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**On The Cover:** Phaeton test coach is driven along Outdoor Resort Indio's palm-studded roadway leading to the beautifully manicured luxury park. The motorhome-only facility was home for the Phaeton evaluation that begins on page 48. Photo by Scott Hirko.

# THE WI-FI DILEMMA

Selecting an RV park takes some research. Obviously, location is paramount, but there are a number of other factors to consider before making that reservation. For one, the space must be suitable for the coach size and slide-out configuration. Hookups are important, especially if 50-amp power is required — and, of course, the available amenities. Staying connected while on the road is probably equally as important to most RVers these days, and whether or not the park has Wi-Fi accessibility can be a deal breaker.

As part of any good marketing campaign, RV parks that offer Wi-Fi connectivity often promote the service. Free Wi-Fi is certainly a selling point these days; almost all places where people tend to gather — from coffeehouses to state parks — promote Wi-Fi services, if available. It's part of today's culture.

We often hear from owners who have had less than stellar results using Wi-Fi in RV parks, so we reached out to our readers asking for comments about their experiences with email and Internet connections. The response was overwhelming — and mostly negative. In this month's *P.O. Box* (see page 6), we've published a smattering of letters received on the subject. The majority complained about weak signals and slow download and upload speeds.

In all fairness to the campground industry, there's a big difference between hanging out in a coffee shop with maybe five other Internet users and competing for bandwidth in an RV park with hundreds of motorhome users. Throw in peak hours and the system can easily become overloaded. Keep in mind that any Wi-Fi infrastructure is dependent on antenna placement and overall reach. Hotels and retail business are typically in confined spaces, but even a small campground can be sprawled out over 20 acres. Campgrounds that are light on antenna placement tend to have the best signals closer to the office or recreation centers — a common com-



plaint among park guests whose sites are out of strong signal range.

In talking to campground operators, it's clear that bandwidth is a sticking point. Getting the right service is reliant on local providers, an issue almost all park operators face. Making an investment in additional antennas and state-of-the-art equipment may be an exercise in futility when the only service available in the area is not up to speed. Remember, most parks are not in metropolitan areas where Internet service is best.

Nevertheless, campground operators are working with providers to offer faster service, even though the portion of the overnight fees allocated to Wi-Fi may not result in a profitable enterprise.

Travelers who absolutely require reliable service while on the road should consider using a satellite system or cell-based data device. I use a Verizon Mobile Hotspot and a Smoothtalker signal booster, which allow me to stay connected. But there is a downside to using cell data service: If you enjoy streaming movies, for example, cell data service can get real expensive.

Actually, streaming videos and movies contribute to the bandwidth problem in RV parks. The proliferation of tablets and Internet TV devices place huge demands on Wi-Fi systems. Customers should not let expectations get in the way of reality. It's unrealistic to compare campground systems to home cable service tied into wireless routers. It's also unrealistic to expect that RV park guests will refrain from Internet activity other than email.

I believe RV park operators are sincere in their efforts to improve Wi-Fi service, but at the same time, have an obligation to meet and/or adjust advertising claims. No one said that keeping up with technology would be easy. ♦

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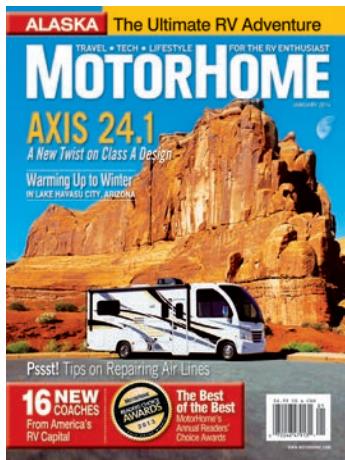
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## DO YOU USE THE WI-FI PROVIDED AT CAMPGROUNDS? IF SO, WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE SERVICE?

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

### DEAL BREAKER

In response to the question concerning Wi-Fi provided at campgrounds, our experience has been mixed. Some RV parks that advertise free Wi-Fi have park-wide service and are very good. Others offer service that can only be picked up near the office. Then there are parks that charge \$1 or \$2 for a certain amount of hours with a card from the office. This is not ideal, but is better than nothing at all.

Not having park-wide free Wi-Fi is becoming a deal breaker for us, and we will be more selective in where we call home in the future.

**FRANK AND PAT NYERT | KEWANEE, ILL.**

### SURFING WITH A JETPACK

I've never had luck with campground Wi-Fi. I often work online and on-the-road, so network access is important. My solution is Verizon's Jetpack. It's a small, very mobile Wi-Fi you take with you. It works great, is fast and I use it for Internet access at home and on the road. The cost is reasonable, but the price depends on how much data you use monthly. Basic email and Internet browsing are no problem; however, if you download often or use heavy online video application, you can quickly use up your data allotment.

**ANTHONY ROBITZSCH | VIA EMAIL**

### WILLING TO PAY FOR GOOD HIGH-SPEED SERVICE

We average 45 nights a year in our Reyo motorhome. We have traveled from Glacier National Park to the northern shores of Nova Scotia, Canada, and rate the Wi-Fi service from deplorable to disappointing. We are not wanting to stream video or music, we just would like to stay in touch with good email access (as I still work) and some Web surfing to find local establishments, entertainment opportunities, etc. This is extremely frustrating, especially in areas where cell service is poor to nonexistent. I don't even mind paying a few dollars a day extra for reliable connection to good high-speed service.

**TOM PALMER  
WINFIELD, ILL.**

### THE DEFINITION OF A STRONG SIGNAL

Last year, we took an RV trip to the East Coast and back. It was a 47-day trip with stays in 14 RV parks, which ranged from KOAs to independents to state parks. All were specifically chosen because each advertised Wi-Fi, with some even stating that they had "strong" Wi-Fi. Looking back at my reviews of the parks, we experienced the following:

One park advertised Wi-Fi at all sites, but only provided it at the snack bar. At another park, the Wi-Fi signal could only be detected at the office. Two parks had extremely good service, e.g., a strong signal and good bandwidth. Neither of them advertised as having a strong signal.

Four parks had intermittent signals. Just about the time I logged on, the signal was lost and I had to start over. After several tries, it was easier to use our cellphone service.

Six campgrounds had good signal strength, but little to no bandwidth. This prevented us from performing uploads and downloads to the extent that the server timed out.

Since then, I've researched Wi-Fi boosters with external antennas. I hope that they might at least increase signal strength enough to fix half of the problems encountered. However, it's not enough to have a strong signal when everyone at the park is trying to use an Internet connection that is bandwidth limited at the same time. A booster won't improve the bandwidth; only the parks themselves can fix that.

Speed is a measurement of how much data can be transferred from the Internet to a computer per second. I'd like to see RV parks list this speed at the farthest site from their Wi-Fi antenna during the hours of 6 to 8 p.m. It would be much more meaningful than saying they have a strong signal.

**LARRY FRIEMEL | LAS VEGAS, NEV.**

### EXCUSES, EXCUSES

We travel to many different RV parks. Ninety percent of the time we have little or no service when advertised! We've heard all the excuses ... the repair guy is on the way; folks



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in 40-foot motorhomes always have problems; funny, we just checked it yesterday. The other issue we experience is slow, limited service that goes to no service when the park census gets to 50 percent. I've never had this issue in a hotel/motel.

**GENE SPOON | RENO, NEV.**

**NEED MORE BANDWIDTH**

I agree Wi-Fi service at RV parks is bad to non-existent. Some parks still charge for Wi-Fi, and the service is just as bad as the free Wi-Fi.

I am a computer network administrator and I know for a fact that parks could have very good Wi-Fi if they just had enough antennas throughout the park and, most importantly, enough bandwidth for at least half of us to be online at the same time. This would cost the parks more money, but many of us must have decent Wi-Fi when on the road. I typically carry a Wi-Fi hotspot with me, and get better response with that than by using the park's Wi-Fi.

**MARK SNOWDEN | MIDLAND, TEXAS**

**MIFI WORKS FOR ME**

I have yet to find a campground with adequate Wi-Fi. Problems range from no connection, to slow connections, to the signal being dropped, to just plain bad service.

We travel extensively, and occasionally I try the campground Wi-Fi, but usually I end up going back to my Verizon MiFi, or Jetpack as it is now called. My service from Verizon is usually 4G in most areas and seldom not available. I have used this method of connection for several years and even use this service at home for regular Internet connectivity. We have had great success with our Verizon Wi-Fi, even in Alaska. I highly recommend this method.

**TOM ROCHELEAU  
HOLLYWOOD, MD.**

**GO WITH CELLULAR WI-FI**

I am new to RVing and, as a bit of a tech geek, I need my Wi-Fi. During the past year, I have visited many campgrounds in Northern California and Oregon. I always run a speed test after connecting. All of

the parks but one had lousy throughput. Most barely reached 1 Mb/sec. Lincoln City KOA in Oregon was the one exception to the rule. On July Fourth, I was able to stream a pay-per-view event over the campground Internet connection. Tested throughput was around 14 Mb/sec. Toward the end of the night, throughput dropped to the point where I couldn't stream media. As luck would have it, a neighbor let me use their Verizon MiFi box so I could finish watching the fight. Throughput was much higher, and I finished the fight in HD streaming without dropouts. I learned that night to go with cellular Wi-Fi access if I want decent throughput.

**JEFF PHINNEY | PLUMAS LAKE, CALIF.**

**WI-FI SERVICE NEEDS IMPROVEMENT**

We own a 40-foot motorhome and have traveled extensively. We have found campground Wi-Fi to be generally poor. A few work well, but most work poorly and are not secure. Some do not work at all, especially if you are more than 50 feet away

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from the office. At the prices that most campgrounds charge these days, they could provide better Wi-Fi service.

**WALLY AND MARTHA VENARD  
BERNARDSVILLE, N.J.**

### **NO PASSWORD PROTECTION**

Yes, I use Wi-Fi when available. Many campgrounds have a very weak signal, which is only effective in off hours. A few campgrounds have a good signal. Some are password protected, but most are not. Pretty backward for this time.

**SUSAN E. DONOHUE  
BRISTOL, CONN.**

### **HONESTY AND FREE WI-FI**

One of the camping joys is the friendliness and honesty of fellow campers. However, I must question the honesty of campground owners when it comes to free Wi-Fi.

I have noted that some campgrounds list free Wi-Fi, yet in smaller print, it states only for one hour, which has to be used all at one time, and then they charge. Others limit free Wi-Fi to certain campsites.

Still others have it available only in the office, and some turn it off when the office closes. Others list free Wi-Fi, but the download rate is so slow that it's not really useful. So, I believe, the time has come to standardize what is meant by free Wi-Fi.

I strongly recommend that the leading campground associations get together and standardize the meaning of free Wi-Fi.  
**ALAN S. KAPLAN | ROCKVILLE, MD.**

### **RELIABLE CONNECTIONS AND GOOD SPEED**

I used to use park Wi-Fi until I got fed up with the spotty coverage and slow speed and got a hotspot from Verizon. The problem is now solved. I get reliable connections and good speed.

**PAUL THORPE | GIG HARBOR, WASH.**

### **ONLY ONE PROBLEM**

We recently made a 4,000-mile trip from Texas to Pennsylvania, down the East Coast and back. We used Wi-Fi extensively in all of the campgrounds. We didn't have any problems except with TengelInternet

service in one campground in Virginia. We had a problem getting connected and had to use its tech support.

**BARRY MCHENRY  
NORTH RICHLAND HILLS, TEXAS**

### **RV PARKS NEED TO GET ON THE BALL**

On our last trip to the lower 48 from Alaska, we stayed at several different RV parks during our seven-week vacation. We attempted to use the Wi-Fi at all of them. What we found was that there was no rhyme or reason on how good the connectivity was. At some of the nicer RV parks, one would expect that the connectivity would be good or better. That was not always the case. We stayed at some very nice RV parks and had issues with their systems. We also stayed at some RV parks that some would never stay at, and the connectivity was always good.

In this day and age, good Wi-Fi connectivity should be something RV parks should stay on top of. I imagine that with so many people using Wi-Fi to stay connected and conduct business, that RV



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parcs would do a much better job with their systems.

**LARRY E. WHITE JR  
PALMER, ALASKA**

**NOT WORTH PAYING FOR**

I have not found a reliable RV park Wi-Fi system. It is hard, if not impossible, to reliably connect to the Internet if more than a few folks are trying to connect. And I have data security concerns about using a

public connection. I have found that I get a better, totally secure and faster connection by using the mobile hotspot feature on my smartphone. I have an encrypted and secure connection from my laptop to that hotspot, and I can also connect securely to my work's system.

I don't think that Wi-Fi as I've found it in RV parks is even worth advertising, much less paying for.

**BRUCE MCCUBBIN | BEL AIR, MD.**

**SYSTEM JUST DOESN'T WORK**

During a trip to Las Vegas and Southern California, I was sadly disappointed in the quality of Wi-Fi connections in RV parks. I ended up using my Virgin Mobile connection instead. I am a very experienced computer/Wi-Fi user, and spent far too much time talking with tech support. The systems just did not work. At Happy Traveler R.V. Park in Palm Springs, Calif., the Wi-Fi repeater was adjacent to my space, and while I had good signal strength, I couldn't get a solid data connection.

**DAVE BITTNER | FRISCO, COLO.**

**TIRED OF MISLEADING ADS**

We have rarely been able to connect to Wi-Fi service and then it has usually been unsatisfactory. Given the advertising of this service, RV parks should provide it. No excuses. We are tired of believing their advertising and then having to go to a Starbucks or McDonald's to get our email.

**CHARLENE MERCADO | VIA EMAIL**

**HAPPY WITH NEXU MESH**

My wife and I always look for Wi-Fi at the campgrounds we plan to stay at. I have to stay connected to work while we travel, so it is very important to us. As expressed in the January issue, the ability to actually connect and the quality of the connections are often dubious. The best service we've had is with Nexu Mesh Networks. The campgrounds using its systems have always had good coverage throughout the park and its connections are easy to access. Best of all, it provides great technical support 24/7. We weren't sure how to connect multiple devices the first time we used the system. The support was very friendly and technically competent. I'd love to see this group at more locations.

**WARREN BROWN | VIA EMAIL**

**GOING INTO OVERDRIVE WITH SPRINT**

We have been traveling with portable Wi-Fi-capable computers since 2005. The first two years we tried using the Wi-Fi services provided by RV parks. We found these services varied greatly. The servers were often overloaded and we couldn't get online or stay online very long. Frequently, we had to specify that we wanted a campsite close enough to the antenna to get service, and those sites were more

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expensive. When service failed, the office staff couldn't help.

In 2007, we bought a Sprint Overdrive 3G/4G mobile hotspot wireless roaming mobile broadband device. Since then, we have been delighted with the service across a wide circle of the Midwest, the South and Southwest.

As I wrote this note, the Wi-Fi system in the resort where I am camped is down. The RVers cannot communicate with their friends and families over the Christmas holidays. I am glad I have my own wireless Internet connections.

**BILL SPEER | BILOXI, MISS.**

### WINDSHIELD REPLACEMENT?

It was interesting to read about the AXIS 24.1 Class A motorhome in the January issue. It has a lot of features in a small package and should be easy to drive. However, what is with the windshield? While the windshield may look cool, and give an outstanding view, I bet it would be a real pain to replace. Any idea what it is going to cost to replace it? I am not sure about driving in the lower 48, but here in Alaska, broken windshields are the norm. I guess that those who design motorhomes do not care — or think much — about possible repairs to the coach after it's purchased.

It will be interesting to follow these coaches once they get on the road.

**LARRY E. WHITE JR | PALMER, ALASKA**

### FLEETWOOD WAS THE FIRST

Nice to see the AXIS motorhome by Thor on the January cover, and the article on the new product inside. Thor, however, isn't the first to build a Class A coach on the Ford E-series chassis. Fleetwood introduced the Flair Class A motorhome as a 1989 model on this platform, and used it through the 1991 model year on its smaller units. Other manufacturers followed suit, but Fleetwood was the first.

**DOUG SCHWEBACH | VIA EMAIL**

### THE BEST STATE PARKS

On Dec. 22, 2013, my wife and I had the good fortune to be found by Ranger Ben Holmes at Hunting Island State Park in South Carolina. We were walking from the campground to the lighthouse when I stepped on a pine cone hidden beneath pine needles and twisted my already in-

jured knee. We also had the misfortune of arriving at high tide, so we couldn't walk back on the beach.

Ranger Holmes saw my distress, came to our rescue and gave us a ride back to the campground, all the way to our motorhome. He was an answered prayer.

With rare exceptions, we camp almost exclusively in South Carolina State Parks. They are arguably the cleanest, best maintained and the friendli-

est parks in the nation. Ranger Holmes and Hunting Island prove this true.

**JOE SHERRILL | MONROE, N.C.**

### QUESTION:

Which state parks do you think are the best in the nation?

Send your comments to *MotorHome*, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, CA 93036; or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com. ♦

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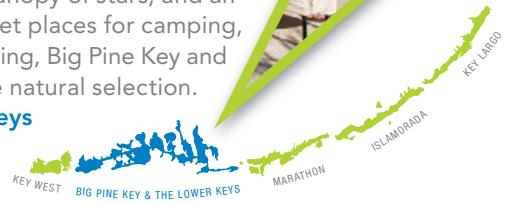


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# escapes

edited by EILEEN HUBBARD

ROAD FOODIE | WHEELS & GEAR | NOTEWORTHY | CROSSROADS

## SURPRISES NEAR ST. GEORGE, UTAH

### A DAY HIKE IN RED CLIFFS RECREATION AREA BRINGS UNEXPECTED DELIGHTS

Have you every set out on a hike, not knowing what to expect, and found an incredible destination at the end of the trail? Our day hike to Red Cliffs Recreation Area near St. George, Utah, was just that.

After arriving at Quail Creek State Park, we walked 4 miles (passing under the overpass for Interstate 15) to the trailhead at adjacent Red Cliffs. We hiked through the canyon on Red Reef Trail along Quail Creek. Just as we were ready to stop and head back to the campground, we decided to scramble over a small rock pile and continue deeper into the canyon. As we made our way around a bend, we came upon a peaceful waterfall emptying into a slick rock pool. It was a great place to relax and have a picnic.

Quail Creek State Park has 22 sites with electricity and modern restrooms. Camping is also available at Red Cliffs (dry camping only), but be aware that due to the I-15 overpass, access to the Recreation Area is through tunnels that restrict vehicle size to less than 12 feet in height. For more information, call 435-879-2378 or go to [www.stateparks.utah.gov/park/quail-creek-state-park](http://www.stateparks.utah.gov/park/quail-creek-state-park) — *Morey Edelman*

PHOTO: MOREY EDELMAN

# CLAMOPOLY: DIG THOSE RAZORS!



This surf clammer wears chest-high waders to stay dry.



From top: These clamming RVers, who drove their motorhome right onto the beach, are rinsing the sand off their catch. Clamming is a family affair. Razor clams have the distinctive shell that resembles a straight razor.



## They're coming ... and the sun isn't even up yet.

Normally, the ocean waves are the only noise you hear on Washington's Long Beach Peninsula. But on designated "clam tides," the roar of hundreds of cars heading to its famous 28 miles of beach sounds like a freeway.

Clam lovers, many who are also RVers, dig for Pacific razor clams, one of a family of long, slim-shelled clams (resembling a straight razor) that occurs on select coasts around the world. Some are fatter or slimmer; some are longer or shorter, but all have the characteristic narrow, razor-like shell. They also have a powerful "foot" for fast digging.

From Labrador, Canada to South Carolina, the razor clam is called the Atlantic jackknife. The razor shell (or razor fish) lives on sandy beaches in Eastern Canada, especially on Prince Edward Island. In the West, the Pacific razor clam — one of the tastiest — is found from Pismo Beach, Calif., to the eastern Aleutian Islands in Alaska where they can grow up to 11 inches.

## WORTH THE COLD AND WET

On Washington's Long Beach — one of the best razor clam beaches around — thousands of clammers stand along the muddy tide line. They're looking for little holes or depressions indicating a clam. Most wear knee-high rubber boots, though surf clammers (who hunt at or below the tide line) wear chest-high waders. Some diggers use thin, curved clam shovels. Most use clam "guns" — aluminum or plastic PVC pipe tubes with handles that quickly suck up wet sand.

When diggers spot a clam, they plunge the shovel or gun into the sand. The shoveler digs madly; gunners push and twist the tube into the sand, pull up sand and, hopefully, the clam. Often, clammers must plunge their arms into the cold, wet hole to grab the clam. If they're fast — and lucky — they'll emerge with a 3- to 7-inch-long razor clam.

Razor clam harvest is strictly controlled. In Washington, the state Department of Fish and Wildlife designates "clam weekends" and each clammer must buy a license and is limited to 15 clams (regardless of size or condition) per day. (Elsewhere, regulations differ, so check first.) Fines for clamming without a license or taking more than the limit are steep.

Clams are best during cold, wet months like April. In fact, there's an old adage that you can clam in months with an "R" in them, but it's best to check first. Also, toxic tides can close beaches.

After "limiting," clammers must clean clams or turn them over to clam cleaners. It's important to separate the clams from their sharp shells, remove any fibrous membrane and thoroughly rinse off the sand.

