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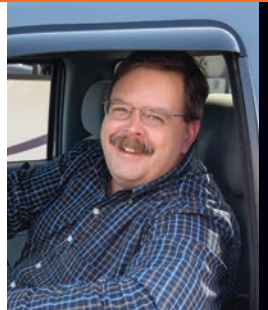
Rockport, Massachusetts



Considering a fifth-wheel? The nimble Escape 5.0TA is one of 12 value-priced choices. Page 36

Camping with Mickey

For RVers, Disney's Fort Wilderness is the Most Magical Place on Earth



When asked what my favorite RV park is, Disney's Fort Wilderness is at the top of the list. The 799-site campground, and then some, right in the middle of the magic of Walt Disney World, with all the rights and privileges granted to the resort's hotel guests.

My wife, Karen, and I stayed at Fort Wilderness with family members this past February to celebrate my sister-in-law's 70th birthday. I'd camped at Fort Wilderness 18 years ago, but none of my family had; they'd just heard me talk about it. After our visit, my sister-in-law said, "I'm a convert to the Church of the Mouse!"

We just missed running into Stephanie and Jeremy Puglisi, who spent a week at Fort Wilderness in January. Stephanie shares her strategies for making the most of a visit to Florida's theme-park capital on page 26. The Puglisis have already booked a Fort Wilderness site for next year, and my family hopes to stay with Mickey again, too.

I enjoy winter RV jaunts to Florida, not just because of the nice weather, but they're also a good chance to visit with other RVers and see how they travel. I talked to some fellow trailer owners who were looking to upgrade to a fifth-wheel. It's for those folks and others like them that we asked Emily Fagan to round up a dozen value-priced fivers with all the comforts of home (page 36).

To maintain those comforts off the grid, a mobile power source is necessary. Fortunately for RVers, lithium-ion technology is finally a reality. We stepped up our ability to boondock by installing a couple of Battle Born LiFePO4 batteries in our test trailer, along with a Xantrex Freedom XC inverter-charger and a Torklift PowerArmor Max battery box (page 77).

In the first of two airbag installs this year, Bruce W. Smith checks out the improvements in ride control the Air Lift LoadLifter 7500XL made on a six-year-old Ram pickup towing a 12,000-pound toy hauler (page 84). Chris Hemer observes the installation of a Banks PowerPack system on an older Dodge Ram, giving it a needed boost of hauling heft (page 67). Chris also provides tips on sanitizing the freshwater system (page 94), and Bob Livingston offers a guide to replacing water pumps (page 51).

As we gear up for another season of RVing, there's lots to sink your teeth into in this issue. We'll see you down the road! 🚚

— Chris Dougherty, Technical Editor



(Left to right) Karen Dougherty, Linda Levister and Joyce Alonge celebrate a milestone birthday at Disney's Fort Wilderness.

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Weight Watching

When I saw the March issue with the Coachmen Chaparral 381RD being towed by a previous-gen Ford Super Duty, I was excited to read Barb Riley's test of the unit, "Supersize Fiver," as I tow a Chaparral 345BHS with a 2012 F-250. However, my towing capacity is 12,500 pounds, which is 20 pounds shy of the listed weight of the fifth-wheel you feature. Was your tow vehicle rated for the trailer it was pulling?

I'm not trying to nitpick a small error in an otherwise phenomenal publication. But considering your constant reminders not to bite off more than our trucks can chew, this seems like a significant discrepancy.

David Hitesman, Flagstaff, Arizona

Technical Editor Chris Dougherty replies: *The truck pulling the Chaparral is a 2012 F-350 with the 6.7-liter diesel, which has a rating of 16,100 pounds for fifth-wheel towing. The Chaparral 381RD has a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 14,500 pounds, which is well below the tow limit, but you make a great point. The weight you refer to is the wet weight, which is how much the trailer weighs with just water and LP-gas on board but no cargo; the number to focus on is the GVWR. It's interesting to note that some of the 2018 F-350 SRWs with the 11,500-pound-GVWR package can tow up to 20,000 pounds.*

Barking to the Choir

I just finished reading "RVing with Pets" in the March issue. This is a well-written article by Jerry Smith, but I do think more emphasis could have been put on how important it is that you do not allow your dog to bark. Very often, we have had to listen to constant barking, even when the owner is present. Most campgrounds have rules against barking dogs, but we hate to be the bad guys and report the offender. Please, don't let your dog bark, and don't leave it unattended.

**Gail Hansche Godin
Hubbardston, Massachusetts**

No-Bling Fivers

We have been receiving your magazine for quite some time and really enjoy it. My husband is especially interested in all the information you share about keeping our toy hauler and truck in tip-top condition and how to avoid problems in the future.

As for me, I particularly enjoy the photos and descriptions of the many travel trailers, toy haulers and fifth-wheels that are available. Unfortunately, the greater part of those are above and beyond our price range. I am wondering why you don't often highlight ones that are less than 34 feet long and under \$35,000, and have more casual interiors without all the "bling" like granite countertops, glass-panel cupboards, electric fireplaces and leather seating. All the fancy stuff is fine for some but not for us.

We would like to sell our toy hauler and buy a nice, unpretentious fifth-wheel that has one or two slides, is half-ton towable and fits our budget. Can you suggest anything along those lines?

Candy York, Farragut, Iowa

Yes, we can, Candy. This issue's roundup of 12 "Budget-Friendly Fivers" (page 36) includes a number of fifth-wheels that meet or come close to your requirements. — Editors



A Bridge Too Short

"Covering New Hampshire," Pamela Selbert's otherwise excellent March article, incorrectly identifies New Hampshire's Cornish-Windsor Covered Bridge as the country's longest. Opened in 2008, the Smolen-Gulf Bridge in northern Ashtabula County, Ohio, is in fact the longest covered bridge in the United States and the fourth longest in the world.

Rick Richardson, Ashtabula, Ohio

I loved "Covering New Hampshire," as I've always been fascinated by the historic allure of covered bridges. Many of these are still in use and are true gems for the communities. One can only imagine traveling in a bygone era and waiting out a storm under one of these magnificent structures.

Steve Cervas, Geneva, Ohio

Just Roll with It

"Dump Station to Go," Chris Dougherty's March article about the SmartTote2 portable dump

tank, omitted one important item — weight. A 35-gallon tank full of water would weigh almost 300 pounds, not including the weight of the tank. Since an RVer would frequently have to roll the full tank at least a short distance, maybe over uneven ground, that would be a chore.

I personally use an 18-gallon "honey wagon," and that is as much weight as I can handle comfortably.
Boyd Walden, Richmond Hill, Georgia

Chris Dougherty replies: *The Thetford SmartTote2 we tested has a handle that extends for easy pulling and a cutout for connecting to the hitch ball for hauling the tank to a remote dump station. Once the hose is connected and the vent is opened, the tank will start to drain without being lifted. 🚚*

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The new Restigouche River Experience Centre features aquariums and museum-quality exhibits (far left), and a plush bar and restaurant named Taste the Place (left). (Below) The adjacent Campbellton RV Camping offers RVers all the basic services, plus gorgeous panoramic views of the river.

Restigouche River Experience

An interpretive center in Campbellton, New Brunswick, celebrates the region's heritage and natural history

article and photos by **Dave G. Houser**

Praised as a salmon angler's paradise, the Restigouche River flows from its source in the Appalachian Mountains some 120 miles across northwestern New Brunswick, Canada, to its mouth at the Bay of Chaleur in Campbellton.

Part of the Canadian Heritage River System, the Restigouche is world-renowned for its Atlantic salmon fly-fishing. For more than a century, the river's large (20- to 40-pound) and aggressive salmon have attracted a host of luminaries — among them the Duke of Windsor, Hubert Humphrey, Ted Williams, Bing Crosby and George H.W. Bush.

To celebrate its connection to the river, the city of Campbellton recently unveiled the Restigouche River Experience Centre, a handsome \$4.1 million facility, positioned on the south bank and designed in the rustic style of the region's original fishing lodges. The

interpretive center is the culmination of a tourism-development project co-funded by federal, provincial and municipal governments that includes an adjacent 86-site full-service RV park that opened in 2016.

Located in the heart of Campbellton (population: 7,600), the complex occupies a 20-acre site near the city's sparkling waterfront esplanade and the sweeping 2,641-foot-long J.C. Van Horne Bridge connecting New Brunswick and Quebec. The bridge serves as one of the major gateways to Canada's Atlantic Provinces.

The 7,545-square-foot facility features touch pools, aquariums and a variety of museum-quality exhibits relating the heritage, natural history and cultural aspects of the Restigouche and its surrounding communities — a multicultural mix of Scots, Acadians and First Nations people who settled the region. Anglers will find numerous displays devoted to the

art and science of hooking and netting salmon, as well as the craft of tying flies that attract salmon.

A plush bar and restaurant named Taste the Place (Saveurs d'ici) occupies one end of the center, serving dinner Wednesday through Sunday. Fittingly, the menu focuses on fresh seafood and local produce. Among the entrées are wild salmon filet, smoked salmon ravioli, bouillabaisse, beef short ribs, and surf and turf, a platter of bison tenderloin and pan-seared scallops.

In addition to gorgeous panoramic river views, Campbellton RV Camping offers RVers all the basic services — 30- and 50-amp electricity, water and sewer, plus restrooms, shower and laundry facilities, and free Wi-Fi.

The interpretive center is open Wednesday through Sunday year-round. The campground's RV sites (no tents) are available May through October.

Restigouche River Experience Centre
844-787-3701
www.experiencorestigouche.com

Campbellton RV Camping
844-787-3701, www.campbellton.org/camp2/rvcamping.asp



RPM's Tough Toy Haulers

Motorhome manufacturer Chinook Motorcoach Corporation, based in Elkhart, Indiana, has acquired Von Liche Manufacturing (VLM), builders of RPM toy haulers, and Dream and Riverside trailers. The sporty RPM boasts heavy-duty construction that, according to the manufacturer, includes thicker floors, higher rated axles and tires, and rubber diamond-plate flooring and 5,000-pound-rated tie-downs in the cargo areas.

Eight travel trailer floorplans currently in the RPM line range from 18 to 36 feet, and a 33-foot fifth-wheel was recently introduced; additional floorplans will follow. The RPM's 8-foot, 4-inch-wide body allows for space to carry ATVs, quads and side-by-side vehicles, with cargo areas up to 17 feet long and ramp doors that can handle 3,000 pounds.



Pictured is the interior of the 33-foot, 10-inch RPM 335R17 fifth-wheel with abundant kitchen cabinetry. Up the stairs, the bedroom has a walk-around queen bed and a 6-foot-high ceiling. In back is a HappiJac power queen bed.



RPM 270B travel trailer

The fifth-wheel has an unloaded vehicle weight of 8,580 pounds and a claimed 4,820-pound cargo carrying capacity.

Interior decor choices include traditional farm-style maple cabinetry or a billet interior that features gray-and-aluminum cabinet doors. Standard are a 6-cubic-foot gas/electric or 10.6-cubic-foot 12-volt DC refrigerator.

Other standard features include a power A-frame jack, aluminum hybrid entry steps, porcelain toilets, power awning with LED light strips and a 15,000-Btu air conditioner in all units longer than 20 feet. Available options include a fuel station, a ramp-patio system, a generator and even a built-in air compressor for camping in the boonies.

RPM toy haulers have a starting retail price in the upper teens. Larger slideout-equipped models have MSRPs starting in the upper \$20,000s to low \$30,000s.

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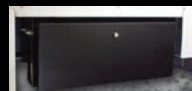
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Alto Raises the Roof

Based in Quebec, Safari Condo offers a unique 17-foot, 3-inch travel trailer that's available to the U.S. market. The lightweight, rounded-body Alto R-Series has a seamless-aluminum retractable roof that is opened and closed with the push of a button by a pair of electric linear actuators. Within minutes, the 7-foot-tall [exterior] trailer is transformed into an 8-foot, 5-inch-high light-and-bright oasis-on-wheels for the true outdoor lover, with crescent-shaped tinted-tempered-glass windows lining both sides. With the roof retracted, the refrigerator, toilet and beds are accessible.

Two Alto R-Series floorplans are available with self-containment features that include 15-gallon freshwater and 11-gallon black and gray holding tanks, a fixed-flush toilet, a dinette and sleeping for three. The R1713 has a 72-by-76-

Let there be light — and lots of it — with the retractable roof on the Alto R-Series from Safari Condo. The two models sport independent Flexiride suspension and claimed dry weights under 2,000 pounds.

inch bed that can be converted into two beds, and the dining area transforms into a 36-by-81-inch bed. The R1723 has a 60-by-76-inch bed, a convertible dinette and a curtained-off interior shower.

If you're interested in an Alto, plan ahead, because the wait time is approximately 18 months, as each Alto is built to order. At this writing, base MSRP in U.S. dollars was just under \$30,000, which includes the \$750 brokerage fee to transport the trailer across the border.

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Maine Events

Known for its seafood cuisine, rolling mountains and rocky coastline, Maine is a wondrous place to visit, particularly during the comfortable summer months. Take in the sights, do a little fishing, hiking and maybe some kayaking, and enjoy the state's summertime festivals. Be sure to book an RV site in advance.

BOOTHBAY HARBOR

The 56th annual **Windjammer Days**, June 24 through 30, celebrates the state's maritime heritage with an antique-boat parade, a tug-of-war across the harbor and fireworks. Afternoon and sunset sails are available on the *Lynx* tall ship (call 207-633-2474 to purchase tickets). www.boothbayharborwindjammerdays.org



MOUNT DESERT ISLAND

Observe pelagic birds including puffins and razorbills, peregrine falcons and many other species in their natural habitat at the **Acadia Birding Festival**, May 31 through June 2. Explore the Gulf of Maine by canoe with an avian expert and learn from local ornithologists while visiting the Warbler Capital of the World. www.acadiabirdingfestival.com



ROCKLAND

The **Maine Lobster Festival**, August 1 through 5, offers carnival rides, cooking contests, artists, craftsmen, live entertainment and plenty of local seafood, with proceeds going to midcoast Maine communities. The Food Network dubbed Rockland Pie Town USA, so be sure to sample a

variety of pies, from sweet to savory. www.maine lobsterfestival.com

UNION

The 37th annual **Maine Antiques Festival**, the state's largest antiques show, takes place August 3 through 5, with vintage collectibles and furnishings from the 18th to the 20th century from dealers from 20 states. www.maineantiquesfestival.com

YARMOUTH

The 53rd annual **Yarmouth Clam Festival**, July 20 to 22, is a summertime tradition with food booths, fireworks, a carnival, arts and crafts, live music, a parade, a kids' fun run and bike ride — plus more than 6,000 pounds of clams. www.clamfestival.com

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Blame the Frame

When his out-of-warranty fifth-wheel needed repairs, a Missouri reader felt the trailer frame's manufacturer should cover the costs. When that didn't happen, he asked RV Resolutions to step in as a third-party facilitator:

▶ I am contacting you in regard to a recent problem with our 2011 Heartland Landmark. The frame of the fifth-wheel broke in the pin-box area. Heartland said we should take up the issue with the manufacturer of the frame, Lippert Components. I contacted Lippert, and the company sent a technician to our residence, suggesting that he would make repairs as needed and that the cost of parts and labor would be covered. However, when he arrived, he told us he was there to inspect the trailer but not to make repairs.

After the inspection, Lippert decided not to repair the frame, claiming no welds were broken, which is not true. We are moving forward to have the problem fixed on our

own, but I don't believe it's right that Lippert won't stand behind its work. We were lucky the broken frame didn't cause a terrible accident.

Leonard Grant, Ewing, Missouri



THE COMPANY RESPONDS

Although the frame was considerably beyond its one-year warranty, Lippert Components agreed to reimburse Leonard Grant for the repairs. An attorney for the company sent the following reply:

Lippert Components contacted Mr. Grant and paid him the full amount of his alleged losses as a matter of goodwill.

Dean E. Leazenby, Legal Counsel
Lippert Components, Inc., Elkhart, Indiana

Nice Surprise

A California reader turned to RV Resolutions when the manufacturer of his travel trailer didn't respond to letters about problems he was having with it:

▶ Please find enclosed copies of letters I have written to Keystone regarding issues with my Springdale trailer, including a leaky LP-gas regulator and a defective tank-flush valve. I suspect the regulator caused the refrigerator to overheat on a three-week trip, requiring a hard reset to get it running again. I used the flush only four times — don't you think it should have lasted longer?

I also wrote to Keystone about other problems, including construction dust inside the trailer and manufacturing debris that came out of the gray-water tank the first time I tried to drain it. It would appear that the RV was swept out after manufacturing was completed, and this debris was dumped down a drain.

What bothers me most is that Keystone never contacted me to discuss my complaints. I do not think that is appropriate. I would appreciate a check from Keystone to cover my out-of-pocket costs.

William Kafka, Avery, California

After reaching out to Keystone RV on William Kafka's behalf, we heard from him that reimbursement had been received and the matter had been settled:

▶ I appreciate your efforts as expressed in your letter to Keystone. I just received a check from Keystone for \$150 to offset the costs associated with the replacement parts. I thought I had expected too much but am surprised. Thank you for your help.
W.K.

Claim Check

A Florida reader filed an extended-warranty claim after two tires on his fifth-wheel had to be replaced. After a couple of months passed with no reimbursement check, he came to RV Resolutions for help:

▶ We are trying to get back \$285.13 for a couple of tires we purchased for

our Heartland Bighorn after they blew out when we were on vacation. One was replaced in Ozona, Texas, and the other in Deming, New Mexico, and we provided receipts to Safe-Guard Products, our extended-warranty company. We have been dealing with Safe-Guard for more than two months now, and the company comes up with a different excuse every time I call.

Harry Cosner, Okeechobee, Florida

Less than a month after we forwarded Harry Cosner's complaint and supporting documentation to Safe-Guard Products International, Cosner was reimbursed by the insurer. He sent the following thank-you note:

▶ I want to express my sincere thanks for your help getting my money back from Safe-Guard Products. It is greatly appreciated. P.S. I love your magazine.
H.C. 📧

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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Modern Retro

Riverside RV's 199FKS combines top-line amenities with classic craftsmanship for a blast-from-the-past travel trailer

We could spot it a mile away. The clean curves and white-and-aqua stripes on the Riverside RV Retro 199FKS test unit called to us from across the campground, eliciting *oohs* and *ahhs* from my daughter Annabelle and her camp-along friend, Tori. Getting that kind of immediate and positive response from a couple of 17-year-olds was, I thought to myself, a good portent. We did a quick walk-around, noting the whitewall tires with painted rims that matched the color scheme and the diamond-pattern lower-body stone shield on the front. I unfolded the manual step, and we entered, eager to see how else we might be transported back in time once inside the nearly 26-foot travel trailer.

Walking in, we were again delighted by the eponymous retro design, with white-and-aqua dinette cushions and a black-and-white-checked linoleum-look floor that reminded me of a 1950s-throwback diner. The birch-look laminate covering the walls and ceiling is a good choice. The light color helps open up smaller spaces, and the pattern is appropriately reminiscent of that era. [If the look didn't reach that far back and instead stopped on the '70s wood-plank paneling, we'd have a prob-





(Far left) In addition to a fun throwback-diner feel, with its white-and-aqua decor, Riverside RV's Retro 199FKS has a surprisingly spacious kitchen (left) for a smaller trailer. It provides a good amount of counter and shelf space that helps to make up for the absence of overhead cabinets.

lem. That will probably be a hot trend for the next generation, but for now, too many of us remember it firsthand.)

The main control panel and refrigerator are to the left, and the rest of the kitchen lines the front wall of the trailer to the right, with the dinette slideout straight ahead, which extended farther than expected. The girls dove into the dinette to lay out their snacks and play cards, an initiative I interrupted in typical Mom fashion by scooching them over so I could slide in to evaluate the space. We could fit two on one side without too much trouble, though there wasn't a lot of room for arm movement.

One element I immediately appreciated was the table's sliding bar that adjusts its proximity to either side, and I liked its metallic rounded edges and light color with a gray-relief pattern. There is one power outlet on the wall under the table, into which I promptly plugged my laptop, and another on the

opposite wall for a TV. There are no overhead cabinets here, but there's space under the dinette seats. However, the front bench storage area is accessible only from the top by lifting up the seat, whereas the rear bench storage also opens from the side so that its contents are accessible while someone is seated there. Annie and Tori, having patiently waited for me to finish my scientific research, were finally left to play in peace, as I took my snooping elsewhere.

I realized quickly that it's not just the decor patterns and colors that contribute to the overall throwback feel of the Retro; it's also the shapes and contours. The curvature of the end caps is pleasantly noticeable, of course, but the wall corner between the kitchen and hallway is also rounded, which is a surprisingly significant contribution to opening up the main area so it doesn't feel boxy or compartmentalized.

Keep in mind, though, there's a give-and-take here. What's gained in aesthetics with the end-cap curvature is sacrificed in space where the arc cuts into cabinet storage and headroom. That was evident particularly while standing at the kitchen counter. Since I'm on the short side, it wasn't a problem for me, but taller cooks may find it more confining when working at the sink or the optional three-burner LP-gas stove. The lower curve also chops up the floor-cabinet space, so with the other sectioning they've done, there is no place to stash a kitchen trash can, even a small bathroom-size one.

However, there are two soft-close drawers, an open two-shelf cabinet above the 1-cubic-foot High Pointe convection microwave on the countertop, good counter space, and a window and light over the double sink, so it still feels spacious and works well, even without overhead cabinets. The 6-cubic-foot Dometic refrigerator's full separate freezer and plentiful storage options allowed for utilization of every inch of it, including drawers on the bottom and shelves in the door. There was plenty of room for a gallon of milk, which is one of my litmus tests for a satisfactory fridge. And because it's placed opposite of the other kitchen accoutrements, I could freely open its doors wide without hitting other appliances or cabinets.

I do wish there were additional windows in the 199FKS

The Retro 199FKS features a distinctive 1950s-era look but adds elements inside and out that speak to modern convenience, including updated appliances, optional exterior speakers and a power patio awning.

to allow more natural light in, or failing that, another light fixture between the kitchen and midship area. The roof vents and fans in the kitchen and bathroom let in air with the light, so we couldn't have them open while running the 13,500-Btu roof air conditioner, which was efficient but loud. We discovered it gets pretty dark in the center of the main living space at night or when the blinds and the panel over the kitchen-sink window are closed.

During our outdoor rec time, we found the 12-foot white-vinyl patio awning did its job and fit the look. There is an optional exterior shower, plus a power outlet. A Magnadyne antenna receives over-the-air TV signals, and a Solar on the Side hookup is reportedly compatible with any portable solar kit.

