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# TRAILER LIFE

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JUNE 2013

## Camping in the Outback

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Florida's Sailfish Capital | Billings, Montana: Brimming With History

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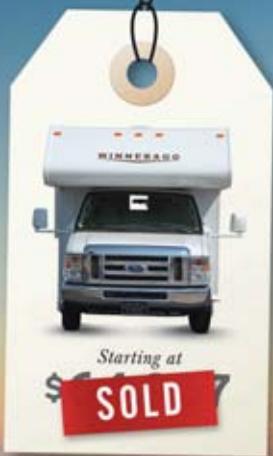
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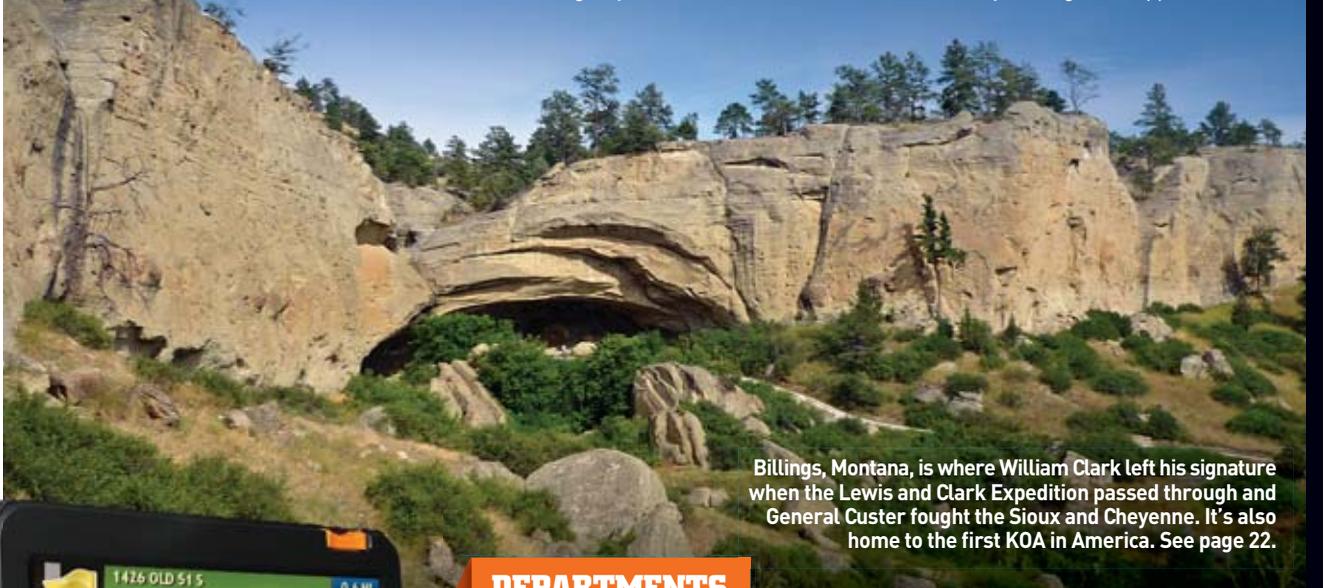
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Billings, Montana, is where William Clark left his signature when the Lewis and Clark Expedition passed through and General Custer fought the Sioux and Cheyenne. It's also home to the first KOA in America. See page 22.

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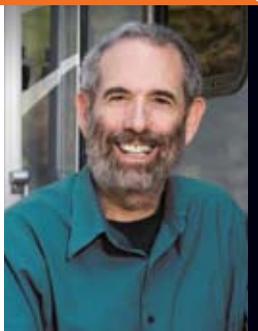
Good Sam's GPS has information and navigation to thousands of campgrounds (Page 10)

**On the cover:** Keystone's Outback, being towed by the Ram 1500, offers many recreational options. Photo by Stuart Bourdon.



# Lightweight Towables

## What's not to love?



When my wife, Lynne, and I bought our first travel trailer in 1971, we were pretty proud owners. It was a 13-foot Cardinal, "fully" equipped with a dinette that converted into a huge bed, a nice galley with a sink, a hand-operated water pump, a stove and an oven, a large closet suitable for a portable toilet and even an LP-gas light fixture. The trailer was light enough to be towed by our car (a real sedan) and we were in hog heaven.

About a month later, we traded it for a 19-foot self-contained trailer.

It wasn't that we didn't enjoy the diminutive trailer, we simply figured out very quickly that having a lightweight trailer didn't fulfill our needs. Days after we bought the new trailer, which was considerably heavier, we bought a pickup to tow it with.

In those days, a small trailer — and there were many of them on the market — was Spartan, offering enough amenities to get out of the weather and sleep on a comfortable bed. Some of these small trailers even became industry icons during their time and have gone on to become classics.

Fast forward to today, and trailers like our first seem to be more popular with hardy souls who find self-containment and extra comfort unnecessary — you know the hardcore campers who prefer to be closer to nature. Nothing wrong with that attitude; I love nature as much as anyone, but being in a fully equipped RV is much more satisfying to our lifestyle.

Just because the majority of RVers like the comforts of home, doesn't mean they want a big rig. So we asked veteran writer, Bob Ashley, to survey the field and report on lightweight travel trailers that offer higher-end amenities typically found in larger rigs. The results are eye-opening.

Lightweight composite materials and improved construction techniques have allowed manufacturers to produce trailers that are longer, more fully equipped, and in some cases, downright luxurious. These trailers are a far cry from that first trailer we bought more than 40 years ago, but almost as light.

As you can see by the list of examples found in the article, *Loaded and Light*, on page 62, giving up features is not an option when it comes to lightweight trailers capable of being towed by small SUVs and trucks. We're talking about leather furniture, large refrigerators, handsome wall coverings, a full complement of appliances and even sophisticated entertainment systems and fireplaces.

The new lightweights are certainly not short on comfort. 🚐

– Bob Livingston, publisher

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### Rally Time

Check out all the fun happening this June in Syracuse, New York. Not only is it the site of the Camping World/Good Sam Rally (June 13-16), it's home to canal boat rides, lots of museums and even a zoo (see page 9).

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**Traveling Companions**

I read with interest Stuart Bourdon's April test, *Traveling Companions*. Impressive stats on the Ford F-150. I currently tow a similar travel trailer with my Tundra and its 5.7-liter V-8 and am lucky to get 9 MPG while towing. The spec chart showed MPG Solo/Towing to be 29.1/12. Is this correct? That's unheard of for a pickup truck solo and 12 MPG while towing an 8,500-pound trailer is very good as well.

I noted the truck had a 3.73 rear end (axle ratio) that is beefed up. If the solo figure was a misprint I can understand and figured it ought to be 19.1 MPG, which is still very good. My Tundra gets 17 MPG best overall and towing 9 MPG is best as mentioned.

**John A. Thompson, Via email**

*Actually, the F-150's mpg was 26.1, less than the reported 29.1, which is still excellent fuel mileage. SB*

Regarding Stuart Bourdon's *Traveling Companions*, about the Starcraft Travel Star 294 RESA and Ford F-150, this is a combination I would never buy. The trailer is very close to being overweight by itself, as soon as you load it with food and clothing. Then, this truck can hardly handle this load. When you put a family in the truck and then connect this trailer, it'll end up overloaded. There are too many people pulling heavy loads with half-ton pickups. It is much safer to overbuy than to underbuy. I have a 1-ton pickup pulling my 10,000-pound trailer so I can carry the whole family, a bunch of tools and anything else I want to carry without getting overloaded. Sure, it cost more, but safety first.

**Ken Locke, Colonial Beach, Virginia**

**Gas vs. Diesel**

In April's *RV Clinic*, in "Gas vs. Diesel,"

**Comfy Fold-Up Bed**

We received our April issue and want to respond to Terry Rohde's letter ("Easy Going") about the Lance 2185. We had narrowed our search down to a Lance and were leaning toward the 2185 in order to have room to store bikes inside while we are traveling and bunk space for the grandkids (and their parents) when we visit. We purchased the model with the fold-up bed/couch conversion and are glad we did.

We have just returned from our first trip and are happy to say the bed was very comfortable — no crease or fold felt! We did not use an extra padded mattress cover, just a regular cover. It was nice to have the extra seating space when family was visiting, and the grandkids loved the bunks.

The trailer performed well in spite of colder-than-normal temperatures. On our first night, the outside temps were in the high 20s, while inside, we were cozy in the mid 60s. We do have the four-season package.

**Barbara and Bill Arnold  
Randolph, New Hampshire**



Ken Freud was right that diesel is better. I had both. The 460 gas truck got 7 to 8 MPG towing, and 12 MPG on the highway. The 6.0-liter diesel got 11 to 12 MPG towing and 22 MPG on the highway. Even with the fuel-price difference, I more than paid for the diesel engine, and it pulled the same trailer a lot better. Oil changes were more than twice as far apart with diesel. I had the gas truck for 13 years and the diesel for 8 years. I now have a V-10 gas engine in a motorhome that gets 7 MPG.

**James Wentworth, Irwinton, Georgia**

**Enjoying the Outback**

I've been reading Bill Graves' column, *America's Outback*, for years and wanted to let you know how much I enjoy them. When we get a new issue of *Trailer Life* I usually turn to the back page to read his column first.

I read his April one about the SPAM museum in Minnesota. We will be traveling near there this summer

and I haven't been able to find the answer to my question. I can't get a human on their phone! Is there RV parking at the museum? We have a 35-foot fifth-wheel. We probably will want to tour the museum and then continue on down the road.

Keep up the great work!