Clam necks have to be pounded to ensure tenderness and are often reserved for clam chowder. The diggers or "foot" are the most tender and tastiest. A light battering of egg, flour, and cracker crumbs and a quick fry in butter does the trick.

The first time you bite into a razor clam with its crispy outside, tender-chewy inside and rich clammy-briny flavor, you'll know, like thousands of clammers, that the sand, the cold and all the work are definitely worth it. So, if you're anywhere near a razor clam beach, get out there and dig your limit!

Got a favorite clamming spot you'd like to share? Let Bobbie know by sending an email (with Road Foodie in the subject line) to [hasselbring@bctonline.com](mailto:hasselbring@bctonline.com)

## AN ENERGY ODYSSEY

EnerSys has expanded its ODYSSEY Performance Series battery product offering to include the Group 65 battery designed specifically for consumer applications. The ODYSSEY Performance Series 65-760 battery features 762 cold cranking amps (CCA), 129 reserve capacity (RC) minutes and deep cycle capability up to 400 cycles at 80 percent depth of discharge. Engineered with Thin Plate Pure Lead (TPPL) technology, ODYSSEY Performance Series batteries feature rugged construction, high reliability and deep cycling capabilities to deliver more overall power and longer service life than conventional batteries, according to the company. It also features a three to 10 year service life and is backed by a limited four-year full replacement warranty.

**EnerSys Energy Products Inc., 660-429 2165,  
www.odysseybattery.com**



## EZ OIL DRAIN

Regular oil changes are an important part of coach ownership — but draining the oil can be a messy process, and if you're not careful, you can cross thread the drain hole when reinstalling the plug. The EZ Oil Drain Valve simply replaces the existing oil drain plug for fast, clean and easy oil changes. No need for tools — just lift and turn the lever of the nickel-plated brass ball valve to drain the oil, then return the lever to its original locked position when finished. An optional hose end (sold separately) makes it easy to connect a hose to drain the oil into a remote receptacle, if desired. The EZ Oil Drain Valve is available in 26 sizes to suit all engines, according to the company.

**Global Sales Group, 425-999-1200,  
www.ezoildrain.com**

## NEED A LIFT?

Under bed storage is a convenient feature in any RV — but over time, the small gas struts that support the bed can start to fail, or worse yet, don't work properly in the first place. Recognizing that not all RV beds are created equal, Hatchlift introduced its Bedlift kits for a cost effective solution to a very common problem. Consisting of appropriately sized gas struts, mounting brackets and hardware, Bedlift systems are available for small, standard, large and heavy bed applications. For example, the heavy bed kit is designed for king size beds with residential mattresses, or queen beds with thick particle board platforms and heavy mattresses with pillow tops.

**Hatchlift, 303-233-6083, www.hatchlift.com**



## GOOD SAM ANNOUNCES **TOP-RATED RV PARKS AND CAMPGROUNDS** FOR 2014

The following parks received perfect 10/10\*/10 ratings from the Good Sam RV Travel Guide & Campground Directory for amenities, cleanliness and location:

- **Alabama** — Bella Terra of Gulf Shores, Lake Osprey RV Resorts, Heritage Motorcoach Resort & Marina, Windemere Cove RV Resort
- **Arizona** — Desert Shadows RV Resort, Desert's Edge RV-The Purple Park, Distant Drums RV Resort, Far Horizons Tucson Village RV Resort, Lazydays RV Campground, Mesa Spirit RV Resort, Palm Creek Golf & RV Resort, Pueblo El Mirage Golf & RV Resort, Rincon Country East RV Resort, Rincon Country West RV Resort
- **Arkansas** — Catherine's Landing at Hot Springs, Ozarks RV Resort on Table Rock Lake
- **California** — Jackson Rancheria RV Park, Motorcoach Country Club, Outdoor Resort Indio, Outdoor Resort Palm Springs, Redding Premier RV Resort, The Lakes RV & Golf Resort, The Springs At Borrego RV Resort & Golf Course
- **Colorado** — Mesa Verde RV Resort, Tiger Run RV Resort
- **Connecticut** — Aces High RV Park
- **Florida** — Crystal Lake RV Resort, Emerald Coast RV Beach Resort, Gulf Waters RV Resort, Outdoor Resorts/Chokoloskee Island, River Bend Motorcoach Resort, Signature Motorcoach Resort at Naples, The Great Outdoors RV, Treasure Coast RV Resort, Vacation Inn Resort of the Palm Beaches, Williston Crossings RV Resort
- **Louisiana** — Cajun Palms RV Resort, Paragon Casino RV Resort
- **Maryland** — Castaways RV Resort & Campground
- **Massachusetts** — Beach Rose RV Park, Cape Cod Campresort & Cabins, Normandy Farms Family Camping Resort, Pine Acres Family Camping Resort
- **Michigan** — Harbortown RV Resort, Hearthside Grove Motorcoach Resort, Little River Casino RV Park, Signature Motorcoach Resort at Bay Harbor, Silver Creek RV Resort, Soaring Eagle Hideaway RV Park, South Haven Sunny Brook RV Resort, Traverse Bay RV Resort, Vacation Station RV Resort
- **Minnesota** — Grand Casino Hinckley, Prairie View RV Park & Campground
- **Montana** — Polson Motorcoach & RV Resort
- **Nevada** — Lakeside Casino & RV Resort, Las Vegas RV Resort, LVM Resort, Nevada Treasure RV Resort
- **New Jersey** — Seashore Campsites
- **New York** — Chautauqua Lake KOA, Lake George RV Park, Skyway Camping Resort, The Villages at Turning Stone
- **North Carolina** — Mountain Falls Luxury Motorcoach Resort
- **Ohio** — Evergreen Park RV Resort
- **Oklahoma** — Choctaw Casino Resort KOA
- **Oregon** — Bend/Sisters Garden RV Resort, Casey's Riverside RV Park, Olde Stone Village RV Park, Pacific Shores Motorcoach Resort, Pheasant Ridge RV Resort, Seven Feathers RV Resort
- **Pennsylvania** — Lake-in-Wood Resort, Shenango Valley RV Park
- **South Carolina** — Cypress Camping Resort, Hilton Head Harbor RV Resort & Marina, Hilton Head Island Motorcoach Resort/Outdoor Resorts, Ocean Lakes Family Campground, Willowtree RV Resort & Campground
- **South Dakota** — Hart Ranch Camping Resort Club
- **Tennessee** — Smoky Bear Campground, Twin Creek RV Resort
- **Texas** — Advanced RV Resort, Bentsen Palm Village RV Resort, Buckhorn Lake Resort, Fernbrook Park, Forest Retreat RV Park, K.E. Bushman's Camp, Mill Creek Ranch Resort, Northshore RV Resort, Oak Creek RV Park, Rayford Crossing RV Resort, San Jacinto Riverfront RV Park, Shallow Creek RV Resort
- **Utah** — Mountain Valley RV Resort
- **Canada** — Bissell's Hideaway Resort, Camping La Cle Des Champs RV Resort, Fisherman's Cove Tent & Trailer Park, Holiday Park Resort, Woodland Park

## News Briefs

In January, the RV/MH Heritage Foundation board announced that **Bob Livingston**, publisher of *MotorHome* and our sister publication, *Trailer Life*, will be inducted into the RV/MH Hall of Fame as part of the Class of 2014. Ceremonies will be held at the RV/MH Hall of Fame facility in Elkhart, Ind., on August 4.

"I join their friends, family and colleagues in welcoming these new inductees who will join the honored rolls of industry leaders, pioneers and innovators who have made significant contributions to the RV and manufactured housing industries," said Foundation President Darryl Searer.

The other RV industry inductees include **Debbie Brunoforte**, president-owner and CEO, Little Dealer, Little Prices; **Peter Orthwein**, chairman, Thor Industries Inc.; **John Roba**, founder and president of Roba and Associates; and **James Shields**, president of Pan Pacific RV Centers Inc.

The **American Red Cross** has issued a new Pet First Aid App. According to a press release, the app puts lifesaving information in the hands of dog and cat owners so they can provide emergency care until veterinary assistance is available. The Pet First Aid app costs 99 cents and provides smartphone users instant access to expert information about pet health and what to do during emergencies. Other features include an animal hospital locator and the ability to set up multiple pet profiles. The Pet First Aid App is available at the Apple App Store and Google Play Store or by going to [www.redcross.org/mobileapps](http://www.redcross.org/mobileapps).

## RV SHOWS

**APRIL 4-6**  
**Acadiana RV & Camping Show**  
 Lafayette, La.  
 337-436-4355

**APRIL 11-13**  
**El Paso RV & Travel Show**  
 El Paso, Texas, 847-229-6730

**APRIL 11-13**  
**Washington State Evergreen RV Show**  
 Monroe, Wash., 206-783-5957



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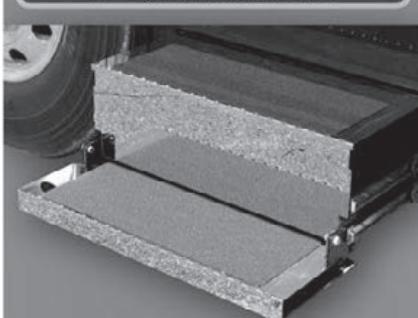
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**BROOKGREEN GARDENS**  
If you're driving on U.S. Highway 17 along South Carolina's coast, plan a stop at Brookgreen Gardens — a National Historic Landmark. Located between Myrtle Beach and Pawleys Island, Brookgreen is open year-round and has constantly changing flowers and color. In addition to plants, these gardens feature a beautiful selection of metal sculptures. Begun by Archer and Anna Hyatt Huntington in the early 1930s to showcase Anna's sculptures, the gardens quickly grew to include works from the great artists of the time. Today, you can walk the paths and marvel at the sculptures, the fountains, the 300-year-old live oak trees and the natural environment that was once rice plantations. The facility is also home to the Lowcountry Zoo.

Camping is available directly across the highway at Huntington Beach State Park. Located on the Atlantic Ocean behind the dunes, there are 107 RV sites with partial hookups and 24 sites with full hookups.

**For more information**, call 843-235-6000 or go to [www.brookgreen.org](http://www.brookgreen.org) — *Morey Edelman*

## WORLD CENTER FOR BIRDS OF PREY

**The Peregrine Fund was founded in 1970 to save birds of prey** from extinction. Since then, it has produced and released more than 4,000 Peregrine falcons into the wild. In 1999, these raptors were removed from the Endangered Species List, making it one of the most successful conservation projects in history.

In 1984, The Peregrine Fund opened the World Center for Birds of Prey on a 580-acre site in Boise, Idaho. Each year, more than 30,000 visitors come to see demonstrations with hawks, falcons, eagles and owls, and to learn about the organization's conservation efforts at the Velma Morrison Interpretive Center.

The World Center for Birds of Prey is home to about 50 California condors, one of the world's most endangered birds. In the 1980s, only 22 California condors existed. Due to captive breeding programs, there are now about 350, with more than half of them living in the wild in Arizona, California and Mexico. An unreleasable pair of these magnificent birds, with their 9½-foot wingspans, resides at the Condor Cliffs exhibit.

**For more information**, call 208-362-8687 or go to [www.peregrinefund.org](http://www.peregrinefund.org) — *Mary Zalmanek* ♦



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PHOTO: THE PEREGRINE FUND/PAUL SPURLING

*“...I didn't know it was windy...”*



The Ronnie Moller Family (Nisalah, Trey, Sarah, Ronnie, Riley & Aidan)

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***“The only problem I encountered with the combination of HWH® Active Air and the Newmar Comfort Drive® steering, was that I didn't know it was windy until I opened the door and the wind almost blew the door off!”***

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– Ronnie Moller,  
Grandview, Texas

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# TANKS FOR THE MEMORIES



DRIVING A BRITISH CHIEFTAIN AND SHOOTING A WORLD WAR II-ERA STEN MAKES FOR A ONE-OF-A-KIND DAY OUT IN KASOTA, MINN.

**S**taring at the blue Oldsmobile someone has carelessly parked in front of me, I press down on the accelerator, filling the air with a thick cloud of coal-black diesel exhaust.

Then, just as I begin to pick up speed, a peculiar thing happens. Time seems to slow down, as I feel a slight bump and the nose of the British Chieftain main battle tank I'm driving suddenly climbs skyward, accompanied by the sounds of crumpling metal, breaking glass and bystanders whooping their approval.

As the dust settles, I climb down to get a better look at the aftermath of my short test drive. I'm afraid this is no ordinary fender-bender — together, this 60-ton beast and I have turned what was once someone's beloved family sedan into a shiny sky-blue speed bump.

Which leaves me with just one question: How am I going to explain this to my insurance agent?

## HEAVY METAL

Having driven my share of motorhomes over the years, I like to think I'm capable



Top: Be honest ... who wouldn't love to have the opportunity to drive a 60-ton Chieftain tank in a safe and fun environment? Above: The author gets instruction on the finer points of driving a 30,000-pound FV433 Abbott SPG.



Clockwise from above: Drive A Tank's private arsenal includes everything from Humvees, to self-propelled guns (pictured) and armored personnel carriers, to British and Russian main battle tanks. The tank's controls are relatively simple; following the winding course while looking through the tiny viewing port, not so much. Before starting target practice, participants must receive instruction on gun safety.



of handling a large vehicle in most any situation. That said, nothing could have prepared me for the morning I spent in the small farming community of Kasota, Minn., home to the world headquarters of a humble family-run operation known simply as Drive A Tank.

Like most unusual businesses, this one started innocently enough when co-owner Tony Borglum traveled to England in 2007 with the idea of buying a retired military vehicle, solely as a source of amusement for family and friends. While he was there, however, he stumbled upon a tourist attraction that allowed ordinary people to tool around in the British army's heavy metal castoffs — like my 120,000-pound Chieftain tank — and the seed was planted.

From those humble beginnings, the Borglum family's private arsenal has grown to include a dozen British tanks, plus several examples of the heavy-duty six-wheel-drive M35 trucks known as "deuce and a halves," not to mention assorted military Humvees and even a World War II-era Jeep, complete with pedestal-mounted .30-caliber machine gun. Unlike other collectors of military memorabilia, however, these folks had no intention of turning the items in their personal military-industrial complex into dusty museum pieces.

The result is the only place in North

America where anyone over the age of 14 can take the controls of some of the most unstoppable machines the world has ever known. In a society where most people have never even seen an actual military tank up close, this out-of-the-way tourist attraction is nothing less than the stuff of which daydreams are made.

### DRIVER'S SEAT

My Drive A Tank adventure started out with Tony Borglum giving our group an overview of the day's activities, with a heavy emphasis on the operation's few simple safety rules. With those basics out of the way, he continued with a fascinating history of the military tank and its role in armed conflicts over the years, followed by a detailed look at the distinctly different machines we'd be driving that day.

From there, we walked outside and climbed into the canvas-covered bed of a hulking M35 for the quick trip to the 20-acre facility's staging area. While Drive A Tank offers several different packages, members of my group and I had all signed up for the Four Star General package (\$599), which includes seat time in two different armored vehicles.

First up was the 33,000-pound FV433 Abbot, a tracked vehicle technically classified as a self-propelled gun (SPG) and fitted with a 105-millimeter cannon (demilled) that was once capable

We used to promise each other  
vacations that never seemed to happen.  
Trips that got pushed back because  
of work or the kids or things that just  
seemed more important at the time.  
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of striking targets as far as 9 miles away. The logic of making this the first thing we drove soon became apparent as we were able to pop our heads out of the driver's hatch gopher-style, giving us an excellent view of the winding dirt track that makes up the operation's closed course. Like most tracked vehicles, steering this brute was a relatively simple matter of alternately tugging on the two steering levers located between the driver's legs.

With only occasional advice from our instructor, perched just outside the driver's hatch, I managed to keep the Abbot centered on the narrow, muddy path without much difficulty. As I climbed out at the start/finish line, I was thinking maybe this tank-driving thing wasn't so tough after all.

To keep us from getting cocky, everyone then moved to Drive A Tank's FV432 Armored Personnel Carrier (APC), better known as a battlefield taxi by virtue of

its 10-seat rear troop compartment. To make things a little more interesting this time around, our instructor informed us we'd be maneuvering the APC around the course with the driver's hatch buttoned down, as it would be under actual combat conditions. While the controls were very similar to the Abbot, trying to pilot this 30,000-pound monster around the winding course while looking through the driver's tiny viewing port proved to be a good bit more challenging.

From there, it was back to the armory building for the high point of my day — driving the 60-ton Chieftain main battle tank over that hapless Oldsmobile. While that was great fun, I found out too late that they also allow visitors to use the Chieftain to demolish travel trailers that have reached the end of their road. I mean, how perfect would that have been for a story in an RV magazine?

After flattening the car, Tony presented me with the keys to what was left of it, along with the emblems off the hood and trunk, to keep as souvenirs. As we laughed about it, all I could think was, "There goes my good driver discount!"

**TRIGGER HAPPY**

Before that adrenaline rush had a chance to fade, Tony and his staff ushered us back into the classroom for another short presentation, this time by retired police officer and certified firearms instructor Mike Pulis. Like Tony's detailed review of the different tank models earlier in the day, Mike went over each of the three fully automatic machine guns we'd soon be handling, and covered important rules about gun safety designed to make sure the only injuries would be to the human silhouettes on our paper targets.

After donning safety glasses and ear protection, our group filed in to the operation's sophisticated indoor firing range. When our instructor asked who wanted to be first up, we all hesitated, as if trying to decide whether it was worth body-checking the other group members in order to get to the front of the line. Not that we were eager or anything.

In order to help build our confidence, we started small with a World War II-vintage Sten 9-millimeter submachine gun. These simple, British weapons were

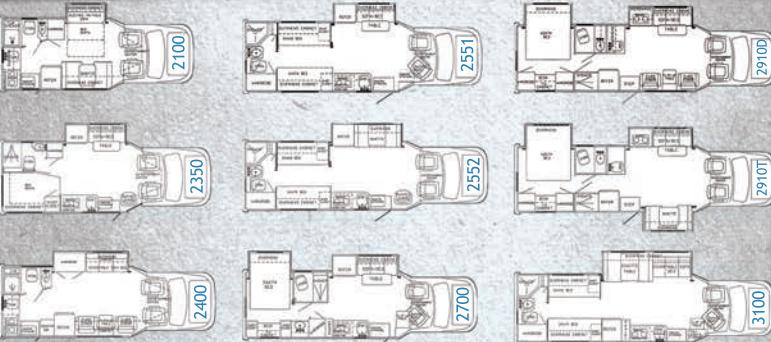
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designed to be mass produced quickly and cheaply, and many of them — including the one we'd be firing — found their way into the hands of resistance fighters behind enemy lines. Though it was my first time firing a fully automatic weapon, the Sten's minimal recoil and 500-rounds-per-minute firing rate allowed me to make quick work of emptying its 20-round magazine.

Next, we moved to a shortened version of the Vietnam-era M16 known as the M4 carbine, the rifle currently used by U.S. troops around the world. While this larger, heavier rifle wasn't particularly hard to handle, the staccato booming as it burned through the 30-round clip made the little Sten seem like a BB gun by comparison.

Last, but certainly not least, is one of those weapons no one ever expects to get their hands on, much less actually fire. I'm talking about another World War II staple, the tripod-mounted M1919 .30-caliber belt-fed medium machine gun. Again, with a firing rate of 600 rounds per minute, we all blew through our allotted 25 rounds almost before we knew it. When the ammo ran out, each shooter turned back to look at the rest of the group with wide eyes and a silent "Wow!" on their lips.

**PERILOUS PARKING**

By lunchtime, our adventure was over, but the excitement lingered long after the last motor was shut down and the final round was fired. Over the course of four hours, we had lived out the fantasies of every kid

who ever picked up a stick to play soldiers with their friends in the backyard. Things we'd all seen over and over again on the big screen, we could now casually say, "Oh yeah, been there, done that."

As I walked out to my car, however, I couldn't help laughing at the red-and-white signs affixed to the gate that led back to the dirt lot where the Chieftain still sat looming over the crushed Oldsmobile. Because this is one of those places where

you really want to take those *No Parking* signs seriously, lest you arrive in a full-size car and return to find a compact(ed) model occupying that same space. ♦



Alan Rider has been wandering the backroads of America for more than four decades. Though he's never been big on traditional souvenirs, he's passionate about collecting memories of the remarkable people and unforgettable places he encounters along the way.



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# EXPLORING CALIFORNIA'S

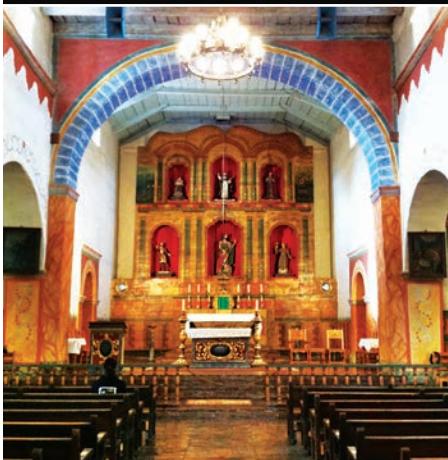
**It's just like in the movies. The narrow, two-lane road snakes along, hugging the cliffs. On one side, the Santa Lucia Mountains soar upward. On the other side, is a sheer 900-foot drop to the sea. Except that, unlike in the movies, I am not in a little sports car. I'm in a 28-foot Class C motorhome.**

Ah, Highway 1. It's good to be back.

