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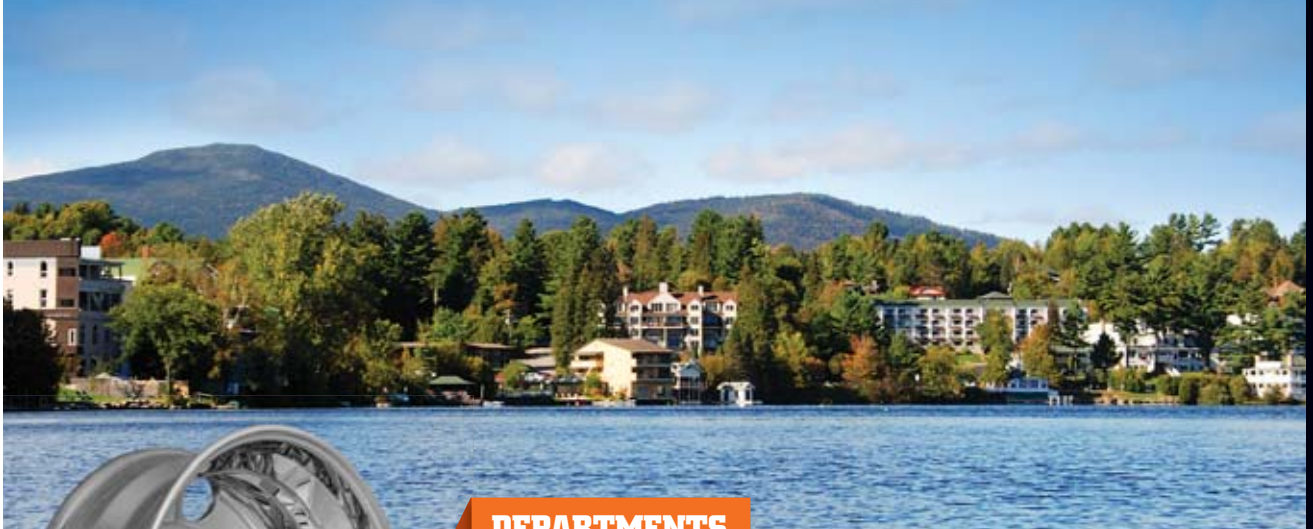
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On the cover: Redwood RV's RW36RL luxury fifth-wheel is equipped with three slideouts and substantial options. Photo by Rich Cox.



Harnessing the Sun

Solar systems for battery charging



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As the summer travel season gets into full swing, most of us have made plans and cross off the days on the calendar, waiting anxiously to hit the road. At the same time, we're probably busy getting our RVs ready for travel, servicing systems that need attention and adding new toys to make the mobile lifestyle more pleasant.

While the summer sun makes it possible to stay outdoors during the long days, the sun's energy is also valuable for taking an eco-friendly approach to battery charging. We show you exactly how to make that happen on page 36 (*Sun Power*) with the installation of a solar system.

Most people consider a solar system atop an RV roof as the ticket to exploring destinations off the grid — and indeed it is. I have another slant on solar systems. Solar panels with high-tech regulators can charge batteries with pinpoint precision, something most RV power converters are not capable of doing. For that very reason, and the fact that good batteries, especially AGMs, are too expensive to mishandle, I rely on solar charging almost exclusively in my own rig — even when hooked up — and have disconnected the converter. If the panels are not being washed with decent sun, due to rainy weather or when cloud cover prevents the sunlight from shining, I'll plug in a multistage charger to restore the batteries, but that's not often.

The regulator in my system allows the panels to do an excellent job of conditioning the batteries, which promotes service longevity. I use a sophisticated meter to monitor battery condition and make a game out of recording the amp hours necessary to run the rig through the night and how long it takes to get the battery bank up to full charge during the day.

I got hooked on solar energy after meeting Greg Holder (who provided technical expertise for the article) almost 20 years ago while teaching together at the Life on Wheels program. At the time, solar panels were bulky and very expensive, but nevertheless we rigged up a two-panel system for my RV. Today panels are more efficient, smaller, lighter and, best of all, much cheaper, so bigger systems are more practical. Regulators are awesome and properly sized systems can easily run any RV without hookups. We installed a system recently at Holder's shop using 16 panels covering just about every square inch of rooftop real estate.

Sure, that's extreme for most owners, but what the heck, the sun's energy is free. 🚐

– Bob Livingston, publisher

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FUN FACT

According to the U.S. Department of Energy, solar energy is the most abundant energy source on Earth — 173,000 terawatts of solar energy strikes the Earth continuously. That's more than 10,000 times the world's total energy use.



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"We recently bought our 3rd fifth wheel trailer. When we set our rig up, my dealer recommended a Husky 26kW. Wow, what a difference that hitch has made. I never new that hookup could be that easy, and the ride is so smooth."

- Randy
26kW customer
Redding, CA



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Heartfelt Thanks

My husband and I spent a week in Arkansas at Bull Shoals-White River State Park. Twelve miles from our destination, one of our fifth-wheel tires blew out. Luckily, my husband was able to pull over and change out the tire with our spare. Because of this, we arrived late and decided to eat at Gaston's, the restaurant next to the state park. The restaurant was wonderful and a great place to relax after our experience on the road. After dinner, we asked our waitress where we could get a tire replaced. She brought the restaurant manager, Keith Larson, to our table. He asked us where our trailer was located, and we told him site #5 at the White River State Park.

He said, "Don't worry about a thing. I'll be at your camper in the morning." The next morning, Keith arrived just as promised, with all the arrangements made for us. Shannon Schroeder's Garage in Flippin, Arkansas, was set to come out to the park and do all the work for us. We didn't even have to be there! Those people really went the extra mile to make sure our vacation was not ruined. I cannot thank them enough for their professionalism and care. The park was beautiful, the river was gorgeous and the people of Arkansas were wonderful!

Mary and Frank Harrell
Lake Charles, Louisiana

Loaded and Light

Last year, my wife and I bought a trailer manufactured by a company in Riverside, California, called Eclipse RV, which makes lightweight towables. In the June issue, there was an article by Bob Ashley, *Loaded and Light*, that did not include a mention of Eclipse RV. The company's prices and comforts are hard to beat. Thanks for letting me have my say.

Larry Marcum, Barstow, California

More on the Mother Road

I have been enjoying Pamela Selbert's series of articles on Route 66. In the second article (*Historic Route 66: Part II*, March issue), the Selberts went through Oklahoma. Route 66 gets close to Woolaroc, which is a 3,700-acre wildlife preserve and home to many species of exotic wildlife. There's also a museum with an amazing collection of Western art and Native American pottery. It's definitely worth a stop!

Brian Bennett, Fullerton, California



Trailer Tires

In the June article, *Rolling Along Safely*, about finding the right trailer tires, the Goodyear Marathon actually says Carlisle on the side. The Maxxis is actually the Goodyear Marathon. I went out in my garage to check my Goodyear Marathons' tread design to make sure. I think your pictures got mixed up.

Ken Rathbun, Bremerton, Washington

In regard to Tim Walton's article in the June issue, *Rolling Along Safely*, overall, the article was well written and informative. The problem that I have is why didn't *Trailer Life* do its own evaluation of the tires listed instead of quoting the manufacturers praises of their products? I can get the same glorious claims of heat dissipation, high mileage, fantastic warranty, advanced tread compounds etc., from reading the manufacturers' ads! What the readers need is honest, true road test information.

Also, I would have liked to see

a listing of the country of manufacture for each of the tires. I know from personal experience that the Goodyear Marathon tires are made in China. I do not know where the other brands listed are made but I think that some others are also made in China. I cannot find any tires to fit my Cougar fifth-wheel that are made in the U.S.A.!

George Nachtseim,
Littleton, Colorado 🇺🇸

FACEBOOK POLL

What is the main purpose of your RV trips?

53% Taking a few trips per year

22% Traveling the country to see new destinations

19% I'm a full-time RVer

4% Socializing

2% Family events and vacations only

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PHOTOS BY GUY SELBERT



Iowa's Amish Community

Visitors are invited to experience a simpler way of life

by Pamela Selbert

Amish Community, made up of about 170 farm families living along a grid of rural roads outside Hazleton, Iowa, invites visitors to “experience the Amish way of life” at its farms and shops. In this world of white-frame farmhouses, immaculate tree-shaded lawns and kitchen gardens bursting with produce, many of these Old Order Amish, whose ancestors came to the area a century ago, also run a business of some sort: a country store (usually where items can be purchased in bulk); a woodworking or furniture shop; saddle, harness or buggy shop; or a bakery — among other businesses.

The delectable vegetables you see growing in the gardens are available every Tuesday and Friday from May to September, and Tuesdays in July and October at Wapsie Valley Produce Auction (C57 and Amish Boulevard). And at many of the farms you can buy produce right from the ground at reasonable prices.



Amish families work hard, no doubt — but they also take time for fun, such as gathering for the day at Fontana Park, 1883 125th Street, just south of Hazleton. The lovely 134-acre park, open to all visitors, offers an interpretive nature center, a 1¼-mile nature trail, a playground, picnic tables and a campground. To

get there take Highway 150 south and turn right (west) on 125th Street.

Fontana Park

319-636-2617; visit www.mycountyparks.com for information on camping and county parks in Iowa.

Amish Community Information

319-636-2243 or 319-636-2854

WHERE TO STAY

There are several RV campgrounds in Hazleton and nearby Oelwein. Call in advance, as the season varies:

Lake Shore RV Resort & Campground

Full hookup sites with 30- and 50-amp service, swimming and beach, sand volleyball, horseshoes, shuffleboard, family and kids activities, basketball. Backs up to a golf course (open May 15 to October 15) **319-283-5234**, www.lakeshoreiowa.com

Morwood Campground

Full hookups, pull-through sites, convenience store, laundry, horseshoes, sand volleyball, hayrides, heated swimming pool, walking and bicycling trails (open April 15 to October 15) **319-636-2422**, www.morwoodcampground.com

Oelwein City Park Campground

Shower house, park, small playground, electric and water hookups (open April 15 to October 15) **319-283-5440**

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TL Publisher Films How-To Videos

Publisher Bob Livingston, and his sidekick Bill Gehr recently spent a week in front of the camera for www.TrailerLife.TV. Livingston drilled, rewired, programmed gauges and threw tools across the back lot (just kidding, Bob!) to bring viewers instructions on how to install an awning and a Torklift battery box; mount a Voyager wireless backup camera and a SenseStat obstacle detection sensor;

lock up propane cylinders; and use a LevelCheck LP-gas level indicator (see the review on page 72). These original how-to videos are available on TrailerLife.TV/TLDVD and cover everything from electronics and accessories, to water systems, to maintenance and repairs, to gas and electric, to lifestyle and entertainment. Monthly (\$4.97) and annual (\$29.97) memberships are available at www.TrailerLife.TV/TLDVD.



RV/MH Hall of Fame Burns the Bank Note!

The RV/MH Hall of Fame in Elkhart, Indiana, raised \$150,000 from private donors and paid off one of its three bank loans. The Hall of Fame is dedicated to preserving the history and honoring the pioneers and individuals who have made significant contributions to the RV and manufactured housing industry. The RV/MH Hall of Fame has 55 vintage units on display, several current RVs and a library with the largest collection of RV literature (20,000 books!) in the country. It has magazines going back to the 1930s, and even has several original copies of 1942 issues of *Western Trailer Life* (established in 1941), now *Trailer Life* magazine!

Here's one place where you'll have no trouble parking your RV while visiting — the lot has 65-foot pull-through parking spaces. 800-378-8694, www.rvmhhalloffame.org.

NEWSWIRE



Good Sam Buys RV.com Domain
Good Sam Enterprises LLC has purchased the domain name www.RV.com from Dometic Group. Good Sam Chairman and CEO Marcus Lemonis said the new RV.com, launching in August, will be content-rich and feature tools and services that the Good Sam Club member base and today's RVers find most useful, including access to new and used RVs for sale, how-to videos and content offering demonstrations of RV maintenance and use, as well as integrated social media tools enabling RVers to communicate with each other.



Ford Increases F-150 Production
Ford plans to add more than 2,000 jobs at its Kansas Motor Co., reacting to U.S. pickup sales that have gained momentum for almost two years straight. "Customer demand for today's F-150 is strong and continues growing," said Joe Hinrichs, Ford's president of The Americas. "Our 'Built Ford Tough' F-150 is America's favorite pickup."
Now in its 65th year, the F-Series has been the best-selling truck in America for 36 consecutive years and the brand with the most trucks on the road with more than 250,000 miles.



Coleman-Mach's Golden Ticket
RV Products, manufacturer of Coleman-Mach air conditioners and heat pumps, is celebrating its 5-million-unit milestone by producing a unit with a gold shroud that will be shipped to an unknown distributor and then sent to an unknown dealer who will sell it to one lucky customer. The consumer will receive a free Coleman-Mach air conditioner of their choice in exchange for the gold shroud unit, as it will be sent to the RV/MH Hall of Fame. Keep your eyes peeled; RV Products personnel believe that the gold shroud will be revealed this summer.

RV Usage to Rise This Summer

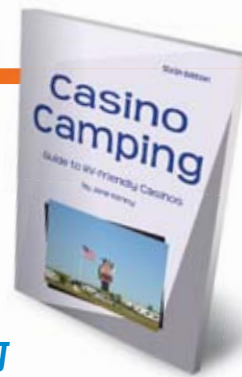
RV owners will be on the road in a big way this spring and summer to enjoy time outdoors with family and friends, according to a new survey. The latest Campfire Canvass survey of RV owners, conducted by the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA), reveals that 71 percent of RV owners intend to use their RVs more this spring/summer than they did last year, and 21 percent say they will use theirs the same amount. Just 5 percent said they would use their RVs less.

The top reasons for using their RVs more include enjoying outdoor activities (78 percent), taking more mini-vacations (72 percent), spending quality time with family (62 percent) and escaping the stress and pressure of daily life (51 percent). In a significant change from last year's survey, just 34 percent (down from 58 percent) said fuel prices would affect their RV travel plans.

Top benefits of RV travel include spending more time enjoying outdoor activities (80 percent), flexibility (76 percent), seeing



natural sites and attractions (75 percent), the ability to bring pets (60 percent) and being on the open road (56 percent). The research found that traveling with pets remains popular with RV owners. Sixty-four percent of survey respondents said they travel with pets. Of those, 94 percent bring a dog and 10 percent bring a cat.



Casino Camping

If you don't want to trek to Las Vegas for gaming fun, pick up the latest edition of *Casino Camping, A Guide to RV-Friendly Casinos* by Jane Kenny for a list of casinos located across the country.

The book lists more than 600 casinos in 35 states that include river-boats, Native American and commercial casinos. Locator maps at the beginning of each state section are followed by detailed individual casino listings.

Many of the facilities listed have campgrounds, while others offer free dry camping in their parking lots for self-contained RVs.

MSRP: \$15.95, *Casino Camping* is available at Camping World stores and www.amazon.com.

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Yamaha, Circle 131 on Reader Service Card

Labor Intensive

Believing he was overcharged for work done on his truck while traveling in Canada, a reader asked *RV Action Line* to get involved. He wrote:

» I have owned four General Motors pickups, two GMC trucks and two Chevrolet trucks, all of which I bought new. Presently, I own a 2005 Chevy 2500 HD 4 x 4 Duramax diesel. I bought the diesel truck, with the tow package, specifically for towing my travel trailer.

On October 10, 2012, we returned home from a three-month trip to eastern Canada. While in Nova Scotia, we thought that the diesel had blown a head gasket but as it turned out, it was pinholes in the aluminum heads; most likely caused by electrolysis.

As bad as it was to break down, the treatment I received from the GM dealer/repair shop in Nova Scotia was even worse. Over the course of a week, the repair cost escalated from an estimated \$3,500 to more than \$9,000 with no warnings that there was the potential for additional costs. When I went to pick up the truck, the bill was nearly \$12,000 (Canadian). I protested to the service representative, but paid the bill so I could get out of there.

Once we arrived home, I sent a letter and all documentation to the GM dealer in Nova Scotia as well as to GM customer service in Detroit, Michigan. To date, I have not heard back from the dealer; however, GM customer service contacted me several times over a four- to six-week period to let me know they were working on it. On the final call, they said that because it happened in Canada, there was nothing they could do and that I should take it up with the dealer in Nova Scotia.

RV Action Line's help in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

John Peterson, Hillsboro, Oregon

RV Action Line contacted General Motors Co. in Detroit as well as GM of Canada Ltd. We heard back from both and received a follow-up letter from Peterson as follows:

THE COMPANY RESPONDED

We have investigated Mr. Peterson's claim and have worked directly with him to provide reimbursement. Customer

Having a Meltdown

Unhappy with the way the air conditioner in his fifth-wheel was behaving, a reader turned to *RV Action Line* for help in resolving his dilemma. He wrote:

» After several letters to our RV dealer and the manufacturer of our air conditioner, I am asking for *RV Action Line's* help in getting a matter resolved.

We purchased a Keystone Laredo fifth-wheel from Orlando RV in February 2011. The first summer, the Airxcel AC unit cooled the rig and cycled on and off as it should. The next summer, the



satisfaction is imperative for everyone at General Motors and we are pleased we could help satisfy a loyal customer.

Alan Adler

GM Communications, General Motors Co.

Detroit, Michigan

We have received confirmation from Alan Adler, GM Communications in Detroit, that the review concerning Mr. Peterson's claim has been completed and an amicable agreement has been reached. We thank you for bringing the matter to our attention at General Motors of Canada Ltd.