**Beth Smith, Via email**

*Beth, the museum has no special RV parking, but the parking lot is large and street parking is also available. BG*

**f FACEBOOK POLL**

**How old were you when you took your first RV trip?**

**41% 10 AND UNDER**

**27% 21-39**

**16% 11-20**

**16% OVER 40**

**TALK TO US!**

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



### J-Shaped Tool Alternative

After reading Tom Morr's April article (*Bearing Down*) on packing wheel bearings, I thought that I might offer a suggestion. The article shows a "J-shaped tool" that was used to remove the grease seal. Most people do not have this in their toolkit. On most wheel-bearing assemblies, the inside bearing cone has an inside diameter that is larger than the spindle nut. Once the hub assembly is removed, screw the nut back onto the spindle three or four turns. Then carefully place the hub back over the spindle nut and through the bearing cone. Slide the hub on the spindle a short distance and then with the weight of the hub riding on the spindle and while holding the hub assembly with both hands, yank the hub off of the spindle. The nut will stop the bearing cone and the seal and both will remain on the spindle.

This method has the advantage of saving the seal so that it may be reused if a new seal is not available. It also reduces the chance of damaging the bearing's roller cage, which would require replacing the bearing.

**Britton Misker, Goreville, Illinois**

### Alaska's Richardson Highway

I have a daughter and son-in-law who live in Alaska, and I have been there 10 times. The letter in the April issue from Pete Wellenstein is not correct when he says that the Richardson Highway is gravel and rented motorhomes and campers are not allowed. My Alaska family had a boat in Valdez for many years. I have traveled the Richardson Highway from Delta Junction to Valdez many times and it is a paved road. During the summer they usually have a small section under construction. We have always met a lot of rented motorhomes and campers going and coming on the highway. I would hate

to have people not visit Valdez, as it is a wonderful place to see.

**Edwin Howe, Bryant Pond, Maine**

### High Five to MOR/ryde

We would like to relate a very great experience we had at MOR/ryde International in Elkhart, Indiana, on some warranty work we recently had done on our fifth-wheel trailer. We were given very clear instructions on where to stay and preparation for the night before. Work was started early

in the morning and we were treated very well the entire morning. The people we dealt with were friendly and courteous. The waiting room and accommodations were exceptional. Work was performed quickly and we were on our way.

From the receptionists Taryn and Vivianne, to inside sales Todd and James, to technician Sergio, we couldn't have been treated better. Thank you to MOR/ryde International.

**Don and Rita McGuffin, Via email** 📧

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Syracuse has restaurants offering food from all over the world, museums, theaters, zoos and parks. It's also host to many events, including June's Camping World/Good Sam Rally. The city is close to Niagara Falls and the Adirondacks.



## See it All in Syracuse

This central New York city has plenty to offer RVers

by Laura Michaels

Step aboard a full-size canal boat and experience history within the Erie Canal Museum. Housed in the Weighlock Building, itself listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the museum's hands-on exhibits preserve the influence of the Erie Canal on the history of central New York — and the United States.

Built in 1850, the Syracuse Weighlock was one of seven canal-boat-weighing stations on the Erie Canal and is the only surviving building of its kind in the world. The Erie Canal itself was built between 1817 and 1825, the first all-water link between the Atlantic seaboard and the Great Lakes. At 363 miles long, it cut through forests and rocky cliffs, using 83 lift locks to overcome hills. Renamed the New York State Canal System it continues to use several old routes and is now open to pleasure and fishing boats.

Visitors to the museum start outside by exploring the Nathan, a full-size canal boat. Inside, displays

re-create the weighlock office, a typical tavern and general store. Walk through the inside of a packet boat, a passenger boat that carried people on the canal for about 4 cents per mile. A \$4 per person donation is requested for self-guided tours; docent-led tours are \$5.

Not far from the museum is Thornden Park, near the campus of Syracuse University. A stroll through the park brings visitors to E.M. Mills Rose Garden, which boasts more than 5,000 rosebushes and 29 classes of roses. Among these are old garden roses, floribundas and climbing roses, all with peak color in June.

Syracuse is also home to Rosamond Gifford Zoo and its more than 700 animals. Check out the Lion Corridor and Penguin Coast, along with the Asian Elephant Preserve and its seven pachyderm residents. The Wildlife Trail provides views of gray wolves, Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep, Amur tigers, red wolves, white-lipped deer, red pandas, snow

leopards and many more animals.

Don't forget, Syracuse plays host to the Camping World/Good Sam Rally June 13-16. To find out more, visit [www.therally.com](http://www.therally.com).

**Syracuse Convention & Visitors Bureau**, 315-470-1910, [www.visitsyracuse.org](http://www.visitsyracuse.org)

### SUMMER IN SYRACUSE

#### JUNE 7-8 Taste of Syracuse

Head to Clinton Square for the area's largest food and music festival. 315-471-9597, [www.tasteofsyracuse.com](http://www.tasteofsyracuse.com)

#### JUNE 11-OCTOBER 8 Downtown Syracuse Farmers Market

More than 50 vendors offer local produce, cheeses, baked goods, flowers and crafts. 315-422-8284, [www.downtownsyracuse.com](http://www.downtownsyracuse.com)

#### JUNE 21-23 59th Annual Polish Festival

Celebrate Polish culture in downtown Syracuse with food, music and crafts. 315-687-1076, [www.polishscholarship.com](http://www.polishscholarship.com)

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## Good Sam GPS

Good Sam Enterprises LLC and Rand McNally have partnered to launch a suite of navigation products designed "to meet the needs of today's outdoor consumer." The first product to launch is the Good Sam GPS, powered by Rand McNally. It provides custom navigation on suitable routes, taking into account the specific vehicle or vehicle/trailer combination. Enter vehicle attributes, including the length of trailers, if propane is being carried, and vehicle and trailer height, and the Good Sam GPS provides navigation on roads suitable for the customer's specific vehicle configuration.

Information and navigation to more than 2,000 Good Sam affiliated campgrounds, plus 12,000 additional parks and campgrounds across the United States and Canada is programmed in the device. The GPS provides information on thousands of points of interest. Preprogrammed track locations for NASCAR fans are also included.

Chairman and CEO of Good Sam Marcus Lemonis



noted, "Customers will appreciate an increased ease of planning and navigating to their destinations, such as events from horse shows to trade shows, national parks, campgrounds, lakes and trails as well as all of the great places to see along the way, with products customized for them." Other features include a 7-inch, high-definition full-color screen; a large and high-volume speaker; turn-by-turn spoken directions; pre-programmed Points of Interest; lifetime map updates; and Wi-Fi connectivity.

Additional products are slated for release in 2013.

The Good Sam GPS is available at **Camping World stores** and [www.campingworld.com](http://www.campingworld.com) for \$329.99.

## NEWSWIRE

### NATIONAL PARKS



### Top Parks for 2012

Last year, more than 282 million people visited America's national parks, an increase of more than 3 million over 2011, and the sixth highest annual visitation in the history of the National Park Service. The 10 most-visited parks for 2012 are:

1. Great Smoky Mountains...9,685,829
2. Grand Canyon.....4,421,352
3. Yosemite .....3,853,404
4. Yellowstone .....3,447,729
5. Rocky Mountain.....3,229,617
6. Zion .....2,973,607
7. Olympic .....2,824,908
8. Grand Teton.....2,705,256
9. Acadia .....2,431,052
10. Cuyahoga Valley .....2,299,722

### BUSINESS



### Thetford Celebrates 50 Years

On May 1, Thetford Corp., marked its 50th year as one of the world's leading suppliers of sanitation products for the RV market. In 1963, Frank Sargent and his two sons founded the company. Over the years, Thetford's achievements have included low-profile and low-water-use plastic RV toilets, the first two-piece portable toilet (Porta Potti), and the first holding tank slide-action valve. Headquartered in Ann Arbor, Michigan, Thetford is a privately held company with manufacturing facilities worldwide. Subsidiaries include Norcold, Tecma and Thetford Europe. [www.thetford.com](http://www.thetford.com)

### DINING



### New Food Choices at Pilot Flying J

Pilot Flying J has launched a new fast, casual dining concept at select travel centers and travel plazas. The first facility opened in March at the new Pilot Travel Center in St. Marys, Georgia. The menu features hot soups, home-style platters, fresh-made salads and cold sandwiches, a frozen yogurt bar, pizza, hot dogs and more. "We listen to customer feedback, and customers want more dining options on the road," said Pilot Flying J CEO Jimmy Haslam. "Our new dining concept delivers more food options." Pilot Flying J has plans to open more of the fast, casual dining concepts at locations across the country.



## Motor(less) Nights

Are you looking for a challenge? Then New Jersey Motorsports Park Motor(less) Nights are for you! Two times per month, bicyclists, skateboarders, roller-bladers, runners and parents with strollers are invited to challenge themselves on one of the world-class road courses.

Feel what it is like to be on the 2.25-mile Thunderbolt Raceway that has 14 challenging turns, or try the 1.9-mile Lightning Raceway, which features some of the most interesting and dramatic corners and elevation changes in the park.

Motor(less) Nights are the first and third Thursdays of each month and begin at 6 p.m. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3 for children under 12 years old.

Helmets are required!

### 2013 DATES:

June 6 • June 20 • July 4 • July 18 •  
August 1 • August 15 • September 5 •  
September 19 • October 3 • October 17



## Elevation App

Winegard has introduced a free mobile app that makes it fast and simple to set the elevation on its Carryout Anser portable satellite TV antenna. Through a three-step process, the Anser app lets antenna owners use the GPS on their smartphones to set the satellite elevation. Users first select "Elevation Guide," then select their service provider and then choose the target satellite. The app will display the correct elevation to set using the built-in guide on the Anser housing, as well as clear pointing instructions. The Winegard Anser iPhone app is available free to download from the Apple App Store and Google Play.

