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# MOTORHOME

JANUARY 2013

## HIGH-END AMENITIES

New Floorplan  
for Winnebago's Tour

FIRST-EVER  
READERS'  
CHOICE AWARDS



**Driving a Bargain**  
13 Motorhomes For  
Less Than \$100K  
+ RV Financing Options

### TRAVEL »

**National Treasures**

Devils Tower to Yellowstone

Explore **California's** Wild Rivers Coast

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**On The Cover:** With four slides and amenities galore, the new 42GD floorplan for Winnebago's Tour sets the bar high. See the test on page 46.

# GREAT CHOICES

**C**learly, motorhome enthusiasts enjoy luxury and have a low threshold for discomfort. Consequently, all classes of motorhomes have evolved into well-equipped machines that provide the comforts of home with the added benefit of being able to explore new horizons. Case in point: Winnebago. The iconic motorhome builder from Forest City, Iowa, can trace its roots to coaches that were Spartan compared to today's offerings, but still provided a level of comfort that spearheaded mobile living to what it is today. The 42-foot Tour featured on page 46 is quite a contrast to the original "eyebrow" clad Winnebagos that graced our highways back the mid 1960s.

What do the early Winnebago motorhomes have in common with a new luxury liner like the Tour? To most people the answer will be "nothing," but when you think about it, the answer could be "everything." Each motorhome offers a place to sleep in comfort relative to the available mattresses, and although appliances and accessories were products of current technology, it was still easy to cook and lounge in comfort — and have a fully equipped bathroom. The truth is, RV life was pretty simple in the old days and while I'm the first to admit I relish creature comforts and enjoy hanging out in nice RV resorts, I kind of miss the minimalist trips when we spent less time inside our rigs. Heck, having a TV was almost a sin.

I remember buying a battery powered, portable TV to watch the Olympics in 1976 while on an RV vacation, which upset my wife, Lynne, because she hated the idea of watching TV in a campground. In her words, "We were supposed to be getting away from it all." That box with a wiggly rabbit ear antenna and 5-inch black and white screen gave way long ago to HD screens driven by satellite signals. And my wife has softened her stance about watching the tube while on RV trips.



The inability to afford a luxury coach does not preclude us from enjoying trips and residing in great comfort, as evident in the article on page 56. Here you'll read about a gaggle of motorhomes with price tags south of \$100,000. Winnebago's Vista 26HE, for example, is a well-equipped Class A with a promotional price of \$69,999. We've got this coach in our testing program and will publish the results in the near future. From our initial observations, get ready to be pleasantly surprised. Undoubtedly, the company's reputation as a versatile, quality builder has earned our readers' respect (see Readers' Choice Awards, page 38).

When you factor in attractive interest rates, it could be argued that it's never been easier to afford a new motorhome. Historically low interest rates and generous terms have made coach ownership easier on the budget. And the good news is the banks and finance institutions have strayed from the Draconian requirements for loan qualification prevalent when the financial crisis reared its ugly head.

As suggested in the article on page 26, finance companies are actively seeking your business. Good Sam's finance program, for example, is just one of a number of players offering very low rates for new and used motorhomes — and are tied to liberal terms.

Owners who desire to pursue the full-time motorhome lifestyle are no longer dissuaded from securing long-term financing. In the past, people without a permanent address had to scramble for financing. Good Sam RV Loans is one of only a few companies actively approving loans for full timers.

These are good times to be a motorhome enthusiast. ♦

# MOTORHOME

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## ARE YOUR GRAY-WATER VALVE HANDLES BLACK OR GRAY?

That's the question we asked in our October 2012 issue, and here are some of the replies we received.

**Author's note:** In the July 2012 "RV Oops Awards" article, I suggested that motorhome manufacturers consider color-coding their waste-valve handles: Gray for gray water; black for black water. In the October 2012 P.O. Box, a reader commented that I should "get out of my office a bit more often and go take a look at new motorhomes," since at least one company — Tiffin — manufactures coaches with color-coded handles.

In response, I asked motorhome owners to email me as to whether their waste-tank handles are appropriately colored, along with the year, make and model of their coaches. Thanks to the 133 people who replied, especially to the owner of a 2011 Tiffin Phaeton, whose handles were both black. Another owner of a new Phaeton had both gray and black handles; unfortunately, the gray handle was attached to the black-water tank.

The good news is that most of the owners (111) reported appropriately color-coded handles, many on the same make of coach. The remainder, reporting on 21 different makes all newer than 2000, had black handles on both the gray- and black-water valves. Many of these owners were planning to paint their gray-water valve handles gray to prevent pulling the wrong handle. — **LARRY MACDONALD**

### NO COLORS NEEDED

I've owned a variety of RVs. None of them had color-coded dump valve handles and I never considered that to be necessary. I suppose if someone is that confused, they should take a step back and give it some thought. There are so many bells and whistles on recent RVs that we tend to take it for granted that everything is foolproof, or at least should be. I find myself becoming accustomed to or complacent with all the fool-proofing, but we just can't drop our guard. We must take a step back, relax and be thoughtful.

**CLIFF ZIMMERMAN | CAMARILLO, CALIF.**

### MAKE YOUR OWN LABELS

My 2009 Winnebago Adventurer dump handles are

color-coded, one gray and one black. Unfortunately, the gray handle is on the black-water valve and the black is on the gray-water valve. Needless to say, there was much consternation when I first used the installed black-water spray head. I religiously followed directions, dumping first the black then the gray tanks. Then I closed the gray handle and opened the black handle, hooked the garden hose up to the spray head, turned it on and waited for the black water tank to be cleaned out. You guessed it — dirty black water gushed out of the top of the toilet and nothing came out of the dump hose.

After twice trying to convince the dealer that the colors were reversed, I figured it was risky to let him change the plumbing. Instead I hung labeled tags on the handles. Someday I may get around to painting the black handle gray and the gray handle black.

**DICK MOORE | BENSALEM, PA.**

### PICTURE PERFECT

On our 2007 Holiday Rambler Admiral we have neither gray nor black handles; we have pictures. Our waste system has unmistakable photos/diagrams: a picture of a sink for gray water and a picture of a toilet for black. There's no way to confuse them.

**DARLENE AND JOE TORREZ | VIA EMAIL**

### COLORS & DECALS

I have owned many RVs, and all have had their gray- and black-water valve handles clearly marked, either by decals or handle color. It was always a no-brainer as to which was the correct valve. My current 2004 Winnebago Adventurer valve handles are color-coded gray and black, and there are also decals.

Revisiting the slideout versus no slideout debate, I think those who do not have a slide are just defending their turf, as anyone who has owned both will never again do without a slideout. I have never had a single problem with a slide in any of the numerous RVs I have owned, no loss of

heat or cooling and no leaks. It does take a bit more maintenance, such as lubricating the mechanism and rubber seals, and cleaning the top. But the bonus of the extra space is invaluable. My Winnebago Adventurer has a slide on either side and gives enough extra room to make us feel at home instead of in a closet. When the slides are closed, there is no functionality lost, except for a couple of bedroom closet drawers. We can easily move about the motorhome, use the full kitchen and bath, and living and bedrooms.

**MIKE HUFFMAN | VIA EMAIL**

### ALWAYS TEST OUTLETS

Thank you for printing the "Shorepower Safety" article in the October 2012 issue. We, unfortunately, have had two very costly incidents plugging into shorepower, which we wrote to you about previously. Even though you were unable to assist us since the RV park owner was not at all cooperative, we are very pleased to see your follow-up with this article to benefit fellow RVers.

After our sad experiences, we tell everyone we can to be sure to use a tester each and every time prior to plugging in to any electrical outlet. It doesn't make any difference if it's a public/private campground, your best friend's home or a family member's home. Grab your tester first! Their wiring can be different than what your motorhome requires.

According to the RV service company we had work on our coaches and other RVs over the years, we were very lucky that only our refrigerator was damaged. Many times the entire electrical system of the RV would be compromised. Take the few minutes to protect yourself and your RV.

**JOHN AND EVE BURTON | VIA EMAIL**

### NOT SO SIMPLE

I read with amusing interest the "Back to Basics: RV Sanitation Systems" article in the October 2012 issue and was struck by the statement that changing out a leaking or stuck holding tank valve is "relatively easy."

I have been RVing since 1968 and have had to change out three black-water dump valves because the handle came off in my hand while attempting to dump the tanks. Proper maintenance of these valves with a good lubricant has been a

learning lesson for me. I always carry buckets that will fit under the dump valve so I can loosen the bolts allowing the black-water tank to drain into the bucket. It generally takes several bucket dumps to get all the fluid out of the tank. It is then possible to pull the stuck valve and replace it with a new one. Having replacement dump valves is necessary as an inventory item of spare parts.

It is not all that difficult, but it is time consuming and not exactly an easy job. Particularly if you are preparing to depart the morning you are dumping your tanks.

**GORDON BROWN | KELLER, TEXAS**

### NO MORE RUNAWAY RUG

My husband and I want to thank Carroll Manning for the Quick Tip hint in the October 2012 edition about gluing strips of clear plastic hall runners to the bottom of a rug to keep it from moving. We have been battling this problem in our home for years. Yesterday we purchased the clear vinyl hall runner and spray glue, placed the strips on the bottom of our hall runner and voila, no more rug movement! Now it's on to the one in the motorhome.

**NED AND MARSHA RYAN  
APPOMATTOX, VA.**

### TV PET PEEVE

I'm wondering what other RVers think about where the TV in the motorhome living area should be located. This is a constant gripe for me when looking at the new models of motorhomes. As I get older and it gets harder to hear and see, I need the TV located at the front in a motorhome, close to the seating. A TV set located 15 feet away (and nearer to the bedroom) is totally impractical and, in some cases, almost unusable. Who dreamed up the idea of putting the TV as far away as possible from the lounges and chairs?

**EILEEN GLAHOLT,  
SACRAMENTO, CALIF.**

## QUESTION:

**Are you happy with the TV placement in your motorhome? Why or why not?**

Send your comments to *MotorHome*, 3300 Fernbrook Lane N #200, Minneapolis, MN 55447; or email [letters@motorhomemagazine.com](mailto:letters@motorhomemagazine.com). ♦

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# escapes

by LAURA MICHAELS

EVENTS | NOTEWORTHY | WHEELS & GEAR | CROSSROADS

## A SURPRISING ECOSYSTEM

### THE TALLGRASS PRAIRIE OF KANSAS' FLINT HILLS

Stretching across 4 million acres, the Flint Hills of eastern Kansas seem to roll on forever. But in reality, this vast land of tallgrass prairie is a fraction of the historic expanse that once covered more than 170 million acres from Indiana to Kansas and from Canada to Texas. Saved by the layers of chert rock or “flint” that made it unsuitable for farming, this portion of the prairie survived and is now home to more than 500 species of plants, 60-plus species of reptiles, amphibians and mammals, and nearly 150 bird species. Here, bobcats and coyotes roam while prairie voles dart around stalks of big bluestem grasses and Upland sandpipers share their melody. Nature trails, such as the 2.8-mile hiking route that departs from the Konza Prairie Biological Station in Manhattan, Kan., wind through the prairie. Or experience its beauty with a drive along the Flint Hills Scenic Byway. For more information, call 785-587-2726 or visit [www.flinthillsdiscovery.org](http://www.flinthillsdiscovery.org).

PHOTO: MEREDITH CORPORATION/MICHAEL C. SNELL



## ALBUQUERQUE: THE BEST OF NEW MEXICAN CUISINE



**New Mexican cooking is as colorful as it is delicious. Just take a look at this plate of empanada appetizers at El Pinto Restaurant.**

If you're like me and many RVers, you love to explore the varied culinary landscape when you travel North America in your motorhome. Each region has its own distinctive dishes, ingredients and cooking methods. One of the most interesting is New Mexican, a blend of Spanish, Mexican, Mediterranean, Pueblo Native American and American cowboy cooking. New Mexican cuisine is a bit like Mexican and a little like Tex-Mex. And nowhere will you find better New Mexican food than in Albuquerque, the largest city in the state and a favorite winter destination for RVers.

The characteristic ingredient of New Mexican cuisine is the New Mexican chile, often harvested green. (Note: New Mexicans use the spelling chile, not chili, to mean the plant and the green or red sauce they make from it.) You'll find this ingredient in everything from enchiladas to burritos to cheeseburgers and pizza. You'll also find blue cornmeal, used to make tortillas, chips and much more.

One of the best places in Albuquerque to experience authentic New Mexican cuisine is at El Pinto Restaurant ([www.elpinto.com](http://www.elpinto.com)), the largest New Mexican restaurant in the state. This sprawling eatery, operated by twin brothers Jim and John Thomas, was started by the boys'

**These chile ribs at El Pinto are tender and fiery. Golden Crown Bakery makes big loaves of fragrant New Mexican chile bread. The bread sells out quickly, so consider ordering ahead.**

parents in 1962 and specializes in dishes featuring the distinctive New Mexican green chile. Under the restaurant's portico, cooks hand roast and peel chiles. When they use dried chiles, they sun dry them rather than kiln dry them for a sweeter flavor. The Thomas' are so crazy about perfecting New Mexican chile cuisine that they organically grow their own chiles and bottle their own salsa, earning them the nickname "The Salsa Twins."

You'll find your own favorites on El Pinto's massive menu. Some of mine are green chile chicken enchiladas; chili con carne (pork in red chile sauce); blue corn cheese and chile enchilada (with red sauce and an egg on top); smoky and tender New York strip; and grilled salmon seasoned with red chile and lemon and lime. For dessert, try lavante, a light, coffee mousse, and pumpkin crisp, a cross between pumpkin pie and bread pudding that's laced with Myers's Rum.

An Albuquerque icon you'll want to meet is cookbook author and cooking instructor Jane Butel ([www.janebutel.com](http://www.janebutel.com)), owner of Pecos Valley Spice Company,

which specializes in pure, freshly ground New Mexican spices. Jane conducts New Mexican cooking classes for small groups in her home. One of Jane's specialties is sopapillas, pillowy bits of fried, sweetened dough that are distinctively New Mexican. When I visited Jane's home, she showed me how to make these bites of heaven, deftly frying up the puffy confections until I begged her to stop.

Some of the most delicious New Mexican food in Albuquerque isn't found in a restaurant, but in a pharmacy. For 45 years, Duran Central Pharmacy ([www.durancentralpharmacy.com](http://www.durancentralpharmacy.com)) has been making fresh, New Mexican dishes in the back of an operating pharmacy — and at bargain prices. They hand make their tortillas and salsa. I especially love their soft, fluffy tamales with red sauce, their crispy, light chile relleno stuffed with smooth cheese, and natillas, warm, eggy, vanilla pudding with cinnamon on top.

Another Albuquerque culinary landmark you don't want to miss is Golden Crown Bakery ([www.goldencrown.biz](http://www.goldencrown.biz)). All the recipes in this New Mexican bakery were brought from Spain, and baker and owner Pratt Morales and his son Christopher churn out New Mexican favorites like biscochitos, crispy, crumbly cookies in anise, chocolate, cappuccino and original flavor that you can only get in New Mexico, and light-as-air fruit and sweet potato empanadas. They also make New Mexican pizza using roasted blue corn milled by Native Americans at a nearby pueblo for the dough. Their signature product — and one not to miss — is their New Mexican Green Chile Bread. These big (2-pound), fragrant loaves of hearty bread are studded with bits of green chile and baked in ancient ovens that give the bread a lovely crispy crust.

Next time you're in New Mexico, try these and other places that specialize in New Mexican cuisine. And if you find some I haven't shared with you, drop me a line at [hasselbring@bctonline.com](mailto:hasselbring@bctonline.com) with the subject line "Road Foodie." Until next month, happy eating on the road.





## PLEASURE-WAY'S PLUS

After hearing from customers who sought the advantages of a Class B motorhome but wanted a little extra room, Canadian builder **Pleasure-Way Industries** developed the Pursuit, the company's first B-plus motorhome. Built on a Ford E-350 dual rear-wheel cutaway chassis, the 22-foot Pursuit is constructed with a full steel cage and a one-piece seamless fiberglass roof. Fluted molding and custom solid maple cabinet doors set off the interior and are complemented by the Ultraleather rear lounge that converts into a queen bed. A glass corner shower, porcelain toilet, stainless steel sink and Corian vanity with matching backsplash complete the bathroom. In the galley find a two-burner stove with glass cover, a 6-cubic-foot refrigerator and microwave/convection oven.

Other standards include a 32-inch LED TV, Blu-ray player with Wi-Fi, Clarion in-dash navigation with Bluetooth, iPod and USB connections and a backup camera. Pleasure-Way says the Pursuit is fuel efficient (estimated 13-15 MPG highway) and easy to drive. Fully loaded, the Pursuit retails for \$103,870.

**Pleasure-Way Industries, 800-364-0189, [www.pleasureway.com](http://www.pleasureway.com)**

## MASTER YOUR FUSES

Access to a dinghy vehicle brings added convenience to your motorhome travels, but in some cases a fuse must be pulled to keep the battery from discharging while on the road.

**Roadmaster** aims to make pulling a dinghy easier with FuseMaster, an electrical harness with leads at one end and a rocker switch at the other that eliminates the need to remove a fuse for

towing and then reinsert it for driving. To install, the fuse is pulled and the leads are inserted into the fuse socket; the fuse is inserted into the holder on the harness, re-establishing the electrical connection. After installation, simply flip the switch to "drive" or "tow."

Four FuseMasters are available to fit most vehicles that require fuse removal when towing. A fuse puller and power drill are needed for installation. The heavy-duty FuseMaster is \$225, while others range in price from \$75 to \$100.

**Roadmaster, 800-669-9690, [www.roadmasterinc.com](http://www.roadmasterinc.com)**



## LET THE LIGHT THROUGH

Dim, cloudy or discolored headlight lenses can impair a driver's nighttime visibility and make it difficult for others to see the coach on the road. Remove the effects of sunlight, ozone and road pollution by reconditioning those plastic lenses in 30 minutes with the new **Philips Headlight Restoration Kit**. The company claims the kit will restore lenses to like-new condition with minimal effort and doesn't require power tools. It also adds a protective UV coating to help prevent clouding for up to two years. The kit includes pretreatment, cleaner/polish, shine restorer/preserver, paper towels, gloves and grit sandpaper (course, medium and fine) for severe yellowing.

The Headlight Restoration Kit retails for \$19.99-\$24.99 and is available at Pep Boys auto parts stores and on [www.Amazon.com](http://www.Amazon.com).

**Philips, 800-257-6054, [www.philips.com/automotive](http://www.philips.com/automotive)**



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New for 2013, the Good Sam RV Travel Guide and Campground Directory combines two of the RV industry's most popular and respected brands — the Trailer Life Directory and Woodall's Campground Directory — into one comprehensive volume.

The publishers of the Good Sam RV Travel Guide took the insight and savvy that have gone into both popular directories and created an indispensable guide chock-full of lifestyle features, regional trip guides and essential travel facts. Get vital tech tips to use in your travels and learn about must-see points of interest in all of North America's states and provinces. The Good Sam RV Travel Guide's meal and fitness planner helps you take care of your body as well as your RV, while its RoadReady section features helpful products to add fun and convenience to your journeys.

Of course, the directory's RV park listings include details on 16,000 North American RV parks and campgrounds, including nearly 2,000 Good Sam Park discount locations.

Good Sam is also using the *Trailer Life* campground rating system, giving RVers one clear standard by which to judge RV parks. The three-number rating that accompanies each campground listing in the 2013 Good Sam RV Travel Guide and Campground Directory gives readers a snapshot of the campground's amenities, cleanliness and environment.

As an exclusive benefit, Good Sam Club members can buy the directory for only \$9.95 — more than half-off the non-member price of \$25.95. To reserve a copy of your directory, call 877-209-6655 or go online to [www.trailerlifedirectory.com/2013](http://www.trailerlifedirectory.com/2013).

## News Briefs

Following the successful \$100,000 Challenge Grant from the Ingram family that raised more than \$170,000 for the **RV/MH Hall of Fame**, the Ingrams have announced another challenge. According to a press release, the family will donate an additional \$50,000 in the form of another challenge grant if the Hall can raise \$150,000 through voluntary donations by April 30. The Ingram's first challenge, along with other savings, helped the Hall to reduce its bank loan from \$828,000 to \$283,000. This new fundraiser has been dubbed the "Burn the Bank Note" challenge.

