recently announced significant upgrades to its Super Duty pickup, as well as a long overdue refresh of its full-size Expedition SUV.

Starting with the Super Duty, Ford's second-generation 6.7-liter Power Stroke turbo diesel gets a 40-horsepower boost to 440 horsepower, along with a torque hike from 800 to 860 lb-ft across all models from the F-250 to the F-450. As you might expect, tow ratings have also gone up: the F-450 offers a maximum fifth-wheel rating of 31,200 pounds (a gain of 6,500 pounds), while the F-350 goes up to 26,700 pounds from 23,200 pounds. Both the F-350 and F-450 benefit from chassis/suspension upgrades as well.

The Expedition is more powerful and efficient, thanks to a standard 3.5-liter EcoBoost V-6, now the only engine available. It produces 365 horsepower and 420 lb-ft of torque, delivered to the wheels by a six-speed SelectShift automatic transmission with a manual shifting feature. A best-in-class tow rating of 9,200 pounds is augmented by a continuously controlled damping suspension with three modes: comfort, normal and sport. A new electronic steering system offers improved maneuverability and better feel. We drove the new Expedition at a recent press introduction and can attest that the improvements make the big SUV a lot more fun to drive.

Elsewhere, the Expedition has been freshened up with a new front end and interiors with design themes specific to each model, up to and including the new, upscale Platinum trim level. — Chris Hemer



Pumpkin Festival and Monster Gourd Weigh-Off

The self-proclaimed World Pumpkin Capital, Half Moon Bay, California, hosts two family-friendly seasonal events this month, the 41st annual Safeway World Championship Pumpkin Weigh-Off and the 44th annual Half Moon Bay Art and Pumpkin Festival.

On October 13 from 7 to 11 a.m., spectators will gather to watch as enormous pumpkins are transported by forklifts to the scales at the Pumpkin Weigh-Off. Last year's winner obliterated the Half Moon Bay record with a 1,985-pound Atlantic Giant pumpkin. A special \$30,000 bonus mega-prize will be awarded to any grower who breaks the Half Moon Bay record.

Then on October 18 and 19 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., the Art and Pumpkin Festival welcomes all comers with free admission. Entertainment includes a haunted barn, costume contests, pumpkin carving, a bungee jump and zipline, and on Sunday, an artists' block and live music. Expert pumpkin carver Farmer Mike will sculpt a monster 1,200-plus-pound pumpkin. Tasty libations from Half Moon Bay Winery and Half Moon Bay Brewing Company will be available, as well as pumpkin-infused margaritas. Pets not allowed.
650-726-9652
www.miramarevents.com

RV PARKS

Half Moon Bay RV Park and Campground, 650-726-7275, www.hmbrypark.com
Pillar Point RV Park, 650-712-9277, www.pillarpointrvpark.com



Sample and Sip on the Adirondack Coast

In the shadow of the Adirondack Mountains, New York's Adirondack coast stretches across the western shores of Lake Champlain and is especially beautiful at this time of year with the region's signature red, orange and gold fall colors. The Adirondack coast is home to the world's

largest Macintosh orchard, with more than 30,000 apple trees, and grape growing and wine production have taken off in the past five years. During the fall harvest, orchards come alive with pumpkin patches, petting zoos, wagon rides and corn mazes. The region also hosts a series of wine tours and family-friendly festivals to celebrate the Adirondack Coast Wine Trail.

The third annual Adirondack Coast Wine, Cider and Beer Festival takes place October 11 this year from 2 to 8 p.m. at Crete Civic Center in Plattsburgh. Locally crafted wines are paired with gourmet food from area vendors. Unique cold-climate wine, cider and beer will be served, as well as farm products from local artisans. While sampling and sipping, visitors will be treated to live music and nonstop entertainment.

518-563-2750, www.adirondackcoastwinetrail.com

ADIRONDACK COAST RV PARKS

Cumberland Bay State Park: 518-563-5240, www.reserveamerica.com

Iroquois Campground and RV Park: 518-643-9057, www.iroquoiscampground.com

Plattsburgh RV Park: 518-563-3915, www.plattsburghrvpark.com



Postage Paid

After returning some mail-order parts that didn't fit in their RV, a Colorado couple received reimbursement for everything except the associated postage. When they couldn't resolve their differences with the parts supplier, they asked RV Resolutions to help:

▶ Last year my wife, Vi, and I placed a phone order with Eric's RV Performance Center in Sequim, Washington, for two 22-inch dome lids for our fifth-wheel. Dome lids break often, and both of ours were cracked. This particular size is difficult to find, but the parts department at Eric's said their suppliers had them in stock.

When we received the dome lids, we discovered they were the wrong size — 21½ inches instead of 22. Eric's

refunded the actual cost of the merchandise but didn't refund postage costs both ways. The \$39.93 is not a large sum, but we shouldn't have to pay for their mistake.

Lee McDermott, Durango, Colorado

RV Resolutions mailed a letter to Eric's RV Performance Center on the McDermotts' behalf, eliciting the following response from Lee:

▶ Thank you for your help in this matter. We received a check for \$39.93 from Eric's RV. You helped restore our faith in the business world.

L.M.

Faulty Gasket

When the extended RV warranty didn't cover a needed repair on a Washington couple's toy hauler, they sought assistance from RV Resolutions:

▶ On May 11, 2011, we purchased a Forest River Shockwave toy hauler and an extended warranty from Performance First, paying \$2,091 for five years of coverage.

In October 2013, we had problems keeping our Cummins Onan generator running and took the trailer to Chris Cooper's I-90 RV in Moses Lake, Washington, for service. They dismantled the generator and determined that the intake gasket was folded over, and that was the reason it wouldn't run. The warranty company told us they wouldn't cover the repairs because there weren't enough hours on the generator.

We paid \$647.40 to have Chris Cooper's I-90 RV replace the gasket, and now the generator's running great. We believe we should be reimbursed, as the generator had a defective part that was installed at the factory.

Dennis Hill, Moses Lake, Washington

RV Resolutions contacted Performance First and was told that the Hills' warranty didn't cover parts that had

been negligently installed at the factory. We then petitioned the generator's manufacturer, Cummins Onan. Weeks later, the following thank-you note from Hill appeared in our in-box:

▶ Today we received full payment from Cummins Onan. Thank you for all your help in obtaining a refund.
D.H.

Down the Drain

After a Louisiana reader tried and failed to get reimbursed for damage done to his truck's drain plug, he turned to RV Resolutions for assistance:

▶ On October 1, 2013, I took my 2005 Dodge Ram 2500 HD diesel to Jiffy Lube in my hometown of Pineville, Louisiana, for an oil and filter change. The vehicle was used very little until I pulled my camper to New Braunfels, Texas, on April 7, 2014. I noticed that the differential was leaking fluid, so I took the truck to Bluebonnet Chrysler

Dodge in New Braunfels for repairs. They found that the drain plug had been stripped and was the source of the leak, and charged me \$206.30.

When I returned home, I contacted Jiffy Lube and was told to provide them with a copy of the repair bill. After three weeks with no word, I called Jiffy Lube International in Houston and filed a complaint. I was given a reference number and told that the district manager for the Pineville store would contact me. I still have not been contacted and am asking for your assistance.

Tamridge Kinnison, Pineville, Louisiana

RV Resolutions received a positive response from Pineville Jiffy Lube, prompting Tamridge Kinnison to send the following note:

▶ I wanted to let you know that I received a check for \$206.30 from Jiffy Lube. I appreciate your help in this matter.


T.K. 📧

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

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RV PHOTO CONTEST

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RVing and photography go hand in hand, so the multitude of entries in our Wherever Adventure Takes You photo contest came as no surprise. *Trailer Life* readers traveled from the Canadian Rockies to Florida's Gulf Coast in pursuit of postcard-worthy RV images — and we looked at every one of them! Our winner, Leslie Dorn, took her truck camper to the end of Washington's Mount Baker Scenic Highway in her quest for the perfect RV shot. The result is a stunning alpine landscape of aptly named Artist Point, our judges' unanimous choice for the grand prize, a \$5,000 shopping spree. We congratulate Dorn, along with the three runners-up and 10 honorable mentions.

GRAND PRIZE

\$5,000 SHOPPING SPREE AT ANY AUTHORIZED POWERHOUSE GENERATOR DEALER



Leslie Dorn

Anacortes, Washington

Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest, Washington

RUNNERS-UP

PRIZE: POWERHOUSE 2000WI GENERATOR

Julie Christiansen

Charlevoix, Michigan

Porcupine Mountains Wilderness
State Park, Michigan



Don Koupal

Cameron Park, California

Lost Dutchmen State Park, Arizona



Roger Maier

El Paso, Texas

Twin Spruce RV Park, Ruidoso, New Mexico



HONORABLE MENTIONS

PRIZE: COLEMAN SUNFORCE SOLAR PANEL KIT



Charlie Carroll
Mesa, Arizona
Wild Burro, Oatman, Arizona



Chip and Daisy Cartwright
Holiday Island, Arkansas
Canadian Rockies, Yukon



Randy Chapman
Brandenburg, Kentucky
Camp Gulf RV Park, Destin, Florida

Bobby Daniel
Apex, North Carolina
U.S. Route 2, Washington



Kenneth Fears
Roseburg, Oregon
Elephant Butte Lake
State Park, New Mexico



Bob Grant
Albuquerque, New Mexico
Daingerfield State Park, Texas



Randy Kightlinger
Cooperstown, Pennsylvania
Jamestown Campground,
Pymatuning State Park, Pennsylvania



Chris Murphy
Fernley, Nevada
Eagle Lake Recreation Area,
Lassen National Forest, California

Justin Rasmusson
Nevada, Iowa
Mackinac Bridge,
Michigan



John Wieland
Vacaville, California
Humboldt Redwoods State
Park, California



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In the shadow of Mount Adams, Washington's Yakima Valley dazzles with fall colors as fruit trees and vineyards turn red and golden.

article by Kathy Cabrera

AUTUMN *Across America*

{ SAMPLE THE FALL COLORS AND LOCAL FLAVOR
AT 10 RV-FRIENDLY DESTINATIONS THAT PUT THEIR
OWN DISTINCTIVE STAMP ON THE SEASON }

If the RV lifestyle has taught you anything, it's that there's always a surprise around the next bend in the highway. As with any trip, discovering something new is what the journey is about. Here, we've handpicked 10 far-ranging regions that will leave you feeling like you found more than just a great place to soak in the colors of fall — although you'll find plenty of those, too! Buckle your seat belt because you're in for a memorable ride to these eclectic RV destinations from Nevada to New Hampshire.

Arkansas

If music is a must for your leaf-peeping RV tour and you have an interest in the blues, make plans to attend Arkansas' King Biscuit Blues Festival (www.kingbiscuitfestival.com) in Helena. One of the nation's foremost blues showcases, the festival takes place every Columbus Day weekend (October 8 to 11, 2014) in the only downtown area between Memphis and Vicksburg that's directly

on the Mississippi River.

"The King Biscuit Blues Festival provides the unique opportunity for RV travelers to camp right on the Mississippi River and experience both the charm of a small Delta town and the energy of one of the top blues festivals in the country," says Julia Malinowski, director of the Helena Advertising and Promotion Commission.

In addition to the festival's first-come, first-served campsites at Helena River Park, a couple of nearby locations accommodate RVs:

Darling RV Park

Close to the festival with free round-trip shuttles and dry campsites (no hookups). 662-302-3206



Fred Garrison RV Park

Thirty-two RV sites with water, electric and sewer hookups.
870-995-1474



Halloween at Yogi Bear's
Jellystone Park near
Kentucky's Mammoth Cave

Kentucky

If you'd like a record-breaking landmark to go with your fall color tour, central Kentucky's Cave City may be just the ticket. "Cave City has hosted travelers since 1816, when Mammoth Cave began providing tours to what is now known as the longest cave system in the world," says Jeff Lawson, president of the Cave City Chamber of Commerce.

Just 5 miles outside Mammoth Cave National Park, Cave City offers more than 53 acres of scenic roads, forests and waterways to enjoy and explore. Travelers to this area have a variety of means to see its natural beauty, from hiking trails and horseback riding to canoeing, flying through the treetops on ziplines and dining at Park Mammoth Resort's scenic Lookout restaurant.

Located on the original Louisville-Nashville stagecoach turnpike (now U.S. Highway 31W), the Cave City area progressed naturally over the years from stagecoaches to RVs and now hosts a number of RV campgrounds:

Cave Country RV Campground

Spacious full-hookup sites for RVs from small popups to large fifth-wheels. 270-773-4678, www.cavecountryrv.com

Diamond Caverns RV Resort and Golf Club

Full-hookup RV sites, swimming pool, 18-hole golf course, trails, pets welcome, in neighboring Park City.
877-570-2267, www.rvonthego.com

Mammoth Cave Campground, Mammoth Cave National Park

Paved campsites, no hookups, picnic tables, fire rings, restrooms, ¼ mile from national park visitor center.
877-444-6777, www.recreation.gov

Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park at Mammoth Cave

Full hookups, pull-through and back-in sites, family activities.
800-523-1854, www.jellystonemammothcave.com

Minnesota

If lakes and fall foliage make the perfect travel combination for you, head to Ely in northeastern Minnesota, a gateway to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. As Ely's tourism director, Lynda Fryer, shares, "It's where only the birds tweet! And RV camping offers a great way to leave your worries behind and enjoy the great outdoors and our small-town charm."

Fall is an ideal time to explore Ely and its surroundings. "With 500 lakes in a 20-mile radius — right in the middle of the Superior National Forest — our area is breathtaking in the fall with spectacular colors, warm days and cool, clear, starlit nights," Fryer says. Ely's big autumn event, the Fall Harvest Moon Festival, takes place the weekend after Labor Day, but there's still plenty to see and do in October, minus the crowds.

Several state park and national forest campgrounds accommodate RVs in the Ely area:

Bear Head Lake State Park

Drive-in campsites with electric hookups; noted for earning the 2010 title of America's Favorite Park in a campaign sponsored by Coca-Cola.
218-365-7229, www.dnr.state.mn.us

Birch Lake Campground, Superior National Forest

Back-in campsites for small to medium RVs, no hookups, easy lake access. 877-444-6777, www.recreation.gov

Fall Lake Campground, Superior National Forest

Pull-through and back-in sites, 50-amp and water hookups, fishing, swimming, boating and Boundary Waters access. 877-444-6777, www.recreation.gov

South Kawishiwi Campground, Superior National Forest

Pull-in campsites, electric hookups, swimming beach, hiking trail, shallow boat landing.
877-444-6777, www.recreation.gov



Virginia City, Nevada, World Championship Outhouse Races

Nevada

For something totally out of the ordinary this fall, stop by the Nevada mountain town of Virginia City in time for the World Championship Outhouse Races (www.visitvirginiacitynv.com), October 4 and 5. Costumed teams of outhouse racers vie for glory in this high-spirited annual event.

"The weather in early fall is just perfect," says Deny Dotson of the Virginia City Tourism Commission. "It's one of our busiest times. The International Camel and Ostrich Races are in early September, and, of course, there's the World Championship Outhouse Races."

Close to Reno and Lake Tahoe, Virginia City is a great location for RVers with one campground in town and another just 20 minutes away:

Gold Dust West Casino and RV Park

Back-in and pull-through full-hookup sites, in nearby Carson City. 775-885-9000, www.gdwcasino.com

Virginia City RV Park and Market

Campground is within walking distance of the historic downtown, full-hookup sites, convenience store and laundry room. 775-847-0999, www.vcrvparknv.com

New Hampshire

When it comes to leaf-peeping must-sees, New England, naturally, tops the list. If you're headed that way, each fall the northern New Hampshire town of Berlin hosts its colorful RiverFire (www.riverfirenh.com) on the Androscoggin River.