Janice Clark

Executive Review

General Motors of Canada Ltd.

Oshawa, Ontario, Canada

» After GM received *RV Action Line's* letters, I was contacted by the company and was made an offer to compensate me for the way I was treated by the Nova Scotia dealer. They offered, and I accepted, a goodwill cash settlement of \$2,000. In addition, they have given me a certificate for \$1,000 good for one year, toward the purchase of a new GM vehicle. This is a satisfactory solution to my concerns.

I want to sincerely thank *RV Action Line* for its assistance, without which this compensation would not have been possible.

John Peterson

AC would kick on in the morning and run all day. During this time, the air temperature wouldn't drop more than 7 degrees below the outside temperature, which was in the 90s.

After several attempts to get this resolved with Orlando RV, I had a second AC unit (Dometic Penguin) installed in the bedroom so we could sleep at night. We found that this unit, though much smaller than the one in the living room, cooled the whole trailer with the use of fans.

After another attempt to get the dealer to correct the problem, I went to Camping World and had a new Coleman 15,000-Btu air conditioner installed. This unit keeps the trailer cool and cycles on and off just like the old Airxcel unit did in 2011.

I have sent numerous letters to Airxcel about the problem with the original AC unit and have requested that the new unit be replaced under warranty and the cost of the unit, plus installation, be repaid to me. I am not asking for a refund on the smaller unit,

but I feel that the primary unit should be refunded due to it not working in accordance with its specifications.

Charles Sutphin, Orlando, Florida

RV Action Line contacted Keystone RV Co. and Airxcel on this situation for any further help they could offer to Sutphin. We received a reply from Keystone as well as the following missive from Sutphin, which explained the conclusion of his case. It read:

» After *RV Action Line* contacted Airxcel, it very quickly contacted me and offered me \$400 for the warranty on the original AC unit. Airxcel has proved that it is a provider of goods that fit the needs of RV owners. Many thanks, and hopefully we will get many years of

service from our new air conditioner.

Charles Sutphin

Heartfelt Thanks

Rounding out this month's column, we share a letter from a very happy reader. She wrote:

» Often we are quick to send letters of complaint, but I sent a letter of gratitude to Keystone RV Co. for its kind help in resolving an issue we had with a rear slideout that cracked after the warranty expired. Keystone graciously attended to our needs and got this issue resolved in a timely and efficient manner. I now know it is a company that stands behind its workmanship and provides great customer service and satisfaction.

Sandra Larsen, Moses Lake, Washington

TAKE ACTION » *RV Action Line* is a forum for the resolution of conflicts between consumers and RV dealers and manufacturers, accessories suppliers and service providers. After exhausting all other resources without success, please send a typed letter to *RV Action Line*, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, California 93001. Include copies of appropriate bills and correspondence as well as a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

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A Gift of Friendship

The torch-bearing Roman goddess of freedom is a welcoming signal and a great shrine

With the possible exception of the White House, no structure on United States soil is more famous or iconic than the Statue of Liberty. Located on federal property within the territory of New York state, though closer to New Jersey, the Statue of Liberty stands more than 305 feet tall, from its base on Liberty Island to the tip of its torch. To put her size in perspective, Lady Liberty's index finger is 8 feet long, and the copper she is made of weighs 62,000 pounds. Yet Lady Liberty's physically impressive dimensions, the inspiration she engenders and the freedom she signifies become even more impressive when travelers ride the Statue of Liberty-Ellis Island Ferry to learn the story behind the Statue of Liberty's creation. Travelers will undoubtedly better understand America's values and its history by also visiting Ellis Island National Monument, which is part of Statue of Liberty National Monument.

Partly to honor the Union's victory in the American Civil War and partly to strengthen the cause of democracy in France, Frenchman Édouard René Lefèvre de Laboulaye first conceived of a monument to the United States and eventually became known as the "Father of the Statue of Liberty." Predictably, the journey to turn an idea into an icon that would help further the

cause of democracy was roundabout, but ultimately Alexandre-Gustave Eiffel designed the internal supports, Richard Morris Hunt designed the pedestal on which Lady Liberty stands and sculptor Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi designed Lady Liberty herself. The statue was formally dedicated in 1886.

During their visits to Liberty Island, in addition to the history of the statue's creation, travelers will also learn of the region's archaeology and natural history. But since its people make America the great country that it is, most visitors will be amazed by everything they learn on Ellis Island. From 1892 to 1954, more than 12 million immigrants were processed on this "Island of Hope, Island of Tears." The hardships that these people faced while journeying toward freedom are well documented, and visitors will appreciate that many of their ancestors passed through "America's Golden Door."

Note: At this writing, Ellis Island and the statue are closed due to Hurricane Sandy, but reopen date is scheduled for July 4, 2013. 🗣️

Statue of Liberty National Monument
212-363-3200, www.nps.gov/stli



DID YOU KNOW?

Lady Liberty's feet are 25 feet long, which would be equivalent to a women's U.S. shoe size 879.





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EXPLORING NEW YORK'S ADIRONDACKS



CAMPING, HIKING AND
CANOEING IN THE LARGEST
PARK IN THE CONTIGUOUS
UNITED STATES



At some 6.1 million acres, New York's Adirondack Park is larger than many of our nation's heralded national parks combined. Yosemite, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon, Glacier and Great Smoky Mountains national parks will all handily fit within the boundaries of the Adirondacks. Home to soaring peaks, crystalline lakes and free-flowing rivers, the Adirondacks offer some of the finest recreation opportunities in the country, in a setting that is refreshingly uncrowded.

Long before Europeans settled this region, Native Americans inhabited the Adirondacks, finding sustenance from the area's wildlife, plants and other resources. The term "Adirondack" is from an Iroquois word meaning "bark eater." This label was insultingly flung by the Iroquois in the direction of the Algonquin tribes who inhabited the Adirondacks. Though a nasty nickname, the moniker stuck and eventually came to refer to the region and its inhabitants.

Mineral extraction and logging lured Europeans into this region of northern New York during the mid- to late-1700s. Roughly a century later, conservation-minded individuals became concerned about excessive logging and unchecked development. In 1892 forward-thinking members of the New York legislature created the Adirondack Park, designating portions of it as "forever wild," legally buffered from logging, mining and human abuse. When the United States Congress passed the Wilderness Act of 1964, portions of it were modeled after the wilderness concepts governing the Adirondack Park.

Although designated as a state park, the boundaries of the Adirondack Park encompass a patchwork of public and private lands. Development and land use are regulated on both state and private lands by the Adirondack Park Agency, creating a vast area where human impacts on the landscape are limited. Visitors to the Adirondacks find all the amenities available elsewhere in the country, along with vast sections of beautiful, untamed lands beckoning hikers, fishermen, canoeists, bird-watchers and individuals who simply love to soak up scenic views. Here are just some of the hundreds of potential places to visit in the Adirondacks.

Lake Placid — The host city of the 1932 and 1980 Winter Olympics, the Olympic infrastructure still fascinates visitors today. The ski jumps and bobsled runs attract thousands of people each summer who ride an elevator to the top of the ski jumps to see what an Olympian faced in his or her breathtaking launch, or to ride one of the bobsleds. Boating on Lake Placid is an unforgettable experience. Hiking trails abound within an hour's drive of the village.

Exploring the Olympic heritage of Lake Placid best begins with a visit to the Olympic Center and Lake Placid Olympic Museum located on Main Street. The museum is flush with Olympic memorabilia, including fascinating video highlights and artifacts from the fabled "Miracle on Ice" hockey game in 1980 in which the underdog United States defeated the powerful favorite, the Soviet Union. Along with

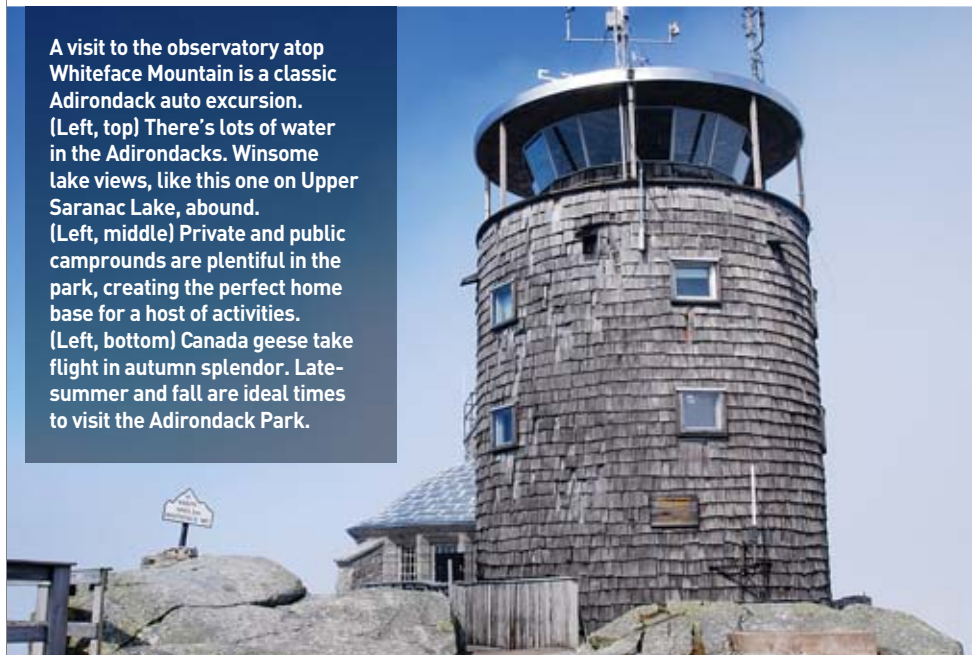
the museum exhibits, the Olympic Center hosts a variety of concerts, hockey games and figure skating exhibitions and competitions.

Whiteface Mountain, the fifth-highest peak in the Adirondacks, can be accessed from the Veterans Memorial Highway, which leads to its summit, the only major peak in the Adirondacks accessible by vehicle. From the observatory at the top of the mountain's 4,867-foot summit, visitors behold an expansive view of the region, including a peek at one-half of the peaks in the heralded High Peaks region of the Adirondacks. On a clear day, it's also possible to see Mount Mansfield, the highest point in Vermont, and the city of Montreal.

Saranac Lake Area — Just a short distance from Lake Placid is the village of Saranac Lake. It's a picturesque hamlet situated along the Saranac River that borders, ironically, Lake Flower — not Saranac Lake. However, it is near the midpoint of the Saranac River drainage, a wandering system of rivers and lakes that runs from the high country to Lake Champlain.

The Saranac River finds its headwaters in the wild country of the Long Pond area in the shadows of Long Pond Mountain. More than 35 lakes and

A visit to the observatory atop Whiteface Mountain is a classic Adirondack auto excursion. (Left, top) There's lots of water in the Adirondacks. Winsome lake views, like this one on Upper Saranac Lake, abound. (Left, middle) Private and public campgrounds are plentiful in the park, creating the perfect home base for a host of activities. (Left, bottom) Canada geese take flight in autumn splendor. Late-summer and fall are ideal times to visit the Adirondack Park.



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EXPLORING NEW YORK'S ADIRONDACKS



Kayaking on Mirror Lake is but one of the many water-based pastimes in the Lake Placid area.

ponds comprise its source. Once the river gurgles into Upper Saranac Lake it passes through more than a half-dozen major lakes on its long, winding journey to Cumberland Bay on Lake Champlain at Plattsburgh. A plethora of fish species inhabit the Saranac River watershed, from tiny, speckled brook trout to gaping-mouthed northern pike. There's more water in the Saranac system than one could fish in a lifetime. In addition to the fishing, there's also world-class canoeing and kayaking on the lakes and the river.

For those wishing to sample the fishing and canoeing in the Saranac Lake area, an easy paddle along the Saranac River is the perfect place to start. On a sunny afternoon in early

autumn, I hit the river at a put-in right in the village of Saranac Lake, across the street from St. Regis Canoe Outfitters where I'd rented an Old Town canoe for myself and my sweetheart. Aiming for a take-out just a few miles downstream, we idled through the village then left civilization behind to float along the lazy river. In the space of a few hours we spied a bald eagle perched in a maple tree, caught several husky smallmouth bass and passed beneath a flock of honking Canada geese.

Whether it's paddling along another stretch of the Saranac River or exploring one of the many area lakes, a visit to Saranac Lake ranks high on my list of activities on my next Adirondack adventure.

(Below left) Once extinct in the Adirondack Park due to pesticides, bald eagles are repopulating the area. (Below right) Ready, set, jump! The view from the top of the 1980 Olympic ski jump offers a hair-raising perspective on this popular Olympic sport.



Blue Mountain Area — Located smack dab in the center of the Adirondack Park, the Blue Mountain area is home to numerous lakes, scenic forest byways and an intriguing history that is singularly Adirondack. Two of the pet attractions in this area are Blue Mountain and the Adirondack Museum, located in the winsome village of Blue Mountain Lake.

The history of the Blue Mountain Lake area, artistically captured in various exhibits at the Adirondack Museum, includes visits by at least two U.S. presidents. Grover Cleveland toured the area with an esteemed local guide in 1892 after his first term expired as president. Theodore Roosevelt was enjoying the Blue Mountain area in 1901 when he received word of William McKinley's death, making him president of the United States. Famous inventor Thomas Edison also frequented the area in the summers. A local Blue Mountain Lake hotel known as the Prospect House was wired by Edison for electricity, making it the first hotel in the world to sport electric lights.

The Adirondack Museum hosts special exhibits and events, but its permanent exhibits form the core of the museum experience with fascinating glimpses into area history. From historic buildings, to art exhibits, to displays showcasing the importance of logging and railroads, to the local economy in the early days of the Adirondacks, the museum has an expansive, airy feel. Among the permanent exhibits, my favorites are those dedicated to boats and boating as early forms of leisure and transportation, and an eclectic collection of Adirondack rustic furniture. Furniture in the Adirondacks developed many unique styles artfully blending birch bark; slender, unpeeled branches and local materials into functional, rustic furniture, a tradition that persists with local present-day furniture makers.

Across the highway from the Adirondack Museum lies the trailhead to Blue Mountain. One of the most popular hikes in the Adirondack Park, the ascent to the summit of Blue Mountain spans a distance of 2 miles

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RESOURCES

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Adirondack Museum

518-352-7311, www.adkmuseum.org

Camping

Lake Durant

518-352-7797, www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/24473.html

Thornbush Acres RV Park

518-648-5843, www.adirondacks.com/ThornbushAcres

Hiking

Find excellent information on hiking Blue Mountain and the Adirondacks in the guidebook, *Hiking the Adirondacks*, by Lisa Densmore.

LAKE PLACID AREA

Lake Placid Visitor Information

518-523-2445, www.lakeplacid.com

Olympic Center and Museum

Information on Olympic attractions, including ski jumps and bobsled runs. 518-523-1655, www.whiteface.com

Camping

A wide variety of public and private campgrounds are available. Visit www.lakeplacid.com/stay/camping for a comprehensive list.

SARANAC LAKE AREA

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518-891-9858, www.charlies-inn.com

Fish Creek Pond

518-891-4560, www.fishcreekpond.com

Rollins Pond

518-891-3239, www.dec.ny.gov/

Saranac Lake Islands

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518-891-2841, www.dec.ny.gov/

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518-891-1838

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on a route suitable for families with children or any reasonably fit person desiring a panoramic view. Although the climb to the top of the mountain involves an elevation gain of just over 1,500 feet, the hike is not particularly difficult, providing you take your time and bring along some snacks and water to fuel your body along the way.

Two features combine to make Blue Mountain such a heralded hike. First, the route includes a 14-point nature trail showcasing interpretive tidbits related to local geography and botany along the way. At the summit, hikers encounter another treat. Atop

Whiteface Mountain dominates the skyline near Lake Placid. There are more than 40 peaks above 4,000 feet in the Adirondacks. (Above) The author admires a fine smallmouth bass from the Saranac River, an attractive destination for anglers and canoeists alike.

Blue Mountain perches a functional fire tower. Retired from its original purpose for aiding in the sighting of forest fires, the tower now opens its steps to visitors who encounter a breathtaking view from the enclosed platform at its apex.

For outdoor enthusiasts from New York City and other urban areas along the Eastern Seaboard in the late 19th century, the Adirondacks became a favored destination to hike, fish, canoe or simply escape from the business and bustle of city life. Although the modes of travel and accommodations have changed dramatically in the last 150 years, the rural feel and natural wonders of the region are as captivating today as they were to the likes of Thomas Edison and Theodore Roosevelt. Like the pioneering souls of old, modern-day explorers will find perhaps no finer outdoor playground than New York's Adirondack Park. 🚗



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HISTORIC ROUTE 66

Wrapping up our kicks on Route 66 from Flag

After two adventurous days in and around Flagstaff, Arizona, we bade farewell to the smiling Route 66 chainsaw-sculpture bear at Woody Mountain Campground and headed west toward Williams. This fourth and final stretch of the Mother Road would take us, over the next 10 days, to the end of the line at Santa Monica Pier near Los Angeles.

Out of Flagstaff the old road arcs through a forest of towering ponderosas before climbing to run along a ridge that provides stunning, wide-mountain vistas on all sides.

Williams, about 30 miles ahead,

a veritable Route 66 world, was the last town on the old highway to be bypassed by Interstate 40, in 1984. But the memory of the Mother Road is very much alive, with signs everywhere and every type of establishment you can think of named for the historic route.

