

TRAILER LIFE

FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

APRIL 2013

Livability Reviews

Starcraft Travel Star | **Winnebago's** SunnyBrook Raven | **Augusta** Flex

Clearing the Air
About Nitrogen-
Filled Tires

10 FAMILY FRIENDLY AMUSEMENT PARKS

Cast Away
on North Carolina's Outer Banks

SPAM Museum
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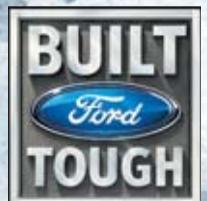
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THE NEW
2013 F-150**

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On the cover: Explore the country in style and comfort with Ford's F-150 EcoBoost and Starcraft Travel Star 294 RESA. Photo by Rich Cox.





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Seat of the Pants

Future Developments



Every issue of *Trailer Life* is filled with articles that enhance the RV lifestyle, and this volume holds some features that deserve particular attention. We've gone on the road for a couple of great stories. One of my favorites is Kathy Cabrera's look at roller coaster parks across the USA. These 10 great American amusement parks full of rides, fun and games on Cabrera's tour are perfect destinations for RVers. All have resorts or campgrounds on the premises or are close to top-quality facilities; and all offer excitement and enjoyment for people of all ages. Another great feature for the vagabond in all of us is Alan Rider's tale of the Outer Banks Byway in North Carolina. This hauntingly beautiful part of the country is blown by the wind and has been witness to some of our nation's earliest colonial history.

We have also gone underneath the trailer for a couple of maintenance procedures. Jeff Johnston gives us a step-by-step look at how to give a trailer's chassis a lift up from the axles, allowing for more ground clearance, and do it in a safe and uncomplicated manner. Author Tom Morr reminds us (and shows us how on a Lippert Super Lube axle) that inspecting and repacking wheel bearings on a regular basis, and keeping them well greased, can prevent major problems on the road.

Trailer reviews are always a big part of the magazine. The Augusta Flex AF-34RS fifth-wheel and Sunnybrook Raven (by Winnebago) model 3300CK fifth-wheel trailer write-ups in this issue are complemented by a test of the 2013 Starcraft Travel Star 294 RESA travel trailer and Ford F-150 EcoBoost Lariat 4x4 SuperCrew. This truck and trailer paired up beautifully on the road and in campgrounds to make a great combo for weekend — and longer — getaways.

This particular volume is also special in that I am now taking on a new role as a contributing editor, which will allow me more freedom to be directly involved in testing vehicles and trailers, and to continue to work closely with the publisher and contributing authors in technical-article development. A familiar face will continue writing this column — *Trailer Life* Publisher Bob Livingston. So while some things change, the good things, thankfully, remain much the same. And so will this magazine. You will continue to get a *Trailer Life* magazine that is continually growing and getting better.

— Stuart Bourdon, editor-in-chief

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INSIDE

For more of Alan Rider's "Scenic Route Series," check out www.trailerlife.com for his weekly blog (Scenic Route) about the lesser-known but more adventurous of America's highways and byways he explores by RV.



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Trailer Life (ISSN #0041-0780) is published monthly by GS Media & Events (a division of Good Sam Enterprises, LLC), 3300 Fernbrook Lane N #200, Minneapolis, MN 55447. Periodicals postage paid at Plymouth, MN 55447 and additional mailing offices. The annual subscription rate is \$15.97 per year in the U.S. For Canadian & International subscriptions, add \$12 per year. U.S. funds only.

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

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

Customer Service:
Email trailerlife@cdsfulfillment.com or call 800-825-6861 or Visit www.trailerlife.com part of the RV.NET family

Printed in the United States.

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Map It

We love the “Scenic Route” series and have been following some of your route suggestions from *Trailer Life* and *MotorHome* magazines for years. The Crooked Road in Virginia is a great example. It would be helpful if you would include a map with the articles; that would give us a place to start when we consult the road map.
Ted Brandley, Summerfield, Florida



Traveling in Alaska

Great article on traveling Alaska’s Richardson Highway by Lisa Densmore in February’s issue. I’d like to point out one thing since we prefer to rent a motorhome after flying in to Anchorage. We have done this several times to visit different areas in Alaska, and off-season rates can be quite reasonable. However, the rental companies will not allow you to drive their motorhomes on gravel roads like the Richardson, only on paved ones.

Pete Wellenstein, Huntington Beach, California



Easy Going

How timely was your February issue! I enjoyed Stuart Bourdon’s article on the Lance 2185. I am contemplating buying the trailer and trying to decide between the models with the fold-up bed (couch) you tested, or the permanent bed. Truthfully, how comfortable was that flip-down bed? Did the crease hit you in the middle of the back? We will be spending a lot of time in it and if it is going to affect my sleep, I definitely want to go with the permanent bed. I do like the flip-up couch, though — really opens it up.

Terry Rohde, Watkins, Colorado

While we slept on the flip-down only two nights, we enjoyed a pleasant night’s sleep both evenings and did not encounter any problems with the crease that you refer to. We did, however, use a fairly thick and well-stuffed mattress pad on it for extra comfort, as we do on all our trips.
— Editor

Hands-Free

In January’s “10-Minute Tech” section there is an idea for a Hands-Free

Freshwater Fill Adapter. I would exercise caution in the use of this idea. When a water hose is connected to the water tank by a threaded adapter, a hydraulic system is developed. The usual 80-PSI street-water pressure can be multiplied by a huge factor (which can be calculated by dividing the surface area of the tank by the cross-sectional area of the hose). If neglected, the tank — which is usually plastic — can expand like a balloon and possibly tear loose from the trailer, snap attaching straps or even develop cracks and split open. Once the tank is filled all the way and there is no air left, the air holes will be filled with water.

The hose pressure may be reduced somewhat by the water leaking out through air holes but it will not stop a disastrous ending unless the total area of the air holes is greater than the area of the inlet. It is safer to just shove the hose in a little way so that it will pop out on its own should the tank get full when left unattended. I became aware of this through an unfortunate personal experience.

Mike Harrie, via email

Mike, you’re right — it was assumed that the user will not run the water very fast and will shut off the water when the air vents in the adapter tip and filler began to spit water. If the owner forces 80 PSI into the filler,

the tank will likely rupture. You are also right in saying someone has to pay close attention when using this adapter. — Editor

Smooth Out the Bumps

Regarding Tim Walton’s article *Pin Point Improvements* in January’s issue, I called Reese about the pin box and was told that the company doesn’t recommend using this pin box with a sliding hitch. A stationary hitch might need to be purchased, thus not making it a viable option.

Robert Tolratz, via email

Robert, you’d use the pin box instead of the sliding hitch, not both. The point is to add more clearance, so you should choose one or the other.

— L.W. 🗨️

f FACEBOOK POLL

Where is your dream summer vacation destination?

32% Yellowstone National Park

24% Alaska

13% Disney’s Fort Wilderness

8% Utah

5% Glacier National Park

18% Other

TALK TO US!

Write to: *Trailer Life*, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001 or email info@trailerlife.com. Please include your full name and location.

PHOTOS BY GUY SELBERT



An ancient relief of a stylized turtle at the Jeffers Petroglyphs is still held as a sacred symbol by Native American visitors to the site today. (Right) Site supervisor Joy Rathman holds a mirror and board used by conservators to reflect light at a low angle across the carvings to make them easier to see.



Minnesota's Jeffers Petroglyphs

Carvings tell a story that spans 7,000 years

by Pamela Selbert

Jeffers Petroglyphs, located on 160 acres in southwestern Minnesota, includes some 4,000-5,000 images carved onto a broad, pink stone outcrop. The slightly domed rock face was so different from its prairie surroundings that early Native Americans considered it sacred. The belief that it is a link between the physical and spiritual worlds continues today, and Jeffers Petroglyphs, now owned by the Minnesota Historical Society, is still used by Native Americans for religious ceremonies.

It's one of the oldest such "living" sites in the country, with the first carvings made around 7,000 years ago. Many of these earliest petroglyphs represent bison and "atlatts" — throwing sticks used for hunting long before bows and arrows were developed. Other images, such as

deer, thunderbirds, turtles and humans may have been created as recently as 250 years ago.

Historically, the landscape was covered with tall-grass prairie, though over the last century-and-a-half, that has been largely replaced with farms and a scattering of small towns. But a decade or so ago the historical society, which had purchased the site from landowner Warren Jeffers in 1966, restored 80 acres to prairie, and now dozens of species of native plants again flourish there, swaying in the wind like waves on a green sea.

And, as it has for thousands of years, the stone outcrop, 50 yards wide and 300 yards long, somewhat elevated over its surroundings, once more appears to drift on a turbulent grassy sea.

The beautiful multihued stone,

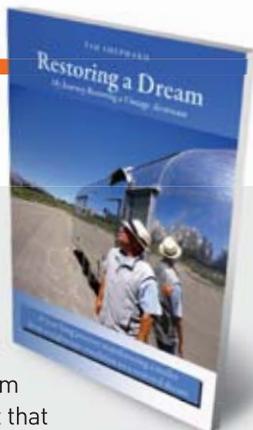
called "Sioux quartzite," is colored by iron oxide and ranges from white to red to lavender-brown to reddish-purple. Part of a 23-mile ridge, it's some of the oldest bedrock in the state, deposited as sand more than 1.6 billion years ago. Visitors today see the sand ripples and mudflats that hardened into quartzite, and also the scars left on the stone by the mile-high glacier that scoured through 14,000 years ago.

The site includes a visitor center with exhibits about Native American culture and programs geared toward children. The center is open daily except Tuesdays and Wednesdays between Memorial Day and Labor Day. A .4-mile trail leads to the petroglyphs (golf-cart rides available), where a roped path across the rock allows visitors to see the carvings without walking on them.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Jeffers Petroglyphs: 507-628-5591, www.mnhs.org/jefferspetroglyphs





Restoring a Dream

Tim Shephard, creator and host of The Vintage Airstream Podcast, a biweekly podcast that discusses Airstream Travel Trailer restoration, repair and travel, has released *Restoring a Dream*. In the book, Shephard recounts his stories about tent camping in California's redwoods, rebuilding two vintage Airstreams and his 2,400-mile journey to pick up his 1960 vintage Airstream. He includes advice on how to choose the right trailer, "recover" it and restore it. Available in paperback and Kindle formats at www.amazon.com, Nook version at www.barnesandnoble.com and the Apple iBookstore in iTunes. www.restoringadream.com

Interior Department Jewell

President Obama has picked Recreational Equipment Inc.'s (REI) Chief Executive Officer Sally Jewell as Secretary of the Interior. Jewell has earned national recognition for her support of outdoor recreation and habitat conservation. The American Recreation Coalition stated, "The recreation community is delighted...Sally is widely respected for her intelligence, her passion and leadership skills. She has supported use of the outdoors as a tool for better health and for stronger, sustainable communities." Jewell has worked to connect younger and ethnically diverse Americans to share the legacy of parks, forests and other outdoor treasures.



RV Shows & Rallies

Spring has sprung and it's showtime! Join up with like-minded people at RV shows and rallies to see the newest RVs on display, hear from industry experts and have fun while making new friends.



April

5-7: Kitchener RV Show

Kitchener Memorial Auditorium, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada

Seminars, entertainment and displays.
888-331-8885, www.rvshowkitchener.ca

12-14: Progressive Insurance 20th Annual Rhode Island RV & Camping Show & Sale

Rhode Island Convention Center, Providence

RV educational seminars, giveaways, camping-vacation planning.
800-441-0013, www.gsevents.com

19-21: RV SuperSaver Show

Lee County Sports Complex, Ft. Myers, Florida

813-741-0488, www.frvta.org/rv-shows

19-21: Washington State Evergreen RV Show

Evergreen State Fairgrounds, Monroe, Washington

Fifteen of Puget Sound's RV dealerships will have more than 400 travel trailers, motorhomes, fifth-wheels, campers and vans on display and for purchase.
206-783-5957, www.westlakepromo.com

May

8-11: Progressive Insurance Great Milwaukee RV Fair

Wisconsin State Fair Grounds, West Allis

800-441-0013, www.gsevents.com

24-26: RV Learning Weekend

Ol' MacDonald's Resort, Buffalo Lake in Alberta, Canada

All RVers—and those contemplating buying one—are welcome to enjoy a weekend of making new friends and attending seminars. Topics include towing tips, solar inverters, preventive maintenance, RV plumbing and insurance.
888-858-8787, www.rvda-alberta.org

June

13-16: The Camping World/Good Sam Rally

New York State Fairgrounds, Syracuse, New York

Entertainment includes performances by Wayne Newton and country-music artist and actress Reba, Food Network's Bob Blumer cooking demonstrations, seminars, exhibitors, Empire State dog show, veterans' parade and exciting optional tours including to Niagara Falls.
www.therally.com



Happy Campers

Ocean Canyon Properties has eight privately owned membership resorts in the southern United States. Its newest acquisition in Robertsdale, Alabama, Styx River Resort and RV Park, is located near the Gulf of Mexico on the 41-mile Styx River. In addition to 150 RV campsites, members can rent one of the 30 cabins and cottages. The resort offers activity programs, indoor and outdoor pools, a restaurant, a large clubhouse with an adjoining outdoor patio, a children's playground and nature trails.

For information on membership, contact Ocean Canyon Properties at 866-850-8488, www.oceancanyon.com

Forest Service Fee-Free Days

The U.S. Forest Service is offering the public fee-free days for 2013. "Fee-free days are an ideal time to recapture your youth by taking your family to the outdoors," said Robin Morgan, deputy director of the agency's Recreation, Heritage and Volunteer Resources. "More importantly, it's an ideal time to introduce the young people in your life to an exceptional experience they'll remember forever."

The agency is entrusted with 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands, and those same lands provide 20 percent of the nation's clean water supply. The fee-free program supports President Obama's America's Great Outdoors, a promise to future generations, initiative. Pack up your RV and enjoy the great outdoors!

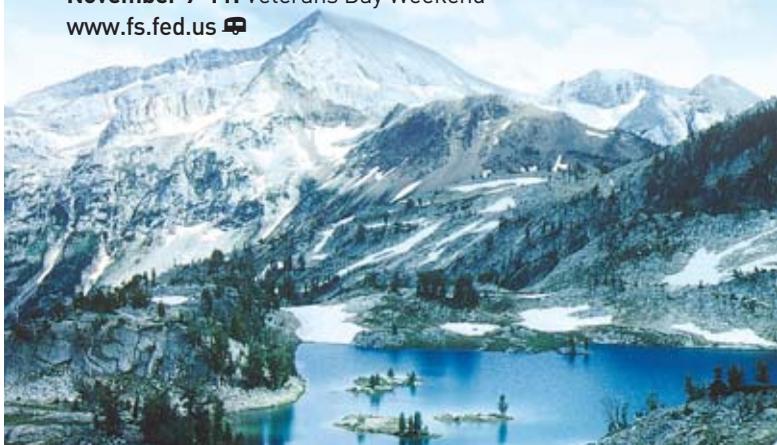
Fee-free days for 2013 are:

June 8: National Get Outdoors Day

September 28: National Public Lands Day

November 9-11: Veterans Day Weekend

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Successful Complaint Resolution

» From some of the mail we receive regarding cases published in this column, it appears there are sometimes misconceptions about our purpose, our objectives and overall what we can actually do for our readership.

Our ultimate goal is to bring both parties (the consumer and the company) together in an effort to voluntarily and equitably resolve their differences. There is no attempt to blame or to blemish someone's good name; rather, it is our intention to provide a forum for both sides to be heard. If a complainant has already retained legal counsel or has filed suit in court, we will not take action.

When a reader complaint is received, we attach a cover letter stating the above philosophy and request to that company or entity which is the focus of the complaint, to take one more look at our reader's situation in the interest of fairness. In many instances, the company will grant a complainant's request for reasons of goodwill alone.

After 60 days, if we have not heard back from the company or entity, we will send a reminder letter. Most companies respond, even if the outcome is negative.

All letters we receive are considered for publication. Those chosen for the column are also condensed and edited for brevity. Great pains are taken to ensure that the essence of the complaint is accurately portrayed.

For those who wish to write to us a letter of complaint

about a dispute or a disagreement within the realm of RVing, the following suggestions may further ensure the best review and understanding of your situation. It should also speed up or improve your chance of a resolution.

The most important element in the process is a well-written letter, which should spell out your issue(s) in simple terms and include what you would consider a fair resolution. The tone of your complaint can also be crucial, as many resolutions from the business world are made on a goodwill basis. Letters must be typed and be no more than two pages. Include your name, address and phone number.

Indicate the date, location, name and phone number of the business or entity with which you have the disagreement. Succinctly detail what went wrong, with whom you tried to resolve the issue and what you want done to correct the problem. Reasonable expectations should prevail here. Do not include laundry lists of everything that ever went wrong, and please refrain from editorializing about your travel itinerary, unless it directly relates to your complaint.

Finally, we'd appreciate a follow-up if you receive a resolution, be it positive or negative, from the company. This way, we can give credit where credit is due, and detail a situation that may be of interest to all of our readers.

If you have a case for *RV Action Line*, send letters to *Trailer Life RV Action Line*, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, California 93001, or you can contact us by email at RVActionLine@trailerlife.com. Include copies (do not send originals) of any relevant bills and correspondence, as well as a self-addressed, stamped envelope. — **The Editors**

Flexing Front Cap

» We purchased a 2009 Keystone Cougar fifth-wheel from a dealer in St. Louis, Missouri, in April 2008. Since then, that dealer has gone out of business. We have really enjoyed our camper. However, last summer when we were heading home, friends called us and asked what happened to the front cap of our fifth-wheel. We were unaware of anything, so we started looking in the mirrors and noticed what they were talking about — the Cougar's front cap was flexing as we drove down the road. Our first thought was that it got hot and would be okay, but we are still having trouble with the front cap. It doesn't matter what the temperature is or how fast we are traveling. We have not run into anything, nor has anything ever hit it since we have owned the trailer.

We contacted Keystone directly and

the company stated that we needed to contact a dealer, so we did. We took videos and photos and gave them to the dealer, which they forwarded to Keystone. We received an email from the dealer and it stated that the cap naturally has some flex in it, and that at this time there was nothing that could be done. Please let us know if there is something else we can do.

**Dale and Kimberly Gerding,
Union, Missouri**

THE COMPANY RESPONDED

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Gerding,
RV Action Line contacted Keystone

RV Company regarding the front cap flex on your 2009 Keystone Cougar. After reviewing the file, I phoned and spoke with Mrs. Gerding. She provided a video demonstrating the issue. We forwarded the video to our vendor and they deemed it to be normal. Therefore, Keystone RV Company will not be participating in a repair or replacement of the front cap.

We stand ready to assist you with answering technical questions and locating dealers and/or repair centers should the need arise.

**Christy Anglemyer,
owner relations specialist,
Keystone RV Company**

TAKE ACTION » After exhausting all other resources without success, please forward information with copies of appropriate bills and correspondence to *RV Action Line*, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, California 93001. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope. No phone calls, please.

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Lounging Around

Portable campground furniture for outdoor comfort and style

Rving is all about going places and enjoying the traveling lifestyle, but once you get to where you are going, it's nice to be able to relax and take a load off your feet. We found some examples of portable camp furniture that are comfortable, affordable and can be easily folded up and packed away in the storage compartments, making them ideal choices for the RV lifestyle.