Held October 18 this year, the festival highlights the beauty of the Androscoggin, says Sylvia Poulin of the Berlin Main Street Program. "The fires on the boom piers in the middle of the river, the carved pumpkins on the walking bridge and the HorrorFest haunted house, along with all the elements of a festival with music, food and entertainment, make for a wonderful day to help celebrate the history of the river and enjoy the beautiful fall season."

Several campgrounds accommodate RVers traveling in this area:

Dolly Copp Campground

Spacious campsites, no hookups, largest campground in White Mountain National Forest. 877-444-6777, www.recreation.gov

Timberland Campground

Shaded big-rig-friendly sites, cable TV, some sites open to reach satellite signal, in Shelburne. 603-466-3872, www.timberlandcampgroundnh.com

Twin Mountain Motor Court and RV Park

"No rig is too big," is the claim. Pull-throughs with full hookups, cable TV, Wi-Fi, in Twin Mountain. 603-846-5574, www.twinmountainmotorcourtrvpark.com

White Birches Camping Park

Wooded sites that can accommodate large RVs, laundry room, grocery, showers, in Shelburne. 603-466-2022, www.whitebirchescampingpark.com



North Carolina

One charming Southern stop for your fall festival tour is Mount Airy, North Carolina, also known as "Mayberry" from *The Andy Griffith Show* (see "In Search of Mayberry," August 2013 issue). Jessica Icenhour Roberts of the Mount Airy Visitors Center recommends an October visit to enjoy the beautiful fall colors along the Blue Ridge Parkway and nearby Pilot Mountain, Stone Mountain and Hanging Rock state parks.

Mount Airy is in the heart of Yadkin Valley wine country, home to more than 34 wineries and one of the largest and oldest fall events in the South, the Autumn Leaves Festival (www.autumnleavesfestival.com), taking place October 10 to 12 this year. "The festival captures the spirit of rural America and showcases the local old-time and bluegrass music that is a big part of Mount Airy's heritage," says Icenhour Roberts.

Nearby RV accommodations include two Mount Airy campgrounds and one in nearby Pinnacle:

Beechnut Family Campground

Full hookups, Wi-Fi, swimming pools, waterslide, zipline, horseshoe pits, play area. 336-320-3802, www.beechnutcampground.com

Greystone RV Park

Pull-through sites with concrete slabs, stocked catch-and-release pond, next to Pilot Knob State Park in Pinnacle. 336-368-5588, www.greystonervpark.com

Mayberry Campground

Full hookups, big-rig friendly, Wi-Fi, cable TV, community fire pit, fishing ponds. 336-789-6199, www.mayberrycampground.com

RiverFire on New Hampshire's Androscoggin River



PHOTOS: NEVADA - VIRGINIA CITY TOURISM COMMISSION; NEW HAMPSHIRE - MARK F. DURCHARME; NORTH CAROLINA - MOUNT AIRY VISITORS CENTER; PENNSYLVANIA - DESTINATION GETTYSBURG



National Apple Harvest Festival in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania

Civil War history and crisp fall apples are a package deal when traveling in the greater Gettysburg area of Pennsylvania in autumn. During the first two full weekends this October, Adams County's National Apple Harvest Festival (www.appleharvest.com)

celebrates its 50th year. The festival has something for everyone with hundreds of arts and crafts dealers, demonstrations, contests, food stands and entertainment.

Festival spokesperson Dawn Bodenbergs calls it "an old-fashioned, fun-filled family event that offers a truly down-home, feel-good time." The South Mountain Fairgrounds where the festival takes place has a rustic setting with brilliant fall foliage. The surrounding countryside encompasses some of the East Coast's most productive agricultural areas, including the Adams County Fruit Belt, where orchards extend for miles along the eastern slope of the South Mountain Range.

Two Gettysburg campgrounds and another in neighboring Gardners host traveling RVers:

Artillery Ridge Campground

Drive-through RV sites, full hookups, fishing, basketball, game room, weekend ghost stories, close to the battlefield.

717-334-1288, www.artilleryridge.com

Deer Run Camping Resort

Full-hookup sites, swimming pool, country store, mini-golf, 20 minutes from Gettysburg in Gardners. 800-955-0208, www.deerruncampingresort.com

Gettysburg Campground

Full-hookup sites that accommodate any size RV, recreational amenities, ice cream parlor, RV repair facility, 3 miles from downtown. 888-879-2241, www.gettysburgcampground.com

Texas

Cooling down after Texas' long, hot summer, fall is an ideal time to visit Fort Worth, home to art museums with some of the best collections in the country. If you travel to this north Texas locale this autumn, get a taste of the Old West at the Red Steagall Cowboy Gathering and Western Swing Festival

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Red Steagall Ranch Rodeo in Fort Worth, Texas

(www.redsteagallcowboygathering.com), October 24 to 26, at Fort Worth Stockyards National Historic District.

"The festival features the best in family oriented activities where visitors can experience the true West," says event spokesperson Rebecca Brian. "This authentic Western event will have cowboy poets, Western entertainers, chuck-wagon cookoffs, fiddling contests, dances and a Ranch Rodeo where teams of ranch hands from famous Texas ranches compete."

Local RV accommodations include two campgrounds in Fort Worth and one just west of the city:

Avondale RV Park

Full hookups, concrete RV pads, laundry room, nearby golf course. 817-247-9364, www.avondalervpark.com

Cowtown RV Park

Full hookups, big-rig sites, RV supplies, dog runs, in nearby Aledo. 888-441-7878, www.cowtownrvpark.com

Eagle Resort's RV Park

Shaded sites, dog walk, fishing, boat dock, country setting near Fort Worth Wildlife Refuge Center. 817-237-2527, www.eagleresorts-rv-park.com

Virginia

One fall festival unites not only autumn leaves and colorful mountain views but live music and craft beer to boot. Those four relaxation factors combine to make the small town of Roseland, Virginia, one attractive destination during the three-day Festy Experience



Roseland, Virginia's Festy Experience

(www.thefesty.com), held October 10 through 12 this year at the Devils Backbone Brewing Company concert grounds.

"The Festy Experience treats you to a weekend of 360-degree views of the vibrant autumnal peaks of the Blue Ridge Mountains while you sample some of the best beer central Virginia has to offer, all to the soundtrack of amazing live music," says event spokesperson Delia Stephenson.

The Festy Experience is family friendly with tent camping and a Kids Zone. RVers can pay to dry camp on the grounds or take advantage of full

PHOTOS: TEXAS - DAVID ROTH; VIRGINIA - TOMMY STAFFORD/BLUE RIDGE LIFE

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hookups at several RV parks in the surrounding valley:

Shenandoah Valley Campground

Shaded pull-through and back-in sites, indoor hot tubs, waterfall, fishing, on the Middle River in Verona. 800-310-2580, www.campingisfun.com

Staunton/Walnut Hills KOA

Pull-through and back-in sites, 2-acre fishing lake, swimming pool, RV supplies, in nearby Staunton. 540-337-3920, www.koa.com/campgrounds/staunton

Stoney Creek Resort

Full-hookup sites, lakeside setting, electric golf cart rentals, family-owned campground in Greenville. 540-337-1510, www.stoneycreekresort.net

Washington

For fall colors and handcrafted wine in the Pacific Northwest, pay a visit to

southeastern Washington's Yakima Valley. With nearly half of the state's yearly wine production made from Yakima Valley grapes, the area is an ideal destination for wine and fall festival enthusiasts.

"Fall is an exceptional time to experience the Yakima Valley," says Yakima Valley Tourism's John Cooper. "Being an agricultural region, there are amazing colors as the fruit trees and vineyards turn golden and red. Plus, we have many festivals that celebrate the harvest and bounty."

On October 4, there's downtown Yakima's Fresh Hop Ale Festival (www.freshhopalefestival.com), where you can sample freshly brewed ale while enjoying local food and music. On October 11 and 12, there's Catch the Crush (www.wineyakimavalley.org), where participants tour vineyards, pick grapes, stomp in vats, and wine and dine at 40 Yakima Valley wineries. For more harvest fun, Bill's Berry Farm (www.billsberryfarm.com) in Grandview

hosts its annual Apple and Pumpkin Festival the first four Fridays and Saturdays in October.

Outdoor recreation and RVing are popular activities in the Pacific Northwest, and the Yakima Valley has its share of RV campgrounds, including the following three:

Circle H RV Park

Paved sites include some 60-foot pull-throughs, barbecues, fire pits, swimming pool, laundry room, free showers. 509-457-3683, www.circlehrvpark.com

Trailer Inns RV Park

Shaded full-hookup sites, big-rig friendly (up to 90 feet), indoor pool, playground, propane, pets welcome. 800-659-4784, www.trailerinnsrv.com

Yakama Nation RV Park

Full-hookup sites, free Wi-Fi, heated indoor pool, hot tub, saunas, fitness center, jogging path, in Toppenish. 800-874-3087, www.ynrp.com 🚐



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From the RV Sanitation Expert

THETFORD

THRILLS AND CHILLS in New York



The little village with a big reputation, Sleepy Hollow gets spirited away each Halloween. This October bats will fly and heads will roll in the town made famous by Washington Irving's ghoulish horseman

With Halloween drawing near, children and adults alike will be donning masks and makeup to portray scary creatures. But what could be better than a travel destination made famous by a person with no face — in fact, with no head at all? That would be Sleepy Hollow, New York, the setting for the famous Washington Irving story “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.”

Oh, the place looks innocuous enough — a leafy village among the hills above the Hudson River. But at Halloween, Sleepy Hollow

and nearby towns are among the spookiest yet most festive haunts anywhere.

In “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow,” Irving describes a bucolic valley settled by the Dutch in the 17th century, a place “that still continues under the sway of some witching power.” The dominant spirit that haunted the region, he wrote, was that of a headless horseman galloping along lonely roads late at night in search of his noggin.

Irving knew the area well. He bought a 1690s riverfront cottage



(Right) Nighttime guided tours of Sleepy Hollow Cemetery are offered to brave souls. **(Below right)** Philipsburg Manor, built more than 300 years ago, is the site of Horseman's Hollow, the creepy gathering of ghouls.

in Tarrytown in 1835 and named it Sunnyside. "It is a beautiful spot," Irving wrote, "capable of being made a little paradise." Adding on to the house over the years, Irving lived at Sunnyside most of the remaining 24 years of his life and died there in his bed.

Today, guides in formal period attire lead tours of the lower level of the eclectic two-story home, through its narrow hallways, parlor, kitchen, dining room and study, which contains Irving's desk and books. Outside, a veranda looks out on the venerable Hudson River and autumn foliage on the hills in the distance. Also outside is an icehouse with a peaked roof that has the look of a tiny gothic chapel. Off limits, unfortunately, is the adjacent four-story Spanish Tower, built after Irving returned from a five-year stay in Spain and influenced by the Alhambra in Granada.

On the tree-shaded 10-acre grounds, kids — and some adults — pose with cutouts of the Headless Horseman and Rip Van Winkle, another famous Irving character, with openings where they can insert their faces to complete the picture. Fake tombstones bear humorous inscriptions, and guides regale visitors with the author's creepy stories on walks along Sunnyside's garden trails. Shadow puppet performances are staged on weekends throughout October.

Back in downtown Sleepy Hollow is Patriots Park, where Irving set schoolmaster Ichabod Crane's midnight encounter with the horseman and his steed. The park owes its name to the capture there in 1780 of British Major John Andre and the revelation that he was working in cahoots with General Benedict Arnold to sabotage

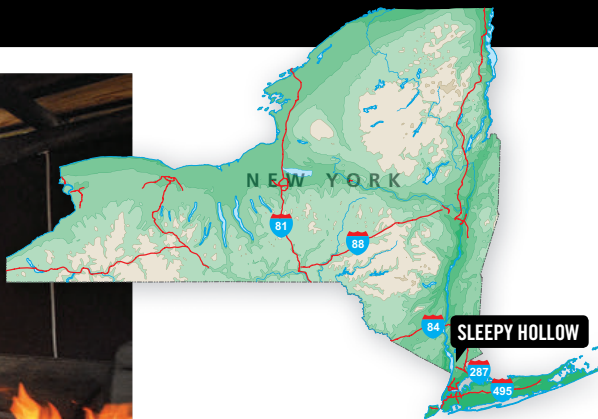


the American cause in the Revolutionary War. A bronze statue and plaque commemorate the capture. Andre was hanged nine days later in another town. Arnold fled and died two decades later in England.

On a ridge nearby is the Old Dutch Church, completed in 1697. It was here that the horseman always galloped back before dawn, Irving wrote. Inside are simple wooden pews, and a local storyteller gives dramatic per-

(Left) As Halloween draws near, visitors may see the Headless Horseman lurking at Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. On the grounds of the 18th-century Van Cortlandt Manor is the Great Jack O' Lantern Blaze with more than 5,000 hand-carved pumpkins. **(Right)** Storyteller Jonathan Kruk regales audiences at the Old Dutch Church with performances of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow."





Blacksmiths still practice their craft at Van Cortlandt Manor, just as they did 250 years ago.

performances of the Headless Horseman tale, accompanied by live organ music. Outside is the church cemetery, which Irving described as “a favorite haunt of troubled spirits.” Just beyond it is the much larger Sleepy Hollow Cemetery. At various times around Halloween, a rider cleverly cloaked to appear as the Headless Horseman sits astride a horse near the cemetery’s main entrance.

Real people inspired Irving’s characters, and as I walk through the hilly cemetery, I notice two tombstones

with the name Van Tassel. Ichabod Crane was besotted by Katrina Van Tassel, an 18-year-old farmer’s daughter who was “plump as a partridge” and “rosy-cheeked as one of her father’s peaches.” Irving himself was buried here in 1859, and his weathered headstone is a big draw.

Sleepy Hollow Cemetery is the final home of a surprising number of the once rich and famous, among them industrial tycoon Andrew Carnegie, cosmetics queen Elizabeth Arden, labor leader Samuel Gompers and William Rockefeller Jr., who with his brother, John D., founded Standard

Oil. A marvelous Rockefeller mansion nearby is open for tours (see “What Else to See” below). For the really brave, there are evening lantern tours of the cemetery and the tomb of Queen of Mean hotelier Leona Helmsley.

The truly chilling event in Sleepy Hollow is Horseman’s Hollow. This is a month of weekends in which visitors wander among the macabre, the insane and the dead at Philipsburg Manor, the authentic remnants of a 17th-century Dutch colony. It’s intense enough and so skillfully done that you should think twice about taking younger children — recommended ages are 10 and older. Organizers also advise that it’s not suitable for adults who are claustrophobic, have heart or respiratory conditions, are prone to seizures or have other chronic health conditions.

Being in reasonably good health, my friend, Rhonda, and I take the risk.

