

THE BIG PICTURE: UPGRADING YOUR MOTORHOME'S TV

MotorHome

Travel, Tech, Lifestyle – For the RV Enthusiast

SENSORY OVERLOAD

Marathon's Luxurious H3-45

MOTORHOME
SAFETY
DETECTORS
PG. 46



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Utah's Salt Lake Temple was built over a 40-year period from 1853-1893 (see page 16).



From a satellite antenna that's compatible with all major service providers to a new portable generator to power your motorhome's gadgets, this month's Equip has your technology needs covered. **Pg. 14**

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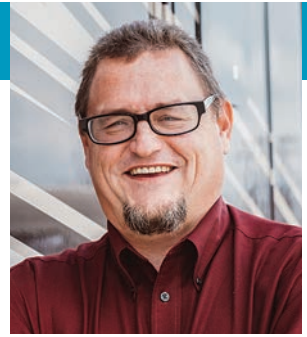
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ON THE COVER

With an impressive profile, high-line appointments and pleasant road manners, Marathon's H3-45 motor coach turns heads wherever it goes (see test on page 28). Photo courtesy Marathon Coach.



By Kristopher Bunker

State of the Art

Remember when we all went RVing to escape the stress of everyday life, to get in touch with our primal selves and to leave anything that plugged in behind (except for our trusty motorhomes, that is)? When I was young and went on family road trips, headphones, for instance, were strictly taboo. At the time, I thought such restrictions were absurd; if I wanted to spend my vacation listening to music, and it wasn't hurting anybody, why couldn't I?

With the benefit of 20/20 hindsight, I now see the point my parents were making: How could I truly appreciate the family togetherness if I was blaring music into my ears, oblivious to the conversations about everyday life, our destination and, perhaps most importantly, enjoying that exact moment in time? To that I say, sorry Mom and Dad.

Ditching modern technology for a simpler life, if only for the duration of a trip, is one way to reconnect with family and loved ones. (Many motorhome owners still prefer low-tech getaways, free from smartphones, video-game consoles and Wi-Fi.) But it's not the only way.

In fact, these days I feel almost compelled to take advantage of modern conveniences as often as I can, at work as well as while at play. Smart devices are a part of everyday life; who doesn't want music, movies, information and gaming in the palm of their hand? Stargazing? There's an app for that. Birdwatching? There's an app for that. Where should we camp next? You

guessed it, there's an app for that.

And, with so much new technology emerging seemingly every day, it's only natural that it would take root in the RV lifestyle we all love. Even apart from the obvious cellphones and laptops, comfort and convenience while on the road, in camp or even while setting up has never been easier to achieve.

This month's "Equip" department is stuffed with technological wonders, from a cellphone signal booster to a satellite antenna to a wireless control module for motorhome components to a portable generator for powering motorhome devices. Turn to page 14 to read more.

If you're looking to upgrade your motorhome's TV from the old tube-type display to the latest in LED technology, "Get the Picture," beginning on page 35, shows what's involved in terms of installing the proper equipment and making it look better than ever.

“Comfort and convenience while on the road, in camp or even while setting up has never been easier to achieve.”

For a study in electronic (and residential) opulence, "Traveling in High Style," beginning on page 28, puts the luxurious Marathon H3-45 motor coach through the testing paces. And although the lofty price tag may be out of many of our leagues, the electronic gadgets contained within the Marathon (tablet-style controls, premium audio/video equipment and top-shelf appliances, to name a few) offer a glimpse into what is available to the rest of us; granted, most likely on a lesser scale.

We've even featured an install of an exhaust fan that's "smarter" than its predecessors. "Fresh Air," beginning on page 40, features the MAXXFAN Deluxe exhaust fan, which includes a two-way digital remote control, integrated thermostat and rain-sensing technology. Yes, even motorhome fans get the wireless treatment these days.

Now, when I'm on road trips with my own children, the very sight of headphones brings the memories flooding back. But, I have a different approach from my parents: *Not now, kids, there will be plenty of time to immerse yourself in modern technology — and gadgetry — when you're older.* For a pastime that is primarily associated with getting away from it all, RVing sure can be rather state-of-the-art. **M**

Contributors | April



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



Chris Hemer has been an RV journalist and photographer for nearly 20 years. An avid outdoor enthusiast, he enjoys camping, motorcycle riding, mountain biking and hiking.



Mary Zalmanek, and her husband, Jim, enjoy traveling in their 2019 Winnebago Vista LX when they are not at home in Colorado. Mary is the author of *The Art of the Spark* (www.adventuresoftheheart.com).

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Do you own a motorhome (or know of one) that has a large window on the passenger side that allows a great view of your patio area? And, would you consider window size and placement an important part of the selection process?

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



Howdy, Neighbor!

Most definitely, window placement is an important consideration when purchasing a motorhome. We have a 2016 Newmar Dutch Star 4002 that has the dining area on the passenger side. Our previous model (a 2013 Tiffin 36LA) had the traditional dining on the driver's side. We were always looking at someone's patio, eating habits, cars and toys. And, when our neighbors were outside, they could then see into our unit. I vowed that our next motorhome would have the opposite floorplan. Also, this model has the headboard slideout on the passenger side so early risers or late-night neighbors are not an issue with this configuration. Now we are "happy campers," able to look out our window and see our own patio.

John Ljepava | Vail, Arizona

Think Practical

Motorhomes with a large window on the passenger side usually have the dinette on that side. This generally means kitchen items such as the sink, oven, stovetop, etc., are on the driver's side and thereby usually in a slide. Having worked in the RV service industry, I've seen enough problems with water and drain lines, and propane lines in slideouts. So, while it would be nice, I'll live without a large window on the passenger side.

Ken Martin | Eugene, Oregon

Window Shopping

Yes, I think you should have large windows on the patio/awning or passenger side of your motorhome. The patio side is your RV site and you should be able to enjoy looking out over your site. We have a 2007 Itasca SunCruiser with three large, almost

floor-to-ceiling windows looking over the patio/awning side. When we go to RV shows, we don't see enough units with a large window overlooking the patio. My wife and I just fell in love with the SunCruiser as soon as we walked in and saw the open space and big windows. For us, having the large window on the passenger side was important in our selection process.

**Duane and Barb Dickens
Whitewater, Wisconsin**

Blinds Wide Open

Our first motorhome was a new 2014 Winnebago Journey 36M. It had a large window over the dining room table where we loved to sit and eat our meals, and look outdoors. Unfortunately, it was on the driver's side of the coach.

After three years, we traded in the 36M for a 2017 Winnebago Journey 40J. It has a large window over the dining room

Featured Letter

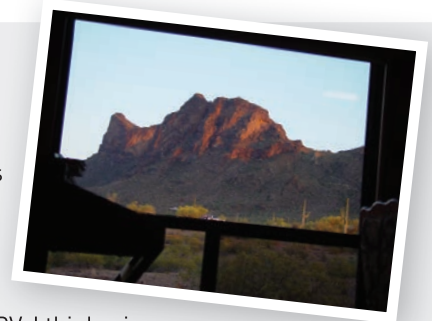
Eyes on the Prize

We own a 2006 Holiday Rambler Endeavor 40PAQ that has two large windows in the passenger-side living room slideout. This slide contains the table and a recliner (which we replaced with a desk). We enjoy the light and brightness the windows bring to the galley/living room area. Whether we're driving or parked, the living room seems to be more open. The windows can provide for a fantastic view, as seen in this photo of Picacho Peak at sunset.

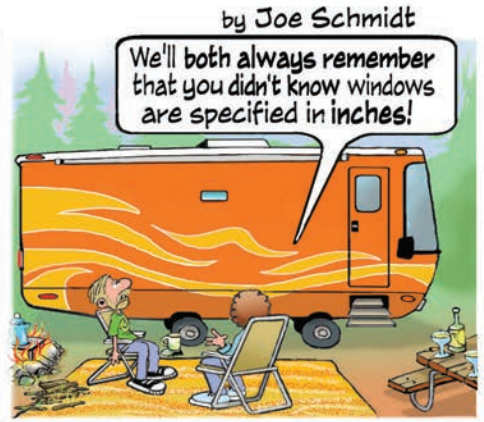
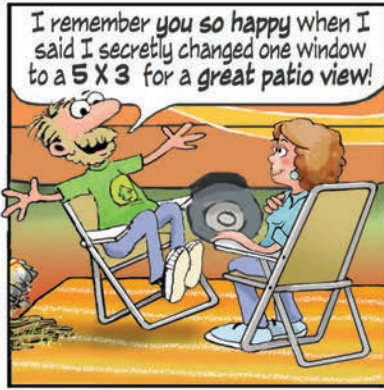
On the negative side is the amount of storage we sacrifice for the view. Since the windows take up the entire

wall of the slide, there is no room for cabinets above or below the windows. And the view can be a problem if all we can see is the side of the neighbor's RV. I think, since we rarely boondock, we would prefer an RV with more storage and less view.

Michael and Mary Anne Melby | Casa Grande, Arizona



Visual Letter to the Editor



by Joe Schmidt



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table on the passenger's side. This was one of the major items on our list when selecting our new coach. It's so much nicer to overlook our own patio. Also, our large patio awning provides total shade for the window, so we don't have to pull down the blinds while we eat.

Chuck Smalley | Clearwater, Florida

50 Horses Short

I handle media relations for Freightliner Custom Chassis Corp (FCCC). In the "Chassis Connection" feature in January, the author declares that, in reference to the XC product line, "larger coaches on this platform may feel underpowered, as the maximum horsepower rating is 400." This is incorrect — the XCL 450 from FCCC offers a rating of up to 450 hp, as evidenced by this link <https://www.fcccrv.com/chassis/xc>.

Kevin Erb, Director of PR — Ferguson Advertising | Fort Wayne, Indiana

Missing M2

The "Chassis Connection" article was a great intro to the chassis that are available. While I know it is impossible to cover everything, I felt like there was a huge void in leaving out the M2 chassis from Freightliner. The S2RV is a relatively new player in the RV field and one that Dynamax "passed" on, for the very reason you cited, lack of power. We used to build on the M2-28K chassis (the truck version of the S2RV), but the 340 hp and 700 lb-ft of torque were under-powered on grades. While the S2RV bumped those numbers up, we didn't feel like it was enough. Instead, we opted to drop the 28K and only build on the M2-106, 350-hp and 1,000 lb-ft

of torque and the M2-112, 450-hp, 1,250 lb-ft of torque to make sure the driving experience was not a disappointment.

Brian Clemens, General Manager — Dynamax Corp. | Elkhart, Indiana

Historical Achievement

After reading the article about Mount Whitney (Trek — “Turning Around”) in the January issue, I wanted to share a story about my family. My great-great-grandfather’s daughter, Mary Jain (Plummer) Allen traveled from Plummerville, Arkansas, to California with a wagon train in 1852. Her son, Samuel Plummer Allen (pictured), along with two other men, led the first two women to the summit of Mount Whitney in 1883. The party consisted of Samuel Plummer Allen, Jack Jameson, Ella Jameson, Ella Roper and Jeff Carver, all of who were from Kern County, California. A record of the ascent was left in a baking powder can.



David Plummer | via email

Age Appropriate

Regarding “Turning Around,” by Chuck Graham: REALLY? Most of your readership is probably 50-plus years old, and we would never dream of hiking a 14,000-foot peak in the summertime, let alone the winter. In winter, a lot of your readers are probably basking in the sun in Florida, Texas or Southern California, not dreaming of trudging through chest-high snow. Remember, your magazine is not “Backpacker,” which probably has a large readership of folks under 40 years old. The only relatable aspect of the article was the beautiful picture. If you really wanted to include a new column in *MotorHome*, how about the adventures and travels of a person/couple that regularly boondocks? Not all of your readers own 35-plus-foot Class A’s or C’s, and there are those of us who regularly choose to camp where we cannot plug-in!

Patrick Braun | Clarkston, Washington

Residential Dump Station

We would like to install an RV dump station at our home. We think it would be really convenient, and would probably save us some time and money. Do any of your readers have experience with this and could they offer some suggestions and/or things to avoid? Any information would be quite helpful to us.

Pat Korloch | Via email M

Question of the Month

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

Send your comments to:

MotorHome, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036; or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com

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ESCAPE

Jenny Lake

Grand Teton National Park's iconic Jenny Lake sits at the base of the majestic Teton Range in Wyoming. In addition to reflecting the dramatic mountains, the lake is the pathway to Cascade Canyon and Hidden Falls. Following a stop at the visitor center, take the boat shuttle (service available mid-May-September 30) across the lake to the base of Teewinot Mountain. From there, take one of the well-signed hiking trails for great views. Reservations are not taken for the boat shuttle, but the shuttles leave every 10-15 minutes, so there's usually not a long wait (visit <https://jennylakeboating.com> for fees). Camping is available at six campgrounds in Grand Teton National Park. Amenities range from electric-only sites at Gros Ventre Campground (a dump station is on-site) to 103 full-hookup sites at Colter Bay RV Park. Campgrounds are open seasonally. The Jenny Lake area is vehicle-accessible from May 1-October 31. — *Morey Edelman*

For more information: 307-739-3399, www.nps.gov/grte



By Chuck Graham

Lost and Found

We had options, so I tried something new. During a three-week rafting trip in northeast Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, I broke away from friends (Truman Boren, 57; Chris Van Hook, 61; and Carl Donohue, 51) and our four-person raft and blew up a one-man pack raft to paddle down a section of the Canning River. After rafting down three rivers, our goal was to reach the Arctic Ocean.