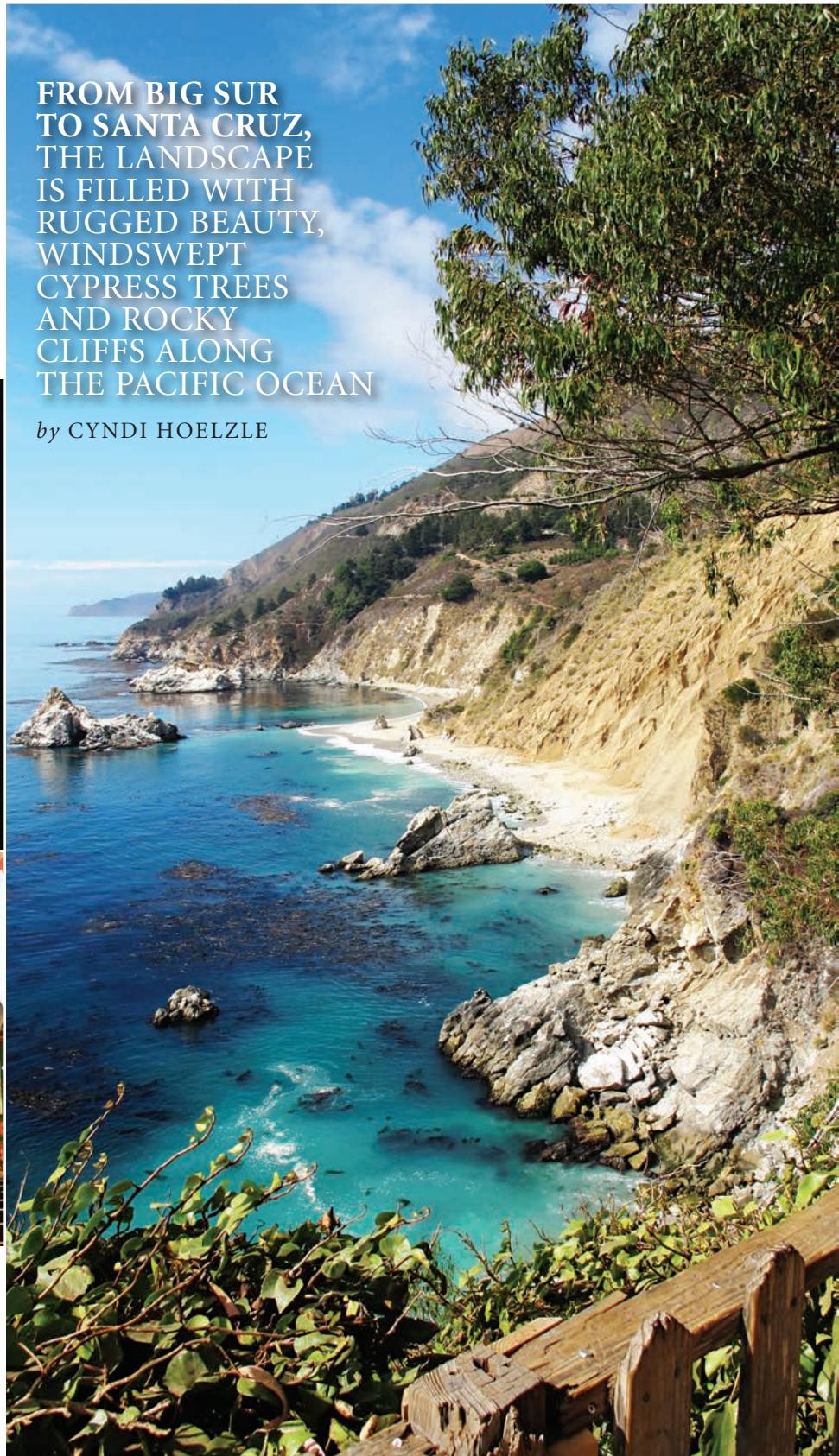
This stretch of California's coastal highway through Big Sur is one of the top scenic drives in the world ... as well

FROM BIG SUR  
TO SANTA CRUZ,  
THE LANDSCAPE  
IS FILLED WITH  
RUGGED BEAUTY,  
WINDSWEPT  
CYPRESS TREES  
AND ROCKY  
CLIFFS ALONG  
THE PACIFIC OCEAN

by CYNDI HOELZLE



Clockwise from top: The Jellies Experience at the Monterey Bay Aquarium features 16 species of jellyfish from around the world. At Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, a short trail from the parking lot leads to a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. The church at Mission San Juan Bautista — the largest of the California missions — holds daily mass.



# CENTRAL COAST

as one of the most dangerous. *National Geographic Traveler* declared it a “Drive of A Lifetime,” and it’s designated an All-American Road, a distinction reserved for highways so extraordinary, they are destinations unto themselves.

When I was a kid growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, my mom would make this same drive in our 1966 Dodge van. Now it’s time for me to show my children, who have grown up land-locked in Nashville, Tenn., the same stunning vistas and hairpin turns.

Since they were little, they’ve heard my stories of this drive, swimming next to seals in Santa Cruz, finding starfish in tide pools and watching the otters play near the shore in Monterey. Our quest is to find out if such wonders still exist.

## SANTA CRUZ

We begin our central coast tour in the funky beach town of Santa Cruz at the northern end of Monterey Bay. It’s a college town, surf town and longtime hippie haven. It’s also the home of the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk, a historic oceanfront amusement park that has been welcoming families since 1907.

If you want a campground that’s close to the action, Santa Cruz North Harbor RV Park is a small facility with water views and restaurants right on the marina. You can take a water taxi to the beach, or walk the ½-mile trail. It’s a quick drive to the boardwalk, where you can park your motorhome in one of the outdoor lots.

We hit the boardwalk as soon as we pull in to town and our first stop is an unlikely one — the 1911 Loeff carousel. Tweens would normally skip right past a carousel, but this historic beauty is a rite of passage. The reason? The brass ring dispenser — one of the last ones left in the world. Riders on the outside horses have to lean out to grab a ring, then try to lob it into a target. It’s harder than it sounds, thus the challenge — and the expression “grabbing for the brass ring.”

Next up is another National Historic Landmark, the Giant Dipper, a wooden roller coaster dating back to 1924. It’s one of the oldest operating roller coasters



PHOTO: CANNERY ROW

The historic streets of Cannery Row in Monterey are lined with specialty shops, art galleries, and a variety of award-winning fine dining and casual restaurants.

in the world, and part of the thrill is the ricketiness of the coaster itself. Every time a train car makes the big drop and begins its wild 46 mph ride, the whole coaster shakes and rattles like it’s about to fall apart. Of course, it’s perfectly safe; to date 60 million riders have taken the plunge.

If you prefer a quieter ride, park your motorhome at the far end of the boardwalk and board the Roaring Camp Railroad. The steam train makes a three-hour-long trip from the beach to the mountains and

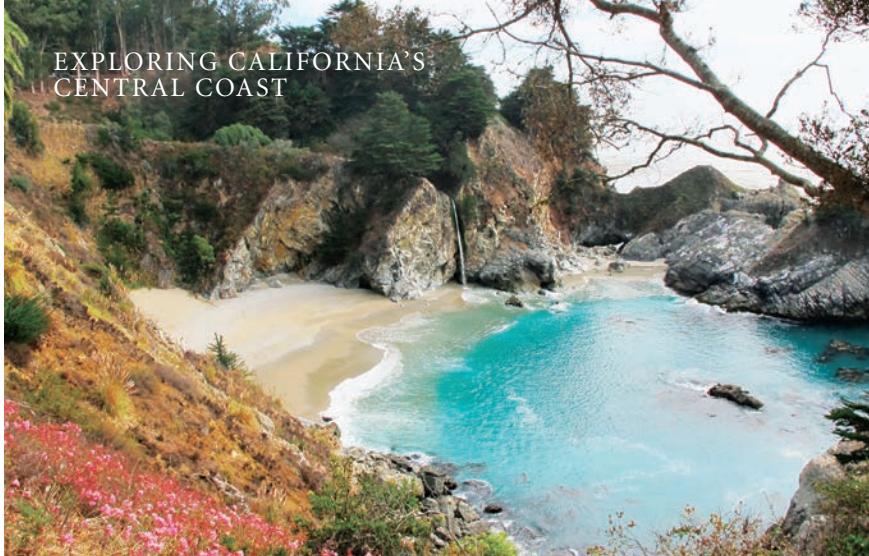
back. The trains, some of which date back to 1875, originally hauled lumber from the redwood forests. Now, they haul passengers in open cars over historic trestles and through canopies of redwoods. It’s a beautiful ride and a genuinely unique experience.

We wake the next morning to the sound of barking seals. My daughter spots a starfish during a stroll on the beach, and we see a few otters farther out in the water. People of all ages are taking surf



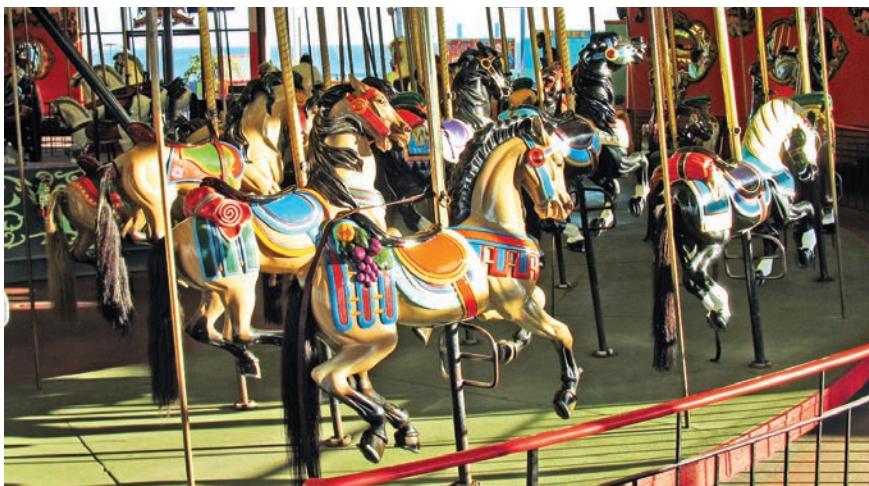
PHOTO: ROARING CAMP RAILROADS

Roaring Camp Railroads’ vintage train pulls in to the Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk after a scenic ride along the San Lorenzo River and through the Santa Cruz Mountains.



Water flows 80 feet from McWay Falls into the ocean at Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park.

PHOTO: SANTA CRUZ BEACH BOARDWALK



There are fewer than 20 working carousel ring machines left in the U.S., so hop on and grab the brass ring at the 1911 Loeffler carousel at Santa Cruz Beach Boardwalk.



Above left: On the way to San Juan Bautista, stop in Castroville at the Giant Artichoke. Above right: Monterey Bay Aquarium was built on the former site of major canning factories. Exhibits at the aquarium describe the history of the area's fishing industry.

lessons. We wander up to the Surfing Museum, staffed by some of the original members of the Santa Cruz Surfing Club from the 1930s. It's fun to see the vintage boards and watch experienced surfers hit the waves at Steamer Lane.

### MONTEREY

Many visitors overlook Monterey in favor of its prettier neighbor, Carmel-by-the-Sea. But I'll take the straightforward charm of Monterey any day (besides, it's just too hard to navigate an RV down Carmel's storybook streets).

Monterey was established by the Spanish in 1770, and served as California's capital under Spanish and Mexican rule. It later gained prominence as a fishing town, driven by the lucrative sardine industry and made famous by novelist John Steinbeck, who described the city in all its gritty glory in *Cannery Row*.

At the height of the sardine-fishing boom in the 1940s, Cannery Row processed 250,000 tons of fish a year, making it a \$50-million-a-year industry. By the 1950s, over fishing had depleted the bay, and the sardines were gone. The canneries closed, and the town was deserted.

Glimpses of the past still remain at Cannery Row. Otters play in the ruins of the sardine chutes — huge tunnels that were used to suck the fish into the canneries. The good news is that after 50 years, the tiny silver fish have returned to the bay, now a National Marine Sanctuary.

These days, the biggest draw is the Monterey Bay Aquarium, the world's largest, with more than 600 species of marine creatures. It sits on the site of a former cannery, but most of the 1.8 million yearly visitors don't care about the history — they're there to see the otters.

The newly updated sea otter exhibit is designed so you can view the cute critters from up above or watch them wrestle and play underwater. The Aquarium's biologists have learned that rescued otter pups quickly become dependent on humans, so now they strive to expose them to minimal human contact, instead utilizing the older otters to serve as surrogate mothers and mentors. The experiment has paid off, as more pups develop the skills they need to make it back to the ocean.

It's easy to spend all day here. The Ocean's Edge Touch Pool, a favorite of



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my childhood, still enchants, as kids lean over to pet bat rays and sea stars. The Jellies Experience uses black light to illuminate jellyfish, that swim by looking like alien life-forms.

If you need a break while visiting, treat yourself to Point Reyes oysters on the half shell at Cindy's Waterfront in the Aquarium. The restaurant features farm-to-table menus and sustainable seafood. The view is excellent, and each table has its own set of binoculars.

Because the Aquarium is right on the bay, the back deck is part of the show. On the day we visited, we saw shorebirds divebombing an otter, trying to steal an abalone off its belly. Less than 30 yards away, a pod of dolphins swam by, jumping and churning the water.

**POINT LOBOS**

Leaving the Aquarium, we made the short drive south to Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, a 550-acre park that is often called "the crown jewel of the State Park System." (Plan on driving your dinghy, as the Point Lobos parking lot fills quickly and vehicles longer than 20 feet are

not permitted on weekends, holidays or during summer. Also note, motorhomes longer than 40 feet are not permitted along Highway 1 from Carmel south to San Simeon.) Point Lobos is indeed a natural wonderland. There are tide pools teeming with sea stars, anemones and sea urchins, otters playing in kelp beds and harbor seals resting on the beaches. In the winter, gray whales can be seen migrating off the coast.

The docents are happy to lend out binoculars and point the way to the best tide pools. Trails lead past one of only two native stands of Monterey cypress, but my family is content to stay on the rugged coastline. It's not the western-most point in the lower 48, but looking out to sea, it sure feels like you are standing at the edge of the world.

**BIG SUR**

The stretch of highway from Point Lobos into Big Sur is where the real adventure begins. You won't be the only ones on the road; the white-knuckled drive is made by more than 3 million people a year. But again, this route is best driven in your

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Located 25 miles south of Carmel, and situated on Big Sur River, the campground has partial hookups and a central dump station.

**MONTEREY PINES RV PARK**

831-656-7563, <http://navylifesw.com/monterey/recreation/recreationalodging>  
Military personnel and their families have access to this centrally located park, near dining and a golf course.

**PFEIFFER BIG SUR STATE PARK**

831-667-2315, [www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)  
This park, dubbed "Mini Yosemite," is one of the most popular state parks in California. There is no beach access, but the park boasts spectacular views of the Big Sur River Gorge, acres of redwoods and meadows, and good trails to waterfalls and swimming holes. Since the canyon walls shelter the campground, you're safe from the coastal winds. Those in the know reserve site 111 (maximum RV length 28 feet), a partially shaded site on top of it all.

**RIVERSIDE CAMPGROUND**

831-667-2414, [www.riversidecampground.com](http://www.riversidecampground.com)  
Set amid redwoods and next to the Big Sur River, this campground inspires loyalty; we encountered a couple who have been coming on their anniversary every year for the past 20 years. Sites have partial hookups, and there's a general store.

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dinghy vehicle. The views are breathtaking, and the hardest part is keeping your eyes on the road. This is California's wild coast, and the attraction is the scenery itself. Fortunately, there are many turnouts to stop and ogle the view. Just make sure you look for ones that are pullthroughs, so you can easily re-enter the road.

Some of the area's beaches are inaccessible, but views of the ocean and the redwoods are easy to find. Not to be missed is Julia Pfeiffer Burns State Park, where a short trail from the parking lot

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##### POINT LOBOS FOUNDATION

[www.pointlobos.org](http://www.pointlobos.org)

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##### SANTA CRUZ

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- SANTA CRUZ
- MONTEREY
- BIG SUR

leads to a bluff overlooking McWay Falls. Water from McWay Creek drops 80 feet onto a deserted cove, like some modern day Shangri-La.

From here, it's another 55 miles south on Highway 1 to San Simeon (famous for Hearst Castle), but we head back to base camp in Monterey, 40 miles north.

#### SAN JUAN BAUTISTA

After recharging in Monterey, and an obligatory stop in Castroville at the Giant Artichoke, we make our way toward the last leg of our journey — the historic town of San Juan Bautista. As we pull up, I am struck that it looks exactly the same — not only as it had when I last visited 30 years ago — but from the climax scene of Alfred Hitchcock's "Vertigo," which was filmed at the mission and village square in 1958.

The village square is a State Historic Park, and it really is like stepping back in time — not in a costumed re-enactment way, but as if time has stood still.

The mission itself dominates the square. Founded by Spanish missionaries in 1797, Mission San Juan Bautista is the oldest mission in California, and still operates as a Catholic parish. Within walking distance of the old mission is Mission Farm RV Park, which is set in a walnut orchard and has lots of shady spots with full hookups, showers and laundry.

I had told my children stories about seeing the San Andreas fault line, which runs right next to the mission. Sure enough, you can still see where the fault runs, as numerous earthquakes have shifted the land so that one side is 4 feet higher than the other.

Nearby is a large cork tree, planted by Spanish missionaries. The kids got to feel the spongy bark of the tree, and another bedtime story myth is fleshed out. Cork really does grow on trees.

Our trip has come to an end, and we leave with sea urchin shells as souvenirs. The best part is that all those stories about otters and seals and dolphins — they weren't fairy tales. My kids finally believe me. ♦



Cyndi Hoelzle is a freelance writer who lives in Nashville, Tenn., with her husband, singer-songwriter Radney Foster, and their somewhat skeptical children.

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Left: Water sports of all kinds are popular at Sand Hollow State Park. Below: Ninety-minute ranger-led tours along Fossil Discovery Trail in Dinosaur National Monument are offered early-June through late September.



**A**s most RVers know, Utah has a lot of beautiful destinations. The state not only has five national parks and six national monuments worthy of a visit, but there are also 43 state parks that shouldn't be missed.

In 1999, while working on my book, *Camping Utah*, my husband, Mike, and I traveled more than 8,000 miles in Utah checking out all of its 300-plus public campgrounds, including all the state parks. Last summer my book was up for revision, so we traveled back to some of our favorite campgrounds to hike more trails, ride more single track on our mountain bikes and

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by DONNA IKENBERRY

# UTAH'S TOP STATE PARKS



Arapeen Campground in Palisade State Park.

PHOTOS: DONNA IKENBERRY



**Above from left: Sand Hollow Reservoir is a popular spot for boating and fishing. Petroglyphs (figures chipped into rock) can be seen at Dinosaur National Monument.**

do some kayaking at various lakes.

During our most recent visit, I found that more than a dozen Utah state parks now offer full-hookup campground sites. I have chosen five of them to highlight here — Bear Lake, Palisade, Red Fleet, Sand Hollow and Wasatch Mountain. However, the remaining full-hookup state parks — Deer Creek, East Canyon, Huntington, Jordanelle, Kodachrome, Starvation,

Steinaker and Williard Bay — are no less worthy of a visit.

### **SAND HOLLOW STATE PARK**

Utah's Sand Hollow State Park is the most southern of the state parks and is one of Utah's newest state parks as well. Opened in 2003, the park is very popular, according to one ranger, because it has so much to offer. Although it's got the feeling of being away from it all, it's not that far from the towns of St. George and Hurricane, where you can get a good meal at a local restaurant, shop to your heart's

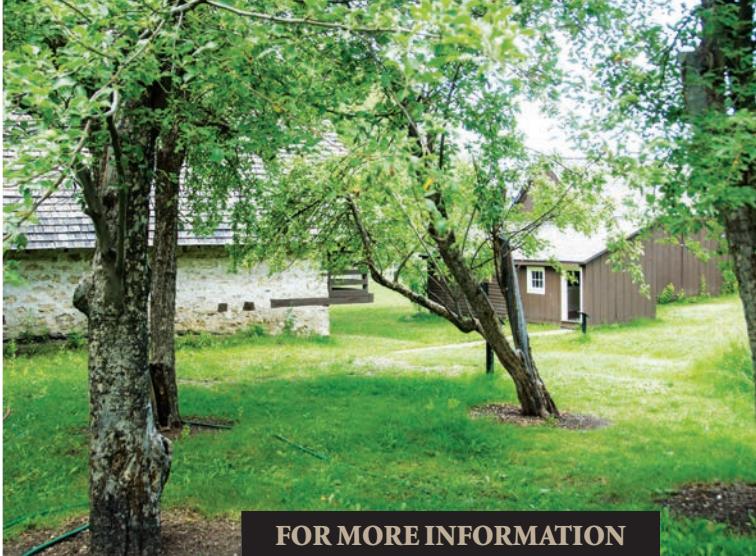
content, or see a movie.