In January 2012, the future of the Hall was in doubt because of its financial burdens. That's when Darryl Searer, who came aboard as the Hall's uncompensated president and CEO, decided he might be able to help. He believed the Hall was too important to the RV and manufactured housing industries and the Elkhart, Ind., area to allow it to collapse. Through a series of discussions with debt holders and fundraisers, the Hall is now on solid financial ground. Gifts may be made by mail, in person at the Hall, by phone at 800-378-8694, or at [www.rvmhhalloffame.org](http://www.rvmhhalloffame.org). All gifts are tax deductible. To make a contribution by mail, send a check or money order to: Burn the Bank Note Challenge, RV/MH Hall of Fame, 21565 Executive Parkway, Elkhart, IN 46514.

The **Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA)** will use federal money to help develop the Chinese RV market for U.S. companies after receiving an award from the Department of Commerce's International Trade Administration. The award provides \$1 in funding for every \$2 invested by RVIA in eligible expenses, up to \$300,000 over a three-year period.

## RV SHOWS

**JAN. 3-6**

**South Texas RV Supersale**  
San Antonio, Texas  
512-327-4514

**JAN. 4-6**

**Progressive Insurance  
3rd Annual New Mexico  
RV, Boat & Travel Show**  
Albuquerque, N.M.  
800-763-5958

**JAN. 9-12**

**Progressive Insurance  
23rd Annual Colorado  
RV Adventure Travel Show**  
Denver, Colo.  
763-383-4414

**JAN. 11-13**

**Knoxville RV Super Show**  
Sevierville, Tenn.  
941-780-0538

**JAN. 11-13**

**Progressive Insurance 24th  
Annual North Carolina RV &  
Camping Show-Greensboro**

Greensboro, N.C.  
800-441-0013

**JAN. 11-13**

**Progressive Insurance 27th  
Annual Washington Camping  
RV Expo**  
Chantilly, Va.  
800-441-0013

**JAN. 17-20**

**Progressive Insurance 2013  
Mid-America RV Show**  
Kansas City, Mo.  
763-383-4414

**JAN. 17-20**

**Toronto RV Show**  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada  
888-331-8885

**JAN. 24-27**

**44th Annual Calgary  
RV Exposition & Sale**  
Calgary, Alberta, Canada  
780-455-8562

**JAN. 25-27**

**Atlanta Camping & RV Show**  
Atlanta, Ga.  
770-447-3334



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## escapes | CROSSROADS

### TOUR WEST VIRGINIA'S HISTORIC HOMES

Once home to the leaders of the community, the Julia-Ann Square Historic District in Parkersburg, W.Va., takes visitors back to the late 19th century through its 126 stately examples of Victorian architecture. As the largest and oldest historic district in the state, the Julia-Ann Square district encompasses the homes on Ann and Juliana streets, from Riverview Cemetery to 9th Street. It is surrounded by West Virginia's third largest city, at the confluence of the Little Kanawha and Ohio rivers.

Development began as the turmoil of the Civil War subsided and West Virginia's oil and gas industry emerged. With the arrival of railroad transportation, the town's population grew and its influential residents built the best houses of the time, displaying the latest styles and using the finest materials. Noted architects William Howe Patton and R.H. Adair were among those who brought to life the district's Queen Anne, Second Empire and Colonial Revival elements. Detailed chimneys and a four-story tower with iron cresting mark the Second Empire style of 904 Juliana St., the home Col. William Chancellor completed in 1877 and one of the most impressive in the district.

Most of the homes were built between 1875 and 1915, and the district was placed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. The Julia-Ann Square Historic Community Association manages the district and organizes guided walking tours throughout the year. Maps for self-guided tours are available from the Greater Parkersburg Convention and Visitors Bureau.

For more information, call 304-422-9861 or visit [www.juliannsquare.org](http://www.juliannsquare.org).



PHOTO: WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



### WHERE THE LIFE OF HELEN KELLER BEGAN

**Born on June 27, 1880, in Tuscumbia, Ala.,** Helen Keller spent the majority of her 87 years working to create awareness and funding

for causes that support the blind and deaf. In 1946, the American Foundation of Overseas Blind appointed Keller counselor of international relations. Keller subsequently traveled to 35 countries throughout her lifetime, speaking as an educator and humanitarian. A strong social activist, Keller also supported women's suffrage and pacifism throughout the early 20th century.

Today, the Helen Keller Birthplace, in Tuscumbia features the original 1820s structures in which the Keller family lived, including the cottage (primarily used as an office for the cotton plantation and as a schoolhouse for Keller), and the main house, called Ivy Green, where Keller grew up. In 1954, Ivy Green was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Surviving the Civil War, Ivy Green and the cottage contain roughly 85 percent of the original furniture, structure and décor, including the original flooring. Visitors can take a guided tour through Ivy Green, see the butterfly, rose or herb gardens, and examine the famous water pump that served as a turning point in Keller's communication breakthrough.

For more information, call 256-383-4066 or visit [www.helenkellerbirthplace.org](http://www.helenkellerbirthplace.org).

— Amanda Lepinski

# CHIMNEY ROCK BECOMES 103RD NATIONAL MONUMENT

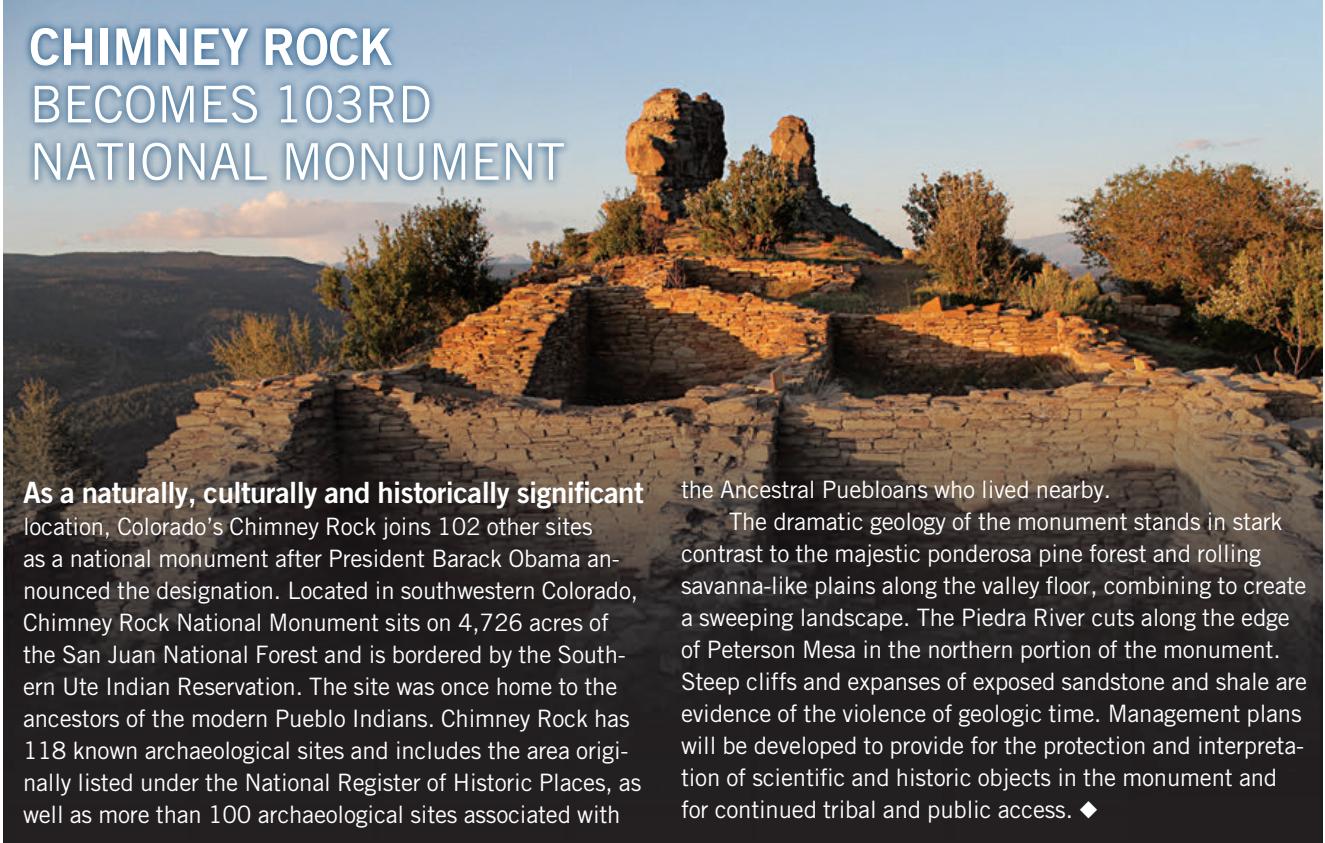


PHOTO: MARK ROPER/U.S. FOREST SERVICE

**As a naturally, culturally and historically significant** location, Colorado's Chimney Rock joins 102 other sites as a national monument after President Barack Obama announced the designation. Located in southwestern Colorado, Chimney Rock National Monument sits on 4,726 acres of the San Juan National Forest and is bordered by the Southern Ute Indian Reservation. The site was once home to the ancestors of the modern Pueblo Indians. Chimney Rock has 118 known archaeological sites and includes the area originally listed under the National Register of Historic Places, as well as more than 100 archaeological sites associated with

the Ancestral Puebloans who lived nearby.

The dramatic geology of the monument stands in stark contrast to the majestic ponderosa pine forest and rolling savanna-like plains along the valley floor, combining to create a sweeping landscape. The Piedra River cuts along the edge of Peterson Mesa in the northern portion of the monument. Steep cliffs and expanses of exposed sandstone and shale are evidence of the violence of geologic time. Management plans will be developed to provide for the protection and interpretation of scientific and historic objects in the monument and for continued tribal and public access. ♦

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- Motorola 2-way Radios



<sup>1</sup> Cardmembers will earn five (5) points for every one dollar (\$1.00) of Net Purchases spent on Good Sam Club related products and services made on their Account rounded to the nearest dollar. "Good Sam Club eligible purchases," are defined as products and services purchased from Good Sam Enterprises, LLC and its affiliates and partners, including but not limited to the following: Coast to Coast, Camping World, Good Sam, Ehler Publishing Group, TL Enterprises, and GMAC. Cardmembers will earn three (3) points for every one dollar (\$1.00) of Net Purchases made at any retail establishments that classify their merchant location to Visa as Campgrounds and Trailer Parks within the U.S. and Canada. For all other purchases made anywhere else, Cardmembers will earn one (1) point for every one dollar (\$1.00) of Net Purchases made on their Account rounded to the nearest dollar.

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<sup>3</sup> Offer subject to credit approval. Benefits will vary depending upon the card for which you are approved. Not everyone will qualify for the Visa Signature card. If at the time of your application you do not meet the credit or income criteria for the offer, we may not be able to open an account for you or you may receive a Platinum Card with fewer benefits. See Terms and Conditions accompanying the application or visit [www.goodsamcard.com/GS46](http://www.goodsamcard.com/GS46) for information about the account terms and benefits that will apply if you are not approved for a Visa Signature card. This offer is available to new Cardmembers only. For information about the rates, fees, other costs, and the reward program rules (including point accrual rate, bonus point awards, etc.) and benefits associated with the use of the credit card program please visit [www.GoodSamCard.com/GS46](http://www.GoodSamCard.com/GS46) for complete Terms and Conditions.

# JEWEL OF THE SIERRAS

## LAKE TAHOE IS AMERICA'S ALL-YEAR PLAYGROUND

**T**he sky was so blue it almost hurt my eyes as it framed snowcapped peaks across the mirror surface of Lake Tahoe, located along the border between California and Nevada. I brushed a little powder off the step of our RV and shuffled through the squeaky snow to disconnect our electrical cords and start the diesel, nice and warm from being plugged in all night. We were camped in a postcard setting and this was a day to play, but what to do first?

The Lake Tahoe basin, the Jewel of the Sierras, is undeniably one of the most spectacular places in the world. Superlatives cannot do it justice in any season, but in winter? What's there to do if you don't ski? We came to find out. I used to live on the South Shore, so I knew my way around, but exploring with a motorhome in the winter presents its rewards and challenges.

Our first stop was Zephyr Cove's award-winning RV park and campground, just a few miles north of South Lake Tahoe

and the fabulous casinos of Stateline, Nev., with their world-famous dining, big-name entertainment and nightlife.

The wooded setting of Zephyr Cove Park is right across the street from all the services and activities offered at this historic resort on the lake. With a dock, a private beach and direct access to 25 groomed acres of terrain, snowmobiling, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing were at our doorstep, and world-class downhill skiing on the groomed slopes of Heavenly Mountain Resort was only minutes away.

Driving into town, the bigger casinos had ample parking for RVs. Heavenly Valley Village just across Stateline is the base for the eight-passenger Heavenly Mountain Gondola that whisked us 2.4 miles up the mountain in just 12 minutes. When it seemed it couldn't get any better, we arrived at The Deck, a 14,000-square-foot mid-station where the views were breathtaking. At the very top, 9,150 feet, the new Tamarack Lodge's 40-foot panoramic windows put us right at the slopes for an après-ski snack.



PHOTOS: GARY AND MONIKA WESCOTT

The wooded setting of Zephyr Cove RV Park is across the street from the lake.

Back at lake level, the village was teeming with shoppers and skiers. Others sat around blazing fire pits while kids of all ages enjoyed the ice-skating rink and the



Visitors enjoy the winter wonderland that is Lake Tahoe.

PHOTO: TOM ZIKAS/CAMP RICHARDSON RESORT



Newmar president Matthew Miller, lifelong motor coach enthusiast.

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To read an interview with Matthew Miller about Newmar's future, go to:

[WWW.NEWMARCORP/MATTHEWBACKYOUUP-MH](http://WWW.NEWMARCORP/MATTHEWBACKYOUUP-MH)



WHEN YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

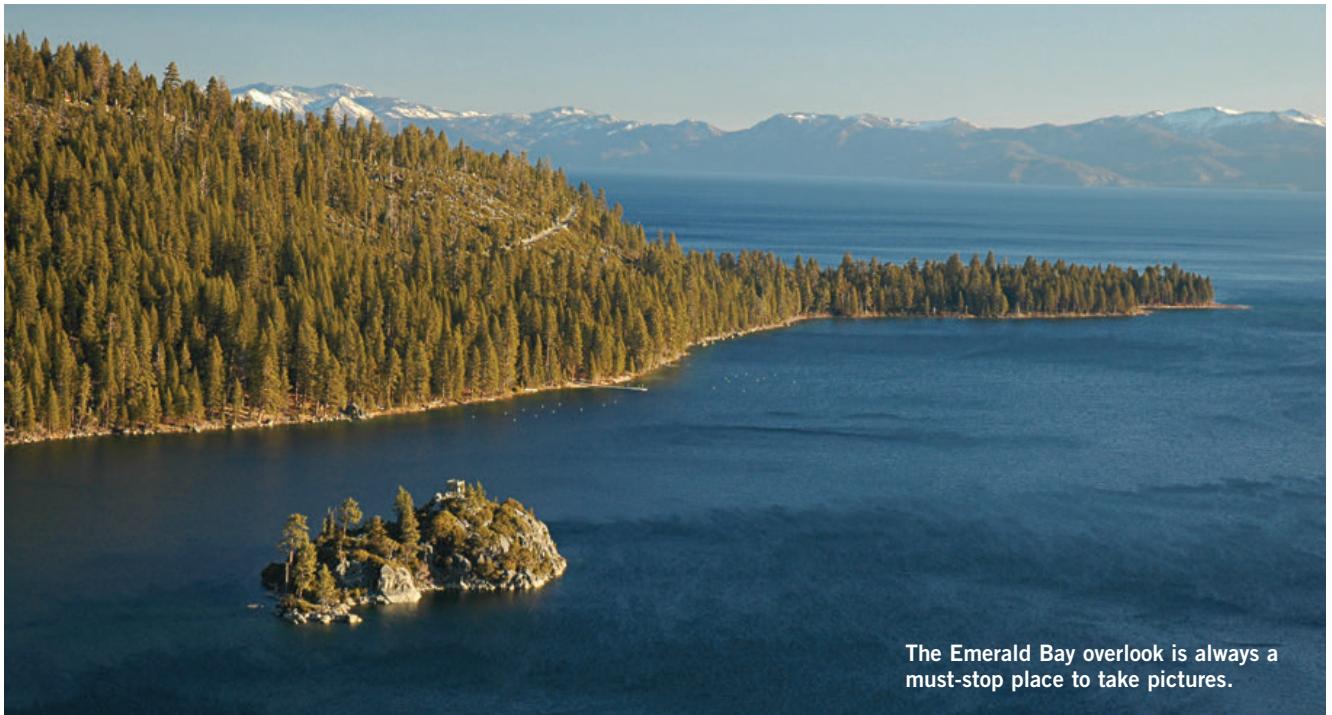


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— Matthew Miller



**THE MOST IMPORTANT PARTS  
OF A NEWMAR ARE THE ONES  
YOU CANNOT SEE.**



The Emerald Bay overlook is always a must-stop place to take pictures.

bungee-cord trampoline. Keeping an eye on the sunset, we walked across the street to Harvey's hotel and the 19 Kitchen Bar and restaurant, appropriately located on the 19th floor of the casino. Every table has a lake view, and aside from the famous cuisine off the hardwood grill, this is the place to watch the sun slip behind the mountains of Desolation Wilderness.

The huge Heavenly Valley ski area is one of my favorites, but after a day on the slopes we needed to travel. The roads around the lake are kept clear unless there is big storm. That said, come prepared to deal with Mother Nature. These are the Sierra Nevada, and as one old ski instruc-

tor told me, there are two types of people who predict weather: damn tourists and damn fools.

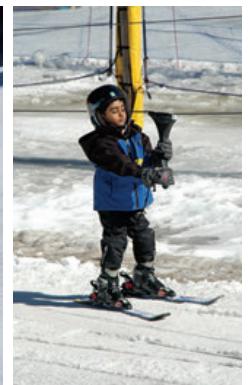
Heading around the lake, we stopped briefly at Camp Richardson just out of town on Highway 89 toward Emerald Bay. This is also a great place to cross-country ski or snowshoe along the lake, with rentals available. Soon we came to the parking area overlooking Emerald Bay, always a must-stop place to take pictures. A cup of coffee gave us time to soak in the view.

It was a little early to look for a nest, but we couldn't pass up Sugar Pine Campground. It is open in the winter, and a few spots were cleared. The bathroom was

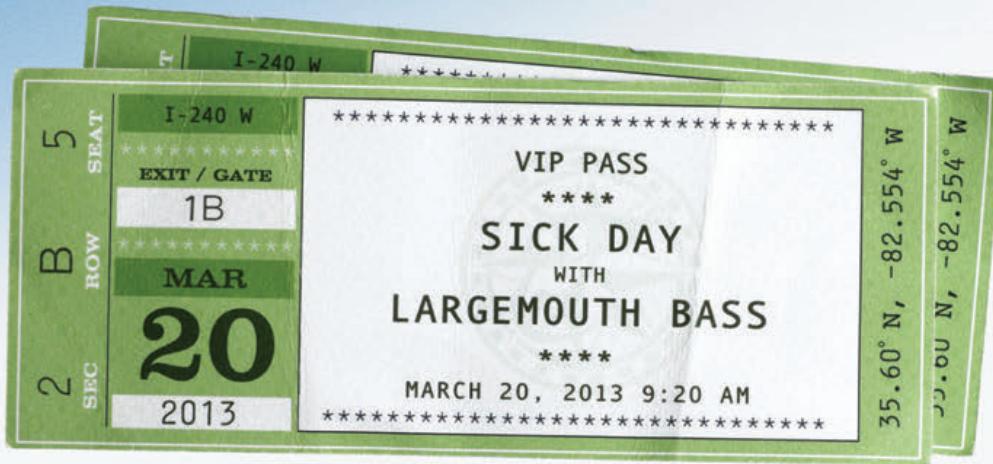
open and there was water but no hookups. We had the whole park to ourselves. It's the advantage of being self-contained.

