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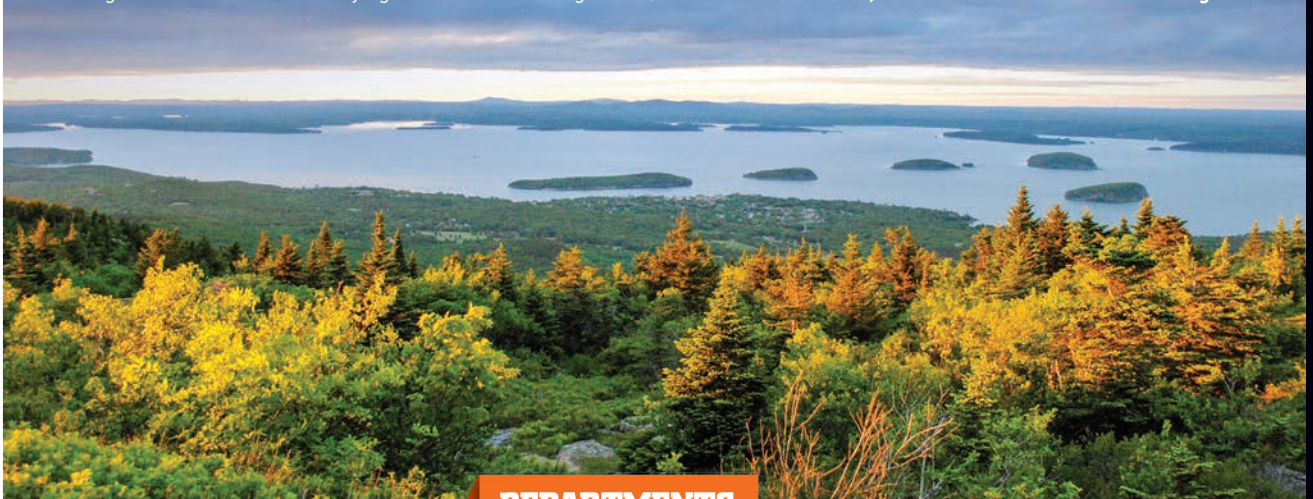
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🚐 **Forest River's 268RKS is one of seven floorplans available in the easy-towing Vibe line. Page 10**

On the cover: Keystone's Outback Super-Lite 332FK at Indian Ranch in Webster, Massachusetts. Photo by Michael Gordon

Do You Have an RV Bucket List?

Drafting a lineup of dream destinations can help with trip planning



What constitutes an RV bucket list? Years ago, I pondered that very question. Back then, my list included recreational vehicles I wanted to own and RV accessories I wanted to install, as well as RV trips I wanted to take and destinations I wanted to visit. The older and wiser me has reduced that down to the trips and destinations part. Don't get me wrong; I still have my RV wish list, but it doesn't have the exalted status of a bucket list.

I live in the Northeast and have always wanted to take a cross-country trip in an RV. Unlike many of you, I haven't managed to do that yet. In fact, in more than 40 years of RVing, including a 10-year stint as a full-timer, I have never driven an RV farther west than Chicago. I take coast-to-coast trips frequently, but I fly when I do.

At the top of my RV bucket list is to drive Route 66 from one end to the other, camping along the way. I have traveled several sections of the Mother Road that extends from Chicago to Santa Monica, but never with an RV. I own the Ross and McClanahan Route 66 maps, and the trip is all planned out, as it has been for about 15 years. Other items on my list include touring the national parks, seeing the Pacific Northwest and camping on the ocean at California state parks. The list goes on, and the places I want to visit are too numerous to mention.

Speaking of favorite places, there's still time to vote for yours in *Trailer Life's* sixth-annual Reader's Choice Awards election. The awards recognize destinations, products and businesses across the RV, camping and travel industries. Be sure to cast your vote for what's best in each of the 30 categories. Voting ends September 20 at www.trailerlife.com/readers-choice.

This issue is packed with the latest RVs, including back-to-back tests of two very different trailers. The cover story (page 18) features the Keystone Outback Super-Lite 332FK, with its trendsetting front windshield and outstanding livability for two. The 38-foot-plus triple-slide trailer has all the amenities expected in an RV this size.

In the issue's second test (page 27), Bruce Smith takes an off-road adventure with the 11½-foot Turtleback Expedition, kicking off our Tiny Trailers series at www.trailerlife.com/tinytrailers. The online section includes exclusive roundups of off-road towables, contemporary teardrops and easy-towing conventional trailers with a gross vehicle weight rating of 3,500 pounds or less.

Another trailer roundup, Stephanie and Jeremy Puglisi's "Half-Ton Towables" (page 42), discusses why that label can be misleading and offers advice for matching full-size trucks with suitable travel trailers. The roundup profiles a dozen 2018 models with a wide range of floorplans and weight ratings.

Have fun checking off the items on your RV bucket list, and we'll see you down the highway! 🚚

— Chris Dougherty, Technical Editor

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Alliance for Audited Media
The New Audit Bureau of Circulations

Trailer Life (ISSN 0041-0780) is published monthly by GS Media & Events (a division of Good Sam Enterprises, LLC), 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036. Periodicals postage paid at Oxnard, CA 93036, and additional mailing offices. The annual subscription rate is \$17.97 per year in the U.S. For Canadian and International subscriptions, add \$12 per year. U.S. funds only.

U.S. Postmaster Send address changes to *Trailer Life*, P.O. Box 5860, Harlan, IA 51593-1360.

Canadian Return Address GS Media & Events, 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6J3. Publication Sales Agreement 40012332.

Printed in the United States

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Options Tip the Scales

I just read “Half-Ton Heaven” in the July issue. I was intrigued enough by Kevin Livingston’s account of the Lance 2375 to look up a number of online video presentations of that trailer from various dealerships around the country. In so doing, I became aware of what appear to be factual errors in your article.

The article says, “Given the trailer’s generous storage spaces and its modest, at best, 310-pound payload capacity....” The claim is repeated in the specifications table, where the cargo-carrying capacity (ccc) is listed as 310 pounds again.

Where did this figure come from? The ccc is given on the manufacturer’s sticker as 1,126 pounds, and the sticker clearly states that this is calculated with the freshwater tanks full and the waste-water tanks empty. I am having difficulty understanding this discrepancy.

Rex D. Matthews, Atlanta, Georgia

Technical Editor Chris Dougherty replies: *When we do a full test, we verify as many of the specs as possible, including measuring and weighing the trailer. We took the 2017 Lance 2375 test unit to a certified scale and obtained the wet weight with a full freshwater tank, full LP-gas cylinders and empty holding tanks. It’s all part of the intensive work we do when testing an RV and reporting back to readers. The 2375 provided to us by Lance was a fully loaded unit with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 6,500 pounds. Often the specifications listed on a website or brochure are for a base model and do not include options, which can add quite a bit of weight.*

Look on the Bright Side

I constantly see trailers in tan and brown. They remind me of the bookmobile that came to my grade school! When will manufacturers again paint their trailers a pretty color?

Doug Allen, St. Charles, Missouri

RVs have become too predictable and blasé. I’d like to see RV companies change it up. Maybe they need to pick up some current decorator books and magazines for inspiration or try looking at decorating ideas from the paint manufacturers. Production-side decisions lead to lackluster products.

Yvonne E. Schwartz, Wolcottville, Indiana

Although this may not be the palette either of you had in mind, manufacturers are coming out with more colorful trailers than we’ve seen in years. Here are a few from (left to right) Winnebago, Livin’ Lite and Weekend Warrior. — Editors



For the record, Lance’s marketing director has notified us that the 2375’s GVWR has been increased to 7,000 pounds on 2018 models.

Trailers Built for Two

Stephanie and Jeremy Puglisi’s “The Buzz on Bunkhouses” in the July issue was an interesting and informative article on a market niche for families. The article made me think that the industry is missing another niche: RVs designed for couples wanting storage space rather than sleeping and seating for four, six or more.

A lot of RVs have two people traveling and living in units that are woefully lacking in storage and closet space because the designs put more emphasis on comfort than personal needs for just a couple. With a bit of creative thinking, many floorplans appear adaptable to that type of design. A toy hauler repurposed for closets and storage rather than toys could be a good plan.

Thomas Bronk, Tucson, Arizona

Read It and Reap

Several years ago we almost “lost” our travel trailer due to a tire leaking air. After reading about the TireMinder tire-pressure monitoring system in *Trailer Life*, we installed one and have never had a fear of something like that happening again. After reading about the Hayes Sway Master in the December 2016 issue, we purchased one and noticed a big difference in the behavior of our truck and trailer. After reading “Smooth Sailing” in the March issue, we had the MORyde SRE4000 suspension system installed and felt a positive improvement right away.

We save the magazines for future reference and often mention to RVing friends how valuable *Trailer Life* has been for us.

**Edmund Rannells
Bluefield, West Virginia**

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



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Michigan's Step Back in Time

Leave the present behind at Copper Harbor's Fort Wilkins Historic State Park to experience life in 1870

article by **Bob Marr**

How would you like to travel back in time to 1870 and talk to a soldier or a laundress about life in a military outpost? Or maybe stop in at a sutler's store or blacksmith shop? You can do just that at Fort Wilkins in Copper Harbor, Michigan, which began as a U.S. Army outpost on the northern frontier in 1844 and was permanently abandoned in 1870. Fort Wilkins became a state park in 1923 and now features exhibits, audiovisual presentations and evening programs that show what life was like in this then-remote location.

The best time to experience this history is from mid-June to mid-August, when costumed interpreters bring the fort to life, going about the daily chores of the time and answering visitors' questions about life in 1870. The biggest treat is at the end of July when a living-history group depicting Battery D, 1st Michigan Light Artillery, holds its annual weekend encampment. Members spend the weekend demonstrating all aspects of Army life around the time of the Civil War, including small arms and artillery drills.

On September 9, the park hosts a geocaching treasure hunt to track down hidden treasures in and around the fort and nearby area. The public



(Top) The buildings at Fort Wilkins Historic State Park are maintained with an eye to historical accuracy. **(Above left)** Costumed interpreters bring the 1870s fort to life. **(Above right)** A couple of young recruits are drafted for Battery D when a living-history group holds its annual weekend demonstrating Civil War military life.

can join in to discover historical locations, listen to stories around the campfire and enjoy a picnic lunch (bring your own GPS device).

History and treasure hunting are not the only draws. The area boasts nature preserves to explore, lots of hiking opportunities, nationally recognized mountain-bike trails, boating, fishing and birding, just to mention a few. In winter visitors can go ice fishing and cross-country skiing.

The village of Copper Harbor has many fine gift shops, restaurants and attractions for the whole family, including kayak and mountain-bike rentals. Perhaps you would prefer a boat trip to the historic lighthouse or an evening cruise aboard the *Isle Royale Queen IV* in search of sunsets and huge freighters to round out the day. The *Queen* also makes trips to Isle Royale National Park for those who want to visit this isolated wilderness park.

The fort is open daily from 8:30 a.m. to dusk, with the complex open

from mid-May through mid-October. The park offers two campgrounds with 30/50-amp electrical service and several large pull-through sites, but no individual water or sewer hookups. There are water taps located throughout the campgrounds, a dump station, modern shower buildings with laundry facilities and free Wi-Fi. A small park store offers souvenirs, ice and snacks.

Adjacent to Fort Wilkins, Lake Fanny Hooe Resort and Campground offers RV sites with full hookups. The resort is open from Memorial Day weekend through early October, weather permitting.

Fort Wilkins Historic State Park
906-289-4215, www.michigan.gov/dnr

Fort Wilkins Natural History Association
906-289-4705, www.fortwilkinsnha.org

Lake Fanny Hooe Resort and Campground
906-289-4451, www.fannyhooe.com

Michigan State Parks
Campground reservations: 800-447-2757

Good Vibrations

With unloaded weights starting at 4,666 pounds, Forest River's Vibe and Vibe Extreme Lite travel trailers come with wide-stance axles that contribute to easy towing, according to the manufacturer. Aluma Frame side walls and what the company calls Hyper Lyte construction are said to take off the pounds.

Currently, there are seven floorplans in each of the Vibe and Extreme Lite travel trailer lines. In the Extreme Lite series, lengths range from 24 to 34 feet, while the Vibe series measures 33 to 38 feet. Features include reeded glass in the kitchen cabinets, a 22-inch oven, three-burner



range, 10.7-cubic-foot refrigerator and residential-style carpeting. LED lighting is provided throughout, and many models have outdoor kitchens.

The rear-kitchen 2018 Vibe 268RKS, pictured here, is 34½ feet long and offers sleeping space for up to six, a cathedral ceiling, radius shower, and two pushback recliners across from a slideout that houses the dinette and jackknife sofa. The entertainment system includes Bluetooth stereo with surround sound and outdoor speakers. For those who like to take the party outside, an optional gas grill and exterior kitchen are housed under a 20-foot awning with LED lighting.

Base MSRP for the Vibe is \$29,000 to \$34,000, and \$24,000 to \$28,000 for Extreme Lite.

Forest River RV, 574-296-2084, www.forestriverinc.com/vibe



The 34½-foot-long 268RKS, available with an optional exterior kitchen, has residential carpeting in the slide that houses the Deluxe Wood Booth Table Top and jackknife sofa.

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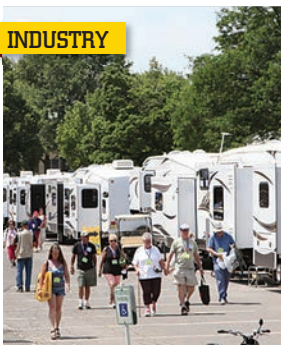
Largest U.S. Ram Truck Center

The largest Ram Truck Center in the United States is scheduled to open near the end of 2017. H.W. Hunter's new 40,000-square-foot facility in Lancaster, California, is being built from the ground up and will include heavy-duty lifts, large service bays, oversize parking spaces and three dedicated Quick Lube stalls for oil changes and maintenance. Certified truck experts, service advisers and technicians will be on-site to assist with truck customers' needs, and loaner trucks will be available for customers while their vehicles are being serviced.

"H.W. Hunter has been a driving force here in the Antelope Valley since 1944, and they just keep growing. The addition of Ram of the West to the Lancaster Auto Mall is one of true industry prowess," said Lancaster Mayor R. Rex Parris.

www.hunterdodgechryslerjeep.net

INDUSTRY



Increase in RV Shipments

According to Frank Hugelmeyer, president of the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA), RV shipments will reach 472,200 units in 2017, an increase of 9.6 percent from 2016. Said Hugelmeyer, "Our industry is in an era of unprecedented growth. We are poised to record an eighth consecutive year of shipment gains, mainly due to product innovations that appeal to retiring Baby Boomers as well as younger buyers. The recession is in the rearview mirror. This is a new era for the RV industry." He also said that the expected peak in 2018 (projected at 487,200 units) will mark a ninth consecutive year of expansion. Quarterly gains for 2017 have been widespread with Class B and C motorhomes up more than 30 percent from 2016, and travel trailers and fifth-wheels up 10 percent.

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ST215 / 75R14 - 6PR

ST205 / 75R15 - 6PR

ST205 / 75R15 - 8PR

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ST235 / 80R16 - 10PR*

*3 ply sidewall construction

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With hundreds of models under one roof, RV shows make it easier to find the perfect one

Seasoned RVers know there's no better place than an RV show to shop for a wide variety of new travel trailers, fifth-wheels, toy haulers and motorhomes. Staged at regional convention and event centers, consumer RV shows corral an array of RVs from multiple dealerships. They're ideal settings for comparison shopping, with the latest RVs and RV gear, hands-on assistance and discounted pricing.

Because everything is show priced, it's easier to get a good deal without haggling.

GS Events, a division of Good Sam Enterprises, runs 30 RV shows across the country, from Rhode Island to Georgia and Arizona, and many in between. These shows are affiliated with the Good Sam Club and its partners, and are known for exhibiting a wide range of goods, hosting educational seminars and supplying information about the RV lifestyle. After kicking some tires and listening to the RV experts, showgoers can browse aisles of RV equipment and learn about RV destinations.

Among its annual lineup, GS Events stages three shows in Colorado each year, including the upcoming Great American RV Show in Colorado Springs, September 28 through 30. Visit the website for more information and to see the full schedule of RV shows.

GS Events, 800-848-6247, www.gsevents.com



Colorado's Colorful Ride

Sightseers can take in golden aspen leaves, blue skies, rugged rocks and green pine trees from their seats in a dome railcar on the Rio Grande Scenic Railroad, departing from Alamosa, Colorado. Lunch is served as the train travels over historic tracks, and docents present talks and discussions. The Fall Colors Explorer runs September 9 through October 17, and an Oktoberfest Train departs on October 7.

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Fridge on the Fritz

A Florida reader asked RV Resolutions to intervene when he wasn't fully reimbursed after paying to fix his fifth-wheel's refrigerator:

► When the cooling unit on the Norcold 1200 refrigerator in my Keystone Montana failed on February 3, 2016, I took it to Nature Coast RV in Crystal River, Florida. Because the cooling unit was still under warranty, Nature Coast contacted Norcold to begin the warranty process, but then the unit started working again.

On December 11, 2016, the cooling unit failed a second time. Although the unit was out of warranty by then, Norcold replaced it at no charge, but my request to have the cost of labor covered was denied. I feel Norcold did not consider the initial February time frame when the unit first quit working but was still covered by the warranty.

Thank you for any assistance you can provide.

Christian S. Westhall, Lecanto, Florida

THE COMPANY RESPONDS

RV Resolutions contacted Norcold's parent company, Thetford Corporation, on Christian Westhall's behalf and received the following reply from the customer-service department:

Regarding Mr. Westhall's cooling-unit replacement, a "no cooling" report was made to Norcold on February 10, 2016. However, no further action was taken because the unit started working again. The initial report was taken into consideration when Norcold provided a cooling unit out of



goodwill in December of 2016, although the refrigerator was eight months out of warranty.

We believe that our team has already made a fair concession by honoring the one-year parts-only warranty when the product was in fact out of warranty. However, I am prepared to reimburse \$577.50 for the labor incurred for the cooling-unit installation.

**Kimberley Gordon, Senior Manager
Customer Service, Thetford Corporation
Ann Arbor, Michigan**

A week later, RV Resolutions received a thank-you note from Westhall:

► I am happy to let you know that, thanks to your efforts, I have received a refund in the amount of \$577.50, which covers the labor charge to install the cooling unit in our refrigerator. Just saying thanks doesn't seem like it is enough gratitude, but it's the best I have. Thank you!

C.S.W.

Trouble with Tires

When the extended warranty did not cover replacement of all of a California reader's failed RV tires and the resulting damage to his fifth-wheel, he turned to RV Resolutions:

► On July 6, 2015, we purchased four G-rated radials from Big O Tires in Hollister, Missouri. We also paid for a three-year protection plan.

In June of 2016, I noticed a bubble on the sidewall of one of the tires and replaced the tire with one of two spares. In August of 2016, two of the tires had blowouts, causing damage to the right wheel and fender skirt. I called my road-service provider to have a replacement brought out,

since I had only one spare left. My jack was destroyed when I lent it to the mobile tire service because their jack was leaking.

When I called Big O Tires, the rep said they would replace two of the three tires, but between the third tire, the fender, the wheel and the jack, I spent \$448.25 out of pocket. Big O does not want to deal with me.

Lennie Burke, Hemet, California

Although Big O Tires did not respond directly to two requests from RV Resolutions, we did receive a follow-up note from Lennie Burke:

I would like to thank *Trailer Life* and RV Resolutions for your help in resolving this matter. I received a check today from Big O Tires, bringing this issue to a close.

L.B. 📧

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



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Fifty-one years have passed since the launch of the Good Sam Club, and the halo-topped mascot still has a lot to smile about, including 10 percent off the nightly rate at 2,189 Good Sam Parks. The 10 percent discount saves members on RV vacations across North America — from Alaska, with 30 Good Sam Parks, to Florida, with a whopping 205 Good Sam Parks.

Getting the Good Sam Park discount is practically effortless. Members show their Good Sam Club membership card at the park's registration desk, and 10 percent is deducted from the regular nightly RV rate right on the spot.

Of course, the Good Sam Park logo signifies more than the 10 percent discount. The familiar symbol is members' assurance that these destinations have met or exceeded the stringent quality standards established by the Good Sam Club.

► To locate Good Sam Parks, go to www.goodsam.com/travel, use the Find a Campground search tool and click on the Good Sam Parks Only box.



HAVE A SAFE TRIP

How to protect your home when you're on the roam



Homeowners tend to put off installing a home-security system for two reasons: it's too expensive and too much trouble.