Setup was simple and straightforward, although mysteriously enough, my advertising it as such to the teens did not entice their assistance. I de-



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ployed the four stabilizer jacks and got all the hookups handled solo without any trouble.

One thing I didn't expect to find was a second gray-water holding tank at the fore of the trailer for the kitchen sink, which I simply emptied separately upon departure. I also didn't expect to discover that the under-bed storage, also accessible from a panel at the rear of the trailer, is in fact the only exterior storage, and part of that is taken up by the spare tire. Add in your septic and water hoses and electrical cords, plus any tools or other nuts-and-bolts necessities, and you're not left with much (if any) free space during travel. If you have much in the way of outdoor equipment, even camp chairs, you may need to use your tow vehicle for overflow storage, but that's not unusual with smaller trailers.

Back inside, our explorations continued. The bathroom is arguably the single most important interior element of an RV. It's the one thing used by every occupant, and its functionality and comfort can make or break the experience. The Retro 199FKS bathroom has a decent amount of space in both footprint and storage. The wall medicine cabinet is a good size, as is the sink cabinet, although the hoses and pipes underneath bite into the storage a bit, and the shelf inside means it won't house even a small trash can. The linen cupboards next to the shower, though, are nice and deep. Problematic is the placement of the toilet-paper holder, which is somewhat behind you as you're seated, requiring a 90-degree twist to reach it. It would be better placed elsewhere, perhaps



(Above, from left) A deep linen closet and full-size shower contribute to a good RV-bathroom experience. The bedroom offers overhead storage cabinets, plus shelves where power outlets are accessible from the walk-around queen bed. Under-bed storage space accessible via a platform with gas struts doubles as the Retro's exterior "basement" compartment.

on the inside of the sink-cabinet door.

The shower here is a little short on headspace, at just past 6 feet, but it has good water pressure, which is always appreciated. (My husband, Dan, jokes that with low-pressure showers, he has to run around in there just to get wet.) There are a couple of other caveats, including just one ceiling light, so if you're using the shower at night with no sunshine to illuminate the room through the roof vent, it's pretty dim. Swapping out the opaque curtain for a transparent one would probably help with that.

Also, the molded liner only comes up the walls and doesn't cover the ceiling, which instead has the birch-look wall treatment that's been carried into the bathroom. Overall, we were pleased with the space and feel of the bathroom, and it is workably functional.

Another critical part of any RV is how well it promotes everyone's slumber between adventures. The dinette converted to a bed easily and will fit one person without a problem. Given that the cushions are so, well, cushy, they may get compressed quickly if used often by a large occupant.

The rear bedroom features a queen bed framed by roomy half-height hanging wardrobes on each side and topped by a full-width overhead cabinet. It still feels retro in here, particularly with the

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(Above, from left) A roomy hallway wardrobe supplements the bedroom closets. It backs up to the light-and-bright dinette, which has slender seating for four and converts into a fold-down bed for additional sleeping space.

kitschy-patterned room-divider curtain that provides a little visual privacy, if not actual separation, but it's in this room where the blending of nostalgia and modernism is the most obvious. The obligatory cable and satellite hookups for a wall-mounted TV are present, and there's a Jensen JWM6A stereo with a radio, CD player and Bluetooth operation that can play music through any combination of the front or rear speakers (outdoor speakers are an option).

Beyond that, mindful choices speak to contemporary convenience, such as the open cubbies on top of the wardrobe cabinets with cutouts so the contents

can be accessed from the bed. Each side has power outlets, with a curbside charging station offering additional 12-volt DC and USB ports. Bedroom storage is augmented by a hall closet that contains a large double-door hanging wardrobe and eight drawers.

Since the head of the bed is against the rear wall, the cap curvature prevents sitting up in bed to read, but individual lights over each side of the bed are a nice touch. The whole-room light is in the middle of the ceiling, but it has an on-device switch and not a wall switch, so stretching over the bed to turn it on or off can be a little inconvenient.

MANUFACTURER SPECIFICATIONS

2018 RIVERSIDE RV RETRO 199FKS

Exterior Length	25' 10"
Exterior Width	8'
Exterior Height	9' 10"
Interior Width	7' 10"
Interior Height	6' 4"
Construction	Aluminum-cage construction, aluminum siding, TPO roof, R-7 fiberglass insulation
Freshwater Cap.	39 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	17 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	49 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	6 gal.
Refrigerator	6 cu. ft.
Furnace	20,000 Btu
Air Conditioner	13,500 Btu
Converter	30 amp
Battery	Dealer installed
Tires	ST205/75R14
Suspension	Leaf spring
Curb Weight (Average)	4,395 lbs.
Hitch Weight	840 lbs.
GVWR	7,840 lbs.
GAWR (2)	3,500 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$30,731
MSRP, As Tested	\$32,186
Warranty	1 year

Riverside RV

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The hardest thing to live with here, and possibly with the entire unit, is the mattress. The abysmally low standard for RV mattresses continues to be an enigma to consumers, and following that trend, this one was extremely firm, with pillows that were good for decoration only. Users will need a plush mattress topper or a replacement altogether. If you keep this mattress, be aware that standard queen fitted sheets may not fit well because the corners at the foot are curved, presumably to help ease walk-around traffic, which helps since the wheel wells protrude into this space.

When it was time to say goodbye to the Retro, it was a bittersweet farewell. Our experience was a pleasant one. With a few work-arounds, which people expect when they're choosing a retro-style trailer, the 199FKS can be a lovely blend of past and present. 🚐

RIVERSIDE RV RETRO 199FKS

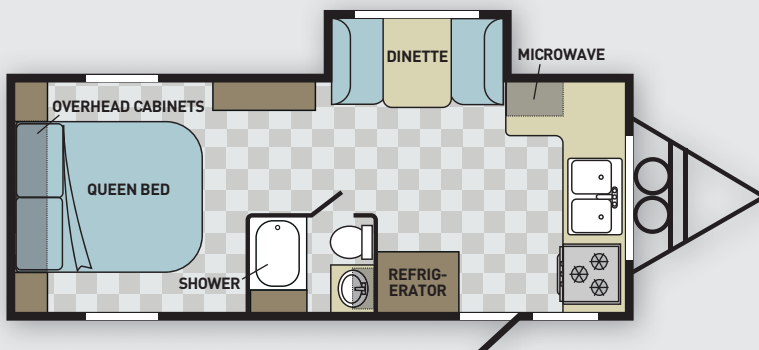


ILLUSTRATION BY ROB ROY

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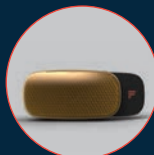
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Ready for Launch

The Falcon GT F-22RK is geared toward RVers seeking a compact travel trailer that doesn't skimp on creature comforts

As we sat down to compare notes on Travel Lite's lightweight Falcon GT travel trailer, SpaceX's *Falcon Heavy* rocket was being launched from Kennedy Space Center. And while SpaceX's Falcon needed 27 engines for liftoff, Travel Lite's Falcon can be launched with a single six-cylinder engine.

The New Paris, Indiana, manufacturer specializes in lightweight trailers that can be towed with most SUVs and also builds compact truck campers. The 21-foot, 7-inch F-22RK is one of six 2018 floorplans available in the Falcon GT line and weighs 3,340 pounds unloaded. After spending some time with it, we discovered that it's a study in efficiency, featuring an

impressive amount of storage inside and out for its size.

Pizzazz is added to the interior with green LED lights above the slideout's frame and below the dinette that coordinates with the bright-green Falcon logo and stitching in the dinette's two-tone leatherette bench seats. Converting the dinette into a 68½-inch-by-40-inch bed is easier with two people because of the two-post table.

On the wall opposite the dinette is a large mirror with a touch-screen on/off switch for the LED-illuminated border. Lighting throughout is excellent with large push-button LEDs. Granicote countertops are used in the kitchen, on nightstands and the dinette's rounded-edge table.



The kitchen packs in ample counter space and cabinetry, and has a 6-cubic-foot fridge.

Throughout the trailer are aluminum-framed cabinets with dark tempered glass, and there's impressive room in the L-shaped kitchen. Almost 2 feet of usable counter space (width and depth) extends between the two-burner range and single-basin sink, and the countertop's lip continues up the wall an inch or so. The one-piece mirrored backsplash with a print on it is lovely, and there's a window over the sink so a view to the outside can be enjoyed. Overhead is a microwave, below are pullout drawers on glides, and a 6-cubic-foot RV refrigerator is next to the entry door.



Catch *Trailer Life's* video review of the Travel Lite Falcon GT F-22RK on our YouTube channel, [TrailerLifeDIY](#).

WALK-THROUGH: TRAVEL LITE FALCON GT F-22RK



A 54-by-75-inch full-size bed is tucked up, island-style, under the aerodynamic front cap, which leaves about a foot of walk-around space on each side and provides extra legroom for tall folks. About half the space under the bed is allocated to storage, accessed by lifting up the end of the bed, while the other half is dedicated to the exterior's pass-through storage.

Nightstands (no storage) stretch half the length of the bed, and each side

(Above, from left) Individually controlled LED light fixtures are positioned throughout the interior. The dinette is accented with green LEDs above and below and a large sliding window. An island-style bed tucks under the dramatically sloped front cap and has storage beneath.

has a GFCI outlet and a charging center with a 12-volt DC outlet and a USB port. The front cap's dramatic slope limits occupants from sitting up in bed to read or watch the 32-inch LED TV (HD antenna standard) attached to an articulating bracket on the wall at the end of the bed. The TV can be viewed from

anywhere in the trailer, though care should be taken where it is positioned in relation to the tempered-glass bathroom door, so someone doesn't knock the door into it. The Dometic thermostat is hidden behind the TV, a plus that could prevent unauthorized use by kids who like to press buttons.

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The compact wet bath feels less confining due to ample light with the glass door, skylight and Fan-Tastic Vent. The step up into the bathroom is about 10 inches, so headroom is lost, except where the skylight offers 6 feet, 2 inches of space. The plastic toilet is set in the corner of the 20-inch shower pan, which opens up a tad more standing room when showering. Niceties include a shower curtain, a showerhead with a shutoff valve, and a towel hook.

Struts on the entry door keep it from opening into the diamond-plate fenders that cover 18-inch rims and 10-inch-wide Michelin Premier LTX tires. Standard is a Kicker-brand exterior stereo with marine-grade speakers, independent of the interior stereo, and a TV bracket on the side wall so the 32-inch TV can be moved outdoors and played through the exterior's stereo and speakers.

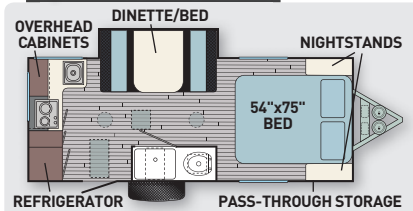
The A-frame houses a factory-supplied battery and a pair of 5-gallon LP-gas cylinders. A Lippert Smart Jack with a 9-inch-diameter foot pad and

memory setting has LEDs that shine down on the ball and coupler for nighttime use. There's an outside sprayer, and the 30-amp electric hookup is at the back of the trailer. Bullet LED lights are attached to the exterior's wall below the manual 10-foot awning and the porch light is a push-button, helpful for seeing the door handle and lock when walking up to a dark trailer. The Falcon GT logo pops out against the Graphite Metallic aluminum exterior.

The GT F-22RK is a small-footprint travel trailer that doesn't skimp on amenities, offers good storage and can be launched with many adventure-seekers' everyday vehicles. Kay Trietsch, cowriter for this Walk-Through, summed it up well when she described the GT as having "a comfortable interior and a smart layout with not an inch of wasted space." 🗨️

Special thanks to Custom RV of Ontario, California, for its hospitality and loan of the 2018 Travel Lite Falcon GT F-22RK. 909-983-8411, www.customrvsales.com

QUICK INFO



Exterior Length	21' 7"
Exterior Width	8' 5"
Exterior Height	8' 8" (without A/C)
Interior Height	6' 3"
Interior Width	6' 1½"
Freshwater Cap.	31 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	30 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	30 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.
UVW	3,340 lbs.
Hitch Weight	265 lbs.
GVWR	4,120 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$20,590
MSRP, As Shown	\$24,355

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ST205 / 75R15 - 8PR

ST225 / 75R15 - 8PR

ST225 / 75R15 - 10PR

ST235 / 80R16 - 10PR*

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DESTINATION: DISNEY WO

My husband, Jeremy, is the quintessential Disney Dad. He grew up visiting Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida, many times over and created some of the best memories of his childhood there. I, on the other hand, experienced one underwhelming visit as a preteen that left me perfectly content never to return.

I managed to put off a Disney World vacation for years, but as our twin sons approached their seventh birthday, my husband went for the hard sell. And he won.

What finally convinced me to book a trip to the Most Magical Place on Earth? It turns out, there is a themed campground on the property. And if there is one way you can get me to Disney World, it's in an RV.

RVING WITH MICKEY

Fort Wilderness is a 750-acre camping resort in the heart of the action — a 10-minute boat ride across Bay Lake takes you right to the Magic Kingdom — but it feels like it's a million miles away. Towering pine and cypress trees surround about 800 campsites and 400 cabins situated on loops throughout the campground. Wild turkeys roam the grounds along with deer, rabbits,

peacocks and armadillos.

During our stay, we hiked miles along the nature trails and visited the horses at Tri-Circle-D Ranch. It felt so rustic and peaceful, we almost forgot we were visiting the most famous theme park in the world.

Almost, but not quite. Because along with all that natural beauty comes the pristine cleanliness, amazing customer service and modern amenities that are legendary at Walt Disney World Resorts. In the end, this is what turned our family of five into hardcore fans of the campground — a group of guests affectionately known as Fort Fiends.

Fort Wilderness allows us to experience all the joy and magic of a Disney World vacation along with all the peace and tranquility of a typical family camping trip. It's a special kind of mix that has us longing to return year after year.

BOOKING A CAMPSITE

Speaking with many Disney World enthusiasts before our first family stay at Fort Wilderness convinced me that planning a Disney vacation was something akin to a full-time job in the months leading up to a visit. After two amazing trips, we now firmly believe that doesn't have to be the case.

No one can do everything at Disney World, so we don't even try. The secret to our personal Disney magic lies in soaking up the fun and frenzy of the rides, live shows and character dining,



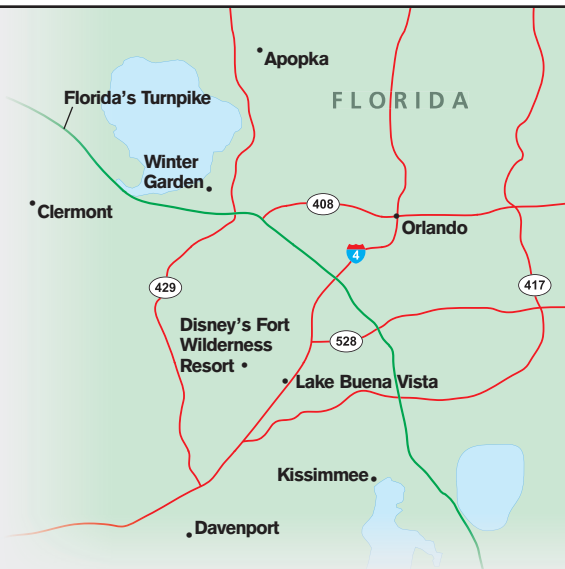
RLD



From Cinderella Castle (above) to Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort and Campground (top left), the Most Magical Place on Earth puts a spell on RVing families. (Far left to right) The author celebrates her birthday at the *Hoop-Dee-Do Musical Review* at Fort Wilderness, the Puglisi family catches some street entertainment at Epcot's World Showcase, and Captain Jack Sparrow recruits a fresh crew of pirates, including young Wes Puglisi in the green T-shirt.

CAMPING NEAR THE MAGIC KINGDOM

The only campground within Walt Disney World, **Disney's Fort Wilderness Resort and Campground** is in the heart of the world-famous theme park and has four levels of campsites with full and partial RV hookups. 407-824-2900 www.disneyworld.disney.go.com/resorts/campsites-at-fort-wilderness-resort



Unless you have a magic wand or a fairy godmother, booking a campsite at Disney's Fort Wilderness during peak times can be a challenge. The good news is that there are many other places to stay near Orlando's main attraction. Here's a sample of nearby RV parks and public campgrounds.

APOPKA

Orlando Northwest/Orange Blossom KOA
407-886-3260, www.koa.com/campgrounds/orlando-nw-orange-blossom

Wekiwa Springs State Park
407-884-2009, www.floridastateparks.org/park/wekiwa-springs

CLERMONT

Clerbrook Golf and RV Resort
352-394-5513, www.clerbrook.com

Elite Resorts at Citrus Valley
800-356-2460, www.citrusvalleyrv.com

Lake Magic RV Resort
877-570-2267, www.rvonthego.com/florida/lake-magic-rv-resort

Orlando RV Resort
877-570-2267, www.rvonthego.com/florida/orlando-rv-resort

Outdoor Resorts at Orlando
863-424-1407, www.rentwiththoro.com

DAVENPORT

Kissimmee South RV Resort
844-727-9616
www.carefreecommunities.com/rv-parks/florida/kissimmee-south

Mouse Mountain Travel Resort
863-424-2791
www.mousemountainrvresort.com

KISSIMMEE

Boggy Creek Resort and RV Park
407-348-2040
www.boggycreekresortandrvpark.com

Great Oak RV Resort
407-396-9092, www.greatoakrvresort.com

Kissimmee RV Park
407-396-6655, www.kissimmeervp.com

Merry D RV Sanctuary
800-208-3434, www.merryd.com

Mill Creek RV Resort
844-728-0750, www.millcreekrvflorida.com

Orlando/Kissimmee KOA
407-396-2400
www.koa.com/campgrounds/kissimmee

Sherwood Forest RV Resort
800-413-9762, www.sherwoodrvresort.com

Tropical Palms RV Resort
877-570-2267, www.rvonthego.com/florida/tropical-palms-rv-resort

ORLANDO

Bill Frederick Park at Turkey Lake
407-246-4486, www.cityoforlando.net/parks/bill-frederick-park-turkey-lake

Moss Park
407-254-6840
www.orangecountyfl.net/cultureparks

Orlando Southeast/Lake Whipoorwill KOA
407-277-5075
www.koa.com/campgrounds/orlando-se

WINTER GARDEN

Stage Stop Campground
407-656-8000
www.stagestopcampground.com

Winter Garden RV Resort
407-656-1415, www.wintergardenrv.com

then retreating to the peace and quiet of the campground before anyone gets exhausted, overwhelmed or burned-out.

While we may not plan extensively, we do plan strategically. Fort Wilderness campsite reservations can be made 499 days in advance by phone and 365 days in advance online. We enjoy visiting during quieter seasons and have had success booking premium sites one year in advance.

However, folks who like to camp at Fort Wilderness during Thanksgiving, the winter holidays and spring break should set their smartphone reminders for 499 days in advance and cross all their fingers and toes. It is ridiculously competitive to land a campsite during these peak seasons, and first-time visitors are often shocked at how far in advance the campground fills up.

When making reservations, guests aren't permitted to choose a particular campsite. Instead, you reserve a campsite category: Tent or Pop-Up, Full Hookup, Preferred or Premium. Every site has a concrete pad, picnic table, charcoal grill, water, electric and cable. The pricier tiers offer sewer hookups and more space.

You are allowed, however, to request a particular loop, and though Disney doesn't guarantee that requests will be honored, we have gotten lucky for the past two years. Our favorite spot is the 900 Loop, with premium sites right near the Meadows Depot. It's private and heavily wooded, yet only a short walk from a heated pool, hot tub, trading post and Chip 'n' Dale's Campfire Sing-a-Long.

As we waved goodbye to Disney World on the last day of our vacation this past January, a new email alert suddenly popped up on my phone. It was a Fort Wilderness reservation for next year. I turned to my husband with an eyebrow raised. "We can always cancel," he said with a wink.

DISNEY PROPERTY PERKS

Fort Wilderness is an official Disney resort, so guests receive some pretty nice benefits for staying on-site, and we make sure to take full advantage while planning our visits. We book dining

reservations 180 days in advance of our check-in date. For our first Disney vacation, we were eager to experience some character-dining venues, such as Mickey's Backyard BBQ and Chef Mickey's at the Contemporary Resort, which we traveled to via boat from the campground.

On our second trip, we scaled back on dining reservations. We realized that part of the magic of an RV stay at Fort Wilderness is that we were visiting with a fully stocked and operational kitchen. Enjoying every breakfast and most of our dinners at the campsite saved a ton of money and also kept things a bit more mellow. We appreciated not having so many reservations on the agenda. It gave us the freedom to spend that extra half hour at the pool in the late afternoon.

We also made sure to book FastPass+ reservations 60 days in advance of our check-in date. For every park ticket we purchase, we can book up to three FastPass+ reservations, and this is a priority for us, since we refuse to wait in line too long for any ride, no matter how big of a buzz there is. Once we use up those first three FastPasses in the park, we can book one more at a time, at either a FastPass+ kiosk or using the Disney World app on our smartphones.

Magic Hours are another bonus for folks staying at Disney properties, and we always check to see what parks have additional morning or evening hours during our visits. This is a great opportunity to get on the hottest new rides or just to enjoy a less crowded park atmosphere.

Other Disney resort perks include complimentary MagicBands (smart wristbands that serve as park tickets, FastPass+ check-ins and more), free parking at all resort properties, and access to bus, boat and monorail transportation. So while it may be more affordable to stay at an RV park elsewhere in the greater Orlando area (see the opposite page for some campground options), the benefits that come with a Fort Wilderness reservation offer a pretty compelling argument for us to stay there.

FORT WILDERNESS "FIENDS"

On our first family vacation to Disney World, we packed our schedule full of dining reservations, live shows and visits to the various parks. We were about three days into our stay when we realized we really wanted to be hanging out at Fort Wilderness.

Apparently, this is not an unusual phenomenon. We had heard from many RVers that they often don't venture into the parks at all during a

Fort Wilderness vacation. At first this sounded completely ridiculous. Camp at Disney World without doing all the typical Disney World things? *Never!*

But once we got to know Fort Wilderness a little better, we understood completely. Why stand in line for a character meet-and-greet when you can roast marshmallows with Chip and Dale? Why battle the nighttime crowds in the Magic Kingdom when you can watch fireworks from the Fort

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Wilderness beach? Why get dressed up for dinner reservations when you can sip a cocktail in a rocking chair at the Settlement Trading Post and watch your kids run around on the playground?