Kelty Loveseat



Cozy-Up
There's room for two in Kelty's Loveseat with a durable steel frame.

CHAIRS

TravelChair Lounge Lizard

Known for its superb construction and durability, TravelChair's Lounge Lizard (MSRP \$177) is super breathable, quick drying and boasts a mildew-resistant mesh fabric that stays cooler on hot days. The Lounge Lizard combines the portability of a folding chair with the all-out comfort of a classic, full-length chaise lounge. Like a traditional lounge, the



GCI Outdoor PackSeat Stool

Lounge Lizard offers variable reclining positions, full-body support and a cushioned pillow. But unlike old-school loungers, it uses lightweight synthetic fabric to create a cooler, more breathable and weather-resistant chair. The Lounge Lizard weighs 21 pounds and has a 300-pound capacity. www.travelchair.com

GCI Outdoor PackSeat Stool

The PackSeat Portable Stool (MSRP \$25) is a quick and easy way to "take a load off" just about anywhere. The patented Shock-Cord Construction snaps the legs into place for setup in seconds. For added strength and grounded leg stability, the PackSeat features a patented Anti-Splay Reinforcement Panel. The PackSeat is constructed of sturdy, powder-coated aluminum and 600-denier polyester. It includes a carry bag with closure strap, buckle and carabiner for hands-free portability. Weighing in at only 26 ounces, the PackSeat

GCI Outdoor Luxury Camp Bed



supports up to 250 pounds; yet measures just 13 by 13 by 21 inches when open and folds down to 15 by 4 by 4 inches.
www.integrityoutdoorbrands.com

Kelty Loveseat

Cozy-up in this comfortable two-seat folding chair (MSRP \$89.95). With built-in adjustable beverage holders and a transport sack, this chair is light and easy to tote around. Constructed of a steel frame and 600-denier polyester mini-ripstop fabric, the Loveseat offers couples adjustable arms and two adjustable beverage holders. The Loveseat weighs 14 pounds, 6 ounces, and has a 500-pound capacity.
www.kelty.com

COT

GCI Outdoor Luxury Camp Bed

The Luxury Camp Bed (MSRP \$99) features a five-position reclining backrest and anti-sink feet for stability on soft or loose terrain. Constructed of a steel frame, tufted cushion mattress and tweed polyester, the Luxury Camp Bed is as durable as it is comfortable. It includes a cot caddy storage pocket and integrated carry handle. This versatile camp furnishing weighs 20 pounds and supports up to 330 pounds. The unit measures 78 by 30 by 10 inches when open and folds to 30.5 by 32.5 by 5 inches.
www.integrityoutdoorbrands.com

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Kelty's large, easy-folding Soft Top

Table (MSRP \$38.95) has plenty of room for eating or for a game of chess or checkers on its printed boardgame. This table measures 27 by 27 inches with a height of 27 inches. It boasts four mesh-bottom beverage holders and two side mesh pockets — perfect for storing playing cards. The table weighs a mere 5.6 pounds, but boasts a 100-pound capacity and includes a transport sack.
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Water Meets Land and Sky

The Apostle Islands teem with natural beauty

The seemingly endless expanse of Lake Superior's blue water laps at the shores of 21 islands that fall under the aegis of Apostle Islands National Lakeshore. All of these landmasses teem with natural beauty. Some islands feature the remnants of the communities that used to exist on these remote Wisconsin isles; others are part of a recently designated national wilderness area; and all of these islands lend themselves to waterborne exploration, their protected bays and pristine beaches beckoning to boaters of nearly every stripe. As intriguing as the Lakeshore's 21 islands are to adventurers and campers, however, visitors need not cross water to experience this destination, since the Lakeshore also lays claim to 12 miles of mainland.

As visitors hike the trails on the islands through mostly untrammelled terrain, they will find it difficult to believe that communities of people once inhabited the islands, since so few signs of the people who farmed, logged, quarried and fished remain

today. Yet hikers who are interested in such artifacts as the remnants of a one-room schoolhouse can find them among all the scenic beauty the islands provide.

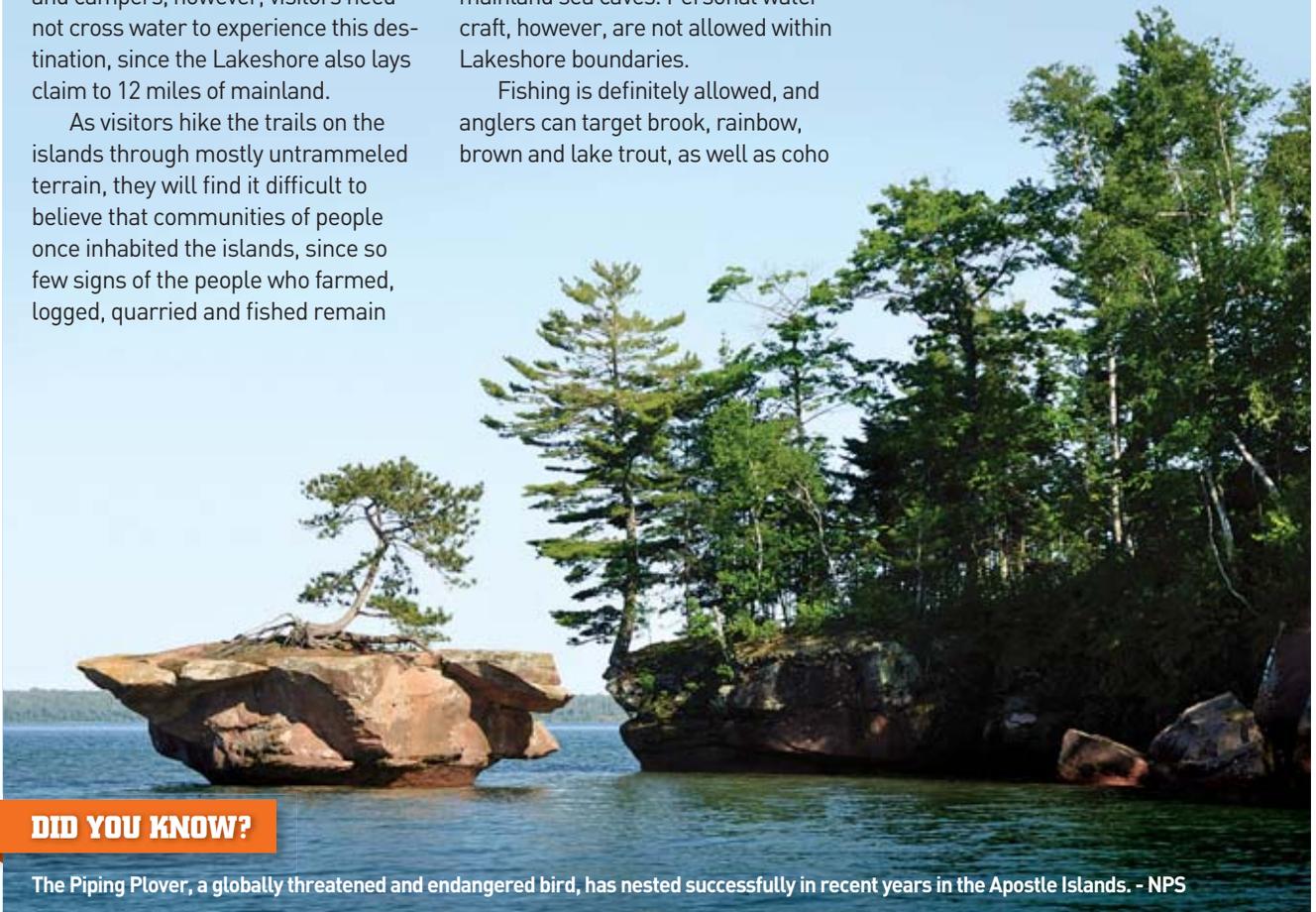
Most visitors to the Lakeshore, however, are likely more interested in the here and now, and that includes sailing and boating. Thirteen of the 21 islands possess public docks, so RVers with their own vessels can tie up to cleats in various locations. Kayaks are becoming increasingly popular within the Lakeshore, and the mainland section features two free launch sites, from which paddlers can explore the mainland sea caves. Personal watercraft, however, are not allowed within Lakeshore boundaries.

Fishing is definitely allowed, and anglers can target brook, rainbow, brown and lake trout, as well as coho

salmon. Hunting and trapping are also allowed between Labor Day and mid-May. And SCUBA divers, after they've checked the conditions (since Lake Superior has famously capricious weather), can explore intriguing underwater rock formations and numerous shipwrecks.

As for camping, 18 of the islands allow overnight stays, and one tent site exists within the mainland section. RVers will find various campgrounds in nearby towns. 📍

Apostle Islands National Lakeshore:
715-779-3397, www.nps.gov/apis



DID YOU KNOW?

The Piping Plover, a globally threatened and endangered bird, has nested successfully in recent years in the Apostle Islands. - NPS



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User Guide

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RVS & ROLLER COASTERS



Ten family friendly finds for amusement-park fun this summer

With summer coming upon us, it's time to plan destinations for a family trip across the country. Whether you're looking for the entertainment of live shows, fun family rides or the thrill-seeking element of wheeling a wind-in-your-face roller coaster ride at speeds you may not even dare in the safety of your own RV, these top 10 finds for fun at amusement parks this summer will get the excitement building for everyone on your trip!

Busch Gardens

Tampa, Florida

As home to the year-round park Busch Gardens (www.buschgardens.com), Tampa, Florida, makes for an ideal destination for amusement-park-bound RV travelers who are looking for a fun visit during the summer, or a respite from the cold

during the winter. The closely located Lazydays RV Park is a partner with Busch Gardens and sells tickets to the park in its office. Between its roller coasters, shows and more than 2,000 animals as one of the largest zoos in North America, Busch Gardens is a pick-your-adventure type park that should appease any member of the family. For the thrill-seekers in the clan, Busch Gardens offers a number of roller coasters — including the Cheetah Hunt — Florida's first triple-launch coaster — and Sheikra, which is a coaster that takes you 200 feet up and then plunges straight down at 70 mph.

Carowinds

Charlotte, North Carolina

If you're RVing through the Southeast, you can't go wrong with rustic family adventure meets thrill rides by stopping at Carowinds

Glenwood Caverns' Cliffhanger, at 7,160 feet, is the highest elevation roller coaster in America. From the top of the coaster, the Colorado River is 1,453 feet below. (Below left) Busch Gardens Florida not only has wild rides like Cheetah Hunt, this adventure park also offers shows and animal attractions.



(www.carowinds.com) in Charlotte, North Carolina.

The Carowinds park thrill experience is provided by 13 roller coasters, including The Intimidator — the tallest, longest, fastest coaster in the Southeast — which takes you on a ride 232 feet high and up to 80 mph. For coaster enthusiasts there's also the Afterburn, the Carolina Cobra and Vortex — a stand-up coaster that takes you on a 50-mph series of loops and drops. And, new for 2013 is Dinosaurs Alive, where more than 30 life-sized animatronic dinosaurs take visitors back to prehistoric times.

There's also Boomerang Bay, a 20-acre water park featuring water slides, a lazy river and a wave pool. And, there's room to camp in your RV right on the park grounds.

"Carowinds Camp Wilderness Resort is a great way to experience the thrills of the park and the fun of the outdoors," said Debby Faille,

campground manager. "The campgrounds are set on 55 wooded acres with amenities like a clubhouse, swimming pool and regular complementary shuttles to the park."

Camp Wilderness features 141 paved, level RV sites with full hookups (water, sewer, electric); and 50 RV sites feature upgraded, 50-amp electric service. Most sites accommodate RVs up to 40 feet in length.

Cedar Point Sandusky, Ohio

If you're planning to be within a few hours of where Ohio, Pennsylvania and New York states meet, stop at Cedar Point (www.cedarpoint.com) in Sandusky, Ohio, located near Lake Erie Shores & Islands. The park's thrilling rides and attractions are within walking distance of Camper Village,

which accommodates a wide variety of campers and RVs, from deluxe sites with electricity, water, sewer and cable, to 112 electric-only sites.

Cedar Point has won the Best Amusement Park in the World Award by *Amusement Today* for the last consecutive 15 years. The park will debut the GateKeeper, the park's first Wing Coaster, in May 2013. It is the 16th roller coaster at Cedar Point and, according to the park, is the longest Wing Coaster at 4,164 feet, and has the longest drop of any Wing Coaster in the world, plummeting riders 164 feet on the first hill. It will also dramatically change the park's front entrance as riders fly directly over the main gate.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE AMUSEMENT PARKS



Amusement Parks

Beyond the hair-raising thrill rides, Cedar Point also makes for a complete family destination with four children's areas, a variety of restaurants to serve even the pickiest eaters and a pristine beach along Lake Erie. The lake is known for its perch and walleye, as well as an array of wildlife, including bald eagles and blue heron.

Dollywood

Pigeon Forge, Tennessee

RV travelers looking for a little music, some splash-time on a hot summer's day in the South, and speed-defying roller coasters will enjoy the diversity of the "Dollywood Experience" (www.dollywood.com) offered by the Dollywood theme park and Dollywood Splash Country. Wild Eagle, the park's first wing roller coaster, debuted in spring 2012 — receiving the Golden Ticket Award the same year (the theme park industry's highest accolade). The park also offers a "Country Fair" area, which features more than 10 rides that the entire family can enjoy, including toddlers. Mature travelers seek out Dollywood for its award-winning live entertainment. Dollywood is also a four-time winner of the Golden Ticket Award for Best Shows. Entertainment features country, bluegrass, classic rock 'n' roll, Southern gospel and more.

While the park offers RV parking, it does not offer onsite RV facilities. Located on Highway 441 just one mile from the entrance to Dollywood is the Foothills RV Park (www.foothillsrvpark



Enjoy some of the world-record 72 hair-raising rides at Cedar Point in Sandusky, Ohio, and then side a short distance to waterfront camping at Camper Village on a Lake Erie peninsula.

andcabins.com), offering all paved roads and campsites, and 30- and 50-amp hookups. Gatlinburg and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park are also only five miles away. The RV park is situated on the Pigeon Forge Parkway Fun Time Trolley Route, offering a leisurely ride to Dollywood as well as nearby famous outlet shopping malls, restaurants and music theaters.

Glenwood Caverns Adventure Park

Glenwood Springs, Colorado

Another theme park hot spot in the Western United States is Glenwood Caverns Adventure Park (www.glenwoodcaverns.com) in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. It offers attractions for all ages with its Iron Mountain Tramway, the Wild West Express family roller coaster, the Mine Wheel ferris wheel ride, a climbing wall, a giant fort-styled maze, a 4D motion theater, laser tag, gemstone sluice box mining, walking cave tours and more.

Thrill-seekers will find the rush they crave with park rides like the longest Alpine Coaster in Colorado; the Giant Canyon Swing, which swings riders out 1,300 feet above the Colorado River in a pneumatically powered, zero-g thrill ride; the Soaring Eagle Zip Ride; and a wild, on-your-belly tour of Glenwood Caverns; and the Historic Fairy Caves.

Additionally, the Cliffhanger, which opened at Glenwood Caverns Adventure Park in 2012, is the highest-elevation roller coaster in America. "The highest part of the 56-foot-tall Cliffhanger Roller Coaster curves alongside the edge of Glenwood Canyon, 1,453 feet above the Roaring Fork and Colorado

River valleys. "It was definitely a big hit last summer, and we anticipate it will be again in 2013," said Steve Beckley, who owns Glenwood Caverns Adventure Park with his wife, Jeanne.

For RV travelers, accommodations are available at the nearby Glenwood Canyon Resort (glenwoodcanyonresort.com). The resort has several handy amenities including a free shuttle into Glenwood Springs, free Wi-Fi connections throughout the resort, a bar and grill open in summer, a convenience store, boat launch and access to adventure activities including rafting, biking, ropes course and zip-line.

Hersheypark

Hershey, Pennsylvania

Located in central Pennsylvania just outside Harrisburg, Hersheypark (www.hersheypark.com) makes for a "sweet" destination — if not only for its chocolate-filled aroma from the moment you pull your RV into town, then for its variety of fun options for every member of the family. Such options include more than 75 rides and attractions (including 12 roller coasters), The Boardwalk at Hersheypark (a water area), more than 20 kiddie rides, live entertainment daily, games, food and shopping. Hersheypark also offers ZooAmerica North American Wildlife Park, which is home to more than 200 animals native to the continent. Skyrush is the newest roller coaster at Hersheypark. It's the tallest (200 feet), fastest (75-plus mph) and longest (3,600 feet) coaster in the park.

Hershey Highmeadow Campground is the official campground of Hersheypark and celebrates its 50th anniversary this

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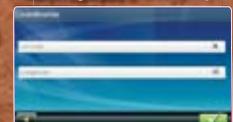
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Amusement Parks

summer. It includes exclusive benefits such as free shuttle service to/from the park and competitive prices on tickets. The 55-acre campground offers more than 300 open and shaded sites, including 27 cabins; full-hook-up sites with electric, water, sewer and cable television; partial sites with electric, water and cable television; and no hook-up tent sites. Pull-through campsites are also available.

Holiday World

Santa Claus, Indiana

Located in a town named Santa Claus, how could Indiana's Holiday World & Splashin' Safari (www.holidayworld.com) not be a fun destination? Living up to the promise of its name, as well as respecting the modest travel budget of today's cost-conscious family travelers, Holiday World was recognized by *Consumers Digest* as a "best value park" — noted for such perks as free soft drinks, free sunscreen, free parking, free Wi-Fi, and no extra charge for Splashin' Safari admission. The park offers a range of roller coasters — including the Voyager, a wooden roller coaster on which riders experience 24.2 seconds of zero-g, one of the steepest drops on any wooden coaster and 90-degree banking at highway speeds. There are also rides for families and young children, shows and a full water park (featuring the Mammoth water

coaster, the world's longest water coaster, according to Holiday World). In 2013, the visitors can also experience the new RhinoBlaster — a complex of four in-the-dark water slides.

Holiday World is located adjacent to Lake Rudolph Campground & RV Resort (www.LakeRudolph.com), a scenic, family oriented campground providing free shuttle transportation to the park.

Silver Dollar City

Branson, Missouri

Silver Dollar City (www.silverdollarcity.com) in Branson, Missouri, is a theme park with 30 rides and attractions, with five roller coasters, including the explosive launch roller coaster PowderKeg and the multilooping roller coaster WildFire. Launching this season is the Outlaw Run that sends passengers soaring through the Ozark Mountains on a ground-breaking wood coaster. According to park representatives, the new coaster features several firsts, including the world's steepest drop on a wood coaster (more than a 16-story, 162-foot drop at 81 degrees, nearly vertical); the only wood coaster to twist upside down; a record-breaking three inversions including a 720-degree (double) barrel roll; and the second fastest wood coaster in the world.

The park also features an RV park and campground, The Wilderness at Silver Dollar City (www.thewildernesslogcabins.com). The Wilderness is

Idaho's Silverwood Theme Park opens for the season in May with a new ride: A 104-foot-tall thrill ride with a cylindrical-shaped vehicle that seats 24 people, wearing only harnesses, who sit facing outward with legs dangling.



located near Silver Dollar City with a free shuttle to the park and has 150 RV and tent sites and 40 hand-hewn log cabins.