The town also offers a variety of attractions, most notably a wildlife park called Bearizona. Visitors drive

through the 2-mile park to see North American animals — burros, bison, black bears, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep and others — in their natural habitat. Free golf carts and wheelchairs are available, as are cars for the drive-through portion. Historic Williams offers a downtown walking tour, and every evening the Cataract Creek Gang puts on a Wild-West-style “shootout.”

(Below) Old Route 66 loops through the rugged Black Mountains in far west Arizona.

(Top right) The rustic and rusty Hackberry General Store is where Route 66 veers far north of modern Interstate 40 in Arizona. Visitors can wander among dusty mementos and back in time.

(Bottom right) This old trailer served as home for movie star Jack Palance during the filming of *Bagdad Café* in 1987.



ROUTE 66: PART IV

staff, Arizona, to Santa Monica, California



(Above) Desolate lava fields cover 27 square miles surrounding Amboy Crater near tiny Amboy. The crater is one of five volcanoes that line the route in California.

Grand Canyon Railway Depot and Museum also offers Old-West-style entertainment every morning before the historic train departs for the South Rim of the Grand Canyon. It's a great 65-mile trip, but time at the park is too limited unless you spend the night. For those who prefer to drive, Arizona Highway 64 runs north to the canyon.

West of Williams, where lovely pink clouds of Apache plume line the road, you must drive I-40 about 20 miles to Exit 146. There, a short stretch of old Route 66 loops north to quaint Ash Fork (population 470). Placards explain that in the 1850s the Army Corps of Topographical Engineers began surveying for a future railroad. The rail line opened the area to sheep and cattle ranching. A decade later the railroad and Route 66 were realigned to bypass Ash Fork, and in 1971 a fire destroyed the downtown, nearly finishing off what was left of the dwindling burg.

Ahead is Seligman, home of business owner Angel Delgadillo, 86, the man who almost single-handedly saved much of Arizona's Route 66 between Seligman and Topock from oblivion. In 1987 Delgadillo arranged a meeting of representatives from

the shriveling towns strung along the old road. That year they formed the Route 66 Association of Arizona, which persuaded the state to designate 66 a historic highway, and today hundreds of signs mark Arizona's stretch of the Mother Road. Winding a tortuous course through the steep hills of the Mogollon Rim, it's arguably the most scenic stretch of the entire road.

Radiator Springs in the film *Cars* was loosely based on Seligman, and Delgadillo, interviewed by John Lasseter for the film, credits the producer with creating much of today's enthusiasm for Route 66.

Guy and I had spent an afternoon with Delgadillo 10 years ago, and he greeted us as if we'd been gone a day rather than a decade. Delgadillo had opened a barbershop in 1950. He retired 15 years ago, but still occasionally cuts hair. A barber chair is set up in a room at his memorabilia shop. "Route 66 has fans all over the world, and they've heard of me," he says. "People come a long way so I can cut their hair, and I never let them down."

West of Seligman Route 66 plows a straight asphalt furrow across the Arizona desert, passing few signs of



civilization other than barbed-wire fencing and rows of resurrected old Burma-Shave signs.

Some RVers might remember a few of the 600 verses on placards that once decorated the nation's roadways. The catchy roadside ad campaign advertising Burma-Shave brushless shaving cream was developed in 1925 by Allan Odell. Among these: "If daisies are, Your favorite flower, Keep pushin' up, Those miles per hour — Burma-Shave" and "Cattle crossing, Means go slow, That old bull, Is some cow's beau — Burma-Shave." Ahead, near Peach Springs, is Grand Canyon Caverns, a "Route 66 landmark and must-see," according to a sign. We stopped to find a magnificent "dry" cave the size of three football fields.

The cave was "discovered" in 1927 by Walter Peck, a woodcutter for the Santa Fe Railway. Thinking that he'd struck it rich — as the cavern walls glittered with what appeared to be gold, silver and diamonds — Peck secured a lease on the property. However, his "treasure" turned out to be no more than iron oxide. So, instead of mining the cave, Peck opened it for tours, providing visitors with a lantern and matches, then lowering them in by rope or in a bucket.

Because they considered it sacred, the Native Americans insisted the original opening be sealed. Now, you go down the equivalent of 22 stories in an elevator to tour the cave which,

unlike with earlier times, has electricity. Among the attractions are the mummified remains of a snarling bobcat and a replica of a 15-foot-tall, 2,000-pound ground sloth also found petrified. Deep claw marks on the cave wall indicate the hapless creature, whose breed became extinct more than 11,000 years ago, very much wanted to escape. Grand Canyon Caverns also includes a lodge, a campground with 50 full-hook-up sites, and a Cavern Suite, should you want to spend the night 220 feet underground.

We continued through Hackberry, once a significant gold-mining community but now empty except for the weathered Hackberry General Store, rife with Route 66 memorabilia inside and out. It was abandoned in 1978 (after I-40 opened) and stood empty until John Pritchard bought it in 1998 and filled it with his immense collection. He says about 150 visitors stop by everyday to "immerse themselves in Mother Road lore or reminisce about what it was like in the old days."

Old Route 66 crosses I-40 and continues south to Kingman, the "Heart of Historic Route 66." Among Kingman's attractions is the Powerhouse and Route 66 Museum, located in a former powerhouse built in 1907. The building also houses Arizona's Route 66 Association headquarters, cafés and gift shops. This museum tells the history with dioramas, artifacts, antique cars, an old-fashioned diner-garage-barber-



(Above) An antique trike decorates one of the hundreds of "Bottle Trees" at the Bottle Tree Ranch near Oro Grande, California.

shop-mercantile and photos of the Dust Bowl-days migration.

West of Kingman, Route 66 winds through a dramatic landscape of yellow-and-red-sandstone bluffs and crosses Sitgreaves Pass, where the 3,600-foot elevation offers stunning mountain vistas. But the drive — narrow, steep, winding — is not recommended with an RV in tow.

We followed I-40 across the state line to Needles, California, and parked our fifth-wheel at The Palms River Resort. Needles is popular for boating and other water sports on the Colorado River, especially in the summer when three-digit temperatures are routine. The afternoon we arrived the thermometer read 117 degrees.

We then drove Route 66 back east to Oatman, Arizona, a town that should not be missed. South of Oatman, once the richest mining district in Arizona, with some 10,000 residents high in the craggy Black Mountains, a sign cautions travelers to watch for burros. The friendly creatures appear suddenly from between boulders near the road, an equine welcoming committee.

Today, Route 66 through bustling, ramshackle Oatman is lined with false-fronted arts and crafts shops, galleries and cafés. With other visitors, the burros often stroll along Oatman's dusty streets.

We left Oatman in late evening, a particularly dramatic time of day as the setting sun turned these rugged mountains to bright gold — mountains



In Williams, Arizona, the Cataract Creek Gang puts on their nightly "Gun Fight" right on old 66. Hopefully the name does not apply to the gang's eyesight....



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that are bare but for scattered tufts of rough grass and the forests of cholla that statue their flanks like pegs stuck in a giant pegboard.

California, Here We Come

In California, unlike most of the other states Route 66 crossed, it's still possible to follow the old road nearly all the way, about 320 miles. For much of the distance, Route 66 differs considerably from the interstate that replaced it and nabbed most of its traffic. For RVers following the old road this is a pleasant thing, as you often find yourself nearly alone on the good-condition, two-lane route.

When Route 66 was built, rather than climbing over mountains as interstates do today, it wound around them, as is the case west of Needles. Needles Highway (Route 66) loops back and forth across I-40, then follows the interstate's alignment to U.S. Highway 95, which arcs north toward Goffs. A lonely desert burg established in 1883,

and now a town of windmills and agave cactuses, Goffs counts just 23 residents.

Goffs Road parallels the rail line, and occasional 150-car trains towed by eight engines inch up the steep grade through the most dried-up landscape you can imagine. Volcanic-like bursts of rock jumbles add interest to otherwise bare mountainsides.

Proceed to Essex and the purple-hued Old Woman Mountains to continue west on Route 66. We turned back east on the National Old Trails Road (Route 66) to return to Needles via the interstate, which includes an alarmingly steep, winding 20-mile descent into town. We preferred the less-precipitous older route.

For many miles west of Essex across this desolate desert landscape (1.6-million acre Mojave National Preserve lies just north), raised levees along the road are decorated with an interesting array of roadside art: travelers' names, peace signs, cairns and others — the letters, numbers and designs formed from rusted cans,

broken bottles and small stones.

We visited with Farrell Hastings of Roy's Café in Amboy, which was a gold-mining town and former railroad stop, founded in 1858. The café was featured in the 1986 film *The Hitcher*, and in Brad Pitt's 1993 film *Kalifornia*.

Hastings noted that table salt is mined in the area, as is pharmaceutical-grade limestone. But now the eight local residents worry about their town's future. However, renewed interest in Route 66 might be Amboy's salvation, he said. In 2005 Albert Okura, founder of restaurant chain Juan Pollo, purchased the entire town, including the 4,000-foot-long runway built during World War II. Okura's plan is to make the town a showplace depicting Route 66 in 1960.

Amboy Crater, a 250-foot-high, 1,500-foot-diameter ash and cinder cone, one of five volcanoes between Amboy and Barstow, is just west of the town along the old highway. A 3-mile round-trip hiking trail leads to the top of the cone; a shorter path leads to a

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shaded platform overlook.

We camped near Newberry Springs (a town famous for its annual Pistachio Festival in November) at Newberry Mountain RV Park. The sweltering day turned pleasantly cool as the sun disappeared in a blaze of orange beyond the park's reed-studded lake.

In the morning we drove the few miles back to the "world-famous" Bagdad Café for breakfast. Established in 1953 as the Sidewinder, the café's name was changed due to its popularity in the 1987 German film *Bagdad Café*, said server Bill Waller. Attesting to the café's world renown, a group of about three dozen Germans and Spaniards traveling all of Route 66 on Harleys roared up, and a tour bus packed with French visitors arrived soon after.

In Barstow, along Main Street (old Route 66), buildings are decorated with 16 colorful historic murals by a variety of artists. One building houses the Route 66 Mother Road Museum.

Between Barstow and San Bernar-



(Above left) Santa Monica Pier is so large that it can accommodate an entire amusement park. (Above right) Bathers flock to one of the many beaches along the Pacific Coast Highway.

dino, Route 66 more or less parallels I-15, the interstate built to replace it. Just north of Oro Grande, a town of dusty antiques shops, a garishly gorgeous "forest" of colorful bottle trees caught our attention. Owner Elmer Long, who wears his white beard chest-length, explained that he "inherited his father's love of bottles while camping in the desert in the 1950s," and began collecting them then.

Bottle Tree Ranch, on 238 acres, began with 400 vertical pipes, each

holding 30 bottles, he says. But the "grove" has grown significantly over the years, and now includes, in addition to thousands of colorful glass bottles, poles topped with deer antlers, bird houses, a cash register, hub caps, a scooter — and just about anything else you can think of.

En route to Victorville a sign points out the road to 67-acre Double R Ranch, once home to Roy Rogers, "King of the Cowboys," and Dale Evans, "Queen of the West." Victorville is known for its

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unusual "skewed-modified" 1930 Mojave River Bridge, a Baltimore steel-truss bridge with ornate iron railings. The river itself is also unusual, not because it flows below ground under the sand, but because it flows inland, rather than to the ocean, and ends in the desert.

The town is also known for its 5,000-square-foot California Route 66 Museum, says Museum Director Paul Chassey. The museum displays an old-fashioned tear-drop trailer, a 12-foot-tall Hula Girl, a customized VW bus, a row of Burma-Shave signs and other Route 66 memorabilia.

South of Victorville, Route 66 follows I-15. Then it begins a long, precipitous descent toward Kenwood, where it dead-ends at a hill of gritty dirt topped by yellow daisies, and returns to the interstate to continue the sharp descent. It leaves the interstate again at Devore and continues to San Bernardino, a bustling community lavish with colorful roses and oleanders.

We stopped for lunch at the quintessentially Mexican Mitla, in operation on Route 66 since 1937, says manager Steven Oquendo. Our waitress was Lucy Reyes, 78, who has been waiting tables here for 40 years. Her parents had a chicken ranch in Devore, and before coming to work here, she delivered eggs to the café "when San Bernardino was a lively place with lots of bars."

Route 66 turns west and runs through a string of busy towns, including Rialto, where the Wigwam Motel is a familiar icon of the old road. Owner Kumar Patel says the motel, built in 1949, has never closed, though he recently restored the 20 teepees that serve as guest rooms.

Watch signs carefully as you continue west, as the route makes some abrupt turns and can be tricky to follow in places. The road eventually feeds onto Santa Monica Boulevard. Far from the lonely pier you may have seen in old black-and-white photos in which a solitary individual leans on a railing gazing out to sea, the Santa Monica Pier

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Arizona Route 66 Association
928-753-5001, www.azrt66.com

Barstow Mother Road Museum
760-255-1890, www.route66museum.org

California Historic Route 66 Association
www.route66ca.org

Dockweiler RV Park (California)
800-950-7275
<http://beaches.lacounty.gov>

Kingman Tourism and Route 66 Museum
928-753-6106, www.kingmantourism.org/route66museum

Newberry Mountain RV Park (California) 760-257-0066

The Palms RV Resort (California)
760-326-0333
www.PalmsRiverResort.com

Victorville, California, Route 66 Museum
760-951-0436, www.califrt66museum.org

National Historic Route 66 Federation
www.national66.org

Woody Mountain Campground (Flagstaff, Arizona)
928-774-7727
www.woodymountaincampground.com

today is as bustling as a carnival, swarming with visitors. Actually it's two adjoining piers — the longer, narrower Municipal Pier, built in 1909, originally served to carry sewer pipes beyond the breakers. The shorter, wider pleasure pier was built in 1916 for an amusement park with a carousel and roller coaster.

Parking near the pier can be a challenge, especially on weekends, so leave the trailer at the campground. We stayed at Dockweiler RV Park, a Los Angeles County-run public campground on the beach, 10 miles south of the pier.

The famous pier is home to numerous amusements, including the carousel and other rides. Among the throngs of people on the pier the day

of our visit, some — like us — had just completed an end-to-end jaunt along the Mother Road. Two English couples we met there had made the trip — for the third time.

Vickie Ashcraft, president of the New Mexico Route 66 Association, says that people drive 66 to "recapture the America that used to be" and that the "Mother Road has never lost its appeal."

I remembered what Paul Snyder, a founder of the Route 66 Museum in Kingman, had said: "Route 66 meant the same thing to a lot of people — freedom, migration, going West. But in the end it was the freedom." He added, "The highway didn't create the demand — it just opened the door." 🚚

The very real and spiritual end of the old road is here on the Santa Monica Pier in Southern California.



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150-year anniversary of history and dedication

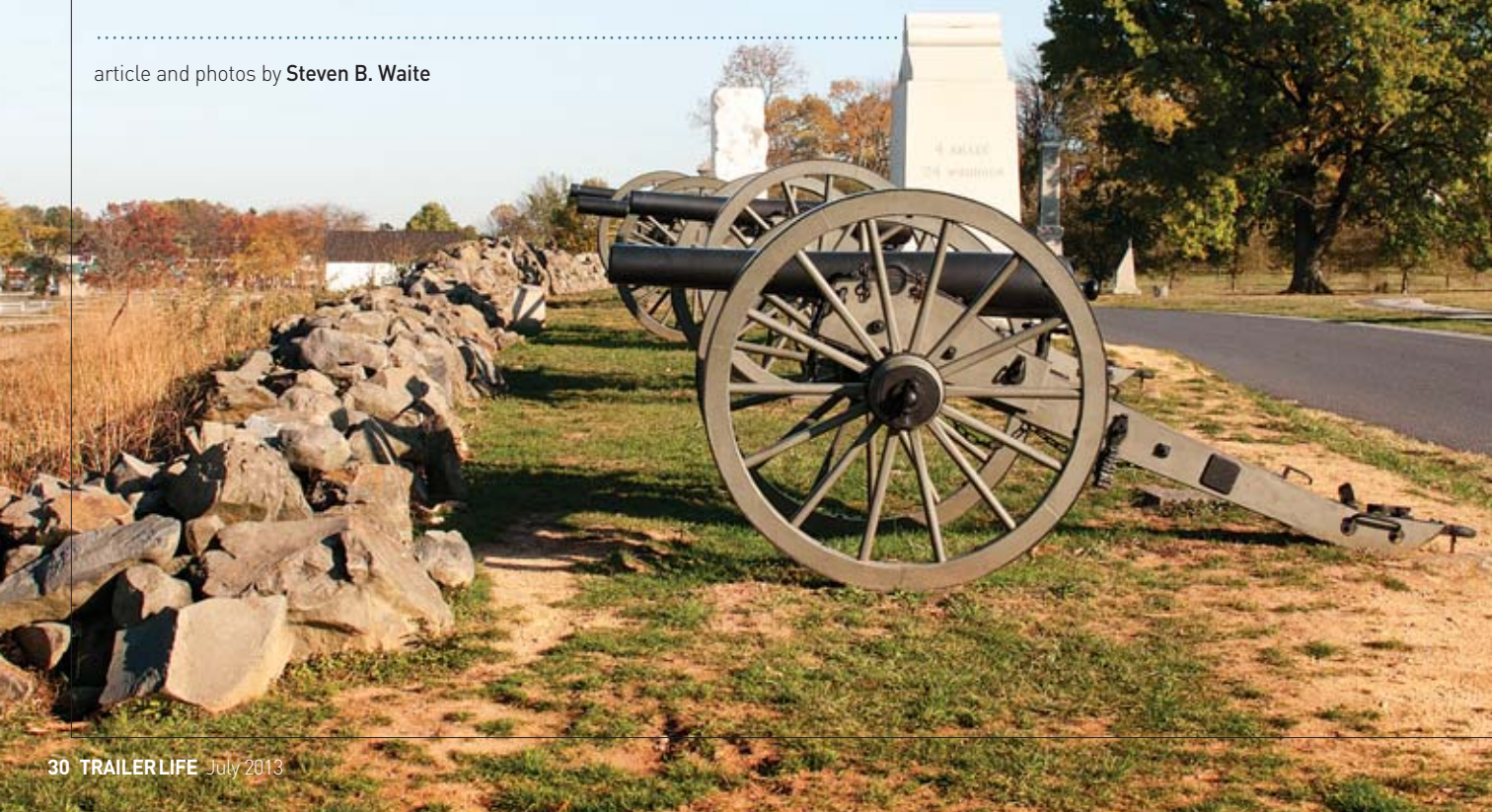
Hot, tired and hungry from waging war for two years, 170,000 men from a divided nation converged on the small rural town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in 1863. The Army of Northern Virginia under the command of General Robert E. Lee traveled from the mountains to the west and north of the town. Lee's plan? To resupply his troops in a fertile land untouched by war, score a major victory in the North and to

march toward the Federal Capitol in Washington, D.C.