Don't get me wrong. Our family has been to all four Disney parks: Magic Kingdom, Epcot, Animal Kingdom and Hollywood Studios. We loved our time at each one, and the boys will claim a different favorite park depending on which day you ask. We bust through the park gates at opening and race from ride to ride, breaking only to eat some ice cream while watching a live show or parade.

Then a funny thing happens around 4 in the afternoon. The kids start asking when we are going back to the campground. We start picturing splashing down the waterslide and lounging in the hot tub. We wonder aloud what movie will be playing at the outdoor theater. Our youngest son starts debating whether he will hug Chip or Dale that evening. We rush out of the park, eager to unwind and relax. And then we realize: Our family has officially joined the ranks of Fort Fiends.

HOLDING THE FORT

Fort Wilderness offers all the amenities that RVers have come to expect at the best resort campgrounds. There are two heated pools, always kept between 83 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit, as a friendly lifeguard told us. There's a hot tub, a splash pad for the little ones, and a waterslide that keeps our boys occupied for hours. The recreation

opportunities are extensive and include tennis, basketball, tetherball and sand volleyball.

Then there are the amenities and activities that you won't find at any other campground in America. In fact, folks come from other Disney World properties just to enjoy the Fort's unique offerings. Visitors can rent fishing equipment, canoes and kayaks to paddle around in the lagoons, lakes and bays. There are bike rentals, pony rides and archery lessons, plus carriage rides and Segway tours.

The Hoop-Dee-Do Musical Revue is a legendary dinner show at Fort Wilderness that has been running continuously for more than 40 years. It is the first meal we enjoy at the Fort every time we visit. The upbeat music, corny jokes, interactive cast and all-you-can-eat fried chicken and ribs make the worries of the real world fade away and put the whole family in a Disney state of mind.

We especially love the fact that we can dance with Mickey, Minnie, Goofy, and Chip and Dale without even stepping foot



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outside the Fort. Mickey's Backyard BBQ is an all-you-can-eat picnic spread with live country music and plenty of photo opportunities with your favorite characters. Once we top off our Fort Wilderness dining experiences with breakfast at the Trail's End Restaurant, we usually head home, collectively vowing never to eat another meal again.

NEXT-DOOR NEIGHBORS

Beyond plummeting down Splash Mountain, spinning with Buzz Lightyear and getting spooked at the Haunted Mansion, there are many other experiences to be had in the Orlando area outside of Disney World. SeaWorld, Legoland and the Kennedy Space Center are all popular destinations. However, our now eight-year-old twins, like many kids their age, are obsessed with Harry Potter, so we dedicated a day to visiting the Wizarding World of Harry Potter at Universal Studios.

The boys swear that it was one of the greatest days of their entire lives, and we swear that it was one of the most expensive days of ours. Yes, we spent more money at Universal Studios than we ever have on a day at Disney World. To enjoy the entire Harry Potter experience, we had to buy Park-to-Park tickets, Universal's version of Disney's Park Hopper pass. We also just had to splurge for the Ollivanders experience, where our three boys got to pick out their own wands that could be used to cast spells throughout the park.

For our family, visiting the Wizarding World of Harry Potter was well worth the expense and the half-hour trip from Fort Wilderness. It looks and smells exactly like we always imagined it would. And the butterbeer was as yummy as we had hoped. We taste-tested all the options, just to be sure.

So many people return to Walt Disney World year after year and barely scratch the surface of all there is to see and do. We suspect it will take us longer than most to explore every nook and cranny of the parks. We're too busy hanging out at Fort Wilderness, looping around on a golf cart and talking about which campsite we hope to snap up for our next visit. 🚗

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HONDA
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NEW HONDA EU2200i PORTABLE GENERATOR: MORE POWER FOR WORK, HOME OR PLAY



**Sporting a fresh new look, new user-friendly features and
a 10 percent boost in power to run more accessories.**

Honda's all-new EU2200i Super Quiet Series generator delivers 10 percent more power than the outgoing EU2000i model, setting a new standard in portable power for camping and RVing, home backup power and worksite power. Best of all, the more powerful EU2200i is virtually unchanged in weight, size and cost from the popular EU2000i generator. It offers a larger engine, easier start-up and maintenance, and is available in three models that fit the needs of campers, tailgaters and RVers, including the EU2200i, the EU2200i Companion and the EU2200i Camo. With this selection, there is a Honda EU2200i generator for virtually any portable power need.

What's New & Improved

Like the EU2000i before it, the EU2200i is an inverter-equipped model with a totally enclosed body and acoustic engineering for quieter performance. Improvements over the EU2000i include:

- Larger oil filler opening, longer spout and larger oil drain gutter for easier, cleaner oil changes.
- Fuel shutoff valve in Fuel Off position allows the engine to run until almost all the fuel in the carburetor is used and the engine shuts off, helping prevent stale fuel issues during storage.
- New air ducts and a larger ventilation area for better cooling of inverter and other key components.
- Improved stator/rotor with thinner magnets, providing more power at less weight.

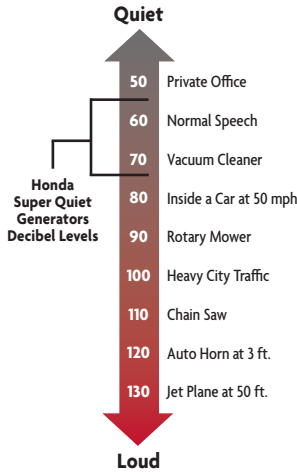
- Color-coded (gray) components guide the user through easier start-up.
- Stamped metal recoil rope insert for improved durability.

The EU2200i is powered by Honda's GXR120 Commercial Series 121cc engine, originally developed to run heavy-duty construction equipment. Like the GX100 engine in the EU2000i series, the GXR120 features an overhead cam shaft plus a maintenance-free, low-noise timing belt to create a compact, lightweight, quiet engine. It also features a cast iron cylinder sleeve and a high-carbon steel, dual-ball bearing crankshaft for improved strength and durability. The OHC design, combined with a compact muffler, reduces the noise level of the EU2200i by one decibel compared to the EU2000i. An innovative lubrication system with a dual-breather chamber optimizes engine lubrication. An automatic decompression system allows easy engine start-up, and the Oil Alert® feature (also found on the EU2000i) prevents engine operation if oil levels are too low.

Clean Power

Honda pioneered inverter technology in their generators two decades ago. Inverter-equipped generators produce clean, stable power comparable to residential AC. The inverter takes the raw power produced by the generator and uses a Honda-designed microprocessor to condition it through a multi-step process.

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The generator's alternator produces high voltage multi-phase AC power, which is then converted to DC, which is then converted back to AC by the inverter. In the process, the inverter also smooths and cleans the power for a stable signal, or sine wave. This clean, stable AC power is ideal for operating entertainment electronics, computers and many of today's electronically sophisticated appliances and accessories. The specially designed microprocessor controls the entire process, plus it adjusts the engine speed based on power demand.

Honda inverter technology reduces weight and noise levels on many of its generator models. A combination flywheel/alternator also reduces weight and size on the EU2200i. The EU2200i weighs just 46.5 lbs., comparable to the EU2000i at 46.3 lbs. It delivers 10 percent more power at only ounces more in weight.

The new EU2200i generator produces maximum AC output of 120 volts/2200 watts/18.3 amps. Rated output is 120 volts/1800 watts/15 amps. Run time is 3.2 to 8.1 hours on a single 0.95 gallon tank of gasoline, depending on load. The Eco-Throttle® contributes to fuel efficiency and long run time, allowing the engine to automatically adjust its speed to produce

only the power needed based on demand. Because the engine does not have to run at full speed constantly, Eco Throttle reduces noise and exhaust emissions as well. Operating sound levels of the EU2200i range from 53 dB at one-quarter load to 62 dB at rated load, compared to 53 dB at one-quarter load and 59 dB at rated load for the EU2000i.

Honda Versatility

Honda portable 2000 watt generators are favorites of pick-up, van and pop-up campers, providing power for a small air conditioner plus other appliances such as coffee makers, slow cookers, TVs and more. Parallel capability lets owners link two like models for twice the power when needed. The EU2200i can be used in parallel with any EU2000i, EU2000i Companion or with another EU2200i model (parallel kits are sold separately). Having two EU2200i or EU2000i models gives owners the advantage of being able to use both generators for larger power needs (home backup or for larger RVs with larger air conditioners) or just one for lower power requirements (tent camping, tailgating, home projects, trade show booths, etc.)

The Honda EU2200i arrives at Honda dealers and Camping World SuperCenters in early Spring 2018.



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BUDGET-FRIENDLY FIVERS



PRICED BETWEEN \$19,000 AND \$47,000, A DOZEN 2018 FLOORPLANS BRING FIFTH-WHEEL OWNERSHIP WITHIN REACH

Fifth-wheel trailers are easy to tow and make great rigs for everything from weekend camping to full-time living, particularly if you already own a suitable pickup truck. If you are buying your first fifth-wheel, there are many things to consider. Above everything, be sure to match the towing and payload capacities of your truck to the gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) and hitch weight of the trailer.

Selecting the best fifth-wheel for your needs depends on how you plan to use it. Are you a solo RVer, a couple, or a family with kids and dogs? Do you like the luxury of camping with full hookups or the more rustic experience of dry camping? Do you envision mostly weekend getaways and short vacations or cross-country adventures? Will you travel close to home to a few favorite spots, park for months in seasonal campsites or venture to far-off destinations?

If you will be camping not far from home on weekends and vacations, then a lighter-duty and less rugged fifth-wheel will do just fine. If you plan to stay in campgrounds that provide full hookups, holding-tank size is not that important. However, if you will be dry camping, the size of the tanks and battery bank are essential, as are the capacity to carry a portable generator or portable solar-power suitcase, or install additional batteries or a

permanent solar-power system.

For families that plan on using their fifth-wheel frequently, making up a convertible dinette or a sofa bed each night can become a chore. Bunkhouse models provide dedicated beds for the kids and sometimes a separate room for them. On the other hand, if you travel solo or are a couple with few overnight visitors, you can opt for comfortable recliners or theater seating instead of a sofa bed and store an inflatable air mattress for occasional guests. Most smaller fifth-wheels offer relaxed seating in the living area for two on either a sofa or twin recliners, but you may want both so you can seat four.

If you plan to watch a lot of television, the size of the TV and its orientation to the seating are important. If you have a lot of mobile devices, USB charging ports throughout the rig are convenient. If you love to cook outside or want easy access to cold drinks while sitting around the picnic table or campfire, an outdoor kitchen is a great bonus, and an exterior TV and speakers may be valuable additions to your alfresco living space.

If you need to transport a lot of gear or plan to travel for extended periods, look for a higher cargo carrying capacity (ccc). This is a measure of the GVWR minus the unloaded vehicle weight (UVW). The manufacturer-supplied CCC weights in this article may or may not include liquids, LP-gas and optional features. Always refer to the weight labels on the actual unit for the most accurate CCC.

Deluxe amenities for those on a bigger budget include things like an automatic-leveling system, a black-tank flush system, a walk-on roof for easy maintenance, a heated basement to extend the camping season and 50-amp capability for running multiple appliances simultaneously with electrical hookups.

Priced from just over \$19,000 to \$47,000, the following 12 floorplans are a sample of fully equipped entry-level fifth-wheels for the 2018 model year. Note that interior height for each model lists the maximum floor-to-ceiling measurement (typically the highest point in the living area), and exterior height generally extends to the top of a standard rooftop air-conditioning unit.



Allen Idle-Time

Although the **219 RKS** was widened to 8½ feet for 2018, it is still shy of 25 feet in length and a maneuverable package that is easy to back into most campsites. At 11 feet, 4 inches tall, it is short enough to fit under almost any bridge or fuel-station overhang. With just one shallow-depth slideout, it is also a lightweight trailer, with a GVWR of 7,700 pounds, and can be towed by a variety of full-size gas and diesel pickups. And it is affordably priced, with a base MSRP just over \$25,000. This

nimble trailer has a generous cargo capacity of 2,700 pounds, allowing for storage of plenty of gear and provisions for longer-term travel. The kitchen is in the rear, the part of the trailer that experiences the roughest ride, but it is fully accessible with the slideout closed for stocking up in the supermarket parking lot or making a meal at a rest stop. Optional upgrades include a walk-on roof and a heated basement.

Exterior Length	24' 10"
Exterior Width	8' 6"
Interior Height	7' 3"
Exterior Height	11' 4"
Freshwater Cap.	36 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	38/38 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.
UVW, Base	5,000 lbs.
Hitch Weight	600 lbs.
GVWR	7,700 lbs.
CCC	2,700 lbs.

800-647-3720, www.allencampermfg.com



CrossRoads Volante

At 30½ feet long and just over 12 feet tall, the bunkhouse **VL270BH** is at the larger end of the spectrum for fifth-wheels in this price range. A plus for families is the separate room with two full-size bunks that gives the kids comfortable sleeping in their own space. A single, big slideout houses a U-shaped dinette and loveseat. The outdoor kitchen, complete with a fridge, stovetop and sink, not only keeps cooking smells out of the trailer but will be welcome by those who love to be outside rather than always preparing meals indoors. The 60-gallon freshwater tank is great for dry camping, although the 44-gallon waste tanks may fill before the freshwater runs out. With a wide-open floorplan, even around the queen-size bed in the parents' bedroom, this fifth-wheel is ideal for family getaways.



BUDGET-FRIENDLY FIVERS

Exterior Length	30' 6"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	8' 6"
Exterior Height	12' 1"
Freshwater Cap.	60 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	44/44 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
UVW, Base	7,704 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,670 lbs.
GVWR	9,300 lbs.
CCC	1,596 lbs.

866-425-4369, www.crossroadsrv.com/brands/volante



Dutchmen Aerolite Astoria

Rising to nearly 13 feet, the 30-foot-long **2513RLF** is the tallest model in this roundup, warranting careful attention at fuel stations and underpasses. And with a base price of \$47,000, it is also the highest priced. The 2,298 pounds of cargo capacity gives it sufficient strength for a few factory options, in addition to supporting seasonal travel where extra food, clothing and gear are needed. Outside speakers, auto-leveling, easy-maintenance gelcoat walls and a black-tank flush system are among many higher-end features. The living area slideout houses a U-shaped dinette and an 8-cubic-foot refrigerator, and the small bedroom slide adds closet space. If no children or overnight guests are expected, optional theater seating can replace the queen sofa bed. For those traveling long distances, there is just enough room to maneuver in the kitchen at a rest area or other pit stop without deploying the main slide.

Exterior Length	30'	UVW, Base.....	7,652 lbs.
Exterior Width	8'	Hitch Weight	1,434 lbs.
Interior Height	8' 6"	GVWR	9,950 lbs.
Exterior Height.....	12' 11"	CCC	2,298 lbs.
Freshwater Cap.	50 gal.		
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	39/39 gal.		
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.		

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Escape

With a length just over 21 feet and a GVWR of 5,500 pounds, the Canadian-built **5.0TA** is one of the smallest, lightest and most maneuverable fifth-wheels in this group. Easily towed by any suitably equipped half-ton pickup, it can be tucked into small sites yet still offers features typical of larger trailers, including a full-length queen bed and a 6.7-cubic-foot refrigerator. The molded-fiberglass exterior avoids the more typical rubber roof. The trade-off for the trailer's nimble size and weight is a wet bath without a dedicated shower stall, but those who take advantage of campground shower facilities won't find that a disadvantage. The 28-gallon freshwater tank and combined 68 gallons of waste capacity are adequate for short-duration dry camping. Cargo capacity of 1,615 pounds rivals some fifth-wheels that are 10 feet longer. For those traveling with kids or guests, the dinette folds into a bed.

Exterior Length	21' 2"	UVW, Base.....	3,885 lbs.
Exterior Width	7' 4"	Hitch Weight	600 lbs.
Interior Height	6' 4" to 7'	GVWR	5,500 lbs.
Exterior Height.....	9' 7"	CCC	1,615 lbs.
Freshwater Cap.	28 gal.		
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	30/28 gal.		
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.		

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Forest River Arctic Wolf

With an open floorplan, big windows, and high ceilings in the central body and main slideout, the **255DRL4** feels much bigger than its 30-foot, 4-inch length. The living-room slide houses a sofa bed and a dinette, and the upstairs slide contains the bedroom wardrobe and bathroom linen closet. Cargo capacity of nearly 2,000 pounds is sufficient for vacation travel, and the GVWR is a relatively modest 9,900 pounds. The big 84-gallon gray tank supports dry camping, especially if the smaller 49-gallon freshwater tank is refilled at the campsite. Much of the storage space is in lower cabinets that can support heavier items, and a black-tank flush system is standard. An outdoor fridge, icemaker and sink take the party to the patio. Deluxe optional amenities include auto-leveling, tire-pressure monitoring, an 11.9-cubic-foot residential refrigerator, multiple USB charging stations and a Trailair shortbed-pickup-capable pin box.

Exterior Length	30' 4"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	9'
Exterior Height	11' 10"
Freshwater Cap.	49 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	42/84 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.
UVW, Base	7,901 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,371 lbs.
GVWR	9,900 lbs.
CCC	1,999 lbs.

260-499-2025, www.forestriverinc.com/fifth-wheels/arctic-wolf

Grand Design Reflection 150

At just over 28 feet long and 11 feet, 9 inches tall, the **230RL** (tested in April 2018 issue) is a fairly modest-size fifth-wheel, but with its generous cargo capacity of 2,510 pounds and full access to the kitchen when the slideout is closed, it is well suited to more extensive and long-distance travels, as well as vacations and weekends. The single slide contains a U-shaped dinette and RV refrigerator, and theater seating in the rear is standard (a sofa bed is optional). The exterior is gelcoat, and an outdoor shower provides a way to hose down gear or even wash the dog. Outdoor speakers liven up the campsite, although exercising noise-etiquette consideration is important with this type of setup. A Trailair Turning Point swivel pin box makes the fifth-wheel towable by many shortbed pickup trucks. A black-tank flush system, porcelain toilet, heated basement and heated dump valves are all available as upgrades.

Exterior Length	28' 1"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	8' 4"
Exterior Height	11' 9"



Freshwater Cap.	52 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	39/71 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.
UVW, Base	6,945 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,195 lbs.
GVWR	9,495 lbs.
CCC	2,510 lbs.

574-825-9679, www.granddesignrv.com

Jayco Eagle HT

The 29-foot, 3-inch-long **25.5 REOK** has two slideouts, one containing a sofa bed and dinette, and the other housing the bedroom wardrobe and bathroom linen closet. With a gelcoat exterior, Goodyear tires, enclosed and heated underbelly, black-tank flush system, porcelain toilet, USB charging stations and a cargo capacity of 2,345 pounds, this fifth-wheel can go the distance or make a comfortable rolling second home for weekend getaways. The clever outdoor kitchen has dual pull-out burners and a small refrigerator, and a spray port provides outside water access while dry camping. Exterior speakers add to the campsite ambience. Prepped for a solar-panel with a run of 8-gauge wire between the basement and the roof, the fifth-wheel also has an optional third LP-gas cylinder and prewiring for a generator.



Exterior Length 29' 3"
 Exterior Width 8'
 Interior Height 7' 11"
 Exterior Height 12'
 Freshwater Cap. 42 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap. 32.5/65 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap. 14 gal.
 UVW, Base 7,650 lbs.
 Hitch Weight 1,235 lbs.
 GVWR 9,995 lbs.
 CCC 2,345 lbs.

800-283-8267, www.jayco.com



Keystone Sprinter Campfire

RVers can live large in the open floorplan of the 30½-foot-long, wide-body 26FWRL, with a deep slideout housing the sofa and dinette. The living area has cushy seating for four on twin recliners and a convertible sofa, and a fifth person sitting sideways in the dinette will also enjoy a good view of the TV. Upstairs, a second slide spanning the bedroom and bathroom contributes to the heavier GVWR of 11,500 pounds, but the cargo capacity of 3,435 pounds is excellent for extended travels. With the slide closed, the kitchen is accessible for pit-stop meals or loading groceries in the cabinets and refrigerator. The big freshwater tank

invites dry camping, though the waste tanks will fill before the water runs out. Auto-leveling and a heated underbelly are higher-end touches that could contribute to a higher base price.

Exterior Length 30' 6"
 Exterior Width 8' 4"
 Interior Height 8' 6"
 Exterior Height 12' 6"
 Freshwater Cap. 81 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap. 44/44 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap. 14 gal.
 UVW, Base 8,020 lbs.
 Hitch Weight 1,385 lbs.
 GVWR 11,500 lbs.
 CCC 3,435 lbs.

866-425-4369

www.keystonerv.com/sprinter-campfire



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BUDGET-FRIENDLY FIVERS



K-Z Sportsmen

Stretching 32 feet, 9 inches, the **293RL** is this roundup's longest trailer. It is also one of the tallest models at 12 feet, 5 inches, and is the only one with three slideouts. The longest slide houses a 64-inch-wide sofa bed, kitchen appliances and a pantry. The U-shaped galley has generous meal-prep countertops with the sink in the center of the rig. A second living-area slide houses the dinette and an entertainment system in a layout similar to much larger full-timer layouts with a center island. Comfortable seating for four and two additional seats at the dinette have a good view of the TV. The bedroom slide

contains dresser drawers and a closet. In the case of the 293RL, the weight of the three slides reduces the carrying capacity, limiting the number of options that can be installed and still allow for provisions and gear.

Exterior Length	32' 9"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	7' 8"
Exterior Height	12' 5"
Freshwater Cap.	38 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	57/57 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
UVW, Base	7,860 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,620 lbs.
GVWR	9,200 lbs.
CCC	1,340 lbs.

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



Northwood Fox Mountain

Just under 28 feet, the **235RLS** (tested in November 2017 issue) is fairly modest in length but quite tall at 12 feet, 7 inches, and its 11,500-pound GVWR is heavier than most models in this group. However, the advantage is the beefy 4,205-pound carrying capacity, ideal for extended stays, and this model even has extra outdoor storage on a built-in roof rack. The single slideout houses the dinette and pantry, and the L-shaped kitchen, with its big 9.5-cubic-foot RV refrigerator, offers loads of counter space. The jackknife sofa bed can be upgraded to twin recliners. A split bath in the bedroom makes it possible for one person to use the porcelain

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toilet in private while another uses the sink or shower. Nightstands on each side of the queen bed have 12-volt DC and USB charging stations, and a black-tank flush system is standard.

Exterior Length 27' 10"
 Exterior Width 8'
 Interior Height 8' 2"
 Exterior Height 12' 7"
 Freshwater Cap. 53 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap. 36/42 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap. 14 gal.
 UVW, Base 7,235 lbs.
 Hitch Weight 1,375 lbs.
 GVWR 11,500 lbs.
 CCC 4,205 lbs.