## Ram Increases Weight Ratings

The towing and weight ratings for the 2013 line of Ram Heavy Duty pickups and chassis cab trucks has been released, and they are class leading. Ram 3500 Heavy Duty pickups are rated for a maximum 30,000-pound trailer capacity, thanks to an upgraded 6.7-liter Cummins turbo-diesel engine with best-in-class 850 LB-FT of torque, a new high-strength steel frame rated 50,000-pounds-per-square-inch, an improved transfer case for 4WD models, higher-load transmission and other significant driveline upgrades. Ram's closest competitor is limited to a 23,100-pound maximum trailer. Ram 3500's gross combination weight rating (GCWR), which is the maximum weight of the truck, payload and trailer, has been raised to 37,600 pounds. This surpasses the closest competitor's 30,500-pound rating.

For 2013, the Ram 2500 will also benefit from increased tow ratings and GCWR. At 18,350 and 25,000 pounds, Ram 2500's tow- and gross combination weight ratings are highest among ¾-ton pickups. Ram Heavy Duty adds a number of new features for 2013, including a factory-integrated fifth-wheel hitch mount, a 17,000-pound Class V hitch rated for 1,800 pounds of hitch weight, electronic stability control (ESC) for dual-rear wheels and a new high-mounted camera, the first of its kind in the heavy-duty pickup category, to provide a full view of the bed for easier hook-up of a fifth-wheel as well as monitoring cargo.

All 2013 Ram Heavy Duty diesels get a high-efficiency fan, dual radiators, dual transmission coolers and a special charge-air cooler, which are said to allow 25 percent better heat rejection. Cummins-equipped Ram trucks now also have 15,000-mile oil change intervals.

When Ram's new Ram Active Air intake system senses extreme heat, it draws cooler air from the front of the vehicle. When conditions are wet from snow, ice or water-fording, the system pulls air from an under-hood inlet, clear from snow packing and water.

New front and rear suspension systems greatly improve roll stiffness. An advanced three-link front suspension on the Ram 3500 is necessary for the vehicle's higher gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) and for use with heavy front loads. Additionally, a newly designed Hotchkiss leaf spring rear suspension on the Ram 3500 is said to offer improved ride and handling while delivering higher towing and payload capability.



## Airstream 2 Go

by Bob Ashley

People who've seen an iconic aluminum-clad Airstream travel trailer rolling down the road and wondered about renting one now have Airstream 2 Go to add to their list.

Former Airstream President Dicky Riegel launched Airstream 2 Go in May with a rental fleet of 20 Airstream International Signature travel trailers with matching 2013 GMC Yukon Denali SUVs to tow them.

Initially, Airstream 2 Go rentals are available at the Airstream Los Angeles dealership in San Gabriel, California, and at a stand-alone venue in downtown Las Vegas, Nevada.

Rates for a minimum five-day rental range from \$5,300 for people who want to pick up a trailer/tow package, to \$7,500 for a customized itinerary developed by Airstream 2 Go's partner Off the Beaten Path, a Montana-based travel planning and outfitting company.

On-the-road emergency service will be provided and rental customers will be covered by their own automobile insurance, according to Riegel. "Insurance coverage will be just like when they rent an automobile," he said.

Although independently owned, Airstream 2 Go has an exclusive arrangement with manufacturer Airstream Inc., Jackson Center, Ohio, to provide rental travel trailers to the public for the first time.

"Ever since the day I joined Airstream 15 years ago, there wasn't a day that went by that somebody didn't say that they loved the Airstream and asked how they could rent one," Riegel said. "I had to tell them they couldn't, that if they didn't make the investment to buy an Airstream, they couldn't do it. Renting an Airstream is



absolutely new territory."

That was Riegel's inspiration to launch Airstream 2 Go.

Airstream 2 Go rentals are available in two lengths — a 23-footer that will sleep four and a 28-foot floorplan that accommodates six.

Interiors on Airstream 2 Go trailers have been designed by Christopher C. Deam, a noted San Francisco architect and designer and have Ultraleather fabrics, Beauflor flooring and Wilsonart laminate furniture.

Each is fully equipped with luxury amenities such as 650-thread-count linens, flat-screen LED TVs, Sony DVD players, iPod docks, integrated sound systems, fully outfitted kitchens with microwaves and cooktops, Weber Q grills and Zip Dee powered awnings.

Renters will be provided with an iPad that will contain a digital owner's manual with an explanation of all systems along with instructions for troubleshooting. For trips planned by Off the Beaten Path, there also will be a complete itinerary of activities.

Riegel said Airstream 2 Go over the next three to five years expects to establish facilities in other areas of the country, including Florida, Texas, the Pacific Northwest, Illinois, New England and other locations.

**Airstream 2 Go, 800-780-9880, [www.airstream2go.com](http://www.airstream2go.com)**





## Who's Your Hero?

Torklift International, manufacturer of aftermarket RV and automotive parts and accessories, has introduced its Wounded Warrior Campaign that starts June 1 and runs through the end of the year.

"A hero is a man who served his country, a woman who guides her children and a man devoted to quality," said VP of Operations Jack Kay. "We are surrounded by heroes everyday and anyone can be a hero to an individual." Torklift wants to know who your hero is.

"As a thank you to our heroes, we are going to donate \$25 to the Wounded Warrior Project for each SuperHitch Hero receiver hitch sold through the end of the year," Kay said. Torklift's SuperHitch Hero was recently released and named for this program to inspire people to support the Wounded Warrior Project and to challenge the RV and automotive industry to support them, too.

"To nominate a hero, simply record a video on your iPhone or other personal device and tell us about your hero. You can also submit a statement and photo about your hero," Kay said. "The submissions will be posted on our blog and social media, allowing people to vote on them." Submit your nomination to [hero@torklift.com](mailto:hero@torklift.com).

The votes will be tallied on December 31, 2013, and the 2014 Torklift Hero will be selected. The hero will receive a weeklong vacation in Maui for two, and the nominator will receive the same vacation package. Torklift International, 800-246-8132, [www.torklift.com](http://www.torklift.com)

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Drawing Will Be August 31st, 2013

## Battery Blues

When a promised refund seemed like it was never going to arrive, a reader asked *RV Action Line* to help speed up the process.

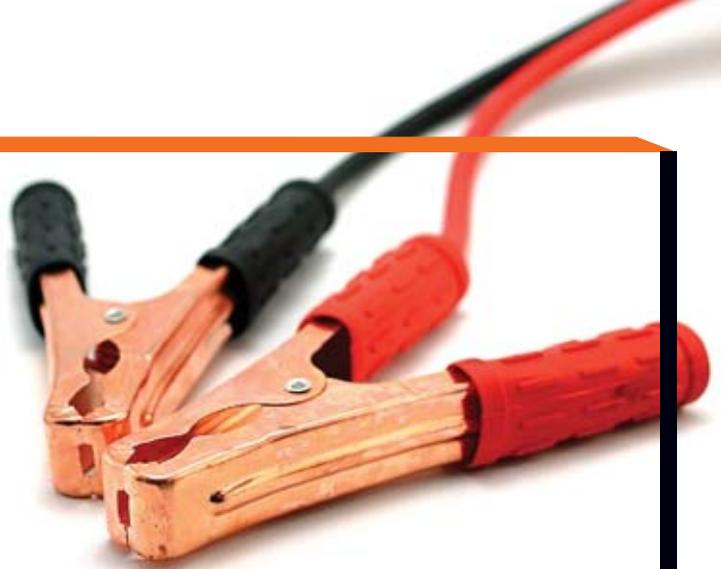
» I have a problem with Dynacell Corp. regarding reimbursement for failed batteries. I had two batteries replaced in my 2005 Chevy Duramax on February 2, 2010, at Palm Chevrolet in Ocala, Florida. The service advisor recommended these batteries, which had a seven-year warranty. The cost was \$264.22 plus tax.

On October 14, 2012, my truck failed to start and the batteries would not recharge. This was on a Sunday afternoon and the truck had not been driven since Friday. I had to jump-start it, then drove about 15 miles and let the truck run for about another 30 minutes. Monday morning the batteries were dead again.

I called Dynacell and requested any dealers for its batteries in the metro Atlanta, Georgia, area where I was visiting, and was told there were none. The contact person advised me to have the batteries replaced and then send copies of the original purchase and replacement receipts for reimbursement (as stated in the Dynacell pamphlet) and it would take six to eight weeks to get a reimbursement.

I again jump-started the truck and drove to my local repair shop, Ewing Automotive in Snellville, Georgia, where both batteries tested bad and were replaced at a cost of \$299.73 (\$213.20 for batteries, \$86.53 for labor and tax). I mailed the receipts to Dynacell.

After about seven weeks, I called about the reimbursement check and was told the controller would be writing checks soon. When I did not receive a check by December 26, 2012, I called back. The contact person said he would check with the controller, and then returned to the phone to tell me my claim was denied because no test results were sent in on the batteries. I told him the receipt for the new batteries showed both batteries bad and I had never had any other results shown to me on any battery testing bad. After about 10 minutes, I was called back to be told my 3500



Chevy truck was considered commercial and its warranty was only 24 months. I told him this was not a commercial vehicle; it is my only transportation used to tow my fifth-wheel trailer, and there is not even a commercial exclusion in its pamphlet. At this point he told me to contact Palm Chevrolet to see if it would honor the warranty. I called and talked to someone in the parts department who said they were dropped as a dealer for Dynacell several years ago and no longer had any of those batteries in stock.

At this time I don't know what recourse I have. Can *RV Action Line* please offer me assistance? I am on the road traveling.

**Glenn McFerrin, Snellville, Georgia**

*RV Action Line* contacted Dynacell Corp. to muster some attention to McFerrin's case. Soon thereafter, the company responded to McFerrin, with a copy to *RV Action Line*.