WHAT ELSE TO SEE

Gate of Heaven Cemetery

The greatest baseball player, Babe Ruth, is buried here in the town of Hawthorne, 6 miles from Sleepy Hollow. His grave marker features a tall sandblasted image of Jesus placing an arm around a young ballplayer. Nearby is the grave of Yankee player and manager Billy Martin. James Cagney is another notable interred here. And at Kensico Cemetery 1 mile away in Valhalla, Ruth’s Yankees teammate, Lou Gehrig, is buried, as are Anne Bancroft, Tommy Dorsey, Danny Kaye and Soupy Sales. 914-769-3672 www.gateofheavenny.com

Kykuit

Kykuit is Dutch for “lookout,” and this 101-year-old estate, home to four generations of Rockefellers, sits on a hill overlooking the Hudson. Group tours provide peeks at some of the 40 rooms and the grounds. In the home’s great room are centuries-old statues from the Tang dynasty. The basement passes through a fine art gallery with works by Picasso, Warhol and others. Vintage coaches, wagons, harnesses and saddles are displayed in the former stables, and classic cars reside in a garage. 914-631-8200 www.hudsonvalley.org

Philipsburg Manor

There’s nothing ominous during the day at Horseman’s Hollow on the grounds of Philipsburg Manor. Instead, you stroll through what was a thriving farming, milling and trading center three centuries ago, including the manor house, a working gristmill, a barn, a dairy and a river wharf. Tours tell the story of both the family of Anglo-Dutch owners and their workers, two dozen African slaves. Hands-on activities include threshing wheat and working flax into linen. 914-631-8200 www.hudsonvalley.org

Union Church of Pocantico Hills

Near Kykuit is this handsome but unpretentious stone church, notable because the Rockefellers commissioned nine stained-glass windows from Marc Chagall and one from Henri Matisse. The rose design Matisse window was the artist’s last work before his death in 1954. It memorializes Nelson Rockefeller’s mother, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, one of the founders of the Museum of Modern Art. The Chagall windows honor various other family members. 914-631-2069 www.ucph.org

We walk along a long tree-lined path illuminated only by candles, expecting somebody to jump out suddenly from the shadows. Nothing. But in the distance we hear guttural noises and demented lullabies and see an old house bathed in purple light. As we walk through the entrance, we begin an unsettling journey through a winding corn maze toward the old manor. Ghoulish women and ghastly men walk up to us and other visitors, babbling insanely or staring, mute and menacing. None of them touches us, and none will. Nor are we permitted to touch them.

Ghouls lurk everywhere. Many are real-looking mannequins. Others are actors in amazing makeup who startle everybody when they move. There also are severed limbs, ethereal ghosts and a hologram of an eerie woman pleading for help.

We continue walking through the corn maze. A stalk rustles. Was it a maniacal freak lurking on the other side or a visitor brushing against it? We stop at one spot on the trail and stare at a tall, motionless figure with a black shroud concealing his face. Rhonda approaches for a closer look at what she assumes is a mannequin. He lurches toward her. She screams, genuinely startled. Later, a zombielike young woman growls at Rhonda after approaching within inches of her. Rhonda quickens her pace. "I'll see you under your bed tonight," her new friend hisses. Fortunately, she did not.

This year's Horseman's Hollow is scheduled for the evenings of October 4 and 5, 10 to 12, 17 to 19, 24 to 26, and 31 to November 1. Advance tickets are required, and the event sells out quickly. Tickets are \$20 to \$25; call 914-631-8200 for information.

A less frightening but equally spectacular event is the Great Jack O' Lantern Blaze, 9 miles north in Croton-on-Hudson. Visitors walk the grounds of Van Cortlandt Manor, an 18th-century riverside home, and view more than 5,000 illuminated jack-o'-lanterns, hollowed out by volunteers and local artists. Their finished products include dinosaurs, serpents, gourd-filled jack-in-the-boxes that spring up and



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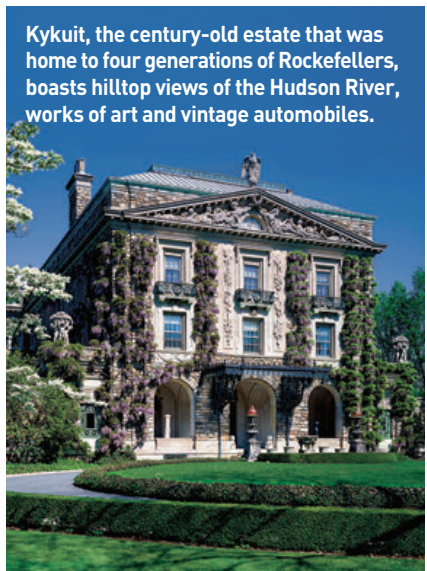
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THRILLS AND CHILLS IN NEW YORK

even a working doomsday grandfather clock, all accompanied by an original soundtrack of dramatic music and synchronized lighting. This year's event is October 4 and 5, 10 to 13, 16 to 19, 23 to 31, November 1 and 2, and 6 to 9. Advance tickets are required, and sellouts are common.

Elsewhere in and around Sleepy Hollow at Halloween, you'll find parking meters with cornstalks and scarecrows attached to them. Pumpkins perch on doorsteps, hay bales and fences. Colorful autumn leaves cling to the trees, and haunted hayrides and other Halloween-themed activities take place. It would all be cheesy if it weren't done so well. 🎃



Kykuit, the century-old estate that was home to four generations of Rockefellers, boasts hilltop views of the Hudson River, works of art and vintage automobiles.

PHOTO BY MICK HALES/HISTORIC HUDSON VALLEY

WHERE TO STAY

Battle Row Campground

On eastern Long Island, 48 miles from Sleepy Hollow in Old Bethpage, Battle Row inhabits a shaded, wooded and quiet area surrounded by a preserve. The campground has 30- and 50-amp sites and restrooms with private showers. It's pet-friendly and is near shops and restaurants. 516-572-8690, www.nassaucountyny.gov

Beaver Pond Campground, Harriman State Park

Located 19 miles northwest of Sleepy Hollow in a wooded 46,000-acre state park in Pomona, Beaver Pond accommodates a dozen RVs up to 34 feet. No hookups, but there are bathrooms, showers and a dump station. The campground stretches out beside Lake Welch, one of 30 lakes in the state park, which also has more than 200 acres of hiking trails. No pets. 800-584-2906, www.nysparks.com, www.reserveamerica.com

Black Bear Campground

About 45 miles from Sleepy Hollow in the village of Florida, Black Bear has 150 RV sites with water, electric, sewer, Wi-Fi and TV hookups. The campground provides bathrooms, two coin-op laundries, a store, a game room, a pool and a small mini-golf course. Limit of two pets — no pit bulls, Rottweilers or Dobermans. Guided tours of New York City, 46 miles away, are available. 845-651-7717, www.blackbearcampground.com



Croton Point Park

Sitting on 500 acres overlooking the Hudson, 8 miles north of Sleepy Hollow, this county park campground has 71 sites providing 30- and 50-amp service, dump stations, hiking trails, a beach and access to 4 miles of riverfront. A nature center has exhibits about local history, flora and fauna, and there's a restroom, plus maps and visitor information. Pet-friendly (limit of two animals). 914-862-5290, parks.westchestergov.com

Liberty Harbor RV Park

Fifty spaces accommodate RVs at this Jersey City, New Jersey, site, 33 miles from Sleepy Hollow, with water and electric hookups, showers, a laundry room, Wi-Fi and a restaurant on the premises. Pet-friendly, open year-round and with views that extend to the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. Daily bus tours take sightseers to Manhattan, and there's easy ferry and subway access. 201-516-7500, www.libertyharborrv.com

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LEGENDS OF THE FALL

When the calendar flips to October in western Illinois, Pike County turns over a new leaf for a constantly changing kaleidoscope of autumn colors

Pike County, Illinois, shaped roughly like a triangle by two of the Land of Lincoln's biggest rivers, the Illinois and the Mississippi, is among the state's loveliest and largest counties. It stretches across a rural landscape of rolling hills and sculpted knobs, wide fields of neatly furrowed corn and occasional small clusters of farm buildings. White-clapboard houses and red barns, many of which are

emblazoned high up on one broad side with a bright quilt-square pattern, each one different, dot the scenery.

Fall transforms the landscape, richly green in spring and summer, into a tapestry of glowing color. Black walnut trees light the countryside briefly come autumn, but the leaves have barely turned yellow before they drop. However, the fat lime-green walnuts hang on awhile — these have a stronger flavor than the English variety

but are worth collecting for cookies and cakes, if you have a way to shell them and don't mind the messy black stains they leave on your hands.

Other trees put on more of a show, among them fiery red sumac and dogwood, maples and hickories that turn to dazzling yellow, sweet gums and Bradford pears that display every color of the rainbow except blue, and oaks of a dozen species change to as many shades of orange, bronze, rusted iron and burgundy. Like their Eastern cousins, Midwestern trees put on an annual display that rarely fails to dazzle.

Many locals believe autumn is a production too spectacular not to be



shared, and from this has come the Pike County Fall Color Drive, an annual event since 1988, according to Kaye Iftner, director of the Pike County Chamber of Commerce. She explained that Gordon and Kay Samson of Pleasant Hill, one of the nearly two dozen small towns that dot the county, originated the idea as a good way to promote history, crafts and other wares during the peak fall foliage. Soon, nearly all of the county's communities were on board.

The drive, which attracts upward of 30,000 visitors to Pike County, takes place October 18 and 19 this year. Twenty of the towns include welcome stations, where maps and information are available. A drawing was a new addition in 2011: Visitors who pick up an entry form and have it stamped at seven of the welcome stations can turn it in to take part in drawings for gift certificates from local merchants.

My husband, Guy, and I have taken the drive and feel that two days are not enough to see everything the 849-square-mile county has to offer. There is no designated route, so visitors map their own itineraries.

This time Guy and I cheated a little — we arrived a day early, as fall color required no setup, and some of the attractions, such as Ed Nolan's Exotic Petting Zoo in quaint Nebo, already were. The area offers several campgrounds (see "Pike County Camping" on page 34), and we highly recommend parking the RV and driving your tow vehicle for the duration. The main roads, mostly two-lane, are all easily negotiable, but parking can be a problem.

Nolan, of nearby Carrollton, has brought his extensive petting zoo to town every year since the Fall Color Drive began, he told us, and on this

occasion had 50 pygmy goats, a pair of camels, two bison heifers, a petite wallaby and several miniature Sicilian donkeys with perfect crosses on their backs, among other animals in a large enclosure. The following day, when we came for a second visit, Nolan had prepared dozens of small paper bags filled with carrot sticks and other treats for sale to feed the animals.

Tiny Nebo has another claim to fame: it was among the 75 stops (including 16 crash landings) made by the *Vin Fiz Flyer*, a Wright Brothers-designed biplane, on the first transcontinental flight across the United States.

In 1911 publisher William Randolph Hearst offered a \$50,000 prize to the first aviator to make the coast-to-coast trip in either direction in less than 30 days. Calbraith Perry Rodgers, grandnephew of naval hero Admiral Oliver Hazard Perry, took up the challenge and persuaded meat-packer J. Ogden Armour to sponsor the flight, naming the plane after Armour's new grape soda, *Vin Fiz*.

With just 90 minutes of instruction from Orville Wright under his belt, Rodgers left New York on September 17, 1911, and on the 14th leg of the trip flew from Springfield, Illinois, to Nebo, an event the town celebrates with colorful billboards and an annual August festival.

Rodgers reached California via a circuitous route, averaging 52 MPH, in November (delayed by repair stops and hospital stays), too late to claim the prize but on time to claim a place in the history books. He was killed just



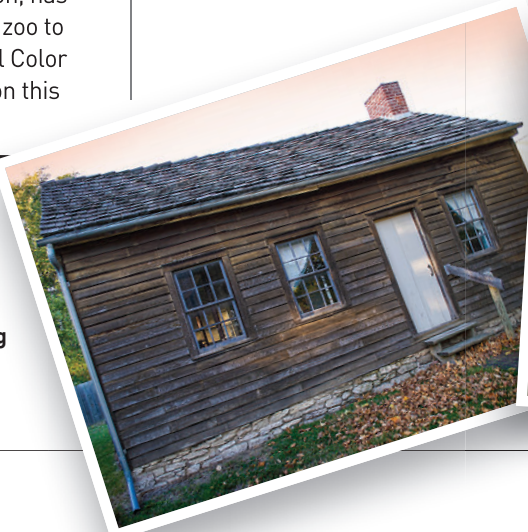
days later when his plane hit a flock of seagulls. Today the *Vin Fiz* is on exhibit at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington, D.C.

Our second day in Pike County began at Pleasant Hill, population 960, which includes a small campground where vendors set up during the Fall Color Drive. A yard sale was under way at nearly every house in town, with long tables piled high with flea-market items and antiques, and customers flocking to examine the wares. Then it was on through tiny Martinsburg, established in 1836, toward county-seat Pittsfield.

South of town we stopped to admire a bright display of quilt patterns painted on large squares of plywood like those you see decorating barn walls. Artist Lauren Perez explained that the hexes she paints ("they bring good luck") and her John Deere tractor designs are especially popular.

Just north of the Perez farm, we passed a yard filled with the most extensive and unusual array of decor we'd ever seen. Farm-owners George and Elizabeth Adrain welcome visitors to their over-the-top display and provide parking space, though they ask that no one stop if they're away. Gardens bursting with fall-hued mums and marigolds are set with gazing balls,

(Right) The restored Shastid House, where Lincoln often stayed while in Pittsfield. Here, the President once gobbled up the family's entire supper of six pigeons while preoccupied telling stories. **(Far right)** A horse-drawn "bus" carries passengers between attractions in Perry.



LEGENDS OF THE FALL

statues of animals, gnomes, life-size concrete children, more than a dozen antique gas pumps and much more.

We then drove to Griggsville, founded nearly 180 years ago and known today as the Purple Martin Capital of the Nation. Road signs here are purple, and birdhouses — including dozens of avian “apartments” — dot the town of 1,300 to accommodate the bluish-black bird, North America’s largest swallow.

Since 2008, vendors have set up booths at Griggsville Fairgrounds during the drive, according to Sheila Slight, chairwoman of the local event. Across the road is an empty sprawling building that until 2007 was home to Nature House. Originally, TV antennas were made there, but from 1965 until the company was sold and moved to Chicago, it made birdhouses.

In 2009 Slight and others formed Citizen Assistance for Purple Martins to raise money for maintaining the town’s many birdhouses. The group also has begun holding a Purple Martin Festival in June, which takes place in the former Nature House.

We continued north to Perry, where nine farmers from Illinois, Missouri and elsewhere were demonstrating 1920s-era plowing using teams of horses or mules. We watched Jack Phillips of Perry, who heads the event, bump across the 3-acre cornfield on an antique sulky plow drawn by his two-mule team, cutting a reasonably straight furrow, a difficult task as stumps of harvested cornstalks had been left standing. He explained that “farmers of an earlier day would have harrowed the stalks to the ground after a freeze, then raked them into windrows and burned them to make spring plowing easier.”

Some impressive draft animals were on hand for demos, and especially intriguing were six smallish horses their owner, Donald Guthrie of Pittsfield, jokingly called “Belgian wannabes.” The horses, just 55 inches tall at the withers, are Haflingers, a breed developed a century or so ago in Austria and northern Italy from Tyrolean ponies “infused with the blood of Arabians and various European



(Top) Fall Color Drive vendors set up on the lawn of the magnificent Pike County Courthouse in Pittsfield, Illinois. Though nice to think about, Lincoln never argued a case here, as it was built in 1894. The courthouse is located in the Eighth Circuit, where Lincoln did practice. **(Above left)** A magnificent four-point buck hightailed it away from the photographer. **(Above right)** A ventriloquist entertained the authors at the Pike County Courthouse.

species," Guthrie explained. The handsome equines, named for the town of Hafling, first appeared in the United States in 1955.

Elsewhere in Perry, which was founded in 1831 and originally called Booneville, we encountered other bits of history: a charming gingerbread-like house built in 1936 by storekeeper Harry Read and the 1878 Gothic Revival Church of Christ built by Read's ancestor John Read. Historian Kris Camphouse of Perry told us that the church, which replaced an earlier structure, is unusual in that it's wood instead of stone. The rare board-and-batten church has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 2006, he added.

On to New Salem, a rural community of just 150 residents, where Underground Railroad Antiques occupies a brick building that was once a feed mill and also a stop on the historic "railroad" that helped escaping slaves from neighboring Missouri, said current owner Brad Gleckler. Among the many other items on display here are an early 19th-century wicker "viewing casket" and an 1870s buckboard driven by actor Beau Bridges in the 1969 film "Gaily, Gaily."