While charging down Class III rapids, I veered off to the east over a gravel bar and before I knew it, I was separated from the rest of my group. They remained in the four-person raft and I was off on my own and lost. The next thing I knew, I was on the far east side of the river. There was only one thing to do, at every opportunity I took every left channel in hopes of paddling back to them. However, it was the middle of summer when it doesn't get dark in the Arctic, so what could possibly go wrong?

Of course, I had my camera gear while attempting to reunite with my party, so I wasn't giving up on wildlife sightings. We had already seen Dall sheep, caribou, Arctic fox and terns. What would be next from the seat of my pack raft? Sure enough, a bull moose appeared in the dense willows on a large gravel bar. I made my approach as its antlers annihilated the spindly willows. When I touched down on the cobble, the moose made like a ghost and disappeared for good.

After three hours I reconnected with the west side of the Canning. Aiming for an advantageous bluff with a convenient overlook, it was my hope I would relocate my friends. My worry was that they would have

gotten ahead of me and we would miss each other, compounding the situation.

I pulled into a shallow, muddy eddy frequented by caribou and musk oxen, and beached my pack raft. Immediately, mosquitoes swarmed me. Wearing nothing but a pair of shorts, a beanie and a personal flotation device, I was literally covered in Alaska's state bird. I scrambled up the muddy embankment about 60 feet high wiping off my arms of mosquitoes, which transformed into a black gunk.

Fortunately, I had my binoculars with me. Scanning back up river toward the North Slope of the mighty Brooks Range, I spotted the four-person raft and my friends about a half-mile off. Despite being cloaked in mosquitoes, relief swept over me. I side-slipped back down the steep embankment, leapt over my pack raft and dove into the 38-degree water. After the initial shock and brain freeze, I felt rejuvenated and fortunate to be back in the company of friends.

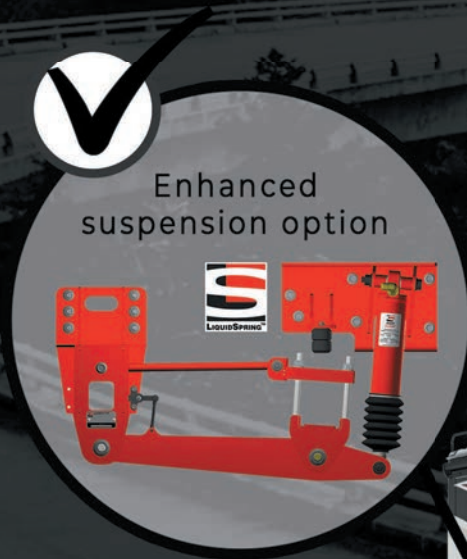
They were all in agreement and were happy it was I who had veered off course and got lost and not them. I was too, but never said anything about it. Alaska can make a person feel small, especially in North America's largest wildlife refuge, where no roads of any kind scar this vast wilderness — the way it should be.

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“It was the middle of summer when it doesn't get dark in the Arctic, so what could possibly go wrong?”

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KING of the Hill

The selection of aftermarket antennas has usually been dependent upon which service provider the customer uses. The new KING One Pro is designed to work with DirecTV, DISH and Bell TV (in Canada). KING claims the One Pro is the only antenna on the market that automatically configures for U.S. satellite service without the use of DIP switches. The KING One Pro is portable or roof-mount-ready, and offers maximum signal strength and upgraded electronics to increase scanning speed. KING One Pro works right out of the box with a compatible receiver and also supports multiple TV viewing. The antenna features a clear cover so you can see where the dish is pointing, and the integrated handle makes it easy to carry in portable applications. Made with a metal chassis and weather-resistant materials, KING One Pro includes 50 feet of coaxial cable (which is also its power source) with preinstalled connectors and a power inserter. MSRP: \$549.

KING | 952-922-6889, www.kingconnect.com

Power By Yamaha

Yamaha Motor Corp. USA introduces the all-new EF2200iS portable inverter generator. The 55-pound EF2200iS is powered by a high-output MZ80 OHV, air-cooled, single cylinder four-stroke engine to deliver a maximum 2,200 watts, with a maximum current of 18.3 amps at 120 volts. The MZ80 offers improved fuel efficiency and can run continuously for 10.5 hours at a ¼-rated load, according to the company. Its efficiency, combined with Yamaha Quiet Technology, reduces noise levels to 57-65 dBA at a ¼-rated load. An LED-illuminated control panel makes it easy to check the status of the generator, and starting and stopping the unit is simple with the new Yamaha Smart Dial. The EF2200iS is also equipped with Yamaha's Smart Throttle, which is a load-sensing control that allows greater fuel efficiency and noise reduction. MSRP: \$1,099.

Yamaha Motor Corp. USA | www.yamahamotorsports.com/powerproducts



Give Cell Signals a Boost

Can you hear me now? If not, you may need a cellular signal booster in



your motorhome. The Drive 4G-X RV cellular signal booster from weBoost is specifically designed for RV use in remote areas. The Drive 4G-X RV boosts voice and data with the maximum FCC-allowed 50-dB system gain, enhancing 4G LTE, as well as 3G network cell signals, up to 32 times, according to the company. The booster is designed to be compatible with all cellular carriers and boosts cellular signals for multiple users, so everyone can stay connected while traveling. The Drive 4G-X RV comes with a full kit and simple instructions so RVers can easily install the booster and instantly get connected. The kit includes the booster, an omni-directional antenna, desktop antenna, wall power supply and cables. MSRP: \$499.99.

weBoost, a division of Wilson Electronics | 866-294-1660, www.weboost.com

High IQ

RV Intelligence offers a new way to control components in a motorhome using a phone or other smart device. The smartRV-controls is a multi-function module that is configured



in the free smartRVapp to control more than eight different features in a motorhome, such as lights, jacks, awnings, slideouts, relays, valves and more. Simply download the free smartRVapp — available for iOS and Android — to configure the module for the desired function. The smartRVcontrols module has a 100-foot range, and cell/Wi-Fi service is not needed for operation since it works using Bluetooth. The module can be integrated into a motorhome in three ways: replacing the existing switch for the desired component, working with its existing switch or even as a stand-alone switch. The app can also be used to control multiple smartRVcontrols modules at the same time. MSRP: \$120.

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Only members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can enter the Salt Lake Temple, which was built over a 40-year period between 1853 and 1893.

Seven Days and One Knight

From its world-famous Tabernacle Choir to Olympic training facilities to scenic biking trails to the Family History Library, Utah's Salt Lake City area is ripe for exploration

By Mary Zalmanek

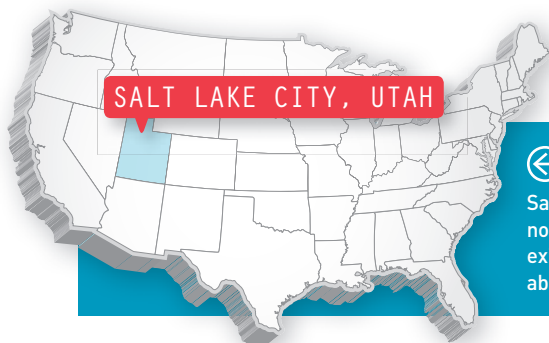
In 1987, my husband, Jim, and I came to Utah for the first time to mountain bike. We fell in love with the state and have returned at least once a year — sometimes twice — to mountain bike, golf and ski. We've also visited its five national parks and some of its seven national monuments and three national recreation areas. Last summer, for the second time in 30 years, we spent time in Salt Lake City. In this state well-known for its natural beauty and outdoor recreation, it stands to reason that its largest city would have ample man-made beauty and fascinating attractions as well.

We checked in at the Pony Express RV Resort & Campground in

North Salt Lake. While it has well-manicured RV sites, a swimming pool and clubhouse, my favorite feature was its close proximity to the Jordan River Parkway Trail. The 45-mile paved trail parallels the Jordan River as it flows north from Utah Lake to the Great Salt Lake. As soon as we were settled in, we hopped on our bikes to get our bodies moving after the long drive.

Since the Mormon Tabernacle Choir rehearsals are open to the public most Thursday evenings, it was serendipitous that we arrived on a Thursday. We drove our dinghy vehicle to Temple Square to hear the 360-member chorus of men and women. The choir is "dedicated to the universal language of music that has the power to bring joy, peace and healing to its listeners ... (which) transcends cultural and generational boundaries and brings together people from around the world through stirring music." Almost as impressive as the choir itself, a 7,708-pipe organ dominates the wall behind the choir and orchestra in the Conference Center.

Before and after the rehearsal, we toured some of the other buildings in Temple Square. In the South Visitors' Center, a scale model shows details of the Salt Lake Temple, which was built



← Did you Know?

Salt Lake City is located in a mountain valley with the Wasatch Mountains to the east and north. The city is situated on land once covered by the prehistoric Lake Bonneville, which existed within portions of Utah, Nevada and Idaho. Salt Lake's official elevation is 4,330 feet above sea level.



The Mormon Tabernacle Choir rehearsals are open to the public most Thursday evenings. The North Visitors' Center features 12 life-size paintings by German artist Heinrich Hofmann depicting scenes from the life of Christ.

over a 40-year period between 1853 and 1893. Only members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church) are permitted to enter the temple, but the model allows the public to imagine the interior of this magnificent building.

In the North Visitors' Center, we saw the 11-foot statue of Jesus known as "Christus," by Danish sculptor Bertel Thorvaldsen. There's also a 14-square-foot replica map of 1st century Jerusalem that shows the layout of the city during New Testament times and 12 life-size paintings by German artist Heinrich Hofmann depicting scenes from the life of Christ. On the lower level, several displays explain the Book of Mormon.

On our first visit to Salt Lake City several years ago, Jim dropped me off at the Family History Library while he ran some errands. I was curious about my ancestors, but knew I'd never have the patience to research microfilm in county courthouses or headstones in cemeteries. I was hoping to get lucky with the world's largest genealogical library. After I watched an introductory movie, a guide helped me with my research. After going back several generations on my father's side, the guide noticed that a branch of my family tree had already been filled in. She said, "We may find out you are royalty. Records weren't kept this far back for ordinary citizens." In the time it took my husband to get a haircut, the guide helped me trace my ancestors

back to 1185 in Norfolk, England. I was thrilled to be a descendent of a knight, Sir Richard Heydon, who died in 1370. With that kind of success on my first visit, I had high hopes for the second. Unfortunately, the results from the second attempt weren't as exciting, but it was enough to rekindle my interest in genealogy.

Salt Lake City is a great city to explore under any circumstances, but we found two ways that added to the adventure at an affordable price. The first was Urban Adventure Quest, a smartphone app that led us on a scavenger hunt to top sites in the downtown area. We downloaded the app and headed back downtown on Friday morning to start our urban adventure. It's not a spoiler alert to say we visited Temple Square again, Salt Lake's No. 1 tourist attraction. What would spoil the fun is if I told you too much about the clever puzzles we had to solve to win points and find our next destinations. Don't worry;

my lips are sealed. Suffice it to say our walking tour took us to Temple Square, the State Capitol and several other interesting locations. We made a conscious decision not to hurry through it for a fast time. Instead, we thoroughly enjoyed the unusual journey, taking time to appreciate each step along the way.

The second way to explore the area is with the Visit Salt Lake Connect Pass that offers admission to 13 different attractions for one price. The pass can be purchased for use on one, two or three consecutive days, or for a full year. With our three-day pass, we visited six attractions, starting with Red Butte Garden. Located on 100 acres near the University of Utah, it has more than 21 acres of developed gardens and 5 miles of hiking trails that wind through an extensive natural area. The vegetation and landscaping in the Water Conservation Garden were especially inspiring to those of us who

Construction on Utah's Capitol building was completed in 1916. Today it is part of the state's Capitol Hill Complex, which includes Senate, House and state office buildings.



GETAWAY

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

live in drought-prone states. There were plenty of flowering plants in the Four Seasons, Rose and Fragrance Gardens to admire in the summertime. We missed the 450,000 springtime blooming bulbs, which includes 230,000 daffodils. That's reason enough to return in the spring.

The Utah Museum of Fine Arts at the University of Utah (UMFA) has nearly 20,000 original works of art, from ancient objects to contemporary works. In the Modern and Contemporary Art gallery, I was fascinated by two pieces. In her "Discarded Memories" sculpture, Chakaia Booker "slices, twists, weaves and rivets discarded tires to emphasize their radial patterns that are akin to African textiles and body decoration." Angela Ellsworth decorates her "Seer Bonnets" with "thousands of pearl-tipped corsage pins that create beautiful exteriors and sharp, dangerous interiors." In other parts of the museum, art from America, Africa, China, Europe, South Asia, the Pacific and ancient cultures are featured.

Also located on the University of Utah campus, the Natural History Museum of Utah is housed in a stunning 163,000-square-foot building. Among its 30,000 specimens, the paleontology collection features two new species of horned dinosaurs found in southern Utah in 2000 and 2007. Other collections showcase Native



Photo: Austen Diamond

The Children's Garden is one of several themed gardens at Red Butte Garden. The paleontology collection at the Natural History Museum of Utah includes 30,000 specimens.