The hardware can be costly, installation typically requires drilling holes and snaking wires throughout the house, and most monitoring plans come with a long-term contract. Consequently, many people postpone installing a system or decide not to do it at all.

In response, SimpliSafe introduced an affordable system that can be set up in less than an hour without hardwiring. The cost for 24/7 alarm monitoring with police dispatch is a reasonable \$15 a month, and the plan can be canceled at any time. The system is ideal for RVers and other frequent travelers who want to make sure their home is safe while they're away without spending a fortune to do so.

To encourage Good Sam members to give it a try, SimpliSafe is offering two months of free monitoring with the purchase of the system, and shipping is free. Members who aren't satisfied can return the hardware within 60 days for a full refund.

► To learn more about the SimpliSafe home-security system and the Good Sam Club offer for 60 days of free monitoring, go to www.simplisafe.com/trailer.

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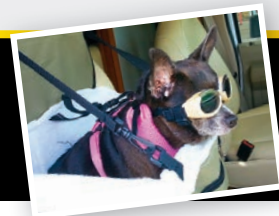
September Savings: Camping World hosts its annual U-Bag-It Sale on **September 8 and 9** this year. Members can find deals and details in the Camping World flyer delivered in the mail.

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CANINE COPILOT When Good Sam Club members Larry and Clarice Marty hit the road in their Winnebago Aspect, they buckle up their pooch, Pippi, in grand style. The black Chihuahua wears sporty Doggles sunglasses to protect her eyes and snuggles up in a faux-sheepskin-lined booster seat that the Grovetown, Georgia, couple calls Pippi's Palace.





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Adventure Ah

With two entrances, three slideouts and a trendsetting wind
Outback Super-Lite 332FK is a couple's ticket to the great

When you hear the word "Outback," what comes to mind? A beautiful yet untamed wilderness in the middle of Australia that requires ruggedness and self-sufficiency for survival? It's unlikely that's what designers at Keystone RV had in mind 15 years ago when they released the first Outback travel trailer, but they certainly were thinking of out-of-the-way adventures that didn't sacrifice comfort and convenience.

That theme continues with the 15th-anniversary Outback Super-Lite 332FK, a great couples' floorplan, which, with its standard Arctic Barrier Package, is designed to take occupants comfortably to their favorite destinations, whatever the weather. In this case, we conducted our test at the Indian Ranch concert venue and campground on Lake Char-gog-gag-gog-man-cha-ugg-gog-gchaubuna-gungamaug in Webster, Massachusetts — Webster Lake, for short.

The 2018 Outback 332FK is a travel-trailer version of the Keystone Montana 3820FK fifth-wheel we reviewed in the August 2016 issue. The most striking feature is the automotive-style windshield behind the front dinette. The dark-tinted windshield affords a commanding view that opens up the whole kitchen and dining area.

The dinette, one of the most comfortable in the RV industry, isn't convertible for sleeping, although the windshield is easily darkened by a black pull-down shade. The dinette benches are well utilized, however, providing access to the passenger-side storage compartment, the 35,000-Btu furnace, the 6-gallon gas/electric water heater and electrical-system components that

include the 75-amp converter.

Above the dinette is a wood ceiling fixture with LED accent lighting and a three-globe chandelier. As is common with RVs these days, lighting throughout the Outback is LED, and most of the fixtures are standard single or dual housings with a sliding switch. Flooring is vinyl with an attractive gray-plank pattern, except for the carpeted bedroom.

Housed in a long streetside slideout, the adjacent kitchen is nicely equipped with a Dometic 8-cubic-foot refrigerator and an Atwood range with a 17-inch oven. The 900-watt High Pointe turntable-free microwave features Diamond Wave technology that, according to the company, cooks food evenly without spinning. This also means the glass turntable won't rattle and dislodge every time the trailer takes a trip.

Well-made cabinets have solid-maple doors and ample solid-surface countertops that include an L-shaped extension. The under-mount double-bowl sink features a high-rise pull-out faucet. The layout is compact, but the sink and appliances form the ideal kitchen triangle, making cooking chores easier.

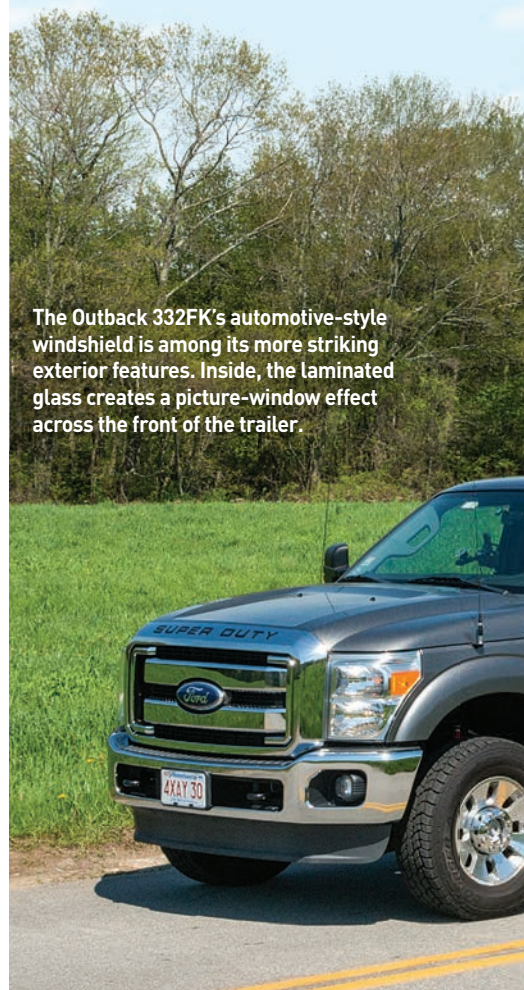
Across from the kitchen in the passenger-side slideout is a large pantry with tons of room to store everything from pots and pans to culinary treats. When extended, the opposing slideouts expand the space for not only a convenient kitchen but also a nicely equipped living area.

The test trailer had reclining theater seating in the passenger-side slide and a pull-out sofa sleeper in the driver-side slide. The rearward wall contains an entertainment center with a 50-inch LED

TV, a DVD-stereo system and an electric fireplace, all set in an attractive cabinet with plenty of space for components, DVDs or whatever you wish to store. Two cubbies, one with a USB charging station, are tucked above two cabinets with solid maple doors. Below are two more doors with frosted-glass inserts that match the cabinets above the sofa sleeper.

While the Outback Super-Lite 332FK is ideal for couples, there is minimal additional sleeping space. The pull-out sofa sleeper is full, not

The Outback 332FK's automotive-style windshield is among its more striking exterior features. Inside, the laminated glass creates a picture-window effect across the front of the trailer.



Lead

shield, Keystone's outdoors

queen size, so two adults may not fit on it comfortably. However, there is more than ample space for entertaining and enjoying meals with friends, courtesy of the U-shaped dinette, without the constricting feeling some standard RV dinettes impose.

Movies should sound pretty good with the iRV Technologies DVD stereo with 2.1 surround in zone 1, although the test unit's zone 1 was wired to the bedroom. Zone 2 receives standard stereo audio. The third zone is interesting, in that it has an independent-control function, which means it can play different media than the other zones. While controlling this takes some acclimation, it's a great feature that allows the outside speakers to play music, even streamed

wirelessly through a Bluetooth device, while those inside enjoy different tunes or stereo-TV audio.

The system features two HDMI outputs and one input, and features an audio return channel (ARC), so the audio of whatever source is being watched on a compatible television, whether over-the-air, satellite or cable TV, will play through the stereo via the HDMI ARC. The stereo is also controlled by a proprietary smartphone app, allowing the user to stream music as well as control many functions.

Speaking of smart devices, the Outback Super-Lite comes standard with the ASA Electronics iN-Command system. This trailer-automation system controls the slideouts, awning, water heater, tank-level sensors and most of the lighting through a wall-mounted touch-screen display or a mobile app. The ability to control the slideouts and awning from outside while being able to check clearances is a convenient feature. So is being able to turn on all the lights from the tow vehicle during a nighttime arrival. In the 332FK, the display is mounted to the hallway wall outside the bathroom door.

The side-aisle bathroom in the 332FK is good sized. The shower has a rounded front with a frosted-glass sur-

round and two sliding doors that meet in the middle, held tight by a magnetic strip. The shower has the usual shelves and ample room for even a 6-footer to feel comfortable, especially with the skylight overhead. The vanity and sink are compact but work fine. A ceramic Thetford toilet sits kitty-corner between the doors. The bathroom features a large linen closet with plenty of room, and hooks on the doors provide a place to hang damp towels.

The carpeted master suite is as nice as any we've seen in a travel trailer. An entry door on the passenger's side provides outside access, and a convenient countertop and wall full of cabinets, drawers and a closet are on the same side. The cabinetry continues its elegant look and feel from the living area. Drawers are large enough to hold a good amount of clothes, and the closet is adequately sized for two.

With its nicely sewn padded-vinyl headboard, the standard king bed will appeal to many, but its area-filling size in the slideout eliminates space for any type of bedside table. The aforementioned counter across from the bed has a USB charging station and 120-volt AC receptacles, but to have a smartphone, CPAP or other electronic device close at





(Above left) Gourmet meal prep is a snap in the kitchen with an L-shaped extension, ample solid-surface counter space and plenty of drawers and cabinets for storage. **The living room** is ideal for entertaining with an electric fireplace, LED TV, DVD-stereo system and room for components in the attractive cabinet. **(Above right)** The front dinette is roomy and comfortable. A black pull-down shade covers the front windshield.

hand while in bed requires leaving them on the floor, placing them on the window valance or setting them inside the over-bed cabinet, which will require the use of an extension cord from the outlet on the back wall of the trailer or the bathroom wall on the other side.

The bedroom has excellent ventilation, with a roof vent, jalousie windows by the cabinets and across the back wall, and a single window on each side of the bed in the slide, in addition to the exterior door.

As mentioned, this trailer comes with the Arctic Barrier Package, which, according to the company, features R-14 roof insulation, R-7 block foam in the laminated side walls and R-10 block foam in the laminated floor. The heated and enclosed underbelly protects the tanks, piping and waste valves, allowing an extended travel season in frosty conditions.

The upgraded frameless windows are dark-tinted and single-pane, which

means they have an insulation R-value of about 1, which offsets some of the commendable insulation elsewhere in the trailer. Dual-pane windows would be a logical option, in light of the Arctic Barrier package promoted in the selling literature.

The trailer is equipped with a 15,000-Btu Coleman-Mach ducted air conditioner and 50-amp electrical service, and wired for a second air conditioner in the bedroom to replace the roof vent.

Experience has shown that any RV out in the bright sun on hot days will heat up, making cooling systems less effective, and with a trailer this size, the second air conditioner would be a good option in these conditions. During our test, the trailer was in bright sun, including two days of temperatures from 90 to

95 degrees Fahrenheit, and the single air conditioner wasn't quite enough.

The exterior of the trailer is clad in pearl-white gel-coated high-gloss fiberglass and attractive appliques. A textured, diamond-pattern lower panel (called a J-wrap) adds a nice touch and reduces unsightly dents and scratches that are commonly found in this area after time on the road.

For this floorplan, the most striking exterior feature is the front cap, which utilizes a unique spray-on bed-liner rock guard on the lower half and the Guardian PrivaGuard windshield above, with the Outback logo emblazoned across the top. Small dot-style LED marker lights enhance the design. The windshield is durable and not only looks appealing but opens the front of the trailer to a panoramic view while making it difficult for people to see inside during the day.

The Outback has an optional BAL 7.0 auto-leveling system (\$2,603) that is controlled by a touch-screen panel on the driver's-side front corner of the trailer. Mated to the BAL NXG Frame, the system uses a special A-frame jack, two straight-acting jacks behind the wheels and four lateral-arm stabilizer jacks to level the trailer by supporting its full weight and prevent movement. It's a good idea to practice with the A-frame jack because it has a long extension foot, and the travel can be exceeded if the

KEYSTONE OUTBACK SUPER-LITE 332FK

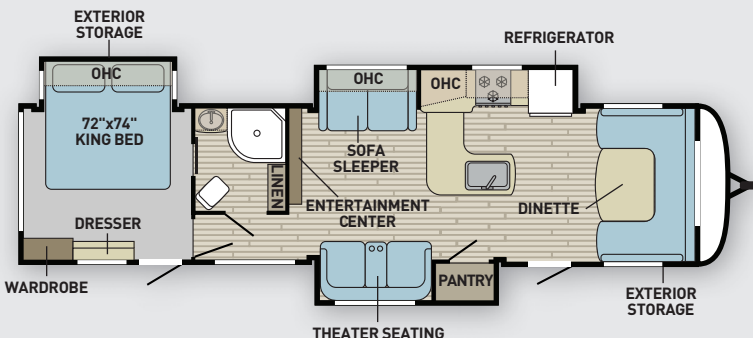
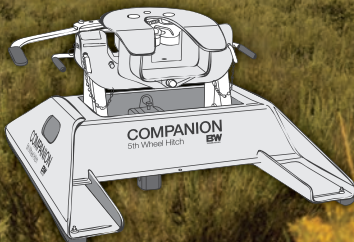


ILLUSTRATION BY BILL TIPTON

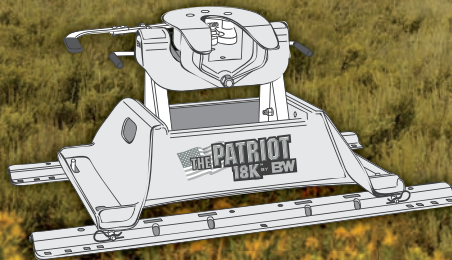
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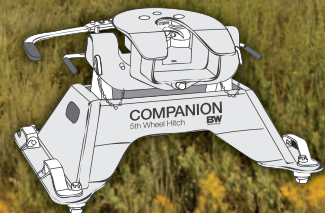
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(Right) The side-aisle bathroom features a frosted-glass-surround corner shower, a ceramic toilet, a good size linen closet and enough room to move around. (Far right) A huge pantry stands across from the kitchen in the passenger-side slide, adding to the trailer's abundant interior storage.



ground is off level enough. A few blocks of wood as leveling jack pads can help address this potential problem.

On this floorplan, the plastic touch-screen door opens right in front of the water-heater exhaust, which could melt the door and cause damage if the water heater happens to be firing while using the leveling controls. For this reason, it's important to keep the touch-screen door locked when not in use. A small bead-chain holdback would help eliminate this issue. That said, we operated the system numerous times, and it is a great convenience that works well.

The 332FK is equipped with a 19-foot Dometic electric awning with an LED light strip at the top. This awning deploys above the passenger-side

living-room slideout and can't be tilted or otherwise adjusted without the top of the slide protruding into the fabric. This is common on RVs with a passenger-side slide, and we prefer a larger awning that extends to the rear door of the trailer to provide more under-awning space. The outside power outlet and TV connection are located toward the back of the trailer, so use of a TV under the

awning will require an extension cord and a long coax cable.

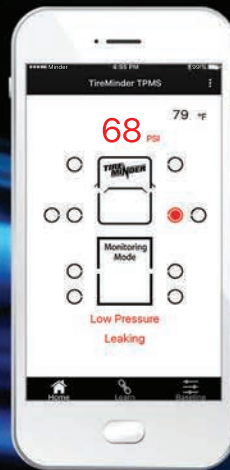
The rear of the trailer has a fold-down platform that also acts as a bike rack, but the design and execution are a bit of a miss. The platform has a so-so 200-pound rating, and the platform itself is heavy and interferes with the roof ladder. The bike-rack bar is little more than a metal post with a pin that has a huge

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amount of movement once installed, and the passenger-side locking pin wouldn't align with the gate in the down position. While we can certainly see the benefit of having a gate like this on a trailer, a little more design time and factory attention to detail are needed to hit the mark. That said, drilling out the holes, repainting and fabricating a new bike rack will make this a usable feature; just don't put too much weight on it.

The water and sewage utilities are common and protected from the outside elements to some extent. The water inlet, tank-fill valve, black-tank flush and cable- and satellite-TV inlets are conveniently housed in a side-wall utility compartment. The trailer has one black and two gray tanks and uses remote cable-style dump valves with handles up on the frame.

While the rear discharge is pretty easily accessed, the front gray tank for the kitchen sink is way up under the front slideout and requires crawling under the trailer to access when the

Enjoy the View

Guardian's automotive-style windshield soaks up the scenery



Travel trailers have had front windows for years. The problem is that the window needed to be covered by a rock guard during travel to keep from being damaged by road debris. When open, the guard acts as a window awning, but it can obscure some of the view, requires maintenance and offers a place for wasps and hornets to nest. Consequently, the use of front windows with rock guards slowly became extinct.

In a game changer, Keystone rolled out two 2016 fifth-wheels with the patent-pending Guardian PrivaGuard windshield. For 2017 Keystone added PrivaGuard windshields on the 15th-anniversary Outback line of travel trailers with the 332FK and 333FE floorplans.

The fully laminated automotive-style windshield, which is made in the USA, is designed to be installed in a reinforced fiberglass cap in the same way a windshield is installed in a motorhome. In this case, the windshield is deeply tinted, providing privacy and excellent solar per-

formance. It serves as a picture window, allowing people inside to see out, yet no one can see in during the day, according to Matthew Eder, general manager of Guardian's Custom Glass Solutions.

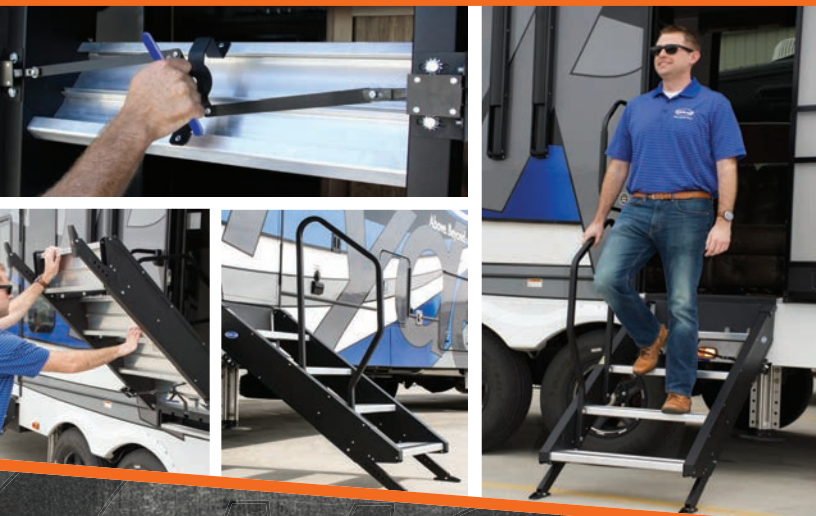
"The forward-facing glass on the Outback is laminated glass, which is the same construction as a windshield on any RV or car," Eder said. "That means if a rock or some other object impacts the glass, it may break, but it will stay in place and provide protection from the elements until it can be replaced. If the glass was tempered — like most other windows on a travel trailer — and it broke, it would shatter into small pieces, and there would be no protection from the elements."

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(Above left) Outside features include a 120-volt AC receptacle and a cable-TV connection aft of the rear door. **(Above right)** The iRV Technologies DVD-stereo system has three speaker zones and allows control through the receiver panel or an app on Bluetooth-enabled devices. The receiver contains a CD/DVD drive, an SD-card slot, and USB and HDMI ports.

slide is extended. This is common for this kind of design. Connecting a hose to it before deploying the slide is recommended, using a wye fitting and a couple of shorter hoses like Camco's Rhino Extreme setup, as we did. Replacing the dump valves with electric models will make dumping a whole lot easier.

Exterior storage is adequate, with a smaller compartment on the front passenger's side, which is lit and contains the battery-disconnect switch. The compartment is located under one of the dinette benches and is large enough for hitch items and some patio essentials; we fit four large bag chairs in it. This model has no cross-trailer storage, so longer items like fishing rods and flag poles will have to reside inside the trailer or the tow vehicle.

There is a much larger carpeted compartment in the rear slideout under the master bed that can hold the 50-amp power cord and other bigger items. High on the to-do list would be replacing this carpet with water-resistant flooring, as outdoor compartments with carpeting tend to hold water and odors, and will eventually rot.