Our last day of the drive began at Pearl, once home to 750 residents, many of whom worked at a flourishing button factory. Buttons were made from shells from the nearby Illinois River, Pearl resident Jane Brangenberg told us. After the factory closed, the town dwindled to just 200 residents. Nonetheless, they host a large flea market with produce and concession stands during the Fall Color Drive each year.

Just west of town off the Vin Fiz Highway (go south on 467th Street) is an elaborate pair of dressed-stone culverts with an unusual history. The first was built a century or so ago for the railroad, said Brangenberg, but the grade was too steep for trains and never used. The second similar culvert was then built nearby. They're worth a visit, but the road is narrow and rough, so we recommend not taking your RV.

We continued to Milton, population 300, where a flea market occupies the town square park, and across the road the Farm Implement Museum presents

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Then it was on to Detroit, which resident Bryan McAllister said was a “thriving community with filling stations, fruit markets, a post office, a grade school, beauty shops and more until Interstate 72 came through to the north.” Now just 83 folks call Detroit home, but they nonetheless celebrate the drive in grand style with a large flea market, a doll display and a host of fair foods for sale.

Just north of town is Bethel Methodist Church, built in 1846 and in use until 1933, says Pike County Daughters of the American Revolution member Alice Cripes of Griggsville. During the drive, re-enactors from the War of 1812, the Winnebago and Black Hawk War, the Civil War and World War II are here in uniform, and the town displays artifacts from the various wars. Cripes leads small groups through the historic graveyard where stones mark the graves of several War of 1812 and Civil War veterans.

As in other years, we hopscotched around the county, visiting a history museum in Kinderhook, a farm market in New Hartford and an antique mall in Summer Hill, among others. To wrap up the drive, we returned to Pittsfield which, with 4,500 residents, is the largest town in the county.

For an hour or more, we roamed the courthouse grounds where dozens of vendors in stalls offered antiques,

jewelry, food and a host of other items for sale. After picking up a brochure and map at the Pike County Visitor Center at 224 W. Washington Street, we took the 13-site Abe Lincoln Talking House Driving Tour.

Kudos to the Pike County folks who developed the tour, as it’s clever and well done. At each site — the Milton Hay House, Scanland House, Shastid House and others — you tune your radio to the FM station on the sign out front to hear the history of the home, the long-ago occupants and their connection to Lincoln, who had numerous friends in Pittsfield. Many of the stories are serious, involving Lincoln’s senatorial campaign and quest for the presidency, but others are amusing, depicting him as an inveterate raconteur.

Once, while Lincoln regaled Mayor Scanland and friends with stories at a local drugstore, Mrs. Scanland waited at home, seething, as her turkey dinner grew cold. Later, she chastised the future president, calling him “the laziest man there ever was, good for nothing but telling stories.” On another occasion, dining at the Shastid home, Lincoln was so preoccupied with storytelling, he absentmindedly gobbled up all six pigeons Mrs. Shastid had prepared, prompting her son to cry out, “Mr. Lincoln, you’re nothing but an old hog!”

Such anecdotes may take Lincoln out of his usual context, but they also keep the tour light and entertaining. We found it the perfect way to end the weekend. 🗽

Giant rolls of hay bales are gathered at a dairy farm against the coming winter.



PIKE COUNTY CAMPING

Three campgrounds accommodate RVers in Pike County, from a pair of municipal parks to one full-fledged resort. Reservations are recommended during the Pike County Fall Color Drive, the third weekend of October each year.

PITTSFIELD

Pine Lakes Resort

Part of the Yogi Bear’s Jellystone Park chain, Pine Lakes Resort (pictured above) welcomes RVers with 30- and 50-amp campsites starting at \$37 per night. Guests can swim, fish and go boating on the 40-acre lake. A pool, snack bar and arcade make this a family-friendly destination, along with the well-stocked camp store, two bathrooms with coin-operated showers, free Wi-Fi hotspots and a jumping pillow. **877-808-7463**

www.pinelakesresort.com

Pittsfield City Lake Campground

Two miles east of town, Pittsfield’s 480-acre recreational park has hiking trails, picnic spots, playgrounds and ball courts, all nestled up to its namesake lake, a local boating and fishing haven. Campsites offering 20-, 30- and 50-amp hookups rent for \$12 a night, and restrooms with showers are nearby. **217-285-4484, www.pittsfieldil.org**

PLEASANT HILL

Jerome Martin Campground

Owned and managed by the village of Pleasant Hill, Jerome C. Martin Sr. Memorial Campground has 30- and 50-amp RV sites with full hookups for \$12 to \$16 per night. There’s a restroom, dump station and one handicap-accessible campsite. Reservations aren’t required except during the Pike County Fall Color Drive. **217-734-2113**



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2014	Dutchmen AEROLITE 326BHSL	KAT484309	TT	\$40,603	\$4,606	\$35,997	Katy, TX
2014	Forest River WILDCAT 317RL	CRV485716	FW	\$52,694	\$14,699	\$37,995	Island Lake, IL
2014	Forest River CEDAR CREEK SILVERBACK 29IK	HAR500844	FW	\$59,721	\$16,726	\$42,995	Harrisburg, PA
2014	Jayco EAGLE PREMIER 321RLTS	POR489468	FW	\$66,651	\$16,663	\$49,988	Wood Village, OR
2014	Heartland BIGHORN 3370RK	FTM474392	FW	\$83,278	\$28,283	\$54,995	Fort Myers, FL
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NEW!

article by **Chris Hemer** photos by **Scott Hirko**

Northwood Bou

If you enjoy cooking and entertaining, head toward Fox

Those of us who consider cooking and entertaining an important part of the RV lifestyle can become frustrated by the kitchen offerings in many fifth-wheels. Entry-level models often don't have the equipment or counter space we need, while higher-end models tend to cater to wealthier owners who spend more time dining out than eating in. But the Fox Mountain lineup by Northwood Manufacturing offers one unique floorplan that makes the kitchen a priority, and sweetens the pot by making it affordable.

Called the 325RKS, this fifth-wheel is only 34 feet 11 inches long, and with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 13,000 pounds, it's towable by most single-rear-wheel 2500-series trucks. What makes this floorplan interesting is that the typical fifth-wheel living area arrangement has been swapped, placing the kitchen all the way at the back and the living area in the middle. At first it's hard to imagine how this would be advantageous, but by spreading the kitchen over the streetside corner and rear wall, there's more usable space in a smaller footprint. And with an L-shaped sofa sleeper, two reclining rockers and a convertible fixed dinette,

Northwood's claim that this floorplan can accommodate up to six seemed reasonable, if a bit intimate.

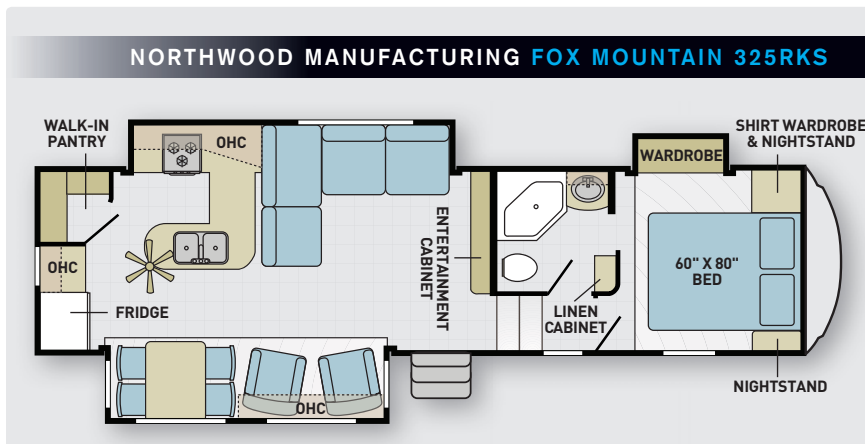
To find out, we invited friends along to help us test the 325RKS to its maximum capacity at a family campground near Goleta, California. We towed the trailer with our long-term 2014 Ford F-350 dually, which was more hardware than we needed for this trailer, but it made for effortless towing. As noted above, a 2500-series truck should have no difficulty towing the 325RKS either.

Setting up was pretty easy, even though this trailer does not come with automatic leveling or offer it as an option. The front landing jacks are oper-

ated by a switch at the front, while the rear scissor jacks are activated by a switch behind a door on the curb side. This arrangement worked just fine for our level site, but if you camp in more rugged locales, you'll probably want to bring along leveling blocks.

The 325RKS is as good looking as it is functional. Tan fiberglass is complemented by brown and black graphics and a black diamond-plate-look rock guard up front. There's also an LED hitch light on the front cap, and an additional LED strip light underneath, which we found perfectly positioned to light the power cord connection on the driver's side of the truck bed. Aluminum wheels look nicely finished and are fitted with Goodyear tires, an unexpected but welcome feature. The Fox Mountain does not have the frameless windows that are becoming popular on newer fifth-wheels and other RVs, which is OK with us, as the ones we've seen don't seem as robust as traditional framed windows.

The forward pass-through storage compartment has a relatively low ceiling, but it served our needs and should be adequate for most users. This area also has some plumbing passing through from the front bath, but it is located on the front corner of the compartment, so this shouldn't be an issue if you keep large, heavy items from making contact. These can go in the front compartment, which has a metal floor and is better suited for heavy items like generators, tools, etc. A vented compartment above the curbside baggage door has room for two batteries, and on the street side of the trailer is a door that allows access to the city water connection and black-tank



nd Mountain



The Fox Mountain 325RKS is a good-looking midsize trailer that lives larger than its dimensions. This test unit wasn't equipped with any options, but we would recommend offering slideout toppers, especially for those who plan to camp under trees.



The kitchen has abundant counter-top space, plenty of cabinets and stainless-steel appliances. Behind the door in the corner is the huge walk-in pantry.

flush (the latter of which is clearly labeled to prevent unfortunate mistakes).

There are the usual hot-cold handles for an outside shower, but instead of an attached hose with a sprayer, there's a quick disconnect for a coiled hose. The hose stores behind a separate door within the compartment, and it's long enough to be used for spraying off dirty feet, washing off a bike or simply rinsing the sewer hose when finished

with dumping duties. We appreciated the addition of an LED strip light above the utility area, which makes it easier to set up or break camp at night.

The dump handles for the black tank and forward gray tank are both exposed, as is the rear gray-tank handle. We'd prefer if these could be located behind locked doors, but at least the handles are up high against the underbelly and aren't readily visible from the outside. The

same can't be said of the gray-water line that runs from the rear kitchen to the front, as it hangs down below the body on a slant to promote waterflow. It's not the prettiest thing in the world, but it is a necessity of this trailer's design.

As a relatively small fifth-wheel, the 325RKS comes with a single 13,500-Btu ducted air conditioner, with a 15,000-Btu unit as an option. Initially, we were concerned that one air-conditioning unit

(Below left) The Fox Mountain's convertible couch takes on an L-shape once the freestanding chair is attached, making for a comfortable place to enjoy the forward entertainment center. **(Below middle)** The bedroom features a queen-size bed with adequate walk-around space and underbed storage, plus a small wardrobe slideout. **(Below right)** The Jack-and-Jill bathroom has a roomy shower with a glass door and a deep pan that can be used to bathe small children.



SPECIFICATIONS

NORTHWOOD MANUFACTURING FOX MOUNTAIN 325RKS

Exterior Length	34' 11"
Exterior Width	8'
Exterior Height	12' 10"
Interior Width	7' 8 ³ / ₈ "
Interior Height	8' 2"
Construction	Northwood built, independently certified off-road chassis; fully welded aluminum frame, multilayered substrate walls, high-density block-foam insulation, R-18 insulation in roof, R-15 reflective foil insulation in slideouts/roof, heated holding tanks and dump valves
Freshwater Cap.	53 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	40 gal. (front) 35 gal. (rear)
Black-Water Cap.	36 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	6 gal.
Refrigerator	8-cu.-ft.
Furnace	30,000 Btu
Air Conditioner	13,500 Btu
Converter	55 amp
Battery	Dealer supplied
Tires	ST 235/80R16
Suspension	Leaf/Equa-Flex
Weight (with water and propane full, no supplies)	10,540 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,860 lbs.
Axle Weight	8,680 lbs.
GVWR	13,000 lbs.
GAWR	(2) 6,000 lbs.
Cargo Carrying Cap.	2,460 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$52,575
MSRP, as tested	\$52,575
Basic Warranty	1 year

Northwood Manufacturing

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would not be enough in the 85-degree temps, but we simply put the day/night shades in night mode and kept the door closed, after which the interior maintained a cool and comfortable 74 degrees all day in our partially shaded site. This may be attributable to Northwood's highly touted All-Conditions/Four Seasons Insulation.

As the afternoon turned to evening, we started getting ready for dinner. Though most of the cooking was done outside on the grill, all of the preparation was done inside, where there was more than enough room for two chefs to work. The kitchen is equipped with an attached island kitchen that forms a U once the streetside slideout is deployed. There's an abundance of solid-surface counter space for both preparation and serving, and there are dual sink covers if you need additional room. The sink is a residential-size stainless-steel model with two sides and features a residential-style stainless-steel faucet with pullout sprayer, which makes cleanup easy. Appliances include an Atwood three-burner stove with oven, vent hood and a smallish

High Pointe microwave oven, all of which are finished in stainless steel for a more upscale appearance.

At first, cabinet and drawer space seems only adequate, until you take a closer look. There are three cabinets to the right of the microwave, four drawers to the right of the oven — two shallow and two deep — and another large drawer underneath the oven. That should probably be enough for most folks, but in the forward part of the kitchen cabinet are three more huge drawers that are made visible once the slideout is deployed. In addition, the rounded end of the island has a hidden handle that allows you to open this area for even more storage. The small shelves within would be a good place to store spices and canned goods, but you probably won't even need it once you see the pantry. Located on the streetside corner just behind the galley, it is quite possibly the largest pantry we've seen on a fifth-wheel at any size. It is accessed by a full-size door and has five shelves — there is enough room here to keep a family of six stocked up for a long time.



On the back wall of the trailer is a hutch that offers more cabinets as well as additional countertop space. It's an ideal place to put food that is ready to serve, and next to the hutch is an 8-cubic-foot refrigerator with storage above and below. There is no dedicated place for a trash can, but you could put one in the pantry area, if you wanted, or cut a notch in the shelf underneath the sink and place one there. Fortunately, there's so much room elsewhere that using the space underneath the sink wouldn't impact storage options in the slightest.

Forward of the galley is the small but cozy living area, which features a convertible couch that can be extended to an L-shaped configuration simply by attaching the free-standing chair. We actually preferred this option instead of a slideout L-shaped sofa, as we found it easier to set up. The chair has wheels on it, so it's simply a matter of pushing it over to the couch and attaching it with the integrated hooks. During travel, the chair stows near the forward entertainment center, so it does not interfere with the slideouts coming in from either side. The only problem with this is that the chair can move during travel, so make sure to secure it with pillows or blankets so it can't cause or receive damage.

The couch is well padded and easily converts into a trifold bed that is reasonably comfortable. The forward entertainment center is occupied by a 39-inch Jensen LED television and matching Jensen AM/FM/DVD/iPod player



The dinette is large and well-padded, and easily converts into a bed. Reclining rockers are comfy but a bit crowded and hard to move around. Theater seats would be a great option.

that is very easy to use and offers switches to control the individual sound zones (living area, bedroom, patio). It's not fancy, but it looks and sounds good — and more importantly, it works. The only thing we didn't understand is why the TV is mounted on an extending arm that swivels; this is totally unnecessary, as the TV can be viewed from anywhere in the living or kitchen area already. The addition of the arm

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means that the TV wiggles during travel, and we found it necessary to place a cushion between it and the slideout wall to prevent possible damage during travel.