Back at Sand Hollow, which has lovely views of surrounding mountains, there is a boat ramp so you can enjoy boating, kayaking, paddle boarding, jet skiing and swimming. Just beware of swimmer's itch — a tingling, burning, or itching of the skin due to a microscopic parasite found in shallow water.

We spent our first day mountain biking around the park. On the second day, we kayaked Sand Hollow Reservoir and paddled among a number of eared and western grebes. On our third day, we ex-

**View of the lake-side campgrounds at Palisade State Park.**



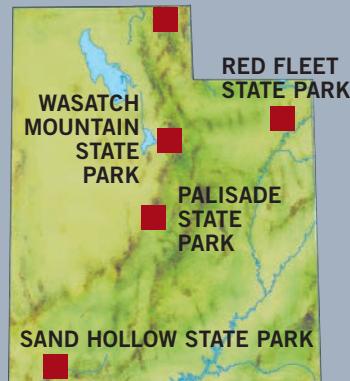


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### UTAH STATE PARKS

[www.stateparks.utah.gov](http://www.stateparks.utah.gov)

#### BEAR LAKE STATE PARK



Clockwise from left: While kayaking on Bear Lake, the author spotted American avocets. Palisade State Park has an 18-hole golf course, driving range and putting green. Huber Grove, a historic area in Wasatch Mountain State Park, features a farmhouse and creamery.

plored the surrounding area, enjoying a visit to the St. George Dinosaur Discovery Site on a particularly hot day. In the air-conditioned museum, we marveled at the well-preserved dinosaur tracks and thoroughly enjoyed what some paleontologists describe as “one of the 10 best dinosaur track sites in the world.” The only activity we didn’t participate in while at the state park was OHV riding on the sand dunes, but that’s because we don’t own an ATV. If you have an ATV, note that OHV riding is a very popular activity at this park.

Two campgrounds suit everyone from those who want nothing more than a basic spot to those who want it all. The West Campground has spacious sites, some with views of the reservoir, and full-hookups. ATVs are not allowed in the campground, except on a trailer. The Sandpit Campground is located near the OHV staging area at the dunes and ATVs are allowed in that campground. There are basic sites with picnic tables and fire rings, and six sites offer electricity and water as well.

If you really like to get away from it all, the park has primitive beach camp-

ing. Although camping is free, you’ll pay a day-use fee for the privilege of camping on the beach. Please note, the state park will not tow you out if you get stuck in the sand, so beware. Enter only where there are signs beckoning you to try beach camping. Some side roads were so sandy during our visit that we had to end up walking our bikes.

### PALISADE STATE PARK

Palisade State Park is a popular place for young and old alike. There are four campgrounds, three of which (Arapeen, Pioneer and Sanpitch) are the elders in the group. Around for a long time, these three have lots of big cottonwood trees for shade and they are the closest campgrounds to the shores of Palisade Lake.

We camped at Wakara, a new campground with spacious, full-hookup sites and nice views, located on a slope above the lake. We thoroughly enjoyed our stay because there is so much to see and do here. In addition to kayaking on the lake, and just plain relaxing, we hiked the trail around the lake and mountain biked up

nearby Six-Mile Canyon. ATVers will want to explore the same canyon, which eventually leads high up into the mountains at Skyline Drive. Golfers will no doubt enjoy the 18-hole golf course, a driving range and one of the best putting greens in the state. If you don’t feel like cooking, there’s also a restaurant at the clubhouse.

### WASATCH MOUNTAIN STATE PARK

Wasatch Mountain State Park is a large park, nearly 22,000 acres strong, with much to offer. Set aside by the state in 1961, the park was host of the 2002 Olympic Winter Games at Soldier Hollow. Open year-round, Soldier Hollow offers hiking, mountain biking and equestrian use in summer and snowshoeing and cross-country skiing activities in winter.

This state park literally offers something for everyone. One morning we mountain biked the Dutch Hollow section of the park and came across a woman horseback riding, a man jogging, a young family with

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children mountain biking and more young people biking as well. After some strenuous riding, we made a visit to the Huber Grove farmhouse, which was open for a few hours so interested visitors could peer inside.

Built in 1878, the Huber family lived in the home until the property became part of the state park in the early 1960s. The ranch house and creamery have been restored, so be sure to have a look. And on September weekends don't miss the apple harvest at Huber Grove. Other fun activities that we could have enjoyed on other days included meeting up with rangers for a hike, full-moon hikes and more.

### BEAR LAKE STATE PARK

In the northern region of the state, Bear Lake State Park is a definite must-visit. We camped on the southern edge of the park at Birch Creek, a new campground with full hookups and paved, flat sites, and were amazed at the beauty before us.

Bear Lake is big, certainly too big for the two of us to kayak around. Twenty miles long and 8 miles wide, instead of kayaking around the lake, we took a drive around it. We made our way via paved roads and entered Idaho in the process as the upper half of the lake crosses the state line. As we circled the lake, amazed by the huge American white pelicans we observed, we wondered about the lake's beautiful, blue color. Later we found that it is the result of minerals suspended in the waters.

Another day, we drove to Fossil Butte National Monument in Wyoming. Mike and I are always interested in the national park system, so the 40-plus-mile drive to Fossil Butte was one we couldn't pass up. We hiked and learned about the fossils found there. Called "America's Aquarium in Stone," some of the world's best-preserved fossils are found in the 50-million-year-old lake bed.

While at Bear Lake, we kayaked the southern end of the lake, watching marbled godwits and American avocets in the shallows, while other visitors fished, played in the water and zoomed by in their powerboats. We also rode our bikes around the various campgrounds and one day we took a scenic drive through nearby beautiful Logan Canyon.

En route to Logan Canyon, we passed through the small town of Garden City, where locals said we should stop and have one of the city's famous raspberry milkshakes. We each ordered a milkshake and enjoyed every swallow. If you are in town two days prior to the first Saturday in August, you may thrill to the start of Bear Lake Raspberry Days, an annual, three-day event complete with parade, craft fair, entertainment, a pageant, dances, fireworks on the beach and more.

### RED FLEET STATE PARK

Upon visiting Red Fleet State Park, which is located in the northeast corner of Utah, I couldn't help but love all the spectacular sandstone cliffs and the gorgeous setting. Named for the sandstone formations that resemble a fleet of ships, the only negative aspect of Red Fleet is the parking-lot style camping, which I usually abhor. But we stayed several nights and thoroughly enjoyed this true gem due to the fact that we could hike to, even kayak to, some nearby 200-million-year-old dinosaur tracks.

We were also close enough to drive to Dinosaur National Monument to see lots of dinosaur bones. In addition, we drove to the McConkie Ranch, 22 miles southwest of the park, and gazed in awe at the hundreds of petroglyphs (figures chipped into rock) and some pictographs (figures painted onto the rock) found along a 1-mile stretch of the 200-foot-high sandstone canyon wall at this private ranch.

Located 10 miles north of Vernal, at McConkie Ranch, the Dry Fork Canyon petroglyphs site is world renowned. The figures here represent the Fremont culture, which lived in this region from A.D. 1 to 1200. Trails lead to the rock art, which you must not touch. Stay on the trails and please obey the signs. Also, leave a donation if possible.

Visit Utah's state parks and you'll see all sorts of unique wonders, enjoy all kinds of water sports, and find plenty of trails to hike and bike, as well as scenic roads to drive. And when you camp, you can have full-hookups as well! ♦



Donna Ikenberry is a full-time freelance writer and photographer. She lives in South Fork, Colo., with her husband, Mike Vining. They travel half of the year in their RV.

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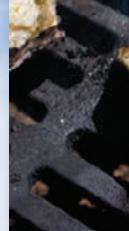
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**love Washington's Olympic Peninsula. It's a big, green thumb of land bordered to the north** by Puget Sound and the Strait of Juan de Fuca, to the west by the mighty Pacific Ocean and to the east by Hood Canal. It's filled with temperate rainforests and near desert "rain shadow" pockets, plenty of lakes and a dozen salmon-bearing rivers, luscious state parks and even a national park. It's also home to Hood Canal, one of only two fjords in the lower 48, and that's what we've come to explore.

For us, a cruise up Hood Canal is just right for a long weekend. As usual, we leave Portland, Ore., later than we'd planned and, though it's an easy trip north on Interstate 5, we don't get into Hoodport and the Glen Ayr Resort until nearly midnight. We pull into our gravel-topped, full hook-up site and feel grateful for the deep quiet that makes this park special.

The next morning, we wake to soft fog rising off the canal, but within an hour or so, bright sun sparkles on the water. Glen Ayr is located across U.S. Highway 101 from Hood Canal. The RV park is behind the Glen Ayr hotel, so only a few of the sites have canal views. However, the spacious clubhouse, with its rock fireplace, large flat-screen TV, couches and pool table, offers guests killer views of the water. It's also where we meet a group of caravaners munching on free cookies and drinking coffee. They've been driving the Hood Canal

# CRUISING

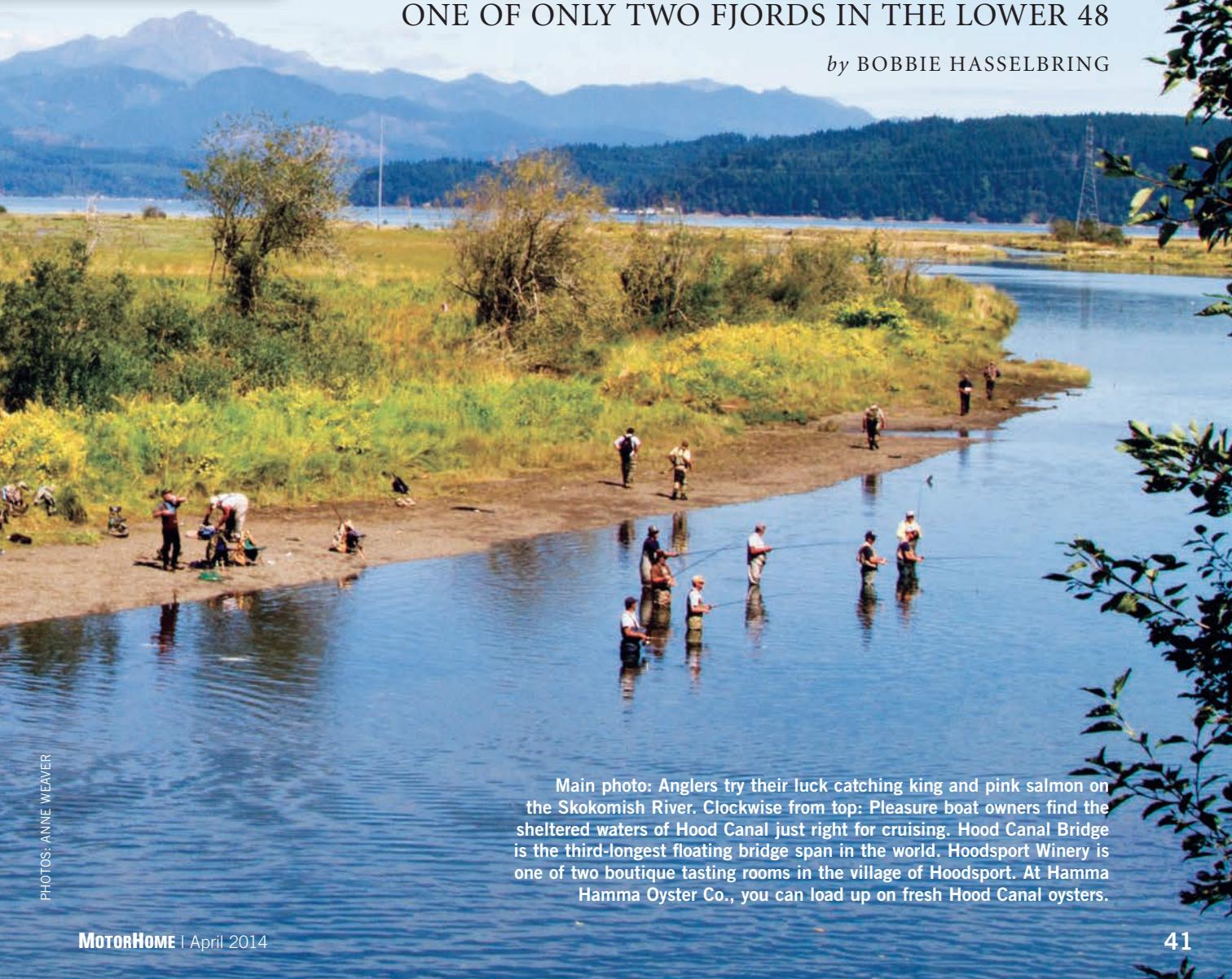




# THE CANAL

WASHINGTON'S OLYMPIC PENINSULA IS HOME TO ONE OF ONLY TWO FJORDS IN THE LOWER 48

by BOBBIE HASSELBRING



Main photo: Anglers try their luck catching king and pink salmon on the Skokomish River. Clockwise from top: Pleasure boat owners find the sheltered waters of Hood Canal just right for cruising. Hood Canal Bridge is the third-longest floating bridge span in the world. Hoodspout Winery is one of two boutique tasting rooms in the village of Hoodspout. At Hamma Hamma Oyster Co., you can load up on fresh Hood Canal oysters.

PHOTOS: ANNE WEAVER

## CRUISING THE CANAL

**From top left: RV sites at Point Hudson Marina and RV Park have spectacular water views. Crystie Kisler, co-founder of Finnriver Farm & Cider, offers visitors tastes of its organic hard cider.**

and staying at this RV park for years. “We love it at Glen Ayr because it’s so friendly,” one of the women told me.

I experience that neighborliness myself as I walk the puppies around the 36-site park. Everyone says hello and wants to pet the dogs. The caravan group is readying the barbecues in the covered outdoor pavilion. One of the members has just returned from Glen Ayr’s deep-water dock across the highway, his crab pot brimming with Dungeness crab. Because it’s private property, guests at the RV park don’t need a fishing license to catch these succulent crustaceans. The park even has an outdoor cooker where you can process your catch.

### CORN, GOLF AND SALMON

We want to explore all of Hood Canal, so we backtrack a bit on Highway 101 and turn off at State Highway 106. On a map, Hood Canal looks like a giant fishhook. It begins up by Port Gamble in the northeast and stretches 50 miles along Highway 101 to the town of Union. Here it makes a dogleg, called the “Big Bend,” and travels east toward Seattle for another 15 miles to Belfair.

Hood Canal got its name in 1792 from Lieutenant William Broughton, who was sailing with the expedition of Captain George Vancouver exploring the area. Broughton named the waterway Hood’s Channel in honor of Admiral Samuel Hood of the Royal Navy. However, he wrote “Hood Canal” on his sea chart and, even though this is a glacier-carved waterway, the name stuck.



PHOTO: BOBBIE HASSE/BRING

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This Big Bend part of the canal is largely farmland bordered by the Skokomish River. We come to Hunter Farms, a large farmstand and nursery. Hunter's corn is a local favorite, so we load up on a few ears for later and spend a little time wandering the farm's large glass greenhouses.

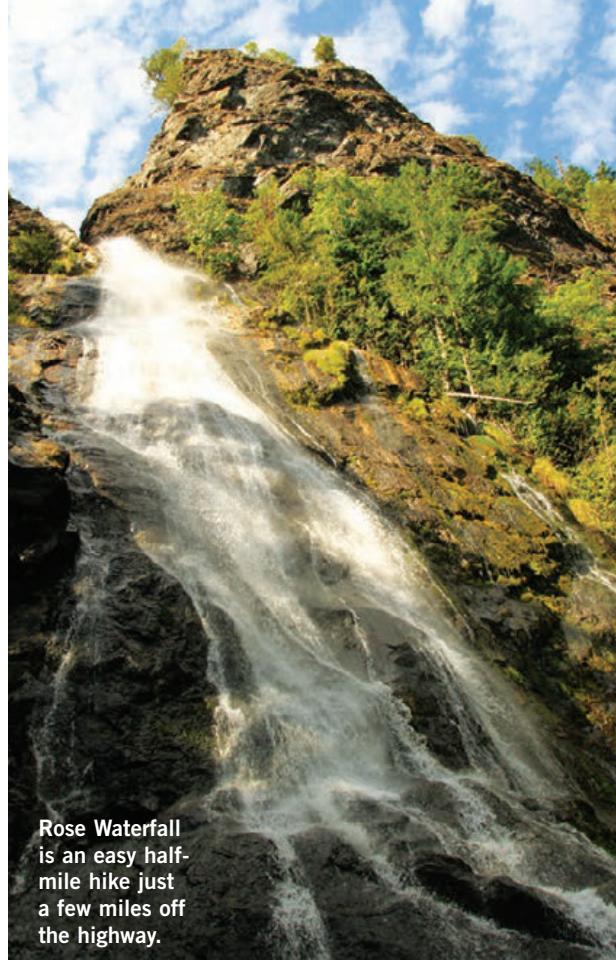
Back on the road, we're amazed to see the quiet waters of the Skokomish thick with fishermen in waders angling for returning king and pink salmon. We pass into the Skokomish Indian Reservation where the Lucky Dog Casino is a favorite among gamblers. (Gaming is legal in Washington only on native reservations.)

The road winds along the canal, and we pass spectacular homes with million dollar views clinging to hills above the shoreline. At the village of Belfair is Alderbrook Resort. While the resort doesn't offer an RV park, the upscale property sits right on the canal and has some terrific dining options.

Back on the Skokomish Reservation on Highway 101, we stop at Patti's Seafood, a little Native-owned stand that sells some of the freshest seafood in the area. Outside they're washing off the boat that brought in the pristine king salmon this morning that Patty is offering at bargain prices. We rearrange the motorhome's refrigerator to make room for a 6 pounder.

Heading north on 101, we pass by Potlatch State Park. On the canal side, the park features a day-use area right on the water that's a perfect place for a picnic. Across the road, there's an RV campground offering 35 big shady sites and a dump station.

Visiting many of Washington's parks and natural areas requires a Discover Pass ([www.discoverpass.wa.gov](http://www.discoverpass.wa.gov)). The Discover Pass isn't necessary if you're a paid camper in the state parks. Visitors can buy a pass online (\$30 annually; \$10 daily), at parks or sporting goods stores or other retail-



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PHOTO: BOBBIE HASSELBRING

**Point Hudson, steps from the marina, allows RVers to park next to the water and walk to downtown Port Townsend.**

ers. Money from the Discover Pass helps the state keep parks and other sites maintained. It's also not worth the \$99 fine to get caught without one.

We stop at Hoodsport Winery, a small wine shop and tasting room that specializes in Washington wines, especially fruit wines. A husband and wife team own this wine shop and offer free fruit wine tastes and six tastes of other wines for \$5. Since I'm driving, my friend samples and tells me the fruit varieties — especially the raspberry rhubarb — are tasty.

**WINE, OYSTERS AND PIE**

Hoodsport, one of a number of small towns strung along Hood Canal, boasts a second winery and some cute shops worth perusing. Because of the winding road and the villages, the average speed along the canal is 25-30 mph. But the life-in-the-slow-lane pace helps us appreciate the stunning views that seem to get more beautiful around every bend.

A few miles down the road, we stop at Hamma Hamma Oyster Co., a family-owned oyster grower that offers fresh oysters, clams and other seafood. As we get out of the motorhome, the smell of smoke from oysters grilling on the barbecue envelops us. A friendly staffer offers us a sample, and it's delicious — sweet, slightly briny, with a satisfying chewy texture.

Hood Canal's Hamma Hamma Bay has some of the purest water in the world, making it perfect for growing oysters. After buying a few, we drive along the highway passing over the grassy channels of the Hamma Hamma River.

We're entering the Hamma Hamma

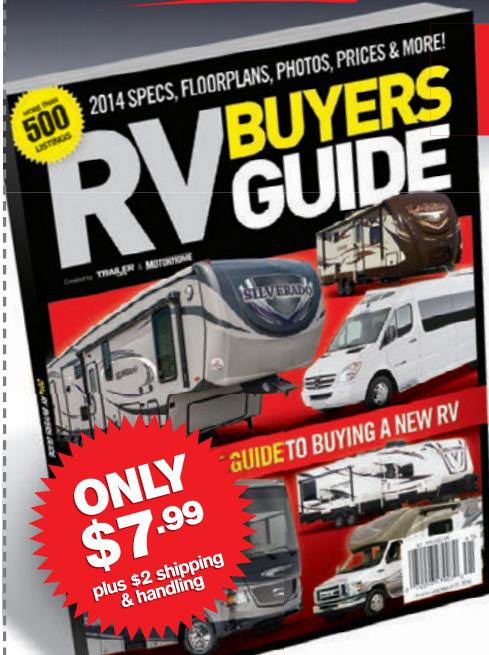
Recreation Area and the road has become more twisted with steep drop-offs to the water. While there aren't places to pass, turnouts provide spots to let cars pass. We drive by Triton Cove State Park, another right-on-the-water day-use site, and Dosewallips State Park with 55 RV sites and great water views. On our next Hood Canal trip, one of these spectacular state parks would make a great place to camp.

My oyster snack has whet my appetite and, on the advice of a local, we pull into Halfway House Restaurant/RV Park, a landmark restaurant that's been serving canal travelers for decades. The restaurant is owned by Bonnie Peterson, better known as the "pie lady of Brinnon." We fill up on thick, tasty clam chowder and smoky, chargrilled burgers, but we save room for big slices of pie — coconut cream for me and flaky double-crust raspberry for my friend.