### THE COMPANY RESPONDED

Enclosed you will find our check in the amount of \$213.20 to reimburse you for the failed batteries that were still under warranty. We appreciate your business and are sorry that you were unable to replace these batteries with Dynacell batteries.

**Preston L. Mintz**  
President, Dynacell Corp.  
Bristol, Pennsylvania

## Premature Failure

Finding themselves at a dead-end in trying to buy an out-of-warranty part, two readers asked for *RV Action Line's* help. They wrote:

» We are asking for *RV Action Line's* help in solving a problem. We purchased our fifth-wheel trailer and had the dealer install an inverter/

charger on the new unit. The dealer had a Xantrex PROsine 2.0 inverter/charger installed June 2010. The inverter worked fine for about a year, then the display panel went bad. I contacted Xantrex and the company sent me a remanufactured display panel, which fixed the problem (thank you).

Now the replacement display

panel has gone bad and I can't get it replaced. I realize that the warranty has run out at this time and we are willing to pay for it. The problem is that when I contacted Xantrex I was told that it has a limited supply of display panels and it is saving them for warranty replacements. In the meantime I have a very expensive inverter that will not work because I

can't buy a \$115 panel for it.  
**Roger and Janice Elzey, King City, California**

*RV Action Line* passed the Elzeys' dilemma on to Xantrex Technology Inc. for further consideration. We received a follow-up letter from the Elzeys as well as a copy of an email to them from Xantrex.

#### THE COMPANY RESPONDED

I am the manager of the technical support team here and was recently forwarded a letter from *Trailer Life* magazine describing your troubles getting your PS2.0 Inverter/Charger repaired. I was disappointed to hear that we had not made a replacement display available to you to repair your inverter and I apologize for that. I have had a replacement display shipped out to you free of charge on overnight service with UPS.

**Rob Syvertsen, Customer Service**  
**Xantrex Technology Inc.**  
**Elkhart, Indiana**

» I am writing to say thank you for solving the problem with our inverter/charger. As soon as Xantrex received *RV Action Line's* letter, I received a call from the company stating that there must have been some sort of confusion about the part I needed. I was told that the part was already shipped that day using next-day air. All at no cost to us! I received the new panel the next day and installed it. Thanks again. This may seem like a small problem to most people but to us, at this time, it was extremely important.

**Roger and Janice Elzey** 📧

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

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# Proper Footwear

## Better shoes for the trail

Once you park the RV and get settled into camp, what's next? Exploration, of course! What better way to get to know the place you have chosen to set up camp than to get out and walk the trails, see the sights and find new adventures. And in order to do that, you will need a sturdy pair of hiking shoes. Commonplace tennis shoes just won't cut the muster. Typical lightweight athletic shoes designed for ball sports are not built to tackle terrain such as slippery rocks, hard-pack dirt and gravel; or to stand up to miles of hard use and impact

that hiking trails can impart on a shoe. The modern purpose-built hiking shoe is designed to not only survive the rigors of the terrain, but to properly support and protect the feet during these extreme conditions.

Here are some examples of hiking footwear that are appropriate for trail use. Some are waterproof, but all offer construction features that provide superior support, comfort, traction and a longer duration of wear than standard "tennies."

### LOWA

The Zephyr GTX Mid (\$195) from Lowa has been updated for 2013 using the company's patented PU (polyurethane) Monowrap construction that wraps the foot in a lightweight and supportive frame claimed to deliver top-notch stability by extending partway up the side of the shoe's upper. This is a good choice for the hiker who is putting on miles and wants plenty of ankle support. The upper is made from split leather/Cordura, the outsole is the Lowa proprietary Cross sole with a three-quarter length shank midsole for stability, and the Zephyr offers a Gore-Tex lining for breathable waterproofing.

Another nice offering from Lowa is the S-Cloud (\$170), ideal for adventures on the trail and pavement. It's less structured than the Zephyr, but still offers better support, stability and traction than an athletic shoe. The S-Cloud features a split leather upper, a Gore-Tex waterproof breathable lining, floating tongue that self adjusts for a great fit, and a bi-density EVA midsole with a TPU insert for stability. The S-Cloud offers the Lowa STG 3D outsole for excellent traction on a multitude of surfaces in both men's and women's sizes.

**Lowa Boots:** 888-335-5692, [www.lowaboos.com](http://www.lowaboos.com)

**Oboz Men's Traverse Mid**



### OBOZ

A company with an odd name that you may have never heard of, Oboz was started in 2007 by a group of footwear industry veterans who had good ideas about hiking boots, lacing systems and insoles they wanted to try. They set up shop in Bozeman, Montana, and have been growing ever since. The Oboz Traverse Mid hiking boots (\$160) deliver the BFit lacing system that securely sets the heel in place without placing additional pressure on the instep. Its midsole is a dual-density EVA with a TPU chassis and nylon shank. Deep lugs in the outsole are strategically designed and placed to help keep weight low and traction high. The upper is made of synthetic leather and a high-abrasion resistant textile, a welded stitchless synthetic microsuede cage with the company's BDry

**Comfort**

Happy feet cocooned in a high-quality boot will make a good hike that much better

**Lowa Zephyr GTX Mid**



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## OUTDOORSMAN: BOOTS MADE FOR WALKING

waterproof breathable membrane. This is another fine shoe for off-pavement trails where ankle support is a priority. This particular boot is offered in men's sizes only, but Oboz has a selection of midheight hiking boots in other styles for women.

Featuring the Oboz BDry waterproof breathable membrane, waterproof Nubuck leather and high-abrasion resistant textile, molded-

rubber toe rand, and a dual-density EVA midsole with an asymmetrical PU heel pod and nylon shank, the Wind River II BDry (\$185) is a serious boot for rugged country offering superior support and durability, but it won't make you feel like you have lead weights on your feet. The Wind River II BDry heavier-duty hiking boots are available in men's and women's sizes, use the BFit lacing system and feature

a gender-specific collar height. **Oboz Footwear:** 406-522-0319, [www.obozfootwear.com](http://www.obozfootwear.com)



### VASQUE

The Breeze 2.0 GTX (\$160) from Vasque is updated this year with running shoe technology that has made it lighter, more breathable and more athletic. It's perfect for the hiker taking on rugged trails with a fast pace but light loads. The Breeze 2.0 GTX uses Gore-Tex technology to deliver outstanding waterproof breathability, and a Vibram outsole for the ultimate in foot-to-terra-firma traction. Its midsole is made from dual-density EVA with a molded TPU plate for superior support; and the Arc Tempo Last creates an asymmetric curve for people with higher arches and a tapered toe box for adequate toe room.

Another newly updated and highly athletic Vasque shoe, the Velocity 2.0 (\$120) is a rugged, go-anywhere shoe for those looking for lightweight footwear ideal for trail or pavement. Also featuring the Arc Tempo Last design, the Velocity 2.0 shares the high arch- and toe-room comfort afforded in the Breeze 2.0 GTX. Its midsole is molded EVA with a TPU plate offering excellent support and comfort. Available in men's and women's sizes.

**Vasque:** 800-224-HIKE (4453), [www.vasque.com](http://www.vasque.com)

You would never buy cheap tires for your travel trailer and expect to have a safe and sound road trip, so why would you lace up chump-change footwear and think that a hike in the woods at your favorite camping spot is going to be more pleasant? Invest in proper hiking shoes and those days of sightseeing will be much more satisfying. Your feet will thank you later. 🚗

A background image for an Engel advertisement showing a white pickup truck towing a white travel trailer on a winding road through a desert landscape with large rock formations under a blue sky. The text 'WE'VE BEEN KEEPING OUR COOL ON THE ROAD FOR OVER 50 YEARS' is overlaid in white, with a circular '50 YEARS' logo and the 'ENGEL' brand name in a red banner below it.

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<sup>1</sup>Requires two parallel-linked EU2000i generators. <sup>2</sup>Warranty applies to all Honda GX Series Engines and GX Series-powered Honda Power Equipment, 300cc or larger, purchased or put into rental service since January 1, 2009. Exceptions apply. See full warranty details at [honda.com](http://honda.com). Does not apply to EU1000 models. Please read the owner's manual before operating your Honda Power Equipment and never use in a closed or partly enclosed area where you could be exposed to poisonous carbon monoxide. Connection of a generator to house power requires a transfer device to avoid possible injury to power company personnel. Consult a qualified electrician. ©2012 American Honda Motor Co., Inc.

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# More Than a Beach

Fifteen miles of park shoreline along Lake Michigan offers sand, plant diversity, rare species of birds and hiking

**T**he arduous, decades-long process to create, protect and expand the scenic sanctuary that today is called Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore is a testament to the human spirit. In 1899, recognizing the need to preserve the natural beauty along the southern shore of Lake Michigan in Indiana, three determined individuals launched a campaign that suffered numerous delays but eventually resulted in the establishment of Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore in 1966. Four expansion bills increased the amount of protected land to its present size of more than 15,000 acres.

Visitors to the lakeshore can access the 15 miles of beach by parking in the lots that are open from 7 a.m. until 30 minutes past sunset. Hikers and bikers are allowed to enter an hour earlier. Yet no matter when and where travelers choose to enter the lakeshore, they can explore the

namesake dunes. Ranging from low dunes covered in marram grass to sandy slopes rising more than 125 feet, the dunes allow visitors to hike among them (45 miles of trails exist within the lakeshore), to picnic in their rippled undulations or to admire the numerous bird species that migrate above them. From April through October, visitors can even camp among the dunes at Dunewood Campground. The Glenwood Dunes Trail is the only trail within the lakeshore that allows horseback riding.