800-766-6274, www.northwoodmfg.com/5th-wheels/fox-mountain



Scamp

With a base price under \$20,000, the **19-Foot Standard** is the smallest and least expensive fifth-wheel of the bunch. With no slideouts and an exterior height under 9 feet, which will clear virtually all bridges and overhangs, the lightweight fiberglass trailer has a GVWR of 3,500 pounds, towable by any truck, and will tuck into most campsites. Its 1,000 pounds of cargo capacity is big for its diminutive size. The trade-off for this affordable package is a miniature interior with a queen-size loft bed and a two-burner stove. Holding tanks are small, making dry camping a rustic experience, but many campgrounds offer excellent toilet and shower facilities. Available in two floorplans, the pricier Deluxe model offers a 4.6-cubic-foot refrigerator, a microwave, a shower and toilet, plus stairs to the loft bed, but gives up 300 pounds of carrying capacity.

Exterior Length 19'
 Exterior Width 6' 8"



Interior Height 6' 3"
 Exterior Height 8' 10"
 Freshwater Cap. 12 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap. 9.5/21 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap. 10 gal.
 UVW Base 2,200 lbs.
 Hitch Weight 400 lbs.
 GVWR 3,500 lbs.
 CCC 1,000 lbs.

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- Find your **GVW** (Gross Vehicle Weight)
Weigh just your truck with a full tank of gas, all your passengers and items in the cab and truck bed with your trailer loaded and attached, but not on the scale.

Do Not Exceed Your Truck Manufacturer's **GVWR**
- Find your **GCW** (Gross Combined Weight)
Weigh your fully loaded truck and trailer including all cargo, a full tank of gas and passengers.

Do Not Exceed Your Truck Manufacturer's **GCWR**

* Transfer Manufacturer's Ratings from previous page.
- Find your **Towing Weight**
Weigh your loaded truck without the trailer attached. This is your truck weight. Subtract your **Truck Weight** from your **GCW**. This is your towing weight.
- Find your **VTW** (Vertical Tow Weight) also known as Tongue Weight.
Subtract your **Truck Weight** from your **GVW**.

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Winnebago Minnie Plus

Great for weekends and short vacations, the 29½-foot 27RE0K has a modest exterior height of less than 12 feet and a cargo capacity of 1,433 pounds. The big slideout houses a sofa sleeper (theater seating or a trifold sofa are options) and a booth dinette (or an optional freestanding table and chairs). A long window-seat bench in the rear lifts to provide storage underneath. The second slide contains a bedroom wardrobe and a bathroom linen closet. A full outdoor kitchen with a dual-burner pull-out cooktop, a sink and a refrigerator, along with exterior speakers and a connection for an external TV expands the living quarters to the patio. Modest waste tanks make this trailer more suited to the luxury of hookups at campsites where the 10-gallon water heater will provide long, hot showers and USB ports will keep devices charged. A black-tank flush system is standard.

Exterior Length	29' 6"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	7' 11"
Exterior Height	11' 11"
Freshwater Cap.	50 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	41/41 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
UVW, Base	8,060 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,820 lbs.
GVWR	9,500 lbs.
CCC	1,433 lbs.

574-825-5250, www.winnebagoind.com



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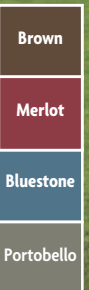
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Water is the lifeblood of any RV. Owners rely on water to take showers, flush the toilet and wash dishes, just to name the obvious. When hooked up in an RV park, water flows freely to all the fixtures, but on the road or in a primitive environment, the onboard demand water pump is called into service to pressurize the system and distribute the wet stuff throughout the RV.

Quintessential water pumps have evolved over the years, but the basic design remains: a diaphragm-driven pump provides approximately 45 to 50 PSI of water pressure throughout the system on demand, and a pressure switch idles the pump until water flow is desired.

Water stored in a nonpressurized storage tank mounted under or inside the RV is pulled through the inlet side of the pump and pushed out the outlet through the system of pipes routed to the faucets and appliances. All RVs with a water system are fitted with a demand pump as part of the standard-equipment package, and switches can be found typically in the galley, bathroom and/or outside utility compartment.

Most factory-installed pumps are rated to flow between 2 and 3 gallons per minute (GPM), which is usually enough to produce a decent flow through the faucets and showerhead. Pumps with higher flow rates (4 to 5 GPM) can be employed in RVs with longer runs of pipe and are generally available as an aftermarket option.

Pumps with adequate filters and that have been exercised regularly will usually last a long time. Fortunately, a number of demand pumps are available through RV retailers that are perfect replacements, and the good news is that swapping out a water pump is an easy process, as long as

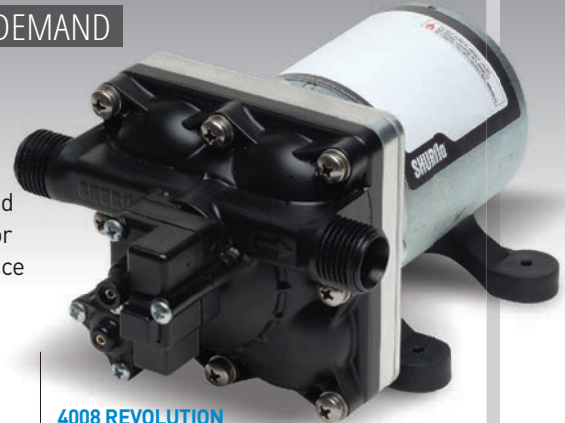
there is proper access.

The following is a roundup of the latest demand water-pump offerings, should a replacement become necessary or an upgrade be desired.

SHURFLO

Shurflo, under the Pentair corporate banner, is a major supplier to the RV industry, and its demand water pumps have been installed in all classes of RVs since 1968. After discontinuing the Classic and Extreme series product lines, Shurflo has realigned its water-pump offerings and now markets them under the Revolution and High Flow nameplates.

The new pumps have a one-piece diaphragm and an internal bypass, and are designed to offer low-noise



4008 REVOLUTION

operation without rapid cycling. The pumps are protected thermally to prevent damage if they run dry. They can be mounted in any position and have a relatively low amp draw.

The **4008 Revolution** is the company's most popular pump, and it is rated to flow 3 GPM. This pump is commonly used by RV builders and has a strong reputation for reliability and durability. It's relatively compact, and the pipe connections are easy to make.

For those who desire a stronger flow, the **4048 High Flow** pump will fit the bill. This pump



4048 HIGH FLOW



CONSTANT FLOW

is rated to flow 4 GPM, and the physical size is just 2 inches larger than the Revolution. The High Flow pump is the logical replacement for the old Smart Sensor series models.

Shurflo/Pentair
800-854-3218

www.shurflo.com/rv-products/rv-pumps



TRIPLEX

FLOJET

Another well-known name in the RV water-pump arena is Flojet, a division of Xylem. Flojet offers a variety of models for factory and aftermarket applications. All Flojet pumps have an integrated pulsation dampener to reduce noise and cycling, and are fitted with quick-connect ports for easy in-



QUAD

stallation and servicing.

Triplex series pumps are designed to handle two, three or four fixtures, respectively, and offer flow rates from 2 to 3.5 GPM. These pumps have all the bells and whistles but are primarily designed for smaller RVs. **Quad** series pumps

can handle up to five fixtures and are commonly found in new RVs.

Next up the ladder is the **4325 Series Heavy Duty** that operates at a higher pressure serving up to five fixtures. While this pump can handle larger water systems, the **High Capacity RV** pump operates at a much higher pressure and is available in models that flow at 4, 5 or 6 GPM. According to Flojet, High Capacity RV pumps have larger-motor brushes and a patented diaphragm that provides 50 percent longer service life than its



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Quad series pumps.

For more precise water flow, Flojet's **V-Flo 5.0** employs a variable-speed drive that regulates flow. Rather than a constant flow provided by standard-type pumps, this unit monitors water flow and power consumption, and automatically makes adjustments based on the position of the valve. As the faucet handle is opened, the flow of water is proportional, allowing from just a trickle to full flow, based on desire. This allows the system to operate at peak efficiency, especially when self-containment is utilized in primitive locations. Another benefit is quiet operation sans annoying hammering.

The V-Flo monitors operation status to prevent failures from dry running or electrical inconsistencies. It does require proper-gauge wiring, which may have to be upgraded if the pump is being swapped for a stock counterpart.

Flojet/Xylem

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POWER DRIVE SERIES 1

ARTIS

Artis Products offers three Power Drive water pumps earmarked for RVs. The top of the line, **Power Drive Series 5**, is a higher-flow model that works up to 70 PSI, providing a strong flow of water, especially for larger systems. Like most of the other brands on the market, it uses EPDM valves, and for this model, five of them to provide upgraded efficiency and flow.

Power Drive Series 1 and 3 pumps have four valves and a 3-GPM



POWER DRIVE SERIES 5

flow rate; the Series 5 pump is rated at 5 GPM.

Giving the company bragging rights are the pumps' low-noise and vibration operation and corrosion-resistant housing. Power Drive pumps have the same footprint as most original-equipment units, making replacement simple. Series 3 and 5 models use proprietary flow-control technology, which provides a steady flow of water at a consistent rate.

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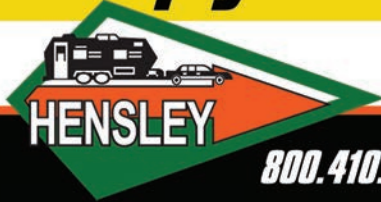
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CONSTANT FLOW

REMCO

Marketed under the PowerRV nameplate, Remco Industries offers three models of demand pumps, all with specific purposes.

Owners needing a direct-replacement pump can look to the **3200 Series** for a simple retrofit. This pump has a three-chamber (valve) design and a heavy-duty motor that allows a 3-GPM flow rate. All PowerRV pumps use EPDM valves and a Santoprene diaphragm, which are commonly used throughout the industry.

The next-level pump in the Remco line is the **Rebel**, which is made in the USA and comes in three models with 3-, 4- and 5.3-GPM flow rates, respectively. The most popular is the 4-GPM flow rate. All models are designed for rigorous use and duty cycles. Quick-attachment ports make water-line hookup simple.

At the top of the company's product line is the **AquaJet**, which has a 20-year reputation in the field. AquaJet is a variable-speed pump that has five chambers and provides the kind of pressure demanded of high-end fifth-wheels and motorhomes. Earmarked for large systems with long runs, AquaJet models are available with 3.4- or 5.3-GPM flow rates and a maximum pressure of 65 PSI.

All of the company's pumps undergo demanding field and factory testing for performance.

Remco Industries
800-228-2481

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3200 SERIES



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FLOW MAX

Lippert Components, a giant supplier to RV manufacturers, offers a **Flow Max** demand pump that is tested to flow at a constant 3 GPM and at 50 PSI. The company touts the Flow Max as quiet and capable of servicing larger RV water systems with multiple fixtures. Inside is a heavy-duty corrosion-resistant motor and three chambers.

The pump has been freeze/thaw tested through five two-hour cycles to ensure reliability in adverse conditions. Provided with the pump is a screen filter and the necessary

FLOW MAX



connection bars. Flow Max pumps are protected by a two-year warranty.

Flow Max/Lippert Components
574-537-8900, www.lci1.com/flow-max



42-SERIES



51-SERIES

SEAFLO

A relative newcomer to the demand-pump scene, Seaflo markets a line of models imported from China. These value-priced water pumps are heavily marketed to the marine and agriculture industries, and a couple of the models in the company's long list of offerings are directly earmarked for RVs.

The **42-Series** pump is the most popular for RV installations, and for the money, carries the desired features, including a 3-GPM flow rate and suitability for up to five fixtures. The bypass technology provides a variable-flow rate, which adjusts

water delivery based on demand. A Santoprene diaphragm and four chambers drive the pump to 55 PSI, and a four-year warranty is designed to build consumer confidence.

For those owners needing a steadier and stronger flow for larger systems, the **51-Series** pump is rated up 5.5 GPM. Considered a heavy-duty counterpart, this pump has five chambers and a higher-pressure shutoff point.

In the near future, Seaflo will be introducing a 54-Series pump with a variable-flow rate.

Seaflo Marine and RV
844-473-2356, www.seaflousa.com

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KEEP THE WATER FLOWING

For a refresher course on how to inspect and maintain demand water pumps, visit the website of our sister publication, *MotorHome*.
www.motorhome.com/tech/diy/keep-the-water-flowing

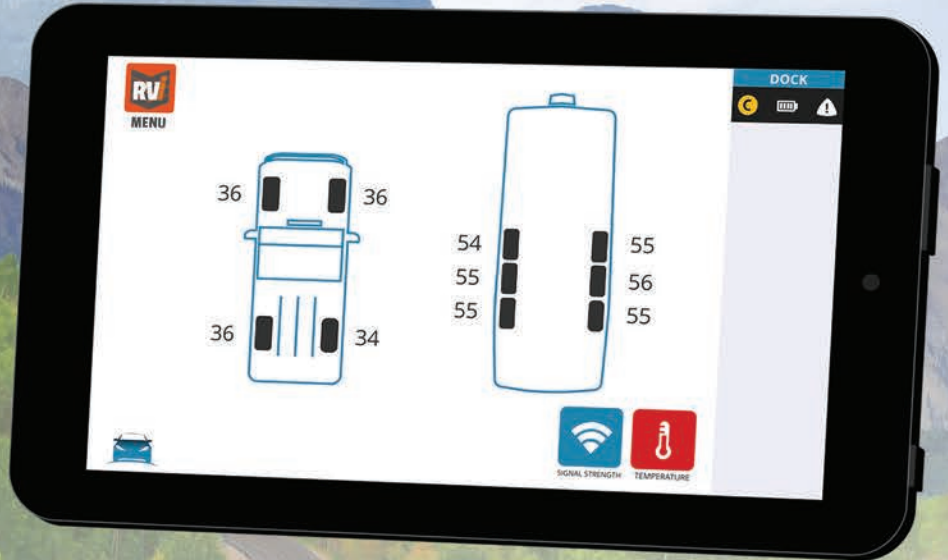
GUIDE TO RV WATER PUMPS

The following chart lists the most popular demand water pumps for RV use. Models that provide higher pressure and flow than the standard pump supplied by the factory might require heavier-gauge wire to handle the current. All the pumps listed below are self-priming, have a built-in check valve, are thermally protected and can run dry without damage. 🗨

MODEL	PART NUMBER	DIMENSIONS	FLOW RATE	FIXTURES	MAXIMUM POWER DRAW	SHUTOFF PRESSURE	MSRP
ARTIS PRODUCTS/ARTERRA DISTRIBUTION							
Power Drive Series 1	PDS1-130-1240E	7.65" x 3.29" x 4.35"	3 GPM	Multiple	7 amps	40 PSI	\$94.99
Power Drive Series 3	PDS3B-130-1260E	7.65" x 4" x 4.62"	3 GPM	Multiple	7.5 amps	60 PSI	N/A
Power Drive Series 5	PDS5B-150-1270E	5.47" x 8.72" x 4.8"	5 GPM	Multiple	15 amps	70 PSI	N/A
FLOJET/XYLEM							
Triplex 2.0 RV	R3426148	4.75" x 9" x 6"	2 GPM	2	3.5 amps	25 PSI	\$116.63
Triplex 2.9 RV	03526144	4.75" x 9" x 6"	2.9 GPM	3	7.5 amps	50 PSI	\$93.87
Triplex 2.9 RV	R3426144	4.75" x 9" x 6"	2.9 GPM	3	5.2 amps	25 PSI	\$125.36
Triplex 3.5 RV	03626149	4.4" x 8.9" x 6"	3.5 GPM	4	11 amps	40 PSI	\$122.44
Quad 4406 Series	R4406143	3.75" x 9.9" x 6.3"	3.2 GPM	4	7 amps	35 PSI	\$139.29
4325 Series Heavy Duty	R4325143A	3.75" x 9.9" x 6.3"	4.3 GPM	5	12 amps	40 PSI	\$256.03
High Capacity RV	R8400144	4.72" x 9.9" x 5.1"	4 GPM	Multiple	14 amps	70 PSI	\$232.30
High Capacity RV	R8500144	4.72" x 10.6" x 5.1"	5 GPM	Multiple	16 amps	70 PSI	\$252.50
V-Flo 5.0	R4320143A	N/A	5 GPM	Multiple	15 amps	35 PSI	\$379.20
V-Flo 5.0	R4426143A	N/A	5 GPM	Multiple	15 amps	60 PSI	\$387.44
FLOW MAX/LIPPERT COMPONENTS							
12V Flow Max	689052	6" x 10.25" x 5.5"	3 GPM	Multiple	8 amps	50 PSI	\$79.95
REMCO INDUSTRIES							
PowerRV 3200 Series	3264-1C4-15A	5.11" x 7.98" x 4.84"	3 GPM	Multiple	10 amps	45 PSI	\$89.99
PowerRV Rebel	53Rebel-JRV	4.84" x 10" x 4.55"	3 GPM	Multiple	15 amps	60 PSI	\$169
PowerRV Rebel	54Rebel-JRV	4.84" x 10" x 4.55"	4 GPM	Multiple	15 amps	60 PSI	\$169
PowerRV Rebel	55Rebel-JRV	4.84" x 10" x 4.55"	5.3 GPM	Multiple	15 amps	60 PSI	\$179
PowerRV AquaJet	55AquaJet-AES	4.84" x 8.89" x 4.6"	3.4 GPM	Multiple	7.5 amps	65 PSI	\$209
PowerRV AquaJet	55AquaJet-ARV	4.84" x 8.89" x 4.60"	5.3 GPM	Multiple	10 amps	65 PSI	\$229
SEAFLO MARINE AND RV							
42-Series	SFDP1-030-055-42	4.92" x 7.97" x 4.37"	3 GPM	5	7.5 amps	55 PSI	\$59.99
51-Series	SFDP1-055-060-51	5.75" x 8.98" x 5.2"	5.5 GPM	5	9.5 amps	60 PSI	\$109.99
SHUFLO/PENTAIR							
4008 Revolution	4008-101-E65	8.1" x 4.9" x 4.3"	3 GPM	Multiple	7.5 amps	55 PSI	\$204.99
4048 High Flow	4048-153-E75	10.3" x 4.9" x 4.8"	4 GPM	Multiple	10 amps	55 PSI	\$239.99

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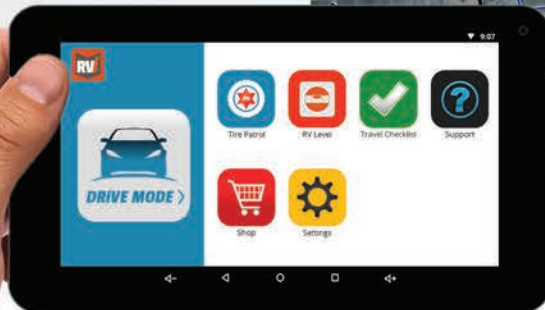
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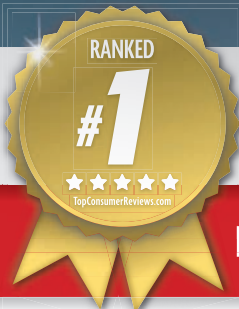


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**Information obtained from AAA of Colorado Plus RV plan at Colorado.aaa.com on 1/15/2018.

***Introductory rate available for new members only. The rate provided includes a \$10 Auto-Renewal discount.

¹According to TopConsumerReviews.com, available on TopConsumerReviews.com published on 10/30/2017.

²Standard membership does not provide benefits for Motorized RVs. If you wish to receive benefits for your Motorized RV, please purchase Platinum, Platinum+, or Platinum Complete. Motorized RVs are classified as the following RV types: Class A, Class B, Class C, Van/Truck/SUV Conversion, Bus Conversion.

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Outdoor Solutions

Make the most of your alfresco RVing experience with everything from awnings and screen rooms to accessories like fans, speakers and lights

When people talk about the Great Outdoors, they're forgetting that some of the things you find outdoors — like bugs, heat, wind and rain — aren't that great. But neither is scurrying back into your RV when conditions aren't perfect. Fortunately, there are ways to regulate how much of the outside environment intrudes into your personal space.

Too hot, or drizzling rain? A patio awning beats back the burning sun and casts a cool shadow to lounge in, or keeps you dry until the clouds pass. Flying creepy-crawlies inviting themselves to lunch, or nosy neighbors

eyeballing you during your nap? Add a screen room that lets in the breeze but keeps out the distractions and gives some measure of privacy.

Awnings range in type and design from the very simple to the technologically sophisticated. At the basic end of the spectrum are awnings typically used on pop-up campers, which come with foldable arms and legs and roll up into a bag when not in use. Deploying one is like putting up a partial tent. At the other end of the spectrum are box awnings, also called lateral-arm awnings. They're deployed either manually with a crank or electrically using 12-volt DC or 120-volt

AC power. Most manual awnings incorporate some sort of spring assist to make extending them easier.

Patio awnings are designed to ward off sun and light rain, but when the weather turns, they should be retracted. Some have rain-dump positions, so you can tilt them to improve water runoff, but if you're caught out in a real frog-strangler, don't take the chance. There are awnings with sensors that detect excessive motion and automatically retract to prevent damage, good for when you're away from the RV when a big wind kicks up. If your RV's awning does not have that feature, the best course of action is to retract it before you leave for an extended time to ensure it doesn't get damaged if an unexpected wind pops up.

Should you get an acrylic awning or a vinyl one? Acrylic is a woven fabric



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURERS

that allows air to circulate through it, so you'll be cooler under one on hot days. The colors and designs are woven in, instead of printed or painted on, so they'll be bright and look like new for a long time. Acrylic isn't waterproof, but it dries fast, and you can roll it up wet, although that's not advised.

Vinyl is waterproof, but its lack of breathability makes it hotter underneath. Vinyl awnings are mildew resistant, but if you roll one up wet, especially in a warm and humid climate, you might find mildew the next time you unroll it.

With a handy, retractable roof over your head, you can think about adding walls in the form of a screen room. Most of these attach to the awning by sliding into the accessory rails in the awning tube, with tension rods to hold the side panels against the side of the RV. Side panels are typically made of nylon, with mesh windows. The heaviness, and therefore the durability, of nylon fabric is expressed in its denier count. The higher the count, the tougher the fabric.

A screen room will quickly become a multipurpose room. You can set up a grill and cook outside the room to keep the inside of the RV smelling fresh, while keeping your picnic table inside the room to enjoy bug-free dining. Two doors, one at each end of the screen room, are handy to prevent traffic jams and tailor air circulation, although they also mean twice as many places for bugs to get in.