Continuing around the 72-mile shoreline drive, we stopped at the Home-wood Ski Area. We have seen motorhomes parked here, but much depends on the weather and the snow plows. In any case, right next door is the Tahoe Maritime Museum with some fascinating history even if you're not a boat buff.

A little farther along we came to the turnoff for the Norwegian-built Granlibakken Resort and Ski Area. This is a great place for beginners and kids to hone their skills on an intimate ski hill. They also have



Left: Some call it the beach. We call it relaxation. Above: The Granlibakken Resort and Ski Area is a great place for beginners and kids to hone their skills or enjoy the machine-groomed saucer slope.



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**As the Hopper IV skimmed across the glassy surface of the lake, our fishing guide knew exactly where he was going.**

a machine-groomed saucer and snow play area perfect for families and children. Ten bucks gets you a saucer and a full day of fun. Cross-country skiing and snowshoeing starts right from the lodge. While there is no real RV parking, they do have a couple of sites where guests can park large rigs and plug in. The fabulous morning breakfast buffet is worth a stop. There is a shuttle bus to Homewood and Squaw Valley.

Arriving at the entrance to Tahoe City, there is a large parking area just before Fanny Bridge. It serves the new transit center, and while overnight camping is not officially condoned, it is also not actively prohibited. The nice thing about overnigh-ting here is that you can walk to town for dinner and visit the Gatekeeper's Museum.

It was starting to snow lightly, so we hurried on to Alpine Meadows ski area, now officially part of the larger Squaw Valley Village and Ski Area with shuttle buses running back and forth all day.

We loved the Alpine Meadows atmo-sphere. Great skiing but still with a family-style personal feel. Just down the road, Squaw Valley and Squaw Valley Village is big, though at this writing, they no longer allow overnight RV parking. Of course, it never hurts to ask.

Out of curiosity, on our way into Squaw Valley we turned off to see the Resort at Squaw Creek. This five star location tucked into the mountainside next to a beautiful meadow has everything

the larger resorts have and more, all in one gorgeous setting. There are great restau-rants and cafés, ice skating, cross-country skiing and walking trails, a heated swim-ming pool and a spa, dog sledding, snow shoeing and even fly-fishing.

We parked at the Resort at Squaw Creek and skied all day at Squaw Valley, coming back in time for a late tasty lunch at Sandy's Pub before returning to Alpine Meadows for the night. Two or three other



**Some of the best angling for Mackinaw, rainbow and brown trout, and Kokanee salmon is in the winter.**

motorhomes were already parked there.

Taking the free shuttle over to Squaw Valley Village in the morning, we boarded the scenic Aerial Tram for a spectacular and leisurely ride 2,000 vertical feet to the High Camp, elevation 8,200 feet. The Aerial Tram is one of Squaw Valley's most popular year-round attractions and is open to all guests, skiers, snowboarders and walkers. At the top, there is a heated pool, a Jacuzzi, an ice-skating rink and an interesting museum covering the 1960 Winter Olympics that took place at Squaw Valley. Admission is free with your Aerial Tram ride. There is also a cafe and a res-taurant overlooking Lake Tahoe.

Not that we were tired of skiing, (there are 11 ski areas around the lake), but there are many other adventures waiting for the winter visitor. Continuing around the lake brought us back to South Shore where we found comfortable camp-ing at the Tahoe Valley Campground with hookups and a dump station. (Tip: there is a great pizza restaurant just across High-way 50 from the entrance.) No need to drive. South Lake Tahoe has an excellent transit system.

For a different view of this jewel of the Sierras, we booked an evening cruise on the MS Dixie stern-wheel paddleboat.

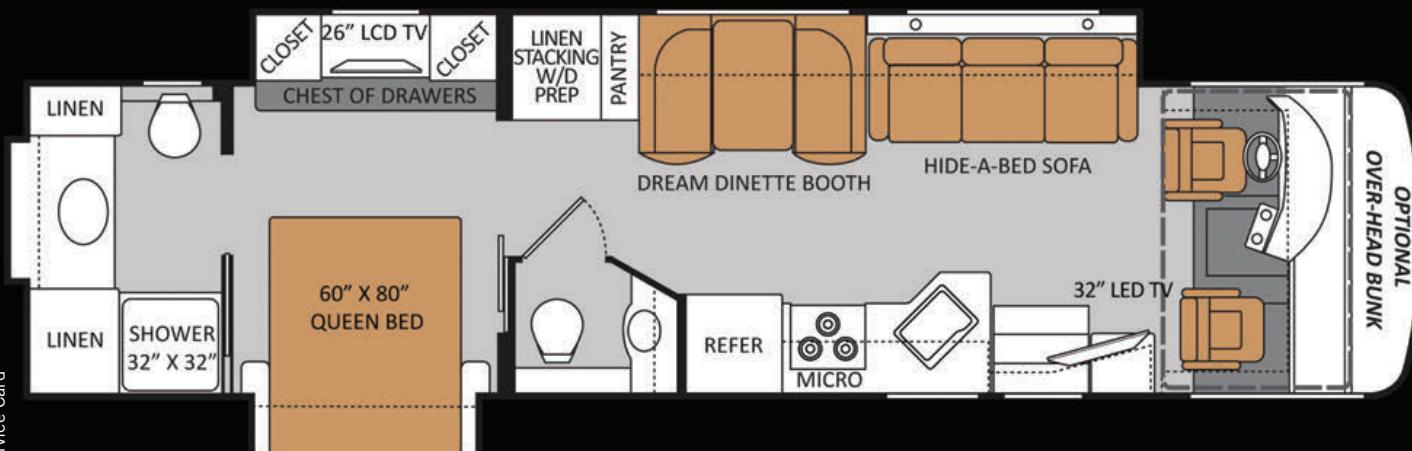
**Just across Stateline is Heavenly Valley Village, the base for the eight-passenger mountain gondola.**



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An evening cruise on the MS Dixie stern-wheel paddleboat is a relaxing way to experience Lake Tahoe.

There was live music, dancing, a sit-down dinner and dramatic views of the lake and Emerald Bay.

The next morning found us back on the dock, fishing tackle in hand. Some of the best angling for Mackinaw (lake trout), rainbow, brown trout and Kokanee salmon is in the winter. As the Hopper IV from the Tahoe Sport Fishing fleet skimmed across the glassy surface of the lake, our guide and captain knew exactly where he was going. Using modern fish finder equipment, we were soon reaching our limit and threw a few small ones back. The thrill of being out on the second deepest lake in the United States (1,645 feet), while fighting a big Mackinaw, all surrounded by awesome snowcapped mountains; can

we use the word spectacular again?

We did find one other exciting way to experience the magnificence of Lake Tahoe. Climbing into one of the Robinson R44 Ravens operated by Reno Tahoe Helicopters at the Lake Tahoe Airport, owner Claudio Bellotto took us on a thrilling tour over Emerald Bay, Fallen Leaf Lake, Desolation Wilderness and the South Shore for a real birds-eye perspective. When you go, be sure and ask to have the doors taken off, but with a maximum cruise speed of 135 MPH, keep your hands and arms inside!

We hadn't seen or done everything, but we had discovered many of the secrets to winter RVing around Lake Tahoe. What was missing were the summer crowds



Reno Tahoe Helicopters offer thrilling tours over Emerald Bay, Fallen Leaf Lake, Desolation Wilderness and the South Shore.

and traffic. Turns out, winter may be the best time to visit the Jewel of the Sierras, America's All-Year Playground. ♦



Gary and Monika Wescott are frequent contributors to *MotorHome*. They travel the country — and world — in their custom Tortuga Expedition camper, and document their adventures at [TurtleExpedition.com](http://TurtleExpedition.com).

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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# LET'S MAKE A DEAL

## RV FINANCING OPTIONS AT A GLANCE *by* CHUCK CAMPBELL

**U**nless you've been living off the grid somewhere with no news coming in, or just don't keep up with current events, you would know that interest rates on new and used RV loans, as well as opportunities to refinance such vehicles, are at an all-time low. As a result of this current financial trend, there will probably never be a better time than right now to buy that motorhome you've always wanted.

### LOAN CRITERIA

Many banks, credit unions and brokers make RV loans as part and parcel of their overall lending programs. Some institutions even accept applications online. Currently, most lenders charge the same interest rate for writing a loan on a new vehicle, as they do on a used or refinanced unit. All that anyone usually needs to successfully qualify for such a loan is:

- ▶ A good credit rating as certified by one of three credit reporting agencies (Equifax, Experian or TransUnion)
- ▶ Record of regularly meeting one's financial obligations (timely payment of one's bills)
- ▶ Proof of income (an applicant's debt-to-income ratio is scrutinized here; this is the most common reason that applicants are turned down)
- ▶ A sufficient down payment (10 to 20 percent)

Buying a new vehicle is always exciting, with the promise of many enjoyable recreational experiences in the future. Additionally, you have the benefit of being the first owner, with all the advantages that go with it. But when purchasing new, buyers should also be aware of the elephant figuratively sitting in the sales office with them. It is the specter of depreciation.

As the majority of people know, new cars and RVs lose a portion of their value the minute they are driven off a sales lot. That's why it is wise for buyers to make a reasonably sufficient down payment to prevent them from becoming immediately upside down on their loan (owing more on the unit than its wholesale value). This also ensures that they have a bit of equity in the unit should they either want to refinance in the near future, trade it in on another, or sell it outright. Remember, banks usually will only loan what a used or refinanced vehicle is worth wholesale.

New RVs also tend to depreciate quickly because of their traditionally higher markups, which means it can sometimes take years to catch up to where the loan balance equals the wholesale value of a unit. In cases like this, buyers should seriously consider taking out extra insurance to fully protect their investment in cases of total loss. Examples of such policies may include Guaranteed Asset Protection (GAP), or

optional Full Replacement Coverage as offered by Good Sam (GS) insurance.

### REFINANCING

Believe it or not, the most lucrative market for a majority of lenders right now is in the refinance business. With the banking industry's eagerness to write new loans on existing contracts, RV owners who take advantage of these opportunities can often realize significant reductions in their monthly payments.

If refinance applicants find themselves upside down on their existing loans, however, they must usually pay the difference up front in cash between what they owe on their units, and what the wholesale book allows.

Wholesale values of RVs can be looked up online for free at [www.nadaguides.com](http://www.nadaguides.com) (banks, dealers and other commercial subscribers use NADA Connect). This is the resource most lenders consider when writing loans on used vehicles, and likewise the refinancing of existing RV loans.

Interest rates on loans vary from person to person, depending on an applicant's FICO (Fair Isaac Corp.) credit rating (high 700s to low 800s preferred). FICO information provides a brief, personal assessment of the risk that banks and other institutions use to help make lending decisions.

### FULL-TIMER DILEMMA

Loans to those who consider their motorhomes as their full-time residences have always been considered iffy at best. With the RV considered the primary and often only collateral on the contract used to finance it, and the fact that this collateral moves at the whim of its owners, loans to full-timers have long been viewed as a higher risk than ones made to people with a permanent residence.

The way full-timers have sometimes circumvented residency issues in the past has been to fudge facts, or use a friend



or family member's address as their supposed official place of residence when applying for a loan. Although the current banking atmosphere appears to be optimistic for most loan applicants, full-time RVers who live exclusively in their vehicles have recently had even more qualifying paperwork added to their already arduous task of securing loans.

Many full-timers have also chosen to become a Montana LLC (limited liability corporation) for a variety of tax reasons. This move has limited their already narrow loan prospects even further.

To cite page, chapter and verse why current industry lending practices for RVs have been revised by the federal government would soon put most readers to sleep. The short version is that federal guidelines regulating lender disclosures changed drastically following the sub-prime mortgage debacle. This resulted in the subsequent passage of the SAFE Mortgage Licensing Act of 2008, and the Dodd-Frank Wall Street Reform and Consumer Protection Act of 2010 that created a sea change in the lending game.

Prior to this legislation, RVs and luxury powerboats were excluded from many truth-in-lending elements attached to housing industry loans. Because of new laws now governing transparency in lending, banks and other lenders are being held to higher disclosure standards, including those related to RV loans and refinance deals.

When it comes to applications from full-timers without a permanent address and the even more voluminous and annoying paperwork now associated with such loans, most lenders have lately decided that writing contracts to such people "is just more hassle than its worth."

### WHO LENDS TO FULL-TIMERS?

Though the attitude of some lenders taken against full-timers seems to paint a bleak picture, there are at least three institutions we've found that currently finance or refinance RVs for full-timers. These include the Good Sam Finance Center, Alliant Credit Union and Essex Credit.

Of all banks and credit unions researched for this article, it was discovered that the Good Sam Finance Center offers some of the more competitive advantages to most applicants. Though

there are some qualifications that not all candidates may meet, the Good Sam Finance Center presents the least amount of hurdles, makes the most allowances and offers some of the lowest interest rates in the industry (rate may vary weekly).

Some lenders to full-timers stipulate that automatic loan payments be put in place. For example, Alliant Credit Union requires an escrow account be set up with them, containing the equivalent of one year's insurance as collateral. After 12 months of successful loan payments, the money is returned to the customer.

### GOOD SAM FINANCE CENTER

Good Sam's Finance Center writes RV loans to traditional applicants as well as full-timers, while still complying with new federal lending regulations. GS also routinely makes the following allowances on conventional loans, as well as refinancing.

- ▶ GS charges the same interest rates for refinancing as it does for new or used vehicles.
- ▶ GS will make loans to full-timers, though there is additional paperwork involved.
- ▶ GS will refinance a vehicle, even though the owner is upside down on the existing loan. Certain criteria apply here, and include having a FICO score higher than 800.
- ▶ GS covers loans as low as \$50,000, while some other institutions begin at \$100,000.
- ▶ GS tries to refinance units up to 10 model years in age; other lenders usually stop at eight years.
- ▶ Borrowers must have a debt-to-income (DTI) ratio of 45 percent to qualify for a loan. GS is trying to increase its lending criteria to a DTI ratio of 49 percent.

### MONTANA LIMITED LIABILITY CORPORATIONS

Most RVers and full-timers can usually qualify with one or more of the lenders mentioned in this article, and many others. However, one loosely knit group of individuals that are registered in the state of Montana as LLCs for reasons of a tax shelter have essentially made themselves ineligible with most lending institutions.

Lenders such as Essex Credit and Alliant Credit Union, which focus on the



Escapees Club, will grant loans to full-time RVers, but decline to consider applications from Montana LLCs. According to Alliant representative Rich Holke, "Here at Alliant, we view LLC applicants as 'business entities.' For the purposes of RV loans, we only make them to individuals."

One institution we found that does lend to Montana LLCs is Sun Trust Bank of Fairfax, Va. In discussing this issue with Don Parkhurst, one of the bank's officers, we were advised that his organization does write loans for Montana LLCs, though it does not accept applications from full-timers. He also cautioned that there are legislative moves afoot in several states at this time to curtail or nullify rights currently held by Montana LLC members.

In the present lending climate, there are RV loan opportunities available for most people with good credit scores, and the desire and ability to take on the debt. Even prospects for full-timers appear to be readily available.

Interest rates will not stay this low forever, so there is no better time than now to start dealing. ♦



Chuck Campbell served 31 years as a sworn member of a state law enforcement agency before retiring. He is a frequent contributor to *MotorHome* and enjoys traveling in his Class C.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**ALLIANT CREDIT UNION**  
800-328-1935, [alliantcreditunion.org](http://alliantcreditunion.org)

**ESSEX CREDIT**  
866-377-3948, [essexcredit.com](http://essexcredit.com)

**GOOD SAM FINANCE CENTER**  
800-444-1476, [goodsamrvloans.com](http://goodsamrvloans.com)

**SUN TRUST BANK**  
800-797-2628, [suntrust.com](http://suntrust.com)



# NORTHERN CALIFORNIA'S WILD RIVERS COAST

IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST, COASTAL REDWOODS INSPIRE ADMIRATION

*by* JEFF CRIDER

**B**efore buying **Kamp Klamath**, a secluded campground two miles off U.S. Highway 101 on Northern California's Wild Rivers Coast, Aaron Funk lived a life of adventure in Mexico.

After studying geology and archaeology at Oregon State University, Funk spent several years in Baja California, where he

did his own research and excavation work, sometimes venturing for days at a time deep into the mountains on mule back.

He subsequently bought a 22-room hotel in downtown Mulege and honed his skills as a tour guide by taking bus loads of American tourists into the mountains, where they could venture into caves

along Baja's only all-year stream and see ancient Cochimi pictographs.

Funk enjoyed the tour guide lifestyle so much he later bought a 55-room resort near Ensenada and provided similar types of pictograph tours until the security situation in Mexico deteriorated to the point where he felt compelled to return to the



**Left:** Old-growth redwoods dominate the landscape of Stout Grove within Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park. **Above:** Visitors take off on a jet boat tour on the Klamath River. **Right:** A walking trail weaves through Fern Canyon, a hidden gorge in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park and a filming site for “The Lost World: Jurassic Park.”

United States.

Funk isn't doing archaeological work anymore. But if you happen to visit with him at Kamp Klamath, as we did, you'll hear him talk about everything from the history of the redwoods to the latest Bigfoot sightings with the intensity and enthusiasm of a young boy reading his first book on dinosaurs.

“I love to do research. I like to learn and to discover things that other people have not discovered and to share them,” Funk explained, adding, “If it's important enough for me to pursue it, then it's a shame to waste it on just me.”

Visitors to Kamp Klamath often make prior arrangements to book one of Funk's Fun Bus tours, which take them to the most popular scenic and historical points of interest in the Klamath area.

So what exactly is there to see on a visit to Northern California's Wild Rivers Coast? For starters, some of the lushest forests in the Pacific Northwest.

While California is notorious for its growing population and perennial water shortages, you won't find either in the Golden State's sparsely

populated northwest coast, parts of which receive more than 100 inches of rainfall a year.

All that rain, combined with mild temperatures, frequent cloud cover and fog from the Pacific Ocean create ideal growing conditions for California's coast redwoods, the world's tallest trees.

In fact, the 10-mile-long Newton B. Drury Scenic Parkway takes travelers through redwood groves with the greatest biomass of any ecosystem in the world.

And while only about 5 percent of California's original redwood forests remain compared to roughly 2 million acres of ancient or old growth redwoods that covered the region before the arrival of logging industry, you'll still find enough redwood forests to visit to keep you occupied for days at a time.

California's Department of Parks and

Recreation and the National Park Service jointly manage roughly 133,000 acres of coast redwoods, or about 35 percent of the remaining redwood forests, including the famous corkscrew tree, which has four intertwined trunks that weave around each other as they shoot toward the sky.

Walking through these forests, you'll not only see thousand-year-old redwoods, but massive, chest- and shoulder-high sword ferns that harken back to the age of the dinosaurs.

It's no accident that Steven Spielberg filmed “The Lost World: Jurassic Park” here in a place called Fern Canyon, a hidden gorge in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park whose walls are adorned with thousands of ferns that receive constant moisture from miniature waterfalls and underground springs.



**Hook a Chinook salmon while fishing in the Klamath River. The sites at Kamp Klamath RV Park have full hookups and free Wi-Fi.**

PHOTOS: JEFF CRIDER



**Left:** Moss-covered branches wind their way through neighboring vine maple trees in Prairie Creek Redwoods State Park. **Right:** In Orick, Calif., Stone Lagoon School, a historic one-room schoolhouse, is now a museum.

These forests are a nature photographer's paradise with massive redwoods alternating with California big leaf maples, both of which rise above five different varieties of ferns. When it's cloudy, the forests take on a mysterious aura, with the mosses seeming to glow bright green and tan against the dark — and often wet — trunks of the trees. But when sun peeks through, its rays light up the forest, further intensifying the contrasts between light and dark.

You can even get a feel for the height of the redwoods by visiting Trees of Mystery in Klamath, which operates a 1,570-foot-long tram that climbs through a forest of redwoods to a viewpoint overlooking the forest.

Trees of Mystery also has a free museum, which boasts one of the world's largest private collections of Native American artifacts. The End of the Trail Museum not only features baskets, pottery, arrowheads and other implements of the local Yurok, Karok and Tolowa tribes, but sizable collections of historic artifacts from Native American tribes across the United States. The museum also has several original goldtone photographs by Edward Sheriff Curtis, who spent 30 years photographing Native American tribes.