We're more than full when we leave Halfway House, so we're grateful the town's visitors center told us about the hike to Rose Waterfall, a hidden gem just

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## CRUISING THE CANAL



The day-use area at Potlatch State Park is a perfect spot for a picnic.

a few miles off the canal. The puppies are happy too, for the short, shady hike to this impressive cascade of water.

Back on the road, my companion reads in a guidebook that Hood Canal Bridge is the third-longest floating bridge in the world and the only one constructed on saltwater. Curious, at the town of Quilcene, we veer off and drive a few miles on State Highway 104 to the bridge. It's worth the drive. This impressive bridge is an amazing 6,521 feet long and offers great views of the water.

### TO PORT TOWNSEND

On our return, we take State Highway 19 as it angles away from Hood Canal and into tiny Chimacum, a rural crossroads that boasts Chimacum Corner Farmstand.

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This little business, dedicated to celebrating the agricultural richness of the Olympic Peninsula, has become a community center and it's a must-stop for people interested in local foods.

A few miles down the road, we stop at Finnriver Farm & Cidery. Finnriver specializes in producing organic hard apple cider, a refreshing, not-too-sweet elixir that captures the essence of apples.

Our final destination on motorhome cruise along Hood Canal is Port Townsend, a gem of a town that's one of only three Victorian seaports in the United States. We motor into downtown, marveling at the multistory stone and brick Victorian buildings that line the waterfront. At the turn of the century, ambitious businessmen thought Port Townsend was destined to become the next major city. Instead, the railroad bypassed this seaport, leaving it a charming, frozen-in-time place with impressive Victorian homes and commercial buildings.

We drive to the end of Water Street to Point Hudson Marina and RV Park, a 48-site park that's right on the water next to the town's public marina. Operated by the Port of Port Townsend, Point Hudson is a bustling place with rigs lined up shoulder-to-shoulder on sandy sites, many with great views of the water. While it's not the quietest RV park, it does have utilities and great showers. It's also super-convenient to restaurants like Doc's Marina Grill, a few steps out our door, where I order delicious clams, salmon, cod and Penn Cove mussels in a savory broth for dinner.

From Point Hudson, it's also an easy walk along the docks to downtown, where we visit the wonderful Northwest Maritime Center, dedicated to the art of making wooden boats, and the historic courthouse museum with its creepy subterranean jail cells. As we walk along the elevated dock, licking chocolate ice cream cones from Elevated Ice Cream and watching striped kingfishers dive for small fish, like the caravanning RVers we met earlier, we know we'll be cruising the Hood Canal for years to come. ♦



Bobbie Hasselbring is a frequent contributor to *MotorHome* and editor of [www.realfoodtraveler.com](http://www.realfoodtraveler.com), which covers authentic food and travel. Bobbie owns a Class C Jayco Greyhawk SS.

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 EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

**F**orty feet seems to be the magical number when it comes to sizing motorhomes. There's plenty of length to satisfy those who want maximum livability without going to a 42- or 45-foot coach and it's close enough to the actual size of a 36 to 38 footer, so buyers might as well go for the 40. It's also a coach size that Tiffin Motorhomes is comfortable producing, since three of its four Phaeton floorplans are 40 footers. However, the 40 QBH we tested is the only one with 1½ baths.

The Phaeton is the quintessential Tiffin motorhome. It's wildly popular among Tiffin fans, and quite frankly, looks and feels like a much more expensive coach. At \$311,000, the Freightliner-based Phaeton is at a price point most people have

a hard time believing. We stayed at the Outdoor Resort Indio (800-892-2992, [www.orindio.com](http://www.orindio.com)) near Palm Springs, Calif., and most of the residents in the RV park who we socialized with felt the coach's luxurious stature put it in a higher price class.

For one, the exterior paint is stunning, a sort of Tiffin trademark that exudes top-notch craftsmanship. The company's full-body paint is known for its brilliant shine — and the fit and finish are excellent, albeit there were a few flaws in the alignment of storage compartment doors, which should be fixable at the dealer level. Beyond the quibbles, the coach is handsome, decked out graphically in a classy way and has a feel-good physique that makes owners loyal — not to mention the legendary service the Tiffin family has provided throughout the company's history.

# PHAETON 40 QBH

**TIFFIN MOTORHOMES HAS ADDED ALL THE ELEMENTS TO MAKE THIS COACH LIVE WELL IN THE LAP OF LUXURY AT A SURPRISING PRICE POINT**

*by* BOB LIVINGSTON



Inside, the floorplan is familiar but enhanced smartly by four strategically placed slideouts. Upon entering the front door, the focal points are obviously its well-placed living room and kitchen components. The opposing slides in the front open up the living space tremendously while allowing access to the residential refrigerator and half-bath when retracted. A couple of configuration options in the test coach changed the dynamics in the living room dramatically, transforming a common sofa-facing-booth-dinette plan into a much more entertainment-friendly atmosphere. The streetside sofa gives way to a corner-mounted 42-inch LED TV and fireplace next to a Euro-style recliner, and a semi-freestanding dinette with computer workstation replaces the booth seating arrangement. These optional components

make a huge difference in livability without eliminating too much seating. Turn the cockpit seats around and add the two folding chairs to the expanding dining table and there's room to seat 10 people for indoor entertaining. The recliner, though, was not a favorite; the seating geometry and mechanism could easily be improved.

I suppose TV lovers will appreciate the optional flat-screen mounted above the cockpit seats, between cabinetry, but it seems somewhat superfluous since the viewing angle to the main TV is comfortable from the curbside sofa.

Hanging out in the galley is pleasurable for the designated cook and it has all the accouterments to make occupants happy. Counterspace expands when the covers for the double stainless-



### 2014 TIFFIN PHAETON 40 QBH

#### WHAT'S HOT

Exterior paint job, expansive living area, 1½ baths, heated floors, easy access storage compartments, legendary service

#### WHAT'S NOT

Euro recliner, limited walk-around space in bedroom, cockpit stereo and cup holders



Clockwise from top: Fireplace/TV and semi-freestanding modules are welcome options. Outside entertainment center is built into slideout wall. Sofa and galley occupy curbside slide. Half-bath is tucked in between galley and entrance to bedroom.

PHOTOS: SCOTT HIRKO



It's nice to have the room and comfort of a memory foam king size bed, but walk-around space is tight, especially when changing bedding. Rear full-bath has all the amenities in a well-designed arrangement.

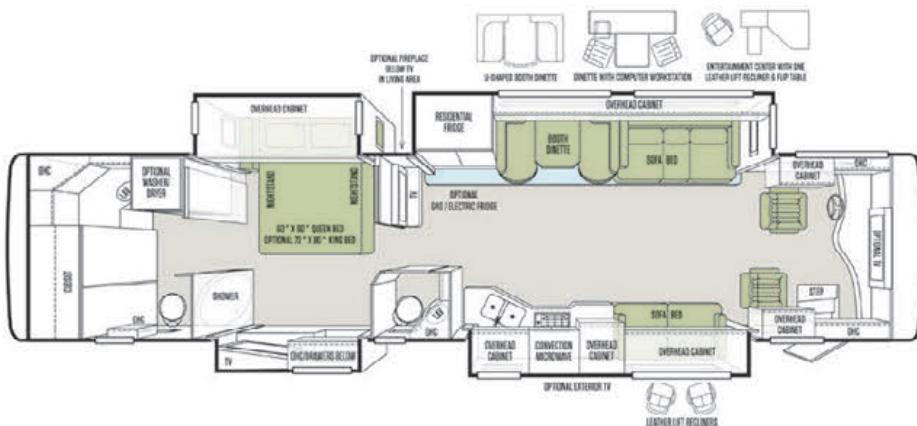
steel sink and cooktop are in place, and a pullout cabinet/drawer structure enlarges the working area. A microwave/convection oven handles the baking and heating necessities and the dishwasher in a drawer takes care of cleanup. There is plenty of drawer and cabinet space for galley utensils and foodstuffs, supported by the pantry next to the refrigerator.

It's nice to have a 22-cubic-foot refrigerator, and the standard residential model in this coach fits nicely in the designated cabinet structure. It's backed by six 6-volt batteries and a 2,000-watt inverter for on-the-road operation, but does require running the generator when parked without hookups. A gas/electric refrigerator is optional.

Almost directly across from the refrigerator is the entrance to the half-bath. Inside is a lavatory, porcelain toilet and storage compartments. Considering the nature of the half-bath, the floorspace

was pretty generous. Opening the door to this bathroom is somewhat restricted when the slides are retracted, but it's doable, making it practical for use while on the road.

The back portion of the coach is reserved for the bedroom and master bath. Sleeping on the optional king size bed with pillow-top memory-foam mattress was very comfortable, complemented by a padded headboard and smallish nightstands that are certainly minimalist in nature. The king size bed is shoehorned into its allocated space, which makes changing the bedding an athletic event. Nevertheless, it's hard to complain about all that extra room, especially if Fido shares the mattress. True to form with most diesel pushers in this category, the bed is covered with a heavy comforter and a bunch of duvets, shams



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The Phaeton was tested at the Outdoor Resort Indio motorcoach park, which provided a beautiful background for this stately motorhome.



Heavy-duty, pullout shelves facilitate access to stored items in the exterior compartments.

and throw pillows. If I had my druthers, I'd leave them home, but I won't win that battle. Under-bed storage is not huge, but there's plenty of room to handle the two folding dinette chairs.

Across from the bed is a well-thought-out ensemble of cabinets and drawers, including a pullout hamper. Cabinetry workmanship here, as well as the rest of the coach, is stout and feels and looks good. Solid surface countertops are strategically placed; one for the 42-inch TV and the other for storing typical bedroom stuff. Louvered doors reveal a satellite receiver (requires activation), a DVD player with surround sound and the cables needed to hookup auxiliary audio/visual components — including connection to the in-motion, rooftop satellite dome antenna. All the TVs are connected to an HDMI router and RCA cables are provided to hook up a non-

HD receiver, if desired.

Tiffin designers did a masterful job of packing in all the elements that make the rear bath complete. There's a lot going on back here, but floor space is not compromised. The large glass-door shower is not fancy, but it offers plenty of elbowroom. A residential-size porcelain, vacuum-operated toilet is tucked in between the shower and sliding-door closet on the rear wall, but legroom is still good. Mirror clad doors close off a large wardrobe closet and provide the main viewing area for those who need primping.

In what can be construed as a cubbyhole at the rear, streetside corner of the coach is a lavatory complex that defies its space limitations. The countertop is huge, as far as bathroom lavatories go, and the surrounding cabinetry swallows up a lot of towels and toiletries — there's even a second hamper built into the cabinet structure. There's only one window in the bathroom and a skylight over the shower, so multiple LED fixtures play a vital role in providing the necessary lighting at the sink area. Immediately to the right of the bathroom sink is the housing for the stacked washer and dryer.

While we enjoyed the bathroom accommodations, getting hot water was problematic. The test coach was fitted with an optional instantaneous water heater that sends hot water when flow reaches a certain rate. Although the water flow to the faucets and shower in the coach was good, regardless whether hooked up or using the on-board demand pump, it wasn't strong enough to activate the water heater. We opened two faucets at a time and the hot water finally started to flow. Obviously, some adjustments are in order, and confirmation that it's working should be determined before getting into the shower for the first time after taking delivery of the coach.

No doubt the Phaeton 40 QBH is easy to live in. Décor is pleasant and maybe even understated for some people. The entire floor area is fitted with radiant heaters and covered with porcelain tile that contrasts beautifully with the English Chestnut cabinetry. Floor temperature is zone-controlled by two thermostats in the half-bath and the warmth on the tile was soothing on bare feet, especially when getting out of bed in the morning.

Roller shades on the tinted windows,

handsome valances and a soft-touch vinyl ceiling (with tray feature) enhance the ambience of the interior. The floorplan prevents an abundance of windows, but the extensive use of LED lighting brightens the interior dramatically.

Exterior compartments are arranged in logical order and fitted with pullout drawers that make access to stored items convenient without crawling in or using an extension hook. The raised-rail Freightliner chassis allows for good-size pass-through compartments and a number of other storage areas usually necessary for owners who spend long periods of time on the road. Two neatly arranged compartments are home to everything necessary for connecting to campground utilities, and the 50-amp power cord and hose are on reels to facilitate hookups without the snarled mess from excess cable and hose rolled up on the ground.

Driving the Phaeton gets high marks in two arenas: cockpit comfort and chassis handling. The cockpit seating position is conducive to long stints on the road and all the instrumentation and controls are ergonomically placed. Even the throttle and brake pedals are adjustable. Although the stereo is easy to reach, the screen-touch controls are temperamental and require too much attention to change programming and channels. Sound is good. And one small nitpick: the cup holder is too small for larger insulated coffee mugs.

From the chassis side of things, the four-point air bag suspension does a good job of smoothing out rough roads, and the interior noise is kept well under control — testament to Tiffin's overall workmanship. A 55-degree wheel cut makes short work out of maneuvering the 40 footer in tight locations and the 380-hp Cummins diesel is well matched to the coach.

Forward visibility and mirror placement is excellent; rear- and side-views are reinforced by the camera and monitor system (with navigation) that displays images of the sides when changing lanes. There were no complaints from the passenger, nestled in the captain's chair.

Like most coaches at this price point, there are a lot of goodies packed in the Phaeton 40 QBH. Tiffin has a knack for building feature-rich, quality coaches with excellent livability, while making owners comfortable with their purchase over a long service life. ♦

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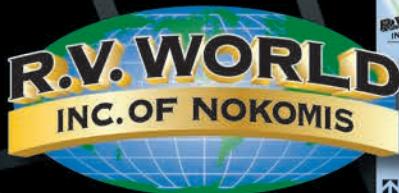
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Even though this is a 7-year-old coach, the properly polished paint makes it look like a new model. Not only does this increase owner pride, it will surely help to increase the resale value as well.

# MOTORHOME PAINT SWIRL REMOVAL

## GET RID OF HOLOGRAMS AND FINE SCRATCHES WITH THESE TECHNIQUES

by E. DON SMITH

**D**uring the past 10 years, one of the most striking visual changes that has occurred to the exterior of Class A motorhomes is the use of automotive-grade, full-body paint. The designers that develop these flashy paint jobs really know how to make a coach look great. In fact, it is much harder to date a motorhome these days simply by looking at its exterior, because it can look new for many years if well cared for. There is, however, one disadvantage to full-body paint jobs, and if you own a coach with full-body paint, you most likely already know about it. I'm referring to "swirls" or hologram scratches.

Swirls have been the thorn in the side of professional automotive detailers for many years, and now that motorhomes are painted, it has become our thorn as well. First, let's define swirls and understand where they come from. Then we can better understand how to remove them.

Swirls, or holograms, are fine scratches in the clear-coat

layer of a paint system that occur from improper washing or polishing. Motorhomes are large, and difficult to wash, and their non-uniform surfaces — with the slideout seals, awning arms and recessed windows — make washing a coach a big job. The temptation is to use more aggressive methods than is necessary, and when combined with subpar lubricity soaps, the result is a large motorhome covered with swirl marks.

These swirls are easiest to see on dark-colored surfaces, such as black, and they show up best from certain angles in direct sunlight. When you first see a motorhome covered with swirls, your first thought might be that the beautiful paint job is ruined. Fortunately, that is not the case.

One simple option for swirl removal is to hire a service that specializes in motorhome buffing. The downside is that you'll be out hundreds of dollars, and if you're not familiar with buffing automotive paint, you're better off leaving this job to the professionals.



Left: Notice visible swirls in the paint before polishing. Right: After polishing, the surface is smooth and free of paint defects.



1. This is an example of a swirled surface. Sometimes the scratched pattern runs in a circle, as shown here, other times it seems to move in a straight or diagonal line.



2. Before polishing the paint, we decided to also “clay” the surface to remove surface contaminants.



5. When properly flattened, the clay should be a 4-inch-square section. Hold it gently and move it back and forth over the wet surface, as shown here.



6. After you finish wiping the clay over the wet surface, wipe it dry with a new, clean microfiber towel.



9. Next, fold the clay over on itself several times to expose a new, uncontaminated section to work on the next area of the coach. Repeat this process over and over until you have clayed the entire surface of the motorhome.



10. After wiping the surface dry, you should be able to feel how smooth it is. Now it's ready for polishing.

If you want to tackle the job yourself, your success will depend on the severity of the swirls, your physical ability and your level of determination. We can't promise that this is a quick and easy task. With one person, and the proper tools, our 7-year-old Tiffin Phaeton 36 footer took about 14 hours — not counting the preparatory wash. That may sound like a long time, but if you split it up over several days it's really not that bad.

In addition to time, you are going to need the correct supplies. The first, and most expensive, is a good random orbital buffer. This is a specific type of buffer and the random orbital motion

is key to preventing paint damage that can occur if you press down too hard while polishing. There are numerous brands on the market, but after having used several, my preference is the Griot's Garage 6-inch model (\$139.99). It has a longer stroke, and a bit more low rpm torque, compared to others. Though the cost of the tools should be considered when deciding whether to do the job yourself or hire someone else, just remember that the tools and supplies will be used many times. In addition to the buffer, you will need enough foam pads for the job (one to three pads), as well as lots of high-quality microfiber polishing towels.



3. Detailer's clay is used to rub along the surface of the clean and lubricated paint job. It removes tiny spots of tar, road grime, etc., leaving the paint finish feeling smooth.



4. Before using the clay, thoroughly lubricate the area with a product such as Griot's Speed Shine, which allows the clay to glide easily across the surface without causing marring or swirls.



7. Even after washing microfiber towels, they have the ability to hold bits of debris that can scratch surfaces, so use only new, high-quality microfiber towels.



8. After using the clay on several sections, you will notice discoloration — those are the contaminants that are being removed from the paint. This is a sign that the clay is working.



11. For buffing the paint, we used an orange pad, which is the color intended for polishing and removing swirls. Different color pads denote different intended uses, so pick the right color for the job at hand. Plan on using one to three pads for this job.



12. After attaching the pad to the hook-and-loop backer plate on the polisher, you will load the pad with a small amount of polish, as shown here. We used Griot's One-Step Sealant.

You will also need a ladder, and enough agility to work from a ladder on the upper sections of the coach. Usually an 8- to 10-foot A-frame-style ladder provides a safe platform to work from, and is not too heavy to easily move around the coach.

Perhaps the most important item is the polish/swirl remover, because it's the polish that will do the actual swirl removal. There are literally hundreds of products on the market aimed at swirl removal. Many of these swirl removers are one-, two- or even three-step polishes and a final "sealer," which provides the long-term protection. After polishing something as big as a motorhome, the

last thing you probably want to do is polish it two or three more times, and then apply a final sealant.

To prevent all those steps, we used a product from Griot's Garage called "One-Step Sealant." A 16-ounce bottle cost only \$17.99, and after finishing the job, there was enough left over to polish it at least two more times. While we hesitate to call anything perfect, this one comes very close. Not only does it go on and come off easily, it also does a great job of removing swirls. In our case, it only took one application to remove more than 90 percent of the visible swirls. The real advantage is that it



13. With the pad on low speed, work the polish into a 2-foot-square area up and down, then left and right, to completely cover and overlap the area. Then increase the speed of the buffer to start the actual polishing. Keep the pad moving slowly on the paint and cover the area several times. As the polish breaks down, it will start to thin out on the surface of the paint.



14. This is what the surface should look like after being properly polished. Notice the overlapping pattern of the polish on the surface.



15. After that section is finished, immediately wipe off the residue with a new microfiber towel. If you still notice swirls, it may be necessary to repeat the process one or more times, and you may need to increase or decrease buffing time or speed. If the polish does not easily wipe off, you might be using too much.



16. After all polishing is completed and the swirls are removed, the surface should display this type of reflectivity. Notice the visible details of the trees and other areas as reflections in the perfectly polished paint.

also has a built-in long-term sealant. This means you don't have to seal the entire motorhome as a separate process after polishing.

Each product and its use are different, so if you decide to go with different waxes and polishes, expect a different set of instructions from the manufacturer and perhaps different results. This is one case where it doesn't pay to use cheap products, or you will end up repeating the entire job due to inferior results.

The best time of year to tackle this project is spring or fall if you live in a warm area; however, you need to avoid working in direct sunlight while polishing. If you don't have a covered area to work under, just schedule your work sessions at the appropriate time of day so as to limit any exposure to the sun. At all costs, you must avoid polishing in direct sun, as it causes the polish to react too fast due to the excessive heat.

Prepare yourself for a good workout, as well as a great looking coach. If you follow the steps outlined here, you, too, can be one of those owners who proudly drives into an RV resort knowing that your beautiful, shiny motorhome is the envy of everyone there. ♦



17. After several hours of polishing, expect your pad to look similar to the one on the right. When it gets this bad, it's time to start over with a new one. The pads can usually be washed and restored to like-new condition in most cases.



E. Don Smith is a Tennessee-based freelance writer and photographer who has been a frequent contributor to *MotorHome* since 2006. He is the proud owner of a Tiffin Phaeton coach.