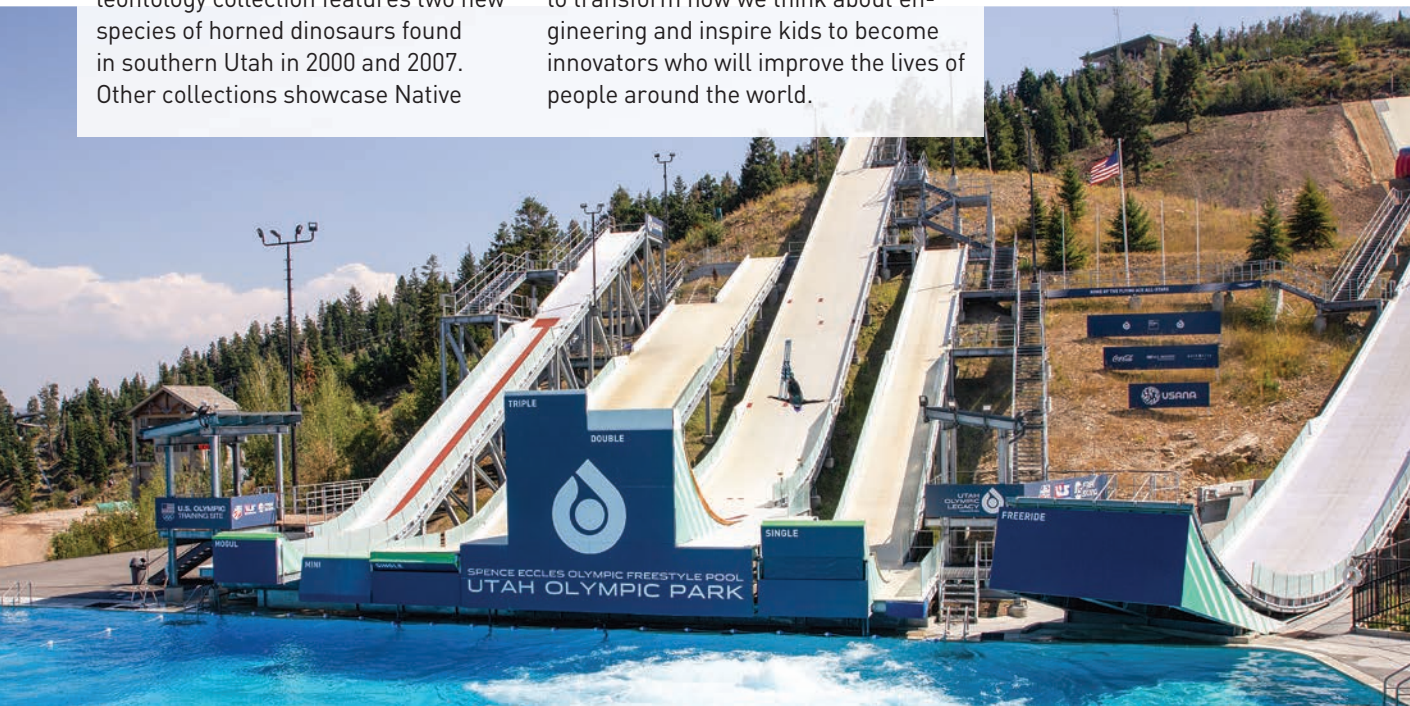
American artifacts, insect specimens and minerals. In addition to more than 41,000 square feet of gallery and education space, the state-of-the-art facility has research laboratories, conservation labs, collection storage and administration areas.

Our pass also included a meal at the Lion House Pantry in Temple Square. The Lion House was built in 1856 by Brigham Young, second president of the LDS Church. Now it's a cafeteria-style restaurant that serves home-style fare from recipes passed down through generations.

The Clark Planetarium appeals to people of all ages who want to learn about science and space. In the IMAX theater, we saw "Dream Big: Engineering Our World." The movie aims to transform how we think about engineering and inspire kids to become innovators who will improve the lives of people around the world.

On the last day of our three-day pass, we drove 25 miles to Park City to visit Utah Olympic Park. The Joe Quinney Winter Sports Center houses two museums, the George Eccles Salt Lake 2002 Olympic Winter Games Museum and the Alf Engen Ski Museum, with memorabilia from the Olympics and Utah's ski history. The 389-acre venue was built for the 2002 Winter Olympics. It has six Nordic ski jumps, a 1,335-meter sliding track with five start areas, a freestyle aerials winter training and competition hill, and a 750,000-gallon training pool. We watched aerial skiers train on the jumps and land with a splash in the

At Utah Olympic Park, aerial skiers train on jumps and land with a splash in the pool.





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GETAWAY

SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH

pool, perhaps preparing for a future Winter Olympics. At one end of the pool, climbers scaled a tall overhanging climbing wall called the Psicobloc Wall. These “deep water solos” also ended with a splash. All of it was entertaining to see.

There’s more to do than watch other people have fun at Olympic Park. Activities are available for various skill levels, ages and bravery thresholds. Thrill seekers can speed downhill at 60 mph on the Comet Bobsled Ride on the sliding track. Other summer options include extreme tubing, zip lines, ropes courses, an alpine slide and a scenic chairlift. We chose the Canyon Adventure Course, an intermediate-level ropes course designed to test our ability with log traverses, swinging elements and problem-solving features while harnessed to a wire 25 feet in the air. It was harder than I expected with my short legs, but doable — and lots of fun.

Antelope Island is the largest of 10



Children and adults can try lassoing a roping dummy at historic Fielding Garr Ranch in Antelope Island State Park. Summer recreation options at Utah Olympic Park include ropes courses.

islands in the Great Salt Lake. When water levels are low, it’s actually a peninsula. Antelope Island State Park covers the entire island, which has 46 RV sites (no hookups). The island is known for its natural scenic beauty and abundant wildlife, including free-ranging American bison, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep and mule deer. It’s also one of the most popular birding destinations in Utah.

The Fielding Garr Ranch is located on the southeastern portion of Antelope

Island at Garr Springs, which is one of the strongest and most consistent springs of the 40 known springs on the island. The ranch was established in 1848 by Fielding Garr to manage cattle and sheep for the LDS Church. Today it’s a demonstration ranch where visitors can explore the ranch house, stables, blacksmith shop and other buildings.

After wandering through the exhibits, we left our dinghy vehicle at Fielding Garr Ranch and rode our

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mountain bikes on the South Island Trail to Unicorn Point at the southern tip of the island. There was no fence between us and hundreds of bison that live in this area. Most of them were near the shore, but occasionally we'd see one closer to the trail. They aren't usually aggressive, but they are wild animals and may be dangerous. We were careful not to disturb them.

If you decide to mountain bike on Antelope Island, beware of goatheads, those nasty little thorns that can wreak havoc on tires. Between our two bikes, we probably had close to a hundred of them. Fortunately, we had tubeless tires with a sealant, which held for three of the tires. The other one waited until the following morning to go flat.

Our visit to Salt Lake would not be complete without eating at the Red Iguana. The restaurant's tagline is "Killer Mexican food that's worth the wait." We waited outside on the sidewalk for about 30 minutes on a Sunday night. It was truly worth the

wait. The pistachio mole over chicken was my favorite restaurant meal of the entire year!

Based on how many times I've heard Jim tell friends about our tour of the Hill Aerospace Museum, I'd say that was the highlight of our Salt Lake visit for him. The museum is located on the northwest corner of Hill Air Force Base. The exhibits include more than 90 military aircraft, missiles, aerospace vehicles and artifacts in the galleries and on the grounds. While the signs in front of each piece provide a good explanation, our tour guide brought it all to life. Volunteer Rocky Olson was a decorated Vietnam veteran who also worked for the U.S. Department of Defense. Jim bought Olson's book *Sgt. Rock: Last Warrior Standing*, "The true story of a sole survivor ... the soldier who would not die." It was a fascinating read.

In retrospect, I can't imagine why we waited so long to return to this wonderful city. **M**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Antelope Island State Park

801-773-2941, <https://stateparks.utah.gov/parks/antelope-island>

Clark Planetarium

385-468-7827, <https://slco.org/clark-planetarium>

Hill Aerospace Museum

801-825-5817, www.hill.af.mil/home/hill-aerospace-museum

Natural History Museum of Utah

801-581-4303, <https://nhmu.utah.edu>

Pony Express RV Resort & Campground

877-421-7002, www.sunrvresorts.com/resorts/west/utah/pony-express-rv-resort

Red Butte Gardens

801-585-0556, www.redbuttegarden.org

Red Iguana

www.rediguana.com

Temple Square

www.temple-square.com

Urban Adventure Quest

www.urbanadventurequest.com

Utah Museum of Fine Arts

801-581-7332, <https://umfa.utah.edu>

Utah Olympic Park

435-658-4200, <http://utaholympiclegacy.org/park>

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www.visitsaltlake.com/things-to-do/connect-pass

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CHASING THE DRAGON

Man-made Lake of the Ozarks beckons to motorhome owners with its waterborne activities, intriguing history and natural beauty



Getting There

Lake of the Ozarks is a straight shot from Missouri's capital, Jefferson City. Take U.S. Highway 54 West for about 56 miles. Merge onto Missouri Route 5 North/7 North, and continue for a little more than 10 miles.

Every year, nearly 2.5 million people — many of them land-locked Midwesterners — flock to the middle of Missouri to celebrate water. On maps, Lake of the Ozarks, a man-made marvel created almost 90 years ago by construction of the Bagnell Dam, resembles an undulating dragon. It has an astonishing surface area of 55,000 acres and snakes 92 miles end-to-end through rolling hills and valleys, creating a watery haven. Lake of the Ozarks' myriad camping opportunities, recreational activities and dining options make it a terrific motorhome getaway.

Often our RV journeys involve driving hundreds, if not thousands, of miles where the journey becomes the destination. Not at Lake of the Ozarks. The lake itself is the destination. Because "The Dragon" creates so many coves, inlets and fingers of water, it boasts more than 1,150

miles of shoreline. The lake is so big and meandering that they've divided it into Lake East, Lake North, Lake South and Lake West and color code it on maps to make it easy to navigate. It would take months — if not years — to explore the entire lake. The trick is to pick one (or more)

parts of the lake you want to visit and have fun.

We approach the lake from the north on U.S. Highway 54, the main highway into the region. We're intrigued by how this watery destination came to be, so we pull off at the sign for Willmore Lodge, an impressive log-cabin-style lodge overlooking the water in Lake North. Completed in 1930 for Union Electric, this 6,500-square-foot lodge, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, was built as a plush retreat for visiting company executives during the Bagnell Dam's construction. The impressive lodge is made of



The ruins of Ha Ha Tonka castle are located on the Niangua arm of Lake of the Ozarks.

Oregon white pine and local limestone, features handsome chestnut floors and was built with many conveniences that were state-of-the-art at the time, including an oil-burning furnace, an air-cooling machine, a bar with an ice-making machine and an “annunciator” with call buttons in each room to request service.

During our tour, we learn that creating a hydroelectric plant by damming the narrow Osage River had been pushed as early as 1912. However, it wasn’t until 1929 that Union Electric Co. broke ground on what was then known as the Great Osage River Project. With the stock market crash in 1929 and the Great Depression, the dam project provided much-needed jobs for thousands of workers. In 18 months, the 148-foot-tall concrete gravity dam was completed, and, in four months, Lake of the Ozarks filled, submerging 22 neighboring communities. In 1945, real estate developer Cyrus Crane Willmore purchased the lodge, a Union Electric-built hotel, pleasure boats, 800 miles of shoreline and 40,000 acres of lakefront property. He used the lodge for his personal residence and created the infrastructure that made Lake of the Ozarks a major tourist attraction.



We stop for lunch at Baxter’s Lakeside Grille, a modern eatery with jaw-dropping views of the lake and Community Bridge, a graceful arch crossing one of the lake’s many arms. After lunch, we follow signs for the Ameren Scenic Overlook, a great spot for getting a better look at Bagnell Dam. While this historic half-mile-long dam looks small, it impounds 600 billion gallons of water, provides hydroelectric power for 45,000 homes and supports a thriving tourism industry.

On our way to Lake of the Ozarks State Park, our berth for the night, we stop at Randy’s Frozen Custard. This iconic drive-in serves silky smooth frozen concoctions like the Ozark

Turtle — vanilla frozen custard topped with caramel, pecans and hot fudge. Yum!

There are a number of campgrounds around the lake and many offer RV camping. Lake of the Ozarks State Park, Missouri’s largest park, is a terrific camping option. This beautiful park offers 185 spacious, blacktopped electric sites under shady oak trees, picnic tables, fire rings, shower houses, playgrounds, hiking trails, and Wi-Fi (at the camp store). With 85 miles of shoreline, it also has a fishing dock, boat launch, two swimming beaches, and canoe and kayak rentals. As the sun sinks behind the trees, we settle into a waterfront site and watch families paddle the waters.

Photos: Anne Weaver





From far left: Many campsites at Lake of the Ozarks State Park are situated right on the lake. Kayaking on Lake of the Ozarks brings the lake experience up close. Old Kinderhook Golf Resort offers world-class golfing on its 18-hole, par 71 course. Golf is a popular activity in the area surrounding the lake, with 13 challenging courses for all skill levels.