History buffs will be surprised to find that Klamath also has California's last remaining World War II early warning radar station and anti-aircraft battery, which was camouflaged to resemble a farm building.

Just north of the radar station is the Klamath River itself, a 250-mile-long river famed for its Chinook or king salmon,

steelhead trout and red tailed perch.

Professional fishing guide Steve Huber runs a guide service at Kamp Klamath from May to September — a critical service for novices unfamiliar with salmon fishing or the parts of the Klamath River that offer the best chances of success. Huber said August and September are peak periods for salmon, when the fish make their way up the Klamath River to spawn.

Wildlife enthusiasts will also enjoy Klamath River's jet boat tours, which take visitors on two-hour trips 20 to 25 miles up the river. The tours include visits to the Klamath Beach, a sandbar that separates the Klamath River from the breaking surf of the Pacific Ocean. The sandbar is a favored resting site for pelicans, seals, sea lions and sea otters. The biggest surprises, however, occur upstream when jet boat passengers catch their first glimpses of American bald eagles, osprey and giant blue herons soaring overhead.

Of course, those who take Funk's Fun Bus tours not only have a chance to enjoy the scenic and historical sites of northwest California's Wild Rivers Coast, but to see several of the locations where local residents claim to have seen, heard or smelled Bigfoot, the legendary 7- to 9-foot ape-like beast that has been reported in news accounts for decades.

In fact, when we visited several Klamath area attractions with Funk, he introduced us to Marilyn Strasser, who reported her own Bigfoot encounter to local news outlets in 2008.

Strasser said she was traveling home on Highway 101 late at night when she

had alternator trouble and pulled over to wait for friends who were a few minutes behind her in another vehicle.

Shortly before her friends arrived, Strasser said she heard a horrible screaming sound and smelled something terrible; tell tale signs that Bigfoot is nearby, according to scores of people who have reported Bigfoot encounters.

Strasser said she left the area as soon as her friends arrived.

"I heard him and smelled him," she said. "That was enough for me." ♦



Jeff Crider is a Palm Desert, Calif.-based freelance writer, photographer and camping enthusiast who previously covered the RV industry and tourism for newspapers in Southern California.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

##### KAMP KLAMATH RV PARK AND CAMPGROUND

866-552-6284,  
www.kampklamath.com

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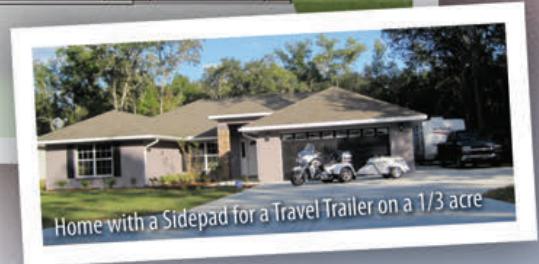


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# FEDERAL FIRSTS: DEVILS TOWER TO YELLOWSTONE

IN WYOMING, HISTORY INTERTWINES WITH SPECTACULAR SCENERY

by BOBBIE HASSELBRING



A lone male bison grazes near the Yellowstone River.

**W**ith its stunning desert landscapes, soaring Rocky Mountains and more than 75 rivers, Wyoming has long been a favorite of RVers. The Cowboy State is also home to Yellowstone, the first national park in the United States, and Devils Tower, the nation's first national monument. We decided to take the northern east-west route to explore these two icons and everything in between.

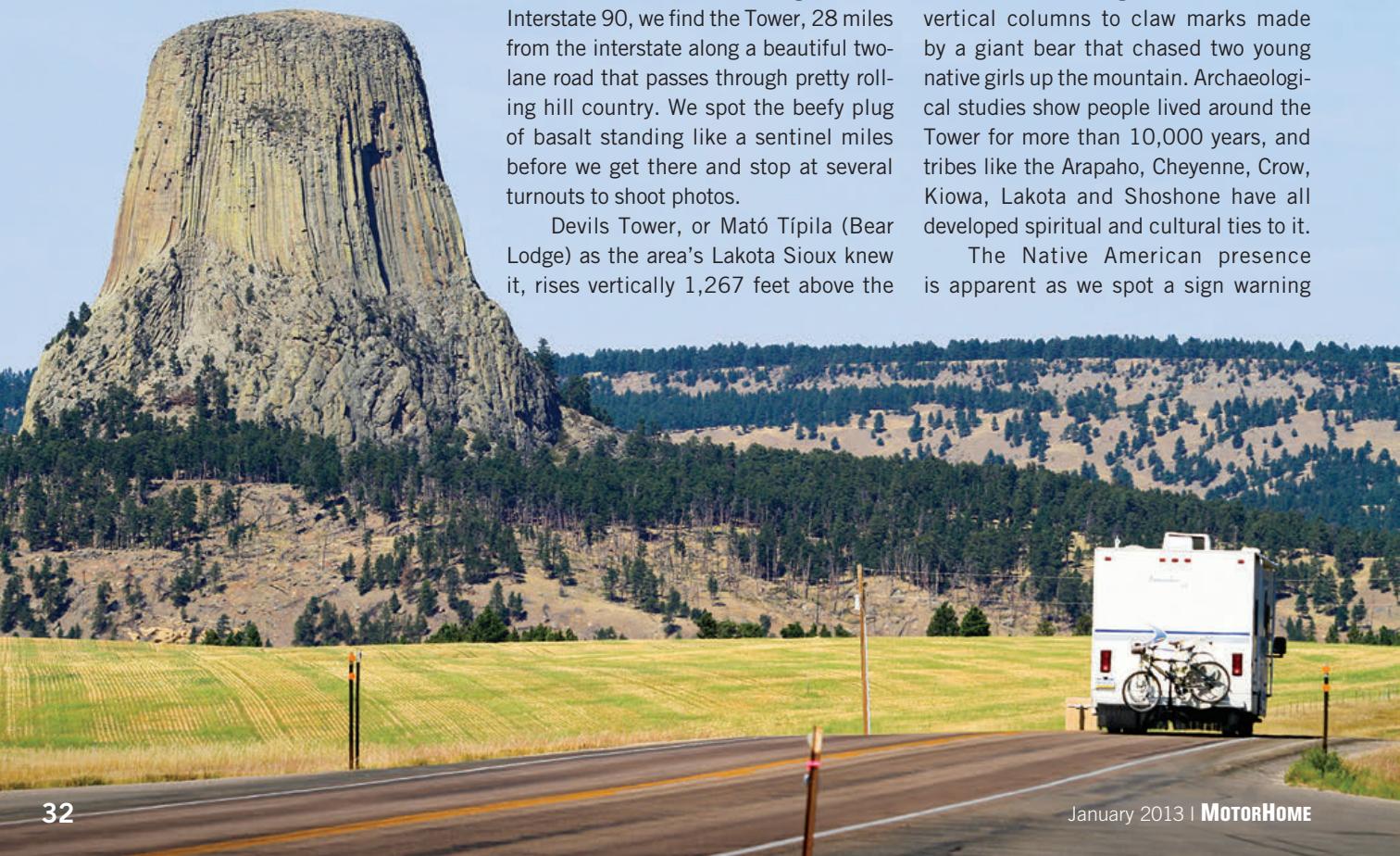
We start in Deadwood, S.D., made famous by Calamity Jane and William "Wild Bill" Hickok. Traveling west on Interstate 90, we find the Tower, 28 miles from the interstate along a beautiful two-lane road that passes through pretty rolling hill country. We spot the beefy plug of basalt standing like a sentinel miles before we get there and stop at several turnouts to shoot photos.

Devils Tower, or Mató Típila (Bear Lodge) as the area's Lakota Sioux knew it, rises vertically 1,267 feet above the

Belle Fourche River. The rock, 867 feet high, is the core of a volcano exposed after millions of years of erosion by the river and weather. Native peoples revered this monument thousands of years before the first white men "discovered" it in 1859. President Theodore Roosevelt named it a national monument in 1906 to protect it from development.

As we drive closer, the Tower's power and majesty become apparent. Before long, we're craning our necks to see the massive rock columns. Some Native American legends attribute the vertical columns to claw marks made by a giant bear that chased two young native girls up the mountain. Archaeological studies show people lived around the Tower for more than 10,000 years, and tribes like the Arapaho, Cheyenne, Crow, Kiowa, Lakota and Shoshone have all developed spiritual and cultural ties to it.

The Native American presence is apparent as we spot a sign warning



not to touch prayer cloths or bundles. Pieces of red, white, black and purple cloth wrapped into small bundles or fluttering from trees carry the prayers of Native peoples. In June, sacred ceremonies are held.

Several visitors are sitting on stone benches pointing upward and looking through binoculars. They've spotted climbers scuttling up the vertical stone face. Every year, 1 percent of the 400,000 visitors climb its dizzying heights. For the rest of us, the sport is watching the climbers, who appear to the naked eye as specks of color, but who you can actually watch navigate the chimney-like walls through binoculars or spotting scopes.

There are 7.5 miles of trails around the Tower and we hike up Red Bed Trail around the base to a sweeping valley overlook. Cattle now graze on what was once a rich buffalo feeding ground. We can imagine this landscape colored black by their big brawny bodies.

We pause beneath shady pines and, as I eat my tuna sandwich at the foot of this ancient monolith, I feel small. It's easy to understand how Native Americans feel reverence for this stunning piece of Mother Nature.

## HISTORIC BUFFALO

We spend more time at Devils Tower than we'd planned and, while we're tempted to stop for the night at the KOA near the monument's entrance, we head to the western town of Buffalo. The outskirts have been overtaken by chain-style businesses, but Buffalo's historic heart still strongly beats. Old brick buildings,

including the impressive, turn-of-the-century Occidental Hotel, once the finest in the West, line Main Street.

The Occidental Hotel is the reason we've come to Buffalo. Step through its wooden front door and into the lobby with its soaring tin ceiling, and you step back into history. This isn't some slicked up, Hollywood version of the Old West; this is the real thing with original wood plank floors, bullet holes and even notches made by cowboys' spurs as they walked down the stairway to visit the hotel's "working girls." Western luminaries like Calamity Jane, Buffalo Bill Cody, Ernest Hemingway, Teddy Roosevelt and Butch Cassidy all stayed here.

Dawn Wexo, who's been restoring this National Historic Landmark for the past 14 years, meets us. "This place was a wreck when we bought it," says this energetic woman, proudly smiling. "Junk was piled feet high everywhere, the roof was falling in, false ceilings covered original woodwork and tin ceilings."

Dawn considers the hotel a "living museum" and allows visitors to tour for free (donations accepted). We wander through the room where Owen Wister wrote "The Virginian," the space where the hotel's madam lived for 40 years, the suite where Presidents Hoover and Roosevelt stayed. One hall is crowded with artifacts — books, lamps and ladies clothing. When Dawn bought the place, "Nothing had ever been thrown out. It was like a time capsule."

In the hotel saloon with its Tiffany back bar and deer, antelope, and buffalo heads adorning the walls, we eat tasty



**Climbers inch their way up the basalt columns of Devils Tower.**

buffalo burgers and spend our time wondering about the conversations of Western legends like Calamity and Buffalo Bill.

Our accommodation for the night is Indian Campground, a seasonal park with 90 sites (most full hookup), 30- and 50-amp electrical service, pool, laundry, showers, and an off-leash area for dogs. It's all nestled under giant cottonwoods that offer a cool respite.

## ON TO MUSTANGS AND CODY

On U.S. Highway 16W, we immediately climb into the fir and pine of the Big Horn Mountains. Along the road are archaeological signs noting the geologic formations and time periods we're passing such as "Bighorn Dolomite, 400-500 million years ago." As we climb higher on the Cloud Peak Skyway, threatening clouds gather and the geologic formations get older. We are literally climbing back through time.

We crest Powder River Pass (elevation 9,666 feet) and begin our descent into meadowland filled with grazing sheep. We pass into Ten Sleep Canyon with its soaring red cliffs and pause to take photos.

**Striking colors are exposed in the vertical walls of the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone, which has been carved over the eons by the Yellowstone River.**



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**Above:** Eye-catching colors belie the scalding heat of the hot springs. Yellowstone National Park sits in the caldera of an active volcano.  
**Right:** Crowds line up early for the first blast of Old Faithful in Yellowstone.



We are at the edge of the Big Horn Mountains and we drive through a beautiful green valley where we spot homestead cabins, their rooflines sagging like the spines of swayback horses. It's slow going through the canyon, but we pick up speed and cruise into Worland, home of the Washakie Museum and Cultural Center. While the museum is smallish, it's surprisingly sophisticated with exhibits on local history and the geology and paleontology of the Big Horn Basin, including mammoth bones and a nest of oviraptor eggs.

Just outside Lovell is the Pryor Mountain Wild Mustang Visitor Center with information about the heritage and importance of the area's mustangs. In addition to books and other information, the center houses several wild mustangs collected by the Bureau of Land Management, which regulates herds on public lands. There's a route you can drive to see the horses in the wild, but our time is short so we head onto Cody, the town William "Buffalo Bill" Cody founded.

Cody boasts the world-class Buffalo Bill Historical Center, a state-of-the-art museum with jaw-dropping exhibits on Buffalo Bill, guns (more than 3,000), Western art and more. One of the most impressive and poignant is the Plains Indian exhibit with several galleries that tell the proud and often tragic story of these Native inhabitants. We explore until we're both suffering museum fatigue. The history center is so massive that admis-

sion tickets are good for two days.

Our home base in Cody is Ponderosa Campground and RV Park, a popular and centrally located park with all the amenities — grass, shade, shower and laundry house, full hookups, pull-through sites and back-ins, and a place to walk our dogs down by the river. In the evening, we head downtown to Buffalo Bill's Irma Hotel to watch gunfight re-enactments and dine on luscious prime rib in the historic turn-of-the-century dining room.

The next morning, we drive a few miles to Heart Mountain Interpretive Center, a museum and memorial dedicated to the Japanese who were forcibly relocated away from the coasts during World War II to outposts like this stark, windswept camp. As many as 120,000 people, many born here as U.S. citizens, lost their homes and businesses, and lived

behind barbed wire in cold, crowded barracks. It's a grim reminder about allowing fear to limit our freedoms.

### FIRST NATIONAL PARK

We could easily enjoy Cody for several days, but we're bound for our final federal first, Yellowstone National Park. We tool down U.S. Highway 14/16/20 West along the Shoshone River into the spectacular Shoshone Canyon, its cliffs rising up like towering ramparts. It's 50 miles to Yellowstone and this eastern approach is filled with iconic Western vistas — chiseled mountains, broad brown hills and sparkling water backed up by the Buffalo Bill Dam.

**Left:** William "Buffalo Bill" Cody memorabilia fills one of the five wings in the Buffalo Bill Historical Center. **Right:** The turn-of-the-century Occidental Hotel in Buffalo, Wyo., holds a central place in the historic downtown.





“HERE, ALONG YELLOWSTONE LAKE, WE FIND SOLITUDE AND SERENITY.”

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER**  
307-587-4771,  
[www.bbhc.org](http://www.bbhc.org)

**DEVILS TOWER NATIONAL MONUMENT**  
307-467-5283,  
[www.nps.gov/deto](http://www.nps.gov/deto)

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**PONDEROSA CAMPGROUND**  
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**WYOMING OFFICE OF TOURISM**  
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[www.wyomingtourism.org](http://www.wyomingtourism.org)

**YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK**  
307-344-7381,  
[www.nps.gov/yell](http://www.nps.gov/yell)



We motor through the Wapiti Valley, passing spire-like Chimney Rock and several tempting-looking RV parks. At elevation 7,733 feet, we get our first glimpse of massive Yellowstone Lake and the remnants of the severe fires of 1988 that swept through the park, consuming more than 793,000 acres.

Native Americans occupied the Yellowstone region for more than 11,000 years before whites explored it in the mid-1800s. It's a caldera of a supervolcano, the largest on the continent, and it encompasses forests, valleys, canyons, mountains and lakes spanning three states. It's one of the most diverse and intact temperate-zone ecosystems in the world. In 1872, President Ulysses S. Grant designated it a national park, the first in the nation and the first in the world.

If you haven't visited Yellowstone National Park, you need to know the park is huge (more than 3,400 square miles) and travel is slow (15-45 MPH). It's late in the afternoon when we arrive and, because we're visiting off-season, many of the campgrounds are closed. We head toward Grant Village, the closest campground, and snag one of the last spots under the pines. Here, along Yellowstone Lake, we find solitude and serenity.

We're up early to explore. At West Thumb Geyser Basin, we walk along a wheelchair-accessible boardwalk to otherworldly boiling mud pots, fumaroles, hot springs, and geysers — bubbling caldrons

of blue, orange and white, hot deep aquamarine pools, rivulets of steamy water edged with white crystals.

A few miles farther, we arrive at Old Faithful, the most famous and predictable geyser, just as steam and water bubble and then gush skyward more than 100 feet to the hoots and applause of hundreds of onlookers. At Biscuit Basin, another thermal feature, we stop to shoot pictures of a giant bull bison grazing beside a lazy river where a fisherman casts his fly.

There's much more to see. We head onto North Rim Drive and the Grand Canyon of Yellowstone. We hear the rumble of its magnificent Upper and Lower falls crashing through the canyon before we see it. As we stand at the Brink of the Lower Falls Overlook, rock pinnacles and striated rock in orange, black and ochre spread before us. This great canyon, carved from ancient lava rhyolite flows, encompasses 24 miles of mighty fury, spans 1,500-4,000 feet across and plunges a dizzying 1,200 feet deep in places. We greedily snap photos trying to capture its ethereal beauty and feel grateful that people like Presidents Grant and Roosevelt had the foresight to protect natural wonders like Wyoming's Devils Tower and Yellowstone National Park. ♦



Bobbie Hasselbring is an award-winning travel and food writer and editor of [www.realfoodtraveler.com](http://www.realfoodtraveler.com), which covers authentic food and travel. Bobbie owns a Class C 2003 Jayco Greyhawk SS.



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*MotorHome* readers have traveled thousands of miles, and along the way they've learned a lot — they are motorhome experts in their own right. Whether it's finding the most accommodating campgrounds, the best tow bar, the most durable awning or fuel additives that actually work, they've learned through experience.

We tapped into those vast resources and asked readers to vote for their favorites in our first-ever Readers' Choice Awards. We created 24 categories and readers chose from 104 brands. This year's winners include many of North America's most popular motorhomes, campgrounds, and RV products and services.

Thousands cast their votes and the results are in. Here are the companies you love and the products and services you use. Congratulations to all the winners!

### APPLIANCES & ACCESSORIES

#### Motorhome Awning



**Gold: Carefree of Colorado;** [www.carefreeofcolorado.com](http://www.carefreeofcolorado.com)  
 » Take shelter or simply a relaxing break under an awning from Carefree.

**Silver: Dometic;** [www.dometic.com](http://www.dometic.com)

**Bronze: Awnings by Zip Dee;** [www.awningsbyzipdee.com](http://www.awningsbyzipdee.com)

#### Motorhome Generator



**Gold: Cummins Onan;** [www.cumminsonan.com](http://www.cumminsonan.com)  
 » Get off the grid or overnight in a parking lot without losing power thanks to Cummins Onan's diesel, gasoline and LP-gas generators.

**Silver: Honda;** [www.powerequipment.honda.com](http://www.powerequipment.honda.com)

**Bronze: Yamaha;** [www.yamaha-motor.com](http://www.yamaha-motor.com)

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## MOTORHOME READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

### RV Refrigerator



**Gold: Dometic;** [www.dometic.com](http://www.dometic.com)  
» Take your favorite foods on the road and keep them fresh in one of Dometic's 18 refrigerator models.

**Silver: Norcold;** [www.thetford.com](http://www.thetford.com)

**Bronze: Maytag** (home style);  
[www.maytag.com](http://www.maytag.com)

### RV Toilet



**Gold: Thetford/Tecma;** [www.thetford.com](http://www.thetford.com)  
» You certainly don't want trouble when it comes to the toilet, and Thetford's products ensure functionality.

**Silver: Dometic/SeaLand;**  
[www.dometic.com](http://www.dometic.com)

## CLEANING & PROTECTING

### RV Cleaner



**Gold: Protect All;** [www.protectall.com](http://www.protectall.com)  
» They say cleanliness is next to godliness and Protect All's cleaning products help apply that standard to motorhomes.