Of course, the lakeshore does not consist solely of shifting sands (though it is home to a dune named Mount Baldy that migrates inland 4 feet a year), so anglers and boaters can also indulge in their aquatic pursuits. Fishers should heed the strong currents of the Little Calumet River, and boaters need to launch their vessels outside of park boundaries. Swimmers



can park at a handful of locations, then beat the summer heat by wading into the lake, but only West Beach features lifeguards and showers.

The lakeshore hosts ranger-guided activities, tours of various historic area homes and cultural events, such as the Music Heritage Series. And within the lakeshore, more than 1,135 native plant species grow, ranking seventh in plant diversity among America's national parks. 📱

**Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore**  
219-926-7561, [www.nps.gov/indu](http://www.nps.gov/indu)



## DID YOU KNOW?

Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore has more native species of orchids than the state of Hawaii.

PHOTOS COURTESY INDIANA DUNES NATIONAL LAKESHORE



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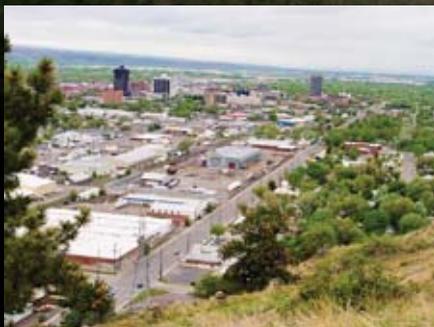
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# STAR OF THE WEST

## MONTANA'S LARGE LIVIN' LITTLE TOWN ON THE YELLOWSTONE RIVER

article and photos by Carl Calvert



(Above left) Billings is home to more than 100,000 residents, and is actually the largest city in a 500-mile radius. (Above middle) The first KOA campground in America is the Billings KOA, located along the Yellowstone River. (Above right) The buildings that make up the Bighorn County Historical Museum & Visitor Center are located on what was once a 22-acre vegetable farm and allows guests a glimpse into a bygone era.



**W**isitors to Billings, Montana, should expect to see an abundance of wide-open land, grazing cattle, cowboys sauntering along the streets and honky-tonks catering to the “good ol’ boy” crowd. While much of that is true, the midsize metro is much more. With a population of slightly more than 100,000, it is actually the largest city in an area about the size of Texas that includes parts of Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, South and North Dakota, Saskatchewan and Alberta. In that respect, Billings is really big in this part of the world and is known for much more than its rural image.

Billings is in close proximity to such places as Yellowstone National Park, Pompeys Pillar National Monument and Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, so the city is often swamped with tourists, especially in the summer months. These locations are prime areas of interest, but in and around the city there are also many additional attractions to entertain visitors.

Billings was founded in 1877 and incorporated in 1882 near the already existing town of Coulson. Located on the Yellowstone River, Coulson was ideal for commerce resulting from the steamboats that brought goods upriver. When the railroad came through, the tracks bypassed Coulson and instead went through the new town of Billings, several miles to the west. Over the next several years Billings flourished, so that by 1883 the town boasted 400 buildings and 1,500 residents. After the turn of the century, mansions were beginning to be constructed by early town pioneers. Today, the city is prosperous, and continues to be known as the “Star of the Big Sky Country.”

On a recent three-month fifth-wheel trip through the western United States, we spent nearly a week in Billings, and were amazed at the diversity and number of attractions in the city, as well as the outlying areas.



**Pompeys Pillar National Monument is definitely worth a visit, as much for its scenic beauty as for its historical significance. Clark’s signature can be found at Pompeys Pillar and is the last remaining piece of evidence from the Lewis and Clark Expedition.**



Downtown Billings holds a number of key destinations for visitors including historical sites, an impressive mix of museums, an excellent zoo and a performing arts center. Plus, Billings is large enough to accommodate RVers, and all services can be found within the confines of the city. A number of RV parks are located in the area: We stayed at Billings KOA No. 1, which was the first KOA in America.

### **In Town**

One of the best places to start exploring the city is the Moss Mansion Historic House Museum. P.B. Moss built this elegant home for his family in 1903, and today the mansion is virtually unchanged. The house still has much of the original family furnishings, including carpets, draperies and light fixtures. A tour of the house is like stepping back into turn-of-the-century elegance. A number of other historic homes in the downtown area can also be toured, but the Moss Mansion is a must-see.

Several museums with exhibits await the Billings visitor, such as the Yellowstone Art Museum, comprised of contemporary and historic art; the Western Heritage Center, housed in a beautiful 1901 sandstone building; and the Peter Yegen, Jr. Yellowstone County Museum.

Visitors should not miss the infamous Boothill Cemetery, where local denizens are buried beneath unique epitaphs. Nearby is the grave of “Yellowstone” Kelly, a local character and one of Billings’ pioneers. Also take the time to walk the downtown area, which is lined with historical buildings, unique restaurants, shops and theaters.

### **On the Road**

Traveling outside Billings, there are several key attractions that draw visitors from all over the world. One of the most famous of these is the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument. Located about an hour’s drive southeast of the city, Little Bighorn is the spot where Gen. George Custer and his cavalry met their demise.

Steeped in controversy, the battle of Little Bighorn took place in 1876 on June 25 and 26, between Custer and his 7th Cavalry and thousands of the Lakota and Cheyenne Native American warrior tribes. Park rangers do an excellent job of telling both sides of the story, and visitors can view the locations where granite and marble markers document important sites. Other not-to-be-missed spots at Little Bighorn include the Indian Memorial and the Visitor Center.

An excellent place to stop on the way (or on the return journey) to Little Bighorn is the town of Hardin and the Big Horn County Historical Museum. The museum, located just 15 miles from the famous battle site, consists of 26 historic structures and exhibit buildings. The 22-acre site, once a flourishing vegetable farm, was donated in 1979 to the Big Horn County Historical Society for a museum. The farmhouse and barn on the property are part of the original farm site. Other historic buildings have been moved to the museum from various locations in Big Horn County.

Touring the site, you’ll see items that belonged to the Native Americans who roamed the high plains in search



## Star of the West

of buffalo, the homes and artifacts of early homesteaders and a number of historic buildings, farm machinery, horse-drawn equipment and early automobiles.

Another important historical location worth visiting is located just 25 miles east of Billings — Pompeys Pillar National Monument. The Pillar is a massive sandstone outcrop that rises 150 feet from a 2-acre base on the banks of the Yellowstone River. The national monument's most notable visitor, Capt. William Clark of the Lewis and Clark Expedition, arrived at Pompeys Pillar on July 25, 1806, on his return trip from the Pacific Coast.

Clark marked his presence by engraving his name and the date of his visit on the outcrop (easily viewed by visitors via a short walkway). This simple inscription is the only remaining physical evidence of Lewis and Clark's epic journey along the Lewis and Clark Trail. Clark named this rock "Pompys Tower." It was later renamed

Pompeys Pillar in 1814. Pompey was Clark's nickname for young Jean Baptiste Charbonneau, whose mother, Sacagawea, was the party's interpreter.

Just seven miles from Billings lies another important site — Pictograph Cave State Park. Trails in the park lead visitors to three caves: Pictograph, Middle and Ghost cave, where generations of prehistoric hunters lived and created cave paintings depicting their daily lives. The more than 100 rock paintings are over 2,000 years old.

There are numerous other areas to explore around Billings. One is Canyon Creek Battlefield National Historic Park, an area like Little Bighorn, which was the site of a famous battle between

Native Americans and the U.S. Cavalry. Chief Plenty Coups State Park is also worth a visit. This was the home of a famous native chief, and is now a trading post and modern museum. The Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area and Yellowtail Dam is also nearby, and is one of the most spectacular canyons in the country. The Beartooth Highway Scenic Byway is also well worth exploring, as the road climbs to more than 10,000 feet, winding its way through the Beartooth Mountains.

After visiting Billings, you'll come away with a richer understanding of this Big Sky city, the history surrounding the area and a sense of the beautiful Montana scenery. 📍

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Moss Mansion**, 406-256-5100, [www.mossmansion.com](http://www.mossmansion.com)

**Big Horn County Historical Museum**, 406-665-1671, [www.bighorncountymuseum.org](http://www.bighorncountymuseum.org)

**Pompeys Pillar National Monument**, 406-875-2400, [www.pompeyspillar.org](http://www.pompeyspillar.org)

**Billings KOA**, 406-252-3104, [www.koa.com/campgrounds/billings](http://www.koa.com/campgrounds/billings)

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# HIGH ON HIGH POINTS

Meeting at the top of a mountain

State high points are special to my husband, Mike Vining, and me. Why, you might ask? Well, for starters, we met on top of Guadalupe Peak, the highest point in Texas. Second, we were engaged on Mount Rainier, the highest point in Washington state. And third, we got married on top of Mauna Kea, which you may have already guessed, is the highest point in Hawaii.

article and photos by Donna Ikenberry





From the Juniper Campground at Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota we watched the sunrise over the Little Missouri River.

Since becoming a couple in 1998, we've stood on top of 45 state high points together. Mike and I travel about half of each year and we "collect" many places, including national parks and monuments and zoos. In addition, we amass state high points because they are one of the very best motives for travel. You see, attaining the high point is only part of the experience...the journey getting there is what matters most.

State high points encourage people like us to travel to part of a state that we might not otherwise visit. Take Kansas, for instance. At 4,039 feet high, Mount Sunflower is the state high point. Located in the western Kansas boondocks, near the Colorado border, en route to or from the high point you might want to visit Monument Rocks Natural Area. Designated in 1968, the preserve includes pinnacles, chalk spires (the area is sometimes called the Chalk Pyramids), and fossils of Cretaceous marine animals. These unique "badlands" are a must-visit. Do so and you might see pronghorn, western meadowlarks and more.