In the curbside slideout is a fixed dinette that is comfortable and roomy enough for four average-size adults. It is laminate but has the same color and finish as the solid surfaces in the kitchen — a nice design detail. The dinette easily converts to a bed for two small adults or kids, and underneath each bench is a large storage drawer. Forward of the dinette are two reclining rockers that are comfortable but probably aren't an ideal solution for this space. The rockers are close together and must be moved away from the wall to recline. Once you do that, the base tends to fall off the step at the edge of the slideout floor. Wall-hugging theater seating would be a welcome addition, perhaps as an option.

The forward bathroom uses a Jack-and-Jill arrangement so it can be accessed by the hall or bedroom. The area is adequately sized for the tasks at hand and includes a counter with sink and storage, a mirrored medicine cabinet with vanity lights, a linen closet and a shower with a glass door. One thing we appreciated here was that the shower can serve double duty as a bathtub for the little ones. The faucet and handles are mounted low in the deep, high-sided shower pan, but the showerhead is mounted high. It's a smart design that works for just about everyone. And, instead of the usual cheapo ceiling vent, this trailer has a standard Fan-Tastic

Vent fan that really moves the air in a hurry. The only thing we felt could be improved was the faucet, which looked like brushed nickel but was really plastic.

The bedroom is small but usable. The queen-size bed offers underbed storage, and the streetside slideout contains a small wardrobe that should be fine for a traveling family. There is another cabinet on the street side of the bed, but oddly, none on the curb side. In any case, there's adequate counter space, a drawer and a 120-volt AC outlet on either side, plus plenty of lighting and a remote for the bedroom Fan-Tastic Vent fan mounted within easy reach. Our bedroom was prewired for television, but didn't include one, and frankly we didn't miss it. You may choose to get your own or opt for the 26-inch LED unit Northwood offers as an option.

Overall, there were no real complaints with this fifth-wheel, but there are some things to note. The forward drawers in the galley can be broken if they're not completely closed, as they will interfere with the adjacent cabinet as the slide moves in or out. And you can't access the rear refrigerator or the pantry at all until the slideouts are almost completely open. This makes it somewhat of a hassle during packing, but we suppose it is just a concession to this fifth-wheel's unique design.

If you appreciate the freedom to entertain in a roomy but manageable fifth-wheel, the Fox Mountain 325RKS is an excellent choice. 🚐



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WALK-THROUGH: WOLF PUP 17RP BY CHEROKEE

Outdoor Sanctuary

Forest River's diminutive toy-hauler trailer offers basic shelter for outdoor enthusiasts

The Forest River Wolf Pup 17RP is a rugged, compact, easy-to-tow toy hauler. It's just a tad longer than 20 feet and stands only 9½ feet tall. Riding on a single axle, the 17RP has a simple design but is loaded with modern amenities. The exterior is common aluminum adorned with what looks like swaying grass blade decals. The interior comes with a dark chocolate wood decor with a golden hue, which makes a good accent off the dark interior.

The floorplan is simple, with the bunks occupying the front of the trailer, and the compact kitchen on the right side butting up against the beds. Capable of sleeping one person

on the 28-inch-wide upper berth and two below cuddling in 44 inches of side-to-side space, the 17RP is pretty tight come bedtime. A fourth person can sleep on the rollover sofa in the "garage" area.

In the galley, there's minimal counter space, a single sink with a high-rise faucet, a three-burner cooktop, microwave and 3-cubic-foot, 120-volt AC refrigerator. An RV refrigerator can be ordered as an option, which makes sense for anyone thinking of camping off the grid.

The petite "wet" bathroom is directly across from the galley. It has a foot-flush toilet, and the space can be used as a small shower. Support systems for the bathroom are limited

to 21 gallons of freshwater and 13 gallons each of black and gray water. The 6-gallon water heater is plenty big for this Pup.

In the back of the trailer, embellished with Wolf Pup graphics, is a 59- x 71-inch ramp door used to load the toys. The interior living quarters share space with what is considered the garage area. To make the most room, the sofa can be positioned against the wall, and the table can be removed and stored up front.

When the ramp is open, a diamond-plate hinge guard connects



The Wolf Pup is a nice alternative for those with modest needs. The Pup is towable by most midsize trucks and SUVs, and can accommodate a pair of motorcycles or a quad.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

the gap between the linoleum flooring inside the trailer and the slip-resistant surface of the ramp door. This prevents tires and feet from getting hung up in the gap and makes the trailer safer to load and more child-friendly. Cabinetry in the garage area, as well as in the rest of the trailer, is kind of sparse, so careful loading is necessary.

This trailer is not designed to be fancy, but there is a fairly long list of options that can doll it up somewhat. On that list are a furnace, air conditioner, TV and antenna, power A-frame jack and upgraded exterior effects. Some dealers will offer a limited package, which adds another layer of optional items, including solar prep and wiring.

Construction is standard trailer fare, and the roof is touted as being one piece and walkable, although there was no ladder to get on the roof. Outside, there is a full-length awning, and a place to mount a TV and speakers. There's no exterior storage, so plan on storing gear inside.

This little trailer is good for weekend getaways and can easily fit in most small campgrounds. At 3,000 pounds unloaded, the trailer is towable by a wide range of vehicles, but there's a limitation of the type of toys that can be hauled. The 5,430-pound gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) and single axle will limit toys to those that are lightweight and on the smaller side. 🚗

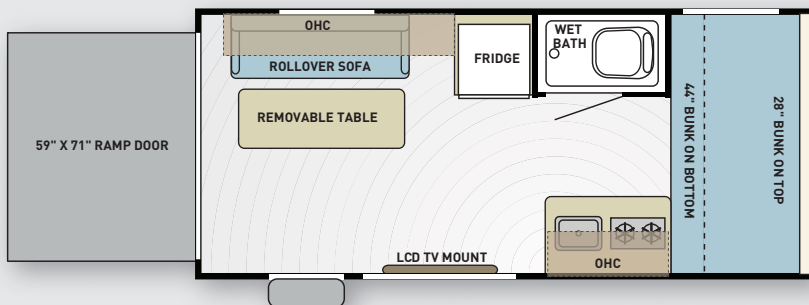


(Top left and above) Compact but cozy living quarters contain a sofa sleeper, removable table and bunk beds up front. Storage space is limited, however, so plan on keeping some stuff inside the tow vehicle.

QUICK INFO



Exterior Length	20' 2"
Exterior Width	7' 1"
Interior Height	6' 6"
Exterior Height	9' 5"
Freshwater Cap.	21 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	13 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	13 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	5 gal.
UVW	3,019 lbs.
Hitch Weight	350 lbs.
GVWR	5,430 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$14,454



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Stay on track with one of these RV-friendly GPS units as your copilot



We all know the old adage “Getting there is half the fun.” That may in fact be the case, but it’s never any fun getting lost. Tempers flare, blood pressures rise, and the good times cease to roll when you’re pulling a 40-foot fifth-wheel down a one-lane highway that seemingly leads to nowhere. In days gone by, the only recourse to get you back on track was unfolding the map, grabbing the magnifier and poring over the tendrils of tiny lines that were sometimes difficult to identify. Of course, you could stop and ask for directions, but that’s the ultimate concession that your weeks of planning have failed (at least, that’s what I think).

Global Positioning System (GPS) devices have taken most of the guesswork out of navigation, so much so that you basically have to *try* to get lost these days. There’s always the occasional news article or campfire story about an unfortunate driver following the GPS voice right into a river or lake, but for the most part, today’s GPS devices can be relied upon pretty heavily — provided the maps are up to date, of course.

In addition to simple navigation, GPS units contain a variety of user-friendly settings and options: points of interest, restaurants, hotels, attractions — the list goes on and on. And some units even come preloaded with campground listings, offering travelers the ultimate in RV usability, from campsites to height restrictions to access roads. Throw in the ability for instant updates, Bluetooth compatibility and even speakerphones and wristwatch units, and it’s obvious that the days of folding maps are far back in our rearview mirrors. That’s why we’ve selected the following handful of GPS units with special appeal for RVers.

Garmin

The RV 760LMT from Garmin has been designed for RVers and offers users a host of features to make RV travel easy. The 760LMT (\$399.99) starts with an easy-to-read 7-inch touch display that keeps the driving map onscreen at all times while displaying any additional information alongside. The info includes speed limits, current speed, accurate time of arrival and school-zone warnings.

◀ RV 760LMT

The unit comes preloaded with America's RV Parks & Services Directory, which includes a comprehensive listing of nearly 20,000 RV parks and campgrounds in the United States and Canada, including national and state parks and privately owned campgrounds. The directory enables users to search by preferred amenities, so you can easily find what they want, from pet-friendly parks to pull-through sites to free Wi-Fi. The directory also lists more than 14,000 service locations, including towing, tire shops, truck stops and repair centers.

Another highlight of the RV 760LMT is straight out of *Star Trek*: voice command. The RV 760LMT has voice-activated navigation in addition to its touch-screen interface, so you can keep your hands on the wheel while learning your exact whereabouts. Other user-friendly features include hands-free calling through the unit when it is synced (via a free app) with a compatible Bluetooth-enabled device, such as a smartphone. The RV 760LMT comes with unlimited map upgrades and the ability to receive real-time traffic updates (via your smartphone). The 760 is also available with a backup camera to help with hitching up (\$499.99) and keep an eye on surroundings while in camp or on the road.

Speaking about keeping an eye on your surroundings, Garmin also offers the Dash Cam 20 (\$249.99), a high-definition (HD) standalone driving recorder with a 2.3-inch display.



◀ Dash Cam 20

The Dash Cam 20 records audio and video, with GPS for detailed time and location data pinpointing exactly where and when events occurred. Mount the camera to the windshield, and the Dash Cam records in a continuous loop, using the included 4 GB SD card. To add more memory, add a larger SD card (accepts up to 32 GB). Play back the footage on the LCD display or review later on your computer. The camera has a wide-angle lens that captures the entire road. Once it's plugged into the vehicle's 12-volt DC socket, it is recording; no need to worry about starting it up. For a close-up view of vehicle or property damage, you can easily remove the Dash Cam from the vehicle and take snapshots with it.

Garmin, 800-800-1020, www.garmin.com/rv

Magellan

Magellan offers its popular RoadMate series with a variety of functions, including several designed with RVers in mind. In fact, the RoadMate RV series runs seven models deep, six of which feature a large 7-inch display.

At the top of the food chain is the RV9490T-LMB (\$379.99), which offers a unique blend of RV navigation and safety features. The 7-inch display is actually an adjustable day- and night-view high-sensitivity touch screen, and the Wi-Fi and Bluetooth technologies make this GPS feel more like the integrated units available in many passenger cars. The wireless capability allows users to

receive advanced weather updates, up-to-the-minute gas prices and even Yelp reviews of the destinations along your route.

RV-specific information includes the preloaded *Good Sam RV Travel*

Guide & Campground Directory, RV dump stations, Walmart locations and RV-friendly fuel stations. You can also customize a route based on the RV's size, vehicle type and driving preferences, allowing you to avoid tight clearances, one-way roads or downtown driving. MSRPs for the RoadMate RV units begin at \$299, and most are available at www.campingworld.com at discounted rates.

If you're looking for something a little more interactive (though without the RV-specific functionality), the RoadMate 6230-LM Dashcam Navigator (\$229.99) is a premium GPS device with the capability to record travel scenery



◀ RoadMate RV9490T-LMB



◀ RoadMate 6230-LM Dashcam Navigator

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The camera is designed so that the driver does not have to interact with it to record footage. When a collision occurs, a special built-in acceleration sensor called a G-Shock sensor automatically locks video footage, location data and date/time information prior to the incident, providing an accurate record of events. Videos may be played back on the device or on Windows-based computers. The 6230-LM Dashcam Navigator comes with GPS navigation features like Free Lifetime Map Updates, Traffic Camera Alerts by PhantomAlert, Junction View, Landmark Guidance, Best Parking and much more. In addition to this integrated functionality, the 6230-LM Dashcam Navigator is compatible with the Magellan Wireless Back-Up Camera (\$149.99).

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▲ RV GPS 7735 LM

Rand McNally

Rand McNally's RV GPS 7735 LM is the latest Good Sam Club-branded GPS device with access to the *Good Sam Travel Guide & Campground Directory*. This means that users have up-to-date information on some 8,000 rated RV parks, including more than 2,100 Good Sam Parks.

The new model's higher resolution 7-inch screen and faster processor

make trip planning, points-of-interest searches and route customization easy. The 7735 LM offers improved large-vehicle routing with 11 different selectable RV configurations, plus a car mode for when you unhitch. Advanced lane guidance at the bottom of the screen makes at-a-glance navigation easier, while enhanced route customization helps drivers avoid congested areas, low clearances and construction zones.

The 7735 LM (\$349.99; Internet sale,

\$329.99) displays more than 70,000 junctions, using Lane Assist to help guide you to the correct lane for easier city and interstate driving. The GPS finds toll costs and compares routes without tolls, and can connect to Wi-Fi for weather and fuel prices. The device also includes Rand McNally's Best of the Road trips, adventures and getaways. Find a complete list of features at www.campingworld.com/goodsamgps. **Rand McNally, www.randmcnally.com**



◀ Via 1605 M RV

TomTom

Via 1605 M RV (\$229.95) is TomTom's RV-friendly GPS. The 1605 M RV includes map data specific to oversize vehicles so users can avoid restricted roadways and low bridges. The unit features an interactive 6-inch high-resolution touch screen for easy operation. A split-screen "junction" view enables users to view the map while catching a glimpse of their upcoming exit, making it easier to recognize the correct lane positioning. Owners also receive a 10 percent discount at KOA locations across the United States and Canada, in addition to free map upgrades for life.

Like all TomTom GPS units, the Via 1605 M RV offers real-time arrival info, a points-of-interest database, an audible speeding alert, fast route planning and safety alerts such as unpaved road notifications and recommendations for taking a break. TomTom units also can quickly calculate an Eco Route, which steers drivers toward the most fuel-efficient way to a destination.

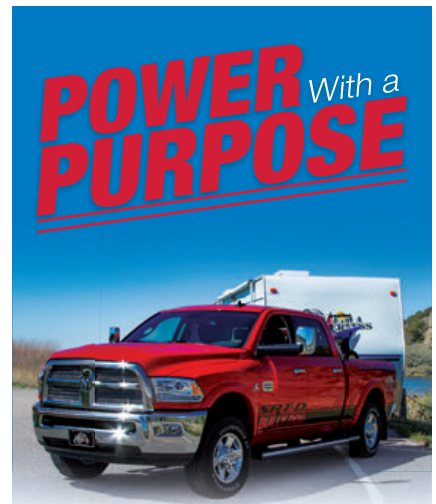
Although all the devices in this roundup are in fact "portable," TomTom offers the ultimate in portability with the Runner Cardio watch, a great way to keep an eye on your health and fitness while exploring the countryside or hiking the dunes. The Runner Cardio features a built-in heart monitor and several settings to ensure you get the most from your backcountry travels. Users can adjust the pace, distance and calorie goals, all in a Bluetooth-compatible lightweight wristwatch that's water-resistant up to 50 meters. You can even share your results with friends

on popular running and social media websites and apps. MSRP ranges from \$269.99 to \$299.99.

TomTom
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KEEP YOUR COOL



Replacing worn-out fabric on a Dometic manual awning is a good way to restore shade and aesthetics

Ultraviolet rays from the sun have been bombarding the earth for millions of years. On an RV, continual exposure leads to damaged plastic components and trim and can wreak havoc on rolled up awnings that are not protected from the sun. Often the top of the rolled awning shreds, rendering the material unsightly at best and dangerous to roll out at worst.