Castles & Kayaking

We wake to brilliant skies and mild temperatures. We leave the motorhome and take the dinghy vehicle exploring. Missouri State Parks do not charge entrance fees, so we drive to Ha Ha Tonka State Park, famous for ruins of a mysterious castle. We hike a short, easy trail to the skeletal remains of a massive stone mansion. In 1905, Kansas City businessman Robert McClure Snyder Sr. purchased land and began building a sprawling stone home, carriage house and immense water tower. He was killed in an auto accident before construction was complete. His family finished building the house, which was later used as a

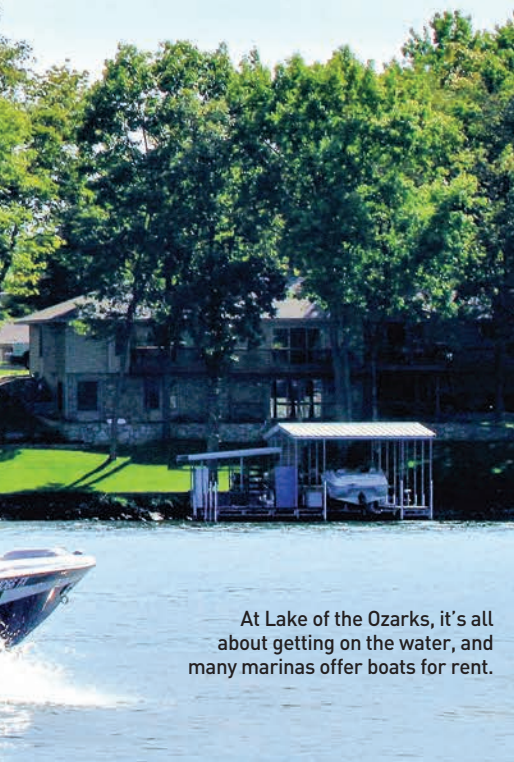
hotel, but in 1942 the structure burned to the ground. Today, what remains are these eerie cliffside stone walls with breathtaking views.

The park features 15 miles of trails shaded by deciduous trees — red oak, redbud, red and silver maples, flowering dogwood and swamp chestnut oak. The hills are made of soluble dolomite and limestone. As water washes away these minerals, sinkholes and cave systems develop. We walk along an elevated walkway to an overlook of Whispering Dell, a 150-foot sinkhole, one of seven in the park. In the 1800s, counterfeiters stashed their equipment in this collapsed cave.

Then we hike a shady path to

Natural Bridge, a large rock swath that forms an impressive overhang. As we walk back to the parking lot, we spot a group of visitors scouring the forest for edible mushrooms.

Not far from Ha Ha Tonka is Sugarloaf Vineyard Kayaking; we head downhill to the lakeshore where the owner has set up single sit-on-top kayaks for us. The sun is bright and the air warm as we launch our boats into the calm water. This little backwater of the lake is largely residential with homes and boathouses hugging the shoreline. We



At Lake of the Ozarks, it's all about getting on the water, and many marinas offer boats for rent.



spend the next several hours paddling in and out of little coves and inlets spotting cormorants and herons and fishermen angling for catfish, crappie, bass and paddlefish.

We're spent by the time we get off the water. Not wanting to cook, we head for family-owned Domenico's Italian restaurant in Osage Beach. Since 1988, this casual restaurant has been hand-making sauces and serving imported Italian pasta to the delight of visitors and residents alike. I enjoy scallops on angel hair pasta with a delectable garlic, butter and olive oil sauce, and my companion gobbles baked mostaccioli, a comforting cheesy dish with a flavorful red sauce.

Back at Lake of the Ozarks State Park, we're lulled to sleep by the soothing sound of water lapping against the shore.

Golf, Caves & Fast Boats

We're up early the next day for a golf date at Old Kinderhook Golf Resort.

With 13 superb courses nestled in forested hills and impressive rock formations, golfing is big in Lake of the Ozarks. In fact, AAA's Best of the Midwest has named the Lake of the Ozark's Golf Trail "Best Weekend Golf Getaway" and, as we approach Old Kinderhook's lush rolling course, it's easy to see why.

It's been a while since we've been on the links, so we meet with the resort's golf pro, Jason Woods, for a refresher. We pilot a couple of carts to the driving range and, soon after the pro reminds us about grip, stance and swing, we're whacking balls straight down the fairway. An hour later, he declares us ready for the course and we spend a couple of hours enjoying the gorgeous grounds.

By the time we drop our clubs back at the pro shop, our stomachs are growling. Old Kinderhook Resort is public and we dine in the gorgeous lodge-like restaurant, The Trophy Room, on signature truffle fries with



Bridal Cave is filled with wondrous stalactites in caverns large and small.

aioli and luscious salads.

It's late afternoon when we reach Bridal Cave, one of several caves open to the public. Caves are common geologic features in the Ozarks. The area offers both natural and "show" caves, like Bridal Cave, that have been tamed with concrete pathways and lights to accentuate



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their beautiful features.

As we enter the cool 60-degree atmosphere of Bridal Cave, our guide, Tiffany, tells us Bridal got its name from an Osage legend about a young brave and Native American princess who married in the cavern. To date, more than 3,500 couples have wed in the cave's "wedding chapel" next to the stone pipe organ.

We descend the gentle pathway deeper into the cave, passing through cave rooms with names like Garden of the Gods and encountering other-worldly structures — giant columns, delicate soda straws, conical stalagmites (rising from the floor) and stalactites (hanging from the roof), and massive draperies, including structures called "cave bacon," streaked with red, white, green and black from mineral seeps. This amazing cavern contains more formations of onyx, a semiprecious gem, than any other cave in the world. By the time we emerge into

the sunlight an hour later, our heads are spinning from the underground beauty.

For dinner, we eat at HalfSauced, a terrific barbecue place, where we split a sampler platter of juicy brisket, smoky ribs, fork-tender pulled pork and some of the best baked beans we've ever eaten. Then we check into Osage Beach RV Park, a Good Sam Park with a rating of 9/10*/9.5 by the 2019 Good Sam Travel and Savings Guide. The 43-acre, neat-as-a-pin park, which borders Lake of the Ozarks State Park on three sides, includes 90 full-hookup sites (many shaded), picnic tables, concrete patios, showers and laundry, and plenty to do, including a pool, playground, volleyball and shuffleboard. We love the glen-like setting and sleep soundly.

Sadly, it's our last day at Lake of the Ozarks. We've kayaked this amazing lake, but to really understand the allure of this place, we need to

boat it. We head to Osage Beach and Ozark Yacht Club where we rent a 28-foot Chaparral bowrider, a fast powerboat with a 375-hp engine. Getting out of the slip and marina is a bit intimidating, but before long, we're racing down the lake's many channels. With the wind wildly blowing our hair, we jet past other boats, lakefront homes and boathouses. Each time we push the throttle forward, the boat leaps forward with a rush, sending us into giggles and the hours fly by in a watery blur. And we're firmly captivated by Lake of the Ozarks Dragon. **M**

For More Information

Lake of the Ozarks

800-386-5253, www.funlake.com

Lake of the Ozarks State Park

573-348-2694, <https://mostateparks.com/park/lake-ozarks-state-park>

Osage Beach RV Park

800-562-7343, <http://osagebeachrvpark.net>

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Traveling in High Style

Beyond driving nirvana, the Marathon H3-45 motor coach activates one's senses and feeds the desire for pure luxury **By Bob Livingston**

There's a certain mystique about bus conversions. After all, they are the rides of choice for the rich and famous, including entertainers and bands that trek over the highways from gig to gig. So it only makes sense that the general populace can only daydream about what it's like to travel in ultimate, or maybe more accurately, opulent, comfort and luxury.

Coaches built within a Prevost shell are most common in this high-end segment, and with budgets seemingly inconsequential, loading these roving palaces with the best appliances, materials and accessories money can buy is the norm. One of the most recognizable names in the bus conversion market is Marathon Coach, a company based in Eugene, Oregon, that excels in building coaches that will require owners to part with almost \$2.5 million during acquisition.

Obviously, these are not cookie-cutter motorhomes with factory-de-

signed floorplans, so potential owners play an active role in developing the interior décor, overall styling and theme. Since all sales are factory-direct, Marathon assembled a new show coach, the 45-foot H3-45, featuring four slideouts and a number of popular livability elements, which was targeted for this evaluation.

OK. What's not to like? If you are one of the lucky few who can afford such a mobile palace and something is not exactly to your liking, the culprit for such missteps is likely staring at you in the mirror. Marathon has made

a science of successfully planning and executing coaches that exceeds expectations, and provides a foundation for travel that is almost impossible to beat. The company prides itself in working closely with clients to ensure perfection is achieved.

Right from the get-go, owning a Marathon and the process to become an owner is usually driven (literally) by the person in the family who thrives on piloting the ultimate machine on eight wheels. Those who drive fancy cars and enjoy the finer things in life are attracted to piloting a vehicle that exhibits precise road manners and provides enough fodder to feed an insatiable ego.

The key to driving prowess is the Prevost bus, which is solid, heavy and provides exhilarating performance,

ABOVE: Marathon builds the H3-45 on a Prevost shell fitted with four slideouts and graced with striking body paint and graphics.

even when propelling 55,000 pounds of coach down the highway. This Marathon is powered by a Volvo D13, 500-hp commercial-grade diesel engine tied to a six-speed Allison transmission. Like all Prevost-based motor coaches, the Marathon is no slouch when it comes to ripping down the highway and gobbling up grades with alacrity. It's quite a spirited machine, relatively speaking, that stimulates one's senses into a feeling of driving nirvana that makes long stints on the road about as pleasant as they can be.

Obviously, the machine quotient brings out the macho in any driver, especially those who are used to piloting expensive vehicles wrapped in luxury and performance, but the livability experience can be catapulted into the stratosphere, only dependent on your bank account. The H3-45 is an exercise in opulence, considering the conversion and option costs will reach \$1.7 million; the rest is the cost of the Prevost shell.

Inside, the elegance will have those not indoctrinated in the luxury motor coach lifestyle rolling their eyes. For those experienced with this level of motorhome travel, the H3-45 is a prime example of how luxury materials, high-end appliances and high-tech electronics meld into a motor coach that provides exceptional comfort and convenience. The bottom line: Marathon's long experience in the field makes it easy to create living quarters that reflect

CLOCKWISE, FROM BELOW LEFT: Cockpit is a driver's dream with complete instrumentation and the comfort of an ISRI air seat. Power shades provide complete privacy. Danish recliner is flanked by occasional table and L-shaped dinette. King bed with motorized head lift is complemented by seating area and well-placed cabinetry. Strategically placed lighting and upscale décor enhance the bedroom experience. Convenience center — with Miele coffee/espresso machine, steam oven and wine cooler — is behind air-pocket door.



the personalities of the buyers.

The front entry leads to the cockpit. In true tour-bus fashion, the driver and passenger seats are mounted lower than the main floor, which is accessed via steps and a curved handrail. Surrounded by well-placed instrumentation and controls, the driver has an acute command of the road, and is planted on an ISRI air seat that provides plenty of tush and back support. This seat is the world standard for bus drivers and is upholstered by Marathon. There's no fatigue when piloting the

coach down the road for long stints — something to which entertainers who travel from city to city can attest.

Interestingly, Prevost has resisted the temptation to replace the two-piece windshield with a single glass counterpart, something that usually begs the question "why?" from prospective buyers. The glass is still plenty big and really doesn't restrict the view of the road, and there is a method to the company's madness. These buses see millions of miles on the road and the odds of getting damaged by flying rocks are much greater. Typically, only one glass panel has to be replaced at time, and is much less expensive than having to buy an

Main parlor features a 78-inch couch that can be converted to sleep two guests and is upholstered in high-end fabric. Primary TV folds down from the ceiling in the cockpit, which drops down from the main floor. Smaller TV is placed at the end of the couch. Half bath is accessed via an air-powered pocket door. Curvy laminates exude luxury, even in the bathroom.





Ceiling sculpture may not have the expected bling of a bus conversion, but works well in this plan, especially in the front parlor. Slideout on right side fits flush with stately wood flooring.

WHAT'S HOT

Prevost shell, flush slideouts, full-body paint, custom interiors, air-pocket doors, luxury appliances, entertainment system

WHAT'S NOT

Other than the price, what's not to like?



expansive, one-piece windshield. That thought brought a chuckle considering the financial status of the owners.

Behind the cockpit seats is a parlor that exudes the highest level of luxury. While the show floorplan is one chosen by the company, it represents a strong platform for customers to work with when designing their own coach. Of note in coaches on the H-shell is the lower roofline. At 83 inches, it actually has a much warmer look, and since the ceiling sculpture is not overstated, the room is a magnet for lounging and enjoying the wonderful view out the generous placement of windows. The big benefit of the H-shell is the more spacious storage lockers; buyers can get 6 more inches of headroom with the X-shell option.

Taking advantage of four slides, manufactured and installed by Valid Slide Co. in British Columbia, Canada, the Marathon is as spacious as a motor

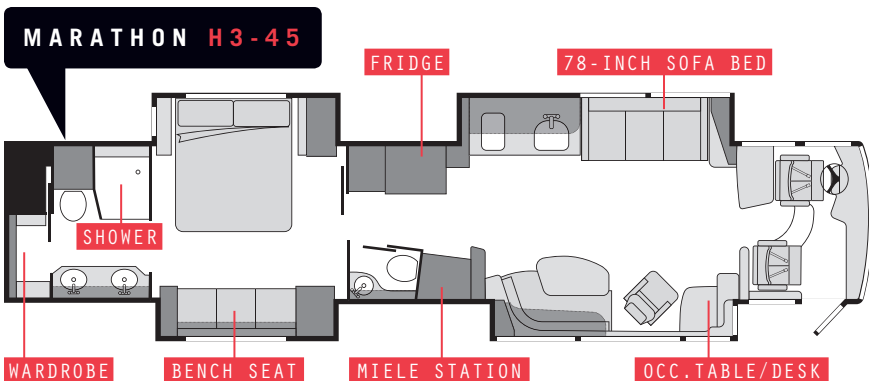
coach can get. In the front parlor, opposing slides disappear in to the interior landscape when extended, and the floor on the passenger slide is flush with the beautiful wood flooring; the lip on the driver's side slide is carefully concealed by the furniture. Outside, the slides blend into the painted surface as if they were not there.