Daunted with the task of preventing Lee from reaching his goal was newly appointed Union General George Gordon Meade and the Army of the Potomac. Ironically, as the mass of men and material converged in what was to become the greatest and costliest battle on American soil, the Army from the Southern states were in a position to attack from the north and the Federal Army approached from the south.

The Union's response to Pickett's Charge: This was the farthest position the Confederate troops made into the Federal lines.

article and photos by **Steven B. Waite**





For three days — July 1 to 3, 1863 — the carnage of war descended onto the rolling hills of this small town in south central Pennsylvania. As the acrid smell of gunpowder and lead filled the air, men and horses fell as each army parlayed each other's moves to gain control of any advantage in terrain. What began as a small cavalry and infantry duel grew as each army reached its full strength.

History lessons and beautiful scenery make for a winning combination for modern visitors. For many years my wife and I have crossed the battlefield as we research her family's participation in the battle. We are frequent visitors and have taken advantage of the various methods to tour the area. All visits should begin with the Gettysburg National Museum and Visitors Center. Parking is available for even the largest RVs. Uniforms, armament and a story of war that led to Gettysburg are displayed. A must-see is the Cyclorama, a massive oil-on-canvas 360-degree painting that is 359 feet around and 27 feet high, and depicts the epic Pickett's Charge of the final day's battle. So many scenes and details are portrayed from a view that puts you right in the center of the battle. If the opportunity presents itself, take the after-hours tour, where you learn of the

(Above left) The Visitor Center provides a vast array of historical information, a bookstore, a museum and a massive oil-on-canvas painting Cyclorama. (Above right) Traveling by horseback is a popular means of touring the battlefield. Major General Daniel Sickles used a farm owned by the Trostle family, who were abruptly forced from their home during the fighting, for his headquarters. Notice the cannon hole just below the diamond design in the Trostle barn.

history and the preservation techniques to restore the Cyclorama. You can get up close and even under the painting as you learn its history.

There are many methods to tour the battlefield. Buses leave the visitors center regularly with a licensed battlefield guide. You can choose a private tour with a licensed guide, like we had, and use your own vehicle. We found the private tour to be highly informative, especially since we were looking for specific regimental information related to family. A good self-guided brochure is available from the National Park Service as well. A detailed map will guide you through the most important parts of the battle and you can spend as much time as you like at each stop on the way. We feel the best method is the licensed battlefield guide but a good alternative is the Audio CD Tour available at the Museum's bookstore. It's narrated by a noted historian and

battlefield guide, and you have a choice of several lengths, depending on how much time you have to visit. The tour is even synchronized to traffic flow and the stops. Once again, you may follow at your own pace and take breaks for meals or extra time at monuments. A fun and different tour is by horseback, leaving from the Artillery Ridge Campground located adjacent to the battlefield. We have enjoyed the different perspective of visiting the various spots on the battlefield on horseback and going to places not accessible by other means. Novice riders like myself had no problems on the trail. A licensed battlefield guide accompanies you and relays information via headphones.

There are more than 1,300 monuments, markers and memorials on the property. It was said that the 78th and 102nd New York Infantry fought like lions, hence the lion's head to the right of the soldier's knees.



GETTYSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

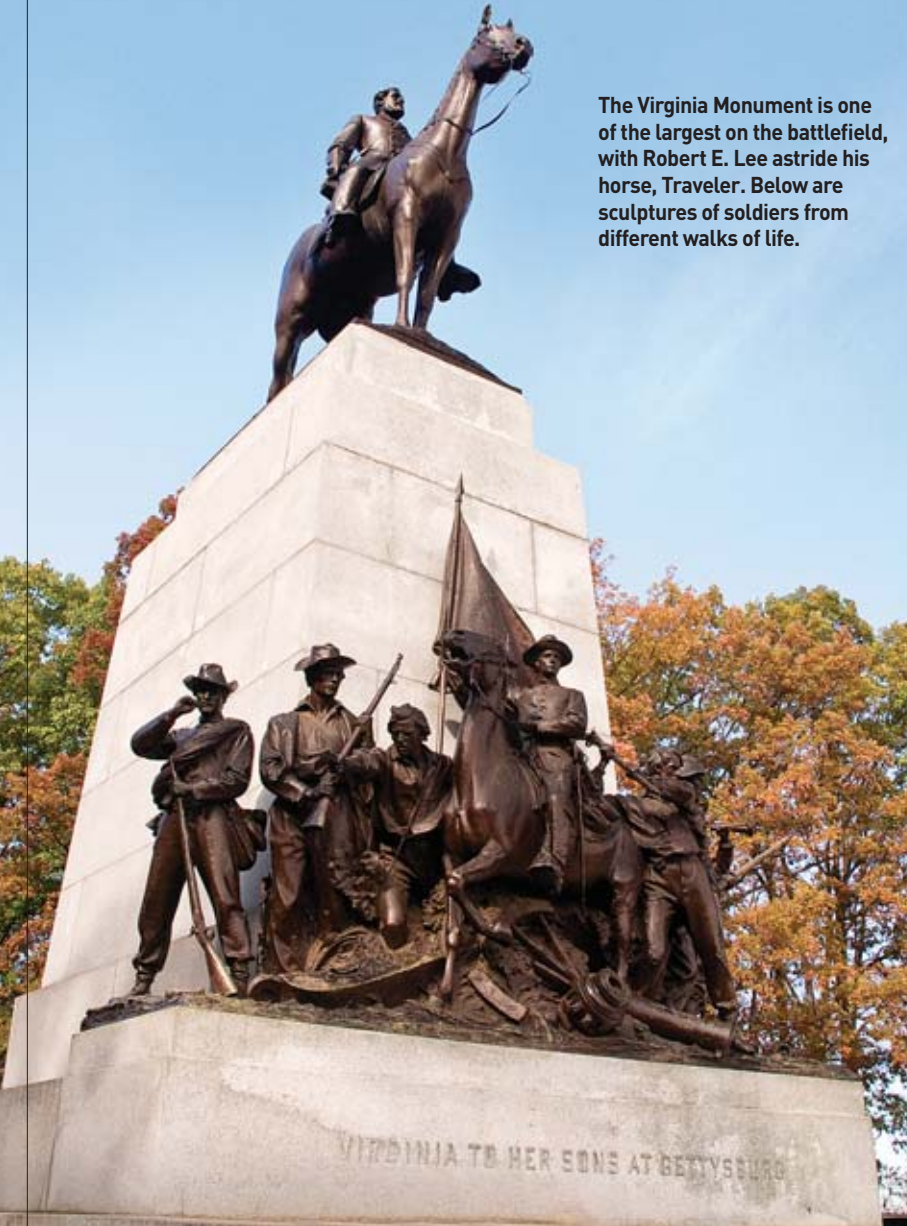
One thing you will notice right away as you travel the battlefield is the large number of monuments, markers and statues that dot the landscape. Gettysburg has more than 1,300 such markers and more than 400 cannons. Several were actually used in the battle (see the Brigadier General John Buford statue across from McPherson's Barn on Chambersburg Road). Take time to look at the detail on the monuments. Some may be simple but others have recognizable faces, hidden objects such as a carved-in footprint, phrases and accurate uniform details. Several

are sobering in their depiction of the loss of life and give a sense how the survivors felt. The majority of the monuments came about at the 25- and 50-year anniversaries of the battle. In most cases, funds were raised by individual regiments, but the states also contributed many funds as a tribute to the sacrifice of its citizens. Most of the monuments are from Northern regiments because of early prejudices, nearness to the battlefield and the fact that funds in the South were just not available during the reconstruction period after the Civil War. Large monuments of the

Southern states are some of the most highly detailed sculptures in the park, particularly the North Carolina and the Virginia Monuments.

The area on the north side of town and the site of the first day's battle are wide-open fields where Union Cavalry tried to hold off the Confederate Infantry. From shots fired early in the morning, to the collapse of the Union line in the afternoon and the subsequent retreat through town, monuments here mark positions of cavalry and artillery units. All monuments tell the story of casualties during the battle and some show exceptional work by the sculptors. While on the north side of town, look at the cupolas of the Lutheran Seminary as you look back toward the town. Although today three are visible, only the green-topped one was there for the battle. It was used by officers from both armies to view the ever-changing battle. As you pass back through the town, many of the buildings still show the scars from bullets and shells, and one brags of having 150 bullet holes in its brick walls. As the battle shifted to the south of the town, Federal troops managed to control the high ground from Cemetery Hill south to Little Round Top, overlooking Devil's Den. From early morning to well after dark, fierce fighting raged on every piece of ground, many times escalating to hand-to-hand combat. Standing today in this serene park, it's hard to fathom the fighting that transpired here so many years ago when it was rough agricultural land with single-family farms and stone fences.

The final assault took place on July 3. For two hours, artillery from both sides bombarded each other. Reports in newspapers at the time said the sound could be heard 150 miles away. Late in the afternoon began what has become one of the most synonymous events in history, Pickett's Charge. I sometimes feel George Pickett has received a bum deal having his name instilled on one of history's costliest incidences. Pickett was joined by troops from Generals Isaac Trimble and J. Johnston Pettigrew and more than 12,000 men began a walk over open ground nearly 1 mile toward Union troops waiting behind a



The Virginia Monument is one of the largest on the battlefield, with Robert E. Lee astride his horse, Traveler. Below are sculptures of soldiers from different walks of life.

VIRGINIA TO HER SONS AT GETTYSBURG

low stone wall. As the battle drew to a close, less than half of the men were able to cross the same field back to the security of their own lines. View this from both perspectives and once again, looking at it today, it makes you wonder what kind of men these were.

The three days of fighting between July 1 and 3 produced about 52,000 casualties, as well as an estimated 1,500 dead horses and mules strewn about for the small community to deal with. Several days of rain following the battle added to the hardship of dealing with the dead. Makeshift graves were dug throughout the area until other arrangements could be made with family, if known. Plans were put forth to create a National Cemetery adjacent to the town's Evergreen Cemetery. A remarkable job was performed relocating the deceased, identifying —

if possible — and reburying the remains. This task was completed, and just over five months later a dedication ceremony was planned. President Abraham Lincoln traveled from Washington, D.C., to speak at the dedication. While used to long-winded speeches of the day, Lincoln spoke less than 270 words that lasted just over two minutes but has become known as one of the greatest speeches of all time. "The Gettysburg Address," beginning with "Fourscore and seven years ago," memorializes the sacrifices of those who gave their lives at Gettysburg. A quiet walk through the cemetery should be a part of the visit.

This historic town has much to offer visitors, including great restaurants, bookstores and the popular evening Ghost Tours. Located a short distance from battlefield parking, a moderate walk puts you in the town square. As we



This reconstruction is from a famous period picture of a view from Devil's Den looking up to Little Round Top, the smaller of two rocky hills. Devil's Den is a boulder-strewn Gettysburg Battlefield hill used by artillery and infantry during the 1863 battle.



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walked around town, we noticed small brass plaques that show the buildings present during the battle. Many days, re-enactors take positions on the battlefield.

Campgrounds are abundant in the area. Some are open year-round, and a number are within minutes of town. We have camped at several different locations and have not been disappointed as all offered wooded sites with full amenities, including pools. The Park Service has restored the battlefield to conditions in 1863, removing trees and replanting the Peach Orchard. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg, living history events and special programs are scheduled for June 29 to July 7, 2013. There will be exhibits, battle walks, ranger programs, interpretive programs and family activities.

Our plan is to be there when the sun breaks the horizon. There is a quiet where you can contemplate what occurred so many years ago before your thoughts are interrupted by others. Spring and fall are our favorite times to visit as we miss the heat of summer and the large crowds. We have been there several times in winter, too, with inches of snow on the ground. Gettysburg is a special place and worthy of a camping adventure for all ages. 🗽

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SUN POWER

Selecting and installing a solar system

by Larry Walton photos and illustrations by Tim Walton

When we head out with our trailer, a good percentage of the time our destination is off the grid. We do some boondocking, but there are the music festivals, hockey tournaments and other outings that aren't out of town but are without hookups nonetheless.

Our Powerhouse generator is working great for us in most situations, but we also wanted to look into getting some free power from the sun. We were invited to check out a solar-system-install in Springfield, Oregon. Not only did we get to experience the install, we learned a lot about solar-system efficiency from AM Solar President Greg Holder.

GETTING FIT

First of all, demand for RV solar varies with how RV owners use their vehicles. "I try to find out what it is they want to do and that helps me size the system," says Holder. Some just want to maintain the batteries while the RV is in storage. This takes about 100 watts for a trailer and 200 watts for a motorhome.

Next comes the conservative off-grid user. They use the

light where they are sitting and turn it off when they move. They're not running their microwave, toaster or blender. This type of user can up with about 200 to 300 watts with 200 to 300 amp hours of battery capacity.

The more liberal consumers turn on more lights, watch TV, turn on a 2,000-watt inverter and operate the microwave. They will need 400 to 600 watts and corresponding battery capacity.

Next comes what Holder calls "hard-core boondockers." They might be full-timers or have an office onboard and they consume a lot of power with additional uses, such as satellite Internet with their computers and TV. "Some of the bigger RVs have residential-style refrigerators that run on 120 volts AC, which means you don't have the propane option, so you have to leave your inverter on 24 hours a day just to run the fridge," says Holder. "These owners end up with 1,500 to 1,600 watts, whatever can fit on the roof."

For those who want to fine tune their requirements, Holder suggests installing a shunt and an amp hour meter to record actual use. He also advises new solar users to install



a large enough infrastructure in terms of wires, switches and controllers so the system can be expanded by adding more solar panels as needed.

Another way to ensure the best solar-powered performance is to improve the efficiency with batteries, controls and wire gauge.

BETTER BATTERIES

Because an RV solar-panel system is really a battery charger, battery performance is a very important part of the equation. The better the batteries, the better the solar-panel system performs.

Typical flooded lead-acid batteries are the least expensive but they have drawbacks. Absorbed glass mat (AGM) lead-acid batteries take advantage of purer lead, but they cost almost twice as much for the same amp hour capacity.

Improved battery performance means you can achieve your power goals with less solar-panel output, but Holder suggests "using up" existing batteries as you learn to use your sun-powered system. Such practice can damage expensive new batteries if charge levels drop too low.

GAUGE

A big part of wiring efficiency is achieved with AM Solar's combiner box, which connects the 10-gauge wire from each solar panel at a bus bar that combines the panel power into a heavier-gauge wire to transmit the energy down to the charge controller. If wire gauges are too small or transmission distances are too long, voltage drop zaps a lot of energy from the system. Other wire characteristics that affect efficiency include solid or stranded, metal type and use of conduit. Prior to combiner boxes, panel wires were daisy chained together, which was both inefficient and destructive as the combined power could melt components.

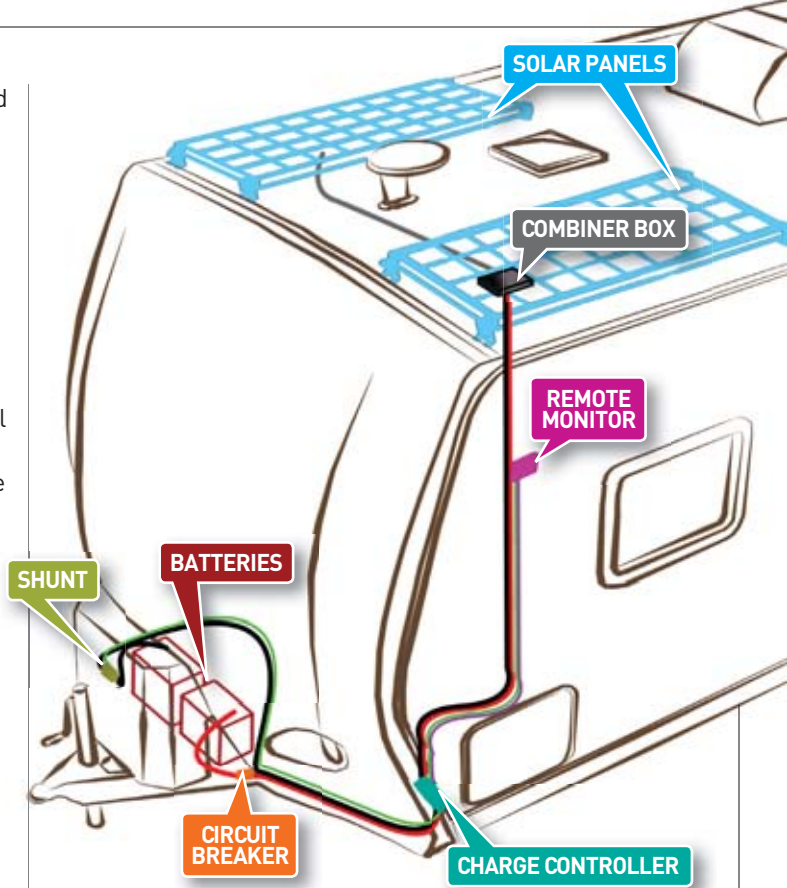
TYPES OF SOLAR PANELS

Most RV solar panels are made with crystalline technology using silicone crystals. Cells are either multi-crystalline or monocrystalline. The monocrystalline panels are more efficient in low light conditions such as early morning or cloudy days. However, 90 percent of a day's charge happens in two or three hours on either side of solar noon so multi-crystalline modules work well in normal conditions and are slightly less expensive. In addition to monocrystalline construction, efficiency can also be improved with a back contact design that eliminates the silver lattice work on the front that shades some of the panel.