Silverwood Theme Park

Athol, Idaho

If you're traveling through the Pacific Northwest this summer, cool off in the water park or enjoy high-speed thrill rides at the Silverwood Theme Park (www.silverwoodthemepark.com), located in the northern panhandle of Idaho (just north of Coeur d'Alene). With more than 216 acres featuring 65 rides, including roller coasters and Boulder Beach waterpark, it's the region's largest theme park. Among its rides are four major roller coasters — two steel, two wooden coasters. Silverwood and Boulder Beach are covered under one admission price.

Along with the park's own 132-space full-hookup RV park, it is set in the scenic Idaho forest surrounded by numerous lakes, rivers and mountains. RV park visitors have quick, easy access to Silverwood and Boulder Beach via an underground tunnel.

Wonderland Amusement Park

Amarillo, Texas

Headed down historic U.S. Route 66 through Texas this summer? If so, in addition to such notable Amarillo, Texas, tourist sites like the Cadillac Ranch, program your GPS to visit Wonderland Amusement Park (www.wonderlandpark.com). It's a sure bet for fun times with its thrill, fun-for-all and water rides. It is home to four roller coasters, including the double-loop Texas Tornado — as well as offering more than 60 rides and attractions in the park, and miniature golf. Another fun family fact — the park itself has been owned and operated by the same family for more than 60 years. It was founded in 1951, a dream realized by Paul Road.

Nearby RV-accommodating campgrounds include the Amarillo Best Wonderland RV Park among others in Amarillo, such as Palo Duro RV Park, Oasis RV Resort, Overnight RV Park, Fort Amarillo RV Resort and Amarillo Ranch RV Park. 🚐

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The Scenic Route:

CASTAWAYS FOR A DAY

Living out our desert island daydreams along North Carolina's Outer Banks

article and photos by Alan Rider



In an increasingly intrusive modern world full of thumping car stereos, inane reality TV stars and pesky telemarketers, I often find myself daydreaming of being stranded on the tranquil shores of some uninhabited island. Now, as the 24-foot skiff that's just deposited me and my family on this lonely beach disappears from view, I realize that I've just gotten my wish.

As we begin ambling along through the gentle surf, it slowly dawns on me

that I'm not the only one who indulges in these secret desert island fantasies. From *Robinson Crusoe* to the reality game show "Survivor," you don't have to look far to find examples of how this notion has become an enduring part of popular culture.

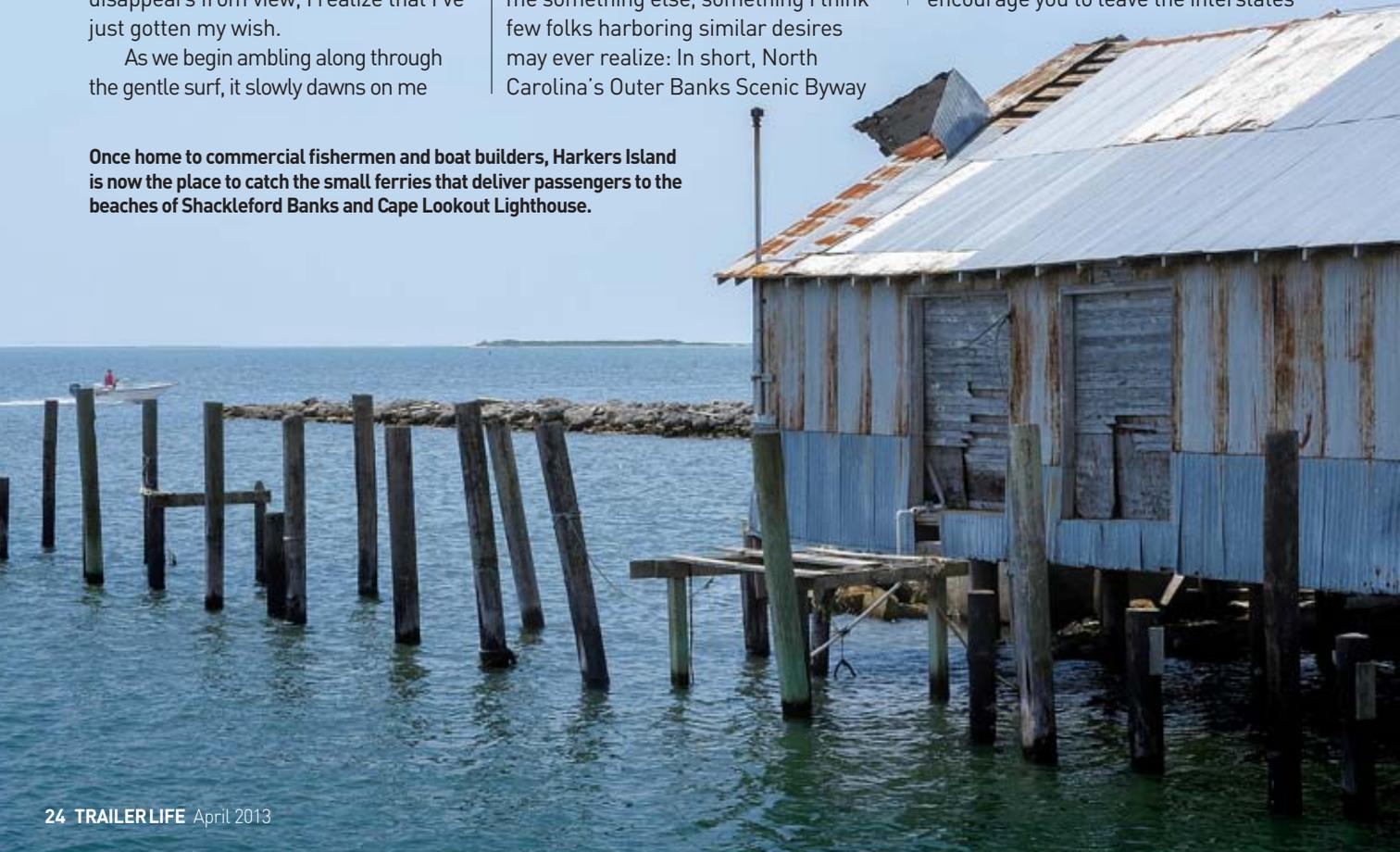
By the time the same small ferry returned to pick us up later that afternoon, the experience had taught me something else, something I think few folks harboring similar desires may ever realize: In short, North Carolina's Outer Banks Scenic Byway

is one of the rare places in this country where anyone can turn their castaway daydreams into reality.

Robinson, Eat Your Heart Out

With our "Scenic Route Series" celebrating the Twentieth Anniversary of the National Scenic Byways Program in 2012 (www.byways.org), we hope to encourage you to leave the interstates

Once home to commercial fishermen and boat builders, Harkers Island is now the place to catch the small ferries that deliver passengers to the beaches of Shackleford Banks and Cape Lookout Lighthouse.



(Left to right) Squeezing our 60-foot rig onto the North Carolina ferries was easier than we expected. Both the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse and its keeper's quarters were moved a half-mile inland in 1999. Wild horses freely roam Shackleford Banks.



behind and experience life in the slow lane. In this case, that detour will bring you to a largely unpeopled landscape where you and yours can get "lost" on what feels like a deserted island.

Stretching along the North Carolina coast from Beaufort to Manteo, it's possible to travel the 138-mile length of the Outer Banks Scenic Byway in a single day. From personal experience, though, I can tell you that taking that approach would mean you'd miss many of the most inspiring views of empty beaches, historic seaports and stately lighthouses along the way, to say nothing of the fascinating history of this area, from the legendary pirates to dramatic rescues

of shipwrecked sailors.

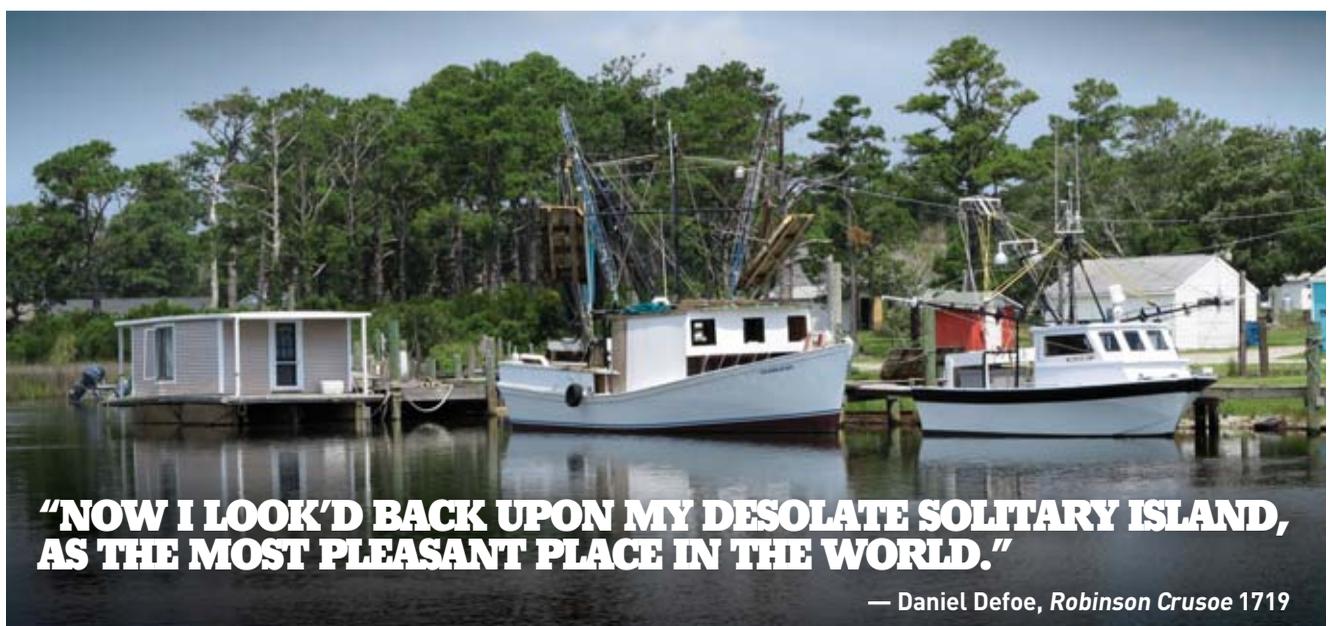
What's more, this castaway adventure is also ideally suited to RV travel. Call me spoiled but, as far as I'm concerned, being able to have my fill of this Robinson Crusoe experience and still come home to our air-conditioned 37-foot Kodiak trailer—complete with a well-stocked fridge and comfy beds—is really the only way to be marooned.

Lost But Not Forgotten

When it comes to being stranded on the Outer Bank's sandy shores—intentionally or not—we certainly weren't alone. In fact, the first English settlement in North America put down roots near here on the

northern tip of Roanoke Island in 1585.

To learn the story of those 117 colonists—and their mysterious disappearance—we headed to the waterfront amphitheater at the Fort Raleigh National Historic Site for The Lost Colony (252-473-6000, www.thelostcolony.org), an open-air drama that's been staged here for more than 75 years. Performed on the site of the settlement near Manteo, the play tells the story of the trials and tribulations these early settlers faced with elaborate costumes and impressive special effects. Arriving early to enjoy the al fresco dinner we packed and the show's backstage tour added greatly to our enjoyment.





(Left) *The Lost Colony* tells the story of the mysterious disappearance of the first English settlers in the United States. (Right) The play's backstage tour is highly recommended. (Below) The first rays of morning sun break on the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse.

Discovering Pirate Booty

While no one knows the exact fate of those colonists, there's an extensive record of many others who've landed on these sandy shores. To learn more we spent several afternoons wandering through two of North Carolina's excellent state-run maritime museums.

The Graveyard of the Atlantic Museum (252-986-2995, www.graveyardoftheatlantic.com) next to the ferry docks in Hatteras tells the story of the hundreds of sailing vessels and steamers that have fallen victim to the strong currents and tricky shoals that give the waters offshore their ominous nickname. The branch of the state maritime museum in Beaufort (252-728-7317, www.ncmaritimemuseums.com/beaufort.html) gave us a firsthand look at another era of the Outer Banks' colorful history, in the form of the many artifacts raised from the *Queen Anne's Revenge*, flagship of notorious pirate Edward Teach—better known as Blackbeard—which ran aground nearby in 1718.

Just Horsing Around

Even though pirates haven't plied these waters for 300 years, there's still plenty of treasure to be had on the beaches of the Outer Banks Scenic Byway. Heading north out of Beaufort we made a detour to Harkers Island, located just west of the Cape Lookout National Seashore (252-728-2250, www.nps.gov/caloc). While most visitors come here to catch a ride on one of the many small

ferries that provide the only access to the historic Cape Lookout Lighthouse, we charted a slightly different course in search of some of the area's more reclusive inhabitants.

No one knows for sure where the 100-plus wild horses that make the nine-mile-long island known as Shackleford Banks home came from, though it's widely assumed they're descended from Spanish mustangs that washed up on these shores centuries ago after a shipwreck. While the horses can be hard to find, we were lucky enough to stumble upon a small band just minutes after hopping off the ferry that dropped us on the beach.

We spent the next three hours admiring the herd as the horses slowly munched their way through the patches of native grasses that sustain them. That is, when we weren't being distracted by the seashells littering the beach in quantities that would put any seaside curio shop to shame.

Don't Lose Your Head

Though we knew our experience on Shackleford Banks would be hard to top, we bravely pushed north to Cedar Island to catch the first of two ferries that would take us to the low barrier islands that make up the Cape Hatteras National Seashore (252-473-2111,



PHOTO BY WILLIAM H. RUSS



FOR MORE DETAILS on this and other Scenic Route adventures, check out the Trailer Life website at www.TrailerLife.com.



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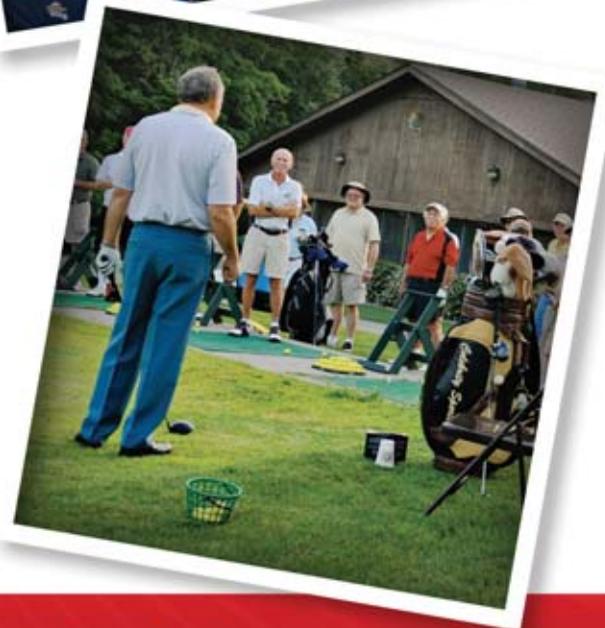
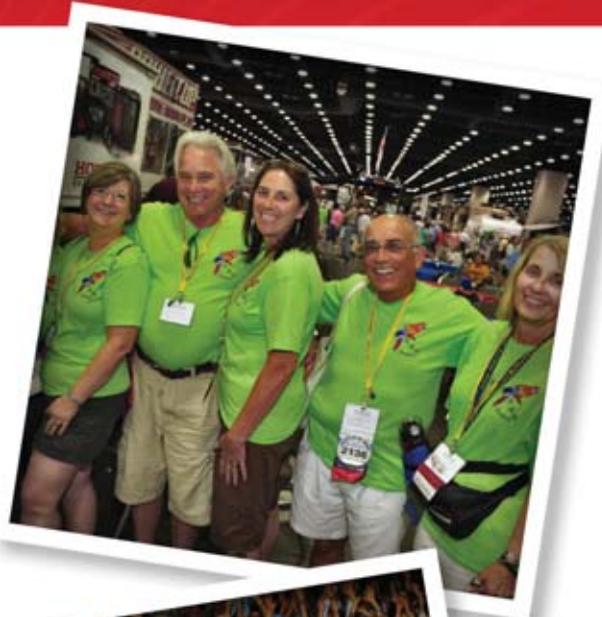
Ranging in size from 50 rigs to over 500, Samborees are RV get-togethers planned by state and provincial directors, making each Samboree unique. Along with fun and games, many Samborees include RV exhibits and educational seminars. Most states and provinces have a Samboree each year!

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www.nps.gov/caha). While our rig is big enough that I generally think twice about squeezing it into tight spaces, the deckhands on the 220-foot Swan Quarter guided us onto the ship without anyone breaking a sweat.

The fact that 15-mile-long Ocracoke Island has no road access made taking the ferry a necessity, but the two-hour ride across Pamlico Sound turned out to be a treat in itself. The ship's second level offered clean, comfortable (and blessedly air-conditioned) public spaces with booths where we enjoyed a picnic, while the outdoor decks provided a sunny spot to watch the constant parade of passing shrimp boats.

After disembarking at the docks in the quaint village of Ocracoke, we took time to poke around in some of the local shops like Teach's Hole (252-928-1718, www.teachshole.com), purveyor of all sorts of pirate paraphernalia and home to an interesting Blackbeard exhibit. The need to catch the next ferry meant we didn't have time to explore the trail to

Springer's Point, one of Edward Teach's favorite anchorages and the place where, outnumbered by sailors from the Royal Navy, the infamous pirate quite literally lost his head.

Happenings On Hatteras

A 40-minute ferry ride carried us, and our rig, from the northern tip of Ocracoke to Hatteras Island, the most developed of the barrier islands along the Outer Banks Scenic Byway. More than 50 miles long, this narrow spit of sand is home to a number of small communities that offer some of the more useful trappings of modern life, including a greater selection of RV parks, restaurants, stores and gas stations. That said, there's still plenty to appeal to those looking to ditch civilization for awhile, including Cape Hatteras National Seashore's miles of empty, unspoiled beaches that lie hidden on the other side of the tall sea-oat-studded dunes lining the ocean side of Highway 12.

To get a bird's-eye view of this portion of the Outer Banks, we headed for the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse. Built in 1870 to warn vessels of the treacherous waters of Diamond Shoals, the 20-story black-and-white-striped lighthouse — the tallest in the United States — offers an unparalleled panorama of the Atlantic Ocean, Pamlico Sound and the mile-wide island itself. While our teenage son, Schuyler, sprinted to the top of the

WHEN YOU GO

Exploring the Outer Banks Scenic Byway is a relatively straightforward affair. Traveling from the south as we did, pick up U.S. Route 70 near the port of Beaufort and follow it north to the Cedar Island ferry landing. At the end of the two-hour ferry ride to Ocracoke Island, you'll find yourself on North Carolina Highway 12 which, after another 40-minute ferry ride from Ocracoke to Hatteras, takes you all the way up to the byway's northern terminus at the intersection of U.S. Route 64 to Manteo. Most turns, including the detour to Harkers Island, are well marked, but you can find more detailed directions online at www.byways.org. Ferry schedules and fare information can be found at www.ncdot.gov/ferry or by calling 800-293-3779.