Every state in the union has a highest geographical point called a state high point. Yes, even Florida! And while some of the high points are difficult (Mike climbed Alaska's Mount McKinley, aka Denali, which soars to 20,320 feet high, twice), there are many high points accessible to everyone. Visit Florida's Britton Hill and all you need to do is drive your car to the top, hop out, and you are there. And there's everything in between. There are high points reached by long day hikes or via overnight backpack trips, and there are simple, short walks to the summit. Here are some of our favorite easy state high points, requiring a short walk or a drive to the top.

Pull out the atlas and you'll quickly find that there are no easy walks or drive ups in the western half of the country. Western state high points require everything from a long hike to a mountain climb with ropes and ice axes. Throughout the country there are 14 high points that require merely driving to the highest point in the state. Another 16 high points are rated very easy to

easy, which means a short walk to the top. Amazingly, a total of 21 state high points are wheelchair accessible.

The easiest, westernmost state high point would have to be Nebraska's Panorama Point at 5,424 feet. Located in the very southwestern corner of the state, the see-forever views from this high point include plains, plains and more plains. And while you are traveling in Nebraska be sure to visit Buffalo Bill Ranch State Historical Park and Buffalo Bill State Recreation Area near North Platte. It's a wonderful place to camp along the Platte River and learn more about Buffalo Bill.

Though it involves a short hike, another favorite high point is North Dakota's White Butte. At 3,506 feet, it's an easy 2-mile-round-trip hike to the top and back. Though we didn't see one, the place is known for its rattlesnakes so be sure to use a walking stick or pole (see May issue's *Outdoorsman on Trekking Poles*). Sunrise or sunset is a great time to be on the summit because the views are even more fantastic. Though you can't see it from the top, one

Monument Rocks, also called Chalk Pyramids, are a series of large chalk formations up to 70 feet high. The formations at Monument Rocks National Natural Landmark in Gove County, Kansas, include buttes and arches formed 80 million years ago that are rich in fossils.



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## HIGH POINTS



of the best things about this state high point is that you are close enough to visit Theodore Roosevelt National Park. We spent several days in the area camping, hiking and enjoying the badlands, prairies and wildlife of the park.

On the opposite side of the country you'll find Florida's Britton Hill. At 345 feet, Britton Hill, located on the Florida Panhandle, is the lowest of all the state high points. It's accessible to everyone and has undergone some recent improvements such as an info kiosk, which includes information about high-point history, the Highpointers Club (to which we belong) and a log book. Three nature trails total nearly 2 miles of hiking.

It may be easy, but people go to great efforts to photograph the event according to Craig Noland, past membership guy for the Highpointers Club. Craig says, "The funny thing about this high point (from membership pictures sent to me) is the photos that folks take. Really, I honestly believe that folks visiting the lowest point of the 50 states spend more time figuring out their 'Hero' photo shots than they would on top of McKinley. On 'The Great One' — Denali — you get there, take your picture and hopefully you make it down in one piece. At Britton Hill, you drag out all of your climbing gear, in temperatures between 40 and 100 degrees and have a photo shot taken with the sign."

While visiting Britton Hill be sure to spend time at the Air Force Armament Museum near Niceville, where there are also campgrounds and lodging. The museum is home to more than 25 different aircraft and much more. Another fun thing is a visit to Fort Pickens at Gulf Islands National Seashore. One of four forts built to

**(Above left) Mike hiking behind Grotto Falls, Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee. (Above) Author Donna Ikenberry, and her husband, Mike Vining, on top of Mount Whitney, the highest point in California and the highest point in the 48 contiguous United States.**

defend Pensacola Bay and its navy yard, the fort was begun in 1829 and completed in 1834.

More than just the highest point in North Carolina, Mount Mitchell is the highest peak east of the Mississippi. Rising more than a mile high, at 6,684 feet, the summit is located in the Black Mountains and 1,946-acre Mount Mitchell State Park, the oldest in the state.

The high point is accessible for all ages. Visit this high point and you'll have a chance to explore more of the Blue Ridge Parkway; it's an excellent place for camping and exploring. A new observation deck opened in summer 2008. An interpretive center near the summit parking lot offers interesting information about the park's history, and during your visit you'll learn about the local forests, wildlife and geology.

My stepdaughter, Terri Vining, and her family visited Mount Mitchell a few years ago. **(continued on page 33)**

## DID YOU KNOW?

More people have climbed Mount Everest, the highest point on Earth, than have climbed all 50 state high points.

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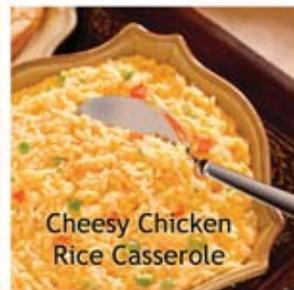
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## HIGH POINTS

(continued from page 30) My grandson's name is Mitchell so visiting the peak "was an important activity for all of us," says Terri, a 40-year-old mom from Lakeview, Michigan. "We love to explore nature, but especially mountains. Scanning the horizon reminded me of how much I love my son." Terri also reminded me that while the highlight is always being "on top" of the peak, the low point was children getting carsick on the way down. Her advice, "go slow... there's joy in the journey."

Head to Tennessee's highest point and you'll be in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, the most visited national park in the nation. At 6,643 feet, Clingmans Dome is an easy 1-mile round-trip walk to the summit and back. Although Clingmans Dome is open year-round, the road leading to it is closed in winter from December 1 through March 31. A paved, but steep path leads to the observation tower where there are 360-degree views of the Smokies and beyond. Before or after being on top of Tennessee be sure to spend time hiking and camping in the national park. Favorite trails include Grotto Falls and the West Prong Little Pigeon River.

New Hampshire's Mount Washington has options for the state high-pointer. You can hike to the top, which is rated strenuous, drive to the top, or you can sit back and relax as the Washington Cog Railroad takes you to the top! At 6,288 feet, Mount Washington is "Home of the World's Worst Weather." No doubt you've heard about its dangerously erratic weather.

An auto road, opened in 1861, leads nearly 8 miles to the top. If you drive up, remember, you are driving "America's Oldest Manmade Tourist Attraction." Closed in winter, Mount Washington Auto Road was originally called Mount Washington Carriage Road. Think about it. In 1861 horse-drawn wagons were making the same trip up the 11.6 percent average gradient.

The cog railway, which is the world's first mountain climbing train and the only cog railway east of the Rockies, takes about one hour to reach the top. An hour is spent at the summit,

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“Massachusetts and New Jersey offer giant monuments on their not-so-lofty summits”

(Above left) Pronghorn, the fastest land mammal in the Western Hemisphere, watch us in Rita Blanca National Grassland in Texas. (Above right) Mike signs the state high point register at Mount Sunflower in Kansas, the highest natural point in the state at 4,039 feet above sea level.

allowing time for high-point photos, and then it's another hour back to the train station. If you'd rather hike, be prepared to travel eight to 10 miles round trip and climb about 4,000 feet.

Although there are many other favorite easy state high points, Massachusetts and New Jersey offer giant monuments on their not-so-lofty summits. Located in the northwest corner of the state, Mount Greylock is 3,491 feet in elevation and is located in Mount Greylock State Reservation, Massachusetts' first wilderness state park acquired by the Commonwealth in 1898. As you drive to the top (roads are open seasonally), watch for hikers

as they make their way up and over the top via the Appalachian Trail. The granite tower on top of the peak is quite impressive and is dedicated to the men and women of Massachusetts who died serving our country.

High Point, New Jersey, says it all. At 1,803 feet, it is the highest point in the Garden State. Enter High Point State Park and you'll drive up to the high-point monument. Notice anything upon arrival? The monument is similar to the Washington Monument in D.C. and was built in honor of all war veterans. At the top of the 220-foot structure, visitors enjoy awesome views all around. 📷

Mike at High Point Monument in High Point, New Jersey.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

High-pointing is a wonderful way to explore America. Purchase a guide to state high points (choose from Charlie and Diane Winger's, *Highpoint Adventures*, Don Holmes', *Highpoints of the United States*, and *Fifty State Summits* by Paul Zumwalt) and you'll find yourself in some unlikely places.

I also recommend joining the Highpointers Club. The late Jakk Longacre started the club in the 1980s and his motto, "Keep Klimbin," is legendary. Membership totals 2,725 individuals. The club's purpose is to promote climbing to the highest point in each of the 50 states and to "aid in preservation and conservation of the highpoints and their environs." Membership is \$20 a year (for the entire family living at one household) and includes a newsletter. There's also an annual convention: The 2013 Highpointers Convention will be in Millinocket, Maine, July 18 to 20.

You don't have to climb all the state high points to be a high-pointer. To date, 241 people have summited all 50 states. Almost twice that, 449, have attained the goal of 48 Contiguous State Finishers. Contact the Highpointers Club at [www.highpointers.org](http://www.highpointers.org) or call 303-278-1915 for more information. **DI**



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# FISHING IN FLO

## Sailfish, beaches and small-town ambiance in the

Florida's tagline is the "Fishing Capital of the World." The city of Stuart, population 15,000, must be its headquarters. Blessed with an abundance of water — the Atlantic Ocean and the St. Lucie and Indian rivers — the area offers world-class fishing and miles of sandy beaches. Yet, with a building-height restriction of less than four stories, development has been kept in check. The result is a sleepy, old-Florida feel.

Fishing has been a top draw for many years. The first non-native settlers exported pineapples and fish. President Grover Cleveland discovered the bountiful fishery back in the late 1800s. Dozens of charter captains continue to offer clients a chance to wrestle with a billfish or fill their coolers with fresh harvests. A rejuvenated downtown district full of unique

shops, art galleries and restaurants offer activities for nonangling visitors.