Yet another efficiency gain comes from using "hotter" cells to make each panel. Cells are flash tested and grouped together by output quality so the exact same size module might come in 85, 90, 95 and 100 watts. The difference besides output? Price. More watts cost more money.

If the target output for an RV solar panel is 100 watts, improved efficiency really results in smaller, lighter panels. When roof space is at a premium, smaller panels can produce the power but at a price premium.

Other components can also contribute to the efficiency



AM Solar illustration: Solar power flows from the solar panels to the combiner box to the charge controller through the circuit breaker into the batteries. The remote monitor reads system activity through the frame-mounted shunt.

of the solar charging system and improve battery life. Battery temperature sensors, charge controls with pulse width modulation, and maximum power point tracking all contribute to "extracting the maximum power out of your solar panels and delivering it in a form that your batteries want," says Holder.



PREP PANELS

[1] Before heading to the travel trailer roof, the solar panels are prepped, which includes installation of the mounting brackets with adjustable feet.

[2] The connectors that come with the solar panels are cut off and butt connectors are installed in preparation for taking the panels to the RV roof.



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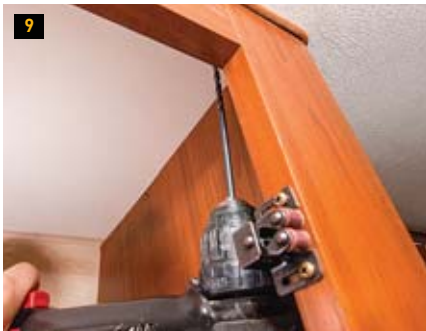
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MOUNT PANELS

[3] The exact location for each foot is marked before panels can be removed to prepare the roof surface area for installation.

[4] At every location where a hole from a fastener or for a wire penetrates the roof, a clear primer must be used to prepare the roof for the sealer that makes the installation waterproof. The primer requires adequate ventilation and drying time before going on to the next step.

[5] The elevation of each panel corner is adjusted by selecting different holes in the brackets. This design compensates for curves in the trailer roof. The goal is to get the panels as flat as possible. After fastening the brackets to the roof with screws, a liberal amount of self-leveling Dicor sealant is applied to each foot to make it weather tight. Sealant is also applied around the combiner box, cable ties/clamps and holes for wire routing.



ROUTE WIRES

[6] After mounting the panel, the AM Solar crew used butt connectors and heat shrink wrap to connect the double 10-gauge wires that transfer energy from each panel to the combiner box.

[7] Cable ties with built-in screw mounts are used to keep the wires in place on the trailer roof. A liberal amount of sealant is applied to each cable tie mount.

[8] The completed install from the top; two solar panels and the wire are the only visible components since the combiner box is mounted underneath one of the panels.

[9] Two priorities determine the wire routing: proximity and concealment. The floor-to-ceiling closet in the front bedroom of this Arctic Fox trailer was the perfect route between the solar panels on the roof and the charge controller in the front storage area. It's best to use a long 3/16-inch drill bit from inside the cabinet face frame to go through the ceiling and roof to indicate the location for the 6-gauge wire from the solar panel combiner box to the charger control.

[10] Following the hole made from inside the closet, a hole saw is needed to make a pathway for the 6-gauge wires that go from the combiner box into the closet below. Another hole goes through the closet floor into the storage area that will house the control box.

[11] After routing the heavy gauge wire from the roof, through the closet and into the front pass-through storage area, it's important to make sure there's enough wire for a route that will keep the wires from being damaged by normal storage area use.

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INSTALL COMBINER BOX

[12] The 6-gauge wire that transmits energy from the combiner box to the control exits the bottom of the combiner box and goes through the opening that was drilled through the trailer roof.

[13] The AM Solar combiner box features bus bars that can handle several wires of different gauges, has bulkhead openings for solar panel wires and offers excellent weather sealing. Dicor seals the box to the roof.



INSTALL MONITOR

[14] The back of the bedroom-mounted monitor reveals the battery sensor wires and a 4-conductor line cord, which goes to the charger control.

[15] A small plastic basket works well as a vented cover to protect the monitor circuit board while split wire loom makes a clean and protected install for the wiring, which is routed through the closet.

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INSTALL SWITCH AND CONTROL

[16] A switch installed between the combiner box and the solar charge controller allows the trailer owner to turn off the solar power.

[17] The wires from the monitor, combiner box and battery come together at the solar charge controller, which is the brain of the system.

[18] A marine grade circuit breaker protects the circuit between the battery and solar charging system.

INSTALL BATTERIES AND SHUNT

[19] The batteries were replaced in this trailer. High-performance batteries are a big part of a solar power system. Batteries that can efficiently take a charge and hold a charge make the whole system better and actually reduce the number of solar panels required.

[20] A shunt installed on the back of the front cross frame provides an accurate sensor for the system activity, which is transmitted via the two small wires to the monitor mounted in the master bedroom.

[21] IPN-ProRemote, Blue Sky Energy, is designed to monitor the system accurately, while calculating remaining battery capacity. It compensates for temperature, battery size, battery type and charge/discharge current. Past battery behavior is "learned" to continuously improve accuracy. 🚚

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Redwood 36

Earmarked for long-term living, this luxury fifth-wheel dishes out the comfort

by Chris Hemer photos by Rich Cox





(Right) Galley area is nicely appointed and has plenty of meal prep space courtesy of a large island with stainless-steel sink.

The purchase of a new fifth-wheel trailer, particularly one that is ostensibly designed for full-time and/or luxury living, is not one to be taken lightly. Besides the monetary investment, which can easily eclipse the \$100,000 mark, there is so much more to consider. Construction details, floor-plan, storage space and tank capacities are always important — but when you plan to live in the fifth-wheel seasonally or full time, there are even more things to think about. Furniture, flooring, cabinetry and residential details, which may be somewhat lower in priority in a weekend trailer, become increasingly important when you're spending a lot of time in a fifth-wheel.

There are a lot of fifth-wheels on the market that lay claim to long-term/full-time capability; in some cases, that amounts to a big storage bay, larger holding tanks and high-capacity LP-gas cylinders — but not much more. Clearly, there's more to it than that, but in the battle to keep price points competitive, some manufacturers forsake the smaller, important details that can make a big difference in the long run; Redwood RV does not.

A subsidiary of Thor Industries, this Syracuse, Indiana-based company is unique in that it builds fifth-wheel trailers exclusively and manufactures

its own Falcon-branded products, including the frame, pin box, axles, suspension, auto-leveling system, steps and slideouts. That's not only advantageous for quality control, it's also important at the service level when the customer or dealer needs parts or answers to technical questions. Redwood also makes standard many features such as six-point leveling jacks, 50-amp service and a 12-gallon water heater, plus an external docking station with an exterior shower, winterization valve and water filtration system in one tidily packaged area.

Redwood's product line consists of a total of nine floorplans ranging from 31 to 40 feet, offered with a variety of options. Our test trailer was the popular 36-foot RW36RL, a three-slideout floorplan equipped with some pretty substantial options, including full-body paint (\$11,016); a Parks Package (\$4,331) with 40-inch LCD TV and LG Home Theater system, dual recliners, bedroom TV, satellite pre-wire, halogen lighting, keyless entry, Carefree electric awning, 60-by-80-inch queen memory foam pillow-top mattress and more; and a Full-Time Living Package (\$6,629) that includes flush-mount frameless windows, aluminum wheels, roller day/night shades, washer/dryer prep and more. In addition, Redwood offers a



number of stand-alone options we'll point out as we go along.

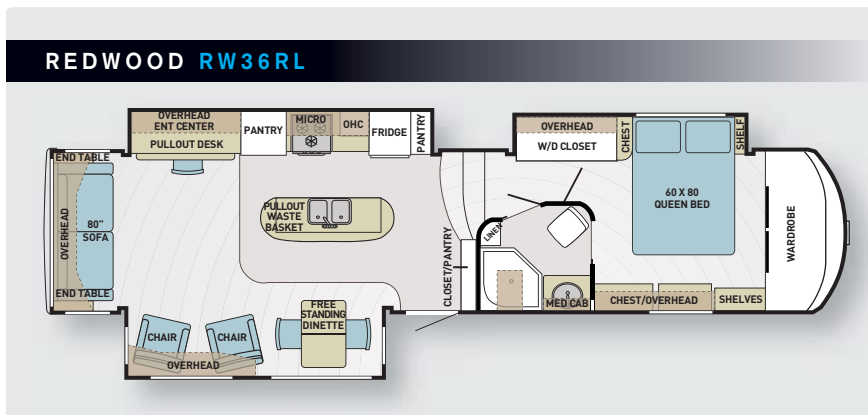
Because this fifth-wheel is really designed for the RV park lifestyle (although it can be equipped with an Onan 5.5 Marquis Gold generator), we called upon our friends at Outdoor Resort Palm Springs to help us locate an unoccupied space to test livability. With the trailer parked in a beautiful lot against the scenic backdrop of the resort's 27-hole golf course, we proceeded to dis-

cover what it's like to live in a Redwood fifth-wheel.

Walking into the trailer, we were greeted by an expansive kitchen area that rivals many small homes in terms of equipment, storage space and overall layout. In addition to appliances like a convection microwave (\$473), upgraded 12-cubic-foot side-by-side refrigerator with icemaker (\$3,194), three-burner stove and even a drawer-type dishwasher (\$1,391), the kitchen

was equipped with thoughtful details like a pull-out trash can, plate drawer, space rack and a huge pantry with pull-out shelves and roller bearing glides. The large island offers an abundance of counterspace, and features 120-volt AC outlets at both ends, an oversized stainless-steel sink and a high-rise faucet with pull-out spray hose. Solid surface countertops are standard, but ours was equipped with the optional quartz countertops (\$1,741) that, frankly, we could live without. They look beautiful, but the sink/stove covers are very heavy and somewhat awkward to stow. Unless you appreciate looks over functionality, this is one place where we'd elect to save some money.

The living area is well-appointed for lounging and entertaining, with an 80-inch sofa (\$551), and dual recliners located across from an optional 5,100-Btu electric fireplace (\$788) and the aforementioned 40-inch LCD TV. It's a cozy setup, but in warmer climes, we'd probably go with the standard pull-out



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User Guide

Contents





(Left) Available Parks Package makes entertaining easy with two oversized dinette chairs and two folding chairs (not shown), plus reclining chairs in the living area. (Middle) Test Redwood was equipped with the optional electric fireplace. (Right) Bedroom is comfortable and features a queen-size bed, plus a huge "Diva Closet." Roller day/night shades make for a restful night's sleep.

desk arrangement. The Godiva décor drew high marks and matched beautifully with the Blonde Cherry cabinets, which were numerous and seemed to be of good build quality. We found the furniture to be well made and very comfortable — the only small exception being the free-standing dinette, which had a large metal bracket underneath that taller guests may bump their knees against. Overall, we were very pleased with the living area, and would highly recommend the optional central vac system (\$315), which makes house-keeping more convenient.

Heading up the stairs to the bedroom area, we discovered both pluses and minuses. On the plus side, there's a huge

cedar-lined "Diva Closet" with shoe rack and nicely designed opaque glass/wooden doors, plus a chest of drawers with plenty of room for folded clothes. The streetside washer/dryer closet is big enough to also hold additional clothes and household items (brooms, mops and the like), so there's no shortage of storage space. We found the queen bed to be comfortable, and the placement of the windows was perfect for both ventilation and views.

This particular floorplan locates the porcelain foot-flush toilet, shower, linen closet and lav in one room, with an arrangement that allows access from both the living and bedroom areas. The room is well configured, (continued on page 52)

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(continued from page 48) the shower roomy and the fixtures high-end, but the main drawback of this layout is that there's little space to walk around the bed, and with the bedroom door open, there's nearly no space. We also tend to prefer having the shower separate from the toilet and lav, but this is personal preference.

One detail we think was neglected are the switches throughout the RW36RL trailer — they were neither intuitively placed, nor labeled for easy use. We would also appreciate a more legible systems indicator, and a switch for the water pump inside the bathroom.

From a utility aspect, Redwood has dotted its i's and crossed its t's. The outside forward storage area is huge, well lit and accessible from both sides and the front of the trailer. A nice touch here is a small shelf with netting to keep smaller items from intermingling with the larger ones. It's a small detail, but one that makes living with the trailer easier. We also liked the pull-out shelves for the dual LP-gas cylinders and the battery.

Honestly, it's easy for anyone to nitpick, but we found very little not to like on this Redwood. It certainly has the elements to make long-term living in a fifth-wheel comfortable. 🏠

Our thanks to Southwest Coaches for supplying the Redwood RW36RL for this test and to Outdoor Resort Palm Springs, California, for its hospitality during our photo shoot and review.

Outdoor Resort Palm Springs, California: 760-904-6665, www.outdoorresort.com

Southwest Coaches, Inc.: Corona, California 951-493-6784; Indio, California 760-863-5330, www.southwestcoaches.com

SPECIFICATIONS

2013 Redwood RW36RL

| | |
|---------------------|---|
| Exterior Length | 38' 11" |
| Exterior Width | 8' |
| Exterior Height | 13' 2" |
| Interior Width | 7' 8.5" |
| Interior Height | Living area: 8' Bedroom area: 6' 4" |
| Construction | Aluminum-framed 2-inch laminated side walls; aluminum-framed floor with marine-grade 7/8-inch tongue-and-groove plywood; stamped steel roof trusses with 3/8-inch plywood decking; 3-inch radius metal roof cap |
| Freshwater Cap. | 104 gal. |
| Gray-Water Cap. | 90 gal. |
| Black-Water Cap. | 45 gal. |
| LP-Gas Cap. | 20 gal. |
| Water-Heater Cap. | 12 gal. |
| Refrigerator | 12 cu. ft. |
| Furnace | 40,000 Btu |
| Air Conditioner (2) | 30,000 Btu |
| Converter | 90 amp |
| Battery | Dual battery box, with one factory-supplied 12-volt |
| Tires | ST235/80R15E |
| Suspension | Leaf springs with Falcon-Flex rubberized suspension |
| Weight | 12,970 lbs. |
| Hitch Weight | 2,580 lbs. |
| Axle Weight | 10,390 lbs. |
| GVWR | 16,000 lbs. |
| GAWR | 7,000 lbs. |
| Cargo Carrying Cap. | 3,030 lbs. |
| MSRP, base | \$90,674 |
| MSRP, as tested | \$114,212 |
| Basic Warranty | Two-year basic warranty, five-year structural |
| Redwood RV | 574-457-7800, www.redwood-rv.com |



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by Barb Riley

HAVE TRUCK & Make Money \$

Delivering RVs to dealers is a great way to supplement income and see the country



WHAT DOES IT PAY?

Ask any RVer what the main advantage RVing has over other forms of travel and recreation, and you'll probably get an overwhelming response around one word: "Freedom."

Ask an RVer what their main obstacle is to enjoying that freedom more often and extensively, however, and this time the overwhelming response would likely center around something almost as big: "Money."

How to live frugally on the road, how to earn money while RVing — these are topics of major discussion among the RVing community. Any number of blogs, discussion forums, books and videos expounding on them can be found in seconds with a simple Web search, but curiously enough, there won't be much on what a few folks consider one of the best-kept secrets in the industry — getting paid to "live the dream."

These are drivers for Classic Transport Inc., a company in Elkhart, Indiana, that pays people to deliver vehicles, often RVs, from one place to another. Mike and Dee Foster are in that group. Dee was a building manager for her local school district and was nudged into early retirement due to budget cuts, while Mike is a retired firefighter. With just-grown kids, they had empty-nest syndrome, a drop

in income availability, and Dee's grandmother in failing health in a city almost 250 miles away with no one nearby to help her. They weren't sure what to do next.

Mike did some research and found Classic Transport. The Fosters were RVers and had taken their kids on trips when they were small, so they were well used to driving and the lifestyle. They sold their house, upgraded their pickup and went to work delivering RVs to RV dealers and staying with Grandma between jobs.

"Going across the country, you'll be amazed at the people you meet and the things you see," Mike said. "Everyone envies our experiences and our ability to see the United States the way we do."

They said the flexibility they have at Classic Transport is a key element that makes this job work for them. They're able to choose the jobs they take, so they can go on long trips or short ones, to the West Coast or the Gulf, or anything in between. If something happens that needs tending to, they take the time for it; and if they want to see a new region they've never been to before, they go there.