Overall, we really liked the 2018 Outback Super-Lite 332FK for its solid build quality, excellent equipment list, overall storage and upscale appeal. This floorplan is ideal for couples who like to travel in comfort and style, and entertain friends without necessarily inviting them to spend the night. 🚐

Special thanks to Flagg RV in Uxbridge, Massachusetts. 888-352-4478, www.flaggrv.com

SPECIFICATIONS

2018 KEYSTONE OUTBACK SUPER-LITE 332FK

Exterior Length	38' 3"
Exterior Width	8' 1"
Exterior Height	11' 4"
Interior Width	7' 10"
Interior Height	6' 10½"

Construction

Side walls: 1½-inch box welded aluminum frame, gel-coated fiberglass laminated with R-7 block foam.

Roof: ¾-inch walkable wood decking on 5-inch radius, galvanized steel trusses, R-14 block-foam insulation, seamless TPO membrane.

Floor: Welded aluminum trusses laminated with R-10 block-foam insulation.

Freshwater Cap.	53 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	38 gal.
Gray-Water Cap (2)	38/38 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	6 gal.
Refrigerator	8 cu. ft.
Furnace	35,000 Btu
Air Conditioner	15,000 Btu
Converter	75 amp
Battery	Dealer supplied
Tires	ST225/75R15 LRD
Suspension	Leaf spring
Weight (freshwater, water heater, LP-gas full; no cargo)	9,170 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,000 lbs.
Axle Weight	8,170 lbs.
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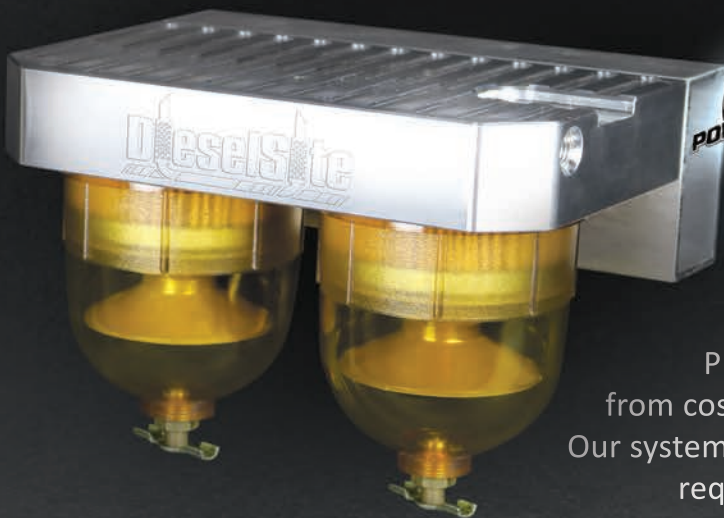


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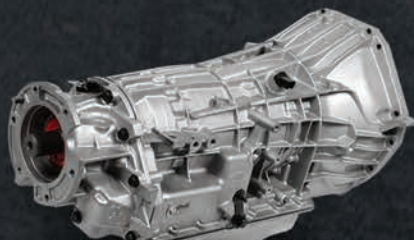
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Off-Road Expedition

Equipped with a rooftop tent and all the essentials, Turtleback's adventuresome 11½-foot trailer takes the roads less traveled



(Top to bottom) The compactness and off-road capabilities of the Expedition promote dry camping in remote locations where conventional travel trailers can't be towed. The trailer easily goes off the grid with a built-in 6-amp charger for the Group 24 AGM deep-cycle battery and a 30-amp controller for the optional solar panel. Turtleback works with 23 Zero to provide a variety of rooftop-tent options. The tent on the test unit had an aluminum access ladder and a 3-inch foam mattress that was equivalent to a king-size bed.

On a typical road map of Oregon, the area between highways 20, 126 and 242 is a green-shaded blank spot shaped like the Bermuda Triangle. No towns. No roads. But the fine detail of a U.S. Forest Service map shows dozens of dirt roads spiderwebbing through the vastness where the Deschutes National Forest butts up against the Willamette National Forest about 20 miles west of the little town of Sisters.

These are the types of roads that attract owners of four-wheel-drive vehicles seeking out-of-the-way places to explore and camp. They are also the perfect setting to test the 2018 Expedition from Turtleback Trailers, a high-clearance tent trailer designed for off-the-grid camping. We loaded up the trailer, hitched it to a 2017 Jeep Grand Cherokee Trailhawk and set up the nav system to get us on Oregon Forest Service Road 2076.

The Expedition is the flagship and most popular model of Phoenix-based Turtleback's four off-road trailer of-

ferings, and it's designed and outfitted to make backcountry and desert dry camping quite pleasurable.

"A Turtleback trailer makes it simple," says the company's owner, Dave Munsterman. "Keep it stocked with nonperishable foods and water, then just add clothes and some fresh food, and you're ready for the next adventure."

Turtlebacks are built tough. The frame is 2x3-inch box-steel welded to a 4x7-foot box formed from 18-gauge steel. The box is divided by a sturdy Baltic birch panel, the rear half of which carries the built-in galley, 12-volt DC water pump, 42-gallon freshwater tank and 6-gallon DSI water heater.

The front half has a spacious storage compartment complete with a weather-sealed and locking access door on each side, which made it easy to stow bulky items such as campfire wood. A little 50-quart ARB fridge-freezer plugs into one of the dual 120-volt AC receptacles on the divider wall that are powered by a 1,000-watt Xantrex inverter.



On top of the roof is a steel-rack system tied directly into the frame for the optional rooftop tent (RTT).

There's also a pair of additional storage boxes, one on each side, for gear and provisions. The one on the driver's side is 45 inches long with a strut-assisted flip-up lid, and it's where we stored the tent and awning poles, wheel chocks and camp shovel. In the 25-inch-long streetside box, with a nice flip-down door, we kept bottles of water and a few canned goods.

Up front, atop the trailer's A-frame, is a triangular 48x32-inch nose box made from the same material as the main body, with gas struts, a stainless-steel locking-latch system and automotive-style weather stripping to seal out dust and water. Inside is the power-distribution system, with a Group 24 AGM deep-cycle battery, a battery-disconnect and fuse block, a 6-amp marine battery charger, the inverter and a 30-amp digital solar controller for an optional flexible solar panel. There's also plenty of space left over for tools, tow straps, a small chainsaw and a 5-gallon jerrycan, which is what we stored.

The Expedition has a built-in lift point at each corner to accommodate a jack. The chassis is hot-dip galvanized, and it, along with the fenders, rear bumper, storage-compartment floors and steps, is coated with spray-on-type truck-bed-liner material to make it as durable as possible for off-road use.



(Top) Turtleback equips the Expedition with a 10-inch single-row LED light on each side to provide 360-degree-perimeter illumination. All of the lights are LEDs, including those in the front storage box and nose box. **(Above left)** Turtleback mounts an LP-gas cylinder on the driver's corner of the trailer so it's next to the galley. An optional second cylinder goes on the opposite corner. **(Above right)** The pass-through storage compartment at the front can hold an enormous amount of gear. We used it as a mini woodshed and a place to keep coolers.

The trailer is carried by a 3,500-pound Flexiride torsion-style axle running Pro Comp 16-inch wheels wrapped with 32-inch 265/75R BFGoodrich Mud-Terrain KM2s. This combination places more than 18 inches of space between the reinforced-steel bottom of the trailer and terra firma. The Expedition also comes with a matching wheel and spare on the heavy-duty swing-away tire carrier, which has a stainless-steel fold-down table on the backside.

When the tire carrier is swung into

the locked-open position, the rear door can be opened in the opposite direction to access the smartly designed galley area. Turtleback used Baltic birch to construct the pantry shelf on the back of the door, the drawers that serve as the base for the gas stove and the stainless-steel sink, and the pull-out shelf above them. The Cook Partner two-burner LP-gas stove (a \$600 upgrade) is easy to use, and the 18-inch width fits a couple of typical household pots and pans.

We liked the automatic LP-gas

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Swinging the rear door open reveals the built-in galley. The stainless-steel table folds up flat to store against the spare tire.

shutoff to prevent accidentally setting the top shelf on fire when the stove is in its open position. There's a handy reset switch on the wall behind the stove to resume the gas feed, which was used a lot until we learned to keep items that would be needed during cooking in a lower drawer or on the pantry shelf.

The trailer comes plumbed with hot and cold water, and cleanups are a cinch with the deep, stainless-steel sink. The faucet lies flat when the glass top is placed on the sink for a work space. It takes just a couple minutes for the hot-water tank to supply steaming water to the faucet or the external shower at the back of the trailer.

An RTT is an option on most off-road-trailer packages, and the Expedition is no exception. The test trailer was equipped with a 23 Zero RTT on the rack, providing spacious sleeping accommodations for two. The self-supporting RTT flips open in seconds, with no tent poles required. It's a comfortable space with a king-size closed-cell foam mattress, screened windows around the sides and two large, screened "skylights" in the roof.

We didn't get a chance to view the stars, as it rained one night and temps were in the low 40s the next with a stiff breeze. But those conditions did show us how well the 23 Zero is constructed and made us happy the trailer was also equipped with Turtleback's Essentials Bundle (\$2,029), which includes the Oz-Tent Foxwing swing-out awning.

The four-panel Foxwing spreads out 270 degrees around the side and rear of the trailer like a fan. It takes seconds to deploy and just a couple minutes to put down the ground anchors and aluminum poles that support the aluminum awning arms.

Pulling the Expedition behind the Jeep Grand Cherokee Trailhawk was dramaless. The Expedition weighs 1,550 pounds dry, and with the freshwater tank, water-heater and LP-gas cylinder filled, and the tent and awning on board, it tipped the scales at a mere 2,470 pounds, well below the 271-horsepower, 3.2-liter V-6 Trailhawk's towing capacity of up to 4,500 pounds.

Two reasons the trailer tows well on-road and off are the Max Coupler swivel hitch (included in the options

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Exterior Length	11' 6"
Exterior Width	6' 2"
Exterior Height	7'
Interior Length (Tent)	8'
Interior Width (Tent)	5' 2"
Interior Height (Tent)	4' 1"
Construction	Steel, aluminum, Baltic birch
Freshwater Cap.	42 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	5 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	6 gal.
Refrigerator	1.67 cu. ft.
Inverter	1,000 watt
Battery	Group 24 AGM deep cycle
Tires	265/75R16 MT
Suspension	Flexiride rubber torsion
Weight (freshwater, water heater, LP-gas full; no cargo)	2,470 lbs.
Hitch Weight	125 lbs.
Axle Weight	2,345 lbs.
GVWR	3,500 lbs.
GAWR	3,500 lbs.
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MSRP, As Tested	\$26,380
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bundle) and the torsion axle that allow a moderate amount of trailer movement and independent wheel travel. The Expedition does a nice job on rough terrain, and with the trailer's 18-inch ground clearance, the tow vehicle will hit bottom long before the trailer.

Along with the light trailer weight, hitch weight is only about 150 pounds loaded. That means it's easy for two people to spin the trailer around if necessary. The short wheelbase allowed it to follow closely in the Jeep's tire tracks, so it's right at home on narrow dirt roads and easy to maneuver in tight camping spots.

With an as-tested price of \$26,380, the Turtleback Expedition is positioned in the upper-middle price point among nicely equipped off-road trailers. For those who love the solitude and adventure that remote camping brings, it's a trailer worthy of serious consideration. 🚐

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MAINE EVENT

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Long before French explorer Samuel de Champlain named the largest island off Maine's rocky coast Île des Monts Deserts (Mount Desert Island in English), the Wabanaki Indians, who'd been hunting and fishing here for some 5,000 years, were calling it Pemetic ("sloping land").

"Sloping" — and so much more. This is magnificent, dramatic terrain, where wide, glacier-gouged mountaintops are treeless and granite is lichen-stained. An extraordinary *fjord* (a smaller version of a fjord), also created by the glacier, nearly cuts the island in half. Craggy bluffs plunge stair-stepped to the Atlantic, and hammering breakers launch like geysers against the rocks. It's a world of sea versus shoreline.

The island claims more than a dozen mountains, some of them dotted high up with car-size boulders, delicately balanced "erratics" or "bubbles" the glacier placed here. Hillsides are thick with maples, oaks, aspens and other hardwoods, even lovelier, some observers believe, than the evergreens they replaced after much of the original fir and

spruce forest was destroyed in a massive fire more than half a century ago. And there are alpinelike ponds, cobblestone beaches and endless sublime vistas of island-speckled sea.

Champlain was on a mapping mission for the French government when in 1604 his ship struck a shoal off the island. While repairs to the ship were being made, the cartographer had a look around. He spoke with some of the natives about their 108-square-mile island, but had his own opinion — and christened it Île des Monts Deserts (pronounced like "dessert" with the accent on the second syllable), meaning "island of barren mountains."

A French Jesuit settlement was here a few months in 1613, but it was destroyed by the British, who also had designs on the island. Later that century, the French governor of Quebec gave Mount Desert to French soldier Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac. He didn't stay long, but the highest mountain on the island — and on all the Atlantic coast north of Brazil — is named for him. Cadillac Mountain, at 1,530 feet, greets the





sunrise earlier than most everywhere else in the country.

In 1759, the British captured Quebec, ending French dominion over the area, and it was opened to British settlement. Île des Monts Deserts became Mount Desert Island. After the American Revolution, it became part of the new United States.

Word of the remote lobster-claw-shaped island and its fine summer weather began filtering down the northeastern coast, and by the late 19th century, Mount Desert and its quaint fishing villages, linked to the mainland at Trenton since the first bridge was built in 1837, had become popular as a retreat for prominent wealthy families. Folks with names such as Rockefeller, Morgan, Ford, Vanderbilt, Carnegie and Astor came to “summer” here, building palatial “cottages” for themselves. Elegant hotels sprang up. A steamship line from Boston was established.

But soon after the turn of the 20th century, some of these wealthy summer residents became concerned that overdevelopment of the island would spoil it, and a small group, propelled by textile heir and conservationist George Dorr, who would be called the Father of Acadia National Park, opted to set aside some of their holdings for everyone in the country to enjoy.

In 1916, the year the National Park Service was founded, 5,000 acres on Mount Desert were dedicated as Sieur

(Above, from left) Visitors scan a key to the islands in Frenchman Bay at a stop along the Park Loop Road, which connects Acadia’s lakes, forests, mountains and shores. A hiker peers out from the top of South Bubble Mountain.

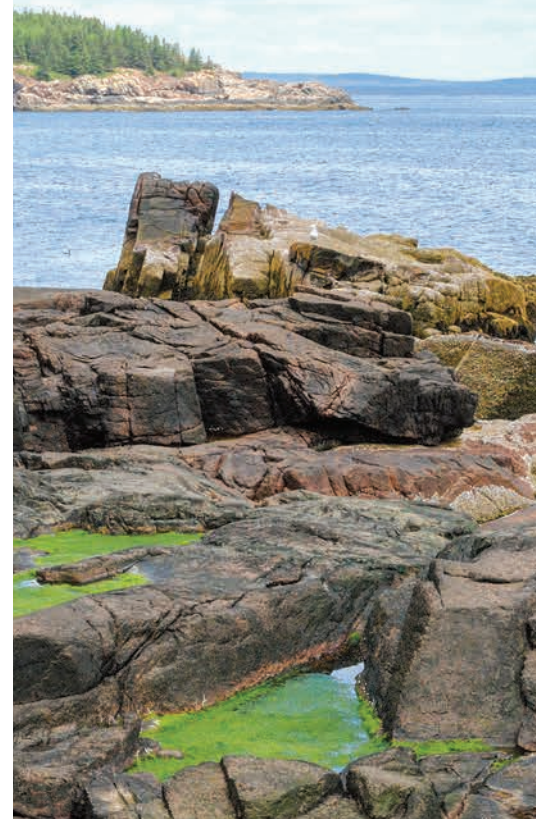
de Monts National Monument. Three years later it became Lafayette National Park, and in 1929 the name changed to Acadia, derived from the Greek for “idyllic place.” It was the first national park established east of the Mississippi.

Today Acadia spans more than 47,000 acres — 35,332 acres that belong to the National Park Service and 12,416 additional acres that are privately owned but managed under a conservation easement. Most of the park is on Mount Desert (where it occupies nearly half the island) but also includes holdings on tiny Baker Island and Isle au Haut (reached by boat) and the Schoodic Peninsula off the mainland.

Once considered remote, Acadia now hosts more than 2 million visitors annually. Guy and I were among them last year — our second visit. We’d come more than 17 years ago to be among the first in the country to welcome the new millennium. This time we were holding our own celebration of the National Park Service centennial, and where better to celebrate than in this beautiful park, also established (albeit as a national monument) a century ago?

We suggest stopping first at Halls Cove Visitor Center, just off State Route 3, where a 15-minute film shown every

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(Left) Looking east over island-strewn Frenchman Bay from the road up Cadillac Mountain, the highest point on the North Atlantic Seaboard. The Schoodic Peninsula is visible in the distance. (Right) Rough granite stones outline Thunder Hole along the Park Loop Road.

MAINE EVENT

half hour offers an introduction to the island's natural and cultural history, and dozens of books, maps and posters are available. Visitor passes, required to enter the park, are for sale here, as well as at park campgrounds, park headquarters and the Thompson Island Information Center near the entrance to the island.

Open mid-April through the end of October, Hulls Cove Visitor Center is also at the start of the 27-mile Park Loop Road, a lovely drive that showcases many of the park's natural wonders. Designed in the 1920s by landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted Jr., it winds roughly along the perimeter of the island's eastern "lobe" and includes a 3½-mile spur that climbs to the summit of Cadillac Mountain. As you'll want to make numerous stops along the loop, plan on a minimum three- to four-hour trip. Also bear in mind that much of the drive is one way.

Our first stop was at a pullout overlooking Frenchman Bay, which lies between Mount Desert and the 7-mile-long Schoodic Peninsula, and on a fine day is as richly blue as cobalt. Small islands, among them the humpbacked Porcupines — Bar, Sheep, Burnt, Long and Bald — dot the water, and placards explain that "during the long struggle to possess North America, French frigates would hide here to prey on English warships, hence the name of the bay."

Continue south and follow signs to Sieur de Monts Spring, a favorite park attraction. It had been purchased in 1909 by Dorr, who was also Acadia's first superintendent. He named the spring for the "proprietor" of the first French colony in North America, Pierre Dugua, Sieur de Mons, and built the octagonal springhouse over it.

The neighboring Nature Center displays plants and animals that live on Acadia. Also nearby are the ¾-acre

Pines stud the hills down to Somes Sound, which splits the island and is the only fjord in the Lower 48 states.



IF YOU GO

ACADIA NATIONAL PARK

Maine's Acadia National Park, a 47,000-acre recreation area, encompasses most of Mount Desert Island and associated smaller islands. The 27-mile Park Loop Road is the main avenue through the park. Cadillac Mountain, at an elevation of 1,530 feet, is the first place to view sunrise in the United States from October to March. 207-288-3338, www.nps.gov/acad

COASTAL CAMPING

Acadia National Park offers three campgrounds with RV sites: **Blackwoods** with 61 nonelectric sites, **Seawall** with 40 nonelectric sites and **Schoodic Woods** with 43 electric sites. Potable running water, flush toilets and dump stations are available. The campgrounds are open from Memorial Day to Columbus Day, and the fee is \$30 to \$40 per night. Reservations: 877-444-6777, www.recreation.gov


Mount Desert Island has numerous private campgrounds. We enjoyed our stay at **Smuggler's Den Campground** in Southwest Harbor. Open from Memorial Day weekend to the last Saturday in October, the campground has 47 RV sites, all with full hookups. Amenities include a camp store, free Wi-Fi, a swimming pool and walking trails. Cost is \$40 to \$64 per night, and pets are welcome. 877-244-9033, www.smugglersdencampground.com

Across the bridge in Trenton is **Timberland Acres RV Park**, a Good Sam Park that is open from mid-May to mid-October. 207-667-3600, www.timberlandacresrvpark.com



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MAINE EVENT

Wild Gardens of Acadia, where more than 400 native species grow along pine-needle walkways, and the 1927 Abbe Museum, which interprets the history of the Wabanaki ("people of the dawn").

Beaver Dam Pond lies south along the loop and is worth a stop. In search of beavers, we briefly followed an oddly zigzag trail that the animals had trenched through thick reeds along the water. No beavers were in sight, but the pond bristles with their spiky lodges.

Ahead, cresting the hill, far below and on the left, you'll see Highseas, a grand "cottage" and one of only a few estates in the area to have survived a 1947 fire that also destroyed much of the evergreen forest. Highseas had been built 35 years earlier by Princeton Professor Rudolph Brunnow.