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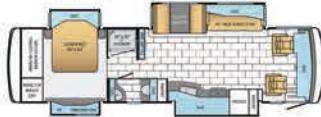


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MSRP \$215,693  
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\*All Units Are 2013 Unless Otherwise Noted.

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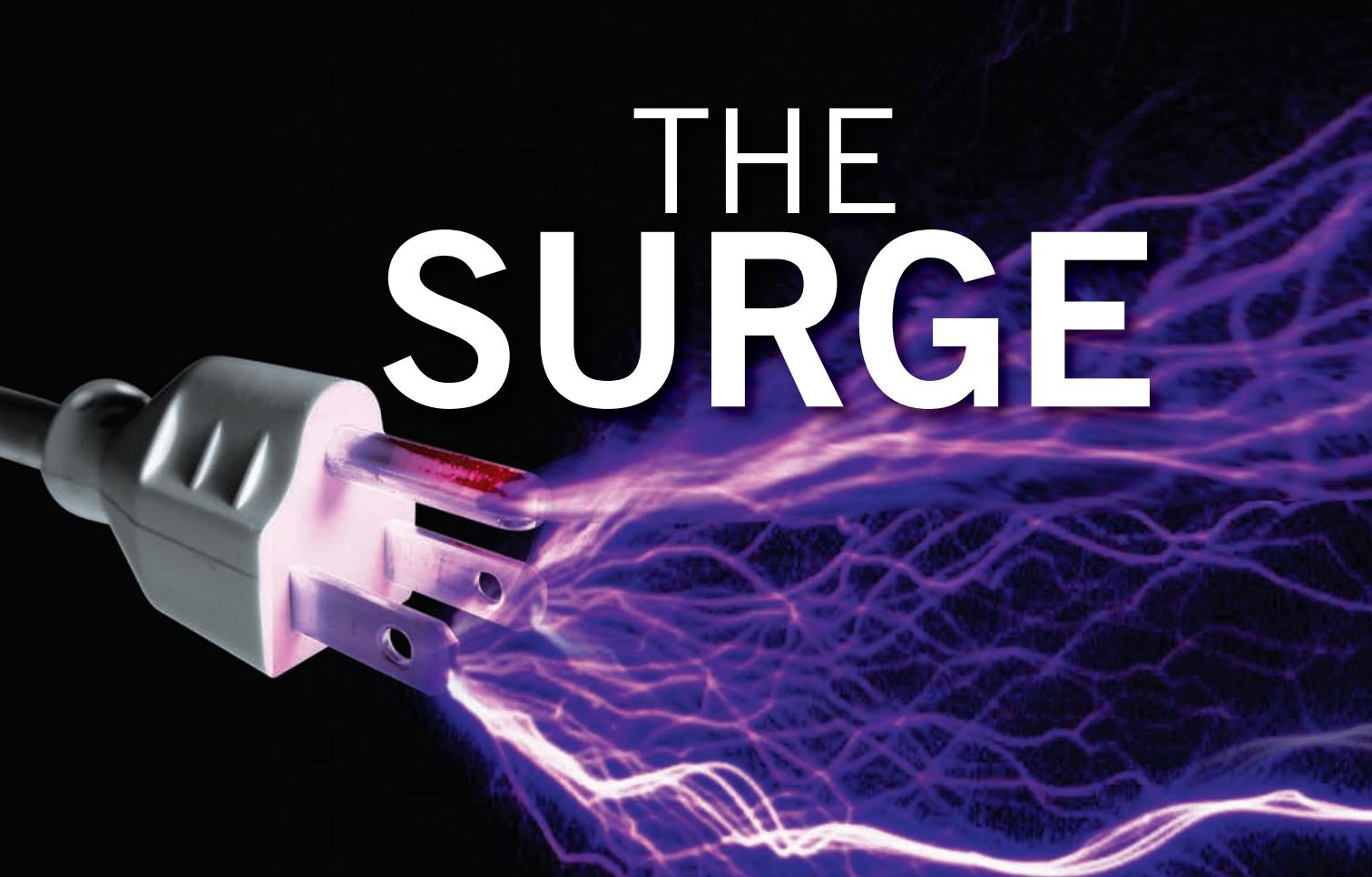


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# THE SURGE

PLUGGING IN TO RV PARK HOOKUPS CAN PUT A COACH AT RISK. THESE PRODUCTS CAN **HELP PROTECT THE ELECTRICAL SYSTEM FROM COSTLY DAMAGE**

by CHRIS HEMER

**W**hen most of us are seeking a campground or RV park in which to spend the night, electrical hookups are usually a priority. Once plugged in, you can enjoy all the comforts of home without having to run the generator. It's simple, fast and very convenient to be connected to the local power grid when you're away from home.

But there's a darker side.

Electrical power is far from faultless; in addition to fluctuation and outages, surges are a common occurrence. In fact, low level power surges can happen dozens or even hundreds of times a day — and while they won't necessarily melt parts or blow fuses in

electronic components, they can gradually degrade internal circuitry until it eventually fails. Anything with a microprocessor is particularly susceptible, and this includes TVs, computers and microwaves — even some dishwashers and refrigerators.

Power surges occur when the flow of electricity is interrupted then started again, or when prevailing conditions send electricity flowing back into the system. Surges can range from just a few volts when you turn on an appliance like a hair dryer (an internal surge), to several thousand volts if lightning strikes a transformer or a tree falls on a power line (external surge). Surges can also occur when power comes back on after an outage.

If you are not a full-timer and own a permanent residence, you likely take care of your home and make sure that there are no wiring or grounding issues. But in an RV park, you can't be so sure. Not only can the wiring in the pedestal be questionable (we've all experienced that), the whole park could have problems. Add bad weather and/or an unreliable power grid to the equation, and it's likely that you'll fall victim to a bad power supply at some point in your travels.

That's why it's important to use a surge protector. Not to be confused with an outlet surge suppressor, which is commonly used for plugging in a computer and/or TV into at home, a surge protector prevents bad power

## Hughes Autoformers

Not really a surge protector in the strictest sense (although they do incorporate a surge protector), Hughes Autoformers are designed to increase voltage to the coach and help eliminate low voltage appliance damage. The Autoformer's "sense circuit" adjusts the output based on the load demand so you can run additional appliances on a 30-amp circuit. With the increase in the voltage to the RV (when plugged in through the Autoformer) the amperage demand will be lower and the overall performance will be greater, according to the company. An operation range of approximately 94-125 volts input will boost RV voltage to safe and efficient levels. Two different models are offered, with install kits available separately.

### 30 AMP 3,600 WATT (RV2130)

- Fully automatic 10 percent boost when needed
- Park power diagnostic light
- Boost indicator light
- Spike and surge protection
- Size: 12 inches high by 5½ inches wide by 5½ inches deep
- Weight: 21 pounds
- Two year limited warranty
- Made in the USA

**MSRP: \$368**



### 50 AMP 12,000 WATT (RV220-50)

- Fully automatic 10 percent boost when needed (95-115 volts AC)
- Park power diagnostic light
- Boost indicator lights for each line (2)
- Spike and surge protection
- U.L. listed Autotransformer
- Size: 12 inches high by 8½ inches wide by 5½ inches deep
- Weight: 35 pounds
- Two year limited warranty
- Made in the USA

**MSRP: \$548**



from entering the coach when hooked up, preventing costly damage to electrical appliances. They can even protect you from your own mistakes, such as accidentally plugging the 30-amp power cord into a 220-volt AC outlet (yes, they look alike — and yes, we've seen it happen).

Surge guards are available in portable versions, which are easy to connect and are relatively inexpensive, and hard-wired units that become a permanent part of the RV. Like most aftermarket products, surge protectors range in their features and price, so we've compiled this handy guide to help you find the right one for your motorhome. After all, a little protection now can save you a lot of trouble and expense later.

## Progressive Industries

Founded by a full-time RVer, the Progressive Industries product line includes everything from basic, portable surge protection for 30 and 50 amp service, to portable and hardwired complete RV power protection.

### SSP-30/SSP-50 SMART SURGE 30 AND 50 AMP SURGE PROTECTORS

The Smart Surge SSP-30 (120-volt AC/30-amp provides three mode, 825 joules and 22,500 amp surge current rating, while the SSP-50 (240-volt AC/50-amp provides five mode, 1650 joules and 45,000 amp surge current rating. The built in surge status indicator tells you whether or not the surge protector is functioning properly, and the integrated circuit tester checks for reverse polarity, open neutral and open ground prior to use.



#### SSP-50

- 4¾ inches wide by 12½ inches long by 3 inches high
  - Portable design
  - Weather resistant
  - Lifetime warranty
- MSRP: \$132**

#### SSP-30

- 3 inches wide by 12 inches long by 2½ inches high
  - Portable design
  - Weather resistant
  - Lifetime warranty
- MSRP: \$89**



### EMS-PT30C 30-AMP AND EMS-PT50C 50-AMP PORTABLE RV POWER PROTECTION

These units offer surge and voltage protection in a portable, compact unit. The integrated display continuously scrolls all of the AC power information, including voltage, current, frequency, error codes and previous errors. Driven by a state-of-the-art microprocessor, these units are weather resistant and feature a built-in lock bracket that allows the unit to be secured to the power source.

- Three-mode/Five-mode surge protection (30 amp/50 amp)
  - Surge indicator
  - High/low voltage protection
  - Time delay for A/C compressor
  - Reverse polarity protection
  - Open neutral protection
  - Open ground protection
  - AC frequency protection
  - Accidental 240-volt AC protection
  - Previous error code
  - 5 inches wide by 16½ inches long by 3½ inches high (30 amp)
  - 5 inches wide by 16½ inches long by 5 inches high (50 amp)
  - Lifetime warranty
- MSRP: \$310 (30 amp)  
\$431 (50 amp)**



### EMS-LCHW30 30-AMP AND EMS LCHW50 50-AMP HARDWIRED RV POWER PROTECTION

These units offer similar protection to the portable units listed at left, but are permanently wired into the RV. Modular design makes repairs very user friendly, according to the company, and a bypass allows the user to bypass the computer circuit in the EMS in the event of a failure, thereby allowing power back to the RV. If mounting in an area where the



readout is not readily visible, Progressive also offers the EMS-HW30C and EMS-HW50C, which have the additional benefit of a remote display.

- 5 inches wide by 9½ inches long by 3¼ inches high (30 amp)
  - 5 inches wide by 9½ inches long by 4½ inches high (50 amp)
  - Lifetime warranty
- MSRP: \$258-\$431**

## Technology Research Corp. (Surge Guard)

TRC offers a wide range of surge protectors under its Surge Guard line, including portable and hard-wired units. Here are a few of its most popular models:



### 44260 (30-AMP) AND 44270 (50-AMP) PORTABLE SURGE PROTECTORS

Billed as “entry level” portable surge protectors, these models identify faulty RV park protection, analyze circuits to verify pedestal power and test for/indicate open ground, open neutral and correct polarity. The 30-amp model offers 2100 joules of surge protection, while the 50-amp model provides 4,200 joules.

**MSRP: \$99.99/\$149.99**



### 34730 (30 AMP) AND 34750 (50 AMP) PORTABLE SURGE PROTECTORS WITH LCD DISPLAY

The new 30 and 50 amp Surge Guard portables with LCD display offer more than twice the joules of power surge protection than the previous model, according to the company. These units continuously monitor for voltage, amp draw and reverse polarity (such as a miswired pedestal or elevated ground voltage). Compact and easy to use, the 34730 and 34750 models are suitable for use on any motorhome with 30-amp or 50-amp service, respectively.

**MSRP: \$279.99/\$379.99**

- Protects RV from faulty park power
- Built-in intelligence
- Automatic reset on power restoration
- Shuts off power when open neutral, low/high voltage conditions exist
- Multi-mode surge suppression
- 128 second reset delay protects air-conditioner compressor
- 2450 joules of power surge protection (30 amp) or 3850 joules (50 amp)
- Convenient plug disconnect handles
- Weather resistant



### 34520 (30 AMP) AND 34560 (50 AMP) HARDWIRE SURGE PROTECTORS WITH OPTIONAL REMOTE LCD DISPLAY

Offering the same features as the portable models listed above, these hardwire units have the additional benefit of being permanently installed within the utility bay of a coach, preventing the possibility of theft or damage from the elements. The optional LCD display plugs into a remote port, and features 16 detailed fault screens plus a joystick for easy screen navigation. The LCD display is not compatible with previous models without a telecom jack.

**MSRP: \$239.99/\$334.99**



### SURGE GUARD UNIVERSAL LOCK HASP

Portable surge protectors aren't cheap, and unfortunately, there are some unscrupulous individuals out there who will steal yours if given the opportunity. You can help protect a portable Surge Guard product with the company's Universal Lock Hasp, which easily attaches to standard 30-amp and 50-amp plugs. Attach a padlock to the durable, high-quality plastic hasp, and it does the rest. Fits all portable Surge Guard models. **MSRP: \$24.99** ♦

# LIVELY ILLUMINATION

**DOMETIC'S 7-COLOR LED LIGHT STRIP  
INSTALLS EASILY, CONSUMES VERY LITTLE  
ENERGY AND CAN BE PROGRAMMED  
TO PAINT THE PATIO WITH  
MOOD-CHANGING HUES**

*by* BOB LIVINGSTON

**S**tringing lights on an awning or outside the motorhome is a tradition many owners use to signify that everyone's settled in and it's time to kick back and enjoy the site. To some it means party time, but for all, stringing the old-style rope lights is cumbersome — and frustrating if a section fails to illuminate. A better solution is to use LED light strips, which not only eliminate the hassle of taking down and restringing for every trip, but offer exceptional location versatility, better light output, lower energy consumption and far greater durability, even with continuous use.

Dometic's 7-Color LED Light Strip takes outdoor lighting to a higher level by incorporating vibrant colors that can be programmed for multicolor or single color pulsing, or continuous illumination in any of the seven available colors. The speed in which the strip pulses can also be regulated via the wireless remote that controls all the programming options.

While the festive mood presented by the multiple color LEDs (white, blue, pink, red, yellow, green and cyan) is the primary reason for installing the 7-Color LED Light Strip, the solid white LEDs put out a surprising amount of light, illuminating the area under the awning far better than a typical incandescent patio fixture.

Installation is pretty straightforward using common hand tools. Just about everything is provided in the kit except for the fasteners to secure the controller, silicone rubber and a few cable ties to clean up the wiring. For the evaluation, the light strip was positioned on an exposed section of the railing that contained the awning, immediately under the roller tube. When the awning is closed, the light strip is concealed, but it could be mounted lower on the side wall if the owner prefers not to extend the awning to make the lights visible.



Opposite page: Light-strip colors allow the user to change the evening mood on demand. We preferred leaving the LEDs set to one color without pulsing. The white light provided generous illumination under the awning. No doubt these lights could be seen from afar and made it easy to find the motorhome after dark. Above: Dometic's 7-Color LED Light Strip Kit includes a 16-foot roll of LEDs molded into a  $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch-wide strip that has an adhesive backing; there are 350 LEDs in the strip. A wireless remote, control box, 120-volt AC power converter, 30 feet of wire and an alcohol wipe are packed with the light strip.

Mounting versatility is the key; just about any surface can be used to attach the light strip, but keep in mind that sticking on the light strip in some locations might detract from the exterior aesthetics. Also, after the 3M-adhesive sets up, the light strip may be difficult to remove.

The light strip is powered by a 120-volt AC converter that needs to be plugged into an outlet that's within 30 feet of the light strip. What the instructions don't show you is that the converter output is 12-volt DC, so it's also possible to hard-wire from the coach's house batteries by connecting positive and negative wires to the provided DC terminals on the controller as an alternative to using 120-volt AC power. The LEDs don't pull that much current, but using the 120-volt AC converter affords power options.

Once the light strip was installed, we had a lot of fun changing the mood under the awning. Admittedly, programming the lights to cycle through all the colors and to pulse may be a little much over long periods of time for some people, but that's the beauty of the wireless programming. We simply set the strip on the continuous-light mode to tone down the visual ambiance.

On a creative note, there are a number of other uses for colorful LED lighting, including providing visibility for guests

looking for your motorhome at night. This is especially useful when parking in a dispersed camping area like Quartzsite, Ariz., with other RVers. The LEDs can also be turned on while walking back to your motorhome after visiting with friends in the same park, and since the lighting can be controlled with the remote, they don't have to be turned on until needed.

Dometic's 7-Color LED Light Strip is designed to provide more than 30,000 hours of illumination and sells for \$199.99 at Camping World and other RV retailers. The company also offers kits with only white LEDs. Universal LED kits have one 39-inch light strip and a wireless remote control with dimmer features. Up to nine, 39-inch add-on light strips can be connected and trimmed to fit a number of applications. Common uses include adding light strips in storage compartments and under entry steps. Kits are available with 120-volt AC power sources or for direct connection to 12-volt DC sources (without the power converter). A Lateral Arm LED Light Kit includes four 39-inch light strips.

Adding the Dometic LED light strips to any motorhome is an easy two-hour DIY project. The LEDs are energy efficient and do a fabulous job of illuminating the area under the awning — and don't forget the fun factor. Here's how it's done:



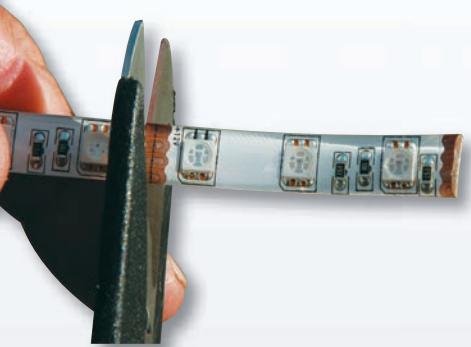
Before unrolling the LED light strip from the reel, the mounting location is determined and measured to make sure the 16-foot strip will fit properly. A connector is molded into the leading end of the light strip.



The railing that secures the patio awning to the side wall is prepped with the alcohol wipe to make sure that the surface is free of oils and debris that may prevent the adhesive from sticking properly.



Once the backing is removed from the light strip, it's simply attached to the awning railing, working with only a small section at a time to make sure the install is straight; a second person is very helpful for this step. The 3M adhesive is super strong, so care must be taken to make sure the fit is right the first time. The process goes very quickly.



Safe-cut lines are clearly visible so the light strip can be trimmed, if necessary, with scissors. Be certain here; cut sections of the light strip can't be reattached.



The terminal at the end of the light strip is connected to the wire cable that is routed to the control box. This end must be within 30 feet of the connector, which provides good mounting versatility. A non-conductive silicone caulking should be applied to the connector for weatherproofing; the LED strip is already waterproof.



Routing the wire cable is dependent on the controller mounting location and will likely be different for specific motorhomes. Here, the cable is routed above the awning roller tube and through a hole that was drilled into the side wall and exited in the back of an interior overhead compartment. Silicone rubber sealant must be used to weatherproof the hole after the wire is routed — a critical step.



Control box was mounted on the wall inside the cabinet that was in close proximity to the connector end of the light strip. Wire cable was connected to terminals in the controller. Wire ends are tagged for clear positioning and the ends are factory stripped and tinned with solder. Wire ends are simply inserted into the terminal strip and secured with an internal setscrew. Control box is not weatherproof and must be installed where it's protected from the elements.



AC converter (with 12-volt DC output) plugs into adjacent power receptacle that happened to be in the cabinet where the controller was installed. Controller can alternatively be wired directly to 12-volt DC using the marked locations in the terminal strip.



Remote control has telescoping antenna for additional range of up to 125 feet. Buttons turn the lights on and off and control all functions, including the color of the LEDs, multicolor and single color pulsing and the speed of the pulsing. While the other kit components seem to be high quality, the remote is a little cheesy.



Dometic also markets kits with white-only LEDs. One kit comes with four 39-inch lengths of strip lights and a wireless remote control with a dimmer feature. A universal kit has one 39-inch light strip, but up to nine add-on lengths of lighting can be added. Each add-on kit has one 39-inch length of LEDs. Kits are available with the 120-volt AC converter or can be wired directly to the coach's 12-volt DC power source. ♦

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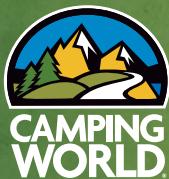
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**Emerald Green /  
Light Emerald  
Green**



**Blue/Light Blue**

**EXCLUSIVE  
DESIGN!**

**CLUB SALE  
\$69<sup>99</sup>**

**Reg. \$79.99**

UV-stabilized to prevent fading  
and resist mold and mildew!

### Circle Design Reversible Patio Mats, 9' x 12'

Reversible, weather-resistant polypropylene mats with decorative designs. Material "breathes" so it won't kill grass underneath. Edge piping with reinforced stitching. Corner tabs and loops hold anchor stakes (sold separately).

**Brown/Tan #74263 Blue/Light Blue #74264**

**Emerald Green/Light Emerald Green #74265**

Ship Wt. 6 lbs.

**CLUB SALE  
\$59<sup>99</sup>**

**Reg. \$79.99**

### Home is Where You Park It, Recliner

All-weather, fade-resistant Oxford fabric on a durable steel frame. Ergonomic poly armrests.

**Navy #72910 Tan #72909**

🚚 \$17 \$9 | ♥



Removable  
pillow with retro  
RV Design

**EXCLUSIVE  
DESIGN!**

Seat is  
17½"W

250 lb.  
capacity

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OFF**



160" sq. in.  
cooking area

### Stainless Steel Grills

#### A Hybrid Grill #69354

Works on propane or 110-volts AC.  
26"L x 18"W x 7"H.