Because grocery stores and fuel stations can be scarce along much of the route, it's a good idea to stock up and top off in Morehead City or Beaufort or in one of the small towns on Hatteras Island. These places are also your best bet for full-service RV parks. Here are three RV-friendly campgrounds we can recommend based on our experiences:

Camp Hatteras/Rodanthe

www.camphatteras.com
252-987-2777

Cape Hatteras KOA/Rodanthe

www.koa.com/campgrounds/cape-hatteras;
252-987-2307

Waters Edge RV Park/Newport

www.watersedge-rvpark.com
252-247-0494

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lighthouse, I contemplated what it took to move this massive brick structure more than a half-mile inland after decades of coastal erosion threatened to undermine its foundation.

Superhuman Surfmén

Lighthouse aficionados will be glad to know that the Cape Hatteras light is just one of four such beacons located along the Outer Banks Scenic Byway. These structures were the first line of defense for mariners trying to navigate the treacherous waters offshore.

For those not fortunate enough to steer clear of the shoals, the men of Rodanthe's Chicamacomico Life-Saving Station (252-987-1552, www.chicamacomico.net), were standing by to come to their aid. Part of the U.S. Life-Saving Service, the lookouts in their rooftop perch scanned the horizon for ships that had run into difficulty rounding Cape Hatteras. When trouble was spotted, the crews would launch their small boats into the pounding surf and row out to rescue the sailors as their ships began to break apart in the howling gales and frigid waves.

Touring the small museum, climbing to the top of the station's lookout platform and watching the weekly Beach Apparatus Drill using the same heavy equipment those original surfmen repeatedly wrestled down to the water's edge was impressive enough. Imagining them accomplishing these superhuman feats in the middle of a cold, dark winter's night while being pelted with wind-driven sand and spray was nothing less than mind-boggling.

Goodbye Paradise, Hello Scenic Route

The fact that we never needed actual rescuing made being temporarily marooned along North Carolina's Outer Banks Scenic Byway all the more enjoyable. Ultimately though, after a week here, we heard the call of open road and left our desert island paradise behind as we set off in search of other equally compelling adventures we knew were waiting for us along The Scenic Route. 📍

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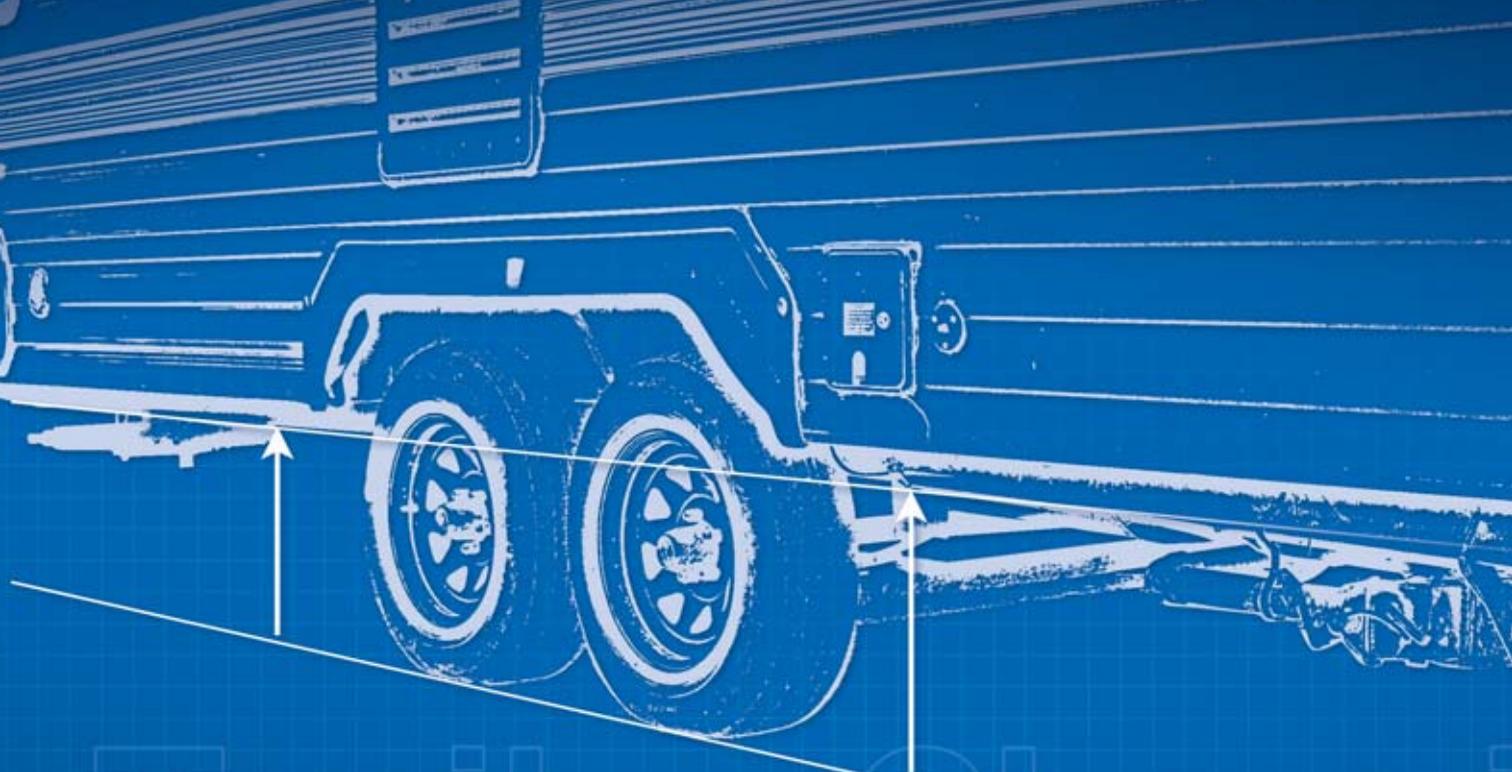
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Trailer Chassis Lift

INCREASED ROAD CLEARANCE PROVIDES ADDED VERSATILITY WHEN NEGOTIATING ROUGH ROADS WHILE IMPROVING OVERALL AESTHETICS

article and photos by **Jeff Johnston**

All trailers are built with a set chassis ride height. The manufacturers do their calculations and come up with what they believe is a good setup for a given model. Regardless of the planning, some trailers both new and old can benefit from a bit of a lift, and the process doesn't have to be complicated or expensive.

There are a number of reasons, mechanical and cosmetic, why an RVer might want to consider lifting a trailer:

- The back of a trailer hangs too low, including the bumper, stabilizing jacks, holding-tank dump valves and other hardware that can be damaged when driving over unlevel pavement.
- If the user wants to camp in back-country locations off the beaten path it can help to provide more ground clearance for the entire trailer.
- A trailer tows with more stability if it's sitting closer to level. Think how often you've seen a tail-dragger trailer wagging its way down the road.
- Many of today's pickups have very high beds that are a poor fit for many fifth-wheel trailers. If your pickup is too tall, it may not be possible to adjust

the fifth-wheel hitch so the trailer rides level or avoids contact with the back of the truck bed on uneven roads.

- Raising the trailer can provide more wheel-well clearance for a user who wants to install somewhat larger-diameter tires.

- It's not a mechanical situation, but some people just like the looks of a trailer that rides closer to level, or that sits a bit higher than some low-riding counterparts.

The most common trailer suspension uses leaf springs supporting a solid axle. The axle may be dropped, with the spindle a few inches above the axle centerline, or straight through from spindle to spindle. The leaf spring may be above or below the axle. It appears to be a trend in recent years to have the springs above straight axles, which gives the trailer a taller ride height direct from the factory, but many older models are not so equipped.

When considering a trailer suspension lift the subject of center of gravity — or more accurately, the unit's roll center — and cornering stability almost always comes up. In





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Trailer Chassis Lift

the example of our project, the trailer was raised approximately 5 inches, and that's not enough to affect stability in a way that any driver will notice. You'd need to be driving and cornering at high speeds far beyond what's considered safe to lose control of the trailer, and it wouldn't be due to a modest 5-inch lift.

We paid a visit to Hitch Pro & Tow in Eugene, Oregon, to observe an axle and spring swap project on an older Komfort 22-foot trailer. This project was pretty simple and involved moving the dropped axles below the leaf springs. It took less than one workday to finish the job, including the extra time added for our photo-shooting needs.

The final project is clean, solidly engineered and looks as if it could be factory equipment. A qualified fabrication shop or RV-service center can do this kind of work on your trailer as well.

If getting a rise out of your trailer seems like a good idea, give it a try. As the Men's Wearhouse ad says, "You're going to like the way you look."



1) A trailer that rides too low can be a towing hazard with damage waiting to happen. 2) The rear stabilizing jack on the stock Komfort trailer had just 8½ inches of ground clearance and the spare tire hanging below the bumper wasn't much better off. It would be really easy to catch these items on the ground when driving on unlevel road surfaces. 3) The job was started by supporting the trailer on commercial-grade jack stands so all four wheels could be removed for the project. Safety first, as always. 4) The stock suspension setup included dropped axles mounted above the leaf springs.

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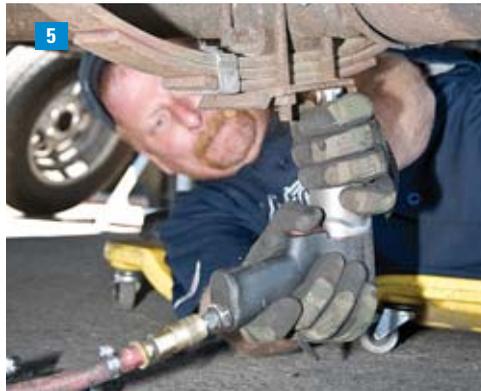
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5, 6) The brake wires are disconnected and then the stock U-bolts and main-spring mounting bolt are removed so the axles can be dropped from their above-spring position. 7, 8) The stock spring-hanger bolt is reused for this project, but this would be a good time to install all-new hardware if the old material is too worn-out for safety.



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Trailer Chassis Lift



9) A new spring perch is positioned loosely on the axle and the U-bolts are reinstalled with the axle hanging below the springs. 10) The reinstalled but not-yet-tight hardware is neat, clean and looks like a stock suspension setup. There's no need for this kind of job to present a cobbled-together appearance. 11, 12) Before tightening the U-bolts, the axle positions are measured to ensure accurate placement both side-to-side as well as the axle's fore-and-aft "roll" location. The "roll" dimension is important because most trailer axles have some camber and caster built in, and maintaining those settings helps keep the wheels in alignment.



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Model 2185 shown in Rain Forest



13) The completed installation is ready to be welded in place. 14) Welding all the nooks and crannies ensures the new spring perch is securely fastened to the axle. A coat of rust-resistant paint follows the welding. 15) This is an excellent time to inspect and upgrade the trailer-brake wiring in the axle vicinity. Clean corroded wire ends, install better-quality fasteners and re-route or replace the wires as needed. 16) This is a good comparison of the stock drum and hub position at left and the modified installation at right. It's not hard to see the suspension lift that results from this work.



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SOURCES

Hitch Pro & Tow: 541-434-2403, www.hitchproandtow.net

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17, 18) The modified trailer rides about 5 inches taller and produces more tire and wheel-well spacing plus ground clearance for underslung hardware. To some users, this trailer just looks better when it's a bit higher, too. 19) The dump valves now have an honest 12 inches of ground clearance, and that's good for peace of mind when the road gets rough or otherwise uneven. Lifting a trailer by modifying its suspension is a mechanically sound way of solving several chassis-height-related problems. 🚚

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BEARING DOWN

Repacking wheel bearings:

THE DIRTY JOB THAT SOMEONE HAS TO DO



Greasing wheel bearings isn't the most enjoyable way to spend your free time. However, this messy maintenance saves you from bigger bills later.

Over time, grease breaks down. Heat produced by brakes speeds up the process. Since the trailer's weight rides on the wheel bearings, keeping them well lubricated is critical for safe RVing.

Bearings normally whine before they grind and ultimately fail. Unnatural sounds that vary depending on speed often indicate that the bearings need attention. It's the proverbial squeaky wheel syndrome.

Trailer owners who do their own routine maintenance know that bearing service can be done in less time than it takes to make an appointment, drive

to an RV shop and either wait for the trailer or make a return trip.

The job doesn't require any special skills or tools. (However, bearing-service kits that include seal-pullers and drifts in varying sizes are available for serious home mechanics.) To ensure we weren't missing any subtleties, Conejo Vacation Trailer owner Mike Niedrich demonstrated how to repack trailer bearings based on nearly 30 years' experience.

Niedrich's pro tips:

- Never reuse cotter pins. One of the least-expensive parts of the system is probably the most important.
- Any high-temperature wheel bearing grease will work.
- All grease isn't always compatible



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Repacking Wheel Bearings

among brands. Thoroughly clean all old grease from bearings, races and hub cavities using a solvent such as brake cleaner.

- In general, trailer wheel bearings should be serviced annually or every 10,000 miles, whichever occurs first. Grease also breaks down on stored trailers, allowing corrosion to form.

- Visually inspect the bearing and race surfaces. If nicks or discolorations are visible, replace all inner and outer bearings and races on both sides of the axle.

- Spindle nut torquing: Once the hub, bearings and thrust washer are in place, snug up the castellated spindle nut while spinning the drum. This seats the bearing. Then back off the nut a turn, retighten it (to about 50 ft-lb if you have a torque wrench) while spinning the drum, then back the nut off 1/4 turn. Fine-tune the nut if necessary to align its closest recesses with the cotter pin hole, or lock the nut in position with the existing tanged washer or cage-style retainer.



Murphy's dictate: If you buy replacement parts before tearing into the axle, the existing bearings will be fine. If not.... Regardless, grease seals should always be replaced. These are Lippert Components' 3,500-pound replacement parts. The dust cap with rubber plug is for a Super Lube axle (cotter pins and Super Lube grease fittings not shown).

- Some shops squirt grease into the dust cap prior to reinstallation. Niedrich used to do this until he noticed that the grease remained in the cap until the next bearing service.

Our focus is on repacking instead of replacing (which requires using punches

and drifts to extricate and reinstall the bearing races). Also, affordable bearing-packing tools are available for people who want less mess.

Major steps are shown here, both for a conventional axle and for a Lippert Super Lube axle. Remember, regularly scheduled packing means happier RVing.

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1) With the axle raised and secured and the wheel removed, carefully pull the dust cap. Repair shops use a special tool, but the cap can also be gently pried off using a chisel or large flat-blade screwdriver. 2) Cutting off the cotter pin will force you to use a new one for reassembly. (Some axles use lock washers or "cage" retainers to keep the spindle nut in place.) 3) Next, the castellated spindle nut can be unscrewed. 4) The thrust washer and outer bearing normally fall out of the hub when the brake drum is lifted off.

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Repacking Wheel Bearings



5) Special J-shaped tools are available that gently remove grease seals. Alternately, do-it-yourselfers normally pry out the seals using flat-blade screwdrivers. The inner bearing can then be lifted out. Old grease should be cleaned off bearings, races and hub surfaces with solvent.

6) Hand packing involves putting a dollop of grease in one palm. Grease is scooped into the bearing all the way around until all gaps between the rollers and cage are completely filled with fresh grease. Wearing a pair of rubber gloves for this step helps reduce the messy factor.

7) A cleaner method is to use a packing tool. This vat-type system uses a plunger to force grease through the bearing while it's immersed in the grease tub.

8) Here's a tool-packed bearing.



9) Adding another layer of grease around the rollers post-packing is recommended.

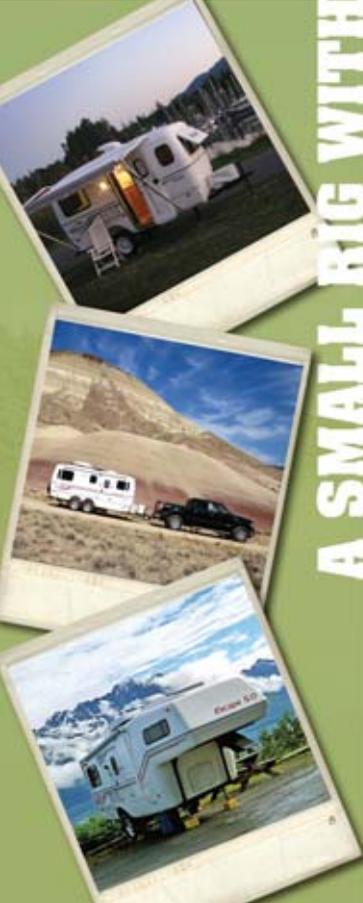


10) Another coat of grease is laid down on the bearing race surfaces in the hub and on the bearing's faces.



11) A new grease seal is installed. A flat piece of steel and a hammer are used to evenly tap in the seal until it's fully seated.

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12) With the drum back on the axle, the newly greased outer bearing is slid into place. It's best to coat its face with more grease prior to reinstalling the thrust washer and spindle nut. The nut is snugned to seat the bearing in the race, then backed off, retightened, then backed off slightly. The drum should turn freely, and the nut's body should be inboard of the cotter-pin hole.

13) Brake adjustment is its own story, but it should happen in conjunction with bearing-packing. (Lippert Component's recommended brake-adjustment interval is every 3,000 miles.)



14) Some axles are bored through the spindle area. Lippert calls these Super Lube. A grease fitting on the axle's end is accessible by removing the rubber plug in the special dust cap.

15) On Super Lube axles, grease passes through the bore and emerges from a hole near the seal. Five to 10 slow pumps of the grease gun is recommended — too much grease can flow past the seal and onto the brakes. Even with this axle type, disassembly and packing annually or at 10,000 miles, whichever occurs first, is recommended. 🚚

SOURCES

Conejo Vacation Trailer Inc.: 805-497-2315, www.conejovacationtrailer.com | Lippert Components: 574-535-1125, www.lci1.com



Traveling Companions

With the Starcraft Travel Star 294 RESA and Ford F-150 EcoBoost working together, a family can hit the road in comfort and style

Starcraft has a wide range of products for the RV crowd, including folding camping trailers (known to many as pop-ups or tent trailers), travel trailers of various sizes and capacities, and a full line of fifth-wheels that go from half-ton towable to king-size. But the object of our attention this particular trip was the intriguing Travel Star 294 RESA model. For 2013, the Middlebury, Indiana, builder has packed a powerful punch of utility, spaciousness, efficiency — as well as luxury on a moderate scale — into this travel trailer that measures just longer than 30 feet from bumper to ball.

A family owned business based in northern Indiana's Amish country, Starcraft RV made its name in the industry creating innovative items such as the crank-up lifter system and hard tops for pop-up campers. The company likes to keep its customers happy with products that meet their needs but push the envelope a bit. So it was no surprise to us when we first saw our Travel Star 294 RESA test unit fully decked out in the Optional Galaxy Package. The group of

seemingly must-have items begins with a colored front fiberglass cap, dark-tinted window glass and a set of exterior graphics that give the trailer an upscale look and highlight the already attractive vacuum-bonded side walls.