**Silver: Star brite;** [www.starbrite.com](http://www.starbrite.com)

### RV Cover



**Gold: ADCO;** [www.adcoprod.com](http://www.adcoprod.com)  
» Though they're made for the outdoors, motorhomes still need protection from the elements and ADCO's covers provide it.

**Silver: CalMark Cover Co.;**  
[www.calmarkcovers.com](http://www.calmarkcovers.com)

**Bronze (tie): Covercraft;**  
[www.covercraft.com](http://www.covercraft.com)  
**CoverQuest;** [www.coverquest.com](http://www.coverquest.com)

## DINGHY TOWING

### Brake Actuator



**Gold: SMI Manufacturing;**  
[www.smibrake.com](http://www.smibrake.com)  
» Improve coach stopping power while towing your dinghy by providing consistent braking with SMI's vacuum-assisted systems.

Silver: Roadmaster; [www.roadmasterinc.com](http://www.roadmasterinc.com)

Bronze: Blue Ox; [www.blueox.com](http://www.blueox.com)

### Tow Bar



Gold: Blue Ox; [www.blueox.com](http://www.blueox.com)  
» With more than 11 tow bars to choose from, Blue Ox helps keep your dinghy vehicle in its place.

Silver: Roadmaster; [www.roadmasterinc.com](http://www.roadmasterinc.com)

Bronze: Demco; [www.demco-products.com](http://www.demco-products.com)

## ENGINE/PERFORMANCE

### Fuel Additive



Gold: Sea Foam; [www.seafoamsales.com](http://www.seafoamsales.com)  
» Put your fuel to work with Sea Foam's petroleum-based additives that help clean carburetor jets and passageways, and help clean deposits.

Silver (tie): Amsoil; [www.amsoil.com](http://www.amsoil.com)  
Lucas Oil Products; [www.lucasoil.com](http://www.lucasoil.com)  
Royal Purple; [www.royalpurple.com](http://www.royalpurple.com)

Bronze: Golden Eagle STA-BIL; [www.goldeneagle.com](http://www.goldeneagle.com)

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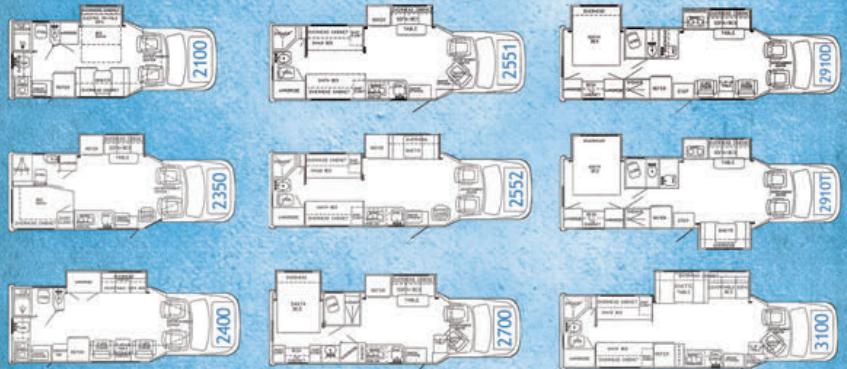
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## MOTORHOME READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

### Performance Adding



**Gold:** Banks Power;  
[www.bankspower.com](http://www.bankspower.com)

» Everyone wants improved horsepower and fuel economy and Banks products are designed to optimize drivetrain performance.

**Silver:** 5 Star Tuning;  
[www.5startuning.com](http://www.5startuning.com)

**Bronze:** Pacbrake; [www.pacbrake.com](http://www.pacbrake.com)

### RV Engine Oil



**Gold:** Shell Rotella;  
[www.shell.com/home/content/rotella](http://www.shell.com/home/content/rotella)  
» Shell Rotella's line of full synthetic and synthetic blend engine oils protect against corrosion and provide deposit and wear control.

**Silver:** Mobil 1; [www.mobiloil.com](http://www.mobiloil.com)

**Bronze:** Pennzoil; [www.pennzoil.com](http://www.pennzoil.com)

## MOTORHOMES

### Chassis



**Gold:** Freightliner;  
[www.freightlinerchassis.com](http://www.freightlinerchassis.com)  
» Flexibility is good for your body, but

not for your motorhome chassis. Freightliner's 9-inch-frame construction keeps everything in line.

**Silver:** Ford; [www.fleet.ford.com](http://www.fleet.ford.com)

**Bronze:** Spartan Chassis;  
[www.spartanchassis.com](http://www.spartanchassis.com)

### Class A Motorhome



**Gold:** Winnebago Industries;  
[www.winnebagoind.com](http://www.winnebagoind.com)

» They've been around since 1958, and a look inside the flagship Tour (page 46) will tell you why.

**Silver:** Tiffin Motorhomes;  
[www.tiffinmotorhomes.com](http://www.tiffinmotorhomes.com)

**Bronze:** Fleetwood RV;  
[www.fleetwoodrv.com](http://www.fleetwoodrv.com)

### Class B Motorhome



**Gold:** Roadtrek; [www.roadtrek.com](http://www.roadtrek.com)  
» You don't have to sacrifice comfort for convenience with any of Roadtrek's seven models.

**Silver (tie):** Leisure Travel Vans;  
[www.leisurevans.com](http://www.leisurevans.com)  
**Winnebago Industries;**  
[www.winnebagoind.com](http://www.winnebagoind.com)

**Bronze (tie):** Phoenix USA;  
[www.phoenixusarv.com](http://www.phoenixusarv.com)  
**Pleasure-Way Industries;**  
[www.pleasureway.com](http://www.pleasureway.com)

## Class C Motorhome



**Gold:** Winnebago Industries;  
[www.winnebagoind.com](http://www.winnebagoind.com)

» Winnebago's lineup of Class C motorhomes offers plenty of amenities and sizes to accommodate the RV experience without taking up too much real estate.

**Silver:** Jayco; [www.jayco.com](http://www.jayco.com)

**Bronze:** Fleetwood RV;  
[www.fleetwoodrv.com](http://www.fleetwoodrv.com)

## RETAIL OUTLET

### RV Retailer



**Gold:** Camping World;  
[www.campingworld.com](http://www.campingworld.com)

» Founded in 1966, Camping World is America's No. 1 source for RVs, camping accessories, RV maintenance and repair.

**Silver:** Local Dealer

**Bronze:** Lazydays; [www.lazydays.com](http://www.lazydays.com)

## SATELLITE TV

### Satellite Hardware



**Gold:** Winegard; [www.winegard.com](http://www.winegard.com)  
» You want to get away from it all, except

your TV, which is why Winegard offers an array of RV satellite antennas.

**Silver:** KVH Industries; [www.kvh.com](http://www.kvh.com)

**Bronze:** King Controls;  
[www.kingcontrols.com](http://www.kingcontrols.com)

### Satellite Provider



**Gold:** DirecTV; [www.directv.com](http://www.directv.com)

» DirecTV's Choice Mobile package for RVers provides access to more than 185 channels and get ABC, CBS, FOX and NBC channels with the Distant Network Service.

**Silver:** Dish Network; [www.dish.com](http://www.dish.com)

## TIRES

### RV Tires



**Gold:** Michelin; [www.michelinrvtires.com](http://www.michelinrvtires.com)  
» Michelin radial tires for motorhomes are designed to provide excellent handling, comfort and durability.

**Silver:** Goodyear; [www.goodyearrvtires.com](http://www.goodyearrvtires.com)

**Bronze:** Continental;  
[www.continental-truck.com](http://www.continental-truck.com)

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## LEISURE TRAVEL VANS

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Tire Monitoring



**Gold: TireMinder;**  
[www.minderresearch.com/tireminder](http://www.minderresearch.com/tireminder)  
 » Tires don't always behave but TireMinder's digital monitor helps you keep an extra eye on them.

**Silver: Pressure Pro;**  
[www.advantagepressurepro.com](http://www.advantagepressurepro.com)

**Bronze: Hopkins;** [www.hopkinsmfg.com](http://www.hopkinsmfg.com)

TRAVEL SERVICES

Fuel Station



**Gold: Pilot Flying J;** [www.pilotflyingj.com](http://www.pilotflyingj.com)  
 » RVers are friendly and Pilot Flying J reciprocates with its RV-friendly travel centers that offer free overnight parking.

**Silver: Love's Travel Stops;**  
[www.loves.com](http://www.loves.com)

RV Campground



**Gold: Pechanga RV Resort, Temecula, Calif.;** [www.pechanga.com](http://www.pechanga.com)  
 » Located near Temecula wine country, the resort's 168 sites offer electric (20-, 30- and 50-amp), water, cable TV and sewer hookups, and are adjacent to Pechanga Resort and Casino.

**Silver: Rincon Country West RV Resort, Tucson, Ariz.;** [www.rinconcountry.com](http://www.rinconcountry.com)

**Bronze: San Diego RV Resort, La Mesa, Calif.;** [www.sdrvresort.com](http://www.sdrvresort.com)

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## Sit-Down Restaurant



### Gold: Cracker Barrel;

[www.crackerbarrel.com](http://www.crackerbarrel.com)

» Settle in for some home-style comfort food and make a night of it — most of Cracker Barrel's 600-plus locations allow overnight RV parking.

Silver: **Applebee's**; [www.applebees.com](http://www.applebees.com)

Bronze: **Chili's**; [www.chilis.com](http://www.chilis.com)

## State to RV In



### Gold: Florida; [www.visitflorida.com](http://www.visitflorida.com)

» There's more to the Sunshine State than its coasts, making it an ideal motorhome destination.

Silver: **Oregon**; [www.traveloregon.com](http://www.traveloregon.com)

Bronze: **Texas**; [www.traveltexas.com](http://www.traveltexas.com) ♦

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# WINNEBAGO TOUR 42GD

WINNEBAGO'S FLAGSHIP COACH IS GRACED WITH FOUR SLIDEOUTS AND A LONG LIST OF HIGHLINE AMENITIES INSIDE A NEW FLOORPLAN FOR 2013

by BOB LIVINGSTON

**W**hen you delve into the inner workings of a coach the caliber of Winnebago's 2013 Tour, the question changes from "What are the features?" to "What is missing?" The answer to the latter is simply, "nothing." The iconic company's flagship motorhome, outfitted with four slides and a new floorplan that makes up the 42GD model, is loaded with all the goodies expected of a coach that tops \$375,000 on its window sticker. The addition of numerous proprietary features raises the bar in livability and convenience, and zeros-in on a new owner's comfort zone when the deal is about to be consummated.

Winnebago's 42GD is almost 43 feet long and offers a lot of square footage when the slides are pushed out. The size suggests it's a perfect candidate for two baths, catering to strong interest for such amenities in today's market. But the additional bath feature is relegated to its sister model, the 42QD. Instead, the designers took advantage of the space and created an environment that exudes extreme

comfort in each of the four major zones of the coach.

When you walk in the front door, you'll likely stroll right past the galley and dining area as your senses go wild for the TV-centric living room. Surrounded by beautiful mosaic tile and diffused lighting is a 55-inch TV that can be viewed by stretching out and sinking into the company's own Rest Easy extendable sectional sofa. Here the end section of the L-shaped couch expands for additional lounging on the Ultraleather upholstery. Across the aisle is a matching two-person couch that can be substituted with a Euro chair and cabinet/pullout-table arrangement. When you factor in the Blu-ray-equipped home theater sound system, it's hard to give up the life of a couch potato. If you like TV, you can also view programming from flat screens placed above the cab, in the bedroom and/or outside under the awning. The system is all part of the HDMI 4x4 Matrix video componentry that lets occupants watch from multiple locations at the same time.



Navigate the road from the Ultraleather heated captain's seat of the Tour's cockpit, which also has a rearview monitor system, sideview camera, and optional GPS voice navigation and Sirius satellite radio.



A view of the Tour's galley shows its country-style kitchen, curbside dinette, L-shaped extendable sectional sofa and 55-inch TV.

## SPECIFICATIONS

### CHASSIS

**MODEL:** FREIGHTLINER MAXUM  
**ENGINE:** CUMMINS ISL 8.9-L TURBODIESEL  
**SAE HP:** 450 @ 2,100 RPM  
**TORQUE:** 1,250 LB-FT @ 1,400 RPM  
**TRANSMISSION:** 6-SPEED ALLISON 3000MH  
**AXLE RATIO:** 4.63:1  
**FRONT TIRES:** MICHELIN XZA2 ENERGY 295/80R22.5 LRH  
**REAR TIRES:** MICHELIN XZA3+ 275/80R22.5 LRH  
**WHEELBASE:** 279"  
**BRAKES:** AIR WITH ABS  
**SUSPENSION, F/R:** ZF IFS/NEWAY AIR  
**FUEL CAP:** 150 GAL  
**WARRANTY:** 3 YRS/36,000 MILES

### COACH

**EXT LENGTH:** 42' 10"  
**EXT WIDTH:** 8' 5.5"  
**EXT HEIGHT:** 12' 11" WITH A/C  
**INT WIDTH:** 8' 0.5"  
**INT HEIGHT:** 7'  
**CONSTRUCTION:** STEEL/ALUMINUM FRAMEWORK WITH INTERLOCKING JOINTS, CROWNED FIBERGLASS ROOF AND FIBERGLASS SIDE WALLS  
**FRESHWATER CAP:** 85 GAL  
**BLACK-WATER CAP:** 51 GAL  
**GRAY-WATER CAP:** 116 GAL  
**WATER-HEATER CAP:** TANKLESS ON DEMAND  
**LP-GAS CAP:** 28 GAL  
**AIR CONDITIONER (3):** 13,500 BTU  
**FURNACE:** 59,000 BTU  
**REFRIGERATOR:** 20 CU-FT WHIRLPOOL  
**INVERTER/CHARGER:** 2,800 WATTS/23 AMPS  
**BATTERIES:** 2 12-VOLT CHASSIS GROUP 31, 6 AGM 12-VOLT COACH GROUP 31  
**AC GENERATOR:** 10 KW  
**MSRP:** \$364,276  
**MSRP AS TESTED:** \$375,475  
**WARRANTY:** 1 YR/15,000 MILES

### CHASSIS RATINGS

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The Tour's fully equipped kitchen offers ample counter space and all the appliances needed for meal preparation and clean-up.

The country-style kitchen starts directly behind the big sofa and extends to the driver's seat. Naturally the kitchen is fully equipped, and with the Electric Coach option (no LP-gas), the cooktop is flush mounted into the gorgeous Corian countertop, complemented by a matching backsplash and sink covers. Above the cooktop is a stainless steel microwave/convection oven and below is a drawer-style dishwasher clad in matching stainless steel. Surrounding this central service area is plenty of countertop space for spreading out during meal preparation. The sinks are built into the section immediately behind the couch and a pull-out island augments counter space.

Mosaic tile adds decorative contrast to the kitchen, which is floored with handsome tile that runs throughout the motorhome (optional in the bedroom). Opposite the galley and behind the passenger seat in the cockpit is the home-style refrigerator with French doors and water and ice dispensers, and freezer drawer below. The refrigerator also has a stainless steel exterior. Six AGM (sealed) batteries tied to a 2,800-watt inverter/charger handle the power needs of the refrigerator on the road and when hookups are not available. There's also a 10,000-watt diesel generator with auto start, should the batteries become discharged.

As you leave the living room, an



Add to the entertainment under the awning with the optional exterior TV.

aisle on the right side of the coach passes the bathroom and terminates in the rear bedroom. The bathroom is huge, allowing plenty of square footage for a large corner shower, a generously configured lavatory and a storage closet that can be fitted with an optional stackable washer/dryer. Plenty of cabinets offer stowage for lots of towels and toiletries. A door in the hallway provides access to the bathroom from the living room while a sliding door can be used to enter the bathroom from the bedroom.

Two of the four slideouts help create a suite-type atmosphere in the rear of the motorhome. The larger slide on the driver's side expands the bathroom/bedroom and moves the king bed and nightstands into a very livable position. The Ideal Rest Natural Reserve mattress is digitally adjusted for comfort via remote controls.

An opposing chest of drawers with a 32-inch TV tucked in the corner moves out

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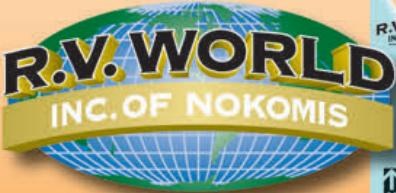


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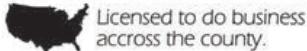
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## WINNEBAGO TOUR 42GD



A digitally adjusted Ideal Rest Natural Reserve mattress provides sleeping comfort in the bedroom and is surrounded by handsome woodwork.

with the second slide, which is employed exclusively for this purpose. It's easy to feel at home in this bedroom. Stunning woodwork complements the headboard, bedspread, pillows, shams and the nightstands. The back wall of the coach is allocated to the wardrobe, which has ample hang-up space and places to store more bulky items — or lots of shoes. Sliding doors blend nicely into the décor, making the wardrobe look more like the back wall than a closet.

Winnebago no longer uses a basement air conditioning system, giving way to three 13,500-Btu roof air units (two with heat pumps). While roof air has its advantages over a basement unit, especially in extremely hot conditions, it was noisier than expected. Triple-digit temperatures kept all three running at a fast pace (the coach is equipped with an energy management system) and the inside comfortable. Proven insulation design using block foam with layers of fiberglass within an aluminum support structure, along with dual-pane windows and block-out shades, worked efficiently in concert with the cooling system. Heating is handled by the super-quiet Aqua-Hot hydronic, triple-zone system, with continuous hot water.

Outside, the coach is fitted with a long list of amenities commonly found in motorhomes of this stature. Side-swinging compartment doors lead to a number of storage bays capable of swallowing up the

RV gear necessary to run this coach and make campsites relaxing. The utility center is well equipped and includes a reel for the water hose. A reeled 50-amp cable handles power and the generator slides out of the front, controlled by a switch in a nearby compartment housing the electrical components. And, of course, there's the aforementioned TV poised for outside viewing, mounted high enough to entertain a patio full of folks without stretching their necks.

The Tour's beautifully painted body is mounted on a Freightliner Maxum chassis with a lowered-rail design that's less intrusive in the storage areas. The chassis is powered by a 450-HP Cummins ISL engine tied to an Allison six-speed transmission. The 60-degree wheel cut facilitates tight turning and the air ride suspension promotes ride comfort. A 15,000-pound-rated hitch receiver makes it easy to find a suitable dinghy vehicle.

The list of features that go into producing Winnebago's flagship coach is extensive. Everywhere you look you'll find high-end accessories and hardware — many outside the realm of the RV universe — that make life on the road more pleasurable. Add in the ability to produce proprietary components in a technically advanced facility and the Tour ranks right up there with the most notable coaches designed and built for discriminating motorhome enthusiasts. ♦

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# TLC FOR YOUR A/C

DO-IT-YOURSELF AIR CONDITIONER  
MAINTENANCE ENSURES YEARS OF  
TROUBLE-FREE SERVICE

by BILL AND JENN GEHR

**M**otorhome air conditioners tolerate a high level of abuse throughout the years. Each season they are asked to provide uninterrupted cooling during extreme ambient temperatures and survive vicious road vibrations and occasional inadequate voltage. Proper maintenance and routine cleaning go a long way toward extending the life of any motorhome air conditioner.

The most common type of air conditioner found on motorhomes is the roof-mounted model, configured to distribute cold air through a series of ducted registers or via direct discharge. Generally these air conditioners are rated at 13,500 or 15,000 Btu. Several models offer heat pump options, which provide warm air as long as ambient temperatures are not too cold. Larger motorhomes may use basement air conditioners that require very little maintenance other than periodic filter replacement. Whichever model you have, each needs a little TLC for optimum performance.

Safety first. Make sure power is disconnected before starting any air-conditioning maintenance procedure.

Every unit has a cold air intake filter that must be kept clean to avoid a buildup of dirt and other contaminants on the cold air evaporator. With continued use, these filters should be cleaned every two to three weeks. The process is simple. Remove the filter and gently wash using warm, soapy water. Rinse thoroughly and gently towel or air dry. Generally, these foam filters last for years, but if you notice that the filter is beginning to deteriorate, replace it. Basement model filters cannot be washed and must be replaced with a new paper filter.