"I can see the country, but I can put it on hold and take care of my family when I'm needed," said Dee. "It used to be that when I was home sick, I'd have guilt because I wasn't

This is one of the first questions about any new job prospect, and as with most on-the-road jobs, it's pretty straightforward — the more you work, the more you earn. Transport companies pay a set rate per mile, so longer trips pay more, too. It's up to the driver to decide how many jobs to accept and how often. This may vary among transport companies; some require new drivers to take specified routes on specific dates and earn flexibility privileges over time.

For example, Mike and Dee Foster made more than 50 deliveries in 2012, most at 1,000 miles or more. "What we earned paid for our truck, insurance, general maintenance, anything we needed for that truck," Mike said. "It also paid for our lodging and food while we were gone, and we still got home from every trip with cash in our pocket."

As any driver will tell you, though, it's important to track expenses and watch your spending, and be realistic about what your income needs are. "You've got to stick to a budget," Foster advised. "This kind of life might be harder on younger people with big house payments, but if you're retired with supplementary income like Social Security, you can be very comfortable doing this."

Glenn Wallace agreed. Calculating an annual income of roughly \$15,000 a year for a minimum-wage, 40-hour work week, he said he made more than three times that amount in 2012 taking about four trips a month, most of them 1,000 to 1,200 miles. "And I don't drive the whole month. I might take a load down to Texas and then come up and spend a few days at my house in Kansas between jobs," he said.

In the end, it's up to each person to decide what kind of jobs on the road they're comfortable doing and what they get out of it — in paychecks and intangibles. "Some do this just to keep busy," said Foster. As for Wallace, he still lives for the pursuit of his sunsets. "There's so much stuff out there to see, and to me it's still amazing."

Deliver an RV through Classic Transport and you set your own schedule while getting to see interesting places and meeting new people.



Have Truck, Make Money

at work. I don't have that now."

The flexibility is something appreciated by driver Joel Chouinard, too, but for different reasons. He loves the Canadian countryside and has been to Newfoundland seven times. But he can also choose routes that take him near his daughter in Florida or his wife's brother in Nevada. Sometimes his wife accompanies Chouinard on

those trips — he drops her off at her brother's, finishes the delivery job and comes back for her, where they spend a few days visiting before heading back home to Michigan.

"I can go as often or as little as I want, and when and where I want to," Chouinard stated. When he retired in his 50s from General Motors, he found that a sedentary retirement was not for him, and RVing occasionally for leisure was not satisfying his wanderlust. He saw an ad for Classic Transport and decided to look into it.

"The first words out of my wife's mouth were, 'You're too old,'" he recalls. "I was 63 at the time. But I called and they sent me a packet, and two days later they called me back for an interview. That was 10 years ago. I've never looked back."

Classic Transport drivers have found another benefit of increased connection with family, and Chouinard is able to visit his kids more often. One unexpected boon resulting from the

Fosters' lifestyle change is that since they went to work for Classic Transport and live with Dee's grandmother, her health has improved. Her grandmother has become deeply involved in tracking Mike and Dee's routes and even helping to plan them.

"She's our trip planner, pretty much. She follows our route and checks the weather for where we're going. We call her every day," Dee explained. "We take photos of places she's also been, so she can see how it's changed and tell us about what it was like when she was there. Her health is better now because of this. It keeps her mind active."

Even those who don't live near Classic Transport's Indiana headquarters can make a go of it, according to Glenn Wallace, a driver who lives in Kansas. He drives to the pick-up spot and selects routes that take him back home, to an area he's always wanted to see or to visit his children, who are all scattered across the country.



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Wallace said, "I was an RVer for 12 years before working here. I was retired and widowed, and still making payments on my house and my fifth-wheel, but now without my wife's Social Security checks. I thought, 'Hey, now I'm going to do something I like to do.' I was all equipped with the fifth-wheel and pulling anyway, so it was no big deal."

Wallace likes sunsets, so he takes photos of them along the way. "I've got pictures of every sunset I've seen. Those are the best. You don't realize until you get a chance to look how beautiful it all is."

Mike and Dee also appreciate the interactions with America's beauty and people that's offered by life on the road. They've been all over the country, taking interstates on the way to delivery drop-off sites and taking backroads on the way home so they can catch a glimpse of good old-fashioned American life.

"Winding through the mountains, visiting small mining towns or farming towns, stopping at flea markets...I love all of that," said Dee.

Mike said talking to the locals is one of his favorite things about delivering vehicles to so many different places. "We learn about all the area's secrets when we talk to the folks we run into. All the best restaurants, the best places to shop. You can bet we all share that with the other drivers, too," he said. "We've met people from all over the world. It's a blast."

While Mike has worked with other transport companies, he said he's found Classic Transport to be the best one. "I wanted an honest, family oriented Christian company, and I found it," he explained. "I get the feeling they care about us. The second time I went in, they already knew our names. I love that personal touch. The atmosphere is light and fun. They're always in a good mood."

The Fosters post their trip information and photos on Facebook, which are followed closely by Dee's former coworkers. The Fosters get a lot of feedback from people who see what they're up to and wish they could get in on the fun.

"They all say, 'I wish I could do that.' I tell them they can do it, too, but I guess they're scared even though they don't need to be," stated Dee. They recommend the job to other RVers in the campgrounds they stay in when they're on the road. "These people already know how to drive an RV or tow one, so they might as well get paid to do what they already love and know how to do," she said.

Mike said delivering RVs is the

perfect solution for baby boomers who want or need to keep earning a paycheck but need to get out from behind a desk. "This is an absolute blast," he reported. "Every trip is a new adventure. Even on routes we've taken before, we always see something new."

Chouinard agreed, saying simply, "It's the opportunity of a lifetime." 📷

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A Fresh Outlook

by Chris Hemer

Whether your preference is liquid or powder, chemical or natural solutions, there's a holding tank product to keep your RV smelling clean

There are many things to love about the RV lifestyle. Spending time with friends and family, discovering new places and reconnecting with nature are just some of the benefits RVing has to offer. But ask any RVer, from a beginner to a seasoned veteran, and they'll tell you the 800-pound gorilla in any RV is the holding tank — specifically, the black-water holding tank. And even more specifically, the unpleasant odors that can arise from its murky depths. To be sure, a holding tank gone bad is a good reason to stay outside, but with the right holding-tank treatment and some simple maintenance, there's really no reason to suffer olfactory misery.

There are dozens of holding-tank treatments on the market today, and that can make choosing the right one for your needs daunting. Just remember that holding-tank treatments, regardless of the brand, come in two basic categories: natural treatments that use friendly bacteria to break down and digest waste and tissue, and the chemical variety that usually contains formaldehyde, dyes and perfumes to break down waste and control odor. From there, it's simply a matter of the delivery method: liquid,

powder or the most recent development, the drop-in.

It comes down to preference, but both liquids and powders allow you to measure a specific amount for your needs, while drop-ins are great for those who consistently require the same amount of treatment for their journey (always a weekend trip with a family of four, for example). Regardless of the product type — liquid, powder or drop-in — keep in mind you'll need to store it in your sometimes space-constrained RV.

Two final things to keep in mind are how your trailer's holding tank is configured and how often you use it. For example, if the holding tank is directly beneath the toilet, or you use your trailer frequently/full time, you may prefer a scented product that will mask unpleasant odors.

With all of these things in mind, we're presenting this guide to the most current holding-tank products in each company's own words. Bear in mind we can't cover every product that these companies make in the space we have here, but we'll mention other products available, and you can always visit each company's website for specifics.



Thetford Aqua-Kem

Aqua-Kem liquefies waste and breaks down tissue fast to prevent clogs, while powerful detergents clean tank walls and drain lines. Aqua-Kem works around the clock in all weather conditions, and although it contains formaldehyde, it is biodegradable and environmentally safe when disposed of properly. Aqua-Kem is available in liquid, toss-ins and in dry, granulated form.

Price: \$30-\$38 Aqua-Kem gallon, \$10-\$14 for pack of 12 toss-ins

Where to Buy: Camping World



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green and environmentally friendly by EcoLogo, North America's oldest environmental standard and certification organization. Original Eco-Smart uses a green, formaldehyde-free formula that quickly breaks down and liquefies waste and toilet tissue and provides odor control, while a detergent additive keeps tanks clean. The nonstaining green dye washes clean with soap and water. Orange Eco-Smart uses

an enzyme formula with a natural enzymatic deodorizer, while Eco-Smart Free & Clear offers the same benefits but is fragrance-, dye- and formaldehyde-free and is 100 percent biodegradable. Eco-Smart products are available in liquid or toss-in form.

Price: \$20-\$24 for Eco-Smart Free and Clear 64-ounce liquid, \$12-\$13 for pack of 12 toss-ins

Where to Buy: Camping World



Yara North America Odorlos

Odorlos liquefies, treats and sanitizes holding-tank waste to completely and naturally eliminate odors, all while being safe and gentle. Odorlos uses a sophisticated natural technology originally developed in Scandinavia to be exceptionally effective and good for the environment. The 100 percent biodegradable and formaldehyde-free product is available in a nine-pack of 4-ounce bottles, 40- and 68-ounce measuring bottles, a 168-ounce refill bottle, a 5-pound dry economy size and a 10-pack of dry 4-ounce packets. Simply pour 4 ounces into the toilet, combine with 1 gallon of water and up to 40 gallons of waste can be treated.

Price: \$19.99 for 40-ounce bottle, \$26.99 for 68-ounce bottle, \$19.99 for 10-pack of 4-ounce packets

Where to Buy: RV parts dealers and West Marine

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Walex Bio-Pak

Bio-Pak has been tailored specifically to the RV and marine market. With an all-natural enzyme formula, Bio-Pak is 100 percent environmentally friendly, 100 percent biodegradable and 100 percent septic tank safe. They're packaged in a resealable slide zipper bag containing 10 drop-ins. Walex products break down waste and all types of toilet paper and offer commercial-strength odor prevention. Each strong, water-soluble Bio-Pak drop-in disperses instantly when dropped into the holding tank.

Price: \$10-\$13 for a package of 10 Bio-Pak drop-ins

Where to Buy: Camping World, Walmart and www.amazon.com





Walex Elemonate

Triple action Elemonate utilizes the same WAVE2 odor control formula found in the company's Porta-Pak Holding Tank Deodorizer along with enzymes that are specifically designed to dissolve grease in the gray-water tank and plumbing lines, and cleans the tank and sensors of any buildup. Packaged in individual, portion-control bags of five inside a resealable slide-zipper bag, the product powerfully breaks down grease and sludge while offering commercial-strength odor prevention and freshens the tank with a lemon scent.

Price: \$7-\$9 for a package of five tabs

Where to Buy: Camping World, Walmart and www.amazon.com



Monochem T-5

For more than 40 years, Monochem has been a leading producer of holding-tank deodorizers for the RV industry. The company's most popular deodorizer, T-5 Toilet Chemical, works immediately to neutralize odor-causing bacteria, and its T-5 Squeeze & Pour liquid deodorizer contains no formaldehyde or dye, which makes it ideal for use in black- and gray-water tanks. One ounce of Squeeze & Pour treats up to 50 gallons of waste. Monochem's Dyna-Bact biological toilet deodorizer toss-ins liquefy waste and break down tissue, clean tank parts and are also 100 percent biodegradable.

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Where to Buy: Bi-Mart stores or visit website to find a retailer near you



Kronen Premium Holding Tank Treatment

Kronen Premium Holding Tank Treatment uses naturally occurring micro-organisms to liquefy waste and toilet tissue, and clean the tank's valves and sensors. Its natural, formaldehyde-free formula features a subtle, herbal fragrance. One ounce of the liquid product treats 10 gallons of black water, or 20 gallons of gray water. Kronen liquid is available in 32-ounce, 64-ounce and 128-ounce jugs and 4-ounce single-use bottles. The company's new Drop In's product comes in a pack of 10, with each individual drop-in capable of treating 40 gallons.

Price: \$32.99 for 128-ounce jug; \$13.99 for a pack of 10 Drop In's

Where to Buy: Available on Kronen's website



Good Sam Liquid Holding Tank Deodorant

Good Sam Liquid Holding Tank Deodorant controls odors, breaks down waste and tissue and keeps your RV's tank clean. Nontoxic and formaldehyde-free, it features a 100 percent biodegradable

active ingredient ideal for RV use.

Price: \$9.99 for 32-ounce liquid, \$17.99 for 64-ounce liquid

Where to Buy: Camping World



Camco TST Orange Power

Orange Power has odor control with a pleasant orange scent. Camco's TST Orange Power breaks down waste and tissue and its ultra-concentrated formula means only 2 ounces treats a 40-gallon holding tank. It's 100 percent biodegradable, contains no formaldehyde and stops odors for up to seven days. Also available in drop-in form.

Price: \$7-\$9 for 32-ounce liquid

Where to Buy: Visit website to find a retailer near you



Eco-Save Dry

Eco-Save is a dry product that contains billions of friendly bacteria and live enzymes in each scoop. It is non-corrosive, has no harsh chemicals, perfume or surfactants, and works by naturally breaking down wastes and toilet paper. In addition, the product lubricates valves, cleans holding tanks and controls odor. Easy to use and lightweight, this product is effective for long periods of boondocking. One scoop treats 40 gallons of black water; half a scoop treats 40 gallons of gray water.

Price: \$25 (8 ounce) to \$62.40 for 4-pack delivered from Eco-Save

Where to Buy: Visit website to find a retailer near you



Century Chemical Corp. Travel Jon

Travel Jon Holding Tank Deodorizer/Cleaner controls holding-tank odors, breaks down waste and toilet paper, and provides a long-lasting fresh scent. The nonformaldehyde formula is biodegradable and contains detergents to keep the tank clean. The blue liquid formula is highly concentrated, requiring just 2 ounces per treatment. It's also available in 2-ounce dry pouches, packaged in eight-pouch boxes.

Price: \$14-\$18 (128-ounce liquid) \$5.99-\$7.99 (dry pouch)

Where to Buy: Camping World



Dometic Corp. Clean 'n Green Liquid

Dometic's Clean 'n Green holding-tank treatment is formaldehyde-free, so it's nontoxic and environmentally friendly. Millions of friendly, odor-controlling bacteria in each dose break down waste and keep tanks clean without harming sanitation components or the environment. It's long lasting and powerful for instant odor control. Also available in Clean 'n Green Week-Enders Bowl Cleaner and Holding Tank Treatment in drop-in packets (12 or 24 to a bag).

Price: \$10-\$15 for 48-ounce liquid, \$10-\$13 for a pack of 12 2-ounce Clean 'n Green Week-Enders toss-ins

Where to Buy: Camping World and Adventure RV Center



TankTechs RX

Developed by TankTechs, a family owned business that specializes in the pumping, cleaning and sanitizing of black- and gray-water holding tanks, TankTechs RX is an organic product that uses probiotic microbes delivered in a health-promoting purified structured water. TankTechs RX controls struvites (crystals that form when sewage breaks down) and odor, kills mold and is effective in all temperatures. Only 1/2 ounce is required to treat 40 gallons.

Price: \$49 for a 1-liter bottle (68 tank treatments) that includes shipping

Where to Buy: Available on TankTechs' website



Valterra Products Pure Power Blue

Pure Power Blue is a chemical-free, bacterial enzyme holding-tank treatment that performs in all temperature conditions. Its powerful Bio-BlastPlus technology provides odor control up to 130 degrees and will keep holding tanks clean with a fresh scent. Pure Power Blue liquefies all waste and toilet paper, and just 2 ounces treats 40-gallon black- or gray-water tanks. Also available in Bio-Pouch drop-ins.

Price: \$22-\$26 for 128-ounce liquid, \$12.99-\$14.99 for 12-pack of Bio Pouch drop-ins

Where to Buy: Camping World



DirectLine Industries NuGen

NuGen is an all-in-one product that breaks down waste, tissue and debris while creating a nano-shield on holding-tank walls to keep waste in suspension until it is discharged. It also controls odors, lubricates valves and floats, and cleans sensors. Formaldehyde-free and biodegradable, just 2 ounces of NuGen treats a 40-gallon tank.

Price: \$16.99

Where to Buy: Visit website to find a retailer near you

HEAVY LOAD?

Obviously you're not going to haul a battleship anchor around with you. But when you need to handle a heavy load, you still have to live with the ride of your truck. It's simple. Just add air to the Firestone Ride-Rite™ air spring suspension. It controls the load, maintains that great ride, and stabilizes the vehicle.

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Dometic Corp. Full-Timers Holding Tank Treatment

Designed for those on the road 200 or more days a year, Dometic's Full-Timers offers a great value with long-lasting odor control in a concentrated, formaldehyde-free formula. Available in 1 gallon and 32 ounce sizes, just 4 ounces are required for treatment. Also available in dry, toss-in form in resealable bags of six or 12 packets. **Price:** \$29-\$39 for 1-gallon liquid, \$19-\$24 for a 12-pack of Full-Timers toss-ins

Where to Buy: Camping World and Adventure RV Center

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Dometic Corp.