While no floorplan/décor package is alike, the show coach sports elements that appeal to typical buyers looking for a high-line motor coach. Outsiders of the luxury bus conversion fraternity tend to imagine these interiors are flashy, which is quite the opposite here. The interior is classy and the materials are obviously high-end, but, for example, the ceiling is not gaudy and outlandish. Maybe the lower ceiling height demands a statelier look, but in any case, it works incredibly well, especially in the front parlor.

Blend in the elements that exude

pure comfort and owners will relish hanging out inside — and entertaining guests. Of course, many of the owners don't cook elaborate meals, so the galley will be considered on the small side when compared to some mainstream diesel pushers. Stove and sink inserts extend the versatility of the solid-surface countertop and a practical selection of drawers and cabinets handles storage for a well-equipped kitchen. Cabinetry is made from laminates supplied by Laminart, Formica, Polyrey and DuPont, and built using birch plywood, which is straight, strong, lightweight and non-porous. All the drawers are made of stranded bamboo and are lined with a nice fabric — as are the cabinet shelves. The end result is a network of radius-corner laminates that scream "high-end" luxury and look very clean. Add in the touches of glass doors, strategic lighting and stunning décor, and it becomes clear that these items are usually reserved for high-priced custom homes. Most of the interiors feature a two-tone laminate look that contrasts nicely with the wood floor.

The galley shares the front streetside slideout with the couch. It's well equipped, although just about everything is concealed behind laminate cabinetry. A Fisher & Paykel dishwasher is built into a drawer and the same brand refrigerator is virtually undetectable behind laminated doors





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MARATHON H3-45

adjacent to the galley. It's all part of that mystique of a luxury bus and is further represented by a newly conceived convenience center across from the galley. Here an air-pocket door opens with a push of a button (think spaceship stuff) revealing a coffee/espresso machine, a steam oven and wine cooler, all made by Miele, of course.

Sharing the same wall is another air-pocket door that leads to the half-bath. The pocket doors, other than being sexy and fun, keep the aisle uncluttered and visually open, even when in use.

Establishing a focal point inside is a process that takes time when deciding on elements to meet the customer's lifestyle. In the show coach, it's the living room, which is rather understated intentionally because the trend seems to be going toward keeping things uncluttered. Make no mistake, this understatement is still highly luxurious, but there's not a lot of bling here — something that really works well.

Seating arrangements are fairly conventional, albeit the upholstery is top notch and beautiful to look at, not to mention comfortable. Behind the driver's compartment is a 78-inch sofa that converts into a bed for guests. Across is a Danish-made recliner next to an occasional table that doubles as a desk when the extension is pulled out. The adjacent L-shaped dinette is really comfy for two people, but can handle two more guests in a pinch. And the table is controlled by a motor, so it can be positioned easily for dining or when working on a computer or other projects.

Large windows surrounding the



Clockwise, from top left: Rear bath is 16 inches larger in this plan, which offers room to spread out. Judicious placement of tile, and contrasting laminates, provides a striking appearance. Air-powered pocket door leads to spacious rear wardrobe. Sinks and shower are well appointed.

parlor provide an almost panoramic view to the outside and are dark tinted so peeking inside during the day is nearly impossible. To darken the room, day/night duet shades can be employed with a touch of a button on the iPads mounted on magnetic launch pads in the bedroom, living room and outside entertainment bay. Just about everything is integrated through Crestron Electronics programming, which makes operating the TV screens, blinds, AV gear and HVAC touch-screen simple in a wireless environment. The iPad functions are mirrored on a hardwired screen in the cockpit allowing redundant operation of the coach accessories should the iPads develop a glitch, or the driver wants to make adjustments.

As expected, entertainment equipment is audiophile quality. The main TV screen flips down from the ceiling in the cockpit and a second

screen is positioned on the wall behind the driver's seat. High-end AV components are mounted in a rack positioned in the outside bay and are cooled by their own air conditioner. There's a TV in the bedroom and one (50-inch) in the entertainment bay that can be articulated on its mounting bracket.

The back living area is devoted to a grand master bedroom and the rear bathroom. According to Marathon, the bathroom in this model is the biggest in the market, featuring an additional 16 inches of space. Beautiful appointments in the tiled shower stall lure owners to luxuriate under the water for longer periods of time. There's a double vanity and a Thetford Tecma toilet — and plenty of closet space. Push a button and an air-pocket door slides open to reveal the rear wardrobe. And, of course, the pocket door to the bathroom is also controlled by air. The door here is almost all glass, and becomes opaque when pushing another button, affording privacy.

Step into the bedroom and you'll see a king bed that occupies much of the space, surrounded by copious closet and drawer placement. Viewing the big 49-inch TV from bed is nearly

Utility center is configured perfectly with well-marked components; there's even a disposable glove dispenser. Access to complex systems and generator is surprisingly convenient.



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MARATHON H3-45

perfect, especially when another button is pushed and the back portion of the mattress raises. One of the iPad control tablets is mounted above the nightstand on the forward side of the bed, as is the multiplex switching panel, which can also be found positioned on walls throughout the interior.

Although a lower roofline can reduce the visual perception inside the coach, the four slides do a marvelous job of countering any lack of spaciousness. Larger storage bays are the beneficiaries of the H-model shell. Five bays can be accessed from between the axles and two have a pass-through configuration. This bus was actually developed in the early 1990s and the bays are a foot taller, which allows for storing a great amount of supplies.

A huge utility bay is quite a sight. All the components are organized neatly and user-friendly. There's even a disposable-glove dispenser. Interestingly, as complex as this coach is, access to service points are better than those in most gas-powered and diesel-pusher motorhomes. That theme is carried throughout many areas inside and outside the coach. Not surprisingly, the electrical and plumbing systems are patented, and everything is assembled by hand over many hours — and documented precisely.

Overall, there is not much to want when owning a Marathon 45-foot motor coach, and the build process, which can take up six months, is quite exciting. Those people with the financial wherewithal to purchase such a motorhome can be as creative as they like, and the company is not shy about encouraging opulence and sheer convenience. Throw in a driving machine with masterful handling characteristics, and the Marathon ranks right up there with the best the industry can offer.

Driving into an RV park just about always turns heads, and when on display in shows, people wait in long lines to take a peek. If you're a Marathon owner, you just have to get used to all that attention. **M**

Marathon Coach

800-234-9991, www.marathoncoach.com

Specifications

Chassis

Model	Prevost H3-45
Engine	Volvo D13
SAE hp	500 @ 1,500-1,800 rpm
Torque	1,750 lb-ft @ 1,050 rpm
Transmission	Allison 6-speed
Axle Ratio	3.91:1-4.10:1
Front Tires	365/70R22.5
Drive Axle Tires	315/80R22.5
Tag Axle Tires	365/70R22.5
Wheelbase	316"
Brakes	Air disc
Suspension	Air, outboard shocks
Fuel Capacity	235 gal
Fuel Economy	6.5 mpg
Warranty	24 months bumper-to-bumper/ 5 years engine/transmission

Coach

Exterior Length	45'
Exterior Width	8' 6"
Exterior Height	12' 5" with A/C
Interior Width	8' 0"
Interior Height	6' 11"
Construction	Fiber composite shell, 303 surgical-grade stainless-steel monocoque structure
Freshwater Capacity	158 gal
Black-water Capacity	70 gal
Gray-water Capacity	91 gal
Water-heater Capacity	22 gal
LP-gas Capacity	N/A
Air Conditioner (4)	15,000 Btu
Furnace	Espar Hydronic 55,000 Btu
Refrigerator	17 cubic-foot
Inverter/Charger	(2) 4,000 watt/33 amp
Batteries	(4) 24-volt AGM chassis, (6) 4D AGM coach
AC Generator	20 kW
MSRP as tested	\$2,433,569
Warranty	24 months bumper-to-bumper

Wet Weight

(Water & heater, fuel, LP-gas tanks full; no supplies or passengers)

Front Axle	Custom
Drive Axle	Custom
Tag Axle	Custom
Total	Custom

Chassis Ratings

GAWR, F/Drive	19,000 lbs/22,500 lbs
Tag Axle	14,000 lbs
GVWR/GCWR	55,000 lbs/75,000 lbs
ROCCC	Custom
GAWR	Gross Axle Weight Rating
GVWR	Gross Vehicle Weight Rating
GCWR	Gross Combination Weight Rating
ROCCC	Realistic Occupant and Cargo Carrying Capacity (full water, no passengers)



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GET THE PICTURE

Dave and LJ's RV Interior Design can upgrade your motorhome's TV, entertainment system and more

By Chris Hemer

As RVs morph into an extension of our homes, rather than a getaway from them, the entertainment system(s) a motorhome offers has become an increasingly important purchase consideration. Where our parents or grandparents used the family RV as a way to distract us from the evils of TV and even radio, nearly every motorhome on dealer lots today is equipped with at least one TV, and an audio/video head unit with a wide range of entertainment capabilities. Indeed, there are times when we're camping off the grid and just want to soak in Mother Nature's abundant beauty, but most of us enjoy a favorite television show or movie as part of the RV experience.

Technology changes rapidly, however. In the course of a decade, we've seen motorhomes move from using heavy tube-type CRT TVs to plasma and LCD flat screens, DVD to Blu-ray, and now LED "smart" TVs that can stream a variety of entertainment choices from platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hulu, Vudu, YouTube and more. Unlike your home, however, updating an entertainment system in an RV isn't a simple "plug and play" proposition; TVs and their associated equipment are usually built into one or more cabinets, so stepping up to a better/larger TV can require not just electrical savvy, but skillful fabrication to make the new system look factory-installed.

[1] Tube-type CRT TVs were used in the RV industry throughout the early 2000s. This 28-inch unit in the living area will be replaced with a state-of-the-art 43-inch LED flat-screen smart TV. [2] CRT TVs in the bedroom are often installed in the wardrobe unit, like this one. Replacing it with a larger flat screen will not only provide the customers with a better picture, but more storage space as well. [3] In the living area, the process begins by removing the lower access panel, then carefully disassembling the TV chassis. Because these TVs were so heavy, RV manufacturers employed different methods to secure them using metal framing. Over time, however, the weight can take its toll, causing squeaks, rattles and cabinet damage. Dave and LJ's has even seen some instances where these TVs have broken loose and have fallen down; a potentially dangerous situation. [4] It takes two to carefully remove an old CRT TV from its cabinet.



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Dave and LJ's RV Interior Design of Woodland, Washington, is more than up to the task. Brothers Dave and LJ Ast have been in business for 13 years performing all types of RV interior upgrades, from flooring and furniture to cabinetry work. The two learned their craft growing up in their father's interior shop so their combined experience actually spans more than 60 years. In that time, they've seen and done it all, but to this day, TV upgrades are still the most popular with their customers. "New TVs not only offer higher definition, but are equipped with digital tuners for over-the-air broadcasts, so a converter box isn't required," explained Dave Ast. "You can receive HDTV with your existing antenna." Another advantage, said Dave, is that new TVs are equipped with one or more HDMI ports so you can easily connect a Blu-ray player, gaming console or other device. "It really opens up a lot of options," he says. "Plus, today's flat screens are so much lighter and better looking."

Though each case is different, a TV upgrade in the main area of a motorhome takes between 10 and 20 hours of labor, and typically ranges in cost from \$1,000 to \$2,500, depending on the size of the TV and work involved to fit it correctly. Dave and LJ's consults with its customers first to determine what size TV is desired, and what will fit in a given space. For example, if a customer wants to make the largest possible TV a priority, the quote will include labor for building a completely new cabinet as well. In most instances the existing cabinet is modified to fit the new TV and then finished so that it looks like a factory installation. The customer can supply the TV of their choosing, or Dave and LJ's can provide its recommendations and purchase

one on the customer's behalf.

Dave and LJ's was recently visited by a customer with a Class A motorhome that was in beautiful original condition, but was equipped with small, heavy CRT TVs in both the living area and bedroom. We followed along with the Ast brothers and their team as they installed new, larger flat-screen LED TVs and completed typical modifications to the respective cabinets for a clean installation. The whole job was completed in a single day, and the results, as you'll see, were quite impressive.

If an old TV is detracting from your RVing experiences, Dave and LJ's can make movie time something to look forward to again.



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[5] The screws that secure the "face frame," or the decorative portion that goes around the TV, are removed. [6] With the face frame removed, the cabinet is modified by unscrewing the upright cabinet stile and moving it outboard, then carefully cutting back the cabinet with a multitool to provide the necessary space for the new TV. [7] The remaining section of the TV frame mount is cut away so that the new TV can be mounted flush. [8] The remaining metal structure is removed — it won't be necessary to support the new, lighter-weight TV.



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[9] With the TV and its metal structure out of the way, all of the excess wiring is removed, including the old RGB connections, digital converter and converter box wiring. [10] Here, the right-hand cabinet is shown with the excess wiring removed and necessary equipment remounted. [11] Dave and LJ's makes nearly everything needed for each job in-house. Here, a reinforcement bracket that will mount inside the cabinet and support the TV is fabricated.



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[12] The bracket is attached to the rear of the new TV (arrow) and the assembly is installed in the overhead cabinet. [13, 14] A new access panel is fabricated and covered in matching vinyl. The panel is then secured underneath the new TV with screws and snap-on buttons made in house and covered in matching vinyl for a finished appearance.