You can sleep in a screen room on hot nights, but if the weather gets ugly, be prepared to dismantle and stow it quickly. To that end, get one that's easy to set up and take down. Practice the drill several times before hitting the road.

Here's a roundup of awnings and related products to help make the outside of your RV more comfortable and fun, from shades that keep the sun and rain off your head to extra rooms to entertain or sleep in. Accessories range from fans to circulate the air, speakers to pipe in music and lights to brighten up your campsite. Don't be surprised if you find your family spending more time outside the RV than in it.



Carefree of Colorado's **Awning Extend'r** extends the awning canopy by 8 feet and requires no drilling or dealer installation. It fits all manual and power awnings with an empty slot in the roller tube, and setup is quick. The kit includes support poles, stakes and straps to secure the fabric extension to the ground. The Extend'r is available in five lengths — 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20 feet — and comes with a lightweight carry bag. **MSRP: \$199 to \$239**



Carefree's **Patio Annex** accommodates numerous setup options. Each wall comes with a separate bag, so you can set up all of the panels to make a complete annex or just a few. It includes two main doors, large mesh windows, detachable clear-plastic window covers and a canvas privacy cover that blocks the light, giving complete privacy. **MSRP: \$1,899, plus custom fitting to your RV**



The **12-Volt Travel'r** awning from Carefree mounts flush to the RV, to help

the arms blend into the side wall, and uses a 12-volt DC worm-gear motor for easy operation. Its truss-support design provides superior strength and maximum headroom for easy access to the patio area. It's available in steep-pitch or adjustable-pitch versions. **MSRP: From \$1,322 to \$2,107.** Price varies depending on fabric choice and fabric protection.



Compatible with both power and manual awnings, Dometic's **Veranda Room** features a fast hang-up-and-zip setup. The fabric and mesh are durable, quick-drying and nonflammable. The starter kit and additional zippered panels measuring 2, 4 and 8 feet create any size room. Universal attachments fit most patio awnings, and there are models to fit high- and low-profile RVs. The roll-down privacy screens are sewn in, and the doors can be positioned in multiple locations. **MSRP: \$575/standard, \$583/tall**



The **9200 Power Awning** from Dometic features a newly designed motor for quiet, one-touch operation. It's easily set up by one person and comes with an improved manual override in case of power outages. The durable mildew- and moisture-resistant vinyl fabric protects you from the elements. Available lengths range from 8 to 21 feet. Hardware is sold separately. **MSRP: \$788 to \$889**



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The **Solera Family Room** kit from Lippert Components adds up to 160 square feet of enclosed space. It works with 8-foot-extension Solera, Carefree and Dometic awnings from 10 to 20 feet long, and with awning rail-to-ground measurements up to 10 feet, 10 inches. The lightweight gray fabric complements most RV color schemes. Roll-down all-weather panels let you turn the Family Room into a secure sleeping area. **MSRP: Starting at \$664.95**



The **Solera 18-Volt Power Pack** makes upgrading to a power awning easy with a rechargeable battery that fits inside the Solera Power Awning arm and comes with everything needed to connect to the motor wire. The universal hardware works with Dometic and Carefree manual or power awnings, and saves up to two hours of additional installation expense because there's no need to wire it directly into the RV's power supply. It features independent pitch adjustment, an easy-access manual override and a 120-volt AC charging kit. **MSRP: \$649.95**



Nifty **Solera Awnbrella** awning bows solve the problem of rainwater puddling on top of the canopy. These aluminum extenders are available in 8- and 10-foot widths and create an arch across the awning to help shed water. The two-bow kits are designed for awnings from 10 to 14 feet, and the three-bow kits handle 14- to 18-foot awnings. **MSRP: 8-foot: \$139.95/two-pack, \$199.95/three-pack. 10-foot: \$159.95/two-pack, \$229.95/three-pack**

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Zip Dee's **Solar Shade** does double duty by blocking the sun and providing privacy by allowing you to see out but obstructing the view for others to see in. The company claims the shade, available in coffee-brown or silver-gray, can block up to 85 percent of the sun's heat and glare. The Solar Shade can fit any brand awning requiring a cord and channel installation. Available in two lengths (10 feet and 15 feet) and two heights (5 feet and 6 feet), the shade comes with all required hardware. **MSRP: Starting at \$185**



The handcrafted 12-volt DC **Relax Awning** allows you to customize your shade. According to Zip Dee, which has been in business since 1967, the Relax is the first automatic awning to work on a contoured or flat-sided RV. The awning works in fully or partially open positions and has an automatic tilt feature. It's tailor-built to an RV's specifications down to the quarter inch for up to 23 feet in length. An optional remote and wind sensor are available. Hardware is included. **MSRP: Starting at \$4,114**



The **Relax Awning Retrofit Kit** can be used to convert a Zip Dee manual awning into an automatic 12-volt DC Relax awning. The kit enables owners to use the main parts of their RV's manual awning (fabric, roller and case) and change out only the arms and hardware. **MSRP: \$3,348**

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- Niel Dunn



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Camco **Party Lights** add a festive touch to awnings with retro travel trailers and other themes such as fuzzy dice or colorful flamingos and palm trees. Each 8-foot strand includes 10 lights and end connectors for hooking strands together. They run on 120-volt AC and include two spare bulbs and a spare fuse.

MSRP: Starting at \$17.99



Camping World's **Rope Light Trak** creates a holder for rope lights and an

accessory track for adding lights, drapes and other accessories. It holds 1/2-inch rope lights and a sunshade or screen room, and consists of six 3-foot sections. MSRP: \$39.99. Camping World item 54900



The **Blue Multi-Purpose LED Light Strip** from Camping World comes in a 16.4-foot roll and features 300 SMD diodes and an aggressive 3M tape backing that adheres to any clean surface, according to the manufacturer. The light strips can be cut to specific length requirements in 2-inch increments. They run on 12-volt DC power and are said to last 50,000 hours. MSRP: \$99.99. Camping World item 71614



The **Multicolor LED Light Strip Kit** puts you at the controls of a 6 1/2-foot length of waterproof LEDs. Like the Blue Multi-Purpose strip, it can be cut in 2-inch increments, and the tape backing adheres to clean surfaces. A wireless remote can be programmed to run 16 different colors. It runs with direct power from a 12-volt DC source or the included 120-volt AC converter and is available from Camping World. MSRP: \$99.99. Camping World item 84463



Give your campsite a colorful or stately look with **Globe Lights** from Camping World. Available in Multicolor or Bronze, the 6-inch-diameter globes have an etched design that diffuses light to eliminate harsh glare. They're made for bulbs up to 60 watts (sold separately) and run on 120-volt AC power. The 30-foot coiled cord lets you space out the lights as desired. Replacement globes are \$5.99 each. MSRP: \$69.99. Camping World item 82024/Bronze, 82026/Multicolor

For hanging Globe Lights or other decorative light strands, Camping World sells an inexpensive eight-pack of **Awning Hooks** that slide into the awning's roller tube. MSRP: \$9.99. Camping World item 69039



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Chill out with the **PowerChannel Fan** from Dometic, which runs on a clever power rail that allows the simultaneous connection of multiple Dometic awning accessories. The rail is an easy retrofit with no visible cables. The fan can be used fixed or oscillating, and has a full safety grille and a long-life motor. **MSRP: \$43.57**



The **PowerChannel Bluetooth Speaker** attaches effortlessly to Dometic's 12-volt DC accessory rail. Just pair it to a Bluetooth music device or your phone to add ambient music under the RV's awning or in the screen room. **MSRP: \$58.25**



The **PowerChannel LED Spotlight** provides a 600-lumen, four-light array and attaches to Dometic's accessory rail. Made from waterproof metal and polycarbonate, the spotlight has a 30,000-hour life. Additional PowerChannel accessories will be available soon. **MSRP: \$49.74**

Sources

- Camco**, www.camco.net
- Camping World**, www.campingworld.com
- Carefree of Colorado**, www.carefreeofcolorado.com
- Dometic**, www.dometic.com
- Lippert Components (Solera)**, www.lci1.com
- Zip Dee**, www.awningsbyzipdee.com



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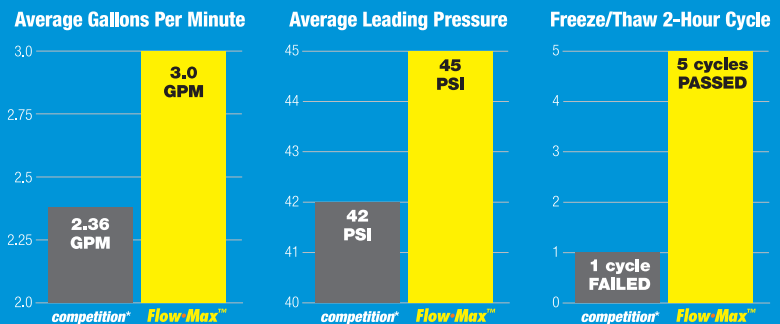
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- Pump can run dry without incurring damage



- Average 3.0 gallons per minute (GPM) flow
 - Competition* averaged 2.36 GPM when independently tested
- Average leading pressure of 45 PSI
 - Competition* averaged 42 PSI when independently tested
- Freeze/thaw tested up to 5 2-hour cycles
 - Competition's* housing cracked after one cycle

* Compared to SHURflo® Revolution™ 4008 Fresh Water Pump. Independently tested by Progressive Engineering, Inc, Goshen, Indiana USA.



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MAKING THE GRADE

BANKS POWER CAN BREATHE NEW LIFE INTO AN AGING DODGE CUMMINS WITH MORE SPIRITED PERFORMANCE AND BETTER FUEL ECONOMY

If there's one thing RVers always seem to need more of, it's horsepower. From passing trucks to ascending steep grades, having an abundance of *oomph* provides a variety of benefits, not the least of which are increased driver confidence, reduced anxiety and shorter travel times. It's no wonder that new trucks seem to get more powerful with every passing year. Of all the benefits a modern truck can deliver, horsepower (and torque) are the most tangible, especially when towing a trailer. And contrary to what you may have heard, more power can actually improve fuel economy, because less throttle is required for a given load and/or speed.

Thankfully, it's not always necessary to buy a new truck to realize significant horsepower and torque gains. Banks Power of Azusa, California, offers a variety of products and complete systems for trucks and motorhomes designed to improve horsepower and fuel economy. Banks Power has been an icon in the performance aftermarket industry since 1958, and the company's patriarch, Gale Banks, has vast experience in almost every

type of motorsport competition, from drag racing to Bonneville and Pikes Peak. Obviously, racing has little to do with towing a trailer (other than the rig that transports the race vehicle), but the same principles apply to every engine: More air and fuel combined with optimal volumetric efficiency translate to more power and torque.

Banks' PowerPack systems have become synonymous with towing performance, especially where diesel

powerplants are concerned. Increased turbo boost along with the appropriate fuel-system upgrades and reduced intake/exhaust restrictions result in serious power gains while maintaining the reliability RVers count on. So, when a member of our staff, who owns the cleanest 1998 Dodge Ram Cummins truck we've ever seen (pictured above), inquired about how she might get more power from her 12-valve powerplant, we knew just who to call.

The crew at Banks recommended several components from the company's vast catalog of performance parts that would help improve engine efficiency and horsepower, including its Twin-Ram intake manifold (part number 42710), Quick-Turbo turbine (exhaust) housing with Big Head actuator (24052), Ram-Air intake

MAKING THE GRADE



1) The original 5.9-liter Cummins 12-valve engine was in good shape overall, but with more than 200,000 miles, it was in need of a power boost. **2)** The first step is to remove the original air-intake tube to gain access to the turbocharger, **3)** followed by the air-box.



system and filter (42225), and Monster exhaust system (48636). It's important to note here that these components were previously offered in a PowerPack bundle under part number 49280, but due to customer requests, they are now offered à la carte. All told, the parts featured here came to more than \$2,300, but the claimed gains are very impressive: 127 horsepower and 311 lb-ft of torque, along with a 7 percent gain in fuel economy.

To see what was involved with the installation and to test the system for ourselves, we headed to Banks Power headquarters for the old Dodge's transformation. First, the truck was tested on Banks' chassis dyno, producing 178 horsepower and 346 lb-ft of torque at the rear wheels. After installation of the Banks components, which took approximately 10 hours to complete, the truck was dyno'd again the following morning. This time, the old girl knocked out 299 horsepower and 644 lb-ft of torque. Not quite the 127-wheel horsepower Banks claims, but considering the truck's age and mileage, that's still pretty impressive. After several days of driving, we also noted an 11 percent improvement in fuel economy driving solo and 8 percent while towing.

If your truck is starting to feel old or you just want more power, Banks components or a complete PowerPack system could be just the solution for breathing new life into your truck's engine — and excitement into your towing experience. 🚛



4) With both of these components removed, the turbocharger is readily accessible. **5)** This truck was equipped with a PrimeLock remote fuel-filter system, which had to be moved aside to access the top of the engine. The bracket will be replaced with a Banks Fuel Filter Relocation Kit (43400) in a later step. **6)** The clamp that secures the downpipe to the turbocharger's exhaust housing is loosened and pried free, **7)** followed by the oil-feed tube.



BOOSTER SHOTS

(Clockwise from top left) Banks Power Fuel Filter Relocation Kit, and Monster Exhaust, Quick-Turbo, Twin-Ram Intake Manifold and Ram-Air Cold-Air Intake systems.

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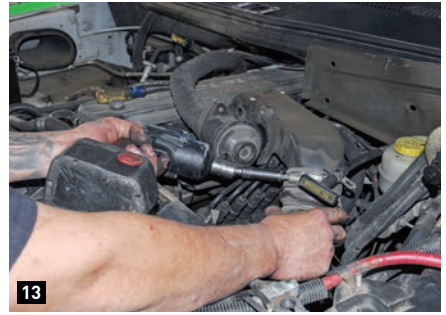
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MAKING THE GRADE



8) Next, the tube from the turbo's outlet to the intercooler is loosened and removed. 9) Four studs and nuts secure the turbo exhaust housing to the exhaust manifold. The nuts are most easily accessed by a common end wrench, although they can be sticky and may require some penetrant first. 10) The turbo compressor housing is then removed, 11) followed by the rest of the turbo assembly. 12, 13) The upper and lower intake manifold upgrades come next, so the exhaust-gas recirculation (EGR) tube and rubber bellows connection at the original intake manifold are removed.

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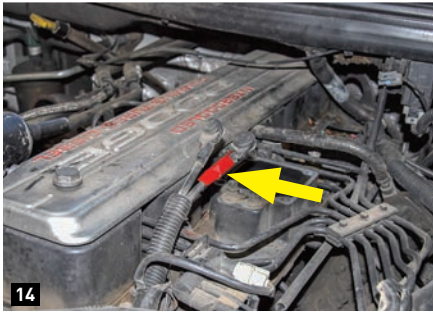
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14) With the intake tube and manifold removed, the positive connection to the intake air heater (arrow) is marked with red tape, so the connections aren't crossed at reassembly. 15) The turbo assembly is placed in a vice, and the original exhaust housing is removed. 16) The original compressor housing is matched with the new Banks exhaust housing with the Banks Big Head waste-gate actuator. The exhaust housing is slightly larger than the original and has reconfigured passages inside that are designed to increase low- to midrange torque, perfect for towing. The waste-gate actuator, meanwhile, features a larger diaphragm and a stronger spring that keeps the waste-gate valve from opening prematurely, reducing boost pressure. 17, 18) Next, the exhaust manifold is drilled and tapped to accept a fitting for the exhaust gas temperature (EGT) sensor. 19) The turbo assembly is then reinstalled on the engine.

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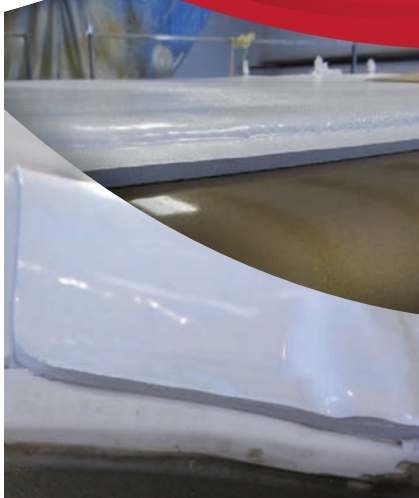
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MAKING THE GRADE



20



21



22



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24



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26



27

20) The stock intake manifold has one inlet, with two intake heating elements stacked on top of each other. The new Banks intake has two inlets, so the two heating elements are separated, with one grid going into each housing for the new intake. 21) To complement the added airflow provided by the turbo and intake system upgrades, the fuel system must be modified next. The stock injection pump housing is removed first. Note that the injector lines have been removed and the injectors covered with blue caps to protect them from dirt and debris. 22) The injection pump is a mechanical unit, and this plate controls the fuel delivery. It must be removed and replaced with a Banks plate. 23) It is very

important that the positioning of the new plate is exactly the same as the old, so a template is bolted in place before the old plate is removed, securing its position. 24) Then the stock plate is removed, the new Banks plate installed, and the template removed. 25) Here, the new lower intake has been installed, and the injection lines reattached. 26) The Twin Ram intake is bolted on, and the EGR tube is reconnected. Be careful when ordering a Banks PowerPack, as not all kits are designed for vehicles with an EGR system. 27) While we were at it, we replaced the truck's previous fuel-filter relocation bracket with a Banks Fuel Filter Relocation Kit, which is made from powder-coated steel.

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MAKING THE GRADE



28) With the other under-hood modifications completed, the Banks Ram-Air intake was installed next. 29) The intake includes a washable, reusable high-flow air filter. 30) To keep tabs on the engine's function, the Banks team recommended the installation of exhaust gas temperature (EGT) and turbo-boost gauges. Monitoring EGT in particular is important when climbing grades under load. 31) Last, but certainly not least, the high-flow Banks Monster exhaust system is installed. 32) This bolt-on, stainless-steel system features a low restriction muffler and a polished tip. 🚚

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QUEST FOR POWER

LITHIUM-ION TECHNOLOGY IS HERE AND READY TO ENERGIZE OFF-GRID ADVENTURES

Imagine a battery in your RV that has a 100-amp-hour rating, could be discharged to the full capacity of the battery and conditioned completely in as little as an hour. The battery would be a drop-in replacement for the existing flooded lead-acid (FLA) batteries, weigh half as much and last up to 10 times longer. It would not corrode or require any maintenance, and would withstand winter storage, which freezes and kills thousands of RV batteries each year. What's more, this battery, though representing a higher initial cost, would actually end up being cheaper per charge/discharge cycle than comparable FLA batteries — and thanks to the latest advancements in battery-

management systems (BMS), would be as safe as FLAs. If you guessed we're talking about lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO₄ or LFP) batteries, you're right on track.

While a long-lasting, quiet power source that would increase camping freedom is the holy grail for RVers, legacy battery technology has been a limiting factor. To secure true long-lasting off-grid power, most owners build large 6-volt battery banks. This not only consumes valuable storage real estate, but at 62 pounds per battery, these battery banks add a tremendous amount of weight to the rig. With cell watering, gassing and terminal corrosion, FLA batteries are mainte-

nance-intensive, and they also require adequate ventilation.

Until recently, lithium-battery technology wasn't a viable alternative. Early iterations were fraught with safety issues, not the least of which were fires as a result of runaway thermal events, often caused by cell crystallization or battery overload or overcharging.

Fortunately, the technology has advanced dramatically. LFP is the safest lithium-battery technology currently available, according to Sean Nichols, cofounder and chief operating officer of Dragonfly Energy, a Reno, Nevada-based Li-ion battery technology company that designs, manufactures and sells LFP batteries to the RV industry under the Dragonfly and Battle Born brands.

The company set out to design a drop-in LFP battery system that is safe and easy to use for the RV market. We tested these batteries, tethered to a Xantrex inverter-charger, and installed them in the new Torklift PowerArmor Max locking battery box, which mounts to the travel trailer's A-frame and allows room for system additions or upgrades.





POWER PLAYERS

A) Two Battle Born BBGC2 100-amp-hour, 12-volt LiFePO4 batteries. **B)** Xantrex Freedom XC 2,000-watt pure-sine-wave inverter and 80-amp charger system. **C)** Xantrex Freedom X digital remote-display panel. **D)** Torklift PowerArmor Max aluminum battery box with diamond-plate sides and a sliding, lockable top.

For this install, the test trailer was previously fitted with a “green energy” project that used a Xantrex TrueCharge2 60-amp battery charger, a Xantrex Prowatt SW 2,000-watt inverter and two GC2 6-volt FLA batteries. These components were replaced with the new Xantrex Freedom XC 2,000-watt inverter and 80-amp charger system with a digital remote, and two Battle Born LiFePO4 12-volt batteries.

The Batteries

A few companies currently make LFP batteries, but most are battery packs that connect to an external BMS. Dragonfly’s packs are all-inclusive, combining the BMS and the cells in one sealed, user-friendly package that directly replaces a 12-volt battery. These batteries are designed to work with some existing converter/chargers on the market, including those from Progressive Dynamics, WFCO and Xantrex, although Nichols says that a charger with tweaked charge settings for LFP is ideal.

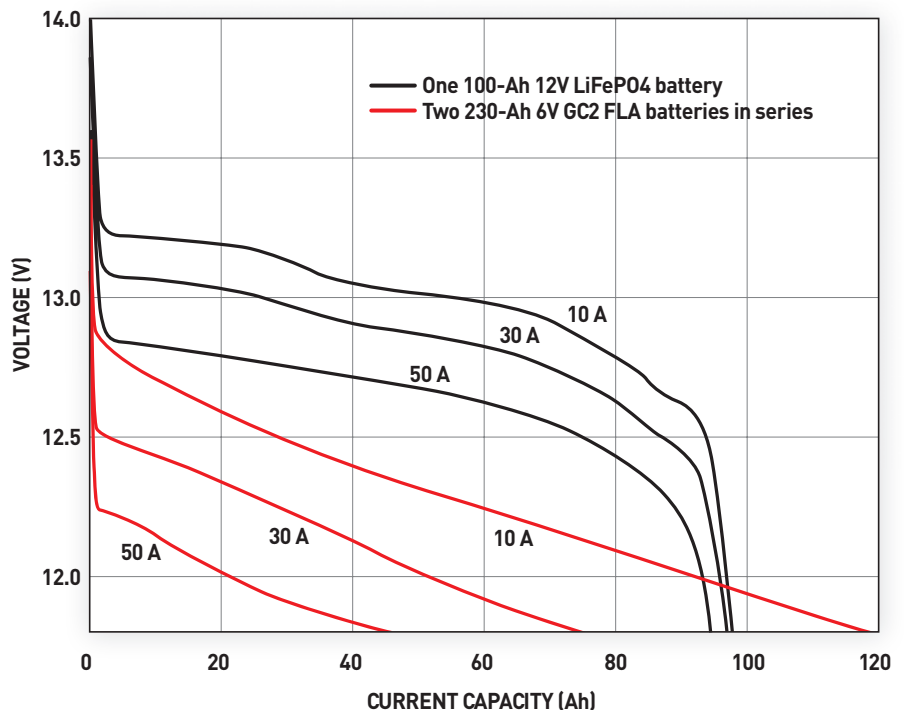
He adds that four-stage units (with equalization) can’t be used with LFP batteries unless the equalization stage can be turned off, and if users have any question about the charger, they should contact the battery manufacturer for assistance and guidance. Progressive Dynamics currently offers a full line of lithium converters, Nichols says.