Nearby is the parking area for Precipice Trail, which Brunnow also had built. Of Acadia's 130 miles of trails, ranging from easy to strenuous, Precipice, at just under a mile, is one of the shortest. But it's also by far the most challenging, requiring hands and feet as you negotiate iron rungs and ladders up the vertical stone face of





(Above, from left) Magnificent stone bridges and a beautiful entrance gate were built for the Carriage Trail between 1913 and 1940 by order of John D. Rockefeller and then gifted to the National Park Service.

Champlain Mountain. If you're afraid of heights, don't even think about it.

Then again, you may find the trail closed, as we did on our June visit. In the mid-1980s peregrine falcons were reintroduced on the island and began nesting here regularly a few years later. Precipice is closed as long as chicks are in the nest. Two visitors at the parking lot, scanning the high cliff face with a powerful telescope, reported they'd seen four chicks — three females, one male.

Other attractions along the loop include Sand Beach, Thunder Hole, Monument Cove, Otter Cliffs, Otter Point (an odd world of gray spars and fallen trees), Little Hunters Beach, Jordan Pond Gate Lodge and Jordan Pond, among others.

Ideally, you should get to Thunder

Hole midway between low and high tides to descend a series of concrete staircases and look down into the hole. When tide and surf are right, incoming water, dead-ended at a small cave with nowhere else to go, thunders high into the air. Unfortunately, we weren't there at the right time, but we still found the unusual geology intriguing.

You'll pass the turnoff for Wildwood Stables at Seal Harbor, where for a fee you can take a horse-drawn carriage ride (you may also walk or ride a horse or, except where it's posted otherwise, a bicycle) along a stretch of the 57-mile carriage-road system built by John D. Rockefeller Jr. Between 1913 and 1940, he bought the land, paid for the roads and stone bridges, and then donated them to Acadia.

Ahead, parking is available for

This dock in Southwest Harbor, where you can watch boats coming and going, houses Beal's Lobster Pier, a popular seafood restaurant.



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MAINE EVENT

Bubble Rock Trail, and, if you're able, we recommend making the climb. The trail isn't long — 1½ miles round trip — but it's rough, very steep and involves a little rock climbing. However, spectacular views await at the top, and you get a close-up look at enormous granite "bubbles" deposited by the glacier some 12,000 years ago.

Our two geriatric dogs were game, so we subjected them to the trail, and then ended up having to carry them much of the way. When we arrived back at the parking lot, we noticed a small sign: "You are entering backcountry. No dogs."

Acadia and Mount Desert offer more. Much more. A free shuttle-bus system with seven routes serves the entire island. There's spectacular mountain-bordered Somes Sound, the only fjord in the Lower 48 states, which nearly bisects the island. Picturesque Bass Harbor Head Light, built high on the granite shore in 1858, marks the entrance to Bass Harbor on the park's southern tip. Now automated and managed by the U.S. Coast Guard, it's the only lighthouse on the island, though five others are nearby (tours are available). You can take a 45-minute boat ride out to Isle au Haut, where more trail-webbed acres of the park are located.

The Schoodic Peninsula, 2,000 acres stretching off the mainland, includes a 6-mile park road, hiking trails, cobblestone beaches, Schoodic Education and Research Center, and Schoodic Woods Campground with 45 sites. Two other park campgrounds, Blackwoods and Seawall,



(Top) RVers relax and do a minor fix on their truck at Smuggler's Den Campground, with 47 full-hookup sites, just outside the town of Southwest Harbor. (Above) Revelers and strollers enjoy the nightlife of Bar Harbor (pronounced "Baa Ha-baa" by locals), the island's largest town where tourists can buy T-shirts and other souvenirs.



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MAINE EVENT

are on Mount Desert, and a fourth, Duck Harbor, with primitive tent camping only, is on Isle au Haut. Numerous private RV parks are also located on Mount Desert and the surrounding mainland.

Four principal towns feature superb views of the water among their attractions: Tremont, Southwest Harbor, Northeast Harbor and — the largest — bustling Bar Harbor, with dozens of trendy shops, galleries and restaurants. A fifth town, Trenton, is at the north end of the bridge to the island.

As RVers, we don't often dine out, but in Bar Harbor we made an exception and chose at random; dozens of restaurants looked tempting. But we can say with some authority that the seafood at Stewman's Lobster Pound (35 West Street) is first-rate, and the view from the upper deck of Frenchman Bay, which we watched turn to liquid gold in the evening light, is just as fine. We didn't learn till later that our dogs would also have been

welcome; Stewman's and nearly two dozen other restaurants in Bar Harbor allow dogs at outside dining areas.

We saved the trip up Cadillac Mountain to watch the sunset for our last night on the island (sunrise and sunset are the most popular times to visit). The road is steep with precipitous drops, as it coils through a near-desert landscape. Generous parking is available, a good thing, as we imagine this evening was typical, with at least a hundred spectators. From the top, the mountain provides breathtaking views in all directions.

Placards explain what you see from this high-up "great whaleback of granite": the entire park plus faraway Mount Katahdin at the north end of the Appalachian Trail, Frenchman Bay with its many shadowy islands and the silver-blue water of open sea.

While we watched, the sun, veiled behind a swath of gray, rain-bruised cloud, suddenly emerged at the horizon, setting the western sky

ablaze. Even the scattering of clouds in the east turned pink as a conch.

Then the sun was gone, but for long minutes it fired volleys back at the horizon, and the sky flared brighter, striped with fuchsia, rose, apricot. Finally, the sun's arsenal spent, color drained from the sky, leaving a dome of pale blue dotted with charcoal-gray clouds. Far below in Bar Harbor, pinpoints of gold and silver were winking on, as the long string of vehicles wound back down the mountain, where there are no lights. But overhead, among dark clouds that looked like islands lifted from their proper place in the water, a handful of stars were shining. ☁

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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HALF-TON TOWABLES

PAIRING A FULL-SIZE PICKUP WITH A SUITABLE TRAVEL TRAILER STARTS WITH KNOWING THE TRUCK'S LIMITS AND STAYING WITHIN THE TOW RATINGS

If you've been shopping for travel trailers in the past few years, you've probably heard the phrase "half-ton towable." But what does that actually mean, and why has it become such an important classification in the RV industry?

With RV sales continuing to rise and so-called half-ton trucks remaining the largest sales category in the U.S. auto market, many shoppers are looking for the biggest and most well-appointed trailer they can safely tow with their beloved Ford F-150, Chevrolet Silverado, GMC Sierra, Ram 1500, Nissan Titan or Toyota Tundra.

It's certainly no mystery why these trucks are so popular. Most manufacturers have completely redesigned their full-size pickups, offering higher towing capacity, trending technology and refined cabin comforts. Combine all that with the ability to reach 20 miles per gallon or more on a daily commute, and you have a tow vehicle that fits nicely with the lifestyle demands of many RVers.

Unfortunately for the RV consumer, the label "half-ton towable" can be misleading, mostly because these trucks have a wide range of towing and payload capacities. The towing limits of 150/1500-series trucks can range from around 5,000

pounds to 12,000 pounds, depending on the engine, rear-axle ratio and addition of available options. Likewise, payload can vary by hundreds of pounds, depending on cab size, bed length and whether the truck has two-wheel- or four-wheel-drive.

The bottom line is that there is no set towing capacity for half-ton trucks, and that also applies to the larger 250/2500-series pickups. RV shoppers need to know the towing and payload limits of their specific vehicle, as these limits are equally important in safely matching a truck and trailer. For example, a truck with a towing capacity of 12,000 pounds might look like the perfect fit for a particular 9,000-pound travel trailer. However, the 900-pound hitch weight of that trailer may max out the vehicle's payload after factoring in passengers, optional equipment and cargo.

RV shoppers should also keep in mind that some lightweight-classified trailers that can be towed by suitably equipped half-ton trucks are rather large relative to their weight. For instance, even if you choose a fairly long ultralight trailer that's matched properly to your tow rig, it still can be affected by crosswinds and weather conditions. If you tow in areas frequently affected by strong winds, it doesn't hurt to be

Like its "half-ton" brethren, the GMC Sierra comes in a variety of configurations with a range of towing and payload capacities.



conservative when making a trailer selection.

When choosing a full-size truck, or any tow vehicle for that matter, the following five steps can ensure you won't wind up with a vehicle that isn't a good match for your trailer.

1. Find the maximum towing capacity for the vehicle.

Dealerships have that information on hand for current-model trucks, and it's also available on manufacturers' websites.

Trailer Life's annual tow guides (www.trailerlife.com/trailer-towing-guides) are another great resource, offering downloadable PDFs with tow ratings on vehicles as far back as 1999.

2. Subtract the weight of the passengers, pets and cargo that travel in the vehicle to find the true towing capacity. Don't forget to include bikes, kayaks or any other recreational gear in your calculations. All of these weights must be deducted from the truck's gross combination weight rating (GCWR), which is the maximum operating weight of the vehicle and trailer when loaded. You can find the GCWR listed with the towing data in a printed brochure or on the manufacturer's website.

3. Know the gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of the truck, as equipped, which is the maximum operating weight of that specific vehicle when loaded with passengers and cargo. You can find the GVWR on a data plate on the driver's-side doorjamb.

4. When selecting a trailer, focus on the GVWR of the trailers you are researching instead of dry weight or unloaded vehicle weight (UWV), since those figures do not include cargo, trailer

options or tank fluids. If, for example, your truck can tow 9,000 pounds and you choose a trailer with an 8,500-pound UWV, it's almost guaranteed that it's going to exceed the truck's tow rating. Choose a trailer with an 8,500-pound GVWR instead, and don't overload it.

5. Avoid "magical thinking." Sometimes folks know the numbers are tight but go forward with a purchase anyway simply because they are desperately in love with either their half-ton truck or a particular trailer. This scenario often leads to unsafe towing conditions or a financial loss when either the tow vehicle or trailer is quickly traded in for a more suitable model. You should also be skeptical of "magical thinking" on the part of RV salespeople, because they can get caught up in the excitement of selling a trailer and sometimes encourage buyers to broadly interpret the numbers to accommodate making a truck and trailer match up.

Fortunately, recent innovations in the design of trucks and travel trailers make it a great time to be shopping in this market segment. The new full-size trucks are more powerful, remarkably comfortable and chock-full of the latest technology, and travel trailers in this weight range are spacious, well appointed and available in a wide selection of floorplans, including the dozen 2018 tandem-axle trailers profiled on the following pages.

Know your numbers, shop within the tow ratings and be prepared for a fantastic RV experience.

Airstream Flying Cloud

Airstream is one of the few manufacturers to offer twin-bed floorplans, other than bunks, and the **28 Twin** comes with two single beds (the 28RB has a queen). Panoramic windows wrap around the front and side of the nearly 28-foot trailer, making it easy to take in the views while lounging on the L-shaped Ultraleather couch, which converts into another bed. The stylish kitchen has a 7-cubic-foot fridge, a three-burner cooktop, a convection microwave, and a stainless-steel sink with a cutting-board cover. The split bathroom places the toilet and sink on the curb side and the



shower across the hall. There are no slideouts on this model, but Airstream tucked plenty of functional storage into all the nooks and crannies including cabinets under the dining booth, a magazine rack, and coat and key hooks.

Exterior Length.....	27' 11"
Exterior Width.....	8' 5.5"
Exterior Height.....	9' 9"
Interior Height.....	6' 7.5"
Freshwater Cap.....	39 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.....	35 gal./37 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.....	14 gal.
UWV, Base.....	5,979 lbs.
Hitch Weight.....	899 lbs.
GVWR.....	7,600 lbs.
MSRP, Base.....	\$88,400

877-596-6111, www.airstream.com/travel-trailers/flying-cloud

Coachmen Freedom Express

The layout of the nearly 32-foot **279RLDS** offers a ton of seating room and open floor space. Housed in the single slideout, the U-shaped dinette is popular with some buyers because of the ample seating area; others prefer not having to scoot around or climb over people to get out. The dinette has abundant under-seat storage and converts into a good-size sleeping area,



HALF-TON TOWABLES

as does the sofa that stretches along the rear of the rig. The entertainment center offers a television angled for comfortable viewing. The L-shaped kitchen has a good amount of counter space for food prep and appliances. Up front, the bedroom comes with a residential-size queen bed and is prepped for an optional second air conditioner, which may be necessary to adequately cool the space.



Exterior Length31' 11"
 Exterior Width8'
 Exterior Height10' 9"
 Interior Height6' 9"
 Freshwater Cap.49 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap.33 gal./33 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap.10 gal.
 UVV, Base5,949 lbs.
 Hitch Weight741 lbs.
 GVWR7,600 lbs.
 MSRP, Base\$31,900
800-353-7383, www.coachmenrv.com

Cruiser RV MPG

A key feature of the 30-foot **2450RK** is the walk-around king-size bed with wardrobes on each side and overhead cabinets for extra storage. Another



unusual feature in a trailer of this size is the dual-entry bathroom with doors leading to the bedroom and the main living area. The L-shaped kitchen in the rear offers great counter space along with views out the two windows. The couch is in a slide and has a perfect line of sight for watching the TV, which is mounted above the opposite booth dinette. This feature is important to folks who don't like twisting their necks to watch TV from the sitting area. An entry door up front leads directly into the master bedroom, and the main entry affords easy access to the kitchen. A hutch to the right of the rear-entry door offers additional storage and a decorative touch.

Exterior Length30'
 Exterior Width8'
 Exterior Height11' 1"
 Interior Height6' 11"
 Freshwater Cap.44 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap.30 gal./30 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap.10 gal.
 UVV, Base5,580 lbs.
 Hitch Weight600 lbs.
 GVWR7,600 lbs.
 MSRP, Base\$22,874
260-562-3500
www.cruiserrv.com/mpg-2450rk

Grand Design Imagine

The double-slide **2670MK** packs a remarkable number of thoughtful

design features into a 32-foot-plus package. Panoramic windows and overhead skylights create an airy interior, while an extra wardrobe in the bedroom and dedicated work space in the main living area make the trailer feel like a small apartment. Residential touches are everywhere from the electric fireplace to the stainless-steel appliances to the 40-inch TV with a telescoping wall mount. Storage and counter space are ample, as are options for customizing the living space. Buyers can swap the dinette for a freestanding table and chairs and choose theater seating over the standard trifold sofa. The outside kitchen contains an LP-gas cooktop and a 1.6-cubic-foot refrigerator that is perfect for drinks and condiments.

Exterior Length32' 3"
 Exterior Width8' 2.5"
 Exterior Height10' 11"
 Interior Height6' 9"
 Freshwater Cap.52 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap.39 gal./71 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap.10 gal.
 UVV, Base6,561 lbs.
 Hitch Weight642 lbs.
 GVWR8,495 lbs.
 MSRP, Base\$29,813
574-825-9679, www.granddesignrv.com



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HALF-TON TOWABLES



Heartland Wilderness

Offering a traditional design palette with darker wood and decor finishes, the 31½-foot **2775RB** aims to provide a residential cooking experience with a double-door refrigerator and three-burner range in a slideout, and a kitchen island with a deep double sink and high-rise pullout faucet. The opposing slide houses a couch and a booth dinette with a freestanding table. Large windows and the 7-foot curvilinear ceiling create a spacious feel. The television rotates for viewing from the living area or the master bedroom. The roomy rear bath contains plenty of cabinet space, perfect for toiletries, towels, linens or extra clothing. For the outdoor kitchen, buyers have the option of purchasing a grill that connects to the LP-gas line. Other options include power stabilizer jacks, a power A-frame jack and the much-coveted central vacuum.



Exterior Length31' 6"
 Exterior Width8'
 Exterior Height11' 4"
 Interior Height6' 5"
 Freshwater Cap.52 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap.42 gal./72 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap.10 gal.
 UVW, Base6,280 lbs.
 Hitch Weight574 lbs.
 GVWR7,400 lbs.
 MSRP, Base\$31,514
877-262-8032, www.heartlandrvs.com



Highland Ridge Light

The living area in the 35-foot **LT272RLS** has an open-concept layout, and the opposing slides make it feel incredibly spacious for a rig this size. On the rear wall, the trifold sofa with a pullout queen bed is perfect for older kids or a visiting in-law. The entertainment center features Bluetooth technology with an accompanying sound bar and contains an electric fireplace. The bedroom offers some nice twists on the standard wardrobe and cabinet designs, introducing drawers and shelf space on both sides of the queen bed, some decorative nooks and crannies above, and a very large wardrobe. Designed to provide comfort during all four seasons, the trailer has foil insulation in the floor and ceiling, and a heated and enclosed underbelly. The power A-frame jack is standard, but power stabilizer jacks are an upgrade.



Exterior Length35'
 Exterior Width8' 4"
 Exterior Height11' 5"
 Interior Height7'
 Freshwater Cap.44 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap.31 gal./57 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap.14 gal.
 UVW, Base7,755 lbs.
 Hitch Weight801 lbs.
 GVWR9,990 lbs.
 MSRP, Base\$41,521
866-583-7771, www.highlandridgerv.com

Jayco White Hawk

If you're looking to enjoy the scenery at your destination from the comfort of your RV, the **28RL** will hit the mark. The rear-living layout in this 33-foot-plus trailer allows for a pair of recliners and an end table to be situated under a large window that spans the back wall. Other seating includes a trifold sofa and booth dinette, or buyers can upgrade to theater seating and a freestanding table and chairs. Either way, the seating is nicely positioned to enjoy the view of the outdoors or the television, which is mounted on a wall that extends on an angle at the rear of the kitchen. Below the TV is space for an optional electric fireplace, but buyers will have to



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HALF-TON TOWABLES



upgrade to 50-amp service to enjoy that feature. Bookended by wardrobes, the walk-around queen bed has overhead cabinets for additional storage.

Exterior Length33' 4"
 Exterior Width8'
 Exterior Height10' 8"
 Interior Height6' 9"
 Freshwater Cap42 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap 30.5 gal./30.5 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap 10 gal.
 UVW, Base 6,425 lbs.
 Hitch Weight 650 lbs.
 GVWR 8,150 lbs.
 MSRP, Base \$32,571
800-283-8267, www.jayco.com

Keystone Cougar X-lite

The design of the 36-foot, triple-slide 30RLI places a premium on comfort and livability. The rear sofa and additional theater seating are oriented around an entertainment center with a TV, stereo, optional electric fireplace and space for additional gadgets. The booth dinette can be upgraded to a freestanding table with chairs. The roomy kitchen is well equipped for cooking with an 8-cubic-foot refrigerator, three-burner range and a microwave. A large drawer under the oven stores bulky pots and pans, and a side hutch is perfect for a coffeemaker or blender. The bathroom maximizes space by angling the shower, linen closet and toilet. The king-size master bed in a slideout will delight many shoppers, as will the expansive closet with mirrored sliding doors.

Exterior Length36'
 Exterior Width8'
 Exterior Height11' 4"
 Interior Height6' 10"



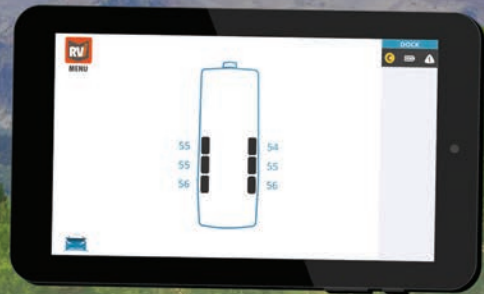
Freshwater Cap43 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap 30 gal./60 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap 10 gal.
 UVW, Base 7,704 lbs.
 Hitch Weight 1,055 lbs.
 GVWR 9,500 lbs.
 MSRP, Base \$39,600

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tial construction puts this 29½-footer on the heavy side, with a GVWR of 10,000 pounds, but the moderate length allows RVers to stay at many national and state park campgrounds. A pair of exterior doors provides convenient access to the kitchen and the bedroom. The rear kitchen offers plenty of space for food prep and storage. The couch is in a slideout that includes a pantry, an extra wardrobe and linen space. The TV is mounted on the wall above the booth dinette, making it difficult to see from the couch, which may be inconvenient for some people.

Exterior Length	29' 6"
Exterior Width	8' 6"
Exterior Height	11' 2"
Interior Height	6' 10"
Freshwater Cap.	57 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	35 gal./70 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
UVW, Base	6,759 lbs.
Hitch Weight	730 lbs.
GVWR	10,000 lbs.

MSRP, Base \$45,378
800-766-6274, www.northwoodmfg.com

Palomino SolAire

The layout of the 35½-foot **304RKDS** is ideal for RVers who prefer more distinct living and sleeping areas. The master queen is in a slide, creating a walk-around bed and leaving room for the closet, wardrobe and dresser. Cabinets above the bed provide more storage space. The living area offers a sofa and booth dinette in a slide opposite a pair of captain's chairs. On the forward wall, the entertainment center includes a television and electric fireplace.