**Club SALE \$279.99** Reg. \$329.99

🚚 \$17 \$9 | ♥

#### B Electric Grill #69356

Operates on 110-volts AC. Adjustable temperature control; cooking surface can reach up to 700°F. 22"L x 10½"W x 8"H. **Club SALE \$183.99** Reg. \$224.99 | 🚚 \$13 \$9 | ♥



150" sq. in.  
cooking area

Folds to 7"H

**CLUB MEMBERS SAVE  
UP TO  
\$50  
OFF**



**NEW  
COLLECTION!**



**CLUB SALE  
\$29<sup>99</sup>**

51"W x 23"H extended

**Reg. \$34.99**

### Folding Pet Gate #74414

Three-section gate. Folds for storage under bed. | Ship Wt. 8 lbs.



For pets up  
to 25 lbs.

**CLUB SALE  
\$8<sup>99</sup>**

21"L x 17"W x 7"H

**Reg. \$9.99**

### Khaki Cuddler Pet Bed #74205

Thickly padded sides and back. Polyester fiber fill. Machine washable. Ship Wt. 2 lbs.

**NEW  
COLOR!**

**CLUB SALE  
\$52<sup>99</sup>**

**Reg. \$58.89**

### Club Chair, Blue #74235

Cushy padded chair is covered in 600-denier polyester for use indoors or out. Heavy-duty tubular steel frame.

🚚 \$20 \$9 | ♥



Seat is  
33½"W

225 lb.  
capacity



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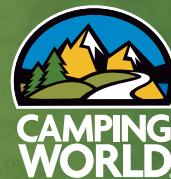
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**CLUB SALE**  
**\$1189<sup>99</sup>**

**Reg. \$1324.99** Uses 20% less water than most brands

### Dometic® Ventless Washer/Dryer #75215

Continuous cycle wash and dry plus 13 lb. capacity lets you wash and dry your entire load without interruption. Convenience features include separate compartments for pre-treatment, detergent and fabric softener; pause/stop; 4 additional cycle options; programmable settings. Moisture drains into a sink or shower—no vent to install. 120-volt. | **FREIGHT**

Let Us Install It ~~\$247.78~~ **CLUB SALE ONLY \$39!** | ♥



13"H x 17¼"W x 12"D

16½"H x 17¼"W x 12"D

### Dometic® Tropicool Portable Coolers/Warmers

Thermoelectric cooler/warmers keep foods at the preferred temperature, cooling without ice and operating on 12- or 24-volt DC, with a convenient adapter to 120-volt AC for use at home or on the go. All cool from 32°F to 60°F and heat from 118°F to 150°F.

**A 15 Quart #75218**  
**Club SALE \$249.99** Reg. \$284.99  
Ship Wt. 17 lbs. | ♥

**B 21 Quart #75219**  
**Club SALE \$299.99** Reg. \$339.99  
Ship Wt. 19 lbs. | ♥



**PORTABLE**

**DISH® ViP® 211z HD Satellite Receiver #73912**



### Pathway X1 Portable Satellite System

The smallest portable satellite antenna only 14.3" dia. x 13.5"H and weighs only 10 lbs. Fully automatic—just select your state and the Pathway X1 automatically finds DISH® satellites. Watch programs on up to two TVs (two receivers required). Compatible with DISH® Pay-As-You-Go ViP® 211z Receiver #73912 for SD and HD programming (receiver and programming package sold separately).

**White #74562** **Black (not shown) #75143**  
**Club SALE \$499** Reg. \$549 | Ship Wt. 14 lbs.

## Dometic®

**Holding Tank Treatments** that are **Easy to Use & Safe** for the Environment

**CLUB SALE**  
**\$21<sup>99</sup>**  
**Reg. \$24.99**



**A Dometic® 3 'N 1 Bowl Cleaner & Tank Treatment, 24-pack #74369**  
Combines air freshener, bowl cleaner and tank treatment all in one easy to use drop-in packet. Lavender scent. One 1.5 oz. packet treats a 40 gallon tank. | Ship Wt. 3 lbs.

**12-pack #74368 (not shown) Club SALE \$11.29** Reg. \$13.29 | Ship Wt. 1 lb.

**B Dometic® Premium Holding Tank Treatments**  
Offers the most powerful, longest-lasting control of tank odors without formaldehyde. Additives break down waste and help tanks rinse cleaner during pump-out. All-season use—won't break down in hot conditions. Concentrated—only 4 oz. liquid or one drop-in packet treats a 40 gallon blackwater waste tank.

**Tip & Measure Liquid, 32 oz. #74366**  
**Club SALE \$10.59** Reg. \$11.99 | Ship Wt. 3 lbs.

**C Drop-In Packet, 12-pack #74356 Club SALE \$11.59** Reg. \$13.49 | Ship Wt. 1 lb.

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**CAMPING WORLD**



## IN THE BAG

We attached ordinary over-the-seat storage pockets to our dash near the passenger side with a wide hook-and-loop fastener. The extra storage is helpful for maps and other travel needs that are nice to have within easy reach.

**MEME WAGNER  
FORT THOMAS, KY.**



## RACK 'EM UP

Here is a great way to keep real wine glasses safe while traveling, as well as just storing. My husband mounted the rod portion of a fishing pole rack on the wall of one of our cupboards. Make sure the rack is flush against the mounting surface. It cost us approximately \$15 from a local sporting goods store.

**GEORGEANNE MOON  
SIOUX FALLS, S.D.**

## CAPTURING COLD AIR

In order to keep the cool air from the dashboard air conditioner in the cockpit, I hung a shower curtain behind the cockpit seats on a wire stretched across the motorhome. The curtain is supported by a wire strung between two cabinets behind the cockpit. I used braided picture-hanging wire because it's flexible. A hook at one end goes onto a small eye-bolt in one cabinet. There's a small spring on the other end of the wire, which keeps it taut, and the spring goes over a hook in the cabinet on the other side. The hook and eye-bolt should face forward so it's not pulled out of the cabinet, but be sure to remove the curtain when extending the slide. I cut the curtain where it met the furniture, and stapled the cut-off pieces to the bottom of the center so the curtain would reach the floor between the seats. I put duct tape over the twisted wire ends so they don't pierce the curtain when packed away. When not in use, the whole thing rolls up nicely.

**FRANK WINTER MANALAPAN, N.J.**



## CUT THE CLUTTER

I grew tired of a disorderly table that was littered with pens, TV remotes and travel literature. Nothing was commercially available, so I fashioned a receptacle for about \$20. With some spare plywood, flexible carpeting and a little imagination, the result is a pleasing container to tidy up the table.

The storage container is 24-inches long, 7-inches wide and 3½-inches high. There are three 16-inch horizontal wood strips for magazines, TV guides and receipts. The front row is divided into four sections for pens and small electronics. The cup holders on either side came from the table — the new storage unit covers the holes that were left.

**THOMAS MICHALSKI | ST. PETERSBURG, FLA. ♦**

## 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 DIY ideas to: *MotorHome* Quick Tips, 2750 Park View Ct., Ste. 240, Oxnard, CA 93036, 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 will receive \$35.

# techsavvy

HANDS-ON | HOT LINE | COACH & POWERTRAIN



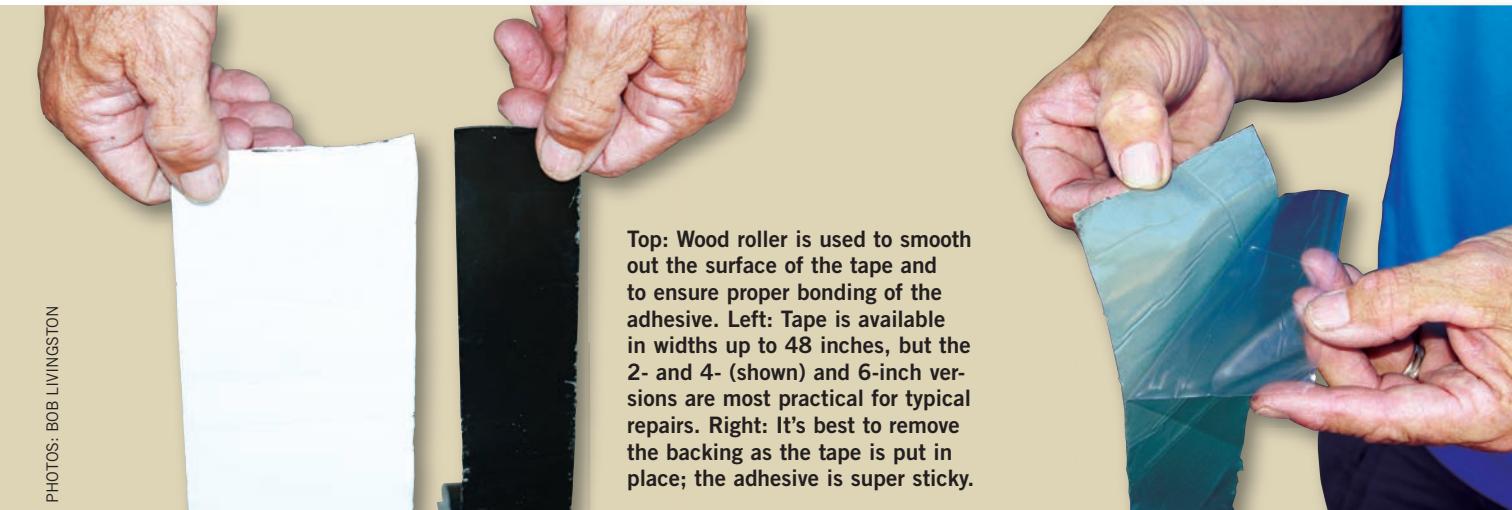
HANDS-ON | *by* BILL AND JENN GEHR

## PERMANENT ROOF REPAIR

EternaBond tape makes short work out of sealing damaged membranes that can lead to mildew, mold and dry rot

**Rubber roofs made from EPDM or TPO material are** lightweight and pliable, but are vulnerable to damage caused by tree branches that can result in tears or rips in the membrane. Left untreated, water damage will lead to mold, mildew and dry rot — leading to extensive and expensive repairs. Fiberglass and aluminum roofs are susceptible to cracks or oxidation. Over time, all roof coverings will require some sort of care. EternaBond RoofSeal is a micro-sealant tape that will stop any leak in its tracks. The bonding strength is unsurpassed, and yes, we found out the hard way; the tape cannot be removed once it's in place. EternaBond tape is pressure activated and UV stable. With a shelf life of five years, the company's patch tape is a must-have for any motorhome tool kit. The bonding strength is so good that no other sealant is required along the edge of the tape — and the tape will easily last the life of the motorhome.

EternaBond can be used to make a lap seam for a large patch on any type of roof material and is available in white,



Top: Wood roller is used to smooth out the surface of the tape and to ensure proper bonding of the adhesive. Left: Tape is available in widths up to 48 inches, but the 2- and 4- (shown) and 6-inch versions are most practical for typical repairs. Right: It's best to remove the backing as the tape is put in place; the adhesive is super sticky.

FOR FREE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON PRODUCTS AND SERVICES OFFERED IN THIS ISSUE, CIRCLE THE NUMBER ON THE ATTACHED CARD THAT CORRESPONDS TO THE NUMBER OF THE COMPANY THAT INTERESTS YOU, AND MAIL. VISIT [WWW.MOTORHOME.COM/INFO](http://WWW.MOTORHOME.COM/INFO) FOR FASTER RESPONSE.

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 is not like comparing apples to apples...  
**All apples are different.**



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black, gray and aluminum colors. It comes in 50-foot rolls in 2-inch widths and 25- or 50-foot rolls in 4- and 6-inch widths, which for practical purposes, are the best sizes for on-the-road toolboxes. Widths up to 48 inches and a double-stick version are also available. It can even be rolled up into a ball for patching holes or cracks. Many RV supply stores will cut the material as needed and sell it by the foot.

The tape was applied to a slideout roof that had developed a leak large enough to allow water into the motorhome during heavy rains, and it was only a matter of time before the structure would become permanently damaged. As always, preparation is the key to success. Before starting, the surfaces must be cleaned thoroughly. Acetone was used for the heavy cleaning after washing, followed by a wiping with alcohol. The tape was then cut carefully to fit the length of area to be repaired and laid in place. Using a felt-tip pen, the location was marked for the installation of the tape. Shorter pieces can usually be handled by one person, but you'll need one or two helpers to set the longer lengths of tape.

It's important to take your time when installing EternaBond tape, as once it touches, the roof adhesion is instantaneous. It's easier to start at one end and peel the backing slowly as the tape is laid in place, using the markings as a guide. Each piece should be overlapped at least 1/2-inch. A heavy wood roller is then used to ensure proper bonding of the adhesive.

Total installation time will vary depending upon prepping and cleaning; this install took about an hour. The price for the EternaBond RoofSeal varies, depending on size. For example a 50-foot roll of 2-inch tape is \$46.05; 25 feet of 4-inch tape is \$50.50 and 50 feet retails for \$84.39. The 6-inch material is \$75.76 and \$126.58 for the 25- and 50-foot rolls, respectively.

No one wants to think about motorhome roof damage, but if it happens, EternaBond will seal the hole quickly and permanently. ♦

**EternaBond**  
**800-248-4010**  
[www.eternabond.com](http://www.eternabond.com)

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## Extended Warranty Woe

FRUSTRATED BY HAVING TO PAY FOR REPAIRS TO HIS AIR CONDITIONER EVEN THOUGH HE HAD AN EXTENDED WARRANTY, A READER ASKED HOT LINE FOR ASSISTANCE. HE WROTE:

I bought a new Dometic air conditioner for my motorhome last February. I also bought Dometic's 2 Plus 3 Full Service Contract, which is a three-year extended warranty. The A/C unit worked fine when I brought it home, but when I went on a trip in March, it quit working.

When I returned home, I took the unit back to the dealer, Tour America RVs, where it was purchased. Tour America worked on it and finally got the air conditioning running again.

When I went to pick up the coach, I was told that I would be responsible for the amount not covered by the extended warranty. I originally purchased the extended warranty so I wouldn't have to pay for repairs. I am asking Hot Line for help in obtaining reimbursement for my out-of-pocket charges.

**DARL HENDERSON | MIAMI, FLA.**

*Hot Line contacted Dometic on Henderson's behalf. Soon thereafter, we heard from Henderson, who provided a happy ending to his dilemma. He wrote:*

Thanks for Hot Line's help with resolving my problem with Dometic. The company contacted me and we have resolved the problem. Dometic was very punctual and nice to work with and settled the matter entirely in my favor.

**D.H.**

### TIRE TROUBLE

*Seeking help with a tire failure claim, a reader turned to Hot Line. He wrote:*

I bought six new BFGoodrich Commercial T/A tires (225/75R16) for my Class C motorhome in March 2011. At that

time, my odometer reading was 21,438.

During a trip to Washington last May, I felt a vibration coming from the rear. I called for emergency roadside service and a technician was dispatched. After inspecting the tires, the technician told me the two left tires appeared to have a "bubble," indicating separating tread, and should be replaced immediately. He referred me to Les Schwab in Oakridge, Ore., where I had both left rear tires replaced for \$352. My odometer reading was 31,480.

I contacted the service advisor who originally sold me the tires and asked what help he could provide in pursuing a warranty claim against BFGoodrich. He told me there was nothing to do until I returned home and to contact him at that time.

Shortly after leaving Washington, I again felt a vibration coming from the rear and stopped into Les Schwab in Brookings, Ore. I was told a right rear tire showed signs of separation and should be replaced. Since it was part of a dual set, I had both right rear tires replaced at a cost of \$353.

When I returned home, I went to the tire dealer to see about a warranty claim and was surprised to hear that there was nothing they could do without having physical possession of the three failed tires! I had pictures of the tires and their DOT numbers, but they were not interested in them. I thought I had done everything to notify the appropriate parties of my warranty claim.

I contacted BFGoodrich's corporate office and was told that without the tires to inspect, the company would not honor its warranty. After a month of calls and failed negotiations, the corporate office agreed to reimburse me 50 percent of the cost as a goodwill gesture.

Not having been in this situation before, however, I feel that for three tires to fail after only two years and 10,000 miles, 50 percent reimbursement is insufficient. BFGoodrich's policy not to reimburse me because it can't inspect the tires is simply unreasonable and defies common sense.

Had I been informed that I needed to ship the tires to BFGoodrich when I first notified the dealer, I could have

made arrangements to do so. Also, if there had been a BFGoodrich dealer in town, I would have gone there for repair under warranty to avoid all of this inconvenience, aggravation and expense.

Unfortunately, Les Schwab Tire Centers do not carry BFGoodrich and given the state of the separated tires, traveling for any distance to a BFGoodrich dealer was not an option.

I believe that BFGoodrich should honor its warranty and pay an additional sum toward the tires I had replaced.  
**ROD MURPHY | PALM DESERT, CALIF.**

*Virtually all tires have some sort of warranty when acquired new, and a monetary adjustment is warranted if they fail during their coverage period. However, no amount of cajoling on a complainant's part is likely to get them help unless they have physical evidence (the actual tire) to substantiate their claim.*

*The most important reason that tire manufacturers insist on examining tires is to determine whether the tire failed because of a manufacturing defect or some other circumstance, such as hitting a highway obstacle, overloading or improper wear due to underinflation or misalignment.*

*We are publishing this letter to remind readers that if any product breaks or fails during its warranty period, hang on to it until you can speak directly to the manufacturer about warranty replacement or compensation.*

*BFGoodrich's reply follows:*

We received Hot Line's letter regarding Rod Murphy. We spoke to Murphy on Aug. 20, 2013, and explained that we would not be able to address his claim for warranty given that the subject tires were not available. Under the terms and conditions of the BFGoodrich Limited Warranty, tires must be presented to an authorized BFGoodrich tire dealer for evaluation. Unfortunately, we are unable to assist him.

**GREGG KNOX, BFGOODRICH TIRES GREENVILLE, S.C. ♦**

TO CONTRIBUTE TO HOT LINE, please refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 13.

## Engine Dies When Stopping

I have a 1998 35-foot Forest River on a 1997 Ford chassis with a 7.5-liter fuel-injected V-8 and 80,000 miles. The engine sometimes dies when I stop at a red light. I have to shift into neutral, re-start and keep my foot on the gas pedal to get going again. This doesn't occur all the time. It usually happens after driving a while, but recently it died after 10 miles. I've replaced the gas filter, EGR valve and the idle control valve with no change. Where do I go from here?

**ED WYBRANOWSK | VIA EMAIL**

*This stalling could be caused by the torque converter not unlocking when you come to a stop. This can be checked with a professional-type scan tool set to monitor that function. You mentioned some parts replaced. An EGR valve sticking open or a faulty idle speed control (ISC) could be the cause, but so could an invalid signal to either component. A pro scan tool should be used to monitor the signals going to them. Also, measure fuel pressure, as this is a common problem with these engines.*

### CHARGING COACH BATTERIES

I own a 2007 Gulfstream Conquest Class C motorhome with a 4kW Onan generator. When dry camping, I use the generator to charge the coach batteries. The batteries are new AGM-type batteries. It seems to take excessively long (multiple hours) for the generator to charge the batteries. I do a lot of dry camping, so a friend suggested I buy a fast charger, plug it in to the coach circuit, connect it to the coach batteries, then run the generator to charge the batteries faster.

Would this work without damaging the circuit, or would I need to unhook the batteries from the motorhome? If I leave the batteries connected, it seems like they would be receiving a fast charge from the charger and a trickle charge from the coach side and that would cause a problem. Any advice would be greatly appreciated. Thanks.

**EARL CAHOE | PORTLAND, ORE.**

*The fast charger will override the slower charging unit because it will put out a higher voltage. Charging output circuits have diodes that act as one-way electrical check valves and prevent back-feeding power. To avoid overcharging, you should not charge the batteries at a rate more than about 20 percent of the batteries' combined amp-hour rating. For example, a 100-amp-hour battery pack should not be charged with more than 20 amps. AGMs have specific charging voltage requirements that must be regulated by the charger.*

### TOWING CAPACITY CLARIFICATION

We bought a 2008 Damon Daybreak 3276 motorhome last fall and would like to tow a vehicle behind it. I've talked to several people and dealers, and have received conflicting information.

**A SLIDEOUT SHOULD BE COMPLETELY DRY BEFORE STORAGE. IF IT'S WET WHEN YOU NEED TO LEAVE CAMP, WIPE IT DOWN FROM THE INSIDE AND THEN OPEN IT WHEN YOU GET TO YOUR DESTINATION. LET IT THOROUGHLY DRY BEFORE STORING THE MOTORHOME.**



We have an 18-foot flat deck auto hauler trailer, which we had planned to use for this purpose. I have a 10,000-pound equalizer bar system on the hitch receiver. The gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of the coach is 20,500 pounds and the gross combination weight rating (GCWR) is 26,000 pounds. The GVWR of the trailer is 7,000 pounds, and the carrying capacity is 4,940 pounds. The trailer weight is 2,050 pounds.