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[15] The finished living area TV installation looks like a factory job. [16] Meanwhile, in the bedroom, the drawers are removed from the wardrobe so the underside of the TV could be accessed. In most cases, including this one, the TV is mounted to the cabinet using a piece of plywood as the base. [17, 18] In applications such as these, where a flat screen will take the place of a boxy CRT, the new TV is mounted on a swing arm, as it won't fit inside the same square space. Support panels are fabricated for each side of the cabinet to hold the weight of the TV and bracket. The panels are glued and screwed into place for maximum strength.



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[19] The customer decided on a 28-inch Samsung to replace the 20-inch CRT bedroom TV. Here, the swing-arm bracket is attached. [20] The new TV mounting plate is hand-fabricated and assembled using a combination of staples, glue and screws. [21] The completed bedroom TV bracket is sprayed with glue, then covered in cargo-area carpeting for a finished appearance. [22, 23] The other end of the swing arm is then attached to the bracket so it can be trial-fit in the cabinet. [24] The interior of the cabinet is now finished, and with the swing arm allowing access to the interior, there is extra storage space behind the TV as well. This could be a good "secret" place to keep valuables such as jewelry, money, etc., out of view. The swing arm lock release chain will be run through the bottom of the cabinet so it can be accessed from the drawer below, allowing the TV to be pulled out and away.

[25] Because the new TV is rectangular, and the old TV was square, there is now space underneath the new TV. Here, measurements are taken for a new panel that will cover the space. [26, 27] Rather than making the panel strictly decorative, half-circles are cut into it, which align with the speakers in the bottom of the TV. This will allow the TV's speakers to project better sound than before. The panel is then upholstered with textured black vinyl. Several small cuts are made in the vinyl around the half circles, and the material folded back, glued and stapled into place. [28] The finished installation looks great. The new setup is unobtrusive and provides improved picture and better audio than the old CRT. **M**



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By Chris Dougherty

FRESH AIR

MAXXFAN Deluxe provides versatile ventilation inside a motorhome, rain or shine

Most owners consider good ventilation inside the motorhome as an important factor for overall comfort. Ventilation is needed to remove cooking odors or smoke from a burnt piece of toast that set off the smoke alarm, steam from the shower or even condensation when traveling in cold weather. But the smell of the fresh air always helps create pleasant surroundings — especially at bedtime, when pulling outside air across the bed from a nearby window can make or break a good night's sleep in warm weather.

There are a number of high-flow exhaust fans on the market; some work well, others not so much. Most of them require a separate vent cover to be left open, and the better models

will automatically close the lid when it rains. But that stops the flow of air. The MAXXFAN Deluxe is the only roof exhaust fan that features an integrated vent cover that folds down when the

fan is closed, reducing the overall exposure of the fan to damage from overhead obstacles, while allowing the air to flow in or out of the motorhome interior, even when it rains.

Installation is not complicated, but does take some expertise working on roof materials. In this case, the MAXXFAN Deluxe was installed on a 2005 Newmar Kountry Star motorhome that was having its roof replaced. In spite of its age, this motorhome is in remarkable condition



➔ INSTALLATION TIP

Make sure the sealants you use are compatible with your motorhome's roof material. The motorhome and/or roof manufacturers will know which type to use.

1

with only 12,000 original miles, but sitting in storage for years left a few undetected roof leaks, resulting in some structural and aesthetic damage.

The MAXXFAN Deluxe is a direct replacement for any 14-inch-square RV roof vent, and if power isn't present at the roof opening, it is usually possible to pull 12-volt DC wire leads from an adjacent light or other circuits.

The MAXXFAN installation is different from the other fans on the

[1] The MAXXFAN Deluxe comes with everything needed for installation except sealants. Shown here are the fan unit, baseplate, interior trim, remote with holder, screws and electrical connectors.

market. The housing is attached (using four screws) to a separate baseplate that is mounted in the roof vent opening. This is a great feature, which allows the fan to be easily removed for cleaning, repair or replacement if it is damaged. The baseplate is sealed to the roof using butyl tape and a self-leveling sealant on top that is compatible with the

motorhome's roof material.

The deluxe model features a two-way digital remote control that stores on a wall storage bracket. The remote is used for operating all aspects of the unit, including opening and closing, temperature settings, fan speed, intake or exhaust operation, and power; 10 speeds provide versatile operation in varying



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[2] Butyl sealant tape is applied to the underside of the flange before placing it in the opening. The screw mounts for the fan must face the sides of the motorhome.
[3] The baseplate is secured to the roof using the included stainless-steel screws.



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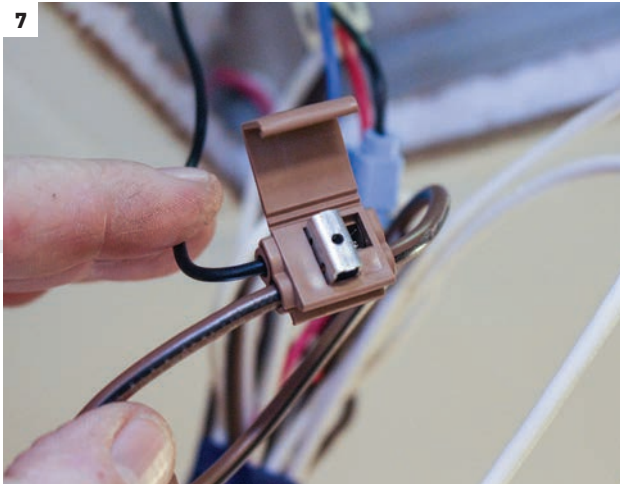
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[4] An appropriate self-leveling sealant is then applied. It's important to use plenty of sealant and to cover all the screws and the seam. Reapply, if necessary, to cover any bubbles or separations. [5] A unique feature, the fan is attached to a baseplate with integrated weather-stripping, which allows easy removal and replacement. [6] The fan is set on the roof baseplate and secured with four stainless-steel screws. Light downward pressure may be required for this step. The lid is raised before performing this step to make accessing the screw holes easier.

[7] Wiring the fan is very simple if a powered fan is being replaced. In this case, the motorhome manufacturer used a power loop and Scotchlok connectors for powering the existing fan. Although this connection procedure was replicated for the new fan, stripping, twisting and soldering the wires is another option. The wiring was then tucked up into the ceiling space. [8] The digital remote with LCD screen operates all the functions of the fan and is stored for easy access in a wall-mounted bracket. The original fan had a wall thermostat, which was removed; the new bracket covers the holes. The remote can be used anywhere inside the motorhome, and the fan can even be operated from the cockpit while on the road. [9] The fan also has manual controls on the housing, in case the dog eats the remote control. Exhaust fans always get dirty, and the screen is easily removed for cleaning by twisting the four small clips holding it in place. The ceiling trim fit perfectly, but can be easily modified to fit any thickness or slope of the roof.



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conditions.

Earlier models of the MAXXFAN were noisy on high; fortunately, subsequent development has led to a much quieter and more refined product. The fan can also be operated from the control panel on the unit, and the temperature sensor is on the fan itself, not on the remote, providing a more accurate reading, regardless of the remote's location. The remote can be kept near the driver's seat so the vent and fan can be operated while on the road.

The MAXXFAN Deluxe comes with all the hardware required for installation. However, the installer will need to supply the proper sealants. The unit has a two-year warranty on the housing, fan and mechanism, and a lifetime warranty on the lid, which is available in white or smoke. The MAXXFAN Deluxe with smoke lid has an MSRP of \$359.33. **M**

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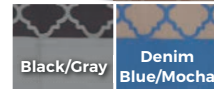
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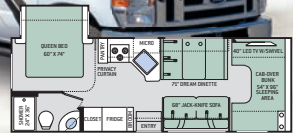


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SAFETY ALARMS

LP-gas, carbon monoxide and smoke detectors must be maintained to provide uncompromised protection

By Chris Dougherty

Carbon monoxide (CO) exposure is the leading cause of poisoning deaths in America, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Of the 364,000 residential fires in 2016, 50.3 percent were caused by cooking accidents and 9.6 percent were the result of heating mishaps, according to the U.S. Fire Administration. Motorhomes are not exempt from these disasters, and the industry employs LP-gas, smoke and CO detectors to prevent human tragedy in RV parks and while on the road.

There is a silver lining to all these adversities — the inherent compact space in an RV makes it more likely that you'll be aware of emergencies more quickly. However, this can only happen if the motorhome's safety systems are in good working order.

All RVs built in the last quarter century are equipped with smoke detectors and LP-gas detectors. At one time, carbon monoxide detectors were mandated only for RVs with generators or generator-ready compartments, but now all motorhomes are equipped with certified devices to protect against CO poisoning. Also, fire extinguishers and emergency exits are part of all safety systems and must be tested and maintained. Detectors have a 7-10 year

maximum lifespan before they need to be replaced, depending on the type of device.

Let's take a look at each of the hazards, along with their detectors.

Carbon Monoxide

CO is produced when fuel is burned. LP-gas, gasoline or diesel-fired equipment in and around your RV creates CO. Most of the gas appliances vent to the outside; however, a blocked flue, exhaust pipe, or even a breeze in the wrong direction can bring CO inside the motorhome. Generators are frequent offenders, especially in tight quarters where the exhaust can flow from one motorhome to another. CO is colorless, odorless and kills by slowly

replacing the oxygen in the blood at the cellular level. Early symptoms are flu-like and include a headache, nausea, fatigue and dizziness. Eventually, the victim falls asleep and doesn't wake up.

This is why CO detectors are now a mandatory fixture in all RVs. Most motorhomes will have separate CO and smoke detectors mounted on the ceiling. CO detectors generally have a 10-year lifespan from the time they are first activated. Most CO detectors have a sticker that indicates service and replacement dates. If it's not filled out, then the manufacturing date starts the "clock."

If the CO detector in your motorhome uses a battery, it should be replaced annually. Use only the type of battery recommended by the manufacturer. Changing the batteries can be an annual spring opener activity, or if you're a full-timer, when you change the clocks (for daylight-saving time, if necessary). Many, but not all detectors have a low-battery and/or an end-of-life signal.

If the CO alarm activates, immediately ventilate the RV and turn off all fuel-burning appliances until the culprit can be found. Many alarms have a function that temporarily silences the alarm. Never remove the battery while people are in the motorhome. The detectors have a safety feature that prevents the battery door from being closed when no battery(ies) is present. If anyone is having CO symptoms, call 911 immediately.

LP-Gas Detector

LP-gas, or propane, is used to fuel appliances in many motorhomes. It is a safe and stable fuel that is energy efficient when used correctly. The LP-gas system in a motorhome

The CO detector should be mounted on the ceiling outside the main sleeping area. This model (far left) has a button to silence an alarm briefly. The LED on this LP-gas detector (middle) turns red during an alarm and yellow for end-of-life. This detector can be surface-mounted, but it comes with the materials for flush-mounting, if desired. A convenient "Replace By" sticker is included.



operates at 11 inches of water column, which is pretty low pressure. However, if propane is allowed to flow into a space, it can become a significant hazard. To combat this, propane has a distinctive odor, and LP-gas detectors are designed to provide a loud alert in the event of a leak, long before it can become a hazard.

Propane detectors in motorhomes are 12-volt DC powered and connected directly to the house batteries, in most cases. Some alarms are connected to an electric solenoid valve on the LP-gas tank that closes in the event of a power failure or during an alarm. Others are simple alarms that activate in the presence of LP-gas. Since propane is heavier than air, propane detectors are always mounted near the floor.

Most LP-gas detectors have a five-to-seven-year lifespan before replacement becomes necessary. Unlike other detectors, the years are counted when the device is powered up, not from the date put in service. Many will have an end-of-life signal to indicate the need to replace the unit.

If the LP-gas alarm sounds, leave the motorhome immediately, close the LP-gas tank valve and ventilate the interior. Be cognizant of any source of ignition, like light switches, which should not be turned on while vacating the interior. Most detectors have a feature that will temporarily silence the alarm. Sometimes other gases, like those from aerosol cans, can cause an alarm in the right concentrations. If you're confident this is the cause, ventilate the area and silence the alarm.

Smoke Detectors

Everyone should be aware of smoke detectors mounted in motorhomes. The simple act of making toast can set them off ... as can smoke from a campfire or outside grill. They can be annoying, but they will save your life in the event of a fire. All they require is a new battery every year. Hopefully, your motorhome came with a detector that has a silence button to



Above, left: Shown are the backs of the old and new Dometic/Atwood LP-gas detectors. Note the production date stamp. This detector will produce an alarm when it has reached its end of life, which is being powered for seven years. **Above, right:** Dometic also offers a 12-volt DC combination LP-gas and CO alarm for RVs.

help with the nuisance alarms. If it didn't, consider replacing it.

Maintenance

Beyond the need for replacing the batteries with the ones specified for the devices, it is essential to keep detectors in top condition. Cleaning them is also necessary. A can of compressed air, like Falcon Dust Off (\$13.59 for two cans on www.amazon.com) can be used to remove any dust or particulates from the inside of the detectors.

Testing is imperative. Detectors should be tested when the RV comes out of storage, before each trip and weekly while living in the motorhome. Simply press the button and listen for the alarm.

As mentioned before, detectors

must be replaced as directed by the manufacturer. It may be necessary to remove or dismount the detector to see the date stamp, but this process only takes a few seconds. Adding a sticker near the detector with the replacement date will make it easier to look up.