Pride of ownership as well as convenience for those owners is also part of the Galaxy package. An electric awning that spans 20 feet on the curb-side can shade your entire party, plus. And front and rear power jacks and an

electric A-frame jack make settling into the campground easy as pie. To make it even better, a handheld remote control device can be used to operate the patio awning, porch and security lights, stabilizer jacks, and the two opposing slideouts. Further exterior highlights of the Galaxy Package include slam latch handles on the storage doors to the sizeable pass-through equipped with lights and tool hooks. A sparkling set of aluminum wheels help match it up with a tow vehicle that might have nice wheels, too.

Stepping into the Travel Star 294 RESA, with an assist from the large folding grab handle and lighted steps through the 30-by-72-inch entry door, our first impression was positive. We marveled at the gorgeous Bourbon Glaze beechwood raised-panel



(Left to right) Bourbon Glaze beechwood cabinetry highlights the solid-surface countertop kitchen. The lav features a roomy and tall curved shower — and a real china toilet. An 8-cubic-foot flush-mount refrigerator dressed out in hardwood inserts is part of the Galaxy Package.

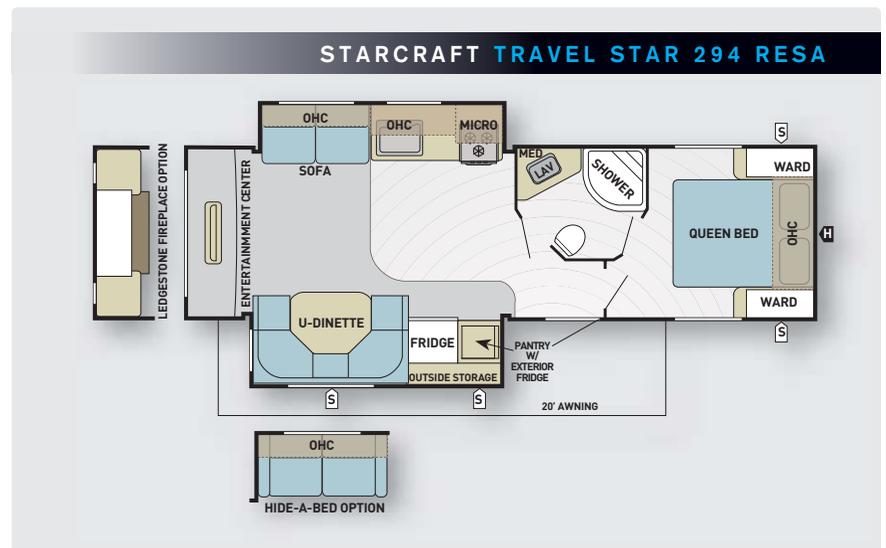
cabinetry and pleated shades throughout the spacious trailer. The galley offers an 8-cubic-foot flush-mount refrigerator that is decked out with hardwood door inserts as part of the Galaxy Package, an oversized oven, and a three-burner range that includes a 9,000-Btu SuperBurner with a range hood with light and exhaust fan. Our unit also came equipped with the optional microwave oven. The solid-surface kitchen countertops are large enough to easily work on and create a meal for a good-sized family. And the kitchen offers little niceties such as an integrated spice rack in the valance that saves counter space and holds plenty of bottles, as well as an oversized sink with a large, arched residential-style faucet with a pull-out sprayer that makes washing dishes easy. A storable cutting board helps the chef get dinner ready and tucks out of the way when it's not needed. Sink covers add a nice touch when you're not working in the galley and do double duty as drying racks.

The living area is made extra roomy once the two opposing slideouts have been extended. A large and comfortable U-shaped dinette is on the curbside (next to the fridge for easy snacking access) which features huge 38-inch deep drawers under the seats that could be used to store anything from games to extra bedding or kitchen implements.

The seating is plush and could handle a family of four with ease for dining or entertaining. It also converts into a sleeping space for two. Directly across in the other slide is the sofa, also a very comfortable seating arrangement for as many as three. And from the dinette and sofa, the 180-degree view, 32-inch LED HDTV that pops up from the entertainment center spanning the full width of the trailer's tail end can be easily viewed. This made watching movies from anywhere in the enormous space that incorporated the living room and galley a real pleasure. Also integrated into the entertainment center console

is a multimedia sound system with an AM/FM/CD stereo and an MP3 input jack for piping in music from digital devices. And surrounding the entire living space are overhead cabinets that offer plenty of storage.

Leading back toward the bedroom is the midway bathroom (positioned right in front of the doorway for easy access from the outdoors), featuring a door leading from the living quarters, as well as another leading from the bedroom. This layout makes it very convenient at night to use the facilities while keeping the bedroom door closed and allowing the occupants of the bed-



Thank you to Ventura Ranch KOA, 877-779-8080, www.koa.com, for its hospitality during our photo shoot and review.

PHOTOS BY RICH COX AND STUART BOURDON

SPECIFICATIONS

Starcraft Travel Star 294 RESA

Exterior Length	33'
Exterior Width	8'
Exterior Height (w/ AC)	11' 6"
Construction	Aluminum framing, laminated fiberglass side walls, R-7 insulation, arched truss wood rafter roof w/ R-22 insulation, cambered structural-steel I-beam frame, E-Z-Lube axles
Freshwater Cap.	68.6 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	30.8 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	30.8 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	(2) 7.5 gal.
Water Heater Cap.	6 gal.
Refrigerator	8 cu. ft.
Furnace	25,000 Btu
Air Conditioner	15,000 Btu
Converter	45 amp
Battery	(1) Group 24 12-volt
Tires	ST225/75R15
Weight (freshwater, water heater, LP-gas full; no cargo)	9,060 lbs.
Hitch Weight	1,020 lbs.
Axle Weight	8,040 lbs.
GVWR	8,550 lbs.
GAWR	(2) 4,400 lbs.
Cargo Carrying Cap.	1,051 lbs.
Base MSRP	\$27,064
As-Tested MSRP	\$35,085
Basic Warranty	1-year limited

Starcraft

800-945-4787, www.starcrafttv.com

Ford F-150 EcoBoost Lariat 4x4 SuperCrew

MPG Solo/Towing	29.1/12.0
0-60 mph, towing	16.8 sec.
40-60 mph, towing	8.8 sec.
Engine	3.5L Ti-VCT DOHC turbocharged
Horsepower	365 @ 5,000 RPM
Torque	420 @ 2,500 RPM
Transmission	6-speed automatic
Axle Ratio	3.73:1
Fuel Cap.	36 gal.
Tires	P275/55R20
Suspension	Front: coil-on shocks, IFS; Rear: Hotchkiss live axle, leaf springs, out-board shocks
Brakes	four-wheel vented disc, ABS
Tow Rating	9,600 lbs.
GVWR	7,650 lbs.
GAWR	15,500 lbs.
Weight As-Tested	6,980 lbs.
Length	19' 3"
Wheelbase	144.5"
Base MSRP	\$41,950
As-Tested MSRP	\$54,150
Basic Warranty	3-year

Ford www.ford.com, 800-392-3673



Ford's modern and functional 2013 F-150 dash is designed to direct information to the driver.

room to have private entrance into the bath without having to enter the main living space to do so. Inside this rather large bathroom space is a china toilet. It also features a voluminous curved shower with plenty of headroom for tall folks, and a good-sized lavy cabinet for storage with a generous sink and mirrored medicine cabinet.

Featuring a 60-by-80-inch queen bed, the master bedroom is especially nice to retire in for the evenings or just an afternoon nap. The mattress is quite comfortable and provided a pleasant night's sleep with plenty of stretch-out space for two adults. We found the laundry basket tucked into a storage space underneath the bed handy, too. Large wardrobes with enough room to hang a week's worth of clothing are mounted on either side of the bed,

with nightstands on both sides. And an overhead storage cabinet spans the distance between the wardrobes, offering space for additional bedding, pillows and clothing. The 22-inch LED TV in the bedroom is equipped with an inside/outside bracket so it can be moved to the exterior TV when you want to take your shows to the patio.

Construction of the Starcraft Travel Star 294 RESA features a cambered structural steel I-beam frame and twin E-Z Lube axles equipped with Nev-R-Adjust electric brakes and radial tires. Insulation within the 5/8-inch tongue-and-groove plywood-based floor and the vacuum-bonded fiberglass side walls is rated at R-7; and the one-piece seamless rubber roof is laid upon 3/8-inch roof decking over 4 1/2-inch arched truss roof (continued on page 50)





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Charcoal Grill Table #69426
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Club SALE \$69.99 Reg. \$78.89 | 🚚



CLUB SALE \$22⁴⁹ Reg. \$24.99

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CLUB SALE \$54⁹⁹ Reg. \$63.99

Folding Director Chair #69429
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Club SALE \$9.24 Reg. \$11.79 | Ship Wt. 1/4 lb.
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Blast Out Pressure Wash Concentrate #70029
Blast out dirt and grime to restore your RV or boat's original finish. One gallon concentrate makes up to twenty gallons of cleaner.
Club SALE \$12.99 Reg. \$14.99 | Ship Wt. 9 lbs.



Folds to 9¹/₂" H



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CLUB SALE \$79⁹⁹ Reg. \$89.99

Utility Cart #67212
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(Continued from page 46)

rafters filled with R-22 insulation. The standard Arctic Package delivers an insulated, heated and enclosed underbelly; foil insulation in the roof and slideout floors add a tad extra warmth in cold weather.

The Travel Star 294 RESA was towed by a 2013 Ford F-150 powered by the EcoBoost 3.5-liter Ti-VCT DOHC V-6 gas engine. Matched to a Select-Shift six-speed automatic, which can be shifted manually for climbing or descending hills, the 3.5-liter V-6 turbocharged powerplant provided plenty of power to tow the Travel Star in any of the varied terrain we encountered during our time with the 33-foot trailer. We had little trouble getting it up to speed on freeway on-ramps, pulling hills once we locked the tranny into fourth gear or cruising at highway speeds in fifth or sixth gear when traveling on flat concrete.

The ride quality was superb as

well, with no signs of rocking, bounce or sway (thanks to the properly adjusted weight distributing hitch), and even when passing or being passed by 18-wheelers that washed us in their wind, the lash-up remained secure and stable.

Interior comfort is a pleasure with firm cushioned seats that kept us well supported over a long haul. The front seats are 10-way adjustable and even feature cooling and heating — nice! Visibility gets high marks from us, too, due to the F-150's excellent mirror design and large windows. We are not huge fans of the MyFord Sync system as it does seem a bit difficult to master at first and could be more intuitive; but the driver information system in the instrument cluster is easy to use and full of details that helped us with the trailer and the road trip.

Some noteworthy equipment on the F-150 we drove that might be of interest: The segment-first high-intensity



discharge (HID) headlamps and the rear-view camera. The HID's light up the dark highway like the landing lights on a 747. We really appreciated that on the long drive home. And the rear-view camera came in handy when hooking up the trailer, especially solo.

Ford's F-150 EcoBoost and the Starcraft Travel Star 294 RESA make a good pairing and a fine choice for a family looking to get out and explore the country in style and comfort. 🚗

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WALK-THROUGH: AUGUSTA FLEX AF-34RS

Flex Appeal

New Fifth-Wheel from Augusta RV is built for the long haul

When Augusta RV opened its doors early last year, the shareholders wanted to offer something they felt was lacking in the market: RV construction that mimics the durable build of most residential homes. In addition, Owner/National Sales Manager Leif Freehafer says Augusta's brain trust was most interested in providing not only a well-built product, but one that delivered maximum bang for the buck. "At Augusta we are committed to using the highest quality materials, and we refuse to cheapen our units by cutting corners and substituting subpar

materials," says Freehafer.

Eager to put Augusta's no-nonsense approach on construction to the test, we decided to take a look at the company's flagship fifth-wheel, the Flex AF-34RS.

Like all Flex trailers, the AF-34RS features 1½-inch aluminum tubing in the side walls spaced 16 inches on center. The tubing, which is 50 percent larger than the usual 1 inch, helps aid in longevity and leads to a more durable, sturdy package. The frame is powder coated, and the floors are also aluminum framed with a stout ⅝-inch tongue-and-groove plywood decking.

The Flex features such notable standard amenities as a fiberglass front cap, power front jacks and a hitching light. The front pass-through storage is lighted and fully insulated.

The fully walkable rubber roof is first covered with ⅜-inch plywood, and is also reinforced every 16 inches. This results not only in a more durable product, but also a much quieter interior — especially when it rains — according to Augusta. This refreshing overall approach to residential-type construction is essentially what Augusta hangs its hat on. "The Flex is built the way a trailer is supposed to be built," says Freehafer. "We are so confident in the build of our trailers that we offer a two-year warranty on the construction."

The Flex features so much more than rugged construction. The exterior's high-gloss gel-coat fiberglass walls are available in white, gray or brown, and the tasteful graphics package works well with the standard fiberglass front cap to offer a look of luxury. The power awning, aluminum wheels and the deep-tinted windows are much appreciated, as are the wide-stance E-Z Lube axles.

Inside, the Flex's residential appointments go a long way toward making owners feel right at home. "We



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER





The bedroom features a comfortable queen bed with additional storage below. The mirrored wardrobe has plenty of space for your clothes. The galley is highlighted by a storage-savvy island, while the living area's HDTV and electric fireplace add to the Flex's residential feel.

take great pride in producing a high-quality product, with a rich, luxurious feel, yet [one that is] very functional and provides a level of comfort not always found in today's market," says Freehafer. The all-natural, maple hardwood cabinetry looks great and is scratch-resistant, according to Augusta. Although we didn't exactly rake our keys across the doors, we can see how the sturdy cabinets would stand the test of time.

The entrance door opens into the galley which features impressive solid-surface countertops and a space-saving kitchen island. The cabinets below the island are ideal for pots and pans, and the dedicated spot for a wastebasket is always appreciated. The galley is appointed with the usual list of three-burner cooktop, stove, microwave and fridge, but little touches like the wall border and backsplash above the sink and the rubbed-bronze high-rise faucet help perpetuate the residential feel.

The living area features a 42-inch HDTV above an optional electric fireplace, which can be viewed from the large sofa bed in the rear, the dual recliners curbside or even the spacious convertible dinette.

The furniture is crafted by Lane, a residential manufacturer that, in my opinion, offers some of the more comfortable available in an RV.

The bathroom is located amidships and provides just enough room to get the job done in comfort. The spacious corner shower is a smart use of space, and the linen closet is a fine place for towels, washcloths and the like. The bathroom does feature two entry doors (via the stairwell and the master), so users need to communicate in order to avoid any embarrassing situations.

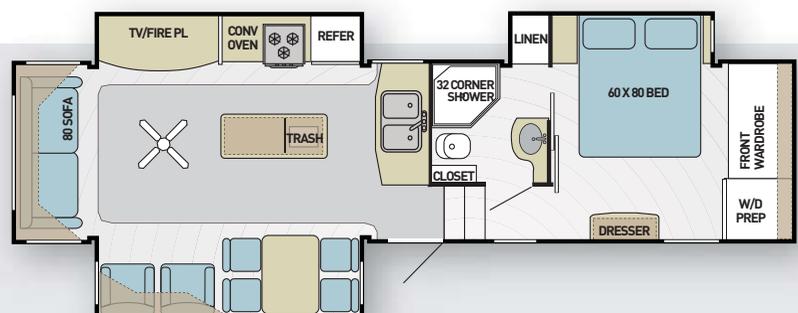
The master bedroom features an RV queen bed that's a welcome retreat after a long day of adventuring. The dresser and wardrobe offer more than

enough space for your clothes, and the unit is built with a washer/dryer prep area should buyers decide to add to the long-term livability of the trailer. The overhead storage cabinets and under-bed storage area are great places for duffel bags and odds and ends. The bedroom is cable- and satellite-ready for additional entertainment options.

When it comes to purchasing a trailer, prospective buyers should take into consideration the amount of time they plan to own the trailer, and how often they plan to travel. By using residential-type construction practices, Augusta has done its best to manufacture a trailer that is designed to last, offering a two-year warranty on build and a 12-year warranty on the roof. Add to that thoughtful features like a sleek appearance, higher-end furniture and upgraded carpeting and padding, and the brand-new Augusta Flex is more than worthy of a second look. 🚐

QUICK INFO

Exterior Length	35' 8"
Exterior Width	8' 5"
Exterior Height	12' 6"
Interior Height	7' 6" to 8' 6"
Freshwater Cap.	54 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	38 gal./76 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
Hitch Weight	2,185 lbs.
GVWR	11,235 lbs.
MSRP	\$55,000 – \$60,000



Augusta RV: (574) 848-0200, www.augusta-rv.com. Circle 201 on Reader Service Card.

WALK-THROUGH: SUNNYBROOK RAVEN 3300CK

Active Luxury

A well-appointed towable from Winnebago's SunnyBrook division maximizes its open layout

Built by one of the industry's most recognizable brands at its Indiana factory, Winnebago's SunnyBrook line of towables is an outlet for the company's newest technology and design. We chose the Raven 3300CK for a weekend excursion away from the city. The Raven's upscale materials, fashionable accents and attention to detail made its confines a truly relaxing space, while its smart layout made the fiver an authentic residential-grade experience.

At 34 feet, 11 inches, with an exterior height of 11 feet, 11 inches, our 3300CK model sits in the middle of the Raven lineup that ranges in length from 31 feet, 7 inches, to more than 35 feet — the sweet spot for couples or small families. Three slideouts, in the master suite and on opposing sides of the living room, allowed Winnebago's

designers to craft a simple, logical layout that's comfortable and never cramped, even with friends invited over for dinner.

Starting in the open-plan living room and kitchen, the huge floating island is the center of attention. Stairs lead up into the kitchen where the eyes quickly fall to the deep wood cabinetry, granite-look countertops, warm linoleum flooring and angled pantry that houses the 8-cubic-foot refrigerator. It's a dramatic treatment, and the raised, black-finish fridge resides at a more natural height — a welcome touch that requires no bending over to hunt for food.

A three-burner range and oven reside under a matching black range hood. Above both is a built-in 1,100-watt microwave. Thoughtfully designed cabinets are numerous, with

a roll-top cupboard left of the stove that's ideal for stashing loaves of bread or small appliances. The Raven 3300CK provides a no-compromise cooking space, with plenty of room to store everything that's needed for a weekend — or week — away.

Oil-rubbed bronze pendant lights hang over the ovoid island that houses the sink. The island more than doubles usable countertop food-prep space, and the end swings out to hide a trash-can. Its satin finish, high-rise hardware adds a nice accent that works well with the gray-finish counters.

The super-plush carpeted living space, dramatically opened up by two opposing slideouts, is defined by a large picture window at the rear of the trailer. An entertainment center



With a bold exterior, right-size options and an inviting interior, the SunnyBrook Raven 3300CK is ideal for couples who like to entertain.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER



comprised of dark cabinetry with a bookshelf, an optional fireplace and a concealed, pop-up 32-inch LCD TV provides a flexible setup — a spare TV-free space when desired, and the high-tech center of family movie night with the TV deployed.

Seating is provided by an optional streetside J-lounge sofa bed across from two deluxe swiveling glider rockers. Adjacent to the island, a dining room table and freestanding chairs (with under-seat storage) provide a comfortable place to enjoy dinner, as well as additional seating for the living space. With plenty of room, large windows, ample accent lighting and warm colors, it's easy to forget you're in an RV.