### Geography Lesson

The basic rule of thumb: East of Stuart is ocean, west is countryside. In between, it can be a tad bit confusing. In town, street name changes are common, as are traffic circles. Using both a GPS and a hard copy map is

recommended. Find comfort in the fact that this is a compact area so it is difficult to be lost for very long. The St. Lucie River rambles around the city in every direction. Heading east, one runs into the Indian River, which is part of the Intracoastal Waterway, and lies just west of upscale Hutchinson Island. The aquamarine Atlantic Ocean forms the eastern boundary of this ritzy island.

### The Fastest Fish in the Ocean

Aided by a streamlined body and long, swordlike bill, sailfish have been clocked swimming 68 mph. Readily identified by their huge dorsal fin, adults average 5 feet in length. When hooked,



PHOTO COURTESY MARTIN COUNTY CVB



# FLORIDA

## Sunshine State

they take acrobatic leaps and dives, making them one of sportfishermen's favorite quarries.

A population of sailfish live off Florida's Atlantic coastline year-round. Large numbers migrate through Stuart via the Gulf Stream in early winter. They head back north en masse in spring.

Fishing for sailfish requires specialized equipment and techniques — things most average anglers don't possess. Best advice: book a charter. Captain Scott Fawcett drags up to 36 hookless mullet and ballyhoo baits rigged on dredge teasers. The dredges resemble oversized mobiles and create the illusion of a school of bait. A ballyhoo bait is then trolled slightly behind. The dredge's silhouette and vibrations draw the attention of sailfish who will strike the easy target: the solitary, rigged ballyhoo running behind.

When sailfish are particularly fickle, go fly a kite! Some fishermen use kites

as outriggers, connecting the fishing line to the kite line via a clip. The kite holds the live bait up so it's dangling on top of the water. It looks exactly like a struggling bait fish because that's what it is. Wary sailfish can't see the line or any hardware. They strike the bait and the clips detach the fishing line from the kite line.

Whether trolling dredges or kites, once you're hooked up, strap on a fighting belt. Stand with your legs shoulder-width apart, thighs resting on the gunwale to help with balance. Listen to the crew as they shout out commands and enjoy the show. To ensure the future of this sportfish, catch-and-release practices are highly encouraged.



(Left) Bathtub Beach borders premier fishing spots in Stuart, Florida. (Top to bottom) Coined "The Sailfish Capital of the World," Stuart's waters also hold dorado, tarpon, snook and many other species.

PHOTOS COURTESY: (TOP TO BOTTOM) CAPT. SCOTT FAWCETT, PATRICIA STRUTZ, CAPT. JOHN MESKAUSKAS



(Above) Phipps Park backs up to the St. Lucie River, and (right) St. Lucie South backs up to the St. Lucie Canal, providing RVers the chance to fish from shore.



PHOTOS BY PATRICIA STRUTZ

## Other Fish in the Sea

While targeting sailfish, fishermen have a good chance of tying into dorado (aka dolphinfish or mahi mahi). This stunning species — marked in iridescent green, lavender, yellow and cobalt blue — makes tasty table fare. Dorado will readily take live or dead

bait and a variety of plugs. They're strong fighters and since they travel in schools, multiple hook-ups are common. Fill up the ice chest and enjoy grilled dorado for dinner.

Resident fish of many species live here all year long, though migrations directly influence what anglers target.

Use sabiki rods to catch live bait around buoys. To locate fish, look for frigate-birds. These large, black birds follow baitfish around. Search for subtle changes in water color, temperature or currents that mark an edge and go fishing throughout these areas. Captain Fawcett remarks that trolling around

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### Fishing Charters

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

**Captain John Meskauskas** —  
Inshore  
772-529-4484  
[www.stuartflyfishing.com](http://www.stuartflyfishing.com)

**Safari I Deep Sea Fishing Party Boat**  
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[www.safari-1.com](http://www.safari-1.com)

### Nonangling Activities

If relaxing on a sandy shore is more to your liking, there are 16 public beaches to choose from. Numerous beaches run along the shoreline of Hutchinson Island; Stuart Beach offers a quiet respite. There is no equipment rental here so plant your own chair

in a dune and catch up on some reading. Pets must be leashed. Showers, restrooms and a concession area are on-site; 889 NE Ocean Boulevard, 772-221-1418.

Or, stroll around on the charming pedestrian walkways in the downtown historic district. Find Sailfish Circle — the rotary that showcases a huge sailfish water fountain. Merchants tout nautical decor, art galleries and antique shops. House of Phoenix (49 SW Osceola Street) sells retro- and vintage-inspired clothing. Two Streets Antiques (20 SW Osceola) offers estate jewelry and major artwork including Highwayman paintings. Starting in 1950, these vivid Florida landscape oils were painted by 26 African-American artists and sold along Highway A1A. They're now

highly collectible.

In the evening, many establishments offer live calypso, jazz and dance music. Peruse an insider's directory and map of the area at [www.StuartFloridaInfo.com](http://www.StuartFloridaInfo.com).

### Campgrounds

**St. Lucie South Campground**  
2170 SW Canal Street, Stuart  
772-287-1382  
Reservations: 877-444-6777  
[www.recreation.gov](http://www.recreation.gov)

**Phipps Park**  
2175 SW Locks Road, Stuart  
772-287-6565  
Reservations: [www.martin.fl.us](http://www.martin.fl.us)

**Port St. Lucie RV Resort**  
3703 SE Jennings Road,  
Port St. Lucie  
772-337-3340

St. Lucie South is a small (nine sites) federal campground located on

the Okeechobee Waterway. Waterfront sites on the St. Lucie River allow RVers to watch boats pass through the canal and locks system. Manatee sightings are common. There's a boat ramp on-site.

A stone's throw away, Martin County maintains 58 campsites at Phipps Park. Visitors can choose between waterfront campsites or park next to a natural conservation area. It offers large, open spaces and a playground — it's rustic and very family friendly. There's a boat ramp on-site.

Port St. Lucie is a Good Sam RV resort that offers 117 paved sites with patios. It is located six miles north of Stuart. Though not on the water, it's close to the St. Lucie River. A pool and clubhouse are on-site. **PS**

or drifting over wrecks and the six-mile reef are always good options. Purchase a map at the local tackle shop and target these areas. He notes, "Snappers and grouper can be caught by bottom fishing these areas. Pair a 6/0 Penn Senator reel (sans a levelwind) with a 6-foot rod. Spool it with 50-pound test braided line and a 4-foot fluorocarbon leader; attach lead to the bottom of the rig. Be sure to check regulations before you harvest fish; they're constantly changing." Regulations and licenses can be found at [www.myfwc.com](http://www.myfwc.com) or at area tackle shops.

The Indian and St. Lucie rivers provide excellent inshore fishing opportunities. St. Lucie South Campground and Phipps Park occupants can choose to bank fish on either side of the St. Lucie locks. Captain John Meskauskas recommends packing a 7-foot medium-to-light action rod spooled with 15-pound braided line and a 40-pound leader (24 inches long). "You can purchase shrimp at bait shops or cast net small finger mullet; use a 4/0 circle hook. Otherwise, tie on an artificial lure. Soft plastic saltwater jerkbaits work well. In winter the snook are in the deeper holes of the river; bounce a jig off the bottom to find them. By spring they move up the banks to warm up. They really hammer DOA shrimp and Hogy jerkbaits then. In summer the snook move toward the inlet to spawn. Snook season is closed then. You can still fish for them but they must all be released. Quite often a bait boat sets up near the inlet selling pilchards and greens."

Tarpon arrive during the spring

mullet run and can be found cruising along the beach. They take residency in the river all summer. Spool a large spinning reel with 50-pound braided line and a 60-pound fluorocarbon leader onto a 7-foot, 25-pound class rod. Tie on a topwater plug such as a chug bug. In fall, massive schools of mullet run along the beach. They are followed by large jack crevilles, tarpon, sharks and snook. Anglers hook on a

mullet to try to entice a bite.

The Stuart area offers incredible bank, surf, inshore and offshore opportunities. Hiring a captain on the first day of your vacation is a great way to find out the hot spots and patterns. They will explain the tides and provide insight into this remarkable fishery. Afterward, launch your own boat (landings marked on maps) or rent a boat from the Marriott on Hutchinson Island. 🚤



(Above) Watch boats pass through the St. Lucie Lock and Dam, located close to Phipps Park and St. Lucie South campgrounds. A visitor center and picnic area are on-site.

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# TOWING PROWESS

by Larry Walton



Husky Center Line hitch simultaneously distributes weight and controls sway

**E**xperienced travel-trailer owners have long appreciated the benefits of a weight-distributing (WD) hitch. Some inherited the system when they bought their trailers, while some let the RV dealership take the lead on setup.

Weight distribution systems are designed to handle the added forces that conventional trailer towing adds to the driving equation. When hitch weight is carried solely by the ball mount, the rear of the tow vehicle is pushed down, unloading the front axle, which affects handling.

WD hitches counteract some of this down force by applying leverage from the trailer A-frame through the ball

mount into the hitch receiver, which is attached to the tow vehicle frame. Imagine inserting a bar into the receiver and lifting the back of the tow vehicle. The bar would push up at the rear of the receiver's square tubing and down at the front. This force carries through to the frames of the truck and trailer.

All weight distribution systems aim to fulfill this vital function of spreading the vertical hitch weight to the truck and trailer frames, but Husky's Center Line Towing System is also designed to control sway, a stability situation created by crosswinds — both natural and traffic related — passing traffic, and poorly balanced trailers.

In order to keep hitch weight to

around 10 percent of total weight (a minimum requirement to promote safe handling) trailer axles are positioned well forward of the rear of the trailer, creating a significant amount of cantilever. However, this arrangement also creates a pivot point for lateral leverage when side forces are uneven front to back, explaining why steering input must change as you overtake or are being passed by a semi truck, which creates lateral movement that impacts stability.