For this installation, two Battle Born BBGC2 100-amp-hour, 12-volt batteries were installed. These

batteries have a maximum surge rating of 200 amps for 35 seconds, and a maximum continuous current of 100 amps. They have the same footprint as standard 6-volt batteries, but while two BBGC2s have a 200-amp-hour capacity and two 6-volt batteries are rated at 220 amp-hours, the additional 20 amp-hours of power from the 6-volt batteries is not usable current because the voltage will be too low.

One of the true benefits of LFP is the power curve. LFP batteries maintain voltage far longer than FLA batteries discharging at the same rate,

which Dragonfly demonstrated during laboratory testing. Although an LFP battery can technically be discharged to 100 percent, it is better to discharge it to no less than 20 percent of capacity for longevity reasons. That said, an LFP battery can be discharged and left, with no detriment to the battery. By comparison, FLA batteries should never be discharged beyond 50 percent of capacity to prevent damage, and leaving one discharged for a lengthy amount of time will lead to sulfation and a reduction in available amp-hours. This means that LFP batteries provide



The graph on the right shows the power curve of the lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO4 or LFP) battery is higher and steadier than two flooded lead-acid (FLA) GC2 batteries. This results in a much longer discharge time.

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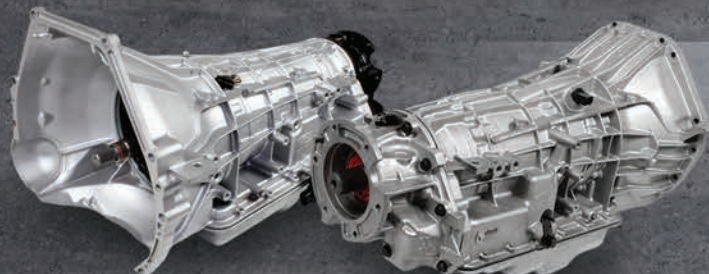
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QUEST FOR POWER

more usable power at a steady voltage for longer periods than conventional battery technology.

Another benefit of LFP batteries is weight. BBGC2 LiFePO4 batteries weigh 31 pounds, exactly half that of FLAs. In RVing, where every pound counts, this is a big difference.

Also, LFP charging is improved over FLA batteries, according to Nichols. "LiFePO4 can be charged faster than lead-acid batteries," he says. "Because of the lower internal impedance, Li-ion batteries spend most of the charge cycle in bulk mode [i.e., at the maximum current delivered by the charger], so they charge faster."

Nichols adds that LFP batteries can be charged as much as five times faster than FLA because of the reduced internal resistance inherent in an LFP battery pack. The charge voltage range for LFPs is 14.2 to 14.6 volts DC, with a float voltage of 13.6 or lower, which is why having a charger designed for use with the LFP batteries is ideal, though

not always required.

The terminal configuration on the Battle Born BBGC2 batteries is quite different from traditional batteries, in that the brass terminals stick out horizontally from the side of the pack and are each secured with a nut and bolt. This requires an additional amount of care when handling and setting the batteries in a box or compartment to ensure that the terminals don't short circuit on adjacent metal.

Since these are sealed packs, they can be mounted in any direction, provided there's adequate space above the battery for the terminals. For the test install, the batteries were mounted with the terminals facing up.

Battery Storage and Mounting

At a retail cost of \$949 to \$1,049 each, Battle Born BBGC2 LiFePO4 batteries are much more expensive than FLA batteries, so keeping them safe is essential. To secure them, Torklift's PowerArmor Max locking battery box

was chosen because it's virtually impenetrable. Torklift has been building these boxes for some years, including a model that integrates one or two 10-amp solar panels on top to help keep batteries charged while in storage. A smaller version was used previously on the test trailer to house the GC2 batteries, but it was quickly determined that the solar panel would not be practical for charging the LFP batteries.

The PowerArmor Max box used for this installation sells for \$551.99 and measures 58½ inches long, 8⅞ inches wide and 13 inches high, which leaves ample room for expansion later. The box is made of aluminum with diamond-plate sides and a sliding, lockable top. It is vented so FLA batteries can breathe; however, that's unnecessary with LFP batteries.

The box is attached to the top of the trailer's A-frame and is available in multiple sizes to fit from one to as many as six batteries under integrated lock and key. Smaller boxes may fit on

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the rack where standard battery boxes would mount, with some modification.

Inside the box, the batteries were secured with battery straps and cushioned with foam-packaging blocks, which came with the batteries. The 2/0-gauge cable was brought into the box and connected to a 250-amp fuse, and cables were made to connect the two 12-volt batteries in parallel.

Charging and Inverting

Battle Born LiFePO4 batteries require special charging algorithms to function as designed. For that reason, the Xantrex Freedom XC 2000 was chosen. While the inverter-charger was a bit of work to install, the RV now has a single piece of hardware controlling all inverting and charging segments, and has AC power off the grid.

Retailing for \$775, the Freedom XC 2000 is a highly sophisticated pure-sine-wave inverter and battery charger designed for RV and marine applications. This system is ideal for LFP use, because

not only are the charging algorithms completely programmable, the unit is capable of conditioning a completely exhausted battery. Designed for AC efficiency, the charger is power-factor corrected—which leaves more current available for other loads—and has a power-share feature that prioritizes AC loads and reduces the charger current during peak loads to prevent overloading the breaker.

It also incorporates a built-in 30-amp transfer switch that automatically selects the proper AC power source for the circuits it feeds, from shorepower to inverter power. If the power goes out and the inverter controller is on, AC power to the inverter-connected circuits will go uninterrupted. This is especially important for RVs with residential refrigerators or critical medical equipment.

The Xantrex Freedom X remote digital panel (\$70 MSRP) was installed to provide complete control of the system from inside the RV.

The system comes set up for permanent AC wiring; however, an optional GFCI receptacle is available for the face of the inverter, so loads may be plugged directly into it. Installation is simplified with integrated spring-clamp terminals for the AC wiring and easy-to-reach studs for the battery connections.

Installation

RVers with experience in DC and AC wiring can certainly do this installation, but it requires planning, tools and equipment. All wiring must conform to applicable NFPA 1192 and NEC 551 codes. When installing an inverter system like this, plan on a sizable amount of DC and AC rewiring.

On the DC side, 2/0-gauge cable was routed from the batteries to the Freedom XC inverter. A heavy-duty crimping tool, the correct size (3/8 or 5/16 inch) copper terminals and heat shrink were needed to manufacture the battery cables. With cable this large, a bolt cutter or large cable cutter will be

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required to size the cables.

A Blue Sea Systems e-Series battery-cutoff switch was mounted on the front cross member of the frame to allow the batteries to be isolated during storage. Battle Born recommends an automated cutoff relay to be used with its batteries, because the BMS will cut off the batteries internally if they fall below a predetermined voltage and will remain off until they are charged.

Battle Born recommends an automatic battery cutoff that activates at a voltage higher than the battery's internal cutoff. Since the Freedom XC can charge a completely discharged battery, the automatic cutoff was unnecessary.

The AC side was more complex with the addition of a subpanel and reorganization of the existing breaker panel for the installation. Xantrex outlines the requirements of the installation pretty well, but a review of NFPA 1192 codes is a good idea. These fire and safety

1) Beyond the Xantrex Freedom XC inverter-charger system and the Battle Born LiFePO4 batteries, supplies needed include 2/0-gauge battery cable with terminals and heat shrink, fuse, subpanel and GFCI breakers, Romex, wire nuts, electrical tape, junction box, spray-foam insulation and screws. **2)** For the AC wiring that runs up to the inverter and back to the subpanel, we used 10/4 GA SJE00W cable, which is well protected for use in the trailer's enclosed underbelly. **3)** We removed the two 15-amp breakers in the main box for the outlets and microwave, and replaced them with a single 30-amp breaker with 10-amp Romex to the new subpanel, where it was connected to the 10/4 cable to the inverter. **4)** The 10/4 cable was routed to a junction box in the forward compartment next to the Freedom XC, where it was converted over to Romex to link to the inverter's push connectors. **5)** The Freedom XC has convenient push connectors for the 120-volt AC connections, and two lugs for the 12-volt DC battery cables, which we made in-house. **6)** The completed subpanel has two circuits, for the front and rear receptacles, including the refrigerator and microwave. Code requires that the circuits being fed by the inverter are GFCI equipped.

standards are available to view for free at www.nfpa.org.

Two circuits from the main breaker box were relocated to a new Square D QO Load Center — one for the non-GFCI receptacles, which included the bedroom, living room and refrigerator, and the microwave circuit (15-amp circuits). A 30-amp breaker was installed in the main panel, and a 10/3 Romex cable was routed to a junction

box where it was joined with a 10/4 SJE00W portable cord.

The cord is a heavy-duty, weather- and damage-resistant cable, capable of carrying 700 volts and 30 amps, which is suitable for the load, and running through the floor and under the trailer. This went to another junction box in the front compartment, where it was again joined with 10/3 Romex cable routed to the inverter.

Coming out of the inverter was another 10/3 Romex cable, which fed the second positive conductor in the 10/4 cord. This came back to the junction box and joined with another 10/3 Romex cable, which fed the subpanel.

7) Installed next to the RV control panel, the Xantrex Freedom X remote-display panel allows full control and programming of the inverter-charger. **8)** The Torklift PowerArmor Max battery box is an attractive way to secure the batteries. We installed a marine battery switch to isolate the batteries while the trailer is in storage. **9)** The batteries were wired in parallel and pass through the fuse before going to the Freedom XC. Straps and a movable divider in the box help secure them, and packing foam that came with the batteries was used to pad them.





The subpanel is equipped with two 15-amp GFCI breakers, which are required for inverter installations. Each of the circuits uses the original wiring, which was moved to the subpanel from the main breaker panel.

The Freedom XC was mounted in the front storage compartment on a 1/2-inch base that is screwed to the bed/compartment frame. A 2 1/2-inch hole saw was used to provide a passageway through the floor into the underside of the trailer at the front compartment; an existing plumbing pass-through under the kitchen cabinets was used to route the cables. Access was provided by dropping the trailer's underbelly in the front and opening an existing cutout panel by the freshwater tank under the trailer. Once the project was completed, the holes were sealed with spray-foam insulation.

The placement of the Freedom XC in the front compartment was the only real option to keep the unit safe and the battery cables as short as possible. The integrated control panel is on the top of the unit with an easy-to-activate power button; thus, it can be turned on and off unintentionally. Other Xantrex inverters have the control panel on the leading edge of the unit, but in this case, the control is of a size and complexity that requires it to be located on top. A guard needed to be installed to protect the control panel. We don't regularly need access to this panel because we installed the remote panel inside the RV, so providing a protective cover was of no concern.

Initial Programming

Once the system was completely

connected, we contacted Nichols at Battle Born to properly program the inverter-charger. This is an essential step. Unlike its automatic presets for FLA, gel and AGM batteries, Xantrex has not made a preset for LFP batteries because the algorithms will change based on the individual batteries. There are 23 programmable settings in the unit menus, from vehicle-ignition control (for motorhomes and trucks) to voltage and current values for each stage of charging, and so on.

Nichols worked closely with Don Wilson at Xantrex to determine the proper settings for this system. Once the programming was complete, the system was ready to run the trailer's appliances and accessories.

A setup like this should be built from the foundation up. Plan ahead and install cable, battery storage and AC distribution components that are capable of handling the calculated load and future additions. If you decide you need a larger inverter, for instance, or more batteries, you'll easily be able to add components without having to replace wiring or battery storage.

This system has greatly increased off-grid capability of the test trailer while saving weight in the process. When it comes to boondocking freedom, the future is here. 🚐

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BLUETOOTH AIRBAGS

AIR LIFT'S LOADLIFTER 7500XL AIR-SPRING KIT AND WIRELESSAIR SYSTEM PUT RIDE CONTROL IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

Pulling a heavy fifth-wheel or hauling a camper over interstates and major highways doesn't create much drama for the person behind the wheel of today's one-ton, single-rear-wheel diesel pickups, other than the occasional buffeting by side winds or passing big rigs. Put the same combination on narrower, curvier, undulating rural roads, and the level of driver edginess ramps up considerably with the constant shifts in weight distribution affecting handling. Fortunately, aftermarket airbags can help address and remedy these problems.

These handling shortcomings are to be expected. With the weight of the trailer's pin bearing down on the hitch, the truck's suspension takes the load, causing it to squat. The end effect in most pickups is a lighter, twitchier steering feel.

The other handling trait when a trailer with a heavy pin weight is being towed is a tendency for the truck to understeer or "push" a little in corners, as the vector of weight transfer in the bed changes from

linear to an angle pointing at the outside of the turn. The transfer of force from the trailer causes the outside rear spring of the truck to carry even more weight, affecting steering. It's just part of vehicle dynamics, much like how the higher center of gravity and added weight in the bed affects cornering with a slide-in camper.

Dualies are less affected because they have the added width of two extra tires that act like mini-outriggers

to carry some of the side load when cornering, and they usually have heavier suspensions than their single-rear-wheel counterparts. But both single- and dual-rear-wheel trucks can benefit from added load support in the form of helper air springs when towing trailers with heavy pin weights (or packing slide-in campers) that are approaching the rig's maximum weight ratings.

Shawn Smalley, owner of Mobile Diesel Service in Oakland, Oregon, said he experienced a noticeable "jitteriness" to the ride of his 2012 Ram 3500 Crew Cab 6.7-liter 4x4 when towing his 12,000-pound, 33-foot, triple-axle toy hauler to the desert or dunes for family outings. "The steering feels much lighter than it does empty," Smalley said. "I'm used to it, but it's not something I like."

1) Air Lift's LoadLifter 7500XL kit comes with everything needed to bolt the heavy-duty helper springs in place, from axle brackets to tubing. This kit is for 2012 and newer Ram 2500/3500 single-rear-wheel trucks. **2)** The WirelessAir kit to control the inflation and deflation of the air springs comes with a remote-mounted air compressor, wireless Bluetooth receiver, tubing and wiring harness. **3)** The upper and lower brackets that hold the air springs in place are easy to install. The upper bracket is bent for a solid fit when bolted to the frame, using the same bolt holes as the factory bump stop it replaces.



4) Both of the 7,500-pound-capacity double-convoluted springs are protected by a special roll plate that slips on the ends. A swivel-type air-inlet fitting is then screwed into the opening at the top of each spring. 5) The top mounting plate is then attached to each air spring (a notch is pre-cut to clear the air fitting) with 3/8-inch flathead cap screws torqued to 20 ft-lbs, per Air Lift's detailed instructions. 6) The air spring was flipped over on the workbench, with the air fitting hanging off the edge, to bolt on the lower bracket that goes over the axle housing. The supplied 3/8-inch carriage bolts must be put through the plate first, as they are covered by the roll plate. 7) The two air springs' assemblies are then ready to be installed between the rear axle and the frame rails. This photo shows the assembly upside down (the air inlets are on top when the springs are installed).



4



5



6



7

LEVEL THE LOAD

Smalley's observations are typical when a tow rig gets close to its maximum tow rating. His Ram 3500 single-rear-wheel automatic has a maximum towing capacity of 13,300 pounds, according

to Ram Body Builder's Guide specifications. When that happens, the rear suspension can kiss the bump stops in dips, and the added weight in the rear raises the front suspension just enough to cause more understeer through

corners than when the truck is running empty or lightly loaded.

A cure for such ills is adding adjustable rear air-helper springs. They are not intended to, nor do they increase the factory-set towing



With the new Air Lift air-helper spring system, the ride and handling of this 2012 Ram 3500 can change with the touch of a button, depending on the road conditions and the trailer in tow.

BLUETOOTH AIRBAGS

capacity or the truck's gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR). Air springs only supplement the factory spring's ability to level the load and provide better control during sudden shifts in weight distribution from side to side and front to rear, thus stabilizing handling and smoothing out the ride.

Air Lift's newest LoadLifter 7500XL kit for later-model three-quarter and one-ton Rams (part number 57595; MSRP: \$696.78) utilizes commercial-grade, double-convoluted bellows airbags that can provide up to 7,500 pounds of lifting power when fully inflated.

We installed a set on Smalley's Ram 3500, along with Air Lift's WirelessAir system (part number 72000; MSRP: \$724.42), which allows instant adjustments of the air springs by the driver, using a handheld controller that connects to the air compressor via Bluetooth. The helper springs and wireless controller can be installed in just a couple of hours with simple hand tools.

Air Lift offers numerous air-spring and controller options to fit a wide variety of needs and applications.

AIR-TUNE THE RIDE

We hit the road with the trailer in tow. The LoadLifter 7500XL air springs can be inflated up to 100 PSI, but we



8



9



10



11

8) There are four $\frac{1}{32}$ -inch hex button-head $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch bolts in the kit. They take a little maneuvering to get into the slotted bolt holes under the bottom plate of each spring assembly. Be sure to tighten to 20 ft-lbs before installing the air springs under the truck.

9) The air-spring assemblies are set on top of the axle tube, one on each side. The passenger's side is a piece of cake to slip into place. The driver's side takes a little more juggling to clear the ABS, emergency brake cable and brake line. We had to trim a 1-inch diagonal piece off the rear corner of the upper mounting plates to clear the brackets on the truck's 4-inch aftermarket exhaust. **10)** Two bolts and a bracket clamp the lower bracket to the Ram 3500's leaf-spring pack, and another just like it secures the bracket to the axle tube. The same installation is used for the other side. **11)** A slick trick for installing the air-helper springs to the upper mounting plate is to use a rubber-tipped air nozzle to slowly inflate each air spring until the top plate on the bag and the upper mounting plate on the frame are close enough to bolt together.



12



13



14

12) When the LoadLifter air-helper spring is in place, it looks like this. The bags are run with a minimum of 5 psi of air, keeping them inflated and tight against the upper bracket, even under full-suspension droop, which is how they were during our installation on a lift. **13)** Before installing, a slot about 1 inch wide has to be cut out of the lower roll plate to clear the axle air-vent tube (and ABS wire) on the driver's-side air-spring assembly. We put the spring in place and marked the cut location, then removed the spring assembly to make the relief. **14)** Before bolting the driver's-side air-helper spring to the upper mounting plate, the emergency-brake cable is moved so it sits on top of the upper plate. We had to bend the thick wire bracket that holds the cable at the frame rail to get the cable into the proper position.

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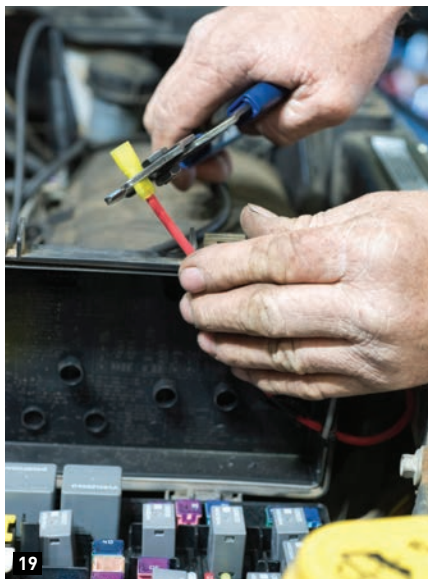


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BLUETOOTH AIRBAGS



15) The WirelessAir kit consists of a compressor and a control box and air-filter unit that contains the brains of the air-fill system. These components were mounted high up on the driver's side of the inner body, just above the Ram's brace for the factory running boards. Supplied self-tapping metal screws anchor the mounting bracket in place. **16)** The little 12-volt DC air compressor was mounted to the body as well, but some may find the noise it makes through the body annoying and choose to mount it to the frame rail instead. One end of the wiring harness plugs into the control box, and the other (with two wires) runs up to the fuse block in the engine compartment. **17)** One air line runs to the air-inlet filter, which was mounted on the frame rail, and the other runs to the control box, which also serves as the manifold to provide equal air to both air-helper springs. **18)** One option is to tee the air lines from the manifold to fill the air-helper springs manually. The valve stems for each line took the place of the typical license-plate bolts to make them easy to get to — and almost invisible.



19) Wiring for power and ground took all of five minutes. The supplied fuse tap was used to connect the fused red power wire to the Ram's main fuse block on the driver's side of the engine compartment. **20)** To power our Air Lift system, we tapped into the relay located at the passenger-side rear corner of the Total Power Integration Module under the hood, which is located on the driver's-side inner fender. **21)** The coolest part of the Air Lift LoadLifter 7500XL kit is the wireless control. It's programmable, so you can preset two air-pressure settings. Push the button with the single dot or the one with two dots, and the air-helper springs will adjust automatically to the desired pressure. Or you can manually raise or lower the air pressure 5 psi at a time using the up and down arrows.



THE ORIGINAL
Equal-i-zer
SWAY CONTROL HITCH

deflated them to experience the ride and handling without their assistance. As expected, the truck felt light in the front, understeering a little in corners and overly soft rolling through dips. After inflating the digital air controller to 33 PSI, the truck's ride and handling quickly stabilized to our liking — a setting saved to a single “preset” button on the WirelessAir controller after the ride was dialed in.

When the air springs have air added, they not only supplement the factory suspension's ability to level the added load of the pin weight and transfer more weight toward the front, the rubber bags also act as supplemental shock absorbers, slowing down compression and rebound as the suspension oscillates with the road surface. And in corners, the outside airbag maintains pressure to help offset the added force being exerted on it, so body lean, from the added side force of the trailer pin, is further minimized.

After we spent an hour towing over two-lane country roads and on the interstate, the difference with and without the LoadLifters inflated was very noticeable. The steering felt tighter, and the shake and jitteriness in the ride were gone.

From an installer's perspective, the LoadLifter 7500XL kit is an easy upgrade because everything bolts into place with no modifications to the vehicle required. The WirelessAir kit has a plug-and-play harness with only a “hot” and ground needed to be run up into the engine compartment fuse block, and the feed lines are push-to-lock, greatly simplifying the plumbing.