As long as the hardware is intact, there's no reason to replace the entire awning just because the fabric is worn-out. Replacing just the fabric makes the most sense, but this project, done on a manual awning here, should only be performed by mechanics or do-it-yourselfers who have experience working with awnings.

Most awning fabrics can be ordered via the Internet or through a local RV parts store. Replacement fabric will be a special order since it's made specifically to fit the length of your awning and particular model. Keep in mind when ordering replacement fabric that in

most cases it's not returnable. Triple-check all measurements and model numbers before ordering.

If your existing awning still has a tag with the model number and serial number, check with the manufacturer to be sure that it is still the correct model number before ordering new fabric. The model number provides the color and length of the awning. Manufacturers often change colors from year to year, so be aware that the color scheme of your current awning may not be available. On the other hand, this gives you an opportunity to change to a color that best fits the RV's paint scheme and your personality. Most vinyl replacement fabrics can be shipped via UPS, which is less expensive than using a freight company.

Replacement fabrics come with detailed instructions, complete with pictures. Most can be replaced within three hours. Be sure to enlist several able-bodied helpers and one who can prep the BBQ to celebrate the installation.

Getting Started

Begin the installation by opening and closing the awning at least twice while carefully inspecting all working parts for any damage and proper operation. Once satisfied that the hardware is in good working condition, unlock the awning and roll it out to about 10 inches. Leave the locking mechanism in this position. Remove any screws that are installed in the awning rail holding the fabric.



TOOLS FOR THE JOB

- Two 8-foot stepladders
- One or two cordless drill/drivers
- One pop-rivet gun
- Pair of pliers
- Rat-tail round file
- Coarse flat file
- 3/16-inch drill bit
- Set of nut drivers
- One large pair of Vice-Grip pliers
- RV sealant

New awning fabric is a cost-effective way to improve both the appearance and functionality of an RV.





1) Remove screws that run through the awning rail into the fabric. 2) Remove the lag screws from the front and rear upper brackets. 3) Slide the entire awning assembly out of either end of the awning rail. 4) Use a pair of Vise-Grip pliers to hold the spring assembly while removing the bolt that holds the upright in place. 5) Mark the direction that you will need to wind the spring assembly before unwinding it. 6) Use the old fabric as ground cover to keep the new fabric clean during installation.

Be sure to save all the screws and bolts for reinstallation. Mark the location of the top mounting brackets at both ends of the awning rail before removing the lag screws or hex head screws. Detach the front and rear foot assemblies on the uprights from their brackets and drop to the ground to help support the awning while removing.

Once it's determined on which end of the awning rail you'll slide the fabric out of, you'll need to recruit two or three people to help remove the awning, one on the ladder at the exit point of the rail and one holding the uprights as the fabric slides out of the rail.

Once the awning is clear of the railing, lay it on a clean, flat surface the same direction that it was installed on the RV. Follow the installation directions and unwind the front and rear torsion assemblies using a large pair of Vice-Grip pliers around the shaft. Caution: There is a tremendous amount of tension on the springs, and they can cause injury if the Vice-Grip pliers get away from you.

Mark the end on each torsion assembly and the roller tube for reinstallation. Drill out the two $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch rivets in each end cap and pull the torsion assemblies out of the roller tube; set aside for reinstallation.

Pull the fabric from the roller tube and stretch it out on the ground. This will provide a clean surface for the new fabric to lie on, rather than placing it on the ground. Before removing the fabric from the roller tube, mark the slots where the fabric and valance are installed. This will ensure that you get them back into the correct slots.

Use the round file to smooth out the slots on the end of the roller tube into which the fabric and valance will slide. Use the coarse flat file to smooth the sharp edge of the roller tube; this will make sliding the fabric onto the roller tube much easier and reduce snagging.

7) Use a $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch bit to drill out the rivets holding the spring assemblies in place. 8) Before removing each spring assembly, mark the end and the roller tube for reinstallation. 9) Pull the spring assembly away from the roller and set aside for later installation.



KEEP YOUR COOL



10) Before removing the fabric from the roller tube, mark the slot where the fabric slides. 11-13) File any sharp or rough edges that may slice the new fabric before sliding the new fabric into the roller tube. 14) Carefully roll the new fabric in the proper direction onto the roller tube. 15) Use $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch-long aluminum rivets to secure the spring assemblies into place. 16) Using a pair of long-nose pliers, spread the opening of the awning rail to prevent the fabric from snagging during installation. 17) Carefully guide the awning with the new fabric into the rail with the help of one or two other people. 18) Before reinstalling the lag screws in the upper brackets, make sure to use a high-quality caulk in the existing holes. 19) Install the lag screws through the upper brackets in the same place from where they were removed.

or tearing when working with the new fabric. Following the directions, slide the fabric into the roller tube.

Using a tape measure, center the fabric on the roller tube and cut the protruding polycord flush with the end of the roller tube. Reinstall the right and left torsion assemblies using a long $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch aluminum rivet (not supplied). Roll the fabric back onto the roller tube the same direction the old one was removed. Follow the instructions to complete the installation, including the direction and number of turns you will need to preload the torsion assemblies. Use the two supplied cotter pins to hold the wound torsion assemblies in place.

Before reinstalling the awning, use a pair of needle-nose pliers to open the end of the awning rail outward, then file any sharp edges or burrs that may catch or tear the fabric. Slide the awning into the rail. Center the awning in place and open and close it two or three times. Once you're satisfied that the fabric and the awning are in the correct position and operate correctly, reinstall all screws and cover them with sealant to prevent water intrusion.

This DIY project is a bit tedious but well worth the effort and the satisfaction of a job well done. Dometic supplies excellent long-wearing replacement awning material. Figure around \$200 for the cost of the new fabric. 🚐

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Devilish on Dirt

RV enthusiasts now have an easier way to improve air quality and keep their rigs cleaner. The Dirt Devil CV1500 by H-P Products runs quieter and offers 26 percent more cleaning power than handhelds and other RV central vac systems on the market, according to the company. The remotely located dirt canister can be installed out of the way in an RV storage compartment, under a seat or in a closet. With the 35-foot hose that contracts to just 7 feet for storage, along with an assortment of attachments, the Dirt Devil CV1500 can be used to clean just about every surface found in an RV.

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Back in Black

K&N's Blackhawk Induction air-intake system for the 2014 Chevy Silverado 6.2-liter V-8 engine (part number 71-3082) replaces the factory system with a free-flowing mandrel bent aluminum air-intake tube to help minimize restriction and increase airflow to the engine. The result is 11 extra horsepower, according to the manufacturer. The kit includes a washable black Dryflow conical air filter and a black powder-coated intake tube/heat shield. The system retains factory connections, requires no modifications and can be installed in roughly 90 minutes with common hand tools.

MSRP: \$575

800-858-3333, www.knfilters.com

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Go with the Flow

Truck System Technologies, an established provider of tire-pressure monitoring systems, has introduced its state-of-the-art TST 507 Flow Thru system, which features a fill port that allows you to add or remove air without having to remove the sensors. This system lets you read PSI and temperature in real time for each tire monitored and can also indicate when tires are under- or overinflated or overheated. The TST 507 Flow Thru utilizes user-replaceable CR1632 lithium batteries and can monitor up to 22 tire positions with customizable high/low alert parameters.

MSRP: \$259

770-889-9102, www.tsttruck.com

Circle 132 on Reader Service Card



Big Wig

Hauling a big fifth-wheel or truck camper? Hellwig Products' Big Wig rear air suspension for the 2014 Ram 2500 truck with rear coil springs provides 5,600 pounds of level load capability, according to the company. The "largest in class" air bags support the same weight as most other 2500 air bags but with 30 to 40 percent less air pressure, which translates to a softer ride. Big Wig air bags mount outboard of the factory coil springs and are a direct bolt-on. The kit includes all necessary brackets and hardware, and requires no drilling to install.

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Horsepower, Torque and Dynamometers

When comparing tow-vehicle engines and aftermarket modifications, horsepower and torque are frequently mentioned. We all know that more is better. Yet, what's the difference between the two terms, and what do all those numbers really represent?

Let's start with torque, because you need it to "make" horsepower. Engine torque is the twisting force that is available at the crankshaft. This force is generated when explosions occur within the combustion chamber(s). The pistons are pushed down, passing the force to connecting rods, and this movement turns the engine's crankshaft.

From there, the twisting force, or torque, goes to the clutch (manual gearboxes) or torque converter (automatic transmissions). It then goes through the transmission, driveshaft U-joints, differential and finally to the drive axle(s) and tire/wheel assemblies. Frictional losses occur each step of the way, so the engine's output steadily decreases on its journey to the road.

Engine torque is denoted in pound-feet (LB-FT) in the United States and Newton meters (Nm) in countries such as Canada that have adopted the metric system. A force of 1 pound exerted upon a lever that is 1 foot long equals 1 LB-FT. (Often, you'll hear it described as foot-pounds, abbreviated FT-LBS, which is correct for describing the tightening torque for nuts and bolts.)

The formula for converting LB-FT to Nm is: $LB-FT \times 1.3558 = Nm$. Going the other way, $Nm \times 0.7376 = LB-FT$. Other conversion formulas to convert various torque units from one type to another can be found online using a search engine such as Google. An interesting rule of thumb is that most gasoline engines produce roughly 1 LB-FT of torque for each cubic inch of displacement, regardless of their peak horsepower.

Horsepower

James Watt, the Scottish mechanical engineer known for developing more efficient steam engines, is credited with the term "horsepower." Watt used it for relating steam-engine power output with that of horses, something very familiar to people in the 18th century. It was an easy way to compare power ratings, and the moniker stuck.

While torque is an instantaneous measurement of force, horsepower is a measurement of work over a period of time. Standard mechanical horsepower is defined as 550 LB-FT of torque per second, which pencils out to 33,000

LB-FT of torque per minute.

Horsepower and torque are related by a simple equation that uses torque and engine speed in revolutions per minute (RPM) and a divisor of 5,252. The commonly used formula for horsepower is: $horsepower = torque \text{ (in LB-FT)} \times RPM / 5,252$. With this formula, at 5,252 RPM, both the torque and horsepower have equal values. That is why the torque and horsepower graph lines of many higher revving gas engines intersect at 5,252 RPM (most diesels can't reach this speed).

The RPM at which maximum torque occurs is the sweet spot of the engine, where it is at its greatest efficiency and produces the most "work" per unit (gallon or liter) of fuel. Although torque begins to drop off above that RPM, engines still produce more horsepower above that speed. That is because the number of firing pulses in a given time is greater, even though each one's force may be slightly less than at peak. At a certain RPM, which varies between engine designs, the engine's breathing efficiency drops off, until increasing RPM further will not offset the decrease in torque.

Some common measures of an engine's state of tune are horsepower per cubic inch and horsepower per liter. To compare similar engines' outputs, divide their displacement by their horsepower to get these numbers. Anything above 1 horsepower per cubic inch is generally considered to be in the realm of high performance.

Power is measured in many other units besides horsepower, including kilowatts, and most European Union countries now use the watt for measurement of power. With the implementation of the EU Directive 80/181/EEC on January 1, 2010, the use of horsepower in the EU is permitted



Eddy-current chassis dynamometers such as this one at Gale Banks Engineering require large ducted fans to properly cool the engine under full load.

only as a supplementary unit. One mechanical horsepower is considered to be equivalent to 745.7 watts.

With European vehicles, you may encounter DIN horsepower ratings, which are used in the German DIN standard 70020. (In Germany horsepower is commonly abbreviated as PS.) DIN horsepower is measured at the engine's output shaft, and is usually expressed in metric rather than mechanical horsepower. Metric horsepower is about 98.6 percent of mechanical horsepower, or 735.5 watts.

Another term you may see is "wheel horsepower," or WH. This is the power measured on a chassis dynamometer at the drive wheels. Power available at the drive wheels is generally 15 to 25 percent less than the engine's crankshaft ratings, due to transmission and final drive losses. This is why it is important when making comparisons to be sure that power ratings were measured at the same place.

Vehicle manufacturers provide

horsepower and torque figures measured at the crankshaft, not the wheels, and the higher numbers are more enticing in advertising. After a vehicle has been assembled, it is much easier to measure power output at the drive wheels. Therefore, "dyno" shops that test power output provide measurements of power at the wheels. However, manufacturers of aftermarket performance products may still list crankshaft horsepower.

Horsepower numbers you see quoted in advertisements usually indicate peak crankshaft horsepower. Peak horsepower at the crankshaft is nice for bragging rights but is not the power that reaches the ground. Since few trailer owners operate their engines at full throttle for very long, an engine that produces a broad, nearly flat torque-curve graph will provide more useful and pleasing power on the street than an engine that has a steep, jagged graph curve. You also won't have to shift as much. Peak power output

makes it more difficult to pull a heavy load, with constant shifting to stay in the narrow powerband.

The term "brake horsepower," or BHP, generally means that the horsepower was measured on a type of dynamometer that applies a brake or other friction device that resists the force the engine is producing and measures the result.

Until 1972, most American engines were rated using Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) standards J245 and J1995. This SAE gross method calculated output of a bare engine on a test stand without water pump or accessories but with free-flowing exhaust and optimum ignition timing. Since then, SAE standard J1349 net horsepower was published. It's still done on a test stand but with production-line timing, exhaust and accessories.

Dyno readings can vary considerably from one dynamometer to another, and even between runs with the same engine. Power output also varies greatly

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with changes in air density. As a rule of thumb, horsepower also drops off about 3 percent for each 1,000-foot increase in elevation. High temperatures, high humidity and low atmospheric pressure all reduce an engine's power output.

The SAE developed a system of factoring these variables to help compare readings taken in differing conditions. It's denoted as SAE corrected horsepower, and although it's not perfect, it does help when trying to compare readings taken in various situations.

Dynamometers

Two basic categories of dynamometers — engine and chassis — measure engine power. Engine dynos measure output directly at the crankshaft on a test stand, a method used by manufacturers and race shops but too costly and time consuming for completed vehicles.

Chassis dynos measure power at the drive wheels, after the vehicle is simply driven onto the rollers and tied

down. Chassis dynos are handy for quick testing but are subject to error due to wheel spin, clutch or transmission slippage, changes in engine and fluid temperatures, tire pressure and drivetrain mechanical condition, which can skew results between runs. This convenient method is what you will find at most aftermarket product manufacturers and dyno shops.

There are also three major types of measuring systems: inertia-drum, eddy-current and water-brake systems. The most common type of dynamometer in dyno shops is the inertia type. It calculates torque indirectly by measuring how quickly the drive wheels accelerate a large, heavy drum. Computer programs provided by the manufacturer of the dyno measure drum acceleration and RPM changes, and from this they calculate torque and horsepower at the drive wheels.

Constant-speed full-load dyno testing is the industry accepted method of measuring torque and horsepower.

The two basic types of continuous-load chassis dynos load the wheels with a power-absorption unit that uses either a water-brake or eddy-current power absorber.

With a load dyno, after everything is at operating temperature, horsepower and torque are measured by running at full-throttle, pausing in steps at RPM points from idle to redline by loading the engine to stabilize engine speed. Then these points can create horsepower and torque graph lines. The engine can also be accelerated as it would when driven, and measurements can be made as RPM increases steadily. Load dynos are also capable of acceleration tests, duplicating inertial resistance as a vehicle overcomes to accelerate, but unlike inertia dynos, load dynos can simulate aerodynamic loads.