Up two wide steps from the kitchen is the bedroom featuring an in-slide queen bed facing a set of drawers that can accommodate the optional 24-inch LCD TV. At the front of the trailer, a full-size wardrobe is flanked by two chests of drawers, with a shelf for a clock, books or other knickknacks to make the place your own. It's a great space, and the dark wood is a nice contrast for the muted bedspread, window treatments and beige carpeting.

Step into the brightly lit bath, just off the bedroom, for another taste of home — a large skylight over an all-glass corner shower, solid surface counters, a white plastic sink with satin hardware, accent lighting and earth-tone linoleum. While it may not have a porcelain sink or in-floor heating of some uber-deluxe fifth-wheels, this is a pleasant room that is akin to typical guest bathrooms.

With its bold exterior of bright aluminum wheels; dark, contrasting graphics; and a fiberglass aerodynamic front cap, the Raven's beauty extends outside. Standard features include power front jacks, a power awning, tinted safety glass, a one-piece seamless rubber roof, aluminum framed walls, floors and slides, additional stabilizer jacks, R-8 insulation, slam-latch under-floor storage including a 111-cubic-foot pass-through space, exterior speakers, a TrailAir Equa-Flex suspension and gel-coated fiberglass exterior walls.

Our spruced-up model included optional goodies like electric stabilizer jacks, the over-island ceiling fan, the upgraded bedroom LCD TV (24 instead of 19 inches), a Create-



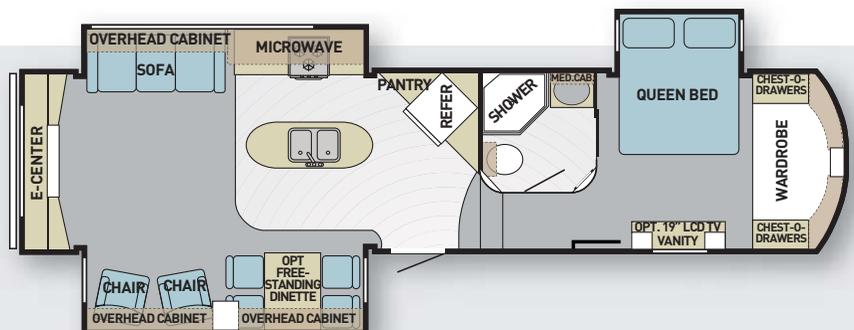
(Top) SunnyBrook made the most of the Raven's floor plan with a large oval-shaped island to divide the space. (Above) Swivel rocking chairs in the curbside slideout are positioned for viewing the entertainment center in front of the picture window.

A-Breeze fan with wall switch, a 10-gallon water heater, 13,500-Btu ducted bedroom air conditioner, a much-appreciated premium memory foam mattress, upgraded 16-inch wheels, the aforementioned fireplace and full-body paint.

Altogether, SunnyBrook's Raven 3300CK hits a sweet spot in size and features that perfectly match the expectations of couples who frequently host visiting friends and family, and occasionally accommodate overnight guests, in a space that's uncommonly spacious and inviting. 🚐

QUICK INFO

Exterior Length	34' 11"
Exterior Width	8'
Exterior Height	11' 11"
Interior Height	6' to 8'
Freshwater Cap.	50 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	44 gal./84 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	14 gal.
Hitch Weight	2,200 lbs.
GVWR	14,200 lbs.
MSRP	\$48,000



SunnyBrook RV: 574-825-5250, www.sunnybrookrv.com. Circle 202 on Reader Service Card.

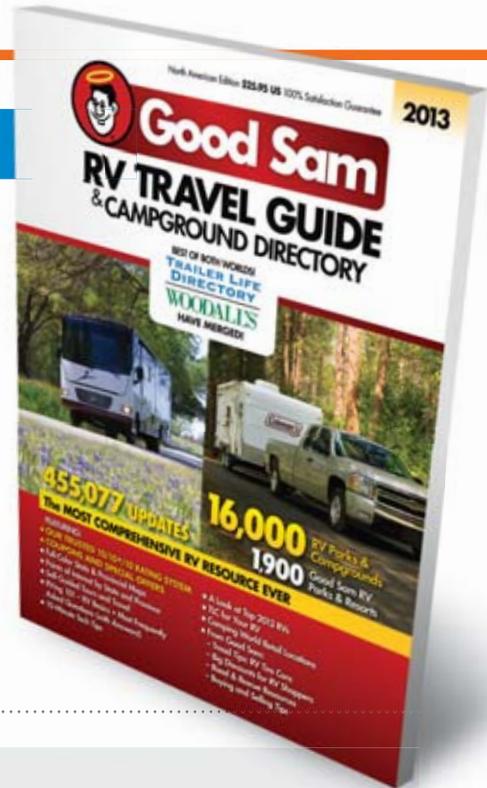
GOOD SAM RV TRAVEL GUIDE

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

This directory is chockful of lifestyle features, regional trip guides and essential travel facts. Get vital tech tips and learn about must-see points of interest in all of North America's states and provinces. The meal and fitness planner helps you take care of your body, while the RoadReady section features helpful products designed to add fun and convenience to your journeys. The directory's comprehensive RV-park listings include details on 16,000 North American RV parks and campgrounds, including nearly 2,000 Good Sam Park discount locations.

Good Sam uses the *Trailer Life* campground rating system, giving RVers one clear standard by which to judge RV parks, and gives readers a snapshot of the campground's amenities, cleanliness and environment.

Good Sam Club members can buy the directory for \$9.95. Nonmember price is \$25.95. 877-209-6655, www.trailerlifedirectory.com/2013



THE REAR TWIN BEDS CONVERT TO A KING BY FILLING IN THE MIDDLE WITH PROVIDED MATTRESS INSERTS.

Twin-Bed Unity

The BlueTEC diesel engine delivers a powerful ride

Leisure Travel Vans

expanded its Unity lineup for 2013 with an all-new twin-bed model. The U24TB features two rear twin beds that convert to a king simply by filling in the middle with the provided mattress inserts.

Enjoy a movie on

the 22-inch LED TV from the comfort of your bed or take in the views through the almost-full-wall windows. Curved maple or cherry cabinets with attractive interior storage is complemented by 62 cubic feet of exterior storage. Wood-look vinyl flooring runs throughout the U24TB and is a great match with the Ultra-leather furnishings. The Unity's front dinette converts into a single bed, and both setups provide a comfortable spot to view the pop-up

26-inch LED TV. The galley features a deep stainless-steel sink, two-burner cooktop, convection microwave and three-way refrigerator/freezer. The rear shower with skylight is across the aisle from the lav with porcelain toilet and round stainless-steel sink.

Built on the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 3500 chassis, the U24TB is equipped with a 15,000-Btu air conditioner with heat pump and power patio awning.



Chassis	Mercedes-Benz Sprinter 3500	GVWR	11,030
Engine	3.0L V-6	Interior Height	6' 5"
Length	24' 7"	Freshwater Cap.	36 gal.
Width	7' 8.5"	Gray-Water Cap.	37 gal.
Height with A/C	10' 5.5"	Black-Water Cap.	29 gal.
		Base MSRP	\$114,270

Leisure Travel Vans, 877-992-9906, www.leisurevans.com

Jensen Adds New Bluetooth Wall-Mount Stereo

The Jensen AWM914 wall-mount Bluetooth Stereo was designed with the digital user in mind. The new wireless-enabled RV-specific stereo eliminates the hassle of moving parts by omitting the CD mechanism, and can connect to any Bluetooth-enabled device. And, with front auxiliary-input connectivity, the Jensen can also accommodate compatible wired devices. It provides two separate speaker zones and user operation is simple. Standard AM/FM reception, integrated clock, alarm and a sleep timer round out the features; and the low-profile design makes it perfect where cabinet and wall space is at a premium. The use of Bluetooth wireless connectivity gives users the ability to control their music selections from outside their RVs. **MSRP: \$179.99.**
ASA Electronics: 877-305-0445, www.asaelectronics.com



Satellite TV Wherever You Go

For easy DIRECTV on the road, check out KVH's affordable TracVision R1ST. It's claimed to be the smallest and lightest in-motion satellite TV system on the market, offering standard-definition satellite TV entertainment from DIRECTV throughout the continental United States. Through KVH's RingFire technology, the 12.5-inch diameter TracVision R1ST antenna is said to offer great reception even in poor weather. The system is designed to ensure easy operation: a single cable is used for quick installation, no laptop required. It offers an exclusive integrated 12-volt DC mobile receiver/controller with onscreen system control, WhisperDrive for ultra-quiet operation, and more than 300 channels of digital satellite TV and music. **MSRP: \$1,995.**
KVH Industries, Inc.: 401-847-3327, www.kvh.com



Pleasure-Way's Pursuit

A Class-B motorhome with more room



FIRST IMPRESSION

Chassis
Ford E-350
Engine
6.8L V-10
Length
22' 2"
Width
7' 10"
Base MSRP
\$105,000

After hearing from customers who sought the advantages of a Class B motorhome but wanted a little extra room, Canadian builder Pleasure-Way Industries developed the Pursuit, the company's first B-plus motorhome. Built on a Ford E-350 dual-rear-wheel cutaway chassis, the 22-foot Pursuit is constructed with a full steel cage that is welded together and topped with a one-piece seamless fiberglass roof. Fluted molding and custom solid maple cabinet doors set off the interior and are complemented by the Ultra-leather rear lounge that converts into a queen

bed. A glass corner shower, porcelain toilet, stainless-steel sink and Corian vanity with matching backsplash complete the bathroom. In the galley you'll find a two-burner stove with glass cover, 6-cubic-foot refrigerator and microwave/convection oven.

The Pursuit comes fully loaded with standards that include a 32-inch LED TV, Blu-ray player with Wi-Fi, Clarion in-dash navigation with Bluetooth, iPod and USB connections and a backup camera. Pleasure-Way said the Pursuit is fuel efficient (estimated 13-15 MPG highway) and easy to drive.

➔ For more information contact: Pleasure-Way Industries, 800-364-0189, www.pleasureway.com

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Reviewed by *Trailer Life* September 2010

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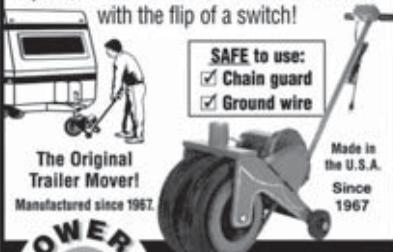
For optimum performance and safety, we recommend you read the owner's manual before opening your Honda Power Equipment. Connection of a generator to house power requires a transfer device to avoid possible injury to power company personnel. Consult a qualified electrician. ©2005 American Honda Co., Inc.

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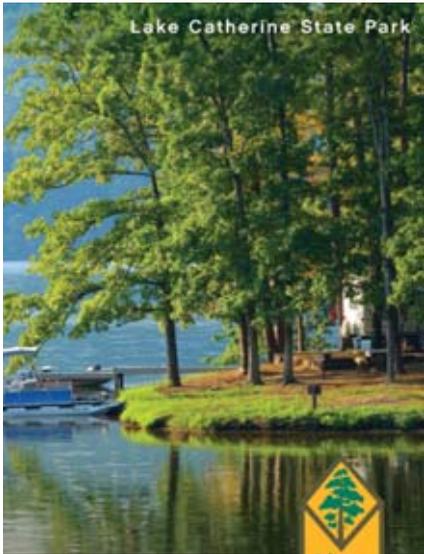
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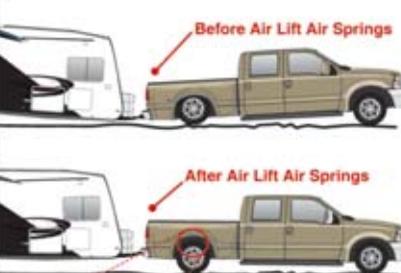


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While every effort is made to maintain accuracy and completeness, last-minute changes may occasionally result in omissions or errors.



Jaws Cleaners Good and Green

The Just Add Water System (JAWS) is a new line of cleaners that offer a refill cartridge attached to the 32-ounce bottle. After you deplete the bottle from the starter kit, just fill it with water, drop in the refill, twist on the sprayer, shake it and you're ready to clean. A pack of two refill cartridges costs \$3.99-\$4.79, depending on product.

There are four JAWS cleaners: JAWS Glass & Hard Surface Cleaner, JAWS Multi-Purpose Cleaner/Degreaser, JAWS Bathroom Cleaner/Deodorizer and JAWS Disinfectant Cleaner Degreaser.

MSRP: \$4.99-\$5.79 for starter kit
866-664-5297, www.jawscleans.com
Circle-203 on Reader Service Card.



Champion One-Piece Spark Plug for Ford Engines

When servicing some Ford 4.6L, 5.4L or 6.8L engines, two-piece spark plugs may separate during removal. Federal-Mogul's Champion brand has solved this issue with an innovative Champion Double Platinum Power "high-thread" plug (No. 7989) that replaces the conventional design with a single-piece configuration.

The new plug features an extended ceramic post that is said to virtually eliminate flashover and also carries the brand's exclusive Heat-Active alloy, which is said to enable it to more quickly reach optimum temperature range.

MSRP: starting at \$19.99
800-325-8886, www.federalmogul.com
Circle 204 on Reader Service Card.



Prolong Cleaner for Diesel Injectors and Valves

Prolong's Diesel Injector Cleaner is said to remove gum, deposits and sludge build-up from fuel injectors, restoring a full spray pattern in TDI and TDCI engines, allowing for quick starts and smooth, efficient vehicle operation. It should be used when the vehicle starts misfiring, running rough or getting poor gas mileage. Prolong Super Lubricants also produces a wide range of chemicals and car-care products, including engine, fuel and transmission additives; chassis and wheel lubricants; and vinyl and leather protectants.

MSRP: \$19.99
800-540-5823, www.prolong.com
Circle 205 on Reader Service Card.



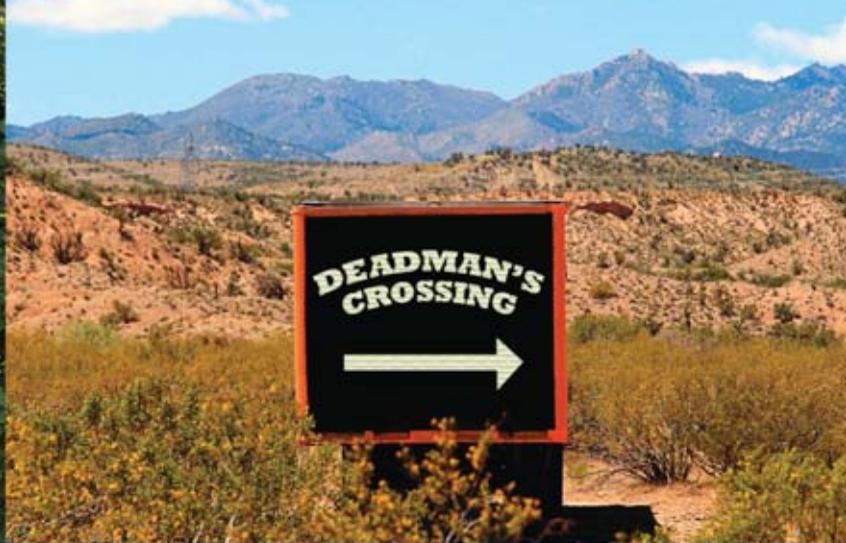
Duplex Receptacle With Twin USB Charger Ports



Any trailer can act as a USB-device charging station with the Hubbell USB Charger Receptacle. It offers two 15-amp, 120-volt AC outlets for traditional use, as well as twin USB ports; and is compatible with any USB 1.1, 2.0 or 3.0 electronic equipment to charge smart phones, digital readers, tablet computers, MP3 players, mobile phones or GPS units.

It's ideal for replacement of existing power receptacles, and installs in a standard electrical box deeper than 1.5 inches with internal AC/MC clamps. Offered in black, gray, ivory, light almond or white. 📱

MSRP: \$49.99
475-882-4838, www.hubbell-wirecon.com
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Nitrogen in Trailer Tires

Tires have traditionally been inflated with atmospheric air, which is actually a mixture of about 78 percent nitrogen, 21 percent oxygen and 1 percent other gases. It's free and generally it works out well, so why change, you ask. A number of RV manufacturers use nitrogen to inflate tires at the factory. The tire valves have green caps to denote this.



Advantages

Nitrogen offers several advantages that have brought it into favor. Nitrogen is considered to be an inert gas because it is not reactive with most materials. Nitrogen is also a dry gas that doesn't support moisture. Compressed air, which is used to inflate tires, contains moisture. This captive moisture also can cause problems with tire pressure monitoring systems, corrode wheels

and, in extreme cases, freeze inside the tire causing imbalance in cold weather, and obstruct tire valves when frozen. Minimizing wheel corrosion also helps bead sealing.

Tires look quite solid, but rubber consists of a porous structure of strands that are slightly permeable. Nitrogen molecules are said to seep less through the microscopic spaces that exist between a tire's rubber molecules. However, oxygen molecules are only about 3 percent smaller than a nitrogen molecule, not enough to be very significant.

Tire pressures vary with changes in temperature by about one pound per square inch (PSI) for each 10-degree-F change in temperature. Based on the "ideal gas law" there is no significant difference between the rates of expansion and contraction of nitrogen compared to air when moisture is absent, over the commonly encountered pressure and temperature ranges.

However, as temperature increases, liquid water vaporizes to become a gas and its volume expands. This causes tire pressure to be slightly higher than it would be in the case of a dry gas, such as nitrogen. Therefore, moisture in tires contributes to somewhat greater pressure variations

as tire temperatures change while driving, and those pressure changes also depend on the outside environmental temperatures and how much moisture content is in the air.

Sources

Some shops have on-site nitrogen generators that employ the selective permeation principle to remove oxygen and moisture from the shop's compressed air lines and capture nitrogen. The result is nearly pure nitrogen, which goes into a storage tank until it is used to inflate tires.

Nitrogen inflation never reaches 100 percent purity. To actually fill a tire with pure nitrogen, one would have to first create a vacuum inside the tire, or mount it inside a nitrogen pressure chamber. Tires should not be subjected to a vacuum to eliminate air, as it can distort and damage the internal tire structure.

Nitrogen equipment manufacturers recommend at least 93 to 95 percent purity to accomplish the desired benefits. This is normally accomplished by releasing the existing air from the tire, and then refilling the tire with nitrogen. The original purge/fill cycle may be repeated to achieve a higher percentage of nitrogen. Some units automatically perform several

Nitrogen inflation stations such as this Green Machine use the selective permeation principle to filter out oxygen from the air. This concentrates the percentage of nitrogen onsite, rather than having to bring in pressurized tanks to fill tires with nitrogen.



purge cycles, reducing labor.

If your vehicle's tires are filled with nitrogen and some needs to be added, but a nitrogen supply can't be found, use standard air. Although this decreases the nitrogen content, it's more important to keep tires properly inflated. Underinflation of tires is often the main cause of a blowout. If the tires run underinflated for some distance, they can become so hot they disintegrate, which can result in a loss of control or a crash.