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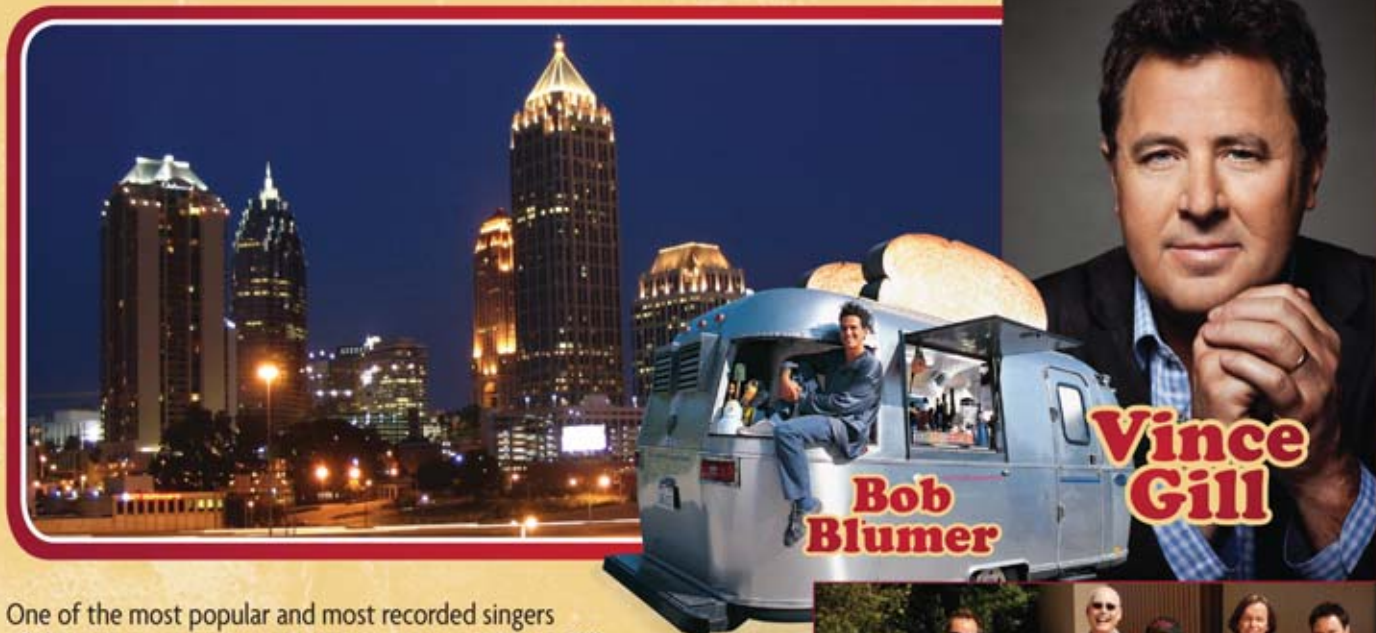


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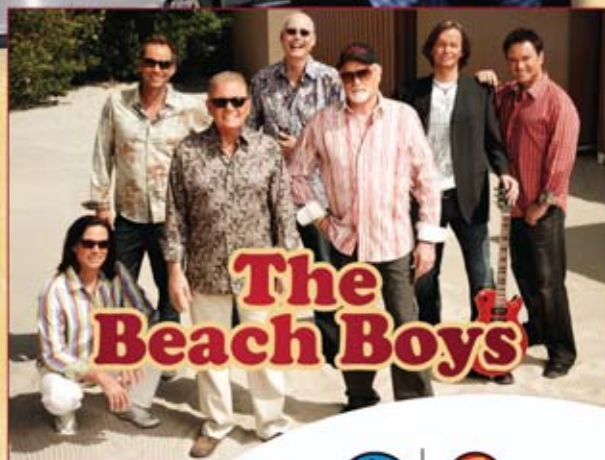
One of the most popular and most recorded singers of the past quarter-century, country superstar **Vince Gill** consistently delivers spellbinding vocal performances with emotionally powerful songwriting and world-class guitar-playing.

Expect an extraordinary evening of sun-drenched harmonies, classic surf tunes and unfading youth when the legendary **Beach Boys** take the stage, performing their iconic hits from the '60s through the '80s.

More than **20 seminars** a day, hundreds of **exhibit booths** displaying the latest in **RV accessories**, and a wide array of **RVs on display** - all on sale!

PLUS - Don't miss the Food Network's *Surreal Gourmet*, **Bob Blumer**.

Register to attend now and enjoy all the Rally has to offer!



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*Early bird days and electric are available at an additional cost.



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User Guide

Contents



WINNEBAGO TOURING COACH TRAVATO

Winnebago recently unveiled the 2014 Travato, the first U.S. motorized RV built on Chrysler's new 2014 Ram ProMaster chassis. The ProMaster is an adaptation of the diminutive front-wheel-drive Italian Fiat Ducato platform, a popular chassis choice for European motorhome builders. The nearly 21-foot Class B Travato is part of a newly named Winnebago Touring Coach line that includes the Sprinter-based Era Class B motorhome.

The Travato is available in one floorplan, the 59G, and is aggressively styled. The coach utilizes a 3.6-liter V-6 gas engine and six-speed automatic transmission, and is economical and versatile, according to the company. Claimed mpg is 15 to 18. Exterior height is 9 feet, interior height is 6 feet 3 inches. Wheelbase is 159 inches and GVWR is 9,350 pounds. The Travato has double doors in back that open for easy storage of bicycles and gear. There's a flip-up rear bed,



and Winnebago's Flex system allows the front couch and dinette to convert into a 42-by-72-inch bed. MSRP on the Travato was not yet determined at presstime. **641-585-3535, www.winnebagotouring.com**

THE 29-FOOT REAR ISLAND BED MOTORHOME, BUILT ON AN EXTENDED FORD E-450, HANDLES LIKE A FAMILY VAN

Born Free

Non-slideout 29-foot rear island bed

Born Free, a manufacturer of Class C motorhomes for 44 years, has a new 29-foot Class C that handles like a family van. Built on an extended Ford E-450 chassis, the unit has three

tubular steel rollbars (for added safety and structural integrity), fiberglass batt insulation throughout and molded gel-coat fiberglass sides.

One of the residential appointments of this new floorplan is its rear bedroom with island-style 60-by-75-inch queen bed. Amidships is the lavatory with porcelain toilet, washstand and separate placement of the

shower stall against the bedroom's forward, curbside wall. Up front is a full-featured curbside galley with a convertible sofa that can be transformed into a 36-by-68-inch auxiliary bed with the push of a button.

Standard features include oak cabinetry, solid-surface countertops, electrically actuated day/night shades throughout, 13,500-Btu roof air and a manual patio awning.



Chassis Ford E-450
Engine 6.8-L V-10
Length 29' 1"
Width 7' 5"
Height 9'9"
Interior Height 6'4"

GVWR 14,500 lbs.
Freshwater Cap. 26 gal.
Gray-Water Cap. 21 gal.
Black-Water Cap. 35 gal.
LP-gas Cap. 19.5 gal.
Base MSRP \$120,000

Born Free, 800-247-1835, www.bornfreemotorcoach.com

RV Resort Renovation

RVC Outdoor Destinations has completed renovation of Garden of the Gods Campground in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The resort has 173 RV sites, including six executive pull-through sites. There are two heated swimming pools, a ballpark, upgraded Wi-Fi, new picnic tables, and road and landscape improvements. A base camp area has been created that includes a community campfire and grill.

In Colorado Springs, the public park of Garden of the Gods, a National Natural Landmark, attracts more than 2 million visitors per year. The area is popular for hiking, technical rock climbing, road- and mountain-bike riding and horseback riding. A 1.5-mile trail runs through the heart of the park and is paved and wheelchair accessible. **866-994-0543, www.rvcoutdoors.com**



Caravan Salon in Düsseldorf, Germany

Heading to Europe? If so, check out the Caravan Salon in Düsseldorf's Exhibition Centre in Germany, August 30 to September 8, to view a wide variety of RVs and accessories. This year the event will showcase a total of 1,800 RVs, with 570 international exhibitors representing 120 towable and motorhome brands. Camping gear and upgrade parts will be on display, as well as information on travel destinations and camping sites. Visitors can test drive a motorhome or trailer. The German Caravanning Industry Association will hold a raffle for a chance to win a trailer, a motorhome and cash. An "off-road" section with all-terrain vehicles on display offers an opportunity for test rides. **www.caravan-salon.com**



Roadtrek's CS – Adventurous

A Class B with ample capacity for dry camping



FIRST IMPRESSION

Chassis
Mercedes-Benz Sprinter

Engine
3.0-L CRD V-6 turbo-diesel

Length
22' 9"

Width
6' 8"

GVWR
11,030 lbs.

Base MSRP
\$114,855

The latest Class B to come from Roadtrek Motorhomes, based in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, is the CS-Adventurous, built on the fuel-efficient Mercedes-Benz Sprinter van chassis. The CS features a large galley with a 7-cubic-foot refrigerator, a convection microwave, a standard power sofa that converts to a king-size bed or twin beds, two separate living areas, three roomy captain's seats and abundant 12-volt DC power outlets for electronic devices.

"We had the avid RVer and camper top-of-mind when we designed this exciting new model," said Roadtrek's President

Jim Hammill. "We made sure it had ample capacity for lengthy trips, both dry camping and otherwise — ample fresh water, propane and storage. We incorporated a very advanced heating system to make spending time in the van as comfortable as home."

The new Roadtrek has a hydronic radiant comfort heating system and also uses engine heat for coach heating and hot water to save propane. The CS is available with Roadtrek's E-trek electric and environmental package for extended periods of dry camping, while being environmentally conscious. 🚐

➡ For more information contact: 519-745-1169, www.roadtrek.com



Ball-Mount Handy Storage

The Hang-a-Hitch attaches to the inside of a truck's tailgate or a trailer A-frame for a convenient and safe way to store a ball mount when not in use. With the ball mount out of the way, no more banging your shin and limping around a campground! The Hang-a-Hitch is said to mount easily with three screws, and is crafted of 6061-T6 aircraft polished aluminum so it won't rust. Hang-a-Hitch is designed to fit all ball mounts 1¼ inches, 2 inches and 2½ inches (part numbers 15000 and 15200). And when you've packed up your campsite and are ready to hook-up and go, you'll know exactly where to find the ball mount.

MSRP: \$39.95

916-933-0236, www.hangahitch.com

Circle 201 on Reader Service Card.



Light Up the Dark

Impeltronics offers a variety of high-powered LED flashlights made of aircraft aluminum. The tough flashlights are good for camping, hiking, fishing, bicycling and other activities, and range in weight from less than an ounce to 1.4 pounds. The 3-inch Ramble fits easily in a pocket and puts out 70 lumens. Drop your keys between the seats? The Extendable Telescoping Magnetic Flashlight extends from 6 to 21 inches, has a flexible LED head for 360-degree directional rotation, and a magnetic head and tail for retrieving hard-to-reach objects. If you're a night owl, there's a flashlight named for you, the high-end DT20 Night Owl Double Barrel LED Flashlight with 1,100 lumens.

MSRP: \$19.99 to \$342

www.impeltronics.com

Circle 202 on Reader Service Card.



Pooch Products

Is your furry friend a lover of the outdoors? Kyjen's Outward Hound collection has a line of products that makes hiking with your dog convenient and fun with accessories like Port A Bowls and backpacks for man's best friend. If your dog tuckers out on the trail before you do, the company offers carriers for small dogs. Can't keep your dog out of the water? Outward Hound's high-visibility life vests with easy-to-grab handles and quick-release buckles offer outstanding flotation, according to the company. While driving to your destination, keep your dog securely in place in the vehicle with products from the auto safety collection.

MSRP: \$5 to \$105

800-477-5735, www.kyjen.com

Circle 203 on Reader Service Card.



BedRug TrackMat

BedRug, manufacturer of truck bedliners, introduces the Trailerware TrackMat, a mat that can be used as a lightweight, portable creeper or knee pad for working on RVs. It can also be used for saving your knees while gardening! The 2- by 4-foot mat folds down to 2 by 2 feet for convenient storage and is made of ¾-inch-thick closed-cell foam that is water-, stain- and chemical-resistant. The TrackMat is made with 100 percent polypropylene fibers with a material similar to that used in life jackets, so it won't mold or mildew, according to the company. BedRug also offers cargo van mats, Jeep kits and trailer liner kits and mats. 🚚

MSRP: \$29.99

800-462-8435, www.bedrug.com

Circle 204 on Reader Service Card.



American Force Wheels

We get a lot of technical correspondence from readers regarding tire and wheel problems, including premature wear and failures. In fact, it's one of the top complaints we hear from trailer owners. Today's large trailers with premium amenities and multiple slideout rooms weigh far more than older units. Heavy trailers put a strain on not only the trailer's tires and wheels, but also the tow vehicle's. Fortunately there are solutions.

We spoke about this problem recently with Robert Martell, general manager of American Force Wheels. Since 2003, the company has been using the latest technologies and materials to manufacture custom after-market wheels for truck enthusiasts. Martell said, "Usually, the weakest point in a towing rig is the tire. From the factory, a driver can only get a Load Range E (LRE) tire for his dually. But with our forged-aluminum 19.5-inch wheel, customers can fit an LRF, LRG or LRH tire. These tires are rated to carry from 3,500 up to 4,900 pounds per tire. Using our 19.5-inch wheel and commercial truck tire combo, drivers are realizing three to four times longer tire life, while also seeing savings by reducing the downtime required for changeovers."

Martell added, "Our 19.5-inch wheels give our clients a great mix of looks and utility. By allowing for the use of high-load-capacity tires, truck owners can realize increased tire mileage between changes, providing substantial monetary and downtime

savings. And, our 19.5s are custom designed for one-of-a-kind street styling."

The 19.5-inch wheels used in conjunction with commercial-grade tires ease the strain of the truck's load and allow the tires to run cooler and more efficiently. Because they are not flexing and squirming as much from running near their weight limits as stock tires do, this leads to longer tire life. American Force 19.5-inch wheels were designed to meet the needs of high-mileage, heavy-load drivers, who are looking for more than just function in their wheel/tire combinations. These new wheels give drivers the ability to use a heavy-duty, commercial-grade truck tire on their pickup, providing increased tire-load-capacity margins while enhancing appearance.

In closing, Martell added, "A common myth in the world of high-performance, heavy-duty wheels is that a customer must often choose between looks and function. Traditionally, the higher curb appeal a wheel offers, the lower its practicality, and vice versa. While that may

be the case with many wheels on the market, it certainly isn't true with our forged aluminum 19.5-inch wheels."

American Force Wheels are specifically designed and created for each application in a variety of designs and finishes. They're manufactured from 6061 forged aluminum to provide the strongest and lightest possible wheel available. The 19.5-inch wheels directly bolt on, and tires come in 32- and 33-inch diameters.

American Force Wheels are available in mirror polish or black powder coating finishes, and come in handsome designs such as Classic, Freedom, Magnum, Titan and Typhoon. They can be enhanced with universal lug-nut covers in various shapes. American Force offers a lifetime warranty on its wheels against manufacturing defects. For more information on this new wheel, and other American Force Wheel products, call 877-427-6773 or visit www.americanforcewheels.com.

Vehicle Care

With summer's road trips coming up, we strongly suggest getting your vehicle prepared. The Car Care Council recently shared some interesting statistics. During the organization's service events, it found that 77 percent of the vehicles inspected required some kind of service. Starting with the worst percentages first, 22 percent had low or dirty motor oil, 20 percent had low, dirty or leaking engine coolant, 19 percent needed a new air filter and 18 percent were in need of brake work or brake fluid. Also, 14 percent needed at least one belt replaced, new windshield wipers and power steering or transmission fluid, while 13 percent had at least one lamp out. Battery clamps, cables, or terminals were needed on 11 percent of vehicles, 10 percent had tires in need of replacement, 9 percent were riding on improperly inflated tires and 8 percent of vehicles had their "check engine" lights on. These are some of the things to check next time you bring your vehicle in for service. 🚗

American Force Classic Wheels



READER SERVICE

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Truma LevelCheck

A portable ultrasound device takes the guesswork out of determining LP-gas levels in cylinders

| | |
|------------------|-----------|
| DIFFICULTY | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| TIME TO COMPLETE | 5 MINUTES |
| TOOLS NEEDED | NONE |

Checking the level of LP-gas in the cylinders that are commonly installed on trailers, fifth-wheels and campers has always been a hit or miss proposition. Gauges are found on some cylinders, but for the most part, these options are usually not provided by the RV manufacturer. Even then, accuracy is suspect. There are a few aftermarket products designed to read LP-gas level, like the stick-on sensors that respond to temperature, but these devices may also be less than reliable.

Seasoned RVers know that pouring hot water down the sides of the cylinder and using a hand to find the location where the temperature changes is an unscientific — but doable — method to discover relative propane level, but it's certainly not convenient. A new device on the market, Truma LevelCheck, uses technology to keep an "eye" on LP-gas level in cylinders.

The LevelCheck is highly portable, easily fitting in the palm of an adult hand. It's a product built in Germany and is very popular among caravan enthusiasts in Europe. It uses ultrasound to locate the level of LP-gas, and LED lights with an audible alert to inform the operator of the measurement process. The device uses a 9-volt battery, which is accessed by removing a screw and pulling off the back cover.

Determining LP-gas level can't get any simpler. The operator pushes the LevelCheck against the side wall of the cylinder and holds it in place at any desired location. The device must be held in a horizontal position and to a clean surface, without any labels or stickers.

An orange LED will flash to indicate the device is in the process of determining if there is LP-gas at the particular level on the cylinder; a beep signals the



(Above left) LevelCheck is held in a horizontal position against the wall of the LP-gas cylinder. Here the red light indicates that the propane level is below this point. **(Above right)** An LED flashlight is built into the end of the device and is operated by a push-button switch.

beginning and end of the measurement process. If there's propane at the point where the device is held against the cylinder, a green LED will illuminate; if there is no LP-gas present, a red LED will show. The user moves the device up and down the cylinder wall until LP-gas is detected.