Some say I should be able to tow a vehicle that weighs approximately 5,000 pounds. Others say I should be able to tow a vehicle of only approximately 3,000 pounds. These figures take into account that the trailer weight will be added, and thus will increase the total amounts to 7,000 and 5,000 pounds respectively.

The trailer is a double axle with brakes on the rear axle and the coach has a brake controller installed. I know I will have to weigh the coach to get an accurate dry weight. Any information would be appreciated as we hope to travel to the U.S. this spring and I want to be within legal and safe limits.

**DONALD A. GRAYDON  
VARS, ONTARIO, CANADA**

*The hitch receivers used on most motorhomes are rated for 5,000 pounds, and the information I found shows the maximum tow weight rating for your coach to be 5,000 pounds. If you subtract the GVWR from the GCWR, you get 5,500 pounds, which is close to the specification I found. That's nowhere near the 7,000 pounds you mentioned, and you should not exceed any ratings for safety reasons. Front-engine coaches have a long rear overhang, which is not designed to handle a lot of hitch weight, usually around 500 pounds. Hitch weight should be about 10 to 12 percent of total loaded trailer weight.*

*You should weigh the motorhome fully loaded with full LP-gas, fuel and freshwater tanks and passengers to get a wet weight, not dry, and subtract that from the GCWR to determine what's left for a trailer. Whether it's 5,000 pounds or 5,500 (which must include the trailer and any vehicle on it) that only*

leaves about 2,950 pounds or so for a car.

### SLIDEOUT STORAGE

We live in a rainy area and often the coach is damp when we want to break camp. Is it OK to store the slideout if it is wet?

**BRIAN JOHNSON | TACOMA, WASH.**

*A slideout should be completely dry before storage. If it's wet when you need to leave camp, wipe it down from the inside and then open it when you get to your destination. Let it thoroughly dry before storing the motorhome.*

### GENERATOR STALLS

I have an Onan MicroQuiet 4000 generator in my 2003 Four Winds. I bought this coach in 2005, and the 4kW generator has worked well until recently. I always make sure the generator crankcase oil level is full before each trip. The generator uses little, if any, crankcase oil.

We took a camping trip four months ago and the generator started fine and ran smoothly until the end of the microwave oven's cook cycle, when the generator stalled out immediately. This stalling happened every time we cooked something in the microwave. The generator always restarted easily and ran fine after it stalled. I adjusted the needle valve until the generator sounded like it was running a little more smoothly and rapidly, and until today it looked as if I had solved the problem.

The generator normally runs at a pretty high rpm. The generator is a single-cylinder engine that runs on regular-grade gasoline from the motorhome's 70-gallon fuel tank. I top off the gas tank and add STA-BIL at the end of each trip. Every month I start the generator and run it with the air conditioner on high/cool in order to keep the generator in good condition. Today I started the generator, and ran it with the A/C on high for 30 minutes. When I turned off the A/C, the generator immediately stalled and shut off. Do you have any idea why my generator starts well and runs under load smoothly, then stalls out at the exact time the load is shut off?

**BOB HAYNES | VALRICO, FLA.**

*This definitely seems like a problem in the genset's control module, where the change*

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AutomotiveTouchup, a leading manufacturer of specialty automotive touch-up paint products, has released its Touchup Paint Pen series. Clean, convenient and cost-effective, the touchup pens make DIY automotive touch-

up work quick and easy, according to the company. AutomotiveTouchup offers high-quality, custom-specified paints matched to the vehicle's original factory colors and applied through a DIY paint pen system for a professional look. The Primer Paint Pen's gray primer adheres directly to bare metal and plastics, providing a clean, neutral base surface over which to paint. Designed to be easy-to-control with strong adhesion, it fills scratches and chips. Basecoat Paint Pens are custom matched to the vehicle's original factory color code and applied in coats. The High Gloss Clearcoat Pen is directly applied over the touch-up basecoat. This delivers a glossy surface and helps match the newly touched-up paint to the proper color, as many vehicles are manufactured with both clearcoat and basecoat paint. Colors are available for dinghy vehicles and motorhomes. For more information call 888-710-5192 or visit [www.automotivetouchup.com](http://www.automotivetouchup.com) or [www.microfinish.com](http://www.microfinish.com).



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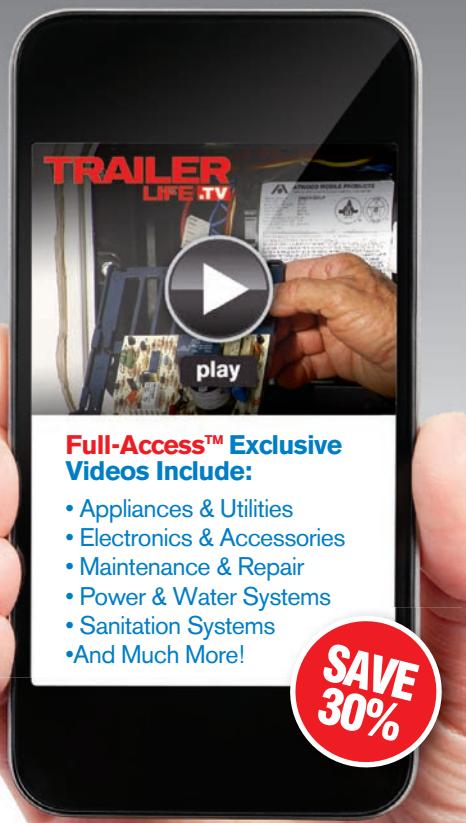
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## COACH & POWERTRAIN

*in load isn't being correctly responded to. It may also be related to a governor adjustment (which requires a frequency meter, voltmeter and 4kW resistive load) that should be done by a qualified technician.*

*According to Onan, your genset should be a Spec J model, which has flash trouble code capability. This fault should set a flash trouble code that will show up on the control panel. Following a fault shutdown, first-level fault codes should be illuminated; the indicator light will repeatedly blink one, two or three blinks at a time. One blink indicates shutdown due to high temperature. Two blinks indicates shutdown due to a loss of engine oil pressure. Three blinks indicates shutdown due to some other abnormal condition — I suspect yours will do this.*

*For a one-blink or three-blink first-level fault code, one touch to the STOP button brings up a second-level fault code. This secondary type of code consists of one, two, three or four blinks, a brief pause, and then one to nine blinks. The first set of blinks represents the first digit and the second set of blinks, the second digit of the fault code number. A governor actuator fault code is 15. A controller (processor) fault should log a 42 or 43. The fault code stops blinking after five minutes. Press STOP three times within five seconds to restore blinking. Note that the last fault logged will blink even after the condition that caused the shutdown has been corrected. Although you can read the trouble codes, it's best to seek professional help when troubleshooting generators.*

### **MATCHING PAINT**

I accidentally damaged the corner of my 2013 Forest River Georgetown XL. I contacted Forest River for the four color codes for my coach. Three of the colors translate to paint colors my body shop can identify, but the color I need — TS40888 (a 1999 General Motors metallic black) — isn't listed. I see it listed on Coachmen 2013 coaches on the Web. Can you identify this color for me so I can have it reproduced?

**RANDY MASON | LONG BEACH, CALIF.**

*I searched the Internet and didn't find that code either. The same folks who gave you those paint codes should be able to give you the latest valid code for the black.*

### **SHADE CLEANING AND REPAIR MADE EASIER**

United Shade has updated a popular shade repair kit while also making it easier for RVers to clean their shades with another new product. Described as "First Aid" for shades, United Shade's Spray 'n Brush RV shade cleaner uses an advanced surfactant formula that, according to the company, works to break the chemical bond between soil and fabrics. For heavily soiled fabrics, the product's cap provides a built-in brush.

United Shade's other Shade First Aid product — its shade repair kit — has been updated with color-coded instructions and illustrations to make repairs even easier. The kit includes parts and directions for repair of two-cord day/night shades, four-cord day/night shades and two-cord night shades.

United Shade, 877-262-0954, [www.unitedshade.com](http://www.unitedshade.com)



*If it's a small area, you might check with [www.automotivetouchup.com](http://www.automotivetouchup.com). If not, most larger auto body paint stores and many body shops have scanners that can match paint samples quite well.*

### **RUNNING A FRIDGE VIA AN INVERTER**

We are interested in using an inverter to power our RV refrigerator when driving. Do you have any recommendations?

**TRACY ELLERS | INDIANAPOLIS, IND.**

*I can understand that you would want to do this for safety reasons, instead of having the LP-gas tank valve open and running the refrigerator on gas. When converting 12 volts to 120 volts, it requires 10 amps at 12-volts DC to produce 1 amp at 120-volts AC, plus the losses involved in the conversion process. To determine approximately how many watts you'll need, look at the tag on the fridge that lists power ratings. If it's in amps, multiply the voltage by amps to calculate watts. Most alternators have a hard time keeping up with that much draw, as they are designed to power vehicle loads and have*

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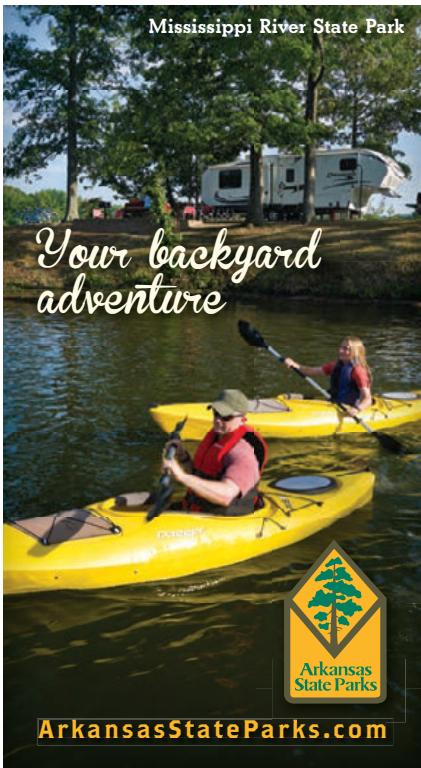
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some reserve for battery charging, etc. A 100-amp 12-volt DC alternator only puts out a nominal 1,200 watts. Inverters also must be sized so that you don't use their full maximum continuous rating.

### HEATING A STORAGE COMPARTMENT

I want to know how to provide heat in my storage compartments under the motor-coach, and not set myself up for a fire.

**DERIK BAREFIELD | MACK, COLO.**

*Storage compartments are generally not well insulated and it's best if you keep anything that's susceptible to freezing damage out of them in cold weather. How to get heat into them mainly depends on the construction of the coach. You want to avoid using an electric heater, because of the risks involved. If you want to heat one compartment, select one that's near an existing heating duct, if your coach has them. Then you could put a T in the duct and run a branch of it into the compartment. Alternatively, you could run a duct and use a small "muffin" fan to direct heated air from inside the coach into the compartment. You'll also need a vent to let the air out of the compartment for adequate airflow.*

### STALLING CHEVY

I own a 1990 Pace Arrow with a Chevrolet 454 (7.4-liter) gas engine. For the last two years, upon descending the same medium hill, braking normally and making a sharp right turn, the engine cuts out mid turn. The tank is always more than half full. My mechanic is puzzled. Do you have any ideas?

**ROGER DEMERS**

**DUNHAM, QUEBEC, CANADA**

*This should be an early TBI-injected model, which uses a throttle body that has dual injectors. These were a step between earlier carburetors and newer port-injection systems. Since they don't have float bowls, fuel slosh shouldn't be a factor. Therefore, I suspect that a wiring connection may be at fault. Remove the engine cover (doghouse) temporarily for a test drive. Have your mechanic wiggle and move wires that run from the chassis to the engine. Replicate this turn (tell him to hang on!), and see if the engine moves excessively. There may be a faulty engine*

*mount rubber that would put additional strain on electrical connections that could be hung up on something and may cause momentary open circuits.*

### SLIDEOUT PROBLEMS

We have a 1997 Damon 35-foot Ultra-sport on a Ford chassis with a 7.5-liter engine. The slide had been extended for several weeks and when I tried to bring it in, it barely moved. I charged the batteries, but that was no help. I don't have an owner's manual, so I don't know how to check the hydraulic fluid. Can you help?

**WILLIAM SUDDUTH | VIA EMAIL**

*Did it sound like it was laboring, but couldn't budge, or like it was running freely (low fluid)? Often when slides stick, it's because the seals are dry and dirty, the unit is twisted and off level, the slide mechanism is dirty/corroded, or the slide is out of adjustment. If it sounds like the motor is running slowly, that often indicates low voltage at the motor, which besides being due to a low battery, can also be caused by loose or corroded connections. If you don't know where the pump is, operate the slideout and listen for the pump's sound to locate it. Typically there's a plug on the upper part of the hydraulic reservoir to check and add fluid. If fluid has been lost, look for signs of hydraulic fluid leakage and repair as needed.*

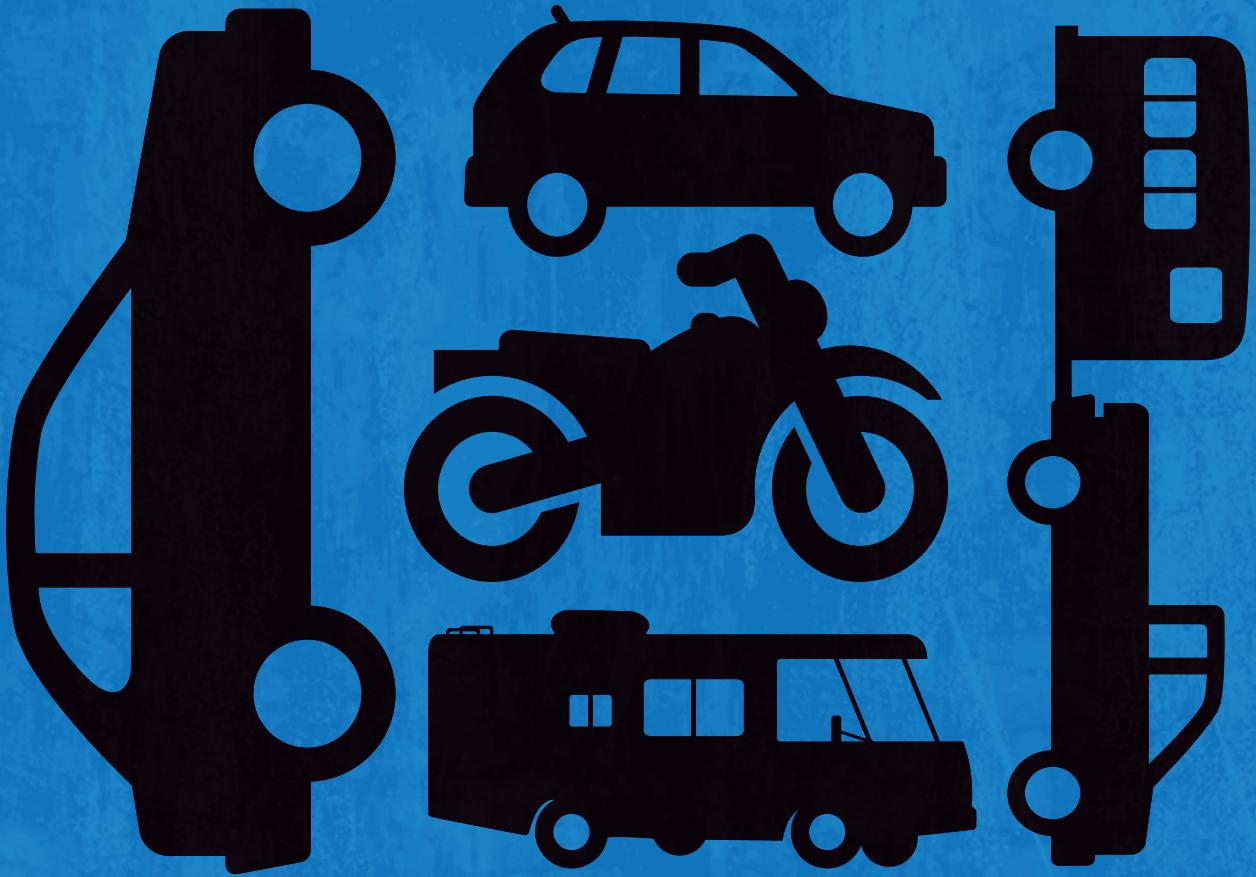
### WHITE POWDER ON WALLS

Our 2011 Fleetwood Discovery 40 has a white-powder residue on the paneling in the cabinets and walls. After we clean it, if we touch the paneling, the residue reappears. Any idea what may be causing this?

**DAVID LIGGETT | WILLOUGHBY, OHIO**

*You likely have powdery mildew, which is whitish in color and may slowly turn yellow-brown, then black. Inhalation of mildew can cause coughing, headache, lung disorders and serious health problems. To prevent mildew, keep all the areas dry and as moisture-free as possible. There are also mildew removers available at stores to eliminate the problem. ♦*

TO CONTRIBUTE TO COACH & POWERTRAIN, refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 13.



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### OPTIONAL RED TYPE:

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## On A Roll

### CELEBRATING THE REINVENTION OF THE WHEEL AND THE ARRIVAL OF SPRING IN NORTH CAROLINA'S CAPITAL



**While 16th-century Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León never found the fabled Fountain Of Youth, modern biomedical researchers have come up with a handful of recommendations that might be the next best thing. Topping their list of ways to stave off the aging process is this simple advice: Try something new.**

Though this suggestion may seem obvious to motor-home owners who regularly set off in search of new horizons, bear in mind that there's more to it than just seeking out an occasional change of scenery. Instead of pursuing the same old activities in a different location, experts say the biggest benefit comes from doing something completely unfamiliar and, dare we say, even a little challenging.

Which explains how I found myself rolling through the tree-lined streets of Raleigh, North Carolina's historic Oakwood neighborhood with my friends Todd and Sandy Masinter, a couple that knows more than a little about setting off into uncharted territory. You see, a few years back they quit their corporate jobs in Southern California, packed up the family and moved to the Tar Heel State's capital to follow their passion for what is arguably the most innovative form of conveyance since the invention of the wheel, the Segway Personal Transporter.

Todd and Sandy's storefront operation, Triangle Glides (919-828-1988, [www.triangleglides.com](http://www.triangleglides.com)), now offers visitors to their adopted hometown a truly different — and decidedly more fun — alternative to a ubiquitous walking tour. For about what you'd spend on a round of golf, you can get an up-close look at some of Raleigh's most interesting historical highlights while having a blast aboard these remarkable self-balancing two-wheelers.

Now, I'll readily admit that my first few moments after stepping up onto the Segway's raised platform were a little shaky. After some pointers from Todd — which basically boiled down to gently leaning in the direction you want to go — and a little practice, however, controlling this cutting-edge collection of gyroscopic sensors, accelerometers, microprocessors and electric motors felt nearly as instinctive as putting one foot in front of the other.

It also became clear why Segway aficionados call this "glid-



ing," as the smooth ride and intuitive controls made it seem like I was floating along effortlessly 8 inches above the pavement. Add the pleasantly mild spring-time weather and the annual explosion of color from blooming dogwoods, azaleas, daffodils and tulips,

and I'm convinced there's no better time to enjoy this experience than right now.

Triangle Glides offers a half-dozen different tours that run between one and two hours. Content ranges from straight-up presentations of Raleigh's rich history, to more colorful tales, including a singing dog many described as a musical prodigy and a fist fight on the floor of the state legislature.

No matter which of Todd and Sandy's carefully curated excursions you choose, based on my experience I think you'll find them to be uniquely synergistic experiences. While both the history lesson and the Segway ride would be interesting diversions on their own, put the two together and you have one of the most enjoyable tours I've ever taken.

Though I can't say Todd and Sandy's Segway tour did much to roll back my chronological age, I can tell you the time I spent with these two and their extraordinary machines made me feel the youthful enthusiasm that comes with discovering an unexpectedly delightful new activity. Which, when it comes right down to it, is one of the best byproducts of exploring the twists and turns in *The Road Ahead*. ♦

.....  
**Alan Rider has been wandering the backroads of America for more than four decades. Though he's never been big on traditional souvenirs, he's passionate about collecting memories of the remarkable people and unforgettable places he encounters along the way.**  
 .....



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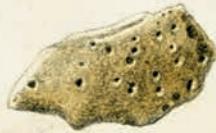
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*without spending your means.*



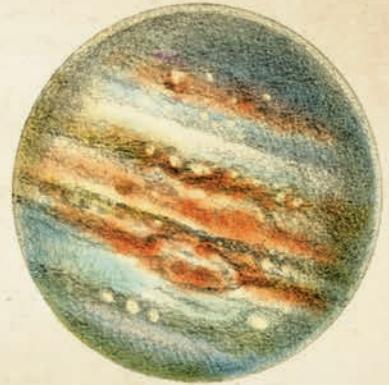
*Fig. 1 Saturn*



*Fig. 3 Asteroid Gaspra*



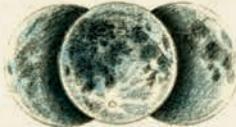
*Fig. 5 Mercury*



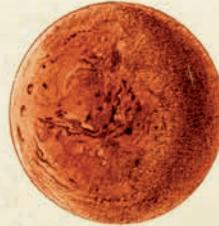
*Fig. 7 Jupiter*



*Fig. 2 Neptune*



*Fig. 4 Phases of the Moon*



*Fig. 6 Mars*

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