Summary

Inflating tires with nitrogen does offer some minor benefits. The main downsides of nitrogen inflation are availability and cost. According to most proponents, nitrogen slows the loss of inflation pressure through rubber. Although this could reduce the frequency of tire pressure checks somewhat, it doesn't eliminate the need for regular tire pressure checks. Nitrogen-filled tires still require pressure to be checked over time,

and as ambient temperatures and atmospheric pressure varies, inflation pressures will vary.

We've seen some service centers that offer reasonable rates of about \$5 per tire, including adjustments for the life of the tire. Or, if you have a place that provides free nitrogen, go for it.

Goodyear Tire & Rubber Company, Michelin and the Rubber Manufacturers Association approve (but do not require or recommend) the use of nitrogen based on its ability to retain pressure better over a period of time. But as these companies note, most leaking is from valve stems, punctures and rim seals. Most tires don't fail from internal oxidation, and their real gaseous foe is ozone (O₃), not oxygen. Ozone and UV rays do far more tire damage than oxygen.

Therefore, instead of spending money on nitrogen, most RVers will derive more benefit from purchasing an accurate tire pressure gauge and a portable 12-volt DC compressor. This will enable them to check and

adjust tire pressures wherever they go, without paying to use a compressor at a gas station. And if a tire gets a slow leak, they can limp the vehicle in using the compressor to refill the leaking tire until the repair is made. If you really want to reduce tire problems on your trailer and/or tow vehicle, also invest in a tire pressure monitoring system.

NHTSA Delays Rear-Visibility Rules

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has again announced it delayed implementation of new auto rear visibility regulations. This was the fourth time it missed and postponed developmental deadlines. The new regulations for back-up cameras are intended to reduce blind zones behind vehicles. These often obscure the presence of people behind vehicles, with tragic results. Some automakers have already committed to adding backup mirrors as standard equipment on their upcoming vehicles. 🚗

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Winegard's ultra-thin Rayzar antenna pulls in HD-quality signals without programming costs

DIFFICULTY

1 2 3 4 5

TIME TO COMPLETE

15 MINUTES

TOOLS NEEDED

PLUG & PLAY

At the risk of dating myself, I remember jury-rigging a rabbit-ear antenna to a portable TV that we tried to use while RVing. After painful maneuvering, we were able to pull in a few over-the-air channels, but dealing with a snowy picture was part of the experience. Broadcast TV has taken a back seat to cable and satellite service, but the digital transformation has made major networks and a host of other independent channels readily available in HD clarity — for free — in most geographical markets.

Winegard introduced the Rayzar high VHF and UHF antenna with a new twist on “rabbit ears.” Actually, the Rayzar has no resemblance to the rabbit ear antenna, but it's the first one that can be used indoors that actually works.

Made of thin translucent plastic, the 13-by-12-inch antenna is designed for mounting in a window. While the antenna is multidirectional, users will find there are preferred locations for better reception. Suction cups that clip to the antenna are used to secure the thin plastic to the window. It's best to avoid metal window frames for better reception. The antenna is not designed for outside use.

Once the antenna is in place, the attached 15-foot mini cable is routed to the coax fitting in back of the TV. This is the connection that is typically used when hooking up to cable. Winegard offers a female-to-female barrel connector (FS-8100) to attach additional cable if needed to reach the intended TV.

The Rayzar is designed to pull in signals that are within a 25-to-30-mile range. Unless you're way out in the boonies, most towns and cities are within range to pick up at least a few channels. Users can go online at www.dtv.gov/maps and put in a zip code to find out which channels are within range. Not only will the channels be listed, but also the signal strength icons will give the user an idea of what to expect.

Once the antenna is in place and connected to the TV, the last step is to run a channel scan to locate and program available channels. This must be done every time the antenna is moved or the TV is disconnected from the antenna.

For some owners, this antenna could be redundant equipment, but for those who travel in older rigs with rooftop batwing antennas that are not suitable for digital reception, the Rayzar is a good replacement. It's also useful for those who have no antenna or one that has been damaged over the



The Rayzar antenna attaches to a window via suction cups. For better reception, avoid metal window frames.

years. The Rayzar is only compatible with digital tuners — those used in all TVs manufactured after March 1, 2007.

We field-tested the Rayzar in an area the aforementioned website listed as having only a few channels within reach. Once the antenna was placed on a side window, we were able to tune in more than 30 channels, with good clarity and audio. We pulled in all the networks along with many independent channels, which were broadcast in HD. Obviously, the website needs updating.

I personally opted out of a rooftop antenna because I rely on satellite TV. But over time I missed receiving local channels, which present the news and weather in the areas we're visiting. And when the trees and buildings restrict the view to the satellites, I'm glad I've tucked the Rayzar into a storage compartment.

The Rayzar retails for \$49.99, but can be found online and at Camping World for \$39.99 on sale most of the time. 📺

Winegard

800-288-8094,
www.winegard.com



RAYZAR RANGE » The Rayzar is designed to pull in signals that are within a 25-to-30-mile range. Go to www.dtv.gov/maps to find channels within range.

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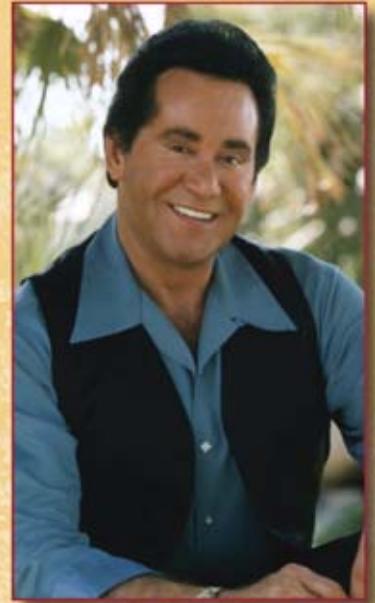
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Photo By Ron Behrmann



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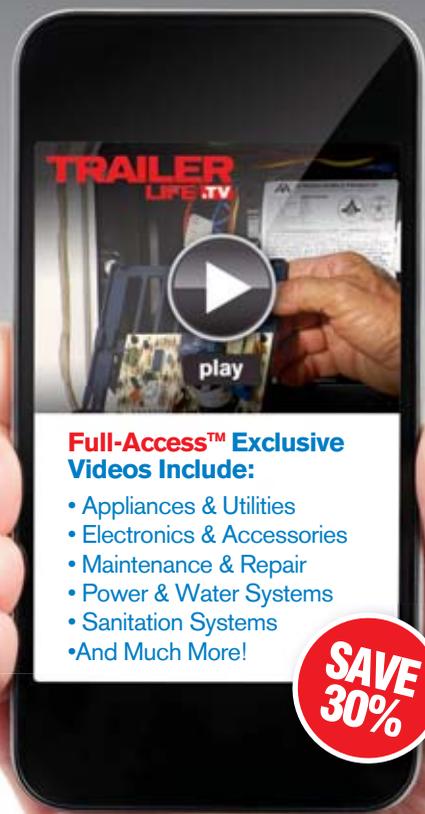
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GAS VS. DIESEL

Q I am curious about the gas/diesel truck debate. Considering fuel mileage, does the diesel truck get better mileage than the gas truck? Is the cost per mile about equal between a gas and diesel? I can never get a diesel owner to tell me the true mileage they get, they always say, "Well...."

Mike Cressy, via email

A Fuel economy can be 20 or 30 percent higher with diesels, with some reporting closer to 40 percent under ideal driving circumstances. Today's gas engines are becoming so efficient that the gas-to-diesel MPG gap is narrowing. So you can compare the prices of gas and diesel in the areas you intend to operate in with that in mind.

It's very difficult to make direct comparisons between the two types of engines because there are many variables. The trucks have a very different feel under load and different performance. Diesel trucks also have a considerably higher initial cost, and service — when needed — usually costs more, but diesels generally last longer and have higher resale value. Take a look at the truck's service requirements, how many quarts of costlier diesel-spec oil each oil change requires, the cost of the oil filter and fuel filters, and so on, and run those numbers out to 100,000 miles or so. Compare the costs to those from a gasoline-powered truck. That's one factor in figuring if the diesel is right for you. Therefore, how long you keep a vehicle also makes a big difference with regard to how soon the increased fuel economy will start paying back the higher-cost diesel-engine option and other related costs, including frequently more-expensive fuel. Diesels also often have a higher tow rating than gas models, so if you tow heavy trailers, a diesel may be a better choice. — **Ken Freund**

AC-GENERATOR SELECTION

Q We own a 2004 Northern Lite 9-foot, 6-inch camper that we bought used. The camper has two 12-volt batteries and no generator. We are looking for AC-generator recommendations on size and manufacturer. We assume an inverter/generator is appropriate, and that 2,000 watts is sufficient, but 3,000 watts will allow the use of all receptacles, water pump, entertainment center and furnace motor while

charging the batteries simultaneously and not tripping the AC-generator's breaker.

We also got a BatterySaver Pro solar panel with the camper (puts out about 13 volts without clouds) but no information as to how to use it properly. We assume we could connect in parallel to a camper battery on a sunny day, but the panel would not know when the battery(s) is/are fully charged. The camper has what appears to be a

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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sophisticated electrical regulator that might know when to cut off charging power from the solar panel, but we don't know if they are meant to do that.

Dave Dix and Celeste Zimmerman, Evergreen, Colorado

A The instruction manual for the solar panel, or the manufacturer's phone tech helpline, would be your best source of information on the solar panel's regulator. The regulator built into your camper might have been the one installed by the camper manufacturer specifically for use with the solar panel, or it could be something completely different. Without knowing the regulator's manufacturer, part number and so on, we're hesitant to comment if it's used with the solar panel or not.

In general, yes, a solar-panel regulator is designed to provide as much current as possible when charging the battery, then to cut back to a trickle charge when the battery is full to avoid damaging the battery. For the straight

scoop on solar-panel matters it's hard to beat the advice and hardware from AM Solar in Springfield, Oregon, (www.amsolar.com).

If you plan to run an air conditioner on the generator then the 3,000-watt generator is a must. If it's just the other 120-volt AC-powered accessories you have in mind, as long as you don't overdo it with hair dryers, a microwave, toaster oven and other high-drain hardware all on at the same time, the 2,000-watt model should do the job nicely. The water pump and furnace motor are 12-volt DC powered so they don't count as direct drains on the AC-generator output. An inverter-style generator is a good idea as it produces the cleanest, most consistent electrical current and that's important for some electronic devices. — **Jeff Johnston**

TRAILER HITCH HEIGHT

Q I have a 2010 Keystone 26B towed by a bone-stock Silverado 2500-HD pickup. I guess because the truck is a

heavy-duty model and has such strong springs, the trailer hitch weight barely squats it down at all when hitched. This is with the adjustable hitch in the lowest position. This causes the trailer to slope from front to back when hooked up due to not enough weight being on the hitch. Have you seen this before?

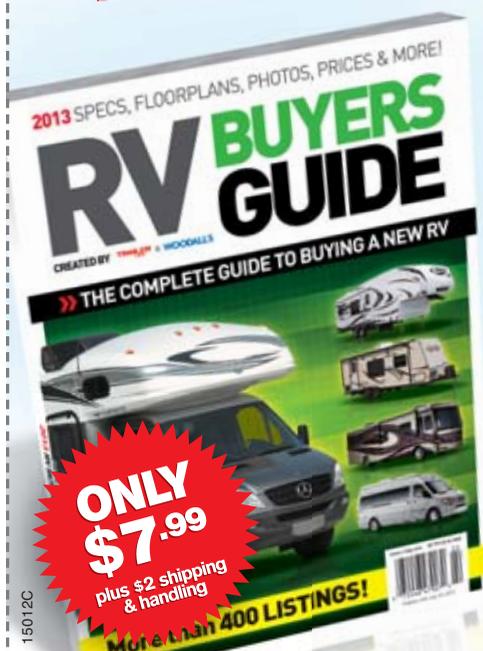
Chad, via email

A You didn't say if you're using a weight distributing (WD) or a dead-weight hitch, Chad, but in either case you can buy ball mounts that provide a significant degree of drop. You also didn't say which brand or model of adjustable hitch you were using, but if it's one of those with the adjustable head locked in place with a straight gear tooth rack, you'll probably have to replace it with a conventional head or WD ball mount with more drop.

While it doesn't hurt to have your trailer tipped up at the front end, other than for lowering the aft end and exposing hardware back there to

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dragging damage, having it sit level would be a better idea. Adjusting it so it rides closer to level or is just slightly tipped down in front may also improve your towing stability; at least, that's been my experience. — J.J.

TRAILER-BRAKE LOCKUP SOLUTION

I saw the Larry Thompson's letter "Brake Troubles" in the December 2012 issue about the brakes on his SunnyBrook locking up. I had a similar issue, and it also happened after having the backing plates worked on. It turned out to be that the backing plate had not been seated properly and was warped, causing the lockup. At least twice I cut the wire to that wheel magnet to prevent application and subsequent lockup, and then took it in for service. It was the second time that he discovered the warped backing plate.

Jim Dunmyer, Temperance, Michigan

A Thank you for passing that along, Jim. It's another good item to

check when diagnosing a brake problem. — J.J.

TRAILER SQUEAKS

We have a 2010 18-foot Puma travel trailer that has developed quite a few loud "rusty hinge" sounding squeaks. I have contacted Forest River and the only information they could give me was to contact the manufacturer of the axle. Any suggestions on what I can check, or is there a lube maintenance schedule for the chassis? If so, what?

Mark Tyler, Spokane, Washington

A Usually it's due to rust between the leaf springs, and dry pivots in the spring ends and shackles. The best way to find noises like this is to have someone inside jump up and down enough to make the trailer squeak, while an observer listens underneath to determine where it's coming from. If there are any grease fittings, grease them at least annually. Many trailers have non-greaseable shackles, so the best thing to do with these is to upgrade

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to premium greaseable units, available at Camping World or other RV shops. About the only thing you can do for springs is spray lube between the leaves. A so-called "dry lube" that leaves a graphite-type coating behind when the solvent carrier evaporates would be a good choice here and the dry aspect means it will be less prone to catching dust and grit, as compared to a wet-type lubricant.

For a truly robust squeak solution, some spring companies sell inserts made from slippery engineering plastic that fit between the leaves. These have ridges on their edges to keep them between the leaves, and the spring packs must be disassembled to install them. Once in place, they prevent metal-to-metal contact, which quiets the springs. They also provide a slippery contact surface, which can moderately soften the ride by allowing the leaves to move more freely against each other. — K.F.

ANOTHER TIRE QUESTION

Q I have a tire question that I've had about six different answers on from RV dealers. We have a fifth-wheel trailer with a dry weight of 7,794 pounds and its tires came filled with nitrogen gas. The tire size is ST225/75R15 with a 65-psi-cold tire pressure printed on the tire. I have two questions: Can I mix the gas with air? (There is no one in the area who carries the gas.) How much air/gas pressure should I keep in the tires? (I had work done on it at a large RV service center and it now has 52 psi in all tires; previously, it had 62 psi.)

David Miller, Anchorage, Alaska

A It doesn't matter whether there is nitrogen or air in the tires; use the same pressure regardless. (See *Performance Corner, Nitrogen in Trailer Tires* on page 62.) You can mix them as well, although the straight air will dilute the claimed advantages of using nitrogen. You may be able to find nitrogen at a local welding or industrial gas supplier if your local tire shops don't have it available. In order to determine what pressure to use in the tires, you need to weigh the fully loaded trailer

(both axles) and divide the weight by the number of tires. Then look this weight up in a load-inflation table, which is available on tire dealers' and manufacturers' websites. Until you know how much weight is actually on the tires, to be safe, you should run the pressure that is listed on the sidewalls. — K.F.

REFRIGERATOR POWER

Q We have a 2008 Gulfstream 21-foot travel trailer with a two-way refrigerator. I would like to run it when traveling, but I am not comfortable running the gas while driving. I tried to connect it to an inverter. This runs the refrigerator fine but runs my battery down in less than an hour even when driving. I have placed the inverter as close to the battery as possible. That helped a little but there's still the problem. My question is, should I give up on this idea and run the LP-gas, or do I need a stronger charge line to the camper?

Mike Bonadonna, Inverness, Florida

A You didn't mention what size alternator your tow vehicle has, nor what the current draw of the refrigerator is. Running on 120 volts AC doesn't work for most folks because of the current draw. There is also a power loss when you convert 12 volts DC to 120 volts AC. You might be able to make it work with a higher-output alternator. Or just run the fridge on gas like many others. If you do, make sure you shut it off in gas stations and other places where it's required. — K.F.

IDLING INQUIRY

Q Something I've not seen in your column: Idling. Back when I was a kid (and there was a war going on) I remember that my dad warned me not to idle a car very long because unburned gas would bypass the rings and pollute or thin the oil. Many decades later I'm wondering if this still holds true. Is excessive warming of an engine on a cold morning, or leaving the engine running to use the heater while waiting for my wife while she's

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shopping, causing any problems? There have been a lot of advances in metallurgy over the years and I'm assuming rings should be better.

Ray Jordan, Colorado Springs, Colorado

A You're right, Ray, things have changed a great deal since you were a kid, but that doesn't have much to do with why a vehicle should or should not be idled for long periods of time. Combustion blow-by happens with almost any vehicle vintage and wasn't just for old cars. For today's modern engines with precise electronic fuel controls, wasting that fuel is the worst side effect of too much idling, especially during cold weather. An old carbureted engine could "load up" due to running rich at idle, but today's engines just meter the fuel down and use what they need. If you need to wait a long time for your wife, I'd suggest going inside the store rather than sitting with the engine running. — **J.J.**

SOFA-BED SNAFU

Q I have a 2004 Forest River SV233T Surveyor expandable with a sofa bed. I bought it used in October this year. When I store the bed it does not retract fully. The left side is the problem while the right side tries to retract. It has one electric motor and a piston shaft connected to a pillow block (my description) that's fastened to two hex bolts. One is screwed down completely to a nut, while the other side is partly fastened but not fully. The left side is, from what I can tell, not fully engaged, but the other side is down beyond the threads. The pillow block does not have threads.

What can I do to correct the bed so that I don't need to hand-move the left-side bed to complete the retracting of the sofa?

Frank Zalar, via email

A This type of mechanical problem is tough to diagnose, Frank, since we don't know the make and model of the sofa bed, we don't have a blueprint or owner's manual for the bed, we haven't seen it in person and your description leaves us a bit puzzled. It seems like the drive mechanism works on the right side and not on the left. First, I'd remove all cushions and obstructions that limit access to the mechanism. Run it out to its full extension — from your note I'm deducing that it extends fine, it just won't retract — and watch the moving parts and how they work relative to each other.

When you try and retract the unit, keep an eye on the left-side moving parts and look for something that twists, lifts, drops or otherwise doesn't do what it should under pressure. There could be a missing bolt that allows movement where there shouldn't be any, or a bolt or screw adjustment that's too far one way or the other.

It's possible the drive mechanism is OK but there may be some kind of bind on the left side. One of the hinges or sliding rail points could be too tight due to a poorly installed fastener. Check for proper lubrication of the parts, too. With a close enough inspection I think you can analyze and hopefully repair what's

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wrong with your sofa bed. Otherwise, a trip to your local dealer repair facility will be in order. — J.J.