Consider upgrading or adding additional detectors as needs dictate. They can be found online or at a local home center.

These devices are present to protect the safety and health of you and your family. Maintenance and operation are your responsibility, and RV incidents are sporadic. Being prepared can make unusual incidents even less common. **M**

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MOTORHOME ADOPTION

A SOLID FOUNDATION AND DIESEL-PUSHER POWER LED THIS COUPLE TO AN “ORPHANED” 2003 NATIONAL RV TRADEWINDS

If you are looking for a used motorhome, sometimes you have to think outside of the box.

Buyers in the market for preowned coaches often start their journey by looking at new ones. They traipse through dealership lots and browse the latest models at RV shows so they can see what’s out there and develop an idea of what they want in a used model. Then they focus their search on older versions of those same motorhomes, often shying away from brands built by lesser-known or defunct manufacturers. It’s a reasonable approach, but it can result in missing an opportunity to own a high-quality classic ride.

Take Gary and Debbie Coughlin of Crosby, Texas. They were in the market for a used motorhome and had a popular model by Forest River in mind. In 2013, one surfaced at a local dealer who specialized in repossessions, and they went to take a look. While there, the Coughlins

caught sight of a 2003 National RV Tradewinds 7391 LTC that had just come in. The brand was certainly not on their radar at the time — despite being lauded by “Forbes” and “Fortune” magazines as an up-and-coming company in the late 1990s, National RV had declared bankruptcy in late 2007, unable to weather the recession. That made the Tradewinds, produced from 1997 until the company’s close, an “orphan” coach without manufacturer support.

Still, the couple liked the look of the motorhome, and a little research showed that National RV had a solid reputation for quality craftsmanship and dependability. The Tradewinds was one of the company’s more-expensive models, boasting a Freightliner raised-rail chassis and Cummins ISC 350-hp diesel engine. This particular unit was equipped with two slides, an 8-kW diesel generator and two solar panels. It was clearly well maintained, and the dealer



Debbie and Gary Coughlin enjoy the power and storage space of their Tradewinds.

was in the process of replacing the worn carpet with hardwood flooring. Gary reasoned that while National RV was no longer in business, the chassis, engine and systems were all produced by well-known manufacturers, so finding parts and getting the motorhome serviced should not be a problem. And, \$67,000 was a small price to pay for a 10-year-old, 39½-foot fully equipped Class A pusher — especially when the original base price had been more than \$207,000. Plus, there were only 58,670 miles on the odometer.

Above: The dual-slide National RV Tradewinds 7391 LTC diesel pusher is built on a Freightliner raised-rail chassis.

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The Classic Ride



Refinishing brings out the beauty of the solid maple cabinetry in the galley.

"It was barely broken in," Gary points out.

The exterior paint and clear coat had held up well, making the Tradewinds look far newer than its age. The only problem in need of an immediate remedy was a small leak around the TV antenna. They had a new acrylic roof installed by RV Roofing Solutions, at the same time replacing and relocating the antenna to a spot less likely to be damaged. They emphasize this was money well spent as it resolved the leak completely.

Other replacements included six Toyo tires, new house and chassis batteries, and a new automatic Dometic awning. The couple then focused their attention on interior updates. The appliances, including a combination washer/dryer, RV refrigerator, cooktop, and convection microwave were all original and in good condition, as were the captain's and co-pilot's chairs. The Tradewinds also came with a new sofa bed, so the only furnishings the couple replaced were the dinette chairs. The window treatments were showing their age, so Debbie re-covered the fabric valances and restrung all of the blinds. The couple installed glass tile backsplashes in the kitchen and bath, replaced the fixtures with residential faucets, and added a custom-made stainless-steel and glass shower

enclosure. They also installed two new flat-screen TVs.

The most time-consuming interior update was refinishing the cabinetry. Solid maple throughout, the existing stain was darker in some places and lighter in others, making the wood look "pieced together" and detracting from the overall appearance inside. Gary and Debbie sanded down every surface, then applied stain and polyurethane.

All of the hard work has paid off. The Coughlins' Tradewinds looks showroom-new and runs perfectly.



WINDS OF CHANGE

A 2003 National Tradewinds like the Coughlins' currently ranges from \$48,000- \$69,000 on the used market. Older models can be purchased for as little as \$29,900, but are powered by a smaller Caterpillar 300-hp diesel and do not have the raised-rail chassis. Newer models, like the 2006, run closer to \$99,000 and are powered by a 400-hp Cummins.

► The full-body paint and clear coat of the Tradewinds maintains its beauty and shine.

They use it for one extended trip each year, to destinations like Florida and California, most recently a month-long journey to Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, Canada. They also use their Tradewinds for weekend trips to watch their son race cars, frequently towing his 24-foot trailer. This brings up what Gary feels is their motorhome's greatest strength.

"I like it for the power," he says. "That's a heavy trailer, and you don't even know it's back there."

For Debbie, their coach's most attractive quality is the amount of storage space.

"We have so many cabinets, drawers and cubbies — under the bed, the nightstands, closets and there's overhead storage everywhere. I keep things from the house in the motorhome just to store them, and we still have cabinets with nothing in them!"

In addition to interior space, Gary notes that the raised-rail chassis provides basement pass-through storage as well. This allows the couple to take literally everything they need along on their trips.

"It really is like a home away from home," Debbie says.

And the couple has nothing but praise for the dependability of their Tradewinds.

"We have no problems at all. This motorhome doesn't break down," Gary says.

In fact, there is nothing the couple would change about their coach. They do point out that it is "not a bunkhouse," and while it can sleep two adults and two children, anything more would be



A custom stainless-steel and glass shower enclosure brightens the bathroom.

uncomfortable. However, the size and accommodations are perfect for this couple, and for extended family trips, such as a recent journey to Missouri, when everyone brought their own RV.

While the Tradewinds was not the motorhome they started out looking for, they have no regrets about purchasing an orphan coach. To anyone considering buying a used RV, even one from defunct manufacturer, Gary says "definitely do it."

"You have to do your homework and really check it out," he advises, but with the depreciation of a new motorhome, it is worth the time and effort it may take to find a quality used model. Gary also notes that age and mileage are not disqualifying factors, particularly for a Class A pusher.

"You'll never wear out a diesel!" he says with a smile.

Which is just one of many reasons the Coughlins chose the 2003 National Tradewinds as their classic ride. **M**

Below, left: The rear bedroom includes a walk-around queen-size bed, nightstands and plenty of built-in storage space. Below, right: The Tradewinds has ample seating with a recliner, captain's and co-pilot's swivel seats, and a full-size sleeper sofa.



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Coney Island

After deciding to add an external filter for the city-water connection to our Class A motorhome, I looked for an economical way to keep it upright. I purchased an orange traffic cone and cut off the top to accommodate the filter assembly. The cone holds the filter upright and off the ground, and is highly visible for the departure walk around and final mirror check. Traffic cones are readily available at home-improvement stores and online.

Doug Warnecke | Harwood, North Dakota



Three-prong Protection

Many diesel engines have a three-prong male connector to plug in when the block heater is needed. This plug can get corroded and dirty over time, as it typically hangs over the engine, which could cause it to malfunction. To remedy this, I cut the female end off an old extension cord to use as a cover. Just plug the block-heater connector into the extension-cord connector. It's easy to do, works perfectly and protects the plug like a snug-fitting jacket.

Jerry Vinson | College Station, Texas

The Classics: Of Mice and Motorhomes

After the second year in which mice had gotten into our motorhome, we started yet another inspection. Using a flashlight under the back area while a partner was looking into the rear storage compartments, we found an area where the frame and compartments did not quite meet. That left hidden, but animal-accessible, holes.

Once inside the storage compartment, the animals could easily gain entrance to the living area through the heating duct located in the middle of the compartment.

A can of minimum-expanding spray foam is an easy and inexpensive fix. First, add an extension tube to the can. Start with the end of the tube far

up in the space and slowly pull it out, while continuing to spray. You'll need to fill the hole at the frame, not fill the entire compartment — so you have to be easy on the trigger. And to prevent animals from entering the living area through the heating duct, we placed craft wire in the duct end.

Linda Myers | LaVale, Maryland

The Classics: Buzz Off!

Between trips, our motorhome's rooftop air conditioner always seems to attract yellow jackets, and they would build hives inside the condenser

housing. Our solution was to buy a 48-by-48-inch mosquito net designed for use on a baby carriage/stroller. No alterations were necessary; simply pull

it over the housing and you're done. Just don't forget to remove it before hitting the road.

J. Petersen | Bearsville, New York



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Cover Up?

When the fabric on the seats in a 3-year-old motorhome began showing irregular signs of wear, the owners turned to Hot Line for assistance. They wrote:



conflicts between customers and various RV-related companies. But there are cases when we receive letters about positive interactions between the two parties, where no intervention is needed:

“ My husband and I purchased a 2015 Fleetwood Bounder 33C on July 14, 2015. We presently have 15,628 miles on our Class A motorhome.

On July 18, 2016, after I noticed the fabric on the two front captain's seats was starting to show signs of stress, I spoke with Joy Higginbotham, customer service rep at REV/Fleetwood RV. I was advised to contact Flexsteel Industries, the company that made the seats, as the 1-year warranty had expired and our extended warranty did not cover seats or furniture. When I called Flexsteel, they stated that they were supplied defective fabric and that I should call Vision Fabrics. I called Vision Fabrics, but I never received a return call from the many messages that I had left.

As time has gone by, the fabric has continued to decompose.

In June 2018, I again called Fleetwood and spoke with Higginbotham. She told me there was a problem with the fabric and referred me to Brett Emelander at Spradling Vinyl. He confirmed there was a problem with the material, and sent me 40 yards of a different material.

I then contacted Dennes Furniture Care to see about getting the seats re-covered, and was given a quote of \$600 per seat to reupholster the two front seats. I texted Higginbotham at Fleetwood RV in regard to the cost of getting the furniture reupholstered. Higginbotham [once again] advised that REV/Fleetwood RV could not assist me, as the coach was out of warranty.

Carol and Anthony Giambruno | Port St. Lucie, Florida

That seems like a short amount of time for the upholstery to start showing wear like the Giambrunos described. Couple that with the fact that the manufacturer admitted fault with the materials, and we decided Hot Line should send along the Giambrunos' request to REV/Fleetwood RV. We soon heard back from the manufacturer.

REV Recreation Group received the enclosed letter from Hot Line, stating it was contacted by owners Carol and Anthony Giambruno. The owner of the coach initially contacted REV owner relations seeking replacement of the damaged upholstery in their coach in July 2016. The owner was denied this coverage, as the warranty on the coach had just expired. The owner again contacted REV customer

service in June 2018.

We have contacted the vendor of the upholstery, Spradling Vinyl, on behalf of the Giambrunos. The vendor has agreed to send the Giambrunos replacement upholstery at no cost to them. The vendor has also agreed to cover \$1,000 toward the labor cost incurred to have the repairs completed.

**Cara Lynch, Administrative Assistant,
REV Recreation Group | Decatur, Indiana**

Hot Line is a consumer advocate department designed to mediate

Solid Gold Service

“ We who travel in RVs hear many horror stories about service, but here is a good service story. This past April, on a Saturday, I was headed from Red Bluff, California, to Corning, California, in my 33-foot Class A while towing a Saturn dinghy vehicle. We suddenly hit a narrow, badly broken-up stretch of road and took a serious pounding. We thought we had dodged the worst of it; however, when we reached the RV park, I found oil rapidly dripping out of the Saturn. Since Saturns are no longer manufactured, I had it towed to Gold Rush Chevrolet dealer in Auburn. Frank Curtis, the service manager, said they were backed up with work, but would get to it as soon as possible. He called me Monday and let me know that the oil pan and the transmission pan were damaged, and that there was also a broken motor mount. Even though some of the parts had to be shipped from Reno, Nevada, Gold Rush completed the repair by late afternoon Tuesday and they stayed late so that I could pick up the Saturn. The service department was great, and the cost was very reasonable. If you are in the area and need work, I highly recommend Gold Rush Chevrolet in Auburn, California.

Don and Terri | via email

Take Action Contact Hot Line for Help

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

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By Ken Freund

Installing a Child Seat in a Motorhome

Q

I have a 1999 Winnebago Chieftain with a sofa that has three lap seatbelts. Are there any kits available to install a three-point child seat?

B.J. Walworth | Ellicott City, Maryland

A

This may be a problem. All of the floorplans I have seen for your year and model motorhome have a sideways-mounted sofa with a window directly above it, which precludes mounting a shoulder harness above the couch. I found an article from Winnebago Life (<https://winnebagolife.com/2017/06/buckling-up-kids-in-an-rv/>), which covers this subject. I'd also like to hear from readers on this subject and their solutions.



Hybrid or Electric Motorhomes

I haven't seen this topic discussed much, but I can't wait for it to happen: Diesels and gas engines may be going by the wayside. I have always thought that the motorhome platform would be perfect for hybrid propulsion; lots of space for batteries without an engine, lots of space for solar panels on the roof, and it already comes with a generator to provide power for the long haul. Tesla made a big splash with its reveal of the company's electric semi-truck, and now Freightliner and others are rolling out their own. The semis claim a range of 200-400 miles on a charge, and with a diesel generator as an extender, long trips are possible. I've had a coach with eight 6-volt batteries and 4,000 watts of inverter power, and no propane, and I really liked it. Just think of it, roll into or out of your campsite silently. No engine to maintain, no fluids, no hoses to burst, just low-maintenance electric motors. I suspect floorplans would also improve as a lower profile is possible if the engines are gone. I, for one, look forward to the first one appearing at RV shows.