We tested the LevelCheck on numerous cylinders to get an idea of accuracy; some had gauges. On one trailer, both cylinders were filled to capacity; one gauge read full while the other indicated empty, verifying our thoughts about the accuracy of some of the integrated gauges on the market. In both cases, the LevelCheck confirmed the level as full. We ran a 5-gallon (20-pound) cylinder empty on a large barbecue and tested the level with the device. It never detected LP-gas so only the red LED illuminated.

There's no real right or wrong way to approach the measurement process; just move the device up and down the

cylinder until the level is discovered. As a bonus, an LED flashlight is built into the LevelCheck.

The LevelCheck is designed for steel and aluminum LP-gas cylinders with a diameter of 7.9 to 13.8 inches. The only maintenance required is cleaning the rubber contact point with a damp cloth (without detergent or cleaning agents). It retails for \$69.

LevelCheck is manufactured by Truma, a company that is a major supplier to the mobile leisure industry in Europe, and is a name that is well respected in the caravanning community. Founded in 1949, the name Truma was inspired by former U.S. President Harry S. Truman.

Say "goodbye" to guessing, and to running out of LP-gas unexpectedly. 🗨️

Truma, www.levelcheck.com/us

SIMPLE SOLUTION » Truma's portable LevelCheck makes it easy to keep an eye on LP-gas levels in cylinders by the use of high-tech ultrasound.



FIFTH-WHEEL HITCH NOISE

Q When starting and stopping, my fifth-wheel hitch makes a popping noise that sounds like slack in the jaws. Is this something that just happens with use, or something I need to get checked out?

Bobby Jack Martin, Ennis, Texas

A Due to the component clearances involved almost every fifth-wheel hitch is going to make some noise, but that can go too far. It's normal to hear a bit of clunking when you accelerate from a stop and again when you slow down. As a hitch and the trailer's kingpin wear a bit that noise can get louder, but if it seems the noise is excessive, yes, I'd definitely recommend you take the truck and trailer to a service center for an inspection. The last thing you want is a hitch failure due to excess wear. — **Jeff Johnston**



CHECKING CONVERTER AND GREASING AXLES

Q We have a 2010 Keystone Montana fifth-wheel trailer. I have some questions for you. Is there an easy way to tell if the converter is working, other than waiting for the batteries to die? Also, the trailer has grease Zerk fittings, for access to grease the axles. After how many miles should it be greased? When greasing it, do I add until it starts oozing out or is that too much?

Gene Heineman, Via email

A To check converter output, measure the voltage at the batteries, with and without the converter powered up. Battery voltage with the converter off should be 12.6 volts or less. When

you plug in the fifth-wheel to shore-power, voltage at the battery should slowly start to rise to somewhere around 13.8 to 14.4 volts, depending on the type of converter/charger.

Regarding the Zerk fittings, it depends on whether they are on the wheel bearing center caps, or on spring shackles, etc. If you are talking about the wheel bearings, we recommend taking them out for a close inspection once a year and repacking them with a high-temperature wheel bearing grease. Look for rough, damaged races and deterioration of the bearings themselves. Then replace the seals and any bearings that are questionable. Pushing grease in with a gun until it oozes out may pop the grease

THE TECH TEAM



KEN FREUND: Ken is a former ASE Certified Master Technician, service manager and shop owner who has authored numerous books on automotive repair.



JEFF JOHNSTON: Jeff served as technical director of *Trailer Life* for 18 years and has been an RV enthusiast, mechanic and writer since he could hold a wrench.

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seals out the back, getting grease on the brakes. It also doesn't allow you to see any deterioration of the races or bearings. On the suspension fittings, yes, it is fine to grease them until it oozes out. — Ken Freund

HYDRAULIC BRAKE UPGRADE

Q First off, we love the magazine (RV Clinic, RV Action Line, 10-Minute Tech and Hands On). All of those

columns have helped me in one way or another.

I own a 2008 GMC 1-ton dually truck to tow my 2009 Heartland Big Country 3500 fifth-wheel. The truck weighs 8,100 pounds with me in it. The truck and trailer fully loaded for a trip weighs in at 23,500 pounds. We do about 5,000 miles a year towing. This is our third trailer in 15 years and we love the trailer, but not the brakes.

I'm converting over to Kodiak hydraulic disc brakes with Titan Brake-Rite II actuator. I'm a mechanic by trade and I work on trucks and trailers both with greased and oil bath wheel bearings. What are the pros and cons of oil bath over greased wheel bearings? I'm installing new hubs and rotors, bearings and Redline 10-63 seals on the trailer in about two months, weather permitting. Any advice you can offer would be helpful.

Stephen Knobloch, Chicago, Illinois

A Hydraulic disc brake systems are great for RV trailers, Stephen. You will find that the rig pulls down to a stop like never before. The main difference in grease versus oil bath bearings is in the maintenance. Because the oil is such a low viscosity compared to grease, the seals must be absolutely perfect to avoid leaks. That is not a big deal for most commercial truck trailers because they undergo regular maintenance schedules far more rigorous than the average RV trailer. Grease-type axles work fine for most RVers — in fact I have never heard of one using oil-bath bearings — but as a mechanic, if you are comfortable using them and can monitor the maintenance, terrific! You should do just fine. — J.J.

RUBBER ROOF BUBBLES

Q Is it common for rubber roof membranes to have air pockets, blisters or looseness or should they be snug and tight fitting? Mine has bubbles and air pockets that are about 2 to 3 inches by 4 to 5 inches and mostly in the front of the roof and along the side. There are 15 to 20 of them. The trailer is a 2012 Prowler fifth-wheel made by Heartland. It is four months old by the warranty. I previously had a 2010 Keystone Laredo fifth-wheel and it didn't have any bubbles on the roof.

Richard Lindemann, Via email

A Are those rubber roof bubbles common? Yes. Are they right? No. An EPDM rubber roof or, for that matter, any type of flexible-membrane RV roof, should be glued down tightly

Bully Dog, Circle 118 on Reader Service Card



with no visible bubbles or obvious loose areas. Because your trailer is still in its warranty period I'd take it to your dealer and talk to the technician about the bubbles. If they say "don't worry, they're normal," have them provide you with a signed document stating that if the roof gets worse and needs repair after the warranty period, they'll take care of the problem they said was "normal" that started back under warranty.

A local RV shop technician told us that trying to repair those small bubbles, which tend to occur at high-stress points where the airflow over the RV creates a vacuum that "sucks up" the membrane while traveling, can be more disruptive to the roof's integrity than leaving the small bubbles alone. However, those bubbles can sometimes grow into larger loose areas that definitely do need repair. Keep an eye on your roof and follow up with your service center if the bubbles get out of hand. — J.J.

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BUCKING TRUCK 1

Q I read the Newton Bruce letter ("Bucking Truck") in the April issue. I had the same problem with a 32-foot fifth-wheel with a gooseneck adapter towed by a Dodge 2500 HD Quad Cab shortbed. I was using a PopUp Industries RV3 adapter.

After I switched to a PopUp RVCC cushion adapter with the 7 1/2-inch offset, it took away about 50 percent of the bucking. On the same section of highway and bridge where I previously had to slam on the brakes to stop the bucking, I didn't even have to slow down — so it works.

Bobby Sheedy, Weir, Mississippi

BUCKING TRUCK 2

Q I have the same problem as Newton Bruce with my tow vehicle and trailer combination. I have learned that if I let up on the accelerator quickly and press it back down quickly this cancels the bucking. You have to practice until you get it right, but it can be done; just

keep on trying and you will learn. I taught my wife but, of course, she was watching me do it.

James Roberts, Via email

BUCKING TRUCK 3

Q We had similar (but not as violent) bucking problems with both a 22-foot Nash and a 27-foot Rockwood being pulled with a 2002 E-350 Ford van. In both cases, we determined that higher tire pressure cured the problem. With underinflated soft tires, they act as springs as they compress and expand. The shocks cannot correct this since the spring source appears between the road and the shock. The shocks could be locked solid and you could still have the pitching as the tires act as springs. The higher pressure makes the tires stiffer and lets the van's shocks do their job. We are currently using 70 psi in the front and 75 psi in the back. Sixty and 65 psi were too low and created the problem.

Russell Schaal, Via email

A Thanks for all of the suggestions about solving or reducing truck and trailer bucking, guys. That *RV Clinic* letter generated a lot of responses from our readers. While it's true that nothing will stop the bucking that occurs in some vehicle and trailer combinations on certain stretches of road, there are some equipment or driving habit adjustments that can be made to at least reduce the effect. Regarding tire pressure, be sure you don't exceed any pressure rating stated on the tire sidewall to avoid over inflation and its associated potential problems. — **J.J.**

TANK-GAUGE PROBLEMS

Q We have a 2007 Cardinal by Forest River model T32TS travel trailer. How in the world can I get the tank gauges to read properly? In our trailer there are four 40-gallon tanks: fresh, galley, gray and black. I have tried a number of things from ice cubes to tank-gauge cleaner without success.

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Hensley, Circle 126 on Reader Service Card



Should I just give up or is there hope?
Jesse Hamblen, Waterloo, Illinois

A Tank monitors have always been problematic, and many folks do give up on them. You've already tried the easier cures. The most common problem is build-up of crud on in-tank sensors. However, if you are willing to install a new monitor, there are some options, albeit more expensive. Camping World (www.campingworld.com) offers a Tank Monitor System Kit, catalog #55603. Another company that has a system worth considering is Scadtech (www.scadtech.com/tank_monitors). Both these monitors use external sensors, which eliminate the most common problem with factory monitors. — **K.F.**

HAVE A QUESTION? » Email our experts at: RVclinic@trailerlife.com or write to: RV Clinic, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, California 93001. No phone calls, please.

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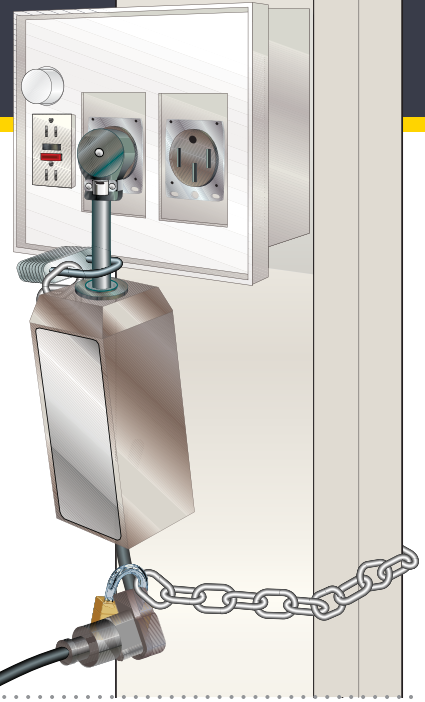


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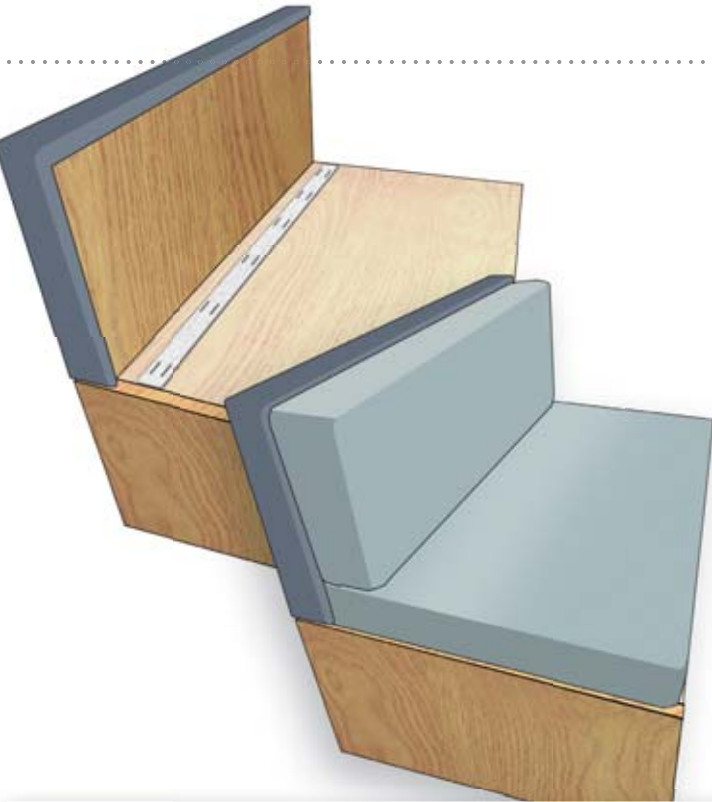




Portable Surge Guard Security

One of the most common concerns when using the portable Surge Guard models is security. Surge Guard sells a security device that locks it and the RV's power cord together, but I found that two locks and about 3 feet of chain provide a higher level of security. The locks secure the chain to the Surge Guard and the chain secures the Surge Guard to the power pedestal. One tip is to make sure that the locks selected are large enough to fit over the Surge Guard's power cord and the chain. Also, for convenience, I purchased two locks that are keyed alike.

Tom Moore, Tigard, Oregon



Cushions: Sit! Stay!

My wife and I purchased a 2011 Keystone Passport travel trailer new in 2011. I like to go through it and improve upon anything I find in our "home away from home" to make it better. One good example was the dinette seat cushions. Every time we used the dinette, the cushions had a way of scooting forward, allowing the backrest cushion to drop down (it normally sat on top of the back edge of the seat cushion). I removed the cushions and stapled a wide strip of hook-and-loop fastener to the plywood base under the seat cushion at the very rear edge. My wife sewed the other side of the hook-and-loop strip to the bottom cushion in a corresponding place. Now when the cushion is in position, it stays in place!

Ken Steele, Lakewood, California

QUICK FIX

Visual Check

My wife and I are pretty new to fifth-wheeling. Because of our inexperience I follow a checklist when breaking camp. Cardinal Rule #1 is a visual verification that the jaws of the hitch are around the kingpin of the trailer. Even when I use a flashlight I can't always tell if it is properly hitched because the kingpin and jaws are the same color. Camping this way is no fun.

Finally, in an "ah ha!" moment, I bought a can of bright-orange paint and painted the jaws. Now I am able to do a visual check and can relax knowing I won't lose our trailer or cause an accident. This makes camping way more fun!

Paul Skinner, West Plains, Missouri 🚐

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NASA's launch site: where U.S.-manned space flight began



Florida is home to 17 million people. Last night, I think that most of them were driving around Orlando. Traffic was a mess; I performed my role as a tourist by contributing to it.

Today, I'm not far from Orlando, but what a contrast. I am on a desolate piece of beach, certainly the longest such beach in Florida, if not the East

Coast. This is Cape Canaveral. It appears on the map as a long island.

I am standing in the afternoon shadow of an Atlas V Rocket. It's 19 stories high. It took two years to build. By this time tomorrow, it will have done what it was built to do and will have traveled thousands of miles to do it.

Its engines and boosters, generating more than 2 millions pounds of thrust, will send its satellite payload on a brief journey that will end 22,236 miles above the Earth. That's 100 times higher than the orbit of the Space Shuttle. The whole operation, from launch to spacecraft separation, will take three hours, one minute and 23.2 seconds.

It's hard to comprehend that this massive rocket will disappear tomorrow in less than a minute. Everything that we deal with on Earth — excepting organic material that nature consumes — will end up somewhere, even if it's a landfill. But this piece of Space Age hardware will just vanish, leaving no sign, but a scorched launch pad, that it ever existed.

Final fabrication of the Atlas V is done in Decatur, Alabama, with parts coming from California, Texas, Florida and Switzerland. The engines are made in Khimki, Russia. They tell me that the Russians make the best rocket engines in the world. Some of the Russian builders are here today as observers, but they keep to themselves.

I am here as a guest of United Launch Alliance, a private company that now performs most of the launches in the United States. The launch sites are here at the Cape, and at Vandenberg Air Force Base north of Los Angeles. The intended orbit of the vehicle determines from where it is launched.

Following retirement from our space shuttle program, NASA has gotten out of the launch business. Private enterprise is picking up the slack. But NASA wrote the



(Above) Visitors wait for the Shuttle Launch Experience ride, a realistic simulation of an actual Space Shuttle launch at the Kennedy Space Center. (Left) Atop the Atlas V of United Launch Alliance is a Navy communications satellite that weighs 8,405 pounds, more than three Honda Civics.

book on the subject, primarily manned space flight, and will always have a presence here, personified today in the Visitor Complex at the Kennedy Space Center.

Named for President John F. Kennedy, the center is actually an installation that was the launch site for every U.S. manned space flight. It's 34 miles long and 6 miles wide. The center is now the focus for our civilian space program, using three pads at the adjoining Cape Canaveral Air Force Station.

The Visitor Complex just celebrated 50 years of space history. Aside from two IMAX theaters, the Shuttle Launch Experience ride, and other theme-parklike attractions, it offers a bus tour of the whole installation.

The bus stops at the Apollo/Saturn V Center, where a Saturn V rocket — like the one that sent our guys to the moon — fills the building. Were it not here, there would be room for a stadium-size football game.

Driving by the Vehicle Assembly Building, one of the largest buildings in the world, the bus driver told us that the American flag painted on the outside wall is 20 stories tall. "Each star is 6 feet across," he said.

Leaving the facility, we watched as an alligator slid into the water of a pond. This added an interesting juxtaposition: spotting one of Earth's oldest creatures surrounded by present-day engineering marvels showcasing man's greatest scientific achievements.

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