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

HALF-TON TOWABLES

Separating the bedroom from the living area, the bathroom is on the small side but offers a shower with a built-in seat. The L-shaped kitchen provides plenty of room for the chef to work, and the 8-cubic-foot refrigerator has ample food storage. A small fridge in the outside kitchen chills more snacks and beverages. To add solid-surface countertops, stainless-steel appliances, a premium mattress, heated holding tanks and other options, buyers can upgrade to the GT3 package.



Venture RV SportTrek Touring Edition

At nearly 37 feet long and with a 9,995-pound GVWR, the **333VFL** is on the larger side for a half-ton towable, but the dual-entry floorplan takes advantage of the space by including some design features normally found in high-end fifth-wheels. A half wall splits the main living area, creating more storage and a cozy living room complete with a 70-inch sofa, theater seating and a slide-out-

housed entertainment center with an electric fireplace. A freestanding table and chairs are standard. The kitchen boasts solid-surface countertops, a stainless-steel sink and a skylight with a retractable shade. The bathroom has a tub and shower, as well as a sink with significant counter space and cabinet storage. The king-size memory-foam mattress will be a big hit with many shoppers, as will be the second fireplace built into the dresser. Outside, the camp kitchen

Exterior Length	35' 6"
Exterior Width	8'
Exterior Height	11' 1"
Interior Height	6' 8"
Freshwater Cap.	50 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	76 gal./38 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.
UVW, Base	7,253 lbs.
Hitch Weight	920 lbs.
GVWR	8,920 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$34,453

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HALF-TON TOWABLES

contains a refrigerator, cooktop, sink, cabinets and drawers.

Exterior Length	36' 11"
Exterior Width	7' 2"
Exterior Height	11' 4"
Interior Height	6' 10"
Freshwater Cap.	40 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	32 gal./32 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.
UVW, Base	8,260 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,290 lbs.
GVWR	9,995 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$41,295

866-472-5460, www.venture-rv.com



The 30-foot, 7-inch **27RBDS** features opposing slides, creating plenty of open floor space. One slide holds the kitchen appliances and cabinets, and the other contains a trifold sofa and booth dinette that can be changed out for a freestanding table and chairs. A kitchen island with a double sink adds counter space for food prep and serving. Extra storage appears everywhere in this trailer, including the kitchen pantry, bathroom wardrobe, four entertainment-center cabinets and double wardrobes in the master bedroom. Dual adjustable lights over

the queen bed and nightstands create a cozy space for reading.

Exterior Length	30' 7"
Exterior Width	8'
Exterior Height	10' 10"
Interior Height	6' 8.5"
Freshwater Cap.	50 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	28 gal./69 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
UVW, Base	6,700 lbs.
Hitch Weight	820 lbs.
GVWR	8,800 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$38,708

574-825-5250, www.winnebagoind.com

Winnebago Minnie Plus

The light interior decor of the Minnie Plus line sets it apart from other industry options, and the choice of eight exterior colors — including orange, yellow and cherry — appeal to shoppers looking to make a bold statement. White, champagne and platinum are more subdued options.

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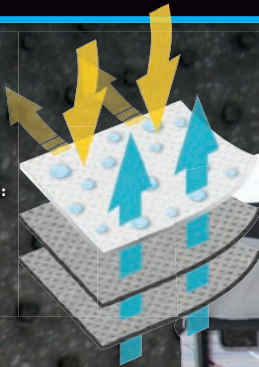
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Camco's new Ultra Shield Premium RV Covers with high-tech ultrasonic welding that's stronger than stitching are the latest innovation in RV protective covers, offering extreme durability in any climate, whether it's rainy, sunny, hot or cold.



When storing your RV, it's important to keep it covered and protected from sun, rain, snow and environmental debris. It's particularly important to protect the critical roof surface to prevent leak formation and water incursion that can result in expensive damage to RV structure and finishes.

Camco's new Ultra Shield RV Covers utilize a better method of construction—ultrasonic welding—to help keep moisture out and to extend the life of the cover. Ultrasonic welding is a method of joining two surfaces by applying a high-frequency acoustic vibration under pressure to create a weld. Ultrasonically welded seams don't have needle perforations or suffer thread deterioration like typical thread-stitched seams. This makes the RV cover stronger and less likely to rip or tear at the seams—traditionally a weak point in other covers. Each Ultra Shield cover is made of two layers of spun-bond polypropylene, with an additional layer of triple stitched Tyvek® on the top to reflect damaging UV rays. Ultra Shield RV Covers are built so well and so strong, Camco confidently backs them with a three-year manufacturer warranty.

Day in and day out, intense UV rays can silently cause irreparable damage to your RV. The rubber roof can crack, sidewalls can yellow, and inside surfaces near windows can fade. Relentless bombardment by UV rays breaks down all of your RV's exterior surfaces, causing paint, plastic, vinyl and graphics to fade, crack and peel; caulking and seals begin to fail, allowing water to find a way in around windows, vents, rooftop air conditioners—even around the lights mounted on the RV exterior.

Covering your RV can minimize or eliminate these potential problems, plus it will also help reduce the need for washing, reduce black streaks from roof run-off, and help protect and maintain your RV while not in use. Your RV looks new longer, and its resale value is preserved, protecting your investment.

Camco has put its 50+ years of experience in the RV industry to good use with the design and construction of its durable, all-season Ultra Shield RV Covers. They offer the top features for best fit and most effective protection of your RV. Elasticized corners help hold the cover in place. Front and rear cinching straps as well as an under-coach buckle strapping system give the cover a semi-custom, secure fit that results in less movement over the surface of the RV. Other features that make this cover stand out are extra reinforcement in corners and other high-wear areas for ultra-durability, zipper entry doors for easy access during covered storage, and 100% breathable polypropylene plus covered air vents to help keep the RV cooler in the summer, deter mold and mildew formation, and protect against billowing in high winds. Each of these premium covers also includes a ladder cover and gutter protectors to help prevent accelerated wear at these key friction points, a patch kit and a storage bag. As an added bonus, the contemporary two-tone design mirrors the paint and graphics of today's RVs for a custom look.

Camco Ultra Shield RV Covers are available for Class A and Class C motorhomes, travel trailers, toy haulers and fifth wheels. You'll find them exclusively at Camping World SuperCenters nationwide and online at CampingWorld.com.



Headquartered in Greensboro, North Carolina with three manufacturing facilities in the U.S., Camco takes pride in listening to its customers and meeting the ever-changing needs of RVing families while maintaining its strong reputation of quality products and customer satisfaction. For more information about Camco Manufacturing Inc., visit camco.net or call 336-668-7661. Look for a wide assortment of quality Camco RV accessories at Camping World and other leading RV accessory retailers.

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The majestic Morgan County Courthouse building presides over the charming town of Madison, home to Georgia's largest collection of antebellum homes.

GEORGIA ON THEIR MINDS

IN SEARCH OF SOUTHERN HERITAGE, STATELY ANTEBELLUM HOMES AND SMALL-TOWN HOSPITALITY ON A SLOW-PACED TOUR OF THE PEACH STATE

On a recent trek north from Florida, my husband, Mark, and I took our 36-foot HitchHiker fifth-wheel on a leisurely route through Georgia along scenic back roads. We were on the hunt for historic mansions and grand estates but were thrilled to discover many other jewels in the small towns along our path, well off the beaten track.

We started just north of the Florida border in Thomasville, where graceful houses built by winter visitors in the late 1800s line the Tockwotton-Love Place Historic District. Enormous trees form natural arches high above the neighborhood's streets, their boughs reaching out from yard to yard, as if clasping hands.

Landscapers were busy tending the lawns of several homes, and I was taken aback when a grounds worker I asked for directions addressed me as "Ma'am." Throughout our stay in Georgia, we were delighted to find ourselves elevated to the respected status of "Ma'am" and "Sir."

The landscaper suggested that we check out the Big Oak, an ancient live oak that was a sapling back in 1680. The massive tree at the corner of Crawford and Monroe streets has immense branches that span 165 feet, and its trunk is 27½ feet around. Despite being well over 300 years old, the Big Oak surprised everyone in the community back in 2005 when it produced acorns for the first time in many years. A hundred seedlings were nurtured, and one, nicknamed the Baby Oak, is planted at Pebble Hill Plantation.

The town is home to another botanical treat, the Thomasville Rose Garden. With 5 acres of gorgeous flowerbeds bursting with 1,500 rose bushes, this garden blossoms throughout spring, summer and fall. We were in town just a few weeks after the Thomasville Rose Show and Festival, held annually in April, but lots of roses were in full bloom, and the aroma was heavenly. A few steps away, we found Cherokee Lake Park, a peaceful city park with a mile-long paved trail that weaves between grassy lawns surrounding



(Far left) The annual Thomasville Rose Show and Festival takes place in April. From early spring through late fall, the Thomasville Rose Garden blooms with more than 1,500 fragrant rose bushes. (Left) During First Friday celebrations, the streets of downtown Milledgeville come alive with music and merriment.



Massive trees form arches over the peaceful streets of Thomasville, ideal for cool, well-shaded walks among the town's historic homes that date back to the 1800s.

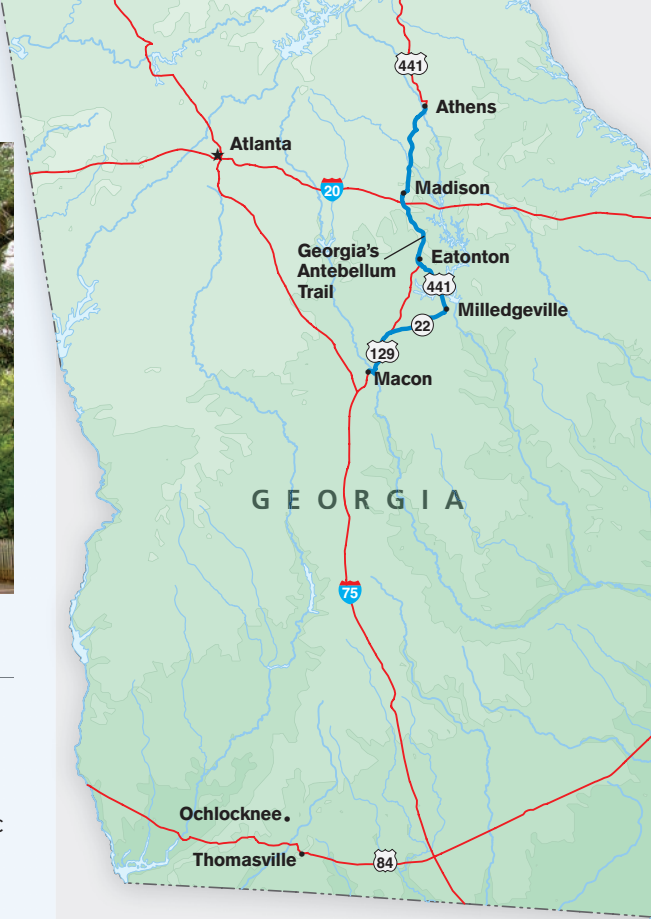
a pretty lake where geese grazed with their goslings.

After this gentle introduction to Georgia, we set upon a quest to see even grander homes from an earlier time in history. The years before the Civil War are referred to as the antebellum period, and many of the most impressive homes of that era were built by affluent plantation owners. Mapping out our way north, we discovered Georgia's Antebellum Trail, a roughly 100-mile tourism drive that connects historic towns along routes 129, 22 and 441 between Macon and Athens.

In addition to seeing elegant homes built by Georgia's high society, we learned that many of these tranquil towns share a tragic past, as they were on the path of the Union Army's brutal March to the Sea in the fall of 1864 at the height of the Civil War. After capturing Atlanta that summer, General William Tecumseh Sherman led his troops on a scorched-earth campaign across the state to Savannah.

Rather than relying on a supply line to sustain the troops in transit, Sherman penetrated enemy lines, destroying industrial

The stately grandeur of graceful antebellum mansions throughout Georgia evokes thoughts of a bygone era when life was lived at a slower pace.



IF YOU GO

Situated in the center of the state, Macon is the southern gateway to **Georgia's Antebellum Trail**. The 100-mile trail leads north past the stately Southern mansions of Milledgeville and Madison and the literary museums of Eatonton, and ends in the college town of Athens near the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains.
www.antebellumtrail.org

The **Thomasville Visitors Center**, located inside the Thomasville Municipal Building at the corner of Jackson and Crawford streets, offers tourism maps and information about the city's historic sites and other local attractions.
 866-577-3600, www.thomasvillega.com

EATONTON

Little River RV Park and Campground
 256-619-2267, www.littleriverrvpark.com

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MADISON

Country Boy's RV Park
 706-342-1799, www.countryboysrv.com

MILLEDGEVILLE

Scenic Mountain RV Park and Campground
 479-454-1013, www.scenicmountainrv.com

OCHLOCKNEE

Sugar Mill RV Park
 229-227-1451, www.sugarmillrvpark.com



Ornate cornices, multistory columns and covered porches are hallmarks of antebellum architecture. Mansions like this beauty are easy to find in Thomasville's historic district.

and infrastructure targets, and feeding his army by seizing food from farms and taking livestock as well as horses and wagons. This crippled the region's economy and demoralized the spirit of many Southerners. Somber memorials in the center of each town make a thought-provoking contrast to the stylish antebellum homes that line the outer streets.

Our first stop was in Milledgeville, nicknamed the First Lady of Georgia. We arrived on First Friday, a citywide festival that takes place downtown on the first Friday of every month. Musicians were set up on street corners, and the doors of all the shops

were open, luring customers in with special enticements.

After walking the streets past throngs of revelers and families enjoying outdoor restaurant seating on the sidewalks, we discovered another celebration was going on just a few blocks away. College students were putting on a jazz concert on the front lawn of Georgia College. The school's classic white-trimmed brick buildings made a distinguished backdrop behind the informal stage, and we found a spot between the picnic blankets and lawn chairs to listen to a few tunes from the big-band era.

Strolling through the Milledgeville

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YOGI BEAR: TM & © Hanna-Barbera. (s17)

neighborhoods, we learned that the wealth of antebellum homeowners was measured by the number of columns their house had out front. These impressive mansions are referred to as four-, six- or eight-column houses. Besides making an imposing statement, the lofty columns serve to extend the roofline from the upper story and create a shaded porch on the ground level that runs the width of the house. A few

mansions had columns that circled the entire house with a wraparound porch.

Gazing at these magnificent homes of yesteryear, more than once my imagination wandered as I pictured myself wearing a tight corset and a long, flouncy dress, and sipping mint juleps while coquettishly entertaining gentleman callers. There is a wistful aura to these lavish houses that evokes a time when life was lived at a slower

pace and social status was carefully displayed and dutifully acknowledged, from plantation owner to slave.

Milledgeville has another side that dates from more recent times. The Georgia Lunatic Asylum, which later became Central State Hospital, is a mammoth campus filled with tall brick buildings and sweeping lawns on the edge of town. Opened in 1842 to house the homeless and mentally ill, the facility initially offered a cordial environment for the disabled and downtrodden where the well-meaning director ate with the staff and residents.

Exponential growth expanded the institution into 200 buildings on more than 3 square miles of grounds. Yet despite this progress, overcrowding, underfunding and insufficient staffing made for serious problems. By the 1940s doctors resorted to lobotomies and shock-treatment therapy to subdue and control their charges.

It was well known that once you checked into Milledgeville (the nickname for the state hospital), you would never leave. Twenty-five-thousand people died at the institution, and 2,000 cast-iron markers adorned with numbers instead of names commemorate them. At one point, when the inmates were involved in the maintenance and operation of the facility, many of the markers were randomly tossed into the nearby woods to make the grounds easier to mow.

The vast facility is open to the public to drive or walk through now. Our hair stood on end as we took in the crumbling brick facades and peered through broken windows at dilapidated examination rooms, with scenes from the movie *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* playing vividly in our minds.

Leaving this spooky world behind, our spirits lifted as we ventured just a few miles north on the Antebellum Trail to the tiny town of Eatonton where a colorful statue of Br'er Rabbit greeted us in the middle of town. Across the street, at the small Georgia Writers Museum, we learned about Joel Chandler Harris, the man who wrote the hugely popular stories featuring this red-cloaked rabbit from the Briar Patch.

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Cherokee Lake Park in Thomasville inspires exploration with fishing piers and a mile-long paved walking path that meanders through lush lawns and takes in the pretty lake views.

Born in Eatonton in 1845, Harris grew up listening to slaves' stories about wily Br'er (Brother) Rabbit who relied on his wits and cunning to get out of bad scrapes. Harris recorded the folktales and presented them as if told by a fictional character named Uncle Remus. Harris and his stories and characters are also memorialized at Eatonton's Uncle Remus Museum, housed in three former slave cabins.

Author Alice Walker was also born in Eatonton, almost a century later in 1944, and she is celebrated at the Georgia Writers Museum as well. A novelist, essayist and short-story writer, Walker is most well known for her Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *The Color Purple*, which went on to become a popular movie and musical.

But it was Flannery O'Connor who intrigued us the most. Born in Savannah in 1925, she lived most of her life just 7 miles from Central State Hospital, and it is said that many of her stories and characters reflect the mystery and darkness of that place. At the urging of the museum's curator, we visited O'Connor's home, Andalusia Farm. Standing inside the farmhouse by huge windows that look out on a grassy lawn rolling down to a small pond, we could easily imagine how she was inspired by this setting.

After making her mark on the New York intellectual community very young, O'Connor was diagnosed with lupus in her mid-20s and returned to

her family's homestead. She loved the outdoors and raised birds on her farm, from peacocks to Muscovy ducks, but as her health and mobility declined, she rarely went outside. Instead, she did her writing seated by the windows that frame the peaceful grounds and died in 1964 at age 39.

Our last stop on the Antebellum Trail was the picturesque town of Madison. Once described as "the most cultured and aristocratic town on the stagecoach route from Charleston to New Orleans," Madison is said to possess the largest collection of antebellum homes in the state. Strolling down the tree-lined streets, we admired the splendid houses that preside over large, manicured yards set far back from the road.

In the bustling heart of the lively downtown area in Madison, the tall clock tower and ornate columned facade of the regal Morgan County Courthouse rise above the lovely brick-walled shops. A few blocks away, we found a perfect spot for a picnic lunch at the new Madison Town Park.

Our tour of Georgia and the Antebellum Trail was a glorious way to see some of the highlights of the Peach State while making our way north. For RVers headed to or from Florida on the snowbird route, a detour off the interstates and onto the back roads of Georgia is a memorable diversion. 🚐

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TOP IT OFF

Enhance the look of your truck with a bed liner or tonneau cover, worthwhile investments that pay off and shield valuable cargo

Whether you bought a truck for towing, work-related activities or both, you want to keep it looking good as long as possible. You also want to make sure that whatever you put in the bed doesn't get wet or sun-fried and is still there when you get home. It's for these reasons that bed liners and tonneau covers are some of the most popular pickup accessories in the truck aftermarket. They protect the truck and its cargo from weather, prying eyes and sticky fingers, and add to the truck's resale value when it comes time to trade up by keeping the interior of the bed looking good.

Bed Liners

The best way to protect the paint inside the truck bed and prevent dents and cracks that result from carrying heavy or shifting cargo is with a bed liner. Think of a liner as a layer of armor between your precious truck and the cruel world, a layer whose job it is to absorb the scratches and dings that might otherwise be inflicted on the bed itself, eventually causing rust that you'll have to deal with sooner or later.

There are two main types of bed liners: drop-in and spray-on. Drop-in liners are basically large, molded inserts that exactly match the shape of the bed and simply drop into it. They're bolted down after drilling holes through the bed

and liner. Most incorporate holes for stakes and racks, so you don't need to cut your own. Because they're custom-molded for each make and model of truck, they look great. They're not only easy to install, they're easy to remove.

But the holes needed for the mounting bolts present their own problems and offer an opportunity for moisture and eventually rust to creep up from underneath. Also, if the installation isn't done just right, the liner could be misaligned, allowing water and dirt to infiltrate the gaps along the sides of the bed and collect underneath the liner, where they can move around and scratch the paint as well as cause rust. It's always a good idea to give the bed a thorough cleaning before installing a drop-in liner to prevent wear that can go unnoticed for years.

The problems common to drop-in liners aren't present with spray-on liners. As the name implies, these liners are sprayed onto the bed like paint, but unlike paint, the material dries into a tough, wear-resistant surface. Because there are no mounting holes to drill, there is no danger of rust or corrosion creeping up from under the bed. Many truck owners choose to have the job done by professional installers at authorized dealerships, but for the DIY crowd, there are brush-on liners that can be applied.