Gerry Parij | via email

There are many challenges that must be solved before motorhomes go full electric; the main one is cost. The expense of developing hybrid and/or electric drivetrains in automobiles was helped along with government subsidies, and the costs of research and development were spread out across tens of millions of vehicles. This isn't the case with motorhomes because of the smaller sales numbers.

You mention hybrids as not having engines, but by definition a hybrid powertrain includes both an engine and electric drive. As long as the coaches have an internal combustion engine, either gas or diesel, they're going to need fluids, hoses, etc. The gensets in current motorhomes don't have anywhere near the capacity to drive a heavy coach, so if they were to be incorporated into a hybrid drivetrain, they would have to be much larger, heavier and costlier. A straight electric motorhome would require higher capacity charging stations due to the power requirements, which exceed automobile needs by several fold.

Winnebago announced a hybrid Adventurer model concept vehicle back in 2009. It was on a Freightliner eco-FRED chassis, with Eaton hybrid power components. This chassis went away

with the recession and the subsequent loss of cash flow in the industry. It was a bad time to introduce a hybrid motorhome chassis with high cost and only modest economic benefits. There are some niche hybrid products already available, such as Craftsman Coaches (503-897-0284, www.craftsmancoaches.com). Winnebago Industries has also signed a deal with Motiv Power Systems, which converts medium-duty truck chassis to electric power. Winnebago is selling stripped down electric versions of its Class A motorhomes from its custom Commercial Shell division. Available on 33- and 38-foot Class A commercial platforms, this groundbreaking vehicle claims to deliver 85-125 miles on a full charge, limiting it to short-range, fixed-base applications. The most likely scenario going forward for straight electric motorhomes is that we will get a trickle-down effect from truck chassis manufacturers as new systems are developed.

In general, people have been predicting the end of gasoline or diesel engines for decades. Better bring a lunch, and a tent, if you plan on waiting for that to happen — but it does seem likely that hybrid and/or electric motorhomes will be available at some point in the future.

Chassis Stability

Q I recently purchased a 2019 Forest River FR3 30DS on a Ford F-53 chassis with a Ford V-10 engine. This Class A motorhome has a tendency to “roll” from side-to-side depending on various road conditions. I have installed a Safe-T-Plus steering control on the front axle and a Roadmaster sway bar on the rear axle. The motorhome comes with a front sway bar on the chassis from the manufacturer. What can I do to tone down or eliminate the roll tendencies? Maybe replace the factory shocks with better ones as someone suggested, or maybe install air bags on the rear? I hate to keep throwing money at this problem.

Ron Jacobs | Ormond Beach, Florida

A The Ford F-53 chassis has some issues with ride and handling. The fact that the aftermarket offers a wide variety of products to improve ride and handling of these chassis is a good indication of how many people find the stock chassis to be — shall we say — less than perfect. Before people run out and start spending money to change things, it’s essential to have a basic understanding of what each component does. There is some overlap of what components do, so please keep that in mind. It’s also a source of confusion for many people. I also recommend making one change at a time followed by a good test drive so that you can isolate the result after installing a component.

The Safe-T-Plus unit you have is designed to help steering track straight, rather than pull to one side or “hunt” from side to side. It won’t prevent the motorhome from leaning to the outside of the curve when turning, or from wind gusts. The springs hold up motorhome weight, and the stiffer the spring, the less a motorhome of a given weight and size will lean to the outside. But you don’t want to install stiffer springs because the ride will suffer. Stiffer shock absorbers will also help slightly to reduce leaning, but again stiffer

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shocks add expense and will likely result in a harsher ride. The most effective way to reduce leaning (the roll axis) is with anti-sway bars. I think the name is confusing, because many people consider sway to be akin to fishtailing, which is on the yaw axis, not the roll axis. These bars don't significantly affect straight-line ride quality; the shocks, tires and springs mainly do this. They only function to resist leaning. The stock bars are a cost compromise, as are many components. The factory-supplied front anti-sway bar is 1.5 inches in diameter. I suggest upgrading this to a thicker after-market bar. Hellwig (800-435-5944, www.hellwigproducts.com) offers its model number 7217 heavy-duty front anti-sway bar for your rig. Roadmaster's (800-669-9690, www.roadmasterinc.com) front anti-sway bar for the F-53 is part number RM-1139-140.

Probably the best fix, albeit the most expensive, is a product from LiquidSpring. The LiquidSpring

system is a Compressible Liquid Adaptive Suspension System (CLASS). Frequently used by transportation industries, the LiquidSpring system is also available in models to fit motorhomes. They can be found at <https://liquidspring.com> and a review can be found at www.motorhome.com/motorhomes/motorhome-gear/suspension-transformation.

Last, I would be remiss if I didn't mention what is called the "Cheap Handling Fix." Google "Cheap Handling Fix for Ford F-53 Chassis" and you will find many references to this simple modification. Here's an example: www.youtube.com/watch?v=MozielP58PY. This changes the leverage ratio of the stock bars and many people are satisfied with the results. Modify your coach at your own risk, and be safe.

Electrical Gremlins

Q We purchased a 2015 Thor Challenger 37KT in 2015. On

our first trip, we went to Texas for three months, then to Pigeon Forge, Tennessee. Everything worked perfectly in Texas; however, on our second day in Pigeon Forge, the transfer switch quit. We could run the air conditioner and appliances with the generator, but not from shorepower. We went from there to southern Indiana, and I managed to get the switch replaced at an RV dealership under my Thor warranty. We stayed at my daughter's house for 10 days and didn't use the RV until we left there for northern Indiana, where we had an appointment at the Thor service center. On our way, we stopped to visit friends and discovered the converter was defective. I called Thor customer service (which was about a 90-minute drive from where we were) and the person I talked to actually came down with a new converter and changed it out right there in the RV park. That says something for Thor customer service! At any rate, after he installed the converter, we discovered the inverter wasn't working either. We also noticed my batteries had been overcharging and had boiled almost dry. I check my batteries regularly. What I want to do is replace the two 6-volt batteries in series with four 12-volt batteries all in parallel or, at least, two 12-volt batteries in parallel. And, yes, I'm still having problems with those 6-volt batteries. I can charge them up completely, but they won't hold a charge.

William Van Winkle | Purcell, Oklahoma

A The fact that you had so many electrical problems at once makes me suspicious. I think you may still have an undiagnosed situation, which was the underlying cause of these maladies. The electrical system might have been damaged by something like a major electrical surge. This could have come from a lightning strike to the power grid, a vehicle taking down a power pole and shorting out wires, a surge when power was being reconnected, or myriad other causes. The failed components should have been carefully examined (if necessary, by their manufacturer) to determine

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the cause of failure, and the entire charging system tested for proper operation before or at the same time as new batteries are installed.

Have you had the old batteries tested on a computerized battery tester? I would recommend having that done to ensure the batteries are bad. Replacing the 6-volt batteries with 12-volt batteries is fine, but you won't have the reserve capacity in the 12-volt batteries that you do with the 6-volt, nor will you have the same resistance to deep discharge cycles as the 6-volt. The 12-volt batteries will be less expensive, and if you're not doing any boondocking, it won't matter much. I would recommend you purchase an RV surge protector/energy management system to help protect the motorhome from future shorepower insults.

Leveling Jacks Won't!

Q We have a 34-foot 2005 Holiday Rambler Vacationer on a Workhorse chassis. Last trip out, our hydraulic jacks would not work at all. And there are no lights on the dash panel. I took it to our local RV mechanic, and after him spending approximately eight hours, on and off, he could not find the leveling control module. He took the dash off, tried following wires, called Holiday Rambler or Monaco, and nothing. He called us to come and pick it up and said if we find it, bring it back. Well, we can't find it and we need help.

Jim and Rhonda Montgomery
Langley, British Columbia, Canada

A If there are no lights on the dash panel, the system has probably lost power. Have the fuses and/or circuit breakers checked first and confirm power to the pump and control module. If several circuits are out, you may have had a connector come loose or rodents chewing on wires; a broken ground can also be a factor. The module, which is a black plastic box roughly the size of a children's lunch box (remember them?), should be attached to the top of a storage bay. Inside the module is a circuit board that

controls the system, which is not user-serviceable. If there is 12-volt DC power and a good ground to the board, and the jacks still don't work, it will need to be tested by the manufacturer. Verify that the automatic parking brake is engaged, as this must occur before the jacks will extend. I believe you have a Power Gear automatic leveling system. The Power Gear Power Level hydraulic leveling and service manual is available at www.lci1.com/support-center.

Electrical Terminology

Q Thanks for your response to my question regarding batteries in "Baffled by Batteries" in the January issue. I intend to use two pairs of 6-volt batteries in the future. They'd also be easier to install in the battery compartment. With the 12-volt, I have to actually remove the stair step to get a big enough opening. I understand what amp-hours (Ah) are, but I have no idea how to measure (continued on page 64)



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(continued from page 59)

them. How could I know when my house battery has been discharged to 50 percent? My Thor Four Winds has a four-light display for showing various levels. For the battery level, what do these lights signify? Are they accurately measuring the battery's capacity, where each light would indicate the level in increments of a third and if a battery measures 12.2 volts at 50 percent, what should it measure at 100 percent?

Bob Dye | St. Louis, Missouri

Amp-hour capacity is marked on the batteries and/or is provided by the manufacturer in published specifications. You can monitor amp-hour usage and battery condition using specialized panels usually provided with bigger inverters and solar systems. Many owners use voltage to estimate battery state of charge. Fully charged batteries should measure 12.6 volts at rest (without a load or a charger connected). However, they will often read higher if a power converter or inverter is charging them, or has just finished charging them. The voltage, if higher, will slowly drop to 12.6 after the surface charge is depleted. Also, if you place a significant load on a battery, even if it is near 100 percent charged, its voltage may drop lower than its actual state of charge, then rebound when you remove the load. I suggest that you install a digital voltage meter near the LED battery monitor panel to give you more accurate readings. The original built-in panels have preset voltage points where various LEDs are lit to indicate charge level, but these are often not marked on the panels. **M**

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Races For the Rest of Us

When it comes to springtime sporting spectacles, the Kentucky Derby isn't the only game in town

By Alan Rider

Spring is upon us, and with it comes one of the all-time great spectacles of the sporting world: The Kentucky Derby (502-636-4400, www.kentuckyderby.com; May 4, 2019).

While the pageantry surrounding this first contest in horse racing's Triple Crown is undeniable, I have to admit this event's traditional trappings leave me feeling, well, kind of underwhelmed. I guess, for me at least, the idea of ladies in elaborate hats, gentlemen in dandy clothing and free-flowing mint juleps has lost its luster after 140-plus years.

Truth is, this indifference probably has more to do with my worldview than it does the actual Derby itself. If there's anything the years have taught me, it's that I'm just more comfortable rubbing elbows with the motorhoming hoi polloi than putting on posh airs. So sue me.

I must admit that I do appreciate the thrill of a good race, however. Especially anything that smacks of the unusual, or even downright quirky.

Which explains how I found myself inside the rectangular corral that serves as the racecourse for the annual Virginia City International Camel and Ostrich Races (775-847-7500, www.visitvirginiacitynv.com; September 6-8, 2019). A media pass had gotten me this up-close photographic access, which was great until an out-of-control camel (in hindsight, I realize this phrase is ridiculously

redundant) came careening my way.

After I recovered from my near-stomping experience, I found the rest of the event thoroughly entertaining. You haven't lived until you've seen otherwise rational human beings flailing atop a wooly, humped beast as it gallops at full speed toward the finish line. To say nothing of the brave souls clinging to the saddles on gigantic African birds as they madly flap their way across the paddock, plumage blowing in the breeze. Quite the magnificent sight, really.

On a slightly smaller (but no less impressive) scale are the jumping frogs of Calaveras County. The very same contest — officially known as Calaveras County Fair & Jumping Frog Jubilee (209-736-2561, www.frogtown.org) — memorialized by Mark Twain still takes place every May (May 16-19, 2019). Wherein you can witness some of the most buff bullfrogs you'd ever want to meet competing to see if anyone's amphibian Olympian can beat the

world record of 21 feet and change.

While both of the above events feature amusing animals, it's safe to say none are more entertaining than what have to be the most comical critters on four legs: the racing dachshund. Yes, the low-slung hounds compete at events across the country all year long in big cities and small towns, where it's hard not to laugh watching those little legs and floppy ears fly as they race to their owner's arms and the promise of a favorite toy or treat.

And the animal racing impresarios, in their apparent efforts to keep boredom at bay, haven't stopped there. Which has led to events like The Great American Duck Race (575-546-2674, www.demingduckrace.com) in Deming, New Mexico, a homey celebration held each August (2019 dates not available as of press time) featuring a duck "parade" and racing on both wet and dry tracks. The very idea quacks me up (hey, somebody had to say it). From piglets to porcupines, you name the animal and chances are someone, somewhere, is racing them as crowds hoot-and-holler.

Ultimately, while I'm generally an advocate of a laid-back life in the slow lane, part of me completely understands the attraction of a good head-to-head competition. Which may explain why I'm always racing off — figuratively speaking, at least — to see what new adventures await along The Road Ahead. **M**

“ I must admit that I do appreciate the thrill of a good race. Especially anything that smacks of the unusual, or even downright quirky. ”

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Animal events combine competitive spirit with the unpredictable, but the jumping frogs of Calaveras County and racing ostriches really know how to strut their stuff.





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