Water-brake dynos typically use a turbine wheel submerged in water to provide a load for an engine. These are being phased out in favor of eddy-current dynamometers, which load an

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engine by using electricity to create magnetic resistance. As current is raised to the dyno's internal electromagnetic coils, the rotor shaft resists turning more and loads the engine. Torque load is measured with a strain gauge. Eddy-current dynos are known for accuracy and consistency. They allow steady-state loading (which is good for tuning and adjusting fuel mixtures and timing) or acceleration sweep testing similar to an inertia dyno.

The most common chassis dynamometer is the inertia dyno, which is the least expensive type. Inertia dynos measure only how long it takes to accelerate a large, heavy drum from one speed to another. They don't have a power absorber and therefore can't be run at a steady load.

A dyno's inertial value should equal the inertial value of the vehicle being tested, and its accuracy suffers from inertia value mismatch. For example, if a dyno has a drum with an inertia value of 2,500 pounds but the inertial value of a truck being tested is 7,000-plus pounds, the drum will accelerate unrealistically fast.

As a result, the rate of engine RPM increase will occur much faster than in real driving conditions. All rotating engine and drivetrain parts have inertia. The quicker the engine accelerates, the more power is absorbed accelerating these parts. Also, since engine speed increases more quickly than in real driving, turbo boost will be lower because the turbo is lagging behind due to its inertia. Therefore at any RPM, less power is measured.

Final Thoughts

Different dynos can, and will, give varying results for the same engine. Also, there will always be differences between runs, even on the same dyno with the same engine and with nothing changed, although these differences should be small. Using the same dyno to measure output before and after modifications is an effective way to determine if the changes you made were successful. The more consistent the runs are, the more reliable the results are for diagnosis and comparison. 🚛

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SCREWDRIVER, PLIERS

RV gas/electric absorption refrigerators are subject to improper installation and high-ambient temperatures that can significantly affect the cooling process. When outside temperatures soar to 100 degrees Fahrenheit and higher, refrigerators need all the help they can get. A simple solution is to add a Fridge-Fix by Smart RV Products, a compact box with three waterproof fans and a pleasant blue light.

RV refrigerators are not equipped with interior fans, so there's no circulation; it's not uncommon to see box temperatures higher than 45 degrees F — warm enough to lead to food spoilage. When refrigerators are overloaded with excess food, the temperature zones become far less efficient. When condensation builds up on the condenser fins, cooling can be reduced by up to 25 percent. Often, this excess moisture can turn to ice, and adequate cooling is further affected.

Ice buildup is a common problem that affects nearly half of the RV refrigerators on the market today. Ice and additional condensation buildup can be caused by worn-out door gaskets or any food that has been left uncovered. When the thermistor, the refrigerator's temperature sensor, becomes encapsulated in ice, a false temperature reading occurs, and airflow across



The Fridge-Fix is equipped with internally mounted LED lights, an added bonus for RV refrigerators that lack adequate interior lighting.

the cooling fins is diminished. The Fridge-Fix eliminates frost buildup and accurately regulates cooling with its increased airflow.

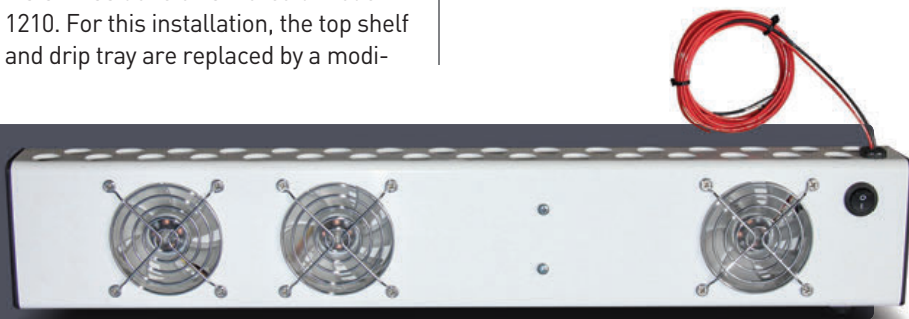
Fridge-Fix is guaranteed to shorten cool-down time and cool all zones by quietly circulating inside air 10 to 12 times per minute, yet it draws only .5 to .75 amps. The high-quality fans are designed to last a minimum of 50,000 hours of operation.

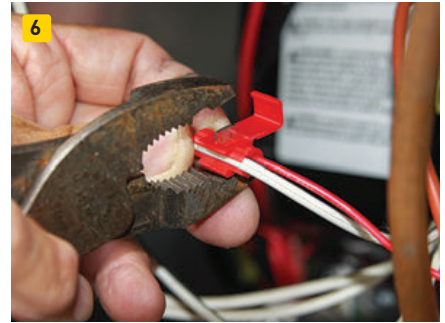
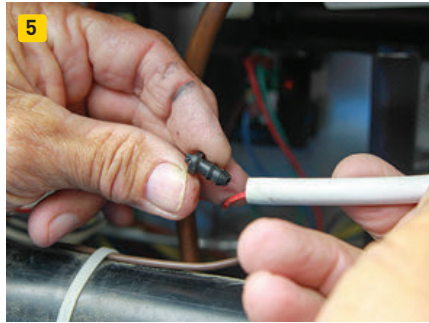
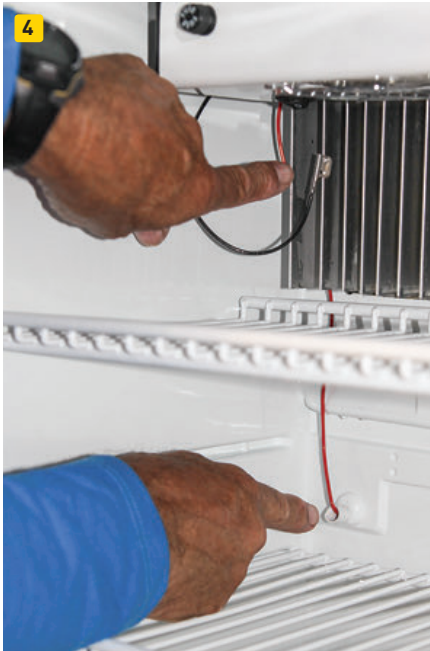
While Fridge-Fix offers applications to fit most refrigerator models, the install was done on a Norcold model 1210. For this installation, the top shelf and drip tray are replaced by a modi-

fied new version. Removal is easy, but make sure the condensation drain hose is not pulled out of place. In some models, like the Norcold 1210, the interior light will be in the way of mounting the Fridge-Fix. If this is the case, simply remove the lens and the two screws holding the light fixture in place; the light will be relocated later in the installation.

There are no holes to drill; the Fridge-Fix mounts securely using hook-and-loop fasteners. Clean the area where the hook-and-loop material will

KEEP YOUR COOL » The Fridge-Fix kit comes fully assembled and installs easily using hook-and-loop tape. Smart RV Products offers applications to fit most RV refrigerator models.





1) Determine the location for the Fridge-Fix assembly. Remove the refrigerator's interior light if it interferes with the fan assembly installation. 2) Clean the areas using a mild household cleaner and finish with an alcohol wipe where the Fridge-Fix will attach with hook-and-loop. 3) After peeling the hook-and-loop backing, press into place for 10 seconds to ensure a complete adhesion. 4) Attach the ground clip to one of the refrigerator's interior evaporator fins and route the red wire through the condensation drain tube. 5) Remove the rubber plug from the condensation drain tube at the rear of the refrigerator and pull the red wire through. 6) Using the supplied Scotchlok, attach the red wire to the refrigerator's incoming positive wire.

contact the surface of the refrigerator when the unit is in place, dry thoroughly and wipe with alcohol. Peel the backing from the hook-and-loop and push the box in place; hold for 10 seconds with firm pressure. Be certain the Fridge-Fix is tight against the cooling fins.

Attach the ground clip to any of the metal fins, which may require a little help from a small hammer. The interior light is then mounted to the bottom of the Fridge-Fix with two Phillips screws that are already in place. In this model refrigerator, we decided to run the red positive wire through the condensation drain tube. Some refrigerators will have constant 12-volt DC power to the light assembly for even easier installation.

Remove the outside access panel to expose the rear of the refrigerator and remove the plastic plug from the end of the condensation drain tube. Feed the wire down through the drain tube and attach to the positive wire running to the

refrigerator's circuit board with the supplied Scotchlok connector. Cut a small slot in the drain tube and reinstall the supplied drip tray. Attach the drain tube to the supplied drip tray and use a small amount of sealant or putty tape to prevent possible leaking of condensation. Reinstall the top shelf and locking rails.

Total installation time runs around 60 minutes. Since the shelves have to be cleaned and the refrigerator turned off before the installation of the Fridge-Fix, it's great time to clean out your RV's refrigerator.

We began testing the new fan in an ambient temperature of 68 degrees F. The inside of the refrigerator was allowed to reach the same temperature as the interior of the fifth-wheel. After installation of the Fridge-Fix, the refrigerator was set with the thermostat on No. 2 with the door closed and never opened during the cool-down period. Before the install, the cool-down from 68 to 38 degrees F took four hours and 40 minutes. We were able to shave 22

minutes off that cool-down time after the installation of the Fridge-Fix.

When opening the door for the first time, we could feel the circulation of cold air from the three very efficient fans. There is no question that the Fridge-Fix will save electricity and LP-gas with its highly efficient air-circulation system.

Fridge-Fix fits most model refrigerators but not all. It is important to be certain of the correct size and model of the refrigerator before ordering the Fridge-Fix. The Smart RV Products website has good references for choosing the right model; email the company for answers to specific questions (have the refrigerator model number handy).

Prices range from \$64.95 to \$109.95. The Fridge-Fix is backed by a two-year, no-questions-asked warranty. 🚚

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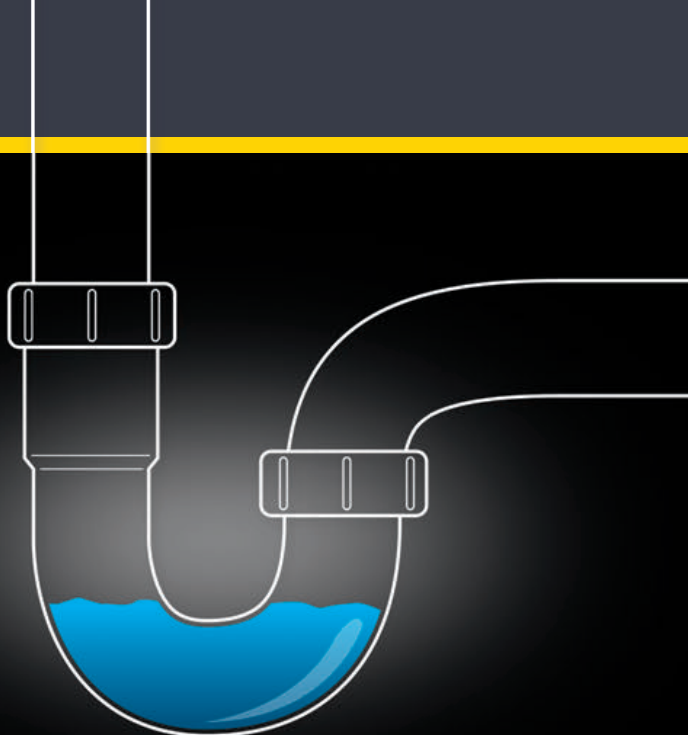
WINTERIZING TIP

In your December 2013 RV Clinic response to Bert Farnell ("Water Heater and Antifreeze"), you mentioned using air to blow out the water system rather than antifreeze. This is a good way to do it, but one must remember that something has to be done to protect the P-traps under the sinks and tub. If you can't blow out the drain system when winterizing, I suggest putting some windshield-washer fluid down the drains. Most of the stuff on the market is good to minus-20 degrees and seems to work fine with no damage to the drain pipes.

Gregg Womeldorf, Franktown, Colorado

In the December 2013 RV Clinic, Bert Farnell asked about blowing out the RV water system versus using antifreeze. You responded that there was no advantage either way, to which I agree, but if you use the blowout method, don't forget to add a little antifreeze down each drain in the RV, otherwise the P-traps may freeze and split, as I learned the hard way.

George Nachtsheim, Littleton, Colorado



It's that time of year again when many an RVer's thoughts turn to winterizing for the off-season. The tips on the left are similar to many we've received from our readers. Thanks for the suggestions, guys. — **Jeff Johnston**

TRAILER AXLE ALIGNMENT

Q I have a 2008 24-foot Palomino Puma travel trailer. After about five years and 4,000 miles, I noticed that the right-front tire had some excess wear on the outside tread, so I replaced all four with eight-ply radials. With the new radials mounted, we made a 4,500-mile trip out West. On our return home, I noticed the right-front tire was starting to show a little more wear than the rest of the tires.

I've read a number of times in RV Clinic about axles being out of line, so I did a little inspection of my own. I measured the distance between the inside axle hangers on the left and the same on the right. I found that the left side measured 28 inches and the right was 28¼ inches, which tells me that

the right-front tire is ¼ inch forward of the left. I'm thinking that ¼ inch isn't bad, but when you multiply the distance between the left and right tire, about 7½ feet, that's a lot, which, to me, is causing the outside tire wear on the right front.

Am I on the right track here, or am I missing something?

Terry Curtis, Rochester, Minnesota

A Yes, you're on the right track. That ¼-inch misalignment doesn't seem like much, but it's enough that the tires on both axles are trying to follow slightly different paths on the road. That means they're always scrubbing the pavement a bit instead of just rolling over it, and it doesn't take much to cause unusual or excessive tire wear. Take the trailer to a shop that works on trailer alignment,

and they should be able to set it back to spec. While you're at it, have your trailer tires balanced, because it's a good idea on a trailer, just as it's important on the tow vehicle. — **J.J.**

TRAILER AXLE ALIGNMENT, PART 2

Q I had the same axle-alignment problem as Bryce Chapman (RV Clinic, July 2014) with my Trail Vision travel trailer with dual axles, and it is a very easy thing to resolve once you find the right people. I had this fixed by a truck-and-trailer shop, rather than an RV shop.

The axles are most likely secured in position with locating pins or studs, so it is impossible to move the axles on the leaf springs to modify the parallelism. I had ⅜-inch more center-to-center on the passenger-side axle ends. The shop added one leaf spring on each axle on this same side, and we ended up with perfect parallelism. The cost was \$320 two years ago in Canada.

I suspect this situation is created by an uneven weight distribution by the

THE TECH TEAM



KEN FREUND: Ken is a former ASE Certified Master Technician, service manager and shop owner who has authored numerous books on automotive repair.



JEFF JOHNSTON: Jeff served as technical director of *Trailer Life* for 18 years and has been an RV enthusiast, mechanic and writer since he could hold a wrench.

manufacturer, causing the suspension to settle more on the heavier side.

Michel Pasquier, Orford, Quebec

A You're on track with the settling alignment, Michel. As a leaf spring is loaded, its arch flattens out, and that means the eye-to-eye distance increases. One eye is fixed to the frame, and the other "floats" via the shackle. As the spring flattens, the axle will move a little away from the fixed end, resulting in a change in center-to-center axle measurement since both fixed spring mounts are usually at the outside ends of the spring pair. Adding the extra leaf to the spring helps it maintain its design arc, and that would help keep the axle-to-axle distance more consistent. We appreciate your input. — **J.J.**

SPRING HANGER ADJUSTMENT

Q I have a 2007 Komfort TrailBlazer 25-foot fifth-wheel. My last truck was a 1999 Dodge 4x4. I recently bought

a 2014 Ram 4x4 Cummins diesel that sits higher. When I tow with the new truck, the trailer slants to the rear quite a bit. The rear-bumper-to-ground clearance is about 16 inches, and trailer-to-bed-rail clearance is about 8 inches at the tailgate. The trailer axles are already under the springs, so flipping the axles is not an option. The springs are mounted in the shackles, and the center pivot in the upper holes. It looks like I can adjust the springs. Is that the best option?