TRUCK-BED PROTECTION

Even more than with a drop-in liner, bed prep is vitally important to a successful spray- or brush-on application, so be sure to add prep time to your estimate of how long the job will take. The main downside is that, once applied, they're not removable. This doesn't seem like such a big deal until the material gets scratched, or stained by some nasty chemical. A professional spray-in liner company can always add a topcoat for cosmetic reasons if the liner becomes damaged.

Tonneau Covers

The function of a tonneau cover is less to protect the truck bed and more to secure the cargo in it. They also look cool, whether the bed is full or empty, and some claim they improve fuel mileage slightly by smoothing turbulent airflow over the open bed. The mileage claim is open to debate, especially in terms of cost-effectiveness, but there's no denying that if you want to protect whatever you're carrying, a tonneau cover is the hot ticket.

There is a wide variety of styles of tonneau covers in terms of material and operation. The simplest and most economical ones are just big rectangles of heavy-duty vinyl that stretch over the bed and attach to the truck body with snaps. They're fine if money is an issue, or if you're not going to take them off and on very often because the snaps can wear out.

Security is mostly an illusion. The vinyl can be opened to get at the cargo, and if the thief is feeling especially rushed that day, the material is easy to slice with a knife. Finally, in rainy weather the cover can sag and collect water — and make its way into the bed. Even a moderate snowfall can weigh down the cover enough to stretch it out of shape.

Many hard tonneaus provide cargo security, thanks to locks that work in conjunction with a locking tailgate. Made of fiberglass, ABS or aluminum to withstand snow buildup if the truck is parked outside during the winter, they're sturdy, too. Some roll up like a big rug, others consist of hinged slats that fold or slide to give access to the bed, and still others are basically big lids hinged at the cab end that lift up like the top of an ice chest. A lot of fiberglass and ABS covers can be ordered to color-match the truck.

Hard tonneaus represent the high end in terms of quality and price, but they're worth it because they secure your cargo and protect the bed's interior from weather and, to some extent, UV deterioration. A real belt-and-suspenders pickup owner has both a bed liner and a tonneau cover.

Here's a roundup of some representative bed liners and tonneau covers. It's by no means a complete list, but it should give you an idea of what's available so you can research which type and style of liner or cover suits your situation.



BAK

The **BAKFlip** ▲ hard cover (starting at \$800) comes in aluminum, fiberglass and vinyl versions. The aluminum G2 offers full-bed access as well as theft protection — just lock the tailgate to secure the contents of the bed — and you can drive with the cover closed, half open or fully open. The **Fibermax** (starting at \$840) is made of a fiberglass-reinforced polymer with an aluminum substructure and has all the features of the aluminum BAKFlip.

The **Revolver X2** ▼ (starting at \$1,200) is a rolling hard cover with locking rails that secure the full length of the bed. It can be opened easily with



one hand and has an automatic slam latch that operates from either side.

The **RollBAK** ▲ (starting at \$1,200) is made of a series of interlinked ½-inch-thick extruded aluminum slats that glide on Teflon rails. It locks with the tailgate and can be set in multiple positions.

818-365-9000, www.bakindustries.com

BedRug

The BedRug bed liner is made of tough polypropylene that resists stains from bleach, oil and even battery acid — they just wash off. It has a knee-friendly ¾-inch cushioned floor and an anti-skid surface to keep cargo from shifting.

The **XLT BedMat** ▼ is designed for outside use and will not absorb water. It installs in minutes with hook-and-loop fasteners, with no sanding, bed prep or drilling required. The cushioned **Impact BedMat** ▼ has a TPO-composite surface that's slip- and skid-resistant. It installs with hook-and-loop fasteners in just minutes. Contact your local dealer for prices.

800-462-8435, www.bedrug.com





DualLiner

DualLiner's ▲ five-piece drop-in bed liner (\$399 for 5½- and 6½-foot beds, \$449 for 8-foot beds) consists of custom-fit hard panels for the front, sides and tailgate that integrate with a heavy-duty ⅜-inch-thick ZeroSkid rubber floor. A tight fit allows the use of factory tie-downs and provides a clean, finished look. The bed liner installs without drilling, sanding or prep work and doesn't trap water. The floor snaps into a molded channel at the bottom of the side walls. The DualLiner comes with four pieces for some truck models.

800-992-1949, www.dualliner.com

Leer

The custom **750 Sport** ▼ tonneau is packed with features like a FlexSeal water barrier, Leer's SuperLift system and an interior headliner. There's also a 12-volt DC interior LED light with a gas prop switch and a keyless remote. The finish uses automotive paint for a long life.

The **Trilogy X2T** ▼ (\$904) is an easy-on, easy-off trifold cover



with interlocking hinges and an exclusive latching system. It features an accessory track, superior water management and vertical stacking.

Other Leer tonneaus include the Ricochet XRT (\$1,694), made of heavy-duty extruded aluminum panels with a tough powder-coated matte-black surface. It requires only a Phillips screwdriver and a ⅞-inch wrench to remove and retracts into a canister box at the front of the bed at the turn of a knob. The Velocity (\$527) is an economical roll-up soft cover that installs with two ½-inch wrenches and uses a no-drill clamp attachment.

Contact your local dealer for prices, as most covers are custom-made.

www.leer.com



Pace Edwards

The **UltraGroove and UltraGroove Metal** ▲ retractable tonneaus

(\$1,319 and \$1,796) feature T-slot and rear-end caps for quick and easy installation, and can be opened or closed without removing the racks. The UltraGroove consists of ArmorTek vinyl over aluminum panels, while the UltraGroove Metal has a powder-coated matte-black surface. Both have raised profiles, seals and drain tubes to improve water management. They include built-in expansion systems that fit most Thule and Yakima racks for bikes, kayaks and canoes.

The retractable Switchblade (\$919)



and **Switchblade Metal** ▲ (\$1,415) can be removed easily with a Phillips screwdriver and ⅞-inch wrench for full-bed access. The Switchblade is ArmorTek vinyl over aluminum panels, and the Switchblade Metal has heavy-duty powder-coated aluminum panels.

Other Pace Edwards products include the Bedlocker Electric remote-control retractable cover (\$2,215) and the Full-Metal Jackrabbit spring-action retractable tonneau (\$1,700).

800-338-3697, www.pace-edwards.com



Rhino Linings

Rhino Linings' ▲ protective coating is a spray-in liner available at authorized franchise dealers (prices vary, typically running from \$400 to \$650). HardLine is the company's hardest truck-bed lining and is applied up to ⅛-inch thick in areas exposed to heavy use.

Extreme was originally designed as a commercial and industrial coating but is now one of the company's most popular products, with excellent impact, chemical and abrasion resistance and a full range of colors with a UV top coating.

TuffGrip, the company's flagship product, celebrating 30 years in 2018, is up to ¼-inch thick and has excellent slip resistance. Hybrid's strengths are chemical and corrosion resistance, and the SolarMax coating combines long-lasting color and UV protection with good impact and abrasion resistance.

800-422-2603, www.liners.rhino linings.com

TRUCK-BED PROTECTION



TruXedo

The TruXedo **Deuce** ▲ (\$599) rolls up like a conventional tonneau cover from the rear, and with the pull of a latch, the front flips to allow access to the bed from the driver's or passenger's side. A rear-mounted control self-adjusts to keep the cover tight in varying temperatures. The preassembled, quick-attach cover system and no-drill clamps make installation time less than 20 minutes.

The **Edge** ▲ (\$469) has a stylish arched tailgate design and can be

installed in less than 20 minutes using the easy-to-attach clamps. A simple trigger latch opens the cover, and the no-tool adjustable-tension control keeps the cover snug in any temperature. Stake holes are available for maximum versatility.

The Lo Pro (starting at \$534) has a heavy-duty aluminum frame and tension control to keep the fit tight in all temperatures. It accommodates most bed caps and bed rails, and can be installed in 20 minutes or less.

Other TruXedo bed covers include

the Titanium (starting at \$849), made of hard aluminum slats and soft vinyl, and the TruXport (starting at \$336), an economical roll-up cover with an industrial hook-and-loop system that provides continuous contact between the cover and the rails.

877-878-9336, www.truxedo.com

UnderCover

The **UnderCover Classic** ▼ tonneau (starting at \$926.95) is made of ABS and designed to provide a strong, watertight seal. It has a dual-locking



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system and a UV-protected polymer finish, and includes a wall mount for easy off-truck storage. The textured black finish is scratch-resistant, and an LED bed-lighting system is included. Installation and removal require no drilling.

Other models include the Lux SE (starting at \$1,459), made of an ABS composite material with UnderCover's patented X-Effect design for strength. It includes a double-seal system to keep water out, a built-in LED light and a center-mount lock for security. The Flex (starting at \$856.27), is made of fiberglass-reinforced panels with an aluminum frame and comes with prop rods to hold the cover in the upright, folded position to allow access to the full bed.

866-900-8800, www.undercoverinfo.com

WeatherTech

WeatherTech's Roll Up ▶ retractable cover (\$479.95 to \$519.95) keeps cargo away from the elements when deployed



and stays out of the way for oversize cargo. The AutoLatch II automatic dual-locking system releases with a downward pull, and when used with a locked tailgate provides excellent security. Made from commercial-grade reinforced vinyl, the cover stays flexible in extreme temperatures. It is water-resistant with front and rear seals that form a tight barrier between the truck and cover.

The TechLiner (starting at \$254.90) and TailGate TechLiner (starting at \$59.90) ▶ are custom-fit solutions to protect and preserve truck beds and tailgates. Made from recyclable and odorless thermoplastic elastomer, they're durable, flexible and UV-resistant, and are designed not to crack, break or warp even in extreme temperatures. Both are secured using hook-and-loop discs.

800-441-6287, www.weathertech.com

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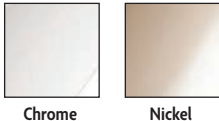
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GOING THE DISTANCE ON THE 165-MILE TAHOE RIM TRAIL, ONE OF THE WO

It was 9:30 a.m. by the time we polished off a second helping of bacon and eggs and hot buttermilk pancakes at the fabulous breakfast buffet at Granlibakken Lodge in Tahoe City, California. We shouldered our packs and headed up the Tahoe Rim Trail (TRT), which conveniently starts just behind the lodge. For most of the people we passed that morning, it was just a day hike to the next pickup point. For us, it was the beginning of a 25-day march.

Our goal was to through-hike the entire TRT, all 165 miles of it. A major complication was the California drought, which had left many of the small streams dry. Water would be critical. We had to carry enough for two or even three days in places, raising the weight of our packs to more than 55 pounds.

Obviously, we were not in a hurry. Perhaps more obvious, we were not part of the new ultralight backpacking crowd. Based on the notion that it's not the destination but the journey that counts, we have always been slow hikers, stopping early to find that perfect campsite. We get up with the sun to enjoy a fresh cup of coffee or two, savor the mountain air, and pack up and hit the trail at about 9 a.m. We stop frequently to take pictures, talk with people and enjoy the country around us.

Few will argue that Lake Tahoe, framed by a ring of snowcapped peaks and lush forests, is one of the most beautiful places on this planet. Never mind the golf, water sports, fishing, world-class skiing and snowboarding, and 24-hour excitement at the Las Vegas-style clubs. If you're



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TACKLE THE COMPLETE TRAIL,
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looking for fresh air and adventure, hundreds of miles of hiking and biking trails have always laced the surrounding national forests and wilderness areas. It was not until the 1970s that Glen Hampton, a recreation officer for the U.S. Forest Service, had a dream of creating an environmentally sensitive trail circling the entire lake on the ridgetops, offering a challenging hike with breathtaking views of the endless

mountains, lakes and forests.

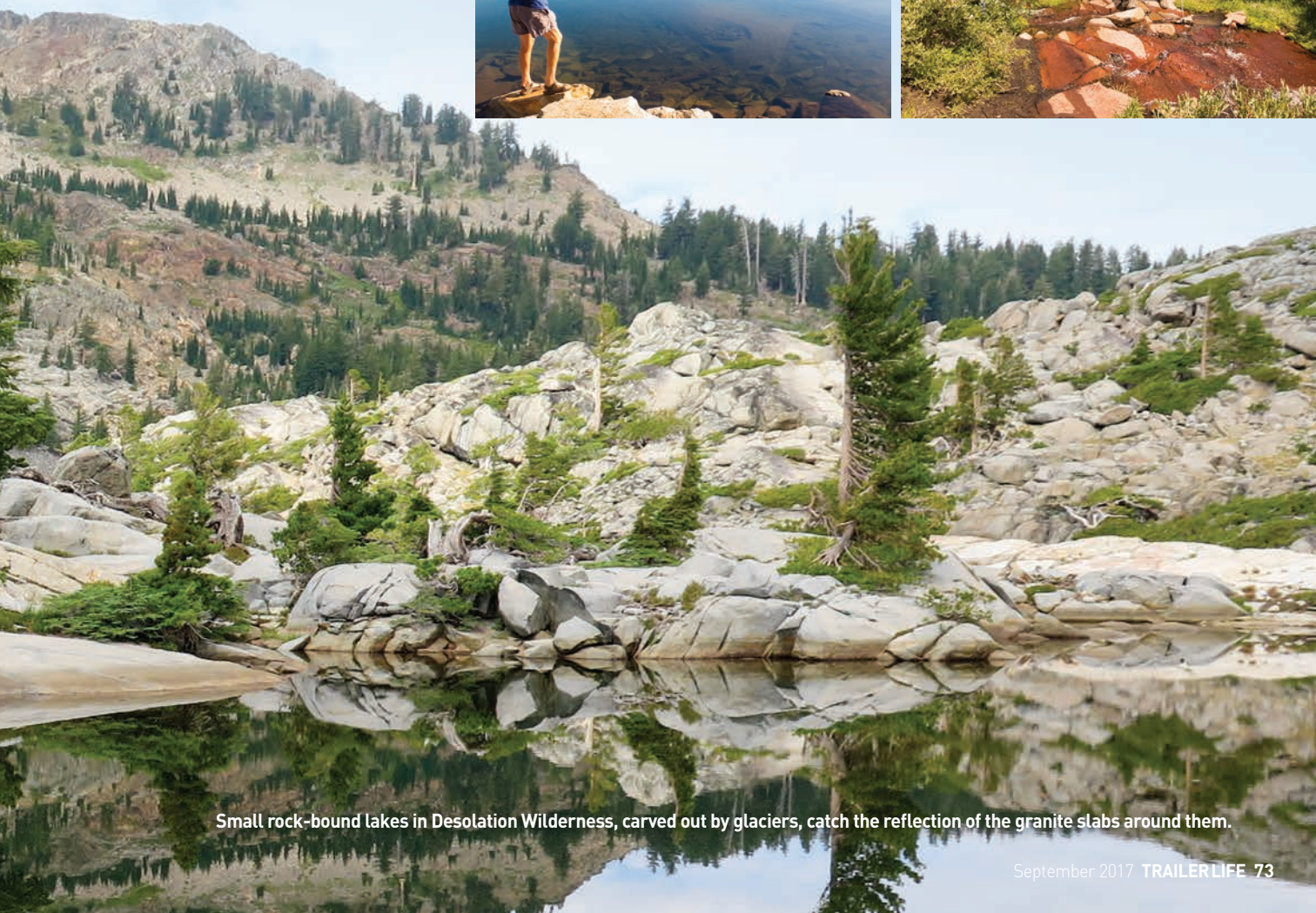
In cooperation with the Forest Service, Nevada State Parks and the then-newly created nonprofit volunteer organization called the Tahoe Rim Trail Fund, thousands of volunteers were organized. After more than 200,000 hours of work by more than 10,000 volunteers, Hampton's dream manifested into the TRT, taking its place alongside the Appalachian,

Pacific Crest and John Muir trails as an American treasure.

It was afternoon on the third day when we crossed California Route 267 and thankfully found the pair of 2½-gallon jugs of water we had stashed several days before. There was no place to camp, so we trudged on another couple of miles to an open spot for the night.

Certainly, one of the joys of backpacking is that wherever you stop, you're home. After setting up our two-man tent and arranging a backcountry kitchen, it was time for a bowl of hot soup and the main one-pot course. Given the length and difficulty of a long hike like this, it was important to eat well. Most of our

(Right) Fishing in the lakes was unproductive for the author; fortunately, food drops were preplanned. (Far right) MSR trekking poles helped tremendously with crossing on slippery rocks, especially when getting caught up taking in the surrounding scenery.



Small rock-bound lakes in Desolation Wilderness, carved out by glaciers, catch the reflection of the granite slabs around them.

freeze-dried or dehydrated meals were prepared from products you can buy in any grocery store. This lengthy hike requires some preplanning.

Finding a running creek at Gray Lake was a nice surprise, and it was a beautiful overnight spot, but we had to keep moving. Our next food drop wasn't until we would cross Nevada Route 431 near the Mount Rose summit. During an earlier scouting trip, we discovered that the friendly people at Flume Trail Bikes and Tunnel Creek Café in Incline Village would be happy to bring our prepackaged box of food for a small fee during one of their normal mountain-bike shuttle runs.

Most of the TRT is open to mountain bikes and equestrians. Although we saw very few horses during our hike, there were plenty of mountain bikes, and much of the trail is ideal for that use. While there are difficult sections that some may walk their bikes through, there's no question that you can cover 20 or 30 miles on an easy day's ride. The TRT does pass through three wilderness

areas where bikes are not permitted. Only Desolation Wilderness requires a special permit for hikers.

Despite the drought, the alpine display of wildflowers was spectacular with more than two dozen easily identifiable varieties, including favorites like Indian paintbrush and lupine. Surprisingly, we saw very few animals other than deer and the ever-present chipmunks. Although all our food was safely packed in lightweight carbon-fiber Bearikade, animal-proof containers that are required in Desolation Wilderness, we saw no signs of bears. They probably found better pickings from garbage cans down by the lake.

By Day 4 we had gotten our hiking legs back, but the weight of our packs was something we would never adjust to, and we started to wonder what we could eliminate for our next trip. Our lightweight two-man tent, three-quarter-length Therm-a-Rest sleeping pads, 20-degree-Fahrenheit down mummy bags, rain gear, super-light pots and stove never made the list to leave

behind. Being on the trail for a week or more, if you can't get a good night's sleep and eat healthy meals, you've lost the game. The best meal on our trip was rehydrated spaghetti with freeze-dried garden vegetables, dried cheddar cheese, powdered milk and bacon bits.

As we hiked above 9,000 feet, we had great views of Lake Tahoe, Castle Peak, Donner Lake and the town of Truckee. Still heading up, we reached Relay Peak at 10,338 feet, the highest point on the trail. At some point I wondered, since we started at lake level (6,229 feet) and would finish at lake level, with a total elevation gain and loss of 27,484 feet, how could more than two-thirds of it be uphill?

At length we reached the Mount Rose Summit Trailhead where it crosses Route 431. We had only a short wait until the van from Flume Trail and Tunnel Creek delivered our first food drop at Tahoe Meadows. With a quick stop at Ophir Creek to fill our 3-liter Big Zip Platypus water bags, we headed south. It would be 23 hard miles to our

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(Right and far right) The Wescotts' lightweight MSR Hubba Hubba two-person tent was a change from their usual expedition truck camper. More than 130 lakes nestle between the glaciated granite canyons of Desolation Wilderness.



next resupply at Spooner Summit, but there was a hand-pump well at Marlette Campground about 14 miles away. While a good rider on a mountain bike could make that distance in an hour or so, it would take us a long day.

One nice thing about the TRT is that, while only a few hikers tackle the complete trail, many sections are ideal for shorter hikes. We saw several couples with young children, some carrying their own little packs and others being carried. Either way, they were in the outdoors, maybe even sleeping under the stars for a night instead of being glued to a video game.

The TRT is the perfect introduction to the beauty and adventure of hiking for kids of all ages, even if it's only a short-day walkabout. We also met a lot of retirees enjoying day hikes.

The views of Lake Tahoe, Emerald Bay and the massive Crystal Range behind the much-anticipated Desolation Wilderness were inspiring. It was getting dark by the time we picked up our third food drop and filled our water at the little Tramway Market convenience store at the top of Kingsbury Grade where the trail crosses California Route 207. We treated ourselves to a steak dinner at the Fox and Hound

Smokehouse, pitched our tent in the parking lot next to the trailhead and headed for Star Lake in the cool of the morning.