There's nothing quicker for either the installer or the end user when it comes to smoothing out the ride and handling on all heavy-duty diesel pickups pulling heavier loads. 🚛

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HOME ADVANTAGE

The Good Sam Club's home-security partner gets a powerful reboot

The original SimpliSafe home-security system was the first of its kind: a professionally monitored system that anyone could set up in minutes without drilling or wiring. It was a hit. Today, SimpliSafe is reportedly the fastest-growing home-security company in the country and protects more than two million Americans.

For 2018, SimpliSafe redesigned its security system from top to bottom, including an attractive new look and compact sensors that are so unobtrusive they can cover an entire house without being noticed. This third-generation system is said to run five times faster than the previous version and has a 50 percent louder alarm siren.

To prepare for a variety of worst-case scenarios, the new system adds safeguards that include a SmashSafe feature that can dispatch police even if an intruder breaks the base unit, keypad or siren. Because the new setup has both cellular and wireless connections, it works even if the home's landline is disabled or Wi-Fi is down. A backup battery keeps the base unit running during power outages.

Despite the upgraded components and added features, SimpliSafe hardware is priced the same as before, and the company continues to offer Good Sam Club members two free months of professional monitoring service with the purchase of a new system.

▶ To learn more about the newly upgraded SimpliSafe home-security system and the exclusive Good Sam Club deal for 60 days of free 24/7 monitoring, visit www.simplisafe/trailer.



SimpliSafe's newly redesigned components include sensors that detect motion, broken glass, and door and window entry, a base unit, wireless keypad and key fob, 105-decibel siren and a panic button. Optional hazard sensors monitor smoke, water and temperature.



Membership Benefits

The Good Sam Club is on a mission to add new membership benefits, including expanding the lineup of Camping World discounts:

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▶ **SAVE THE DATES** Camping World SuperCenters are hosting Good Sam Double Discount Days from April 26 through 29. Members can stock up, doubling the standard Good Sam Club discount on hundreds of items. Members also receive a free gift when they spend \$50 or more, while supplies last. www.campingworld.com/stores



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With each new RV model year, there is more and more electronic equipment being installed at the OEM level.

In addition to this, more electronic devices are being included in the RVing experience. Laptops, smart phones, tablets, e-readers, residential refrigerators, and medical devices are now commonplace inside of RVs. As more high cost electronics are brought inside of the RV, the greater the potential exposure is to the unreliable power supply at campgrounds and from portable power generation. Electrical faults and surges can lead to immediate damage to any piece of electronic equipment that is plugged in to the A/C system of an RV. The resulting damage can be a simple circuit board failure or a complete loss of the RV. A small investment in

a whole RV protective device, which is less than your insurance deductible, can save you from costly repairs and significant downtime while the RV is being repaired.

Protect What You Value Most is a vision that Surge Guard® has developed with a dedication to provide the highest level of protection for the RV community and the substantial investment owners have in their RV. In the pursuit of this vision, for the first time, Surge Guard® has developed the technology to provide protection from electrical issues from the source power AND now inside of the RV.

NEW Portable: Full Electrical Protection

Surge Guard® models 34930 30-amp (2450 Joules) and 34950 50-amp (4200 Joules) provide full electrical protection that now includes protection for faults inside of the RV. With an easy to read LCD display, these models provide a textual information display that does not require code interpretation. Real time voltage and amp draw are continuously displayed on the LCD screen. Power is automatically disconnected if the following conditions are present: low/high voltage, open ground, open neutral, reverse polarity, and overheating of plugs. The incoming power is constantly monitored, allowing for automatic reset when acceptable power is restored. The 34950 50-amp now includes exclusive Patent Pending Load Side Open Neutral Protection, which protects the RV from an open neutral condition inside of the RV. This protection is not needed on 30-amp systems. Both the 34930 30-amp and 34950 50-amp include Elevated Ground Line Voltage Protection, which provides protection from current coming back through on the ground line from inside of the RV.

In addition to the new full protection 34930 30-amp and 34950 50-amp, Surge Guard offers other product types to suit each RV owner's individual needs. The following is a breakdown of the other Surge Guard product families designed to provide the most trusted protection in the RV industry.



Surge Protection with Diagnostics

Surge Guard® models 44260 30-amp and 44270 50-amp provide trusted surge protection with easy-to-read wiring diagnostics. LED indicators provide a read out of the incoming power condition to alert you to open ground, open neutral, and reverse polarity. There is also a surge protection status light to indicate if the product is still protecting against a surge. The 44260 30-amp provides 2100 Joules of surge protection while the 44270 50-amp provides 4200 Joules.

Surge Protection with Enhanced Diagnostics

Surge Guard® models 44280 30-amp and 44290 50-amp provide the same trusted surge protection (2100/4200 Joules) as models 44260 and 44270 above, while upgrading the diagnostic capabilities. In addition to open ground, open neutral, reverse polarity, and surge status indication, this product also indicates reverse ground/line and overheating plug indication. The integrated receptacle also contains stronger brass inserts.



Hardwire: Full Electrical Protection

Providing the same features and benefits as the portable Surge Guard® models 34930 30-amp/34950 50-amp, the hardwire Surge Guard® models 35530 30-amp and 35550 50-amp provide full electrical protection with the convenience of being wired directly into the coach. The hardwire Surge Guard® models will automatically monitor the incoming power and disconnect when a fault is present. These UL listed devices are installed out of the elements without the need to carry in and out of your coach to plug in. An optional LCD display, part number 40300, is available to provide an easy to read display that can be located anywhere inside of your coach. The 40300 display includes 50' of data cable.



Overvoltage Protection Device

Another new product to the Surge Guard® family is the 44300 Overvoltage Protection Device. This product provides an individual 15-amp outlet with overvoltage and surge protection. It can be used on any outlet inside of your RV or in your home to protect electronic equipment from dangerous overvoltage and a small surge. The 44300 will disconnect current flow when voltage is at or above 138 volts and provides 314 Joules of surge suppression.

Surge Guard now offers a Limited Lifetime Warranty with Connected Equipment Coverage on all of the above products. For more information on this and other Southwire RV products, please visit rvpower.southwire.com.

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Fresh Start

Eliminate the foul odor in the freshwater system after your RV comes out of its long winter's nap

DIFFICULTY

1 2 3 4 5

TIME TO COMPLETE

1 TO 2 HOURS

TOOLS NEEDED

NONE

Every year around springtime, we start to hear from readers who have discovered their RV's freshwater system has developed a foul odor and want to know how to cure the problem. In truth, prevention is the best medicine; the system should be thoroughly drained before it is stored for the winter, and in cold climates, winterized as well. That being said, a lot of inexperienced RV owners will have a stinky freshwater system and want to know what to do about it before heading out on that first trip of the season.

The most common approach for treatment is to use a small amount of bleach, pumping it through the system and allowing it to sit, followed by another tank with baking soda to remove the chlorine smell. (For a how-to video of this method, visit our YouTube channel, TrailerLifeDIY.) It works, but it's not a hard science. How much bleach and baking soda you use depends on the size of the tank and the severity of the problem.

Thetford offers a Fresh Water Tank Sanitizer system that takes the guesswork out of the process, and it's effective as well. Not only does it remove odor, but it kills harmful bacteria that may be present, including *Staphylococcus aureus* and *listeria*. Both bottles in the two-part system provide clear instructions on how to use the products, but what may not be as clear is how to actually do the job.

SPRING CLEANING » Thetford's two-part Fresh Water Tank Sanitizer system takes the guesswork out of deodorizing and sanitizing the freshwater system. It's inexpensive (two 24-ounce bottles sell for less than \$15), fast and effective.



1) The first step is to drain the freshwater tank of any remaining water. Most RVs have a low-point drain at the bottom of the tank that allows this. Once the tank is empty, close the drain. Then, following the instructions on the Cleaning bottle, add 1 ounce of the concentrated solution to the freshwater tank for every 4 gallons of tank capacity. As an example, a typical 40-gallon water tank uses 10 ounces of the solution.

For this, we turned to C&S RV Service Center in Oxnard, California, and followed along as one of the technicians sanitized the water system on a customer's fifth-wheel. The whole process takes only an hour or so (depending on

the size of the freshwater tank), but be advised that you will be using a lot of water — so make sure drainage will not be an issue where you decide to perform the job.





For those who have concerns about dumping a chemical down the storm drain, the good news is that these products are EPA-registered in all 50 states and are not harmful to the environment. They contain chemicals similar to those used by restaurants and hospitals to sanitize drinking glasses.

With the right product and the right techniques, an RV's freshwater system will be as good as new again. 🗣️

Thetford Corporation

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2, 3, 4) Next, fill the freshwater tank and run the diluted detergent solution through each faucet, shower and any other water outlet (including the exterior shower, if equipped) for approximately one minute. **5)** Go back to the low-point drain and empty the freshwater tank. Then, close it and refill the tank with water and repeat the process, flushing the solution out of all water outlets. **6)** Finally, add the contents of the Tank Sanitizer bottle at a ratio of 2 ounces per 8 gallons of water. Flush it through the freshwater system and drain the tank. You can now refill the tank and enjoy clean, odor-free water.

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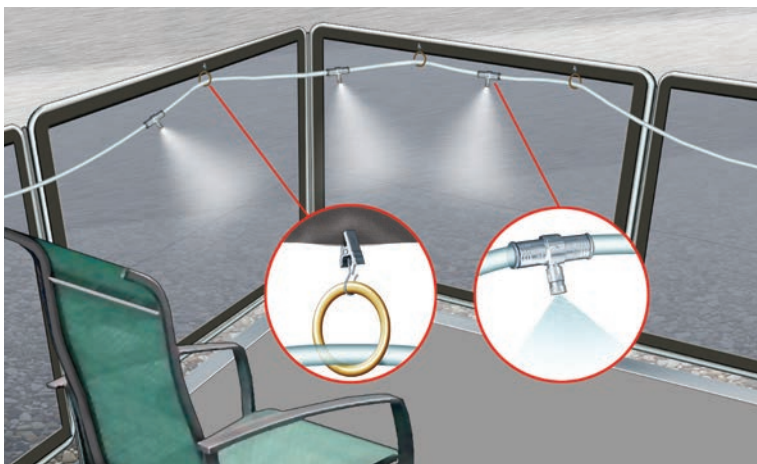
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Mister Cool

With the heat of summer upon us, I wanted to share a simple cooling solution we use on our toy hauler's rear-ramp deck. We attach an inexpensive mister system on the deck's railing with clip-on shower-curtain hooks. To send a cooling mist from above, we clip another mister system on the awning.

Tim Hamilton, Miami, Florida

Note: Hard water can damage furniture and RV side walls, so use a water softener or distilled water in campgrounds with hard water.

Instant Towel Racks

In RVs with limited towel racks in the kitchen and bathroom, there's the potential for more if the drawers have pull handles. But standard pull bars may not be suitable for hanging a dish or hand towel because there's not enough space between the handle and the drawer face.

A simple solution is to extend the handles by inserting plastic spacer washers (½ to 1 inch) between the outside of the drawer and both attachment points of the handle, and replacing the screws with longer ones. Spacer washers and breakaway screws that can be broken off at appropriate lengths to accommodate the washers can be found at most hardware stores.

Not only will these handles provide places to hang towels, they will hold the towels away from the cabinetry, allowing them to dry more readily when damp.

A word of caution: Be sure there's enough space to accommodate the extended handles when the slides are in, and take care not to have wet towels touching wood drawers and cabinets.

Larry MacDonald, Victoria, British Columbia



QUICK FIX

Privacy Curtain

When we were inside our RV at night with the lights on, people could easily see in through our screen door. I remedied that by making a custom curtain that matches the decor and installed it on an adjustable screen-door cross bar from Camping World that cost \$13.

Start by measuring the width of the screen door and the desired length of the curtain, from the cross bar down. Cut coordinating fabric to those dimensions and hem it on all sides. Then sew some loops on top to fit over the cross bar. Now you have some privacy! The curtain is also great for blocking the view outside, in case you have dogs that bark at every little thing that passes by.

Peggy Straka, Rialto, California 🐕

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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Play Like a Pro

King has introduced two Pro-badged satellite TV antennas with clear, smoke-tinted covers that allow users to see which way the satellite is pointing. Designed for permanent-mount or portable applications, the Dish Tailgater Pro VQ4900 and King Quest Pro VQ4800 work with DirecTV service and can support multiple TVs. Setup includes automatic satellite acquisition and switching. Easily viewable internal indicator lights keep users informed of antenna performance and signal strength. The antennas weigh 8 pounds and are 13½ inches tall, making them highly portable and easy to store. Both are covered by a two-year parts warranty and a one-year labor warranty.

**MSRP: \$379/Dish Tailgater
\$549/King Quest**

952-922-6889, www.kingconnect.com
Circle 162 on Reader Service Card



Turn to the Dark Side

Natural sunlight and nighttime campground lights streaming through the roof vents can be quite annoying when trying to sleep or watch TV inside the RV. An easy solution for controlling the amount of light that comes in is installing a Bauer Sun-Out Vent Shade, which fits directly over the trim ring of standard 14-by-14-inch RV ceiling vents and attaches using the existing screws. The company claims that installation of the 4-pound vent shade is simple and quick. Sliding the shade to a variety of positions provides just the right amount of light reduction. The retractable pleated shade has a Mylar backing to reflect light and heat, helping to keep the interior cool.

MSRP: \$59.99

866-682-2837, www.bauerproducts.com/product/vent-shade
Circle 163 on Reader Service Card



Just Hanging Out

TreePod Hanging Habitats offers a refreshing way for RVers to “hang out” among the trees. The company’s single-point suspended “pods” combine features of hammocks, chairs and tents to provide cozy places to relax just off the ground. The original TreePod Hanging Treehouse has a zippered door and mesh windows, and comes in a variety of fun colors. The mesh-sided Cabana (pictured above) furnishes an open and airy hideaway. The higher-end TreePod Plus comes with layered windows and doors, and seam taping for greater water resistance. When a suitable tree can’t be found to hoist the hanging retreat, the steel TreePod Stand supports up to 500 pounds (sold separately).

MSRP: \$199.99 to \$329.99

303-443-0163, www.mytreepod.com
Circle 164 on Reader Service Card



Little Red Giant

Honda Power Equipment’s Super Quiet Series EU2200i inverter-generator provides RVers with a clean, efficient portable power source that weighs only 53.6 pounds dry. Replacing the popular EU2000i, it delivers 200 additional starting watts for 10 percent more power, while still in a compact package. New features include a shutoff valve that allows the engine to run with the fuel supply off, helping prevent issues related to stale fuel. Increased ventilation cools key components better. A large spout and oil-drain gutter make for cleaner, easier oil changes, and the light-effort recoil rope results in smoother starts, according to the company. The Honda EU2200i is covered by a three-year warranty and can be paired with another EU2200i generator or the older EU2000i for more power.

MSRP: \$1,149.95. 770-497-6400, www.powerequipment.honda.com

Circle 165 on Reader Service Card



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Photo courtesy of "Go RVing" Recreational Vehicle Industry Association

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PREDATOR SUPER COUPON

3500 WATT SUPER QUIET INVERTER GENERATOR

Customer Rating **★★★★★**



NOW \$699.99

~~\$749.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$1,999** HONDA MODEL:EU3000ISA

ITEM 63584

SAVE \$1299

15457814

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

EARTHQUAKE XT BEATS Snap-on SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

20 VOLT LITHIUM CORDLESS EXTREME TORQUE 1/2" IMPACT WRENCH KIT

1200 TORQUE FT. LBS. 1/2" IMPACT WRENCH



NOW \$239.99

4.0 amp hour battery

~~\$259.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$710.85** SNAP-ON MODEL:CT888SOP, CT881S, CT8720

ITEM 63852/63537 shown

SAVE \$470

15462855

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

CENTECH SUPER COUPON

FREE WITH ANY PURCHASE

7 FUNCTION DIGITAL MULTIMETER



• 3.5" LCD Display
• Battery Included

COMPARE TO **\$1361** PROSKIT MODEL:MF-1210

ITEM 63604/63758
98025/69096/63759/90899 shown

15449772

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15445690

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PITTSBURGH MOTORCYCLE SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

1000 LB. CAPACITY MOTORCYCLE LIFT

- Diamond plate steel platform and ramp
- Lift range: 7" - 29-1/2"



NOW \$299.99

~~\$429.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$799.99** DIRECT-LIFT MODEL:873100

ITEM 69904/68892 shown

SAVE \$500

15464076

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

PITTSBURGH AUTOMOTIVE SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

1 TON CAPACITY FOLDABLE SHOP CRANE

- Boom extends from 36-1/4" to 50-1/4"
- Crane height adjusts from 82" to 94"



NOW \$999.99

~~\$1799.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$80** DIRECT-LIFT MODEL:873100

ITEM 69512/61858/69445 shown

SAVE \$80

15466863

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

3 GALLON, 100 PSI OIL-FREE AIR COMPRESSORS

- A. HOT DOG ITEM 69269/97080 shown
- B. PANCAKE ITEM 60637/61615 95275 shown



YOUR CHOICE \$399.99

• Air delivery:
0.6 CFM @ 90 PSI
1 CFM @ 40 PSI

COMPARE TO **\$98.62** PORTER-CABLE MODEL:PCFP2003

ITEM 63583/63582 shown

SAVE 59%

~~\$57.99~~

15467220

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

BADLAND ZXR Battle Tested SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

12,000 LB. ELECTRIC WINCH WITH REMOTE CONTROL AND AUTOMATIC BRAKE

- Weighs 86.4 lbs.
- 21" L x 10-1/8" H



NOW \$299.99

~~\$399.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$699.99** WARN MODEL:9820

ITEM 640 46/64045 63770 shown

SAVE \$400

15469721

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

HEAVY DUTY FOLDABLE ALUMINUM SPORTS CHAIR



NOW \$199.99

~~\$299.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$49.99** COLEMAN MODEL:2000022033

ITEM 62314/63066 66383 shown

SAVE 60%

15474257

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

STEP STOOL/WORKING PLATFORM



NOW \$199.99

350 lb. capacity

COMPARE TO **\$57.55** GPL MODEL:H-21

ITEM 62515/66911 shown

SAVE 65%

~~\$299.99~~

15479182

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

CHICAGO ELECTRIC WELDING SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

125 AMP FLUX-CORE WELDER



EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO WELD

NOW \$999.99

~~\$1099.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$179.99** IRONTON MODEL:45433

ITEM 63583 63582 shown

SAVE \$80

15483018

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

SOLAR ROPE LIGHT

- Great outdoor accent lighting
- Super bright light



NOW \$99.99

~~\$139.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$29.97** HAMPTON BAY MODEL:82059-055SR

ITEM 62533/63941/68353 shown

SAVE 66%

15491483

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

CHICAGO ELECTRIC POWER TOOLS SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

12" SLIDING COMPOUND DOUBLE-BEVEL MITER SAW



• Laser guide

NOW \$1299.99

~~\$1949.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$299** KOBALT MODEL:SM3055LV

ITEM 61969/61970 69684 shown

SAVE \$169

15501930

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

12 VOLT MAGNETIC TOWING LIGHT KIT



NOW \$99.99

~~\$189.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$33.59** OPTRONICS MODEL:TL21RK

ITEM 63100

SAVE 70%

15502024

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

drillmaster SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

1500 WATT DUAL TEMPERATURE HEAT GUN (572°/1112°)



NOW \$89.99

~~\$149.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$280.6** BLACK & DECKER MODEL:H91300

ITEM 62340/62546/63104/96289 shown

SAVE 67%

15508236

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

Bunker Hill Security SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

WIRELESS SECURITY ALERT SYSTEM



NOW \$99.99

~~\$159.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$239.99** SWANN MODEL:SWHM-DRIVEA

ITEM 61910/62447/93068 shown

SAVE 58%

15526720

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

7 PIECE PLIERS SET

LIFETIME WARRANTY



NOW \$99.99

~~\$347.9~~

COMPARE TO **\$347.9** HUSKY MODEL:97019

ITEM 69358/62599/62847/62600 shown

SAVE 74%

~~\$899.99~~

15531301

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

PORTLAND SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

7 AMP ELECTRIC POLE SAW 9.5" BAR



NOW \$599.99

~~\$799.99~~

6 ft. to 8 ft. 10"

COMPARE TO **\$99.98** WORX MODEL:W6309

ITEM 68862/63190/62896 shown

SAVE \$39

15522459

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

CHICAGO ELECTRIC WELDING SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

WELDING STORAGE CABINET



NOW \$149.99

~~\$169.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$229.99** KLUTCH MODEL:48348

ITEM 62275/61705 shown

SAVE \$80

15560204

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

9 PIECE, 1/4", 3/8" AND 1/2" DRIVE WOBBLE SOCKET EXTENSION SET

LIFETIME WARRANTY



NOW \$99.99

~~\$149.99~~

COMPARE TO **\$199.99** KLUTCH MODEL:48083

ITEM 61278 67971 shown

SAVE 50%

15562962

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18

COVER PRO **SCISSOR** SUPER COUPON

10 FT. x 10 FT. PORTABLE SHED

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$139.99

COMPARE TO SHELTER LOGIC MODEL: 70333 **SAVE \$96** ITEM 63297

15365591

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

PITTSBURGH **IN AMERICA** SUPER COUPON

#1 SELLING JACKS

RAPID PUMP® 3 TON HEAVY DUTY STEEL FLOOR JACK

- Lifts from 5" to 18-1/4"
- Weights 74 lbs.

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$74.99

COMPARE TO POWERBUILT MODEL: 647593 **SAVE \$60** ITEM 62227/62116/62584/68048 shown

15371660

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

US GENERAL SUPER COUPON

30", 5 DRAWER TOOL CARTS

- 8100 cu. in. of storage
- 700 lb. capacity
- Weights 139 lbs.