Prior to reinstallation of the clean filter(s), use a bright flashlight to illuminate the area around the cold air intake and inspect for any debris or contaminants that may be partially clogging the

aluminum-finned evaporator. If you need to remove any debris, use a soft bristled brush, taking extra care not to damage the delicate fins.

You may notice that the fins are coated with a thin, sticky film that attracts unwanted lint and dust particles. Remove the ceiling assembly for easy access to the fins and spray on a light coat of a non-caustic cleaning agent (such as Formula 409) and wipe clean with a damp paper towel. Be sure to soak up any runoff. Once the fins are cleaned, rinse thoroughly with water and allow to air dry before reinstalling the ceiling assembly. Now would be a good time to make sure the cold air intake is sealed from the air discharge, especially ducted models.

When moving to the roof, take your time, use extreme caution and wear closed-toed shoes. Avoid walking on a wet or damp roof. Remove the plastic shroud that protects the air-conditioner components from the elements. If the shroud is cracked or brittle it should be replaced. The model and serial numbers of your specific unit are located inside, above the filter. These numbers will be necessary for obtaining a new replacement shroud. With the shroud removed, visually inspect the wires and each component for any damages or corrosion.

The condenser is located in the rear of the unit. As the fan draws in air through the condenser, dust and dirt are pulled into the fins. This excess debris should be cleaned/blown out from the inside of the condenser using compressed air; repeat this process annually. Be careful that the air pressure is not too high as it may damage the aluminum fins. If the fins are bent, use a fin comb or small flat-blade screwdriver to restore them to their original position. Before reinstalling the shroud, inspect the foam or rubber gaskets on the inside of the shroud and replace if necessary.

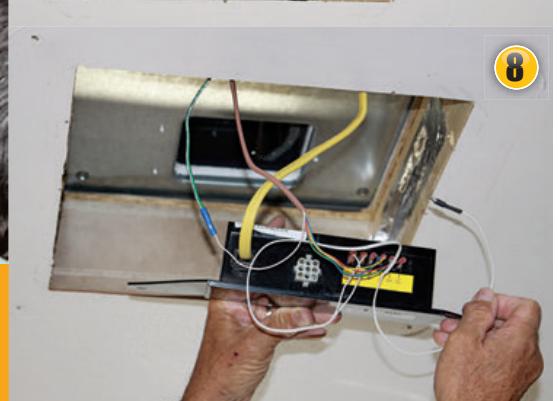
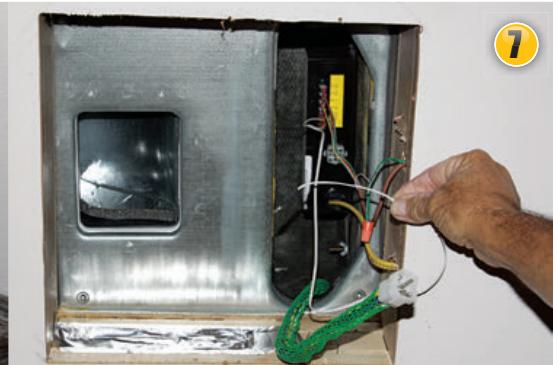
If you notice your air conditioner is leaking water from



1) There are several types of ceiling assemblies. Start by removing the access panel to expose the filter. Remove the foam filter, which is held in place with hook-and-loop fasteners, and inspect it carefully for any signs of dry rot. Replace the filter if necessary. 2) If filter appears to be in good condition, gently hand wash using a mild soap and warm water.



3) After washing the filter, rinse thoroughly and air or towel dry. 4) With the access panel removed, now is a good time to inspect the evaporator to be sure it is clear of debris and oily buildup. 5) If it is necessary to remove the A/C from the roof in order to replace the gasket, you will need to begin by removing both parts of the ceiling assembly as shown.



6) The ceiling assembly is usually held in place by three to four bolts. 7 & 8) After the ceiling assemblies have been removed, don't forget to remove the freeze protection sensor and the control box that are tucked up into the evaporator cavity.



9) Annual A/C maintenance includes removing the shroud and inspecting condenser and wiring. 10) Check condenser for debris or bent fins. For optimum performance, straighten damaged fins using a thin tool. Use an evaporator comb if damage is extensive. 11) Clean condenser with low air pressure, taking care not to damage the delicate fins. A clean condenser makes the A/C more efficient.

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the ceiling assembly during a rainstorm or a routine wash, it's time to replace the gasket (or seal) between the upper unit and exterior surface of the roof. There are two gasket sizes, 14-by-14-inch and 14-by-16-inch. Replacement begins with removing the inside ceiling assembly, normally held on by three to four bolts. On some ducted models you will need to remove the freeze probe from the evaporator. You may have to remove the control box in order to lift the upper unit from the roof to expose the gasket.

Scrape off the gasket from the bottom of the upper unit using a putty knife. Clean the surface with mineral spirits, dry and attach the new, peel-and-stick gasket in the same location.

The next step may require another person. Set the air conditioner back over the exposed opening. With one person on the inside of the motorhome and another on the roof, move the upper unit until the bolts are centered in the opening. Install the bolts and tighten until they are fairly snug and then secure with one full turn. Because of the air conditioner's weight on the roof, the gasket will compress over a period of time so be sure to make a note to retighten the bolts a few months down the road.

Proper voltage is essential for the longevity of your air conditioner's compressor, which is the heart of the system. Incorrect voltage is the leading cause of compressor failure. It's best to carry a voltmeter and use it to monitor system voltage, especially when traveling in extreme heat. Using a digital meter that plugs into your outlet is also a good way to monitor voltage and it is much more accurate than its analog counterpart. The minimum voltage is 105 volts AC with the air condi-



12) Use a large putty knife to remove the old gasket from the underside of the A/C. 13) Clean the roof surface where the gasket will sit with a cleaner that is appropriate for your type of roof material and then allow the surface to dry. 14) Choose a high-quality neoprene gasket. Remove the paper to expose the glue and press into place on the A/C.

tioner compressor running.

Common causes of low voltage can often be attributed to inadequate extension cords. For example, if you have a 30-amp power cord on your motorhome, you will need a 30-amp extension cord to run the air conditioner. If you have a 50-amp power cord, the same size extension cord must be used. Heat generated by the electrical current flowing through power cords can actually melt the rubber end. Routine inspection of the ends of the cords — and replacement if the prongs become loose and fail — will prevent surprises when air conditioning is needed.

By parking your motorhome in direct sunlight, the heat absorbed by the coach may make it difficult for the air conditioner(s) to keep interior temperature at set levels. Here are a few tips that can improve cooling efficiency.

- Choose a campsite that offers shade

- Install aluminum, bubble-style insulation in your windows, skylights and vents. Keep in mind that large windshields transfer a great amount of heat to the interior of the coach.

- Keep baggage doors closed when possible to help reduce the amount of heat penetrating through the floor.

- Try to limit the number of times you open and close the entry door.

By following these simple maintenance procedures on your motorhome's air conditioner, you will help ensure years of continued use and optimum cooling. ♦



Bill and Jenn Gehr, along with their two Boston bulldogs, are full-time RV adventurers who enjoy sharing their technical knowledge with fellow RV enthusiasts wherever they travel.



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# BARGAIN HUNTING

LOOKING FOR A GREAT DEAL? TRY THESE MOTORHOMES WITH BASE PRICES BELOW \$100,000

by KRISTOPHER BUNKER

**H**unting and motorhoming go hand in hand. No, not that kind of hunting. We're talking about motorhome owners constantly on the hunt as part of their lifestyle, searching for a beautiful destination, a pristine campground or the latest gadget to make life on the road easier. But what all motorhome owners (and everybody else, for that matter) are hunting for on a daily basis is a bargain. We're always looking for lower

RV park fees, less expensive fuel, reduced grocery bills and, perhaps most significantly, an affordable motorhome. To help with the latter, we've rounded up a handful of budget-friendly coaches with base MSRPs of less than \$100,000. And although "budget-friendly" is sometimes just a fancy way of saying "cheap," the motorhomes listed here offer the most bang for your buck without scrimping on quality and amenities.

## COACHMEN FREELANDER 19CB

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### SPECIFICATIONS

**CHASSIS:** FORD E-350  
**ENGINE:** 5.4-L V-8  
**FUEL CAP:** 40 GAL  
**GVWR:** 11,500 LBS  
**EXT LENGTH:** 21' 6"  
**EXT WIDTH:** 8' 3"  
**WHEELBASE:** 138"  
**EXT HEIGHT:** 10' 10"  
**FRESHWATER CAP:** 50 GAL  
**BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP:** 22 GAL/28 GAL  
**LP-GAS CAP:** 10 GAL  
**BASE MSRP:** \$49,900

Clearly designed with families in mind, the Coachmen Freelander offers three separate sleeping areas as part of its no-nonsense, straightforward floor-plan. The compact 138-inch wheelbase makes the coach easy to drive — something especially helpful if you're new to motorhomes or larger vehicles. The rear shower is surprisingly roomy, while the compact galley is equipped with the appliances you'll need for a down-home comfort meal. The Freelander also includes some



amenities you may not expect in its price range, namely a standard AC generator, backup camera and power awning.



**SPECIFICATIONS**

- CHASSIS:** FORD
- ENGINE:** 6.8-L V-10
- FUEL CAP:** 80 GAL
- GVWR:** 18,000 LBS
- EXT LENGTH:** 28' 8"
- EXT WIDTH:** 8' 5"
- EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C:** 12'
- WHEELBASE:** 178"
- FRESHWATER CAP:** 60 GAL
- BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP:** 35 GAL/35 GAL
- LP-GAS CAP:** 14 GAL
- BASE MSRP:** \$87,189



Fleetwood bills the Storm as a motorhome with the family friendliness of a Class C, but the space and storage capacity of a Class A. With the Storm featuring 110

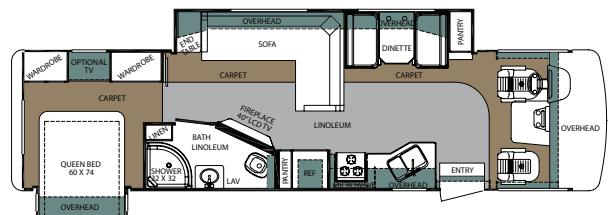
cubic feet of interior storage space and 132 cubic feet of exterior storage space, we can certainly see why. Raised-panel cabinetry, crown molding and a spacious galley highlight the wide-open floorplan of the 28F, while the 44-by-82-inch dinette allows for the whole family to dine in comfort. The master bedroom features a queen bed and dual wardrobes as well as an LCD TV (\$406). The Storm featured here also includes an above-cab hide-a-loft bed (capable of supporting up to 650 pounds) with a 26-inch TV (\$2,940).



**SPECIFICATIONS**

- CHASSIS:** FORD
- ENGINE:** 6.8-L V-10
- FUEL CAP:** 80 GAL
- GVWR:** 20,500 LBS
- EXT LENGTH:** 34' 11"
- EXT WIDTH:** 8' 4"
- EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C:** 12' 1"
- WHEELBASE:** 208"
- FRESHWATER CAP:** 50 GAL
- BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP:** 41 GAL/41 GAL
- LP-GAS CAP:** 24 GAL
- BASE MSRP:** \$97,775

Georgetown Class A motorhomes have been designed to include many amenities generally found in more expensive coaches, but at a price that's easier on the wallet. Standards include solid-surface countertops, a fiberglass roof, a full-coach water-filtration system and a rear-vision backup camera. The 335DS shown here includes a comfortable, soft-touch L-shaped sofa in the living room, a fireplace, a 40-inch LCD TV and a hand-laid glass tile backsplash in the galley. Other livability conveniences include a one-piece fiberglass shower, a 30-inch entrance door and triple electric entry steps.



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 Ship Wt. 3 lbs. |

**Awning Hooks, Set of 10 (not shown) #27913**  
**Club SALE \$7.99** Reg. \$10.49 | Ship Wt. 1/4 lb.

**CLUB SALE**  
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 Reg. \$179.99

**WHILE SUPPLIES LAST!**

**Dometic® Mini Ice Maker #67689**  
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~~\$229~~ |



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Reg. \$16.99

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 Camping World, Circle 115 on Reader Service Card

**FOREST RIVER SUNSEEKER 3010DS**

Forest River, 574-533-5934, [www.forestriverinc.com](http://www.forestriverinc.com)



**SPECIFICATIONS**

<b>CHASSIS:</b> FORD
<b>ENGINE:</b> 6.8-L V-10
<b>FUEL CAP:</b> 55 GAL
<b>GVWR:</b> 14,500 LBS
<b>EXT LENGTH:</b> 32' 3"
<b>EXT WIDTH:</b> 8' 4"
<b>EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C:</b> 11' 3"
<b>WHEELBASE:</b> 220"
<b>FRESHWATER CAP:</b> 44 GAL
<b>BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP:</b> 39 GAL/39 GAL
<b>LP-GAS CAP:</b> 10 GAL
<b>BASE MSRP:</b> \$87,618

The Sunseeker 3010DS is loaded with amenities not typically found in sub-\$100,000 coaches. The large kitchen countertop with flip-up extension offers plenty of prep space, and the 32-inch 12-volt DC LED TV over the galley area offers easy viewing throughout the front of the motorhome. The optional 12.3-cubic-foot, four-door refrigerator (\$2,793) can more than handle your campground meal



plans, while the large 44-by-82-inch U-shaped dinette can comfortably accom-

modate a host of diners. A step up into the rear bedroom reveals a pillow-top mattress, dual wardrobes and a linen closet, in addition to a nightstand. There's also a 32-inch 12-volt DC LED TV and DVD player available (\$1,043) outside, should you decide to entertain under the stars. Other highlights include standard heated and enclosed storage tanks, a fiberglass roof and full-body paint.

**ITASCA CAMBRIA 27K**

Itasca, 641-585-3535, [www.goitasca.com](http://www.goitasca.com)



**SPECIFICATIONS**

<b>CHASSIS:</b> FORD E-450
<b>ENGINE:</b> 6.8-L V-10 TRITON
<b>FUEL CAP:</b> 55 GAL
<b>GVWR:</b> 14,500 LBS
<b>EXT LENGTH:</b> 29' 5"
<b>EXT WIDTH:</b> 7' 11"
<b>EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C:</b> 10' 9"
<b>WHEELBASE:</b> 200"
<b>FRESHWATER CAP:</b> 40 GAL
<b>BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP:</b> 34 GAL/31 GAL
<b>LP-GAS CAP:</b> 18 GAL
<b>BASE MSRP:</b> \$96,417

The 2013 Itasca Cambria 27K Class C is a touring coach the company claims features automotive handling for a smooth ride. Inside, such features as swiveling cab seats, an Ultraleather BenchMark dinette slide, large galley, LED lighting and a rear wardrobe slide all lend a residential feel. A 26-inch LCD HDTV is located in the galley and is installed on a hinged bracket for maximum viewing throughout the motorhome. The bathroom features a curved wall for maximum use of space. A walk-around queen bed,



dual nightstands, a large wardrobe slideout and a 22-inch TV make the master bedroom a comfortable, private retreat.



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LAZY DAZE 27 REAR BATH

Lazy Daze, 909-627-1103, www.lazydaze.com



SPECIFICATIONS

<b>CHASSIS:</b> FORD E-450
<b>ENGINE:</b> 6.8-L V-10
<b>FUEL CAP:</b> 55 GAL
<b>GVWR:</b> 14,500 LBS
<b>EXT LENGTH:</b> 27'
<b>EXT WIDTH:</b> 8' 3"
<b>EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C:</b> 10' 1"
<b>WHEELBASE:</b> 176"
<b>FRESHWATER CAP:</b> 60 GAL
<b>BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP:</b> 24 GAL/35 GAL
<b>LP-GAS CAP:</b> 14 GAL
<b>BASE MSRP:</b> \$88,750

Founded more than 57 years ago, Lazy Daze has always been an advocate of factory-direct sales in order to keep costs down. That policy has remained in place since day one, mainly because the same founding family continues to own and operate the manufacturer to this day. The 27 RB, like all Lazy Daze models, has a long list of standard features, including a steel reinforced structure, smooth aluminum sectioned and repairable exterior side walls, a fully insulated floor, side walls and roof, and full-body paint. Conveniences such as a porcelain toilet, LED interior lights, a 100-watt solar panel and a 4 kW AC generator help make the Lazy Daze a comfortable — and efficient — home on the road.



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**SPECIFICATIONS**

- CHASSIS:** FORD
- ENGINE:** 6.8-L V-10
- FUEL CAP:** 80 GAL
- GVWR:** 18,000 LBS
- EXT LENGTH:** 27' 10"
- EXT WIDTH:** 8' 4.5"
- EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C:** 12' 4"
- WHEELBASE:** 172"
- FRESHWATER CAP:** 75 GAL
- BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP:** 40 GAL/60 GAL
- LP-GAS CAP:** 25 GAL
- BASE MSRP:** \$94,808



For 2013, Newmar has updated its popular Bay Star Sport line to include more user-friendly features and amenities. Owners will still get Newmar's classic sturdy construction, including a gel-coat fiberglass exterior and front and back caps, a Brite Tek roof and a one-piece windshield. Highlights for 2013 include mitered glazed cabinet doors, concealed

cabinet hinges, improved decorative paneling in the living room and slideouts, and a heavier-duty windshield-washer system for improved visibility. The 2702 offers dual wardrobes, a chest of drawers and a 32-inch LCD TV in the master bedroom. A jackknife sofa and convertible dinette in the living area provide ideal seating for viewing the LCD TV above the cab.

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**NEXUS RV VIPER 29V**



**SPECIFICATIONS**

- CHASSIS:** FORD E-450
- ENGINE:** 6.8-L V-10
- FUEL CAP:** 55 GAL
- GVWR:** 14,500 LBS
- EXT LENGTH:** 30' 5"
- EXT WIDTH:** 8'
- EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C:** 10' 4"
- WHEELBASE:** 208"
- FRESHWATER CAP:** 38 GAL
- BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP:** 28 GAL/28 GAL
- LP-GAS CAP:** 12 GAL
- BASE MSRP:** \$79,999

Eliminating the middleman is one way NeXus RV can offer its Viper 29V B-Plus cruiser as part of our sub-\$100K round-up. Selling factory-direct allows NeXus to

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**PHOENIX CRUISER 2910T**

Phoenix Cruiser, 877-754-8535, [www.phoenixusarv.com](http://www.phoenixusarv.com)

**SPECIFICATIONS**

- CHASSIS:** FORD E-450
- ENGINE:** 6.8-L V-10
- FUEL CAP:** 55 GAL
- GVWR:** 14,500 LBS
- EXT LENGTH:** 30' 6"
- EXT WIDTH:** 7' 8"
- EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C:** 10' 1"
- WHEELBASE:** 218"
- FRESHWATER CAP:** 46 GAL
- BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP:** 23 GAL/35 GAL
- LP-GAS CAP:** 10 GAL
- BASE MSRP:** \$99,970



The triple-slide Cruiser 2910T Class C offers the kind of living space generally found in a Class A coach,

but with the drivability of a van. The large master bedroom features a walk-around queen bed, dual wardrobes and a TV stand/desk. A sofa bed and a convertible dinette mean you can invite the extended family, and there's plenty of overhead storage space to accommodate everyone's gear. The factory-direct motorhome is loaded with appointments, including maple cabinetry, full-body paint, two TVs and a backup monitor.

**NEXUS RV VIPER 29V CONTINUED**

pass its savings on to the customer and to focus on higher-quality amenities and improved construction techniques. Nexus' steel-framed side walls are claimed to be more than 70 percent sturdier than aluminum side walls, and its use of automotive-style window seals help eliminate water leaks. Galvanized steel storage compartments also offer an improvement over the more common plastic compartments. The 29V highlighted here also includes a deluxe exterior paint package (\$6,999) and cherry cabinetry (\$399). The 29V has a 5,000-pound rated hitch receiver for your dinghy-towing needs, and break-away mirrors and a heavy-duty entrance step add to the unit's durability.