TRAILER STORAGE PLATFORM

I have a 33-foot Mountaineer fifth-wheel by Keystone. It has a rear kitchen with the 60-gallon freshwater tank and the gray-water tank also in the rear. It also has a standard 4-inch-square steel bumper. I want to install a hitch receiver and a platform so I can carry a 4,000-watt AC generator that weighs about 110 pounds. Do you think that this is a good idea? I tow the trailer with a 2006 Dodge Ram 2500 quad cab that has a payload capacity of approximately 2,534 pounds and the weight of my kingpin is 2,040 pounds, so with everything else and the generator in the truck I'm really pushing my limit.

Jerry, via email

Yes, you can build and use a storage platform for your trailer's aft end. It's done frequently, but it's also not a project you should launch into half-cocked. That's a lot of weight hanging out there and you need to be sure it's done right. Keep the teeter-totter effect in mind.

Before you decide to proceed, you need to gather some weight information. Take your trailer, loaded and ready for a trip, to a public scale and weigh its rear axles, then weigh the overall trailer. Find the trailer's gross axle weight rating (GAWR) on its data tag and deduct the weight of the axles from the GAWR and you'll know how much weight you can add without overloading the axles. Likewise, deduct the trailer's gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) from its measured weight to determine your remaining payload capacity.

You can't depend on that stock rear bumper to support the AC-generator mounting hardware, as it's not strong enough. There are no stock hitch receivers available for trailers due to the variety of trailer sizes and frame configurations so you'll need to have a custom shop fabricate a hitch receiver that mounts to the frame, not the bumper. With luck, a factory hitch receiver designed for a tow rig can be modified, as

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that would save some cash. The fabricator can then add extra receiver pockets or other fittings as needed to facilitate supporting the storage platform. Your truck's payload capacity and hitch weight should be OK because weight added to the trailer's aft end will transfer some weight from the front end. — J.J.

EXPEDITION STEERING

Q I have a 2003 Ford Expedition XLT with a 5.4L engine and trailer tow package and tow a 2005 Jayco 29N travel trailer. The problem is that the trailer's 770-pound hitch weight is extraordinarily heavy. When I fill the water tank and the two 7-gallon LP-gas cylinders, install a battery and have a spare tire under the A-frame, the weight is close to 1,000 pounds. Then, put stuff in the clothes cabinet, refrigerator and so on and it gets obscene. And don't forget the stuff that goes into the Expedition. To counter things, I have put exercise weights in the back of the trailer to get the hitch weight to around 900 pounds,

which is the limit for the Expedition. The front end of the Expedition is affected by some of the squat of its rear end. This can make the steering flaky, especially if there are strong crosswinds. I would like to get heavier springs for the rear of the Expedition to better handle the load, but no one seems to make them. Do you have any suggestions?

Mike Lawler, via email

TUNDRA TOWING TROUBLES

Q I purchased a 2013 Outback 298RE travel trailer that weighs about 8,000 pounds loaded. I am pulling it with a 2007 Toyota Tundra Crewmax with a towing limit of 10,200 pounds. I'm using an Equal-i-zer 4-Point weight-distributing hitching system. When I hitch up it drops my truck bed about 3 inches, and when I drive I feel every bump in the road. When I purchased the trailer, I traveled from Colorado to Michigan to get it and they set up the hitching system on my truck. When I towed it back across Interstate 80, I felt like a

bobble-head doll with the bounce in my truck every time I crossed a seam in the highway or bump. Some say it need shocks and some say air bags: I just don't want to be disappointed to do one and it is not the solution. I've talked with fellow RVers and we all seem to complain about the same thing with Toyotas.

Robert Wrigley, via email

A First, Mike, you don't need heavier rear springs on your Expedition, and Robert, you don't need air bags and you only need shocks if yours are clearly worn out, but shocks aren't the main solution to the problem. This subject comes up a lot in regards to towing stability and we hate to sound like a broken record but it seems like you both need to adjust the spring bars on your weight-distributing hitches. Tighten the spring bars and the hitch will transfer more of the hitch weight to the front axle. This will improve steering stability and raise the trucks' aft ends back where they should be.

Mike, if you're using a dead-weight load-carrying hitch, not a WD hitch, you need to seriously reconsider your towing hardware. The presence of a factory towing package in a tow vehicle, even if it includes some type of auto-leveling rear suspension for example, doesn't mean you should slap the trailer on a ball and go. The WD hitch distributes the hitch weight and creates a safer, more stable towing setup.

Unless you plan to work out while in the campground, it's a shame you have to carry those exercise weights. That's a lot of unnecessary pounds on the road. Perhaps you can have the trailer's spare tire remounted out back on the rear bumper or move some cargo you put in the Expedition to the same space where you stored the exercise weights to better distribute the load.

Robert, check the following details in the "Bucking Truck" letter for some thoughts on crossing the highway seams and feeling the bumps. — J.J.

BUCKING TRUCK

Q I have a 2001 Silverado extended cab 3500 dually that I use to pull a 28-foot fifth-wheel. The hook-up is with a

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gooseneck hitch adapter and ball. When I go over rough road or the transition from smooth road to a bridge, the truck starts bucking and bouncing. I have to apply the brakes and slow down before the bucking will stop. I have tried to see if it would stop on its own, but it gets worse the longer I let it buck/bounce.

Do you have any thoughts or suggestions on how to remedy this issue? I really like the gooseneck hook-up and would prefer not to go back to the normal fiver bed hitch.

Newton Bruce, via email

A The problem isn't your gooseneck hitch or adapter, Bruce; it's a combination of the road surface and your truck-and-trailer setup. This happens to some people on certain types of roads, mainly when it's an older concrete highway with regularly spaced expansion joints. The combination of road speed, your truck's wheelbase and suspension stiffness and the distance from your truck's axles to the trailer's axles are the culprits.

The front tires go bump over the joint, then the back tires go bump, then the front tires bump again and so on and that sets up a front-to-back seesaw action.

A Ford technical spokesman, whose department did some testing on this, reported it's also a factor of frame flexing. A truck with a longer wheelbase, like an extended or crew cab may react more than a shorter-wheelbase truck. Add in the factor of the trailer's tires going bump over the joints and you can set up a real cacophony of porpoising that only eases up when you slow down.

The best you can do is make sure that suspension hardware, shock absorbers and your denture adhesive are in good condition when you take on those sections of road, then slow down as needed, as you suggested in your note. Good luck! - J.J. 🚚

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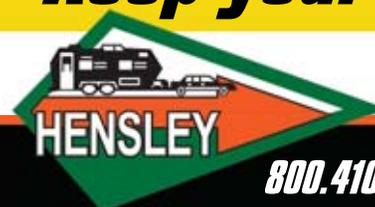
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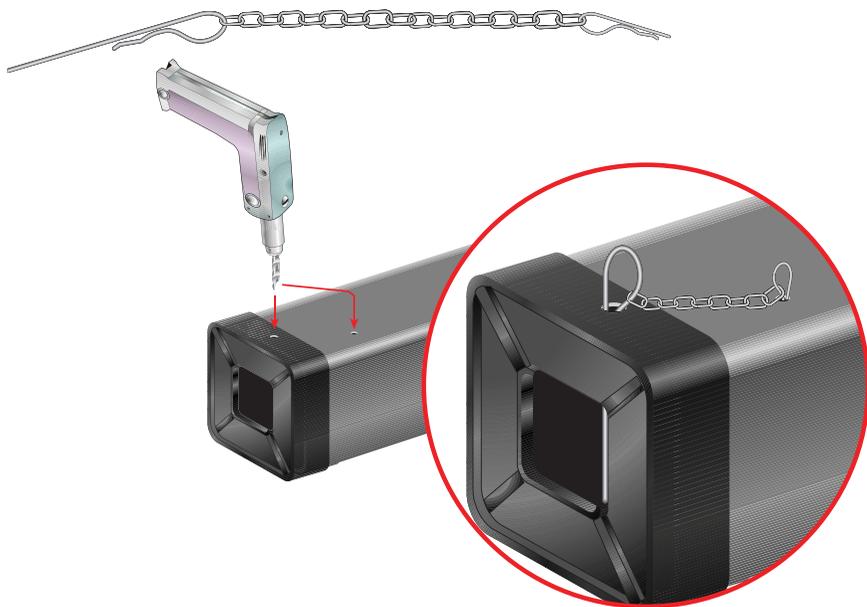
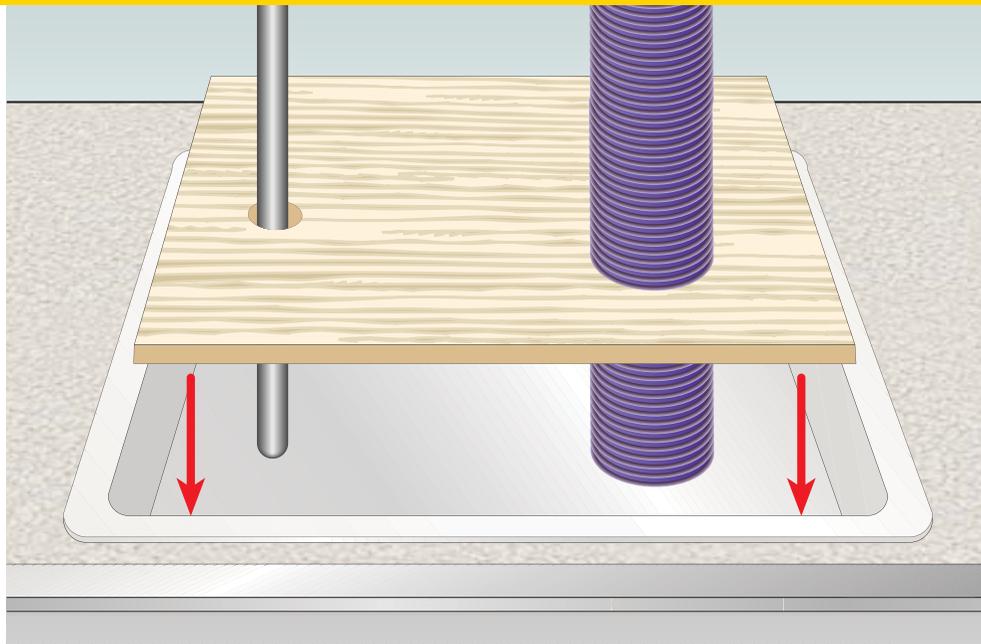


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Keep Out Critters

My trailer has a large waste-hose hatch that leaves a gap around the hose. This gap can allow critters and cold air into the compartment when the trailer is parked or I am camped in frigid environments. The solution I devised was to use a piece of plywood with a hole cut to the size of the diameter of the waste hose to seal around it. Placing the stick-on weather stripping to the around-the-bottom edges of the board creates a good seal to deter the critters and cold weather.

Danny Lindstrom, Salinas, California



Secure End Caps

Have you ever ended up in the campground and found that you've lost the end cap off the rear bumper that holds your sewer hose in, and that you've maybe even lost the hose? This happened to me, so I found a fix. I drilled a small hole in the bumper top about 1-inch and close to the end of one side, and a slightly larger hole about half an inch from the end of the bumper and through the top of the plastic end cap. Then I used a small length of chain (about 5 or 6 inches long) and strung it from each of the holes, using cotter pins. That way, I can secure the end cap until I need to unpin and remove it when I want to access the sewer hose inside the bumper.

Jim Rowse, Middleton, Idaho

QUICK FIX

No More Bed Bounce

We bought a trailer that had a bed with underbed storage, but the lifts were not strong enough to keep the bed platform from bouncing when we traveled over rough road surfaces and the bed would bounce up and down, as evidenced by the ruffled bedding and pillows all over when we arrived at camp. I fixed this by going to a hardware store and purchasing a couple of latches originally intended for use on wooden windows to lock the bed platform down, and installed them on either side of the bed platform. Now when we travel, no more bouncing bed.

Russel Gendolf, North Providence, Rhode Island

ILLUSTRATIONS BY BILL TIPTON

To send your submission, write to: 10-Minute Tech, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001 or email: 10minutetech@trailerlife.com. Please include an illustration or photo if applicable. *Trailer Life* will pay you \$35 for original 10-Minute Tech ideas.

Where SPAM Began

Home of the meat that went worldwide



This is Minnesota and the town is Austin. But the name painted across the front of the Convention & Visitors Bureau is "SPAM Town USA," as well it should be. This is where in 1937 it all began for SPAM – SPAM, as in SPiced-hAM, fully cooked, ready-to-eat, in a can with a flat front, now with a pull-tab top.

It's sold on every continent in the world – no market in Antarctica – but is still as totally American as baseball and a Big Mac. Although Hormel Foods makes it in several places, including Denmark and Australia, SPAM's hometown is Austin, Minnesota.

It took on iconic status during World War II, like Lucky Strike cigarettes, Zippo lighters and Betty Grable. During the war, more than a million pounds of SPAM were shipped abroad to feed allied troops. Our guys often ate it for breakfast, lunch and dinner. They called it "ham that didn't pass its physical," and "meatloaf without basic training."

CBS newscaster Edward R. Murrow reported from London in 1942 that Christmas dinners were not lavish, but there was enough SPAM for everybody. Today, the United Kingdom is second only to the United States in countries with the number of "SPAM fans." South Korea is third.

On the islands of the South Pacific during the war, Marines shared it with the natives. It caught on. More SPAM is consumed per capita on the Mariana Islands today than anywhere. On Guam, the average person consumes an average of 16 cans of SPAM per year. McDonald's on Guam and Saipan even have it on their menus.

How many of those little, four-sided cans have they sold since 1937? A company spokesperson told me that they are pushing the 8-billion mark. In the United States alone, they sell 100 million cans a year. Per capita, more SPAM is sold in Hawaii than any other state. Next in line is Alaska, Arkansas, Texas and Alabama. Your guess as to why is as good as anybody's! Answers here range from cultural tastes to economics.

"I was on a bus tour on Maui one time. The guide was telling us about the many ways Hawaiians use SPAM. He called it 'Hawaiian Steak.'" Cheryl Corey, a lifelong Austin resident, laughed as she told the story. "I had forgotten that



Nobody can resist the photo opportunities in the SPAM Museum — Bill included. Being easy to store and handle, SPAM was a staple in the diet of our GIs in World War II. Depicted in the museum is General Eisenhower, a couple of infantrymen in Europe and a can of SPAM.

I was wearing a SPAM T-shirt. I'll tell ya, when we all got off the bus, I was an instant celebrity."

A dozen restaurants in Austin have it on their menus. "Creatively" is the only limit as to how it is served.

Across from the Visitors Bureau is the SPAM Museum. It's one of the few museums in the country — not run by the federal government — that's free. In the lobby is a wall of SPAM — 3,500 cans. At a rate of a can a day, that wall would feed any one of us for almost 10 years. Faced with that long-term prospect — with all due respect to the SPAM people — I suspect we would be willing, even desperate, to share rather quickly.

This museum is 16,500 square feet of pure fun. It's like walking through a cartoon. It has buttons to push, games to play and screens to watch. Kids love it! But it's also full of memory prods that take us back to when life was simpler, slower and more orderly. And who had freezers back then?

SPAM has been part of American life for three-quarters of a century. It ranks up there on the nostalgia ladder with eating ice cream with a wooden spoon and drinking Coke from a bottle. This is a meaty-filled museum that you leave feeling good, and maybe hungry. And admission is free.

Welcome to America's Outback. 🗺️

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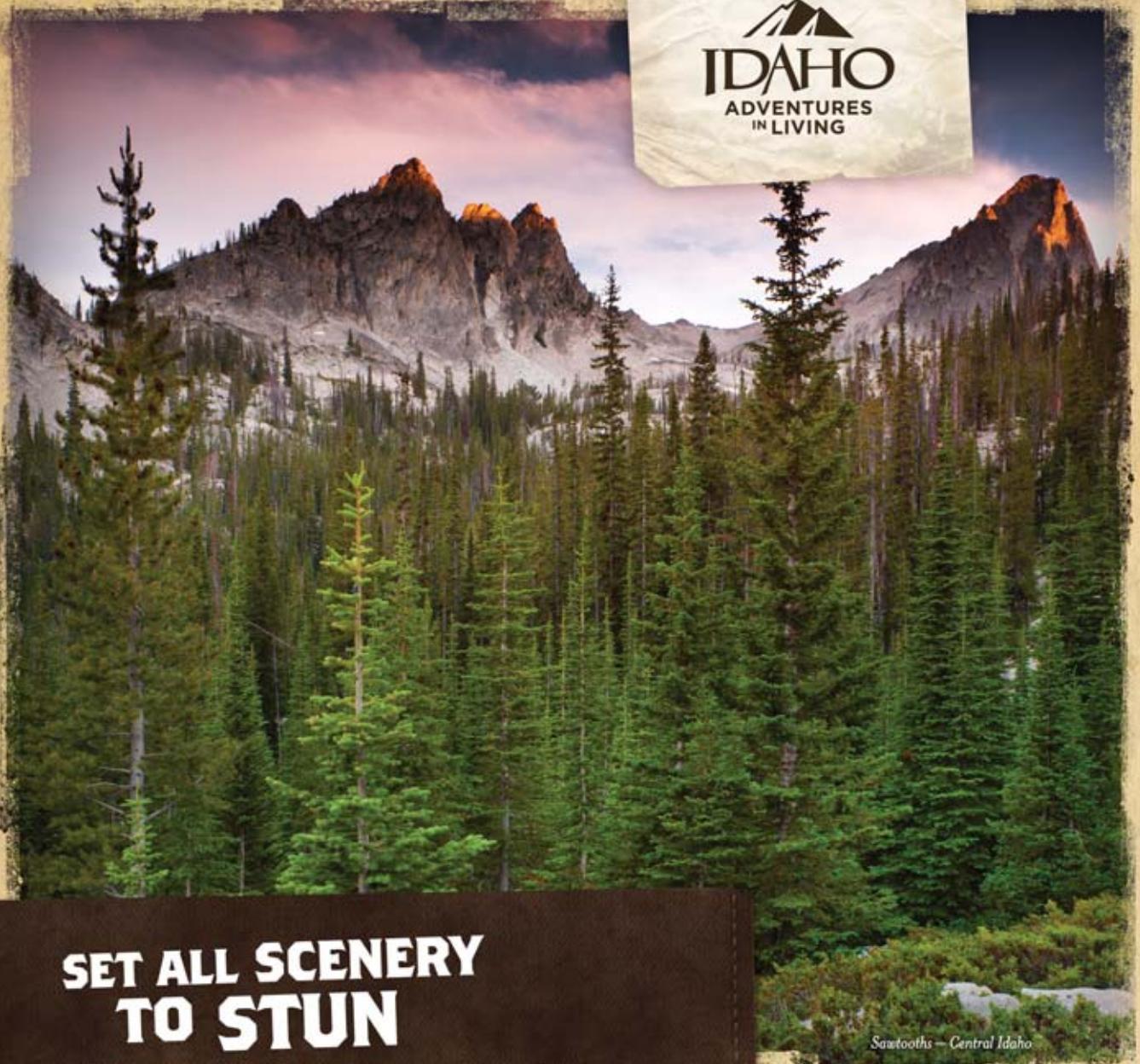
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