Steve Minson, via email

A If there is another adjustment hole in the spring shackles, Steve, moving the leaf spring to a lower hole will raise the trailer chassis a bit. That small degree of lift won't hurt the handling. If you need even more lift, you may need to seek the advice of a professional suspension shop, because they can modify the frame by spacing the leaf spring hangers even lower and do so safely. — **J.J.**

LT TIRES VERSUS ST TRAILER TIRES

Q My trailer is a 2008 Everest 320T 32-footer with three slideouts. The total weight is 13,000 pounds. At this time it is riding on ST235/80R16 Carlisle Radial Trail trailer tires. Can I get truck tires, since they should last a year or two longer than trailer tires and are not rated for 65 MPH as trailer tires are? Would I be in trouble if I did go with LT tires?

Pablo J. Garza, via email

A Many RVers have switched to light truck LT tires because they had multiple failures with Chinese tires and were unable to find ST trailer tires that weren't made in China. LT tires have somewhat different load capacities than ST tires and come in several load ratings (E, F, etc.), which replaced the old ply ratings. Tire pressures should be set based on actual weight on the tires. If you have individual axle weights (apart from hitch weight), I highly recommend you weigh the axles on a truck scale before buying tires. The Tire Rack website (www.tirerack.com) has helpful information including tire weight ratings and inflation guides. Tire manufacturers such as Goodyear and Michelin also offer load/inflation tables and other useful information that may help. Make sure the wheels are rated for the new tires. — **Ken Freund**

TOW VEHICLE SUSPENSION

Q Last year we special ordered a 2013 GMC Yukon XL 2500 to tow our 26-foot 1998 SunnyBrook travel trailer. This is our fourth Suburban (I still call the Yukon a Suburban) in the last 30 years, and I am very disappointed in the ride and handling. I have no problem with a tow vehicle that rides like a truck — after all, that is what it is. However, this vehicle has an extra bounce or two, and to me it rides more like a cushy sedan (when not towing) than a truck. I've noticed that my Buick LaCrosse takes speed bumps and dips much better than our Suburban.

The bouncing is noticeable whether or not we are towing. However, when towing, it is magnified by the trailer re-

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acting to the tow vehicle. It is particularly noticeable when crossing bridge separations on freeways and on uneven pavement. Our other Suburbans never reacted to bridge separations in the same manner. I towed our trailer with our 1999 Suburban across the country twice but would be very hesitant to take such a long trip with the 2013.

We have taken it back to the GMC dealer twice. The service manager said my only option would be to install heavier-duty shocks or adjustable shocks. It just seems to me that we should not have to go to this extreme with a new vehicle that is supposedly built for towing travel trailers.

The vehicle also rocks from side to side when turning into driveways or on uneven pavement. The service manager acknowledged this problem and said he was surprised to find out there is no anti-sway bar on this vehicle. Perhaps this is why I see very few 2500 Suburbans on the road.

Bill Thackery, Fullerton, California

A Vehicle manufacturers have tried to make trucks ride more like cars over the years, as this is what most owners and potential buyers seem to want. Also, the majority of mileage accrued is without towing a heavy trailer. Manufacturers watch every penny and typically skimp on things like shock absorbers, which you don't see, in favor of bling and things people notice in the showroom.

Many folks find that aftermarket replacement shocks and anti-sway bars improve ride quality substantially. ADDCO, Roadmaster and Hellwig make anti-sway-bar kits for your truck, while companies such as Bilstein, Monroe, Rancho and others make shocks. All should show an improvement, but I like the Rancho RS9000XL shocks with nine different damping settings. — **K.F.**

TRAILER BOUNCE AND SWAY

Q I read *Trailer Life* and notice a common theme that trailer bounce and sway are experienced quite frequently. I, too, had that problem when I began towing. I tried a Reese weight-distrib-

uting hitch, along with a sway bar, and although it helped, it never really quite solved the problem. I had purchased a Ford F-150 4x4 with the off-road package and thought the suspension was stiff enough to handle the problem, but it wasn't. I was towing an ultralight trailer and was well within the weight limits and, in fact, had plenty of reserve.

What I did find, however, after a lot of research, was my truck came equipped with passenger-car-rated tires with only two-ply sidewalls, which did not handle dips in the roads when towing. I found that the tires were bottoming out, and it had nothing to do with the suspension, etc. I switched tires to a Cooper 10-ply truck tire, and the problem was solved. Of course, the ride was much stiffer, but my safety was no longer compromised, and I felt in complete control of my vehicle. I also believe the added tire pressure that these tires can handle helped tremendously. I hope this helps anyone new to trailering.

Jim Nice, Palmyra, Pennsylvania

A The tires actually act as part of the suspension and soak up a lot of minor imperfections in the road surface. While three-quarter- and 1-ton trucks use much heavier, stiffer LT tires, the half-ton pickups often come with passenger-car-type tires, which provide a softer ride but are subject to more flexing. Owners of these trucks who are having a similar problem should consider this, if raising inflation to the pressure shown on the sidewalls doesn't solve it. Just be sure that the increased inflation pressure of the heavy-duty tires doesn't exceed the pressure rating of the wheels, and you should be fine. — **K.F.**

TRAVEL TRAILER BOUNCE

Q My husband and I own a 2011 Flagstaff ultralight travel trailer with two slides. Should our trailer bounce when we walk in after leveling?

Mackie Hagood, via email

A Stabilizing jacks provide some vertical and lateral support but do not completely control or (continued on page 69)

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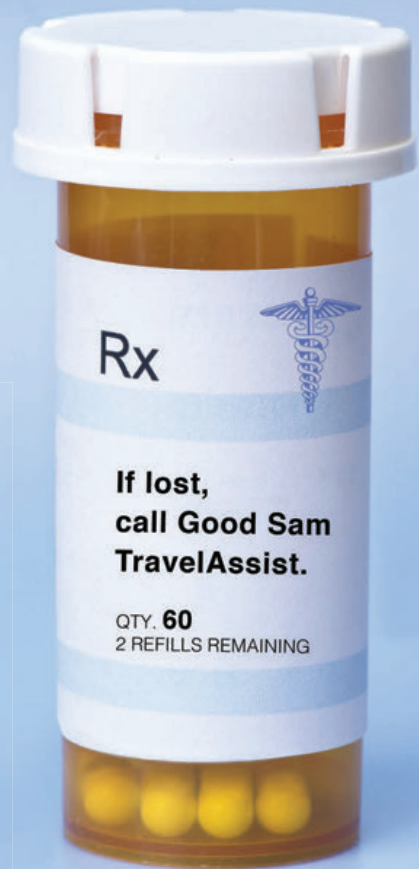


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(continued from page 65) solidify horizontal movement or floor flexing. Even leveled and with the stabilizing jacks down, most of the trailer weight is still resting on its suspension and tires, so as you move around inside, the trailer will still shift around a bit. Assuming the problem is swaying, not floor flexing, I have tested a product called Steadyfast (866-498-8754, www.steadyfast.com), which holds the trailer more solidly when it is parked and leveled. It takes only a minute to set up and works as claimed.

SLIDEOUT...WON'T

Q I am having trouble with my RV's slideout. I had just brought the room back in and moved my RV. When I got to my next destination, the slide would not extend. It makes a clicking noise at the switch, and nothing happens after that. The same thing happened to the steps the day before. I retracted the steps, moved the RV, and when I stopped and opened the door, they would not extend. We got underneath, pulled a connector apart and snapped it back together, and the steps worked. I'm wondering if this is a coincidence. There is not much on troubleshooting in the slideout manual.
Lori Bertolucci, via email

A Both of these items use electric motors, which draw a fair amount of current. This requires that the electrical connections be clean, tight and corrosion-free. Voltage going to the motor should not drop precipitously under load. I would check the battery terminals first. If problems continue, measure the voltage at the battery when there is no load and when the slideout motor is activated. A fully charged battery should read about 12.6 volts; it shouldn't drop below about 10 volts under heavy load. Then trace the source of the voltage drop. — **K.F.**

HAVE A QUESTION? » Email our experts at: RVclinic@trailerlife.com or write to: RV Clinic, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036. No phone calls, please.

READER SERVICE

ADVERTISERS' INDEX

RS#	ADVERTISER	PAGE#
101	B&W Trailer Hitches	7
102	BD Brake	42
103	Blue Ox	28
104	Bully Dog Technologies	49
	Camping World	35-37
	Classifieds	72-73
110	Coast Distribution	29
105	Cypress Trail	27
126	DISH Network	13
106	Desert Gardens RV Park	21
107	Firestone Industrial Products Co.	59
108	GMC Sierra	2
	Good Sam RV Loans	55
	Good Sam Roadside Assistance	17
	Good Sam Travel Assist.	68
	Good Sam Visa	53
109	Hensley Manufacturing Inc.	48
111	Highland Ridge RV, Inc.	8
116	iBall Hitch Cam	27
112	Jayco, Inc.	5
113	KZ Inc.	76
118	Monochem	65
114	New Horizons RV Corp.	33
115	Northwood Mfg.	57
117	Progressive Insurance	75
	RV Marketplace	66-67
119	Sea Eagle	33
120	SpaceCraft Mfg.	59
	The Rally	62
121	Thetford Corporation	22-23
122	Titan Fuel Tanks	48
123	Torklift International	58
124	Transfer Flow Inc.	64
125	Yamaha Outdoor Power	43

EDITORIAL PRODUCT INDEX

RS#	ADVERTISER	PAGE#
130	Dirt Devil CV1500	54
134	Forest River Wolf Pup 17RP	44
135	Fox Mountain 325RKS	38
133	Hellwig Products Big Wig	54
131	K&N Blackhawk	54
132	Truck System Technologies	54

FREE TRAVEL INFORMATION

RS#	ADVERTISER	PAGE#
140	Alaska and Canada's Yukon	70
141	Alaska Marine Highway System	70
143	Arkansas State Parks	70
145	DeGray Resort State Park, AR	70
146	Florida Keys	70
147	Florida State Parks	70
154	Glacier National Park, MT	70
144	Hot Springs National Park, AR	70
150	Idaho RV Campgrounds	70
149	Idaho Travel Council	70
148	Lake Harris RV Resort, FL	70
152	Lake Of The Ozarks, MO	70
142	North To Alaska	70
155	Ohio State Parks	70
151	Visit Missouri	70
153	Visit Montana	70
157	Wyoming Tourism	70
158	Yellowhead Highway, Canada	70
156	Yellowstone County, WY	70

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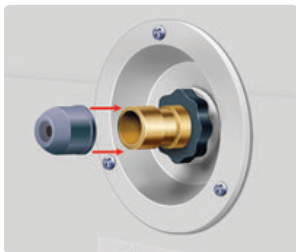
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Water Hookups After Dark

Trying to hook up the water connection when arriving at a campsite in the dark can be difficult, so we came up with an easier way. We use brass quick connectors that are available at any hardware store for about \$5. While traveling, we leave the male connector on the trailer's city water inlet with a rubber cap covering the end (shown above). When we arrive at our site, many times after dark, we remove the rubber cap and snap on the female quick-connect hose (right). We keep a second male quick connect on the opposite end of the hose, which makes it easy to roll up the hose and connect the ends for travel with no leaking. The additional male quick connect on the hose is removed to connect to the campground water supply. The rubber cap is put on this additional male connector and placed in a drawer until ready to disconnect.

Melissa Riley, Seneca, South Carolina



Cut Down Sunlight Glare

We have three skylights in our RV. As much as we like the sunlight shining in to brighten things, the one over the kitchen is too harsh. My wife asked if I could do something to cut down the glare. In an earlier RV we had, I painted one of the skylights. That worked OK, but I thought this time I would try some shade material. The material can be found in the garden section at Lowe's, Home Depot and Orchard Supply Hardware. I cut the material to fit and then glued on two layers to the inside of the skylight using Elmer's multipurpose spray adhesive. It does a great job cutting down the glare.

William Schmall, Coarsegold, California

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A Simple Life

The Oak Lane Hutterites, a self-sustained religious colony, live a communal lifestyle that is orderly and harmonious



Traveling the back roads, we often see a black buggy with an orange safety triangle on the back. Inside, behind a horse that is at a comfortable trot, sits a bearded gent wearing a wide-brimmed hat. A good guess would be that he's from a nearby Amish settlement, a sect whose lifestyle is based on a strict religious doctrine.

A similar but smaller sect is the Hutterites. Like the Amish, they dress uniformly: long dresses for the women, long-sleeve shirts and pants with suspenders for the men. No buggies, though; they drive cars and trucks and operate the full range of mechanized farm equipment.

Both groups live a communal lifestyle that is agrarian, orderly, harmonious, disciplined and totally socialistic — one most of us couldn't handle.

I have visited the Amish as a tourist but never as a journalist. The Amish don't like having their pictures taken, and that's what I do, along with asking personal questions. And if I made a professional visit, I wanted to get it right.

During a recent stay in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, I was invited to the Oak Lane Hutterite colony, 50 miles west of the city in Alexandria. Accompanied by four others, off I went. Cameras were not a problem, and probing questions weren't either, so it made for a rewarding day. Hutterites are bilingual; they speak German among themselves.

Our guide was John Wipf. His title is Boss. John carries a two-way radio that's always on. I would compare his authority here to that of a captain of a Navy ship, but more so. He makes decisions daily — business as well as social — that affect everyone. I saw it when we had lunch in the dining hall (for ages 15 and up): no one leaves their table until John excuses them. Men eat on one side of the room, women on the other.

When we arrived at the colony, we were to meet John by the greenhouse. It contained huge vines that produce tomatoes year-round. This community of 126 people produces all their own food, with a few exceptions — one being eggs. There are no chickens, but they raise thousands



(Top) John Wipf carries the title of Boss at the Oak Lane Hutterite colony in South Dakota. (Above) Women clean up after preparing lunch, served buffet-style, at the communal dining room where residents, ages 15 and older, have their meals.

of turkeys. And they raise cows, hogs and bees, along with whatever vegetables grow here in the summer.

Five boys came by the greenhouse in a pickup. One jumped out and ran to an off-road 4x4 near us and drove off with it. He showed no curiosity or interest in us; it was as if we weren't there. That set the tone for much of my visit. I smiled at some of the girls working in the dining hall, but they preferred not to make eye contact.

We visited the kindergarten with children ages 2½ to five. The kids spend their days here and go home at night. The teacher said, "Here they learn sharing."

Public school teachers from outside the colony come daily to teach kids five to 15. They eat meals in their own dining hall. John made the point that competition is the worst thing they can have in their community. I am sure the school strives for excellence, but apparently not exceptionalism. He said they don't want anybody to stand out.

Thirty-five men work the farm from 5 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. They rarely use outside help. The women and girls do the cooking, canning, baking, cleaning, sewing and mothering. It appeared that most women preferred to dry their laundry outdoors. Clothes hung on lines — shirts lined up in a row, dresses grouped by length, nothing out of order. For me, that defined the Oak Lane Hutterite colony: everything in its place.

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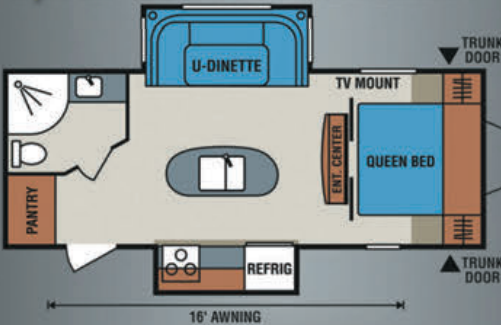
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