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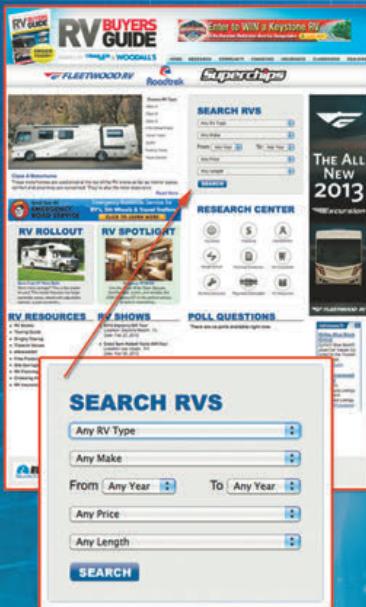
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#### SPECIFICATIONS

**CHASSIS:** CHEVROLET EXPRESS 2500  
**ENGINE:** 4.8-L V-8  
**FUEL CAP:** 31 GAL  
**GVWR:** 8,600 LBS  
**EXT LENGTH:** 20' 5"  
**EXT WIDTH:** 7' 0"  
**EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C:** 8' 9"  
**WHEELBASE:** 155"  
**FRESHWATER CAP:** 15 GAL  
**BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP:** 10/23 GAL  
**LP-GAS CAP:** 7 GAL (OPTIONAL)  
**BASE MSRP:** \$72,800



The Ranger RT motorhome has been designed with fuel efficiency at the forefront. The Ranger's lower weight and smaller engine allow use of a lighter chassis, which not only helps fuel economy, but also makes the rig easy to drive. When you're

unplugged and off the grid, many of the appliances can be run via the 1,250-watt power inverter, while the included portable 120-volt AC generator can power the air conditioner/heat pump and water heater. The Ranger does not include a standard LP-gas system (an intentional design), but one is available as an option.

### THOR MOTOR COACH A.C.E. 29.2

A.C.E., 800-560-5658, [www.acemotorhome.com](http://www.acemotorhome.com)

If the name A.C.E. evokes a hybrid of Class A and Class C motorhomes, that's because they are just that: the familiar "drives like a C but lives like an A motorhome." Thor Motor Coach accomplishes this feat by packing A.C.E. motorhomes with scads of storage space, including a large rear "mega" storage compartment (all told, there is 122.6 cubic feet of storage on the exterior), a coat/broom closet with hanging hooks, a pullout pantry, linen closet and an electric pull-down overhead bunk in the cockpit. In supplying so many storage areas — along with the large living-area slide — the A.C.E. 29.2 feels wide open and uncluttered. The coach also features a queen bed with dual closets in the master bedroom and a "mud room" entry. A standard electric patio awning helps keep things cool at the campsite.



#### SPECIFICATIONS

**CHASSIS:** FORD  
**ENGINE:** 6.8-L V-10  
**FUEL CAP:** 80 GAL  
**GVWR:** 16,000 LBS  
**EXT LENGTH:** 29' 7"  
**EXT WIDTH:** 8' 2.5"  
**EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C:** 11' 11"  
**WHEELBASE:** 190"  
**FRESHWATER CAP:** 50 GAL  
**BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP:** 25/44 GAL  
**LP-GAS CAP:** 20.75 GAL  
**BASE MSRP:** \$92,000-\$97,000

### WINNEBAGO VISTA 26HE



Designed for couples or small families, the 2013 Vista 26HE is a Class A that packs in plenty of standard features. Highlights include a front slide-out room, Ultraleather swiveling cab seats, a 38-by-73-inch dinette, a full-

**WINNEBAGO MINNIE WINNIE 31K**

Winnebago, 641-585-3535, www.winnebagoind.com

**SPECIFICATIONS**

- CHASSIS:** FORD E-450
- ENGINE:** 6.8-L V-10
- FUEL CAP:** 55 GAL
- GVWR:** 14,500 LBS
- EXT LENGTH:** 32' 6"
- EXT WIDTH:** 8' 5.5"
- EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C:** 10' 8"
- WHEELBASE:** 220"
- FRESHWATER CAP:** 47 GAL
- BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP:** 30/30 GAL
- LP-GAS CAP:** 18 GAL
- BASE MSRP:** \$76,000



So new, we don't have all the details. Winnebago is reintroducing the classic Minnie Winnie for the 2014 model year. The coaches will be available in four floorplans. The 31K featured here offers a large U-shaped dinette, a fully appointed and spacious galley, a 32-inch LCD TV, a variety of sleeping options and a large amount of storage space — including a sizeable rear trunk.

**WINNEBAGO VISTA 26HE CONTINUED**

**SPECIFICATIONS**

- CHASSIS:** FORD
- ENGINE:** 6.8-L V-10
- FUEL CAP:** 80 GAL
- GVWR:** 16,000 LBS
- EXT LENGTH:** 26' 11"
- EXT WIDTH:** 8' 5.5"
- EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C:** 12' 1"
- WHEELBASE:** 158"
- FRESHWATER CAP:** 60 GAL
- BLACK-/GRAY-WATER CAP:** 43/38 GAL
- LP-GAS CAP:** 18 GAL
- BASE MSRP:** \$69,999

*(Special promotional pricing at participating dealers for a limited time.)*

featured galley and a walk-around queen bed in the master bedroom with a shirt closet/wardrobe on both sides of the bed. An Ultraleather lounge chair and power awning are also standard. The split bathroom is located amidships, with a shower across the hall. The one-piece fiberglass roof is backed by a 10-year warranty. ♦



Kristopher Bunker, the former editor of *Trailer Life* magazine, has been RVing for more than a decade and is currently a freelance writer and stay-at-home dad.

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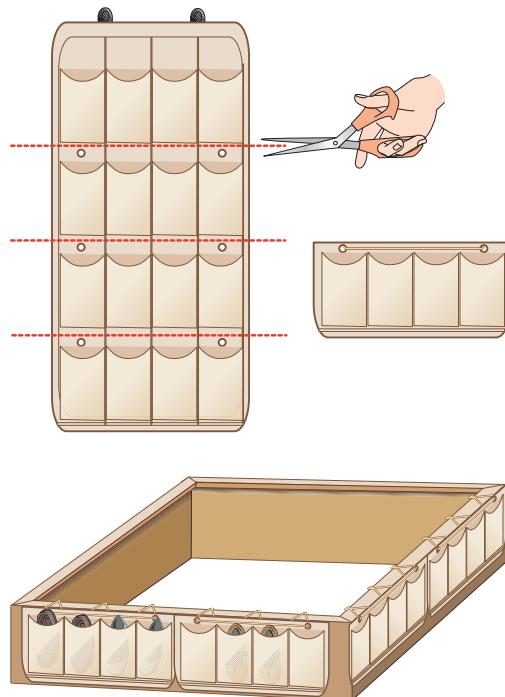
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**WILL GARNER | GRAND JUNCTION, COLO.**



## MUD FLAP REFLECTION CORRECTION

When the two red reflector strips came unglued from my motorhome's mud flaps, I found they were not available separately. I made a permanent fix by attaching scrap aluminum strips using stainless steel bolts and nuts where the original plastic units had been glued on. The aluminum is a bit larger to hide the failed adhesive, and has a Department of Transportation-approved red reflective tape permanently anchored to it. Most auto supply stores carry the tape in red and silver. The repair looks original and is even more reflective than the plastic it replaced.

**FRANK WOYTHAL | ANDOVER, N.Y. ◆**



## A BED WITH SOLE ▲

I devised a way to keep shoes out of the way. I cut a canvas over-the-door shoe holder in thirds (two pairs per section). Along the top edge of each section I punched a series of holes to thread a heavy cord through.

Then a series of screws were fastened on the inside of the under-bed storage compartment to fasten the cord to, so the shoe holder would hang outside the compartment, just below the mattress.

This way, you can put shoes all around your bed. The mattress platform hangs out over the compartment walls, so you can walk around the bed without shoes being in the way.

**JOHN BOHN | MARION, MICH.**

### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

**Quick Tips**, *MotorHome's* monthly column of handy, simple tips by fellow RVers, is looking for submissions. Please send your favorite do-it-yourself ideas to: *MotorHome* Quick Tips, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001, or email [letters@motorhomemagazine.com](mailto:letters@motorhomemagazine.com). Be sure to include photos, illustrations or drawings, if necessary. If your tip is selected for publication, you'll receive \$35.

ILLUSTRATIONS: BILL TIPTON

# techsavvy

HANDS-ON | HOT LINE | COACH & POWERTRAIN

PHOTOS: TOM MORR



The MaxxFan Deluxe is a complete vent system with an aerodynamic rain shield lid that opens and closes automatically as the fan is turned on or off. The fan can also be operated with the lid closed in a reversed "ceiling fan" mode.

HANDS-ON | by TOM MORR

## CIRCUM-VENTING THE WEATHER

### Installing a MaxxFan Elevates Motorhome Venting to a Higher Power

**Hanging out in a musty motorhome is almost like** being locked in a portable restroom at the county fair. Ordinary bathroom vents help release some stenchy air into the great outdoors, but an array of innovative upgrades over the standard hand-crank vent-fan combination are offered by MaxxAir. The company touts that more than 2 million of its RV ventilation products have been installed since 1988.

The newest offering is the MaxxFan Deluxe. This is a vent fan with an elongated power lid that functions as a rain shroud. The unit can operate with the motorhome in motion or stationary. A hand-held remote control is optional.

The heart of the system is a reversible 12-inch electric fan. It has 10 speeds, moving up to 900 CFM of air while drawing a maximum 4 amps of power. (Low speed draws only 0.2 amps.) The 10-blade fan functions as a get-it-out exhaust fan, a fresh-air intake and a lid-closed ceiling fan. The power lid is fully sealed to prevent air loss while running the furnace or air conditioning.

The MaxxFan Deluxe also has an available remote control that displays air temperature. The remote contains an Auto mode, which turns the fan on and off and opens/closes the power lid to maintain the specified temperature. The remote can also control all functions on demand using its keypad.

The fan is covered by a two-year warranty, and the lid

carries a limited lifetime warranty. Available colors are white and smoke, which provides a tinted-window effect for motorhome owners who want more ambient light inside.

Do-it-yourself installation is certainly feasible. The MaxxFan is manufactured to fit a standard 14-inch-square vent opening. The kit comes with a trim ring that can be cut to fit roof thicknesses ranging from 1 1/8 inches to 6.5 inches. Carpentry work is required to adapt the MaxxFan to thinner roofs. The fan unit needs a minimum 8 inches of aft clearance on the roof for the power hatch to raise and lower without obstruction; overall length is 23 inches.

Wiring for a 12-volt DC/minimum 5-amp circuit also needs to be near the opening. Wire should be the proper gauge for its distance from the power source. The MaxxFan is a fairly easy retrofit for most existing vent fans.

The job requires roof sealant, which will have to be sourced by the installer. The sealant needs to be compatible with the MaxxFan's plastic flange. Sealants that contain xylene, toluene, MEK, acetate, acetone, Thiokol or other incompatible solvents will damage the plastic. Butyl-type caulks such as Dacor Self-Leveling Lap Sealant have proven effective.

Highlights of the job are shown here for motorhome owners who are considering doing the job themselves. It took an avid DIY motorhome owner less than an hour to install. An instructional video is available on MaxxAir's website.

The MaxxFan Deluxe is one of the most versatile, easy-to-install ventilation upgrades a motorhome owner can make. It helps vent a coach automatically: rain or shine, parked or on the road. (Lesser-optional MaxxAir models are available with such cost-effective features as one-direction exhaust fan, manual-opening lids, an on-fan keypad control and various optional wall-mounted controls.)

**MaxxAir Vent Corp., 800-780-9893, [www.maxxair.com](http://www.maxxair.com) ♦**



## HAVING RESERVATIONS

SEEKING HELP WITH A REFUND ON A CAMPGROUND RESERVATION, TWO READERS ASKED HOT LINE FOR ASSISTANCE. THEY WROTE:

My wife and I had been planning a two-month trip from Virginia to New York (to watch our grandson play ball at the Field Of Dreams), and then out West to Yellowstone. We made 17 RV park reservations: the first for one week at Hartwick Highlands Campground in Milford, N.Y., near Cooperstown. We were to arrive on Aug. 3, 2012.

On July 23, 2012, I was diagnosed with a severe rotator cuff tear that required immediate surgery. I called the campgrounds to cancel our reservations and they all did so with a maximum fee of \$19 and some with no forfeiture at all, except one: Hartwick Highlands. I had paid Hartwick Highlands in full, \$293, and the RV park refused to grant any refund. Jennifer Czadzeck, the owner, referred to their cancellation policy, which stated refunds would not be allowed after July 20, 2012.

I appealed to compassion, stating that not only were we going to miss the trip, but I would be out of work for at least eight months, which would create a financial hardship for us. She offered to reschedule this season, which we can't do because I won't be able to drive.

I'm asking Hot Line to intercede on our behalf and also to warn fellow RVers to read the fine print when making a reservation, especially at private parks.

**DON AND RUTH ANNE BROWN**  
PORTSMOUTH, VA.

*Campground deposits require close attention, and all transactions are not the same. Most establishments have fairly well-defined criteria as to the handling of such matters, and it behooves campers to make themselves familiar with such things before plunking down their deposits. Credit for a future stay, or an offer to reschedule as was made by Hartwick Highlands, is quite common in such an instance. Unfortunately, that*

*arrangement didn't work for the Browns because of Mr. Brown's upcoming surgery, and we were unfortunately not able to negotiate any further assistance.*

*Hartwick Highlands Campground replied to our inquiry as follows:*

On Oct. 23, 2011, the Browns made their reservation for the week starting Aug. 3, 2012. They paid their deposit and received an email that stated the cancellation date was July 20, 2012. They called to cancel on July 25, 2012. On our website, brochure and email confirmation, the cancellation policy is clearly explained — it is not in fine print.

Mr. Brown called back asking us not to cancel the reservation and to transfer it to another person, which we told him was OK. We held the site, but no one showed up. We strictly enforce our cancellation policies and campground rules so it is fair for everyone.

**JENNIFER CZADZECK**  
HARTWICK HIGHLANDS CAMPGROUND  
MILFORD, N.Y.

### AN EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

*When their campground stay suddenly went south, two readers sought Hot Line's help. They wrote:*

On June 29, 2012, we arrived at Duncan's Family Campground in Lothian, Md., for a one-week stay. That night, a big storm hit the area and caused widespread power outages and major damage. Because of my wife's asthma and the need for a controlled climate, and to operate her medical equipment, we had to run our generator during the outage.

On the morning of July 1, 2012, based on the local power company's estimate that it would take up to two weeks to restore power, we decided to leave. Other factors that influenced our decision included downed trees, no power, low water pressure in the campground and the cost of running our diesel generator 24/7 (\$150 a day).

When the park office opened, I told the staff that we were leaving and asked if they would consider a refund. I was

told to call back to make my request. I called a week later and left a message. Two weeks later I called again and spoke with someone at the park who said they were sending me a letter with a certificate good for three days of camping.

When I received the letter it was for one free day of camping. I sent an email to the campground again asking for a refund for five days. I received a reply that stated, "We have looked into your situation and have determined there will be no refund. Our policy states there are no refunds for holiday weekends, no refunds for early departures and we have never given refunds for inclement weather. It is because of this that we are not refunding any camper who stayed with us that weekend."

If we had left early under normal circumstances I would not be requesting a refund. In this situation, I think we deserve a refund. Thank you.

**ROBERT AND CAROL FITCH**  
POLK CITY, FLA.

*We contacted Duncan's Family Campground to see if it would reconsider. We did not hear back directly from Duncan's, but the campground sent the following reply to the Fitches. It read:*

I understand that you stayed with us for two nights of our Fourth of July weekend that was unfortunately ruined by the derecho storm. We will be refunding your Visa card a total of \$217.20. This amount is the difference of your payment of \$312.40 upon arrival to the campground and the two nights you stayed with us (a total cost of \$95.20).

I was unaware that you were here to stay a week and not just the holiday weekend. The decision to make no refund was made under the impression that you had stayed with us two nights of the three-day weekend. I hope you will accept this apology and consider Duncan's for a future vacation. Again, I am sorry for the miscommunication.

**LURIE DUNCAN, OWNER**  
DUNCAN'S FAMILY CAMPGROUND  
LOTHIAN, MD. ♦

TO CONTRIBUTE TO HOT LINE, refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 7.

## DAY-NIGHT SHADE REPAIRS

We bought a slightly used Winnebago Journey in 2007 and have put 20,000 miles on the coach since. I was concerned about the day-night shades early on, as they wrinkled when they were raised up, but now they have a more serious problem. The operating cords have frayed and now two of the shades are broken and inoperable. It is extremely difficult to remove the shades because of the valances around the window frame. I would guess that many RV owners have the same problem. I have an extended warranty; is this something it would cover? What do you suggest to repair or replace the shades?  
**RAYMOND SCHAFFER | BOSTIC, N.C.**

*This is considered a wear-and-tear item and I doubt it would be covered by an extended warranty, but you'll have to read your policy's fine print. Day-night shades are a pleated shade or blind and lengthy periods of being down will make them a bit difficult to raise without some help. In many cases, RVers can spray the blind with starch and raise the blind for a few days, allowing the starch to dry (like ironing a shirt). The blind fabric will become more rigid and regain its pleats.*

*Restringing the blinds is another issue. The blinds are clipped into the valance header and then they run several screws up through the back (toward the window) part of the blind to hold it to the header. Sometimes the screw heads are buried and you must get the reading glasses out to find them!*

*You will find a repair procedure on Winnebago's website at [www.winnebagoind.com/resources](http://www.winnebagoind.com/resources). Click on the Service link; then select 2006-09 Restraining Day-Night Blinds from the Service Tip's list. If you do a Google search for "RV shade repair" you will get a slew of resources. One is: [www.rvblindrepair.com/DBM\\_Help](http://www.rvblindrepair.com/DBM_Help). You can also check with your local RV repair center.*

### BATTERY DISCHARGE ISSUE

I had a problem starting our 2006 Mandalay Class A coach, but was able to get it running after a direct jump from another vehicle. It is parked in our driveway and is not being used, but is plugged into 30-amp service. What would cause the batteries to not hold a charge while plugged into shorepower?

**NORM COOMBS | VIA EMAIL**

*On most motorhomes, the converter charges the coach or house batteries, but not the engine-starting battery. A number of parasitic draws can cause the engine-starting battery to discharge even faster than it would naturally. Therefore, you need to either keep it charged with a maintenance charger (such as a Battery Tender) or install a device (such as Trik-L-Start, [www.lslproducts.com](http://www.lslproducts.com)) to transfer power from the converter to keep it charged.*

### VAPOR LOCK TYPICALLY OCCURS WHEN THE ENGINE HEATS FUEL UNTIL IT BECOMES A VAPOR, WHICH CANNOT BE PUMPED.

A PUMP LOCATED AT THE ENGINE WILL REDUCE PRESSURE ON THE FUEL IN THE LINES, WHICH CAN CAUSE IT TO FLASH BOIL AND TURN TO VAPOR.



### AUXILIARY FUEL PUMP

The "Surgin' Along" letter in the June 2012 issue reminded me of trouble I had with my 1984 GM motorhome. I always called it vapor lock. I also threw parts at the problem and finally put a high-end inline fuel pump back at the tank area. This was so the fuel can be pushed toward the engine instead of pulling it. Putting the pump at the engine would pull the fuel, therefore collapsing the fuel line. I also put a toggle switch at the dash so I could regulate when I needed extra fuel to the engine. Most of the time when I saw a grade ahead I put the fuel pump on to add extra fuel to the engine and it worked for me. On flat areas and down-grade, most of the time this was not needed. I hope this helps people out there with these older GM engines.

**JOHN DOEZIE | PLACENTIA, CALIF.**

*Thanks for writing, John. Vapor lock typically occurs when the engine heats fuel until it becomes a vapor, which cannot be pumped. A pump located at the engine (as is typical with carbureted models) will reduce pressure on the fuel in the lines, which can cause it to flash boil and turn to vapor. Pushing the fuel helps reduce this tendency. Fuel-injected engines generally have fuel pumps in the tanks that pressurize the fuel lines at considerably higher pressures and help eliminate vapor locking. The fuel pump you installed should have safety features, such as an oil pressure switch shut off, so that if the engine stalls the fuel will not continue to be pumped.*

### GAUGE INCOMPATIBILITY

We bought our 2006 Safari Cheetah in January 2010 and love it. Our coolant temperature gauge has always climbed to 150 degrees Fahrenheit, but never any higher, and never with fluctuation. A Caterpillar shop checked the engine temperature and found it to be 200 degrees. I ordered another temperature sender from Monaco, but got the same thing; another gauge, same result. I spoke with about 20 technicians at RV shops, Monaco, and RV seminars.