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$169.99

COMPARE TO SNAP-ON MODEL: KR5C3AP00 **SAVE \$1005** ITEM 64032/64030/64033 shown

15582363

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

KRAUSE & BECKER SUPER COUPON

AIRLESS PAINT SPRAYER KIT

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$169.99

COMPARE TO GRACO MODEL: 262800 **SAVE \$129** ITEM 62915/60600 shown

15583395

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

WARRIOR SUPER COUPON

29 PIECE TITANIUM DRILL BIT SET

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$9.99

COMPARE TO DEWALT MODEL: DW1569 **SAVE 83%** ITEM 62281/61637 shown

15587931

LIMIT 6 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

Lynxx SUPER COUPON

40 VOLT LITHIUM CORDLESS BRUSHLESS BLOWER

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$119.99

COMPARE TO DEWALT MODEL: DC37909 **SAVE \$79** ITEM 63284

15591070

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

PREDATOR SUPER COUPON

6.5 HP (212 CC) OHV HORIZONTAL SHAFT GAS ENGINE

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$99.99

COMPARE TO HONDA MODEL: EX300120X2 **SAVE \$230** ITEM 60363/69730

15592127

LIMIT 3 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

PORTLAND SUPER COUPON

1750 PSI ELECTRIC PRESSURE WASHER

- 1.3 GPM
- Adjustable spray nozzle

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$179.99

COMPARE TO BRIGGS & STRATTON MODEL: 20800 **SAVE \$99** ITEM 63255/63254 shown

15592442

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

72" x 80" MOVING BLANKET

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$5.99

COMPARE TO BLUE HAWK MODEL: 77280 **SAVE 70%** ITEM 69505/62418/66537 shown

15592678

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON

225 PIECE MECHANIC'S TOOL SET

LIFETIME WARRANTY

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$99.99

COMPARE TO KOBALT MODEL: 95756 **SAVE \$99** ITEM 64367/62664 shown

15595492

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

HERCULES BEATS DEWALT SUPER COUPON

20 VOLT LITHIUM CORDLESS 1/2" COMPACT DRILL/DRIVER KIT

- 576 in. lbs. of torque
- 2.5 amp hour battery
- Weights 3.6 lbs.

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$99.99

COMPARE TO DEWALT MODEL: DC2780C2 **SAVE \$80** ITEM 63381

15599465

LIMIT 5 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

CENTRAL PNEUMATIC SUPER COUPON

3/8" x 50 FT. RETRACTABLE AIR HOSE REEL

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$59.99

COMPARE TO KOBALT MODEL: SBYAIR184 **SAVE \$39** ITEM 62925/62344/93877 shown

15601797

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

SCISSOR SUPER COUPON

3 PIECE DECORATIVE SOLAR LED LIGHTS

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$7.99

COMPARE TO ATE TOOLS MODEL: 3379 **SAVE 33%** ITEM 60561/69462 shown

15627266

LIMIT 7 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

HaulMaster SUPER COUPON

4 PIECE, 1" x 15 FT. RATCHETING TIE DOWNS

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

400 lb. working load

NOW \$6.99

COMPARE TO ATE TOOLS MODEL: 3379 **SAVE 82%** ITEM 63057/63056/63094/90984/60405/63150/61524 shown

15627718

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

CENTECH SUPER COUPON

AUTOMATIC BATTERY FLOAT CHARGER

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$4.99

COMPARE TO ITEM 64284/69955/69594/42292 shown **SAVE 50%**

15632178

LIMIT 8 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

FISCHER SUPER COUPON

HEAVY DUTY MULTI-VEHICLE 750 LB. HIGH LIFT JACK

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

- 750 lb. H-frame capacity
- 500 lb. saddle capacity
- Huge 23" max. lift height

NOW \$179.99

COMPARE TO MOLJACK MODEL: PRO **SAVE \$245** ITEM 63298

15633038

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

HERCULES BEATS DEWALT SUPER COUPON

4-1/2", 7 AMP ANGLE GRINDER

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$34.99

COMPARE TO DEWALT MODEL: DW401 **SAVE 40%** ITEM 63052/62556 shown

15634436

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

SCISSOR SUPER COUPON

10" PNEUMATIC TIRE

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$3.99

COMPARE TO FARM & RANCH MODEL: FR1055 **SAVE 60%** ITEM 69385/62388/62409/62698/30900 shown

15636892

LIMIT 9 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

WINDSOR DESIGN SUPER COUPON

60" HARDWOOD WORKBENCH WITH 4 DRAWERS

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$129.99

COMPARE TO GRIZZLY MODEL: H7723 **SAVE \$285** ITEM 93454/69054/63395/62603 shown

15638344

LIMIT 4 - Coupon valid through 8/10/18*

PITTSBURGH SUPER COUPON

13 PIECE, 1/2" DRIVE DEEP IMPACT SOCKET SETS

Customer Rating **★★★★★**

NOW \$19.99

COMPARE TO HUSKY MODEL: H20SAE11PCSR **SAVE 63%** ITEM 69560 shown

15639892

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TIRE-TEMPERATURE MONITORING

Q I'd like to know your thoughts on the ability of the tire-pressure monitoring system (TPMS) to correctly read a tire's temperature. I have a system on my fifth-wheel and wouldn't be without it, but I don't believe this sensor can come anywhere near reading the correct temp while it is outside the tire. The systems that use sensors inside the tires would more likely give a true reading.

Larry Pittman, Fenton, Michigan

A You're right, Larry; a TPMS sensor mounted on a valve stem does not have the kind of direct access to the air in the tire that's available to a TPMS installed inside the tire. Valve stems, metal or rubber, are not insulated, so that's going to affect the temperature reading by a small amount at the tip. However, the air inside

the tire is constantly circulating during travel, and even that small amount of air in the valve stem will be changing as you drive, so it's going to be fairly close.

In general, the temperature readouts are most valuable for relative comparison to the other tires. All of the tires will be reading out their temps under identical mechanical setups. Being aware if one tire's temperature starts to increase due to low pressure, for example, relative to the other tires, is the important detail.



BED-FRAME REBUILD

Q I have a 2012 Keystone Montana 3400RL fifth-wheel. The last time I used it, I noticed that when I ran the bedroom slideout, it tipped inward more than usual at the top. Upon inspection, I found that the frame for the bed was no longer attached to the wall of the slide, which caused the slide to tip or rock in the opening to the point that I am afraid it could jam in the opening.

I removed the deck of the bed frame to see if I could reattach the frame on the wall. I stuck an ice pick through the 1/4-inch wallboard, trying to locate something solid, and found there isn't any stud or solid item to attach to. The only solution I can come up with would be to drill through the bottom of the slide, then put the bed frame in place, and go outside and drill up through the 2x2 on the bed frame, using carriage bolts through the slide and bed frame. I feel the smooth head of the carriage bolt wouldn't cause any problems, and the bed would be fastened solid.

Owen Dunfee, Neptune City, New Jersey

A Every manufacturer uses a somewhat different system for slideout and furniture construction, Owen, and without seeing your setup in person or by way of a group of detailed photos, it would be difficult to make a firm recommendation about your planned repair. In general, it seems as if you're applying sound engineering principles toward your intended repair, so you're probably on the right track.

Your principal concern is making sure you don't create any obstructions that would hinder the full movement of the slideout. The use of carriage bolts does reduce the chance of a fastener protruding and causing movement interference, but you might also want to consider recessing the bolt seat a bit by boring out some material with a Forstner bit. That would leave you with a truly flush surface. Good luck with the job!

BATTERY TENDER USE

Q I have a 2016 Wildwood Heritage Glen fifth-wheel with dual batteries and a battery-cutoff switch. No mat-

ter how I connect a Battery Tender, it never gets to the point of the batteries being charged. If I use the Battery Tender on my truck's 12-volt battery, it works fine. Could I be doing something wrong? I have tried it with the switch in both the on and off positions.

Andrew Moothart, Vacaville, California

A Using a Battery Tender or maintainer charger is as easy as falling off a log, Andrew; you clip its power leads to the battery posts and plug it in, just as you do when charging your truck's battery. I would use the battery-disconnect switch to eliminate any parasitic drain caused by electrical devices in the RV. Are you connecting the charger directly to the battery posts, or elsewhere to a power line from the battery? They should go right on the posts to eliminate any circuit problems along the lines.

Your trailer isn't very old, so battery age should not be a factor, but it would be good to have a battery shop do a condition and load test on both batteries to ensure they're in good shape. If some cells are low on water, for example, that would cause incomplete charging, and if your RV's converter has overcharged them, they could likewise have been damaged. The batteries

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.

will take a full charge only if they're in good condition.

You might also want to consider buying a second charger so you can have a separate one on each battery, due to slight variations in charging needs, as this will eliminate one battery causing overcharging in the other one, for example.

LESS SQUIRM WITH STIFFER TIRE SIDEWALLS

Q I use a Ram 1500 4x4 to tow a 28-foot Coachmen Freedom Express travel trailer with a base weight around 5,000 pounds. When passing semis or in a crosswind, the combo gets a little squirmy. The tires are Goodyear 275/60R20 with a load rating of 114. The highest rated replacement tire I found in that size is Cooper Discoverer H/T with a load rating of 119T. My theory is that the stiffer sidewall will reduce the squirmy feeling. Have you had experience with tire load ratings and their

effect on towing? I have a Class 4 weight-distributing (WD) hitch and sway bars.

Doug Spraley, Dayton, Ohio

A You're right, Doug, a tire with a stiffer sidewall will tend to have less flex and "squirm," as you describe it. Going to a higher-rated tire with more plies in the sidewalls may help the handling situation, but it may also stiffen your ride somewhat, so you should be aware of that.

Yours sounds like a good truck-and-trailer setup, but I'd look at a few other details to help improve towing stability. Mainly, make sure the WD hitch is properly set up and adjusted. If the spring bars aren't tight enough, for example, it can result in squirrely steering that gets worse with passing commercial traffic or high winds. Shift some heavy trailer cargo forward to make sure you have at least 11 or 12 percent of the trailer weight on the hitch, and check your truck's steering and suspension hardware to be sure

it's up to specs and in good condition.

As for tire brands, stick with a known name brand, such as Cooper, for your best chance of success. Going cheap doesn't pay with tires.



MORE MOUSE DETERRENENTS

Adding to the discussion started by December 2017's "Mice Intrusion" letter, my

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home exterminator suggested using copper mesh and Pur Black expanding foam to keep mice out of our house. Copper won't rust, and rodents will chew most spray foams, but they don't like the taste of Pur Black. Both can be bought online.

My new wife talked me into buying a trailer last year. It's a 24-foot Heartland North Trail. I love it, and I look forward to getting *Trailer Life* each month.
Larry Goodyear, Monson, Massachusetts

Thank you for the recommendations, Larry. The ongoing problem of keeping rodents out of an RV has many solutions, according to our reader mail. Copper screen is a great idea. From what I read about Pur Black foam, it doesn't have quite the same expansion properties as the more commonly used yellow foam, which means a slightly different application technique may be called for. But if the foam tastes bad to

mice and helps keep them out, it's sure worth a try.

CUSTOM-TRAILER BUILDERS

Q For several years now, we have been looking to replace our 2004 R-Vision Trail Cruiser C-21RBH travel trailer. Its uniqueness is what drew us to that particular trailer in the beginning. The hybrid floorplan was perfect for the camping style of our family of five. It has been well used and is now suffering the effects.

We have looked at virtually every brand of travel trailer currently being manufactured and have found nothing comparable. We have even tried researching custom builders but have found their idea of custom build is very limited. Do you know of any company that can and will truly build a trailer to specification?
Clark Toothman, Saint Clairsville, Ohio

A SpaceCraft Manufacturing (www.spacecraftmfg.com), Recreation by Design (www.recreationbydesign.com) and North American RV (www.rvsandcargotrailers.com) build custom trailers from the frame up, Clark, and an internet search may reveal more such manufacturers. They start with a blank sheet of paper and do whatever you want. This costs more than a mass-produced trailer, but I'm sure you're aware of that part of custom-trailer ownership. Give them a call, and I'm sure one or the other can accommodate your needs.

TPO ROOF MAINTENANCE

Q We have a 2014 Keystone Sprinter 302RLS that we purchased new. It has a TPO roof that looks to be in good condition. My wife and I winter four months in Arizona and take shorter summer excursions. When we are not using the RV, it is stored in my shed on the farm.

Some of the people we know clean and treat their roofs every year, which I have never done. I had the brakes checked and wheel bearings packed, I wax the exterior yearly by hand, and I had new tires installed and balanced

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before heading to Arizona recently. While the dealer had the RV to pack the bearings, they checked the roof and said no roof maintenance was required.
Bruce Moss, Stewartville, Missouri

A Storing your trailer inside a shed is the key here, Bruce, as that eliminates much of the weather-related aging that can happen to an RV's roof. I can understand that a service worker might look at your roof and say you don't need to do anything to it yet. It's still a new enough RV that, given your storage situation, your roof is probably still in great shape.

People who store an RV outdoors have a far greater need to clean and maintain their roofs using manufacturer-recommended materials. Even at that, it still wouldn't hurt to wash and inspect your roof once a year to be sure the sealant around the roof vents and other rooftop items haven't started to age. This type of inspection can save you a lot of grief later on down the road as your rig gets a few more years under its belt.

PUSH-PULL RESULTS

I read with interest Glenn Lygrisse's experiences in the February issue with truck push-pull when highway towing his KZ Spree with a Ford Expedition. We, too, have had many white-knuckle experiences — one so severe that the trailer's sway-control system kicked in on our 2011 Ford F-150 and saved the day.

My solution was to upgrade the hitch to a Blue Ox SwayPro, and the problem was solved. We don't even notice when semis pass us. It was a pricey fix but definitely worth the expense.

I am sure there are other premium hitch assemblies available beyond the standard weight-distributing (WD) hitch that many of us use. As you stated, proper setup is the most important factor, but hitch selection may help as well.
Dick Lanier, Feeding Hills, Massachusetts

You're right, Dick. The proper WD hitch, trailer weight balance and truck-and-trailer matchup are vital for achieving safe, smooth towing performance. Even

a spot-on setup is subject to the push-pull effect of passing commercial traffic, so finding something else that can reduce the effect is terrific.

Thank you for your recommendation; it may well help some of our readers.

I am responding to Glenn Lygrisse's February "Truck Push-Pull" letter. He states that there's considerable sway effect from passing semitrucks.

I tow a 27-foot Terry Dakota with a 2011 Ford Expedition EL and the Equal-i-zer hitch system.

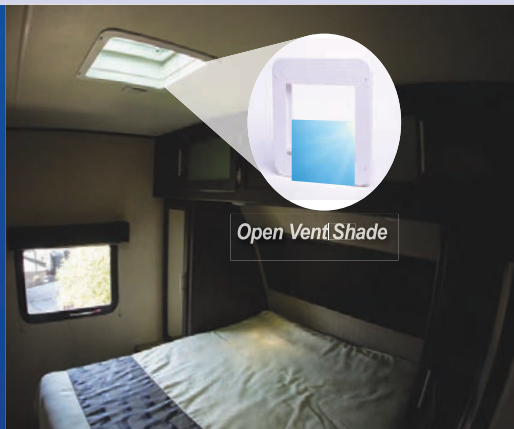
Lygrisse should ensure he has the correct Expedition rear-tire pressure and the correct weight bias on the hitch. If it's too light, it will wag like a spaniel greeting you when you get home. Next, he should try tightening the spring-bar pivot bolts to increase turning friction. I keep **(continued on page 112)**

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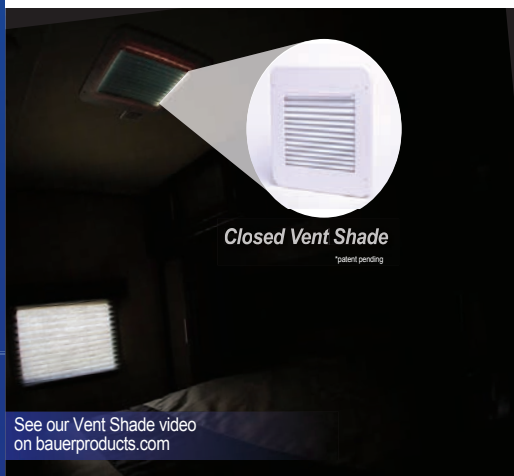
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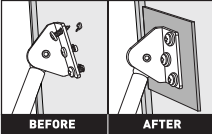

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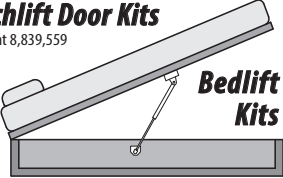
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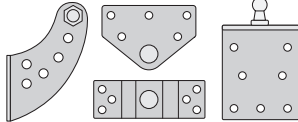
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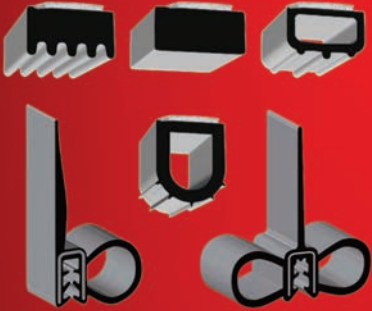
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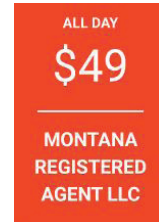
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(Continued from page 107)

mine fairly snug and do not have any push-pull sway issues.

Mike Richardson, Tucson, Arizona

The Equal-i-zer hitch includes some interesting anti-sway features that can be adjusted, to a point, as you've done to help deter sway. Although you can't do much about encountering the push-pull effect on a travel trailer from passing traffic, use of the right WD hitch can

certainly help, as can making sure you have adequate hitch weight. Thank you for the recommendation.

TRUCK MUD FLAPS

Q I volunteer at the local Boy Scout camp, which is a 7-mile drive on a dirt or muddy road. Given that this summer we also intend to drive the Alaska Highway up to the Arctic Circle,

I have been considering adding mud flaps to my 2016 Ram 2500. Some of this trip will be on gravel roads, so I need to protect my travel trailer.

I have looked at several types of mud flaps, from the hard-plastic kind to the rubber-flap style. Even though both get good reviews, I am concerned that the hard plastic will not wear well when hit by the rocks on gravel roads. I'd like your advice.

Stanley Crane, Salinas, California

A The rubber-type flaps that hang down like the flaps on large commercial vehicles work well, Stanley. We drove to Alaska in 1997, and although we covered only about 125 miles of gravel and dirt road because the rest of our route was paved, we still picked up a lot of mud and some rock dings in the trailer front wall. I wish we'd thought of installing a flap of some kind before that trip.

There are various types of flaps available for today's vehicles, but the one we've used is the Roadmaster RoadWing. It attaches to the hitch receiver, and it has large enough coverage to be effective.

AXLE GREASING

Q I read the reply to Bob Maager's "Greaseable Axles" question in February's RV Clinic. We have a 2011 Rockwood Ultra Lite 2608SS trailer. I asked the dealership to grease the bearings when I took it in for the annual checkup, and they never said anything about the axles.

During a recent trip, grease started coming out of the grease caps, so I called a local tech to come and investigate. He told me that the Rockwood had greaseable axles. He used 2 pounds of grease for all four wheels, and said it was good to go and that the axles and bearings were done.

From Maager's letter, it seems that it is necessary to grease the axles and have the wheel bearings packed as well. Is that correct? The tech seemed to know his stuff, so I wanted to know if I need to do both. Does using the Zerk fittings put grease in



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the wheel bearings so I do not need to pack the bearings, as in the traditional way with non-greasable axles?

Robert Lauzon, Flagstaff, Arizona

A The term “greasable axles” is something of a misnomer, Robert, because the axles have no moving parts and there’s nothing to grease. When applying grease to such an axle, you are greasing the wheel bearings. Packing the wheel bearings is “greasing the axles.” The axle just serves as the delivery method for routing the grease back to the bearings by way of a hole down the center of the axle that ends somewhere near the middle of the spindle. Some such axles use a slightly different arrangement, but the effect is the same.

When grease (usually far too much and too often, if our reader mail is an indication) is pumped into the Zerk fitting, that grease travels back through the center hole and exits in the middle of the spindle. That spot is also near the center of the wheel hub, between the bearings. The new grease is added to the existing grease in the hub and displaces some of the old grease that exits from the outer surface of the inner and outer wheel bearings.

As long as you inspect and repack the wheel bearings annually, you do not need to occasionally add grease by way of the Zerk fitting, although it’s tempting. Some users tell us they routinely “add a couple of pumps of grease every month or so,” and that’s completely unnecessary. Those greasable-hub axles were designed for the boating industry, where the hubs are regularly immersed in water. The boat owner could occasionally, and sparingly, add a small amount of grease to help keep the water from penetrating the bearings. That feature is mostly useless on RVs that stay on dry land.

Problems begin when too much grease is added, as that creates excess pressure inside the hub. The grease can leak past the rear-hub seal, and from there it gets inside the brake drum with obvious effects on the brake shoes and the trailer’s braking ability. Once the bearings are packed, you’re good for

the recommended one year between bearing-service intervals, and there’s no need to add more.

Based on the confusing and conflicting stories we hear from readers, and the stories they’ve heard from shop technicians and RV salespeople, manufacturers of greasable hub axles need to do a better job with their owner’s manuals. Something that clearly spells out the process in a way that’s

understandable, and easy to access in the manual or on the manufacturer’s website, would help a lot of trailer owners with this equipment. 📧

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

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Massachusetts Masterpiece

Rockport paints its picture-perfect scenery in broad brushstrokes

An hour north of Boston, Massachusetts, the quaint and historic seaside town of Rockport welcomes visitors who come to play on the beach and window-shop at the charming boutiques and art galleries around town. Embracing a small working harbor that looks out on Sandy Bay, this quintessential New England town evokes wistful images of America's early days.

Just behind a row of shops and waterfront homes at one end of Front Beach, we listened as the bell of the historic First Congregational Church chimed every hour. In 1814 when the British navy invaded Rockport, the bell sounded an alarm to alert the townspeople. In an attempt to silence it, one of the British ships fired at the bell but missed, lodging a cannonball in the steeple instead. The church has that cannonball to this day.

Known in the late 1800s for its granite quarries,

Rockport was also a hub for small-scale fishing and lobstering, and later evolved into a colony of artists. Today, artists can be seen painting on easels at the most picturesque spots in town, and the tiny harbor is home to a fleet of lobster boats that still ply the waters around Cape Ann to catch New England's clawed delicacy.

As we took photos of the famous red fishing shack in the heart of Rockport Harbor, a man told us it is the most-painted building in New England. Some sources claim it is the most-painted scene in America, if not the world. Known as Motif Number 1, the original 1885 shack was so beloved that, when it was destroyed by a blizzard in 1978, the town rebuilt it.

The dozens of boutiques, eateries and galleries that fill the narrow peninsula protecting the harbor where Motif Number 1 stands were once rustic fishing shacks, too. Although it's hard to imagine thick woods and wildlife on the tourist-filled walking streets, legend has it that back in the 1600s, settler Ebenezer Babson killed a bear with his knife to protect his nephew. He left the skin to dry on the rocks, which gave rise to the strip of land being named Bearskin Neck.

For RVers looking for a taste of New England's charm and colorful past, Rockport is a wonderful day-trip destination that is easily reached from Cape Ann Camp Site in nearby Gloucester or Winter Island Park not much farther away in Salem. 📍



Fisherman's Wharf

One of Rockport's claims to fame is a picturesque fishing shack, known as Motif Number 1, that has inspired countless artists to sketch and paint its likeness.

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