On a two-day overnigher, everything can wait till you get home. On an extended hike like the John Muir Trail or the TRT, life goes on. Day stops to wash a few clothes, take a bucket-bath and just relax become part of the enjoyment of the adventure. After a day-and-a-half layover at beautiful Star Lake, we left refreshed and feeling that we were getting close to home — only 90 miles to go! Much of the trail would be above 9,000 feet, but by now we were



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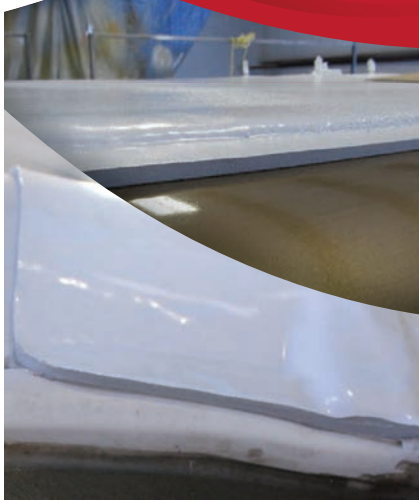


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well acclimated.

In another day and a half, we crossed California Route 89 and made it all the way to Dardanelles Lake, one of my favorites when I lived in South Lake Tahoe. Our packs were lighter now with the abundance of water from spring-fed creeks. Dardanelles, a short detour off the main trail, was too nice not to stay an extra day, and we had plenty of food to reach our final supply box that we had mailed to the store at Echo Chalet in Echo Lake.

After passing Round Lake, the TRT joins the Pacific Crest Trail that spans more than 2,650 miles from Mexico to Canada. On this section that it shares with the TRT, it wanders through lush meadows of wildflowers on the way to Showers Lake.

Wanting to reach Echo Chalet early to pack our food and fishing gear, we camped in a meadow just a couple of miles short of U.S. Route 50. By 10 the next morning, we had stuffed nine days of food into our Bearikade barrels and hopped onto the Echo Lake water taxi that would drop us at the far end of Upper Echo Lake, saving us a 3-mile slog over a very rocky trail. Call it cheating if you want, but we knew what that section was like. By evening we had found a pleasant camp with other hikers at Lake of the Woods. We were now in Desolation Wilderness.

The next 33 miles were the frosting on the cake. The amazing glacial-polished rock landscape of Desolation Wilderness encompasses three mountain ranges and about 130 lakes backed by several rocky peaks pushing 10,000 feet. The TRT wanders by a



FOR MORE INFORMATION
Tahoe Rim Trail Association
775-298-4485, www.tahoerimtrail.org

dozen or more sapphire-blue lakes, some surrounded by forests of western white pine, hemlock and weathered junipers, while others seemed to be placed only to catch a reflected image of the mountains that nurture them.

Lake Aloha is a spectacular sight, dotted with little islands and backed by the sheer glaciated granite cliffs of 9,983-foot Pyramid Peak. The glaciers that carved out Desolation Valley, a 5-square-mile granite bowl, disappeared 10,000 years ago, but there is still a feeling that the Ice Age ended last week.

It's a short day hike from Echo Chalet, especially if you take the water



Views at every turn are spectacular as the Tahoe Rim Trail circles Lake Tahoe, which straddles the border of California and Nevada.



taxi to Upper Echo. We hurried to escape the day-trippers and camped at Susie Lake, knowing we had 9,380-foot Dicks Pass just ahead. Susie, Dicks and Middle Velma lakes are part of what Desolation is all about, with Gilmore, Fontanillis and Lower Velma lakes tempting us along the way. We took time to soak in the incredible scenery and do a little fishing.

Unfortunately for angling hikers like us, many of the lakes have been "restored" as a result of the Sierra Nevada Yellow-Legged Frog Habitat Restoration Project that began in 2008. The once-abundant population of rainbow, brown, brook and golden trout, and even mackinaw have been gill-netted and removed. Combine that with Desolation Wilderness being the most heavily used wilderness area per acre in the United States, and the fishing was not what we could recall from 30 years ago, but the serenity will always be there.

As we reluctantly hiked out of Desolation, we made a comfortable camp at Richardson Lake, a popular spot for off-highway vehicles. We were pleased that the four-wheel-drive crowd had left neat, clean campsites. Now with only Barker Pass (7,650 feet) in our way, we soon turned off the Pacific Crest Trail and headed east over the Sierra Crest with amazing views of Lake Tahoe and Desolation.

Our final campsite at the edge of a meadow just 5 miles from Tahoe City was the perfect end to an amazing journey. We left the rain-fly off our tent to enjoy the star-filled night and slept in until the sun on our faces woke us. A hot shower and a sauna at Granlibakken Lodge where our car had been safely parked in a guarded lot awaited us just a few hours away.

Glad to have made it back safely and sad that it was over so soon, we celebrated with a welcome-home steak dinner and wine at Jake's on the Lake, with a view of the lake we had just walked around, the tangerine blush of a Sierra Nevada afterglow highlighting the mountains across the cobalt water.

The Tahoe Rim Trail is an American treasure that we'll treasure for the rest of our lives. 🚚



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Not much has changed in the way people get into and out of travel trailers and fifth-wheels. The RV industry has been using the same style steps for years, and most owners are forced to tolerate the way they can sometimes lean and sway in unfavorable positions, not to mention the narrow rungs that can reduce stability and impact footing.

While a few improved-design aftermarket steps are now used on production units, MORryde is banking on its recently introduced StepAbove folding staircase to be a game changer. Much more than pull-out and folding steps, the new retractable staircase has been showing up on certain models right from the factory and is now being offered to the aftermarket.

The StepAbove consists of a specially designed and shaped all-aluminum stair structure that is meant to replace the standard entry stairs on trailers and fifth-wheels relatively easily. The one-piece structure takes a completely different approach to how steps are affixed and offers unique adjustability via feet that can be individually positioned for the correct height in response to terrain.

The American-made step system is rigid and well built and comes with all the hardware necessary for installation right out of the box. The job can be accomplished in about an hour with common hand tools, but before ordering, check online for the correct fitment specs. Models are available to fit doorways from 26 to 30 inches and are rated



1) The StepAbove stores in the entry-door opening, securely latched in place to prevent movement. 2) The steps are deployed by releasing the handle and guiding the structure to the ground, which is a smooth process.

to hold up to 500 pounds.

The process begins by removing the step transition strip, located between the existing door threshold and the floor. Soliciting a helping hand to lift and steady the StepAbove will ease the next task of positioning the assembly into its closed configuration. Placing the hinge plate into its mounting position on the floor while temporarily locking the steps into the upright storage state makes the job much easier.

At this point it may be necessary to do some minor wood trimming to allow for a proper fit in the doorjamb. Before lifting the steps for fitment, make sure

DROPPING ANCHOR » Once deployed, MORryde's retractable entry steps provide a sturdy perch with well-placed rungs, plenty of width for secure footing and adjustable legs. When not in use, the StepAbove lifts for storage in the entry doorway.





the adjustable legs are all the way in to prevent clearance problems.

With the StepAbove properly positioned to the door's thin flange, the final measurements can be made to space and center the hinge plate just before driving the mounting screws. You'll be looking for a ¹⁵/₁₆-inch gap from the inside edge of the threshold to the front of the StepAbove's hinge plate. Doing this will ensure a proper fit over the factory threshold.

With the front gap marked, the center of the door opening is located by making sure there's a minimum of ¹/₈ inch between the inside lip on the door-jamb and the outside edge of the step on each side. Before running all the screws in, set the outermost two screws and give the StepAbove a quick test run. Make sure the step moves freely into the travel and deployed positions, and the latching mechanism functions correctly. Once confirmed, the remainder

of the screws can be installed.

The StepAbove is a sturdy, stable and safe piece of equipment. After running up and down the steps multiple times a day over the course of a week, there were no issues with flex or adverse movement. Step spacing is much better than factory counterparts, and users always felt secure entering and exiting the trailer. The adjustable legs do a good job of conforming to uneven terrain.

Even though the StepAbove is made



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King, Circle 156 on Reader Service Card



3) Mounting the StepAbove requires driving screws through the hinge plate into the entryway landing area after confirming sufficient clearance. 4) The handle is turned to release the latches that hold the step assembly in place for travel. 5) The feet can be adjusted to accommodate terrain, allowing the steps to remain solid and wobble-free while entering and exiting the trailer.

of lightweight aluminum, it does take some effort to lower and raise the stairs, but once acclimated, the process to deploy, fold up and secure the latching system becomes second nature. The StepAbove requires additional space outside the RV to open the steps, which could be an issue in tight storage facilities. Also, users need to remember to clean or sweep off the rungs before storing the steps to prevent the entry area from becoming soiled. If the steps

are put away in the rain, drying the rungs will help keep some water off the floor, or simply lie a towel on the floor.

The MORryde StepAbove system is available at Camping World and other RV suppliers. It typically sells for around \$365 to \$399 and comes in three- and four-rung configurations. Optional handrails are available. 📞

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• 350 lb. capacity

\$1999 ~~\$2999~~

Compare \$57.55

ITEM 62515/66911 shown

42190983

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

CENTECH **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

12 VOLT, 10/2/50 AMP BATTERY CHARGER/ENGINE STARTER

SAVE 57%

Compare \$69.99 **\$4999** ~~\$2999~~

ITEM 60581/60653 shown

42196011

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HARDY **SUPER COUPON**

MECHANIC'S GLOVES

SIZE ITEM

MED	62434/62426
LG	62433/62428
X-LG	62432/62429

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

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Compare \$16.12

Item 62429 shown

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PREDATOR **SUPER COUPON**

4000 PEAK/3200 RUNNING WATTS 6.5 HP (212 CC) GAS GENERATOR

• GFCI outlets

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

\$28999 ~~\$32999~~

Compare \$1999

Wheel kit sold separately.

ITEM 69676/69729/63080/63079 shown

ITEM 69675/69728/63090/63089, CALIFORNIA ONLY

42203623

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE **SUPER COUPON**

#1 SELLING JACKS IN AMERICA

RAPID PUMP® 1.5 TON ALUMINUM RACING JACK

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

• 3-1/2 Pumps Lifts Most Vehicles

• Lifts from 3-1/2" to 14-1/8"

• Lightweight 34 lbs.

SAVE \$50

\$5999 ~~\$7999~~

Compare \$109.99

ITEM 68053/62160 62496/62516/60569 shown

42212465

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

COVERPRO **SUPER COUPON**

10 FT. x 20 FT. PORTABLE CAR CANOPY

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

SAVE \$106

Compare \$205.99 **\$12999** ~~\$9999~~

ITEM 63054/62858 shown

42216587

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

17 FT. TYPE IA MULTI-TASK LADDER

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

• Versatile - 23 Configurations

• Safe + Secure + Stable

• Super Strong - Holds 300 lbs.

• Weighs 35 lbs.

SAVE \$189

\$10999 ~~\$298.99~~

Compare \$298.99

ITEM 62656/62514/67646 shown

71159650

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

3/8" x 14 FT., GRADE 43 TOWING CHAIN

SAVE 67%

• 5400 lb. capacity

\$1999 ~~\$2999~~

Compare \$60.95

ITEM 60658/97711 shown

42224237

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

PORTLAND **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

1750 PSI PRESSURE WASHER

NEW

• 1.3 GPM

• Adjustable spray nozzle

\$1999 ~~\$9999~~

SAVE \$99

Compare \$179.33

ITEM 63255/63254 shown

42245434

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

TRIPLE BALL TRAILER HITCH

SAVE 53%

\$1999 ~~\$2199~~

Compare \$42.98

ITEM 61914

42252337

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE **SUPER COUPON**

1 TON CAPACITY FOLDABLE SHOP CRANE

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

• Boom extends from 36-1/4" to 50-1/4"

• Crane height adjusts from 82" to 94"

• Includes Ram, Hook and Chain

SAVE \$169

\$9999 ~~\$269~~

Compare \$269

ITEM 69512 61858/69445 shown

42254552

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

3 PIECE DECORATIVE SOLAR LED LIGHTS

SAVE 35%

\$1999 ~~\$1899~~

Compare \$12.42

ITEM 60561/69462 shown

42256773

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

SOLAR ROPE LIGHT

SAVE 66%

\$999 ~~\$1399~~

Compare \$29.97

ITEM 62533 63941/68353 shown

42258837

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

drillmaster **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

18 VOLT CORDLESS 3/8" DRILL/DRIVER WITH KEYLESS CHUCK

SAVE 71%

\$1699 ~~\$1999~~

Compare \$59.99

Includes one 18V NiCd battery and charger.

ITEM 69651/62868/62873/68239 shown

42269016

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

HaulMaster **SUPER COUPON**

1000 lb. capacity MOVER'S DOLLY

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

SAVE 59%

\$799 ~~\$19.97~~

Compare \$19.97

ITEM 61899/62399/63095 63096/63098/63097/93888 shown

42270360

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

WARRIOR **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

3 PIECE TITANIUM HIGH SPEED STEEL STEP BIT SET

• Drill 28 Hole Sizes from 1/8" to 3/4"

SAVE 85%

\$899 ~~\$1399~~

Compare \$59.97

ITEM 69087/60379/91616 shown

42270839

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

Bunker Hill Security **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

4 CHANNEL WIRELESS SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM WITH 2 CAMERAS

NEW

SAVE \$220

\$25999 ~~\$19999~~

Compare \$419.99

ITEM 62368

42271271

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

UNION SAFE COMPANY **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

1.51 CUBIC FT. SOLID STEEL ELECTRONIC DIGITAL FLOOR SAFE

NEW

SAVE \$75

\$9999 ~~\$12999~~

Compare \$175

ITEM 91006/62678/62977 shown

42288962

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

KRAUSE & BECKER **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

AIRLESS PAINT SPRAYER KIT

SAVE \$124

\$17499 ~~\$21999~~

Compare \$299

ITEM 62915 60600 shown

42290856

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17

CHICAGO ELECTRIC WELDING **SUPER COUPON**

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

90 AMP FLUX WELDER

SAVE \$40

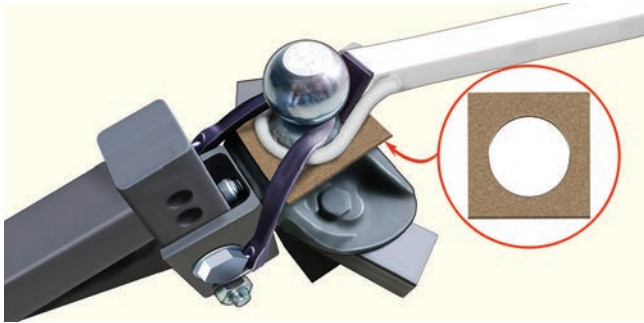
\$8999 ~~\$9999~~

Compare \$129.99

ITEM 62719/61849 68887 shown

42309019

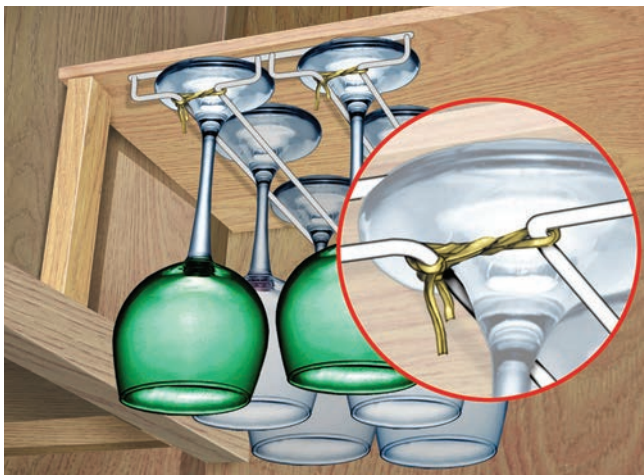
LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 12/15/17



Hitch Cover-Up

I have a travel trailer and sometimes use my Barker Tote-Along portable sewage tank to empty the gray water. I use an Equal-i-zer hitch, and the portable tank's tow arm would scratch off the paint on the ball mount. To protect the paint on the ball mount, I cut a 4x4-inch piece of 1/8-inch-thick leather and snipped a 2 5/16-inch hole in the center of it. I place the hole in the leather square over the ball before putting on the tow arm. I also put a rubber bungee around the tow arm to keep it from popping up and off. Now there are no more scratches around the ball, and it's also less noisy when towing.

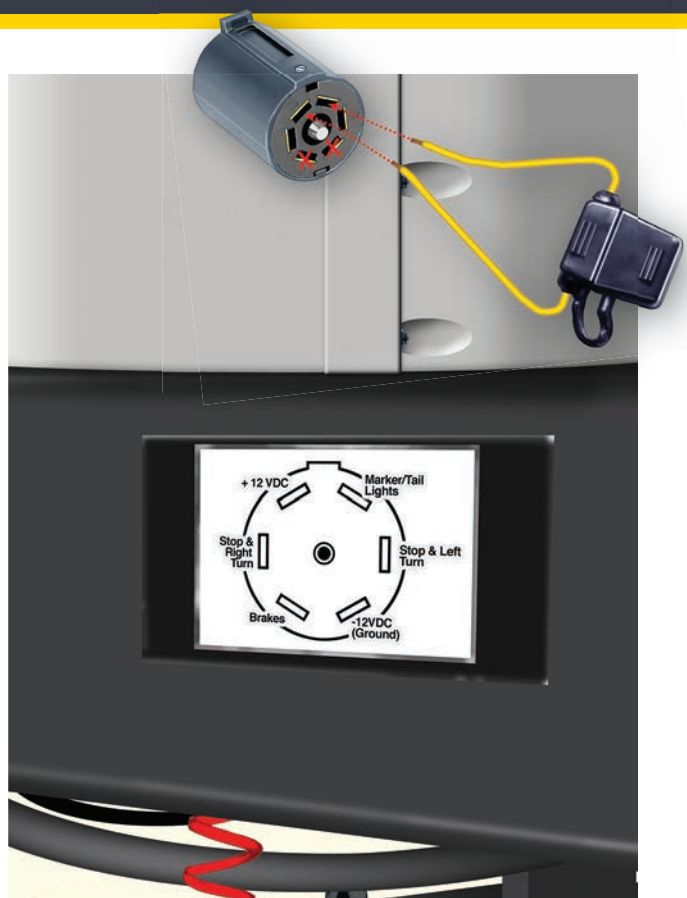
Peter Riehl, Portland, Oregon



Secure Stemware

After purchasing an under-shelf stemware rack for storing wine glasses in my fifth-wheel, I was disappointed because the glasses would slide off the rack while traveling. To keep them in place, I took twist ties from produce bags found at grocery stores and attached them across the open ends of the rack. It was a quick fix for free, and now the glasses stay put.

Linda Eikmeier, Murrieta, California



Light Check

To make sure the running lights and turn signals on my travel trailer are working properly before hitting the road, I refer to a wiring diagram I found online for the trailer's seven-pin connector. I took a 10-inch piece of 12-gauge solid wire, stripped back about 3/4 inch of the insulation, and then bent the wire into a U shape. By inserting one end of the wire into the 12-volt DC socket (charge line) and the other end into the various sockets that control light and brake functions, I can check everything without hooking up my tow vehicle.

I placed a copy of the diagram on the trailer A-frame near the jack, so it's always handy, instead of having to drag out the binder where I store the original. I used clear shipping tape to affix the diagram and protect it from water, mud and dirt.