They all said, “The trouble has to be a loose connection.” On advice from an audience member at a recent RV seminar, I talked with a technician at Beede Instruments. He said there have been issues with Monaco installing temperature-sending units that were incompatible with Beede gauges, and the proper sender would likely solve my problem. He was right. For \$16 I bought a new sender, VDO #323-419 or NAPA #701-1813. Now my temperature gauge works perfectly.

**CARL TURNER | VIA EMAIL**

*This could be very frustrating. I'm disappointed that so many technicians said it must be a loose connection, because that would have resulted in an intermittent reading, not a steady one. Sending units can be tested for resistance at various temperatures and the readings compared to specifications in the shop manual. However, these specs are not always available. Thanks for sharing your hard-earned experience, Carl.*

### BATTERY CONTROL CENTER COMMENT

In the “Battery Control Center” question from John Rodgers in the November 2012 issue, he stated the isolator solenoid relay was hot to the touch when activated. You responded that it was probably due to it charging the batteries. It may be for another reason. That isolator solenoid relay must be a “continuous duty” type, not a momentary starting solenoid relay. If this is the case, then that is the reason for the hot relay.

**RON SNOW | MONTGOMERY, ILL.**

*Good point, Ron. I assumed that it was an original relay and that the manufacturer had installed the proper type, but you know what they say about assumptions.*

### TWO AIR CONDITIONERS ON A 30-AMP CIRCUIT

In your October 2012 issue, the letter titled “Power Cord Adapters” brings up an issue for everyone who owns a motorhome with two A/C units with a 30-amp shorepower supply.

We also have a Fleetwood Bounder 2002 36S with a 30-amp power supply cord. We have been in some very warm areas such as Yuma and Phoenix, Ariz.,

in the summer. We have found you should not try to cool the coach more than 20 degrees of ambient air temp. In other words, if it is 100 degrees outside, try running inside at 80.

A 13,500-Btu A/C unit usually runs at about 15 amps on high cool. On low cool they will run about 11 amps. So if you try to run both units on high cool you will find your in-house circuit breaker is very warm to the touch. If you check your shorepower plug it will also be very hot and in time it will discolor the plug. This heat will cause either the housebreaker to trip or the shorepower breaker to trip and sometimes both.

We have found if we run the front unit on high cool and the rear on low cool it works the best. We also leave the door open for the breakers; it gives them a little cooler air. We have used a 50- to 30-amp adapter and it did not make a difference. Maybe Rich Stow could use this information as it might help him and others who have two A/C units with a 30-amp supply cord (which is a 10-gauge wire).

**DAVID CZERNIAK | WHEATFIELD, IND.**

*Thanks for writing, David. While different brands and models of air conditioners will draw different amounts of current, your tip about running one (or both) on a lower setting is a good idea to prevent circuit breaker tripping. If the voltage is low they may draw even more amperes. So it's helpful to have a voltage monitor as well. If voltage gets down to about 108 volts it's time to turn off the air conditioners, as the motors will overheat. The 50- to 30-amp adapter simply allows you to make the connection at the power post; it doesn't change how much current is pushed through your 30-amp supply cord.*

### BRAKE BUDDY POWER

I tow a Jeep Liberty behind my Winnebago Brave motorhome. I recently bought a Brake Buddy and was told by the salesperson it would be wired to receive power from the motorhome. This turned out not to be true and the only wiring they did was a disconnect cable to apply the brakes should the Jeep come loose. Since Jeep recommends disconnecting the battery while towing, there is no power to the cigarette lighter for the Brake Buddy to operate. What can be done to furnish 12-

volt DC power to the Brake Buddy without depleting the Jeep battery?

**BILL KEENER | VIA EMAIL**

*As the salesman suggested — though unfortunately not followed through by the installation technician — the simplest way is to run a charge line from the motorhome to the Jeep. If you connect it to the Jeep's battery you could leave the battery connected and avoid losing radio presets, etc. Otherwise, have the charging line terminate in a power outlet for the Brake Buddy.*

### HARD TO START WHEN HOT

We have a 1978 33-foot Triple E Class A motorhome that is difficult to start when the engine is hot. The engine is a GM 454.

### SPOTLESS PROTECTION

When a motorhome needs a superior shine, Shurhold's Brite Wash and Serious Shine can deliver. Together, these products get rid of surface dirt and add a protective coating. Brite Wash is formulated to clean fiberglass, clearcoat, metal, rubber and painted surfaces. It cleans off dirt, grease, salt and more without dulling a finish or stripping wax or polish. Brite Wash resists water spots and the formula is also environmentally friendly.

Serious Shine cleans, polishes and protects virtually any solid surface in one step. It is designed for cleaning vinyl seats, dashboards, electronic touch screens, glass, clearcoat, wheels and tires without leaving behind a residue. Serious Shine's formula provides high gloss and a coating that repels water. It also contains UV inhibitors and anti-static properties.

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\*Estimated APR (Annual Percentage Rate). Subject to loan program requirements and credit approval. Certain fees, closing costs and restrictions may apply. Rates and terms may vary with market conditions and are subject to change without notice.

\*\*The 4.99% APR is available for consumer transactions only on loan amounts \$25,000 - \$49,999 with a maximum 12 year loan term. The 4.62% APR is available on consumer transactions only on loan amounts \$50,000 or greater with a maximum 20 year loan term. For a refinance request, RV must be 2003 model year or newer and current loan must have been open for a minimum of six months. For a purchase request, RV must be 2005 model year or newer. For RV 2009 model year or older and loan amount \$50,000 or greater, maximum loan term is less than 20 years; contact Good Sam Finance Center for those terms. Maximum loan to value is determined by the following: credit score and model year, with collateral value being established per NADA Used Wholesale Trade-in value. An application for credit must be submitted by January 31, 2013. APR is valid for 30 days from date of loan approval. A 12 year loan at 4.99% APR and 20 year loan at 4.62% APR will have a monthly payment of \$9.24 and \$6.39 respectively per \$1,000 borrowed. Information is accurate as of October 30, 2012. This offer is not available to applicants who use their RV as a principal dwelling (Full-Timer), visit website for Full-Timer rates and terms. Financing provided through Good Sam Finance Center. ©2012 Good Sam Finance Center

I have installed a new starter, installed a new battery and checked the starter heat shields, which are in place. Nothing helped. The only way to start the hot engine is to apply the built-in battery booster. Mechanics have told me the problem lies with an overheated starter. They suggest this is the result of insufficient air circulation in the engine compartment due to the compartment's design. Do you have any suggestions to overcome this problem or will I just have to live with it?

**KEITH ECKLUND**  
**MOOSE JAW, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA**

*This slow (or no) cranking when hot was often a problem with these older GM V-8 engines, even in cars. I hate to see you throwing parts at the problem without testing them first. When the GM Delco starters get hot, sometimes the plungers inside the attached solenoids seize from heat expansion and won't move to activate the starter. Other times, the insulation on the windings deteriorates and when hot basically short circuits and draws exces-*

*sive current that one battery can't provide. The best way to solve it is to go to an aftermarket starter like a Mean Green ([www.mean-green.com](http://www.mean-green.com)), which has proven to work when hot.*

**UNLEADED FUEL ADDITIVES**

I recently purchased a 1985 Minnie Winnie with a 5.7-L Chevy engine. The previous owner of 20-plus years used CD2 Lead Substitute at a rate of 1 ounce per 10 gallons of unleaded fuel. The coach has 67,000 miles on it. Will this additive do any damage to the engine after use of at least 50,000 miles? Will it cause any damage if I stop using this product? If so, do any major components have to be changed, such as fuel filter, oil filter or oil?

**DANIEL S. WITMER**  
**SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS**

*Unleaded gas came out the early 1970s, and well before 1985 the engines all had hardened valve seats and valves designed to run on unleaded gas. So the additive is a waste of money in your case. You don't need to change anything else, although a new fuel filter never hurts.*

**AIR BAG CONTROL**

We have a 2003 Holiday Rambler 38-foot Endeavor with air bags. Is there a way to dump the air bags and retain the rest of the air on this vehicle? We want to drop the air ride down so it can be driven into a space with a 12-foot-high door. Is there a way to do this? The coach has a dump valve on the dash that dumps the complete air system. When this happens the air brakes set up and the coach can't move.

**DENA ROORDA | VIA EMAIL**

*You should take it to a shop that works on buses and trucks with air brakes. They should be able to separate the two systems and install a control valve for the air bags.*

**TORQUE CONVERTER TRAVAILS**

I have a 1993 Southwind with a GM 7.4-L V-8 engine and an automatic transmission. When I am going up hills I can feel and hear the torque converter kick in and out, like the engine is racing up and down, almost like the passing gear going up and down. How can I fix the problem? Will a different torque converter be better, or

**WINEGARD CARRYOUT ANSER**

Winegard has introduced the Anser, the newest member of the Carryout family of portable satellite TV antennas. The Carryout Anser is designed for motorhomes, tailgating and other outdoor activities. Users simply set the elevation provided by the receiver and plug it in. After the antenna automatically finds the satellite, unplug the antenna power cable and watch TV. The Anser comes with a carrying handle and a security eyelet that's molded into the base. A 25-foot, 12-volt DC power cable and a 25-foot coax cable are included for outdoor positioning. An optional 120 volt AC to 12 volt DC converter is available, as is a Carryout tripod mount, sold separately. The Anser is available at retailers and RV dealerships.



**Winegard, 800-288-8094,**  
**[www.winegard.com](http://www.winegard.com)**

something like a Banks PowerPack?  
**OSCAR PERALES | EDINBURG, TEXAS**

*It's likely that the lock-up function of the torque converter is going on and off while you are driving uphill. Typically you will see a 200-300 RPM change in engine speed, which is significantly less than you will see if the transmission shifts from one gear to another when pulling under load. Unless it is behaving differently than it was previously, it is probably functioning normally as it was designed. Some drivers are disturbed when the clutch fan engages and disengages, which causes a load roar and sounds like the engine is changing speed. This often occurs while climbing a grade.*

*An aftermarket product such as a Banks PowerPack may increase horsepower while climbing hills, and may reduce torque converter activity. However, first make sure you're not just hearing the clutch fan engage and disengage. A tachometer will answer that question by not showing a change in engine speed when the noise occurs. ♦*

TO CONTRIBUTE TO COACH & POWERTRAIN, please refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 7.

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# BACK TO BASICS Unplugged — Your ticket to getting off the beaten path



**Going without hookups is not for everyone. But, for** motorhomers who like the idea of getting off the beaten path, it's a way to occasionally or frequently expand our horizons. Full self-containment capability is built into virtually all motorhomes, with such items as auxiliary (house) batteries, fresh-water storage, separate gray-water and waste holding tanks, LP-gas storage and AC generators. This equipment gets little use unless we dry camp, also known as boondocking.

Dry-camping sites vary greatly, including such destinations as a remote spot in the desert, a side yard at a friend's home, a stream-side location on public lands, a sporting event, a casino and even a hospital parking lot. (Many hospitals allow motorhomes overnight in their parking lots while the owners are visiting patients.) If you haven't stretched the limits of your coach, you may be surprised at how well it performs.

For dry camping, a motorhome should offer reliable ways to measure how much of its resources have been used: gauges for battery reserve power, water, holding tanks and the LP-gas tank.

When not connected to shorepower, we either run an AC generator for battery recharging (and other functions) or we rely on batteries. Many motorhomes do not include accurate voltmeters, which we need for monitoring battery state of charge.

Voltage	State of Charge
12.6 or higher	100%
12.4	70%
12.1	50%
11.8	30%
11.5	10%



These readings refer to batteries that are at rest (no load). Always measure voltage the same way. A voltmeter that monitors solar panels is a good indicator, as is the Voltminder ([www.voltminder.com](http://www.voltminder.com)), which is readable at a glance. A good hand-held multimeter will suffice, but is less convenient.

Consider your batteries depleted when voltage drops to 11.8. It's best to perform a recharge when voltage drops to 12.1 (50 percent). While you can recharge batteries via the AC generator (operating your electrical converter/battery charger), most factory converter/chargers do not provide effective battery recharging. Using an aftermarket unit like the Xantrex Truecharge will provide more efficient and complete charging

through multistage circuitry.

Solar panels are popular with the boondocking crowd and some owners rely on the engine alternator for recharging while on the road, although that's not very practical when parked in one place for more than a couple of days. Good battery capacity (at least 220 amp hours) is needed.

Adequate water storage capacity is essential, and the definition of adequate is subject to personal water conservation skills. Capacity of at least 70 gallons is needed unless dry-camp duration is only two or three days.

It's not very convenient, but if necessary for extended stays it may be possible to bring water to your site. Locate a water source (gas station, town park, etc.) while exploring in your dinghy, and fill a couple of collapsible 5-gallon water containers. Pour the water into your motorhome's gravity fill, or pump it in via the city water connection point:

1. Set your winterization valve to "winterize."
2. Set the water intake valve to the tank "fill" position.
3. Insert the winterization tube into the water container.
4. Turn on the water pump, which usually will transfer an external water supply into the motorhome's tank. Or, consider acquiring an extra RV water pump for use as a portable.



Ideally, your gray-water tank should be larger than the fresh-water capacity. The black tank usually is the last to fill. Upon exiting your no-hookups situation you'll probably be looking for a dump station. Listings can be found in campground directories, at [www.sanidumps.com](http://www.sanidumps.com) and by searching the Internet.

Locating sites for unplugged adventures in your coach usually requires exploration in your dinghy to make sure the site is what you envisioned, and that the road leading to it is manageable. Also evaluate the area from the standpoint of security.

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These Sprinters Three (Winnebago ERA 70X, Winnebago View 24M and Itasca Reyo 25R)	4/36
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### MOTORHOME WALK-THROUGHS MO/PAGE

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CA: Joshua Tree National Park	5/90
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MS: Vicksburg National Military Park	6/90
MT: Old Montana Prison Museum	9/98
MT: Summit Lake	7/98
OK: POPS Soda Ranch	8/98
OR: Mount Hood	10/98
SD: Mount Rushmore	3/98
UT: Arches National Park	2/98

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Banks Powerpack Diesel Tuner Test	3/48
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A Breath of Fresh Air (Air filter replacement)	11/61
Cool Runnings (Radiator cleaning for diesel)	12/48
Corrosion Prevention	9/56
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Don't Fear the Juice (Electrical repair kit)	1/51
The Great Indoors (Satellite products and antennas for TV reception)	9/62

A Great Room in My Motorhome (Dinette redesign)	6/52
Improving Road Manners (Hellwig Sway Bars install)	8/50
Keep the Gears Turning (DIY rear-axle fluid change)	8/58
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Life of the Party (Tailgater Portable HDTV System by DISH Network)	1/55
The Italian Job (Fiat 500 setup for dingy towing with Roadmaster EZ Twistlock bracket)	5/36
The Light-Emitting Diode Revolution	2/60
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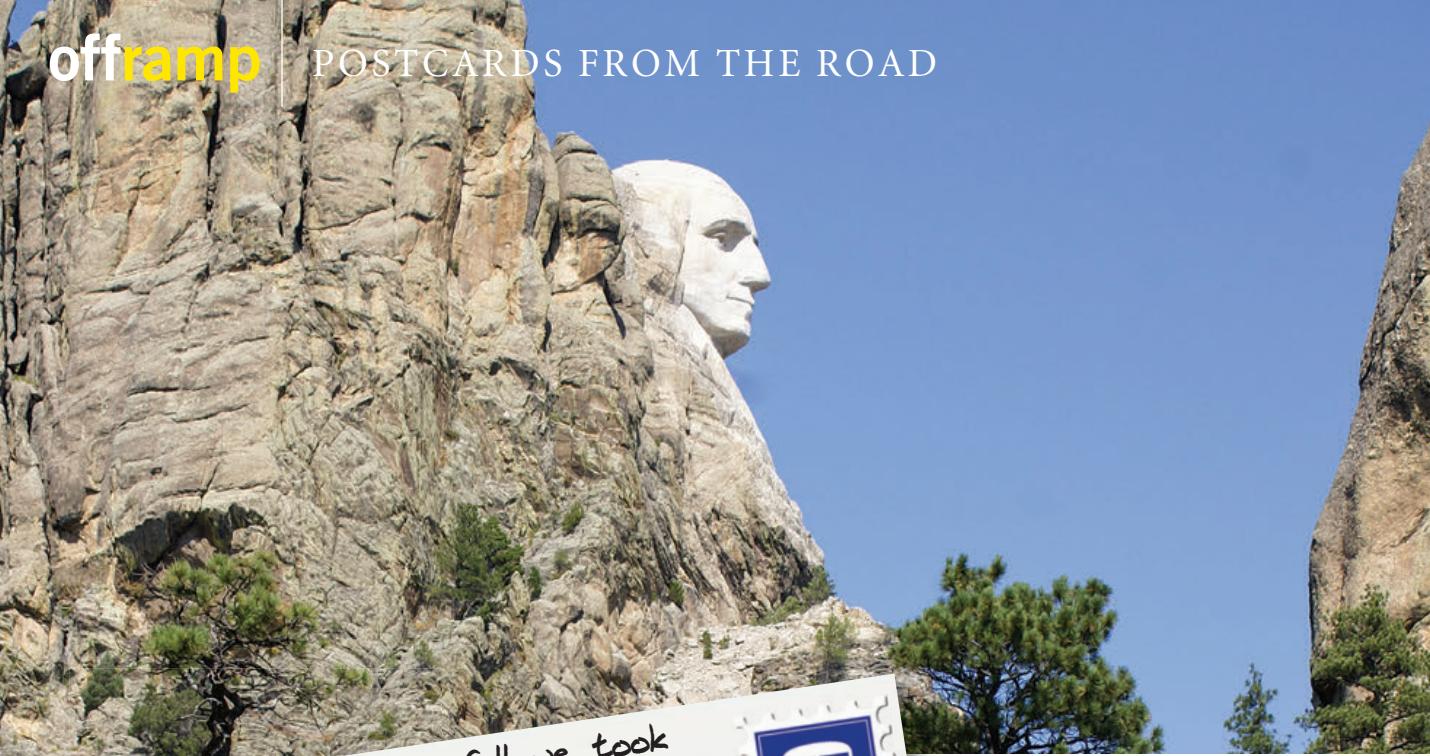
AK: The Next Frontier	12/24
AZ: Do You Know the Mountain Man? (Williams)	10/30
AZ: The Goldilocks of All Deserts (Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument)	6/38
AZ: Meeting Up at Four Corners Monument	1/26
CA: Coastal California Escape (Half Moon Bay)	9/30
CA: How the West Won Us (Sierra Nevada)	2/30
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CO: Mesa Verde National Park	5/26
CO: A River Runs Through It (Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park)	3/34
CO: Rediscovering Home (Pikes Peak)	2/36
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MO: Literary Lesson (Mark Twain Birthplace State Historic Site)	8/24
NC: Shipwrecks, Lighthouses and Banker Ponies (Outer Banks)	4/22
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OR: Weekend Escape in Oregon's John Day Country	3/21
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UT: Cathedral Valley Loop (Capitol Reef National Park)	6/20

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Canada: Old-World Nova Scotia (Cape Breton Island)	1/34
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On our vacation last fall we took a side trip to see Mount Rushmore in South Dakota. Our little 2009 Coachman Freelander (aka "The Eagle") got us from Pennsylvania to West Virginia, Kentucky and west to Missouri, Nebraska, Wisconsin and Ohio - just to name a few of the 13 states we visited.

JAN AND RICH OLSOMMER  
CANADENSIS, PENNSYLVANIA



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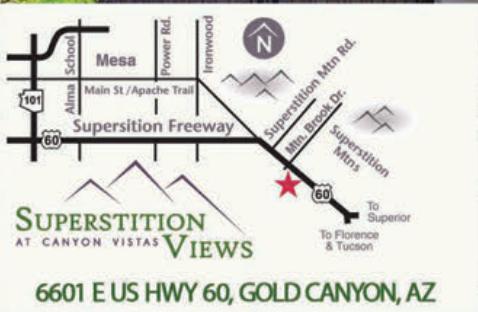


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