Jeff Adams, Santee, California

Technical editor's note: While many RVers do this, including myself, the safest way is with an ATC fuse pigtail rated for 30 amps (Eaton Bussmann model HHC) with a 20-amp fuse in the holder. This way, if there's a dead short somewhere, the chances of having a problem are reduced, since the 12-volt DC pin may be unfused from the trailer battery. 🚚

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

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Map#	Event Name	Dates**	Venue
01	Great American RV Show - CO Springs	9/28/17 - 9/30/17	Norris Penrose Events Center
02	Colorado RV Adventure Travel Show	1/4/18 - 1/6/18	Colorado Convention Center
03	Wisconsin RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Wisconsin Center District
04	Knoxville RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Sevierville Convention Center
05	Savannah RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Savannah Int'l Trade & Convention Center
06	Greater Atlanta RV Show	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	Georgia Int'l Convention Center
07	South Carolina RV & Camping Show - Greenville	1/5/18 - 1/7/18	TD Convention Center
08	Mid America RV Show	1/11/18 - 1/14/18	Kansas City Convention Center - Bartle Hall
09	Washington Camping RV Expo	1/12/18 - 1/14/18	Dulles Expo Center
10	Greater Chicago RV Show	1/12/18 - 1/14/18	Renaissance Schaumburg Convention Center
11	New Jersey RV & Camping Show - Edison	1/19/18 - 1/21/18	New Jersey Convention & Exposition Center
12	Lexington RV Show	1/19/18 - 1/21/18	Kentucky Horse Park
13	Cincinnati - Dayton RV Show	1/25/18 - 1/28/18	Dayton Convention Center
14	Greater Phoenix RV Show	1/26/18 - 1/28/18	Phoenix Convention Center
15	Magic City RV Show - Orlando	2/2/18 - 2/4/18	Orange County Convention Center
16	Minneapolis/St. Paul RV, Vacation & Camping Show	2/9/18 - 2/11/18	Minneapolis Convention Center
17	Richmond Camping RV Expo	2/9/18 - 2/11/18	Richmond International Raceway Complex
18	Chattanooga RV Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Chattanooga Convention Center
19	Atlantic City RV & Camping Show	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Atlantic City Convention Center
20	Gulf Coast RV Show - Mobile	2/16/18 - 2/18/18	Mobile Convention Center
21	Harrisburg RV & Camping Show - Pennsylvania	2/22/18 - 2/25/18	PA Farm Show Complex & Event Center
22	Columbus RV Show	2/23/18 - 2/25/18	Greater Columbus Convention Center
23	Colorado RV, Sports & Travel Show	3/1/18 - 3/4/18	National Western Complex
24	Central Illinois RV Show	3/2/18 - 3/4/18	Peoria Civic Center
25	Rhode Island RV & Camping Show	3/2/18 - 3/4/18	Rhode Island Convention Center
26	Virginia RV Show - Hampton	3/9/18 - 3/11/18	Hampton Roads Convention Center
27	Springfield RV & Camping Show	3/16/18 - 3/18/18	BOS Convention Center
28	Good Sam RV Super Show - Indianapolis	4/12/18 - 4/15/18	Indianapolis Motor Speedway

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MSRP: \$74

800-815-3455, www.dillaircontrols.com

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Odor Eliminator

Few smells are worse than mildew or musty air in an RV that has been stored for a while. Iosso Products' Odor Buster is said to neutralize and eliminate common odors at their source, rather than masking them. Odor Buster is sprayed directly on fabrics, carpets and other surfaces, then wiped off after a few minutes. It can also be used to keep the interior smelling fresh with just a slight upward misting in the air. According to the manufacturer, the fast-acting, odorless formula can remove even the most challenging odors, including those from pets, cooking and smoke, without harsh chemicals.

MSRP: \$19.95/32-ounce bottle

888-747-4332, www.iosso.com

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You're the Doctor

First-aid kits are the one item you hope never needs to be opened, but when an emergency arises, you want everything to be there. Outer Limit Supply's compact Day Tripper kit is suited for RV travel and outdoor adventures. The watertight 10x8½x5-inch thermoplastic case is packed with the medical supplies needed to handle everything from minor aches, pains, cuts and sprains to allergic reactions, diabetic emergencies, broken bones and more traumatic events. The kit includes a "Quick Guide to First Aid/CPR" booklet, so when the critical moment arises, information on how best to deal with it is at users' fingertips.

MSRP: \$172

www.outerlimitsupply.com

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Big Gulp

Transfer Flow's 60-gallon aluminized-steel fuel tank is said to be the largest aftermarket replacement tank available for 2017 Ford Super Duty shortbed Crew Cab diesels. Stretching mileage between stops at the pumps, the heavy-duty fuel tank nearly doubles the original driving range while maintaining the durability and integrity of the F-250, F-350 and F-450, according to Transfer Flow. Made in the USA, the rust-resistant tank is baffled to reduce sloshing and features exterior fuel lines and a relocated water separator to make the most of the available chassis space. The system comes with a six-year warranty and a full installation kit that includes mounting hardware to get the tank ready for the road. Transfer Flow also offers replacement fuel tanks for



other popular heavy-duty tow vehicles including most Ram, GM and Nissan Titan diesels, and non-California Toyota Tundra Double Cab and CrewMax pickups.

MSRP: \$1,579.45, 800-442-0056, www.transferflow.com

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GCR51991 - 1216

CRUISE CONTROL IN THE RAIN

I have a 2001 Ford F-350 SRW 6.8-liter V-10 and a 2004 Northwood Arctic Fox 27-foot trailer. I normally use cruise control whenever I can. I've been to Florida and back a few times from California.

One time while I was driving in Marin County, California, there was a sudden downpour. I saw a puddle and thought, "No big deal." I was in cruise control going 57 MPH. The front tires hit the puddle and slowed the truck and trailer just a little, and the cruise control gave it the gas. The rear wheels broke loose, and we started going sideways on Route 101. I caught it and turned the cruise off.

No more cruise control in the rain for us.

Mike Braley, Lucerne, California

That sounds like a pretty hairy situation, Mike, and we're glad it turned out OK. Per your suggestion, while cruise



control is a fine accessory, it doesn't work 100 percent of the time, nor is it intended to be an anytime, any-road accessory. Shutting it off under adverse driving conditions is a good idea. Thanks for passing that along.

FORMALDEHYDE SMELL

Q We have a 2014 Starcraft Launch 18-foot travel trailer. We bought it in 2015, and it has always had a formaldehyde smell. We met another RVer with the same trailer who had the same problem. We have aired it out for four or five days many times, used Febreze, granular zeolite, Rid-X and many odor-away sprays, and nothing works. We tried an ionizer once, and the smell went away for a day or two, but then it came back. We will have to sell the trailer if we can't remove the smell, as I have asthma. Any help you can give would be greatly appreciated.

J. Douglas, Tamarac, Florida

A This is a puzzling situation, considering high concentrations of formaldehyde were largely phased out of RV building materials many years ago. It's a surprise to hear you have that kind of significant odor in your trailer and that you've encountered someone else with the same trailer and problem.

The manufacturer spokesperson

I talked with was not able to provide any suggestions, and the best we can recommend is something you've already done, which is ventilating the trailer. Formaldehyde in construction materials, adhesives and fabrics goes through an "outgassing" process and eventually fades away, but your trailer should have gone through that process by now. There is no known treatment, including the use of cleaners.

The best you can do is to keep the trailer stored in a covered location and open the windows and roof vents to provide complete air circulation between camping trips, and see if that helps.

DUALY SWAP?

Q I have a 1999 Ford F-350 six-speed manual two-wheel-drive, single-rear-wheel (SRW) long-wheelbase truck that I use to tow a 40-foot fifth-wheel. It has the 7.3-liter diesel with a chip and tows great. I weighed the entire rig, and it's right at its maximum gross combined weight rating (GCWR) of

20,000 pounds, which I am reluctantly OK with, but the pin weight is 2,500 pounds. According to the tire loading, it is well within the limits, but that sounds like a lot of pin weight for an SRW truck.

Should I consider swapping out the rear and suspension for a dually setup, since I intend to keep this truck and trailer long term? The truck has low miles and is paid for!

Tom McFadden, Kelso, Washington

A I'd say that "tows great," "low miles" and "paid for" are terrific reasons to hang on to that one! Swapping in a dual-rear-wheel (DRW) axle assembly and its associated spring pack would likely boost your truck's rear-axle weight-carrying capacity, but it's going to be an expensive process. In addition to the axle and springs, you'll need to add the extended fenders to the truck bed, plus you'll also need to carry two spare tires because the DRW and SRW are different types with different offsets.

To determine if you need to make this drastic conversion, take your truck to a certified scale and weigh just the rear axle. Deduct the rear-axle weight from the truck's rear gross axle weight rating (GAWR) to determine how much payload capacity there is out back. As

TECH EXPERT



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

long as there are at least 2,500 pounds for the hitch weight available, you're in good shape. If you need more axle capacity, then consider the DRW option.

TRAILER TOWING INFORMATION

Q I am a new travel trailer owner but have more than 20 years of RV experience with Class A and C motorhomes. It has been a new experience learning how the trailer reacts to windy conditions, being passed by big rigs, adjustments of the electric brake controller, and the weight-distributing (WD) hitch, including the friction sway-control device.

My trailer is 27 feet long and has an unloaded vehicle weight of 6,000 pounds, and I have a Pro Series WD hitch. On our initial trip, I found that increasing the amount of weight transfer made a big improvement in overall handling. I just received my first copy of *Trailer Life* and am looking for published information about these things to obtain the optimum performance for the trailer and tow vehicle.

Bill Wilkinson, Auburn, California

A Welcome to RV trailering, Bill. Yes, there certainly is a wide range of published material, both online and in print, covering all aspects of trailer towing. A look at the *Trailer Life* website and its many resource links, as well as other web links located by an online search, will provide you with a realm of material to peruse.

In addition to the available published material, you've also encountered an important part of this process: trial and error. You can read all about something technical, but until you're on the road and experience some towing time, you won't necessarily get the entire picture.

This is especially true for WD-hitch spring-bar adjustment. You set the hitch up "by the book," so to speak, tow awhile, then drop a link or add a link to the bar adjustment, maybe adjust the tilt of the ball mount, until it feels best. It works! Do your research to start, then get that road time in to arrive at a safe, comfortable towing setup. Good luck!

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ODD BRAKE WIRING

Q I have a 30-foot travel trailer with tandem axles. While doing an inspection underneath, I noticed the trailer brakes were wired with the front axle on the left and the rear axle on the right, leaving the other brakes unwired. Is there a reason for this? I bought the trailer new from the dealer, so I know it hasn't been modified.

Robert Welch, Eden, Wyoming

A It would be extremely unusual, to say the least, as well as unlawful for a trailer to be built with just two of its four electric brakes connected. It's possible you're misinterpreting what you see.

Many trailer axles have a power wire routed through the inside of the axle tube. There's a hole in the tube close to the brake assembly with the power wire routed into that hole. The brakes are connected to the main wiring harness at one end of the axle, then a second line goes from that connection through the axle tube to the brake assembly on the other end of the axle. One end of each axle is wired to the brake feed, and the other just has the axle-tube-to-brake wire. You may be looking at the end without the feed and thinking it doesn't have brakes.

If in doubt, have someone manually apply the trailer brakes at the in-cab controller and check each brake magnet with a voltmeter. If it shows voltage, the brakes are connected. If not, you need to do some further inspection and possible rewiring to get all four brakes working. Brakes are nothing to fool around with, so if you don't feel comfortable with this type of work, take the trailer to the dealer for the repairs.

HUBCAP REPLACEMENT

Q Where is the best place to buy a replacement hubcap, preferably used? One went missing on our Hurricane RV.

Margy Goldsborough, Garson, Ontario

A In general, there is no one main source of used, vintage RV parts and accessories. An Internet search for "used" or "surplus RV parts" will direct you to a variety of interesting

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retail stores that specialize in older RV parts. It's unlikely you'll find exactly what you're looking for, but you may be surprised.

You can also try posting a photo of one of the hubcaps on places like vintage-RV discussion forums, and someone may come up with a lead that can help. If any of our readers have used, vintage or surplus RV-parts shops they can recommend, we'd love to hear from you. We'll pass the information along.

GENERATOR PREP

Q I have a 35-foot Keystone Montana High Country fifth-wheel. The front cargo area has a slotted-metal floor. I have a 6-kilowatt Onan generator that I would like to install. How can I determine if the trailer is prewired for a generator? I know it needs to have some kind of internal box or something to accommodate a generator.

Howard Bontrager, Fayetteville, Georgia

A Generally, if there is a slotted-metal floor, the compartment is designed for mounting a generator and may be equipped with a generator-prep package. If you still have the original window sticker and owner's manual for the trailer, it will note somewhere in the standards or options sections that generator prep is included. A visit to a Keystone RV dealer and a chat with a mechanic will also answer the question in short order.

Look in the generator-installation area in the trailer. There needs to be a junction box with coiled-up cables for the generator's AC power output. There should also be a circuit breaker ready to be wired to the generator, or a transfer switch that selects either shorepower or the generator as a power source, based on whether the generator is running or not.

By now you may get the impression that installing a generator, even in an RV with generator prep, is a pretty big job requiring electrical, plumbing and mechanical skills. If in any doubt, take the project to a qualified Keystone dealer to have the job done right.

(continued on page 94)

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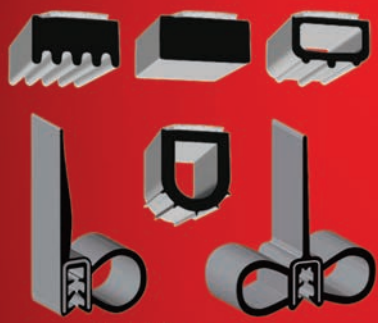
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(continued from page 91)

CONVERTER FAILURE

Regarding David Lusk's "Slideout Power Redux" letter in the May RV Clinic concerning inconsistencies with batteries and converters, I was thinking that the problems may be related to a faulty converter. Here's why.

In 2009, I pulled into a parking lot to have lunch in my trailer. Upon entering, I discovered that the refrigerator was not working. I soon found that none of the 12-volt DC-powered items worked, including the water pump and lights. I checked the connections at the batteries, and all were good. The trailer was connected to my tow vehicle, so it was not dead batteries.

I then noticed that one 12-volt DC device was working: the cigarette lighter/power connector. I checked the fuses in the converter, and all were good. I inspected them, going from left to right and found that the right-most fuse was connected to the 12-volt DC outlet. Not having a circuit/voltage tester along, I simply moved all of the 12-volt DC wires inside the converter to the right side. After that, everything worked as normal.

Somehow, the converter had failed for half of the 12-volt DC connections. I replaced the converter when I got home. The new converter simply replaced the innards of my existing converter case. The best part is that the new converter adjusts to the charge condition of the batteries and does not overcharge them. Consequently, the batteries last much longer. Plus, I hardly ever have to add water to the batteries.

Art Rudolph, San Diego, California

Thank you for detailing the power-problem analysis and solution, Art. Electrical problems can be a bugger to track down. We don't quite understand how your RV's converter was powering only half of the fuse block, unless there was a simple terminal-connector failure, but it's good that the replacement took care of it.

It's also good that you upgraded to a multistage ("smart") battery charger that's going to do a better job conditioning the batteries. That switch is always a good investment.

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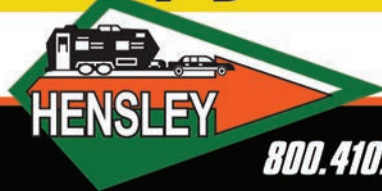
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TWIN BEDS AND RUNNING LIGHTS

Q Can you direct me to a company that makes a travel trailer with twin beds? I have been unable to find one on the internet.

Also, I have noticed this camping season a new fad of having taillights and clearance lights left on while the RVs' owners are camping. I asked one person if he knew his lights were on, and he said yes. This person said that he likes always having the lights on. He did this by using a jumper wire on the plug. Is this safe for the operator and trailer?

James Maass, Herscher, Illinois

A Twin beds are an RV option that seems to come and go in popularity, and, as you found, they're kind of rare now. Airstream, Oliver Travel Trailers and Casita all have twin-bed options available, and you may find others with a thorough online search. Beyond those, you might need to buy a bunkhouse-type trailer to get a twin-bed-style floorplan.

There's no harm in powering the trailer's running lights, other than for the extra battery drain, which isn't much of a concern if you're plugged into shorepower. Looking at the end of your trailer connecting plug with the alignment key straight up, the number 4 pin at the 11 o'clock position is the 12-volt DC line, and at the 1 o'clock position, pin number 3 is for the taillights and running lights. Use a jumper between these two spots, and you'll be powering the lights by your trailer battery.

We'd suggest using an inline automotive fuse holder, like the Eaton Bussmann HHD (item number 1CV56) from www.grainger.com, with a 20-amp fuse.

SHOCK-ABSORBER ADVICE

Regarding Robert Barnes' "Truck and Trailer Bounce" question in July's RV Clinic, you responded by saying, "Your truck and trailer are new enough that worn-out shock absorbers, for instance, aren't a problem."

What? The truck is five years old. You didn't ask how many miles were on it. Shock absorbers wear out because of

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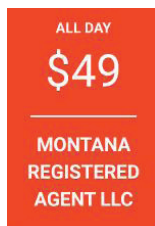
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wear and mileage. His shocks could be total junk. Fail on your part.

Mike Thomas, via email

Not really, Mike, as his GMC has the Z60 suspension package that uses upgraded shock absorbers, like those from Koni or Bilstein. Those shocks have a significantly longer service life than the standard original-equipment counterparts, and based on the problem description, the shocks would not be our first item to inspect. You're right that one or more of the shocks could be bad, but there are other factors such as those we detailed in our answer that can aggravate the bouncing condition. Thanks for catching the shock comment.

SOLUTION TO FRESHWATER ODOR

In the July issue, Monte Bender's letter, "Foul Water Smell," asked about persistent odor in just the bathroom sink after doing the bleach treatment. I had this same issue in a 2006 Keystone Montana, and it drove me crazy, as I would really bleach the system and let it sit, and the smell would always come back to only the one bathroom sink, while the other faucets were fine.

I finally realized that we had another hot-water faucet in the trailer that we had never used and never thought about: the hookup in the closet for the washing machine. The bedroom-bathroom sink had a line that supplies hot water in the washer hookup. Once I bleached that line, the problem went away and hasn't returned.

Patric Pike, Hopkins, Michigan

Thank you, Patric. That's a great solution to the stinky-water problem. We've heard of RV owners forgetting to bleach-treat the outside shower but have never addressed the washer-dryer hookup. We appreciate your letter and believe it will likely do other readers a lot of good.

TRAILER LEVELERS AGAIN

I am responding to July's "Trailer Levelers" question from Michael Morin about the Andersen Camper Leveler. We have

been avid campers for many years and always used wood blocks to level our trailers. Two years ago we bought the Andersen levelers after seeing a video demonstration at an RV show. I wish I would have come across them sooner. They are everything they are advertised to be. My wife even loves them.

Each box has one leveler and a chock combination in it. You need to purchase two boxes for a tandem axle and three for a triple axle. If the axles are close together, you may need to trim a bit off the end of the leveler to get it to slip between the tires. That is explained in the instructions, although we did not have to do that.

These levelers can even be used as a jack in case of flat tires, and that process is also explained in the instructions and demonstrated in a video on the Andersen website. I have actually had to use that feature, and it is so much quicker and easier than digging out traditional jacks.

Mr. Morin was worried about the tires "sitting on those smallish blocks." We have 17-inch tires on our 37-foot fifth-wheel, and there is no issue with the tires fitting on the levelers.

These levelers are more than worth the money. They make leveling the trailer so much faster, and the wheel-chock side is great as well. I will never go back to wood blocks.

Joe Poll, Belgrade, Minnesota

Thank you for your excellent user report on the Andersen levelers, Joe. That product, with its curved-wedge design, is just different enough that many RVers have probably looked at it and been unsure of its effectiveness. As you suggested, it appears to work well and have uses beyond just leveling an RV.

Wood blocks also work well, but this is a solution that could make blocks obsolete for many RVers. 🗨️

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

Forest on Fire

Come fall, Colorado's San Juan Skyway blazes with Mother Nature's vibrant brushstrokes

Growing up in New England, I always assumed the colorful maple trees of the Northeast had to be the best show anywhere. But my first trip along Colorado's San Juan Skyway during the third and fourth weeks of September was a jaw-dropping thrill that draws my husband, Mark, and me back time and again.

The Rocky Mountains are spectacular any time of year, but in the fall they are on fire. Groves of yellow aspen blanket the immense valleys in vivid shades of gold, and towering, jagged gray peaks pierce the sky. As the leaf-peeping season progresses, the mountaintops often shimmer with the season's first snow.

The San Juan Skyway offers many overlooks where leaf peepers can pull over to savor the view, and the roadside is strewn with hastily parked cars and people craning their necks in awe of nature's brilliant display. This All-American Road is a 236-mile route through the mountains with turns at Durango, Cortez, Placerville and Ridgway. The upscale town of Telluride offers ski lifts to even more expansive

vistas, while the charming villages of Ouray and Silverton sparkle between the peaks.

The most stunning segment, U.S. Route 550 between Durango and Ridgway, is dubbed the Million Dollar Highway. This scenic drive requires a strong tow vehicle and nerves of steel to navigate a trailer around the steep switchbacks, although semitrucks do it all the time. It also makes a great day trip for those leaving the trailer behind at Ridgway State Park or one of the region's other campgrounds. Another way to enjoy the views, and spare the driver, is to take a ride on the Durango and Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad.

We took our truck deep into the San Juan National Forest on dirt roads and were astonished when another tourist showed us the very rock on Owl Creek Pass where John Wayne kicked back with a drink in the 1969 movie *True Grit*. How fun it was to watch that movie later and recognize the scenery. 🚚

Million-Dollar Views

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