Husky's Center Line Towing System's sway control addresses these side forces in two different ways. First is what Husky calls, "an innovative active sway control system." The operative components of this part of the system are a pair of compression



Chamfers on the Center Line trunnions (far left) act like cam lobes. When the trunnions turn, springs inside the cylinders (marked with Center Line logo) are compressed and loaded to return the trunnions to the straight position. (Left) The shank can also be installed in the down or drop position, providing room for ball-mount adjustment for many truck-and-trailer combinations.





1) With the tow vehicle and trailer parked on a level surface, level the trailer front to back. Measure the height from the ground to the inside of the coupler and make note of it to determine the hitch height. 2) Since this trailer has a high coupler and the truck has a low receiver, the shank was installed in the up position. 3) If the ball has a 1-inch shank, the included reducer bushing allows the ball to work in the 1¼-inch hole.

cylinders found on each side of the ball mount. The spring bars terminate into a trunnion with a chamfered face that contacts a pressure plate on the outside of the unique, high-strength spring disks, which are packed into the cylinders. As the trunnion turns during a sway event, the angled face of the trunnion compresses the springs that offer measured resistance to sway.

Not only does resistance in the compression cylinder springs act to stop sway before it starts, it stores energy that works to return the trailer to center.

During extreme maneuvers, when the compression springs are maxed out, the friction mounts at the A-frame end of the spring bars offer further resistance to dampen sway. We were able to experience firsthand how these two levels of sway control work together in demanding emergency driving during a towing demonstration at Husky's Research and Development

Center in Elkhart, Indiana.

As Husky's head engineer put a truck and travel trailer through drastic maneuvers, the trailer stayed under control and quickly returned to tracking with the tow vehicle. Traditional sway control typically only inhibits sway; the Center Line adds counter pressure to return the trailer to center, which improves control.

### MADE TO FIT

Components of the Center Line system are designed to fit a tow vehicle and trailer with a variety of hitch, shank and spring bars to match the towing combination. This also means you can use the same ball mount for different size trailers by simply changing the spring bars.

We installed the Center Line on a 1997 Ford F-350 Super Duty that is used to tow a 28-foot travel trailer.

Assembling the hitch components

was pretty straightforward. The brackets bolt onto the A-frame without drilling and we put the shank into the hitch receiver and then the hitch head onto the shank per Husky's instructions. Once assembled, the hitch head remains on the shank when it is removed from the vehicle.

Because the spring-loaded cams on the trunnion bars aid in sway control and trailer centering, the truck and trailer must be inline while hooking up the system. As with most WD hitch systems, using the A-frame jack to change the angles between truck and trailer helps in the hookup process so trailer owners don't need to fight the spring bars to get them into the brackets.

It's a good idea to check the leveling of the tow vehicle for each trip and to pay special attention when you know there has been a significant difference in the way the truck or



4) Assembling the ball mount is a two-person job. The one who loses the coin toss can lift and align the head while the other takes his time putting the bolts in. 5) We double-checked ball height. In our case we wanted it as high as we could place it in the shank because of the tall trailer/low truck combination. 6) Before hooking up with the Center Line system, measure and record the height of the tow vehicle fender wells in line with the front and rear axles. After hooking up, take these measurements again. The vehicle should have settled evenly (within ½ inch) front and back. If not, adjustments need to be made to the hitch. 7) The adjusting plates are fabricated with teeth for sure placement in fine adjustments to the angle of the head assembly.

## TOWING PROWESS

trailer are loaded.

Generally, stability and handling were a lot better, which included several trips over mountain passes. With the Husky hitch, there is a lot more weight on the front wheels. The ability to turn in is a lot different, also. Tow vehicle front-wheel weight is a factor of how tightly the hitch spring bars on any brand of WD hitch are adjusted, and with tight enough adjustment, the proper front-to-back weight distribution is achieved.

This "turning in" is a reference to getting around the corners without pushing, without the feeling that the truck wants to go straight.

Overall, wind had little effect on towability. Semis passing at full speed presented little concern, requiring slight steering wheel compensation. And there was not much noise coming from the hitch components as they moved in different directions.

**Husky Towing Products**, 877-544-4449, [www.huskytow.com](http://www.huskytow.com)



8) Install the spring bars (with the tapered side facing up) into the square hole in the trunnion using the "D" pin to hold it in place. 9) We referenced the "Preliminary Head Adjustment Chart" and measured from the spring bars to the ground and made adjustments to bring them into the proper specification. 10) Make sure that the adjustment plates are in the same position on each side of the head assembly, as well as the same position top and bottom by counting the number of teeth. Tighten locknuts to 260 ft-lbs. 11) With the hitch head on the shank we could torque the ball nut. We used a large pipe wrench to hold the ball from spinning. Make sure to torque a 1-inch shank to 240 ft-lbs and a 1 1/4-inch shank diameter to 360 ft-lbs.



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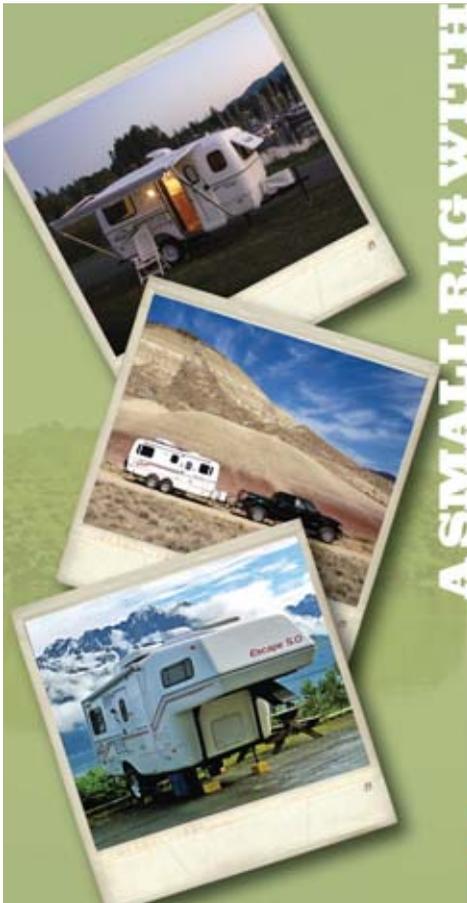
Cutaway of air spring showing internal jounce bumper

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12) Measure 30 inches from the center of the ball down the trailer frame (both sides) to determine the location of the frame lift brackets. We marked it with a piece of tape. 13) Insert the top carriage head bolt into the outer frame bracket and inner frame mounting plate to hang it in place on the A-frame. 14) Using the provided flat washer and lock washer, torque the hex nuts onto the carriage head bolts to 70 ft-lbs. Repeat on other side of the trailer. 15) The brackets provide for plenty of adjustment to accommodate other setups. 16) Hook up the tow vehicle to the trailer. After locking the ball into the coupler use the A-frame jack to lift the trailer hitch and the rear of the vehicle, which makes it easier to install the bars. Installing the bars without using the jack to take pressure from the bars can be both difficult and dangerous. 17) With the trailer properly lifted, it requires little effort to install the trunnion bars into the brackets. 🚚



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## DIESEL WATER INJECTION:

# THE COOL MIX

One of the fastest ways to do a lot of damage to a diesel engine is frying the turbo by letting the exhaust gas temperature (EGT) get out of control under heavy loads.

That very circumstance arises when pulling long grades or negotiating mountain passes during the heat of the summer with a heavy trailer in tow. A heavy load and a high boost for a long duration do not make for a happy turbodiesel.

Fortunately, for those who drive turbodiesels with electronic engine controls, the vehicle engine manufacturers have built-in safeguards to automatically thwart such catastrophic events from happening. When the on-board computer senses exhaust temps reaching the critical point, which is around 1,400 degrees Fahrenheit, it dials back the fuel to lower the EGTs. The only thing the driver notices is the truck slowly loses some power and speed falls off. The driver drops down a gear to maintain that lower speed and all is well.

One method to help keep speed up without the power loss from high EGTs is to cool that fuel-air charge before it reaches the combustion chambers. A really good charge-air-cooler, aka, intercooler, helps. But it can't do the job alone.

An aftermarket water (or water/methanol) injection system is the

best line of defense against extreme heat buildup. Water injection is legal in all 50 states while water/methanol is not California Air Resources Board (CARB) approved.

Water/methanol injection has been shown to improve both fuel economy and power during those high engine loads; the technology has been in use for many decades, its early use in prop-driven fighters during World War II. Water and water/methanol injection is also quite common on big rig diesels today.

### The Power of Water

Today's turbodiesels, such as the Duramax 6.6-liter, respond quite nicely running water/methanol injection to lower operating EGTs — and without the need for additional electronic engine tuning.

According to manufacturer of water/methanol-injection kits AEM Performance Electronic's Lawson Mollica, a 50-50 water/methanol mix, which is what blue (winter mix) windshield washer fluid contains, can add as much as a 20 percent boost in power while helping cool down EGTs by hundreds of degrees. But the use of methanol in injection systems isn't street legal in a number of states that adhere to the CARB emissions standards. On the other hand, straight water-injection kits, which AEM has CARB-certified, provide

AEM'S 50-STATE-LEGAL KIT LOWERS EXHAUST GAS TEMPERATURES UNDER HEAVY LOADS WHILE ADDING POWER AND FUEL ECONOMY



The AEM water-injection kit comes with the pump and tank. We opted for the pyrometer and water-injection flow gauge to monitor the system as we drove. Distilled water (or blue windshield washer fluid) is recommended.

similar cooling results but not as much on the MPG boost.

According to Mollica, the AEM 50-state legal Water-Injection System adds about 8 percent in power because it's not supplementing the diesel with methanol. Meanwhile, it lowers EGTs the same as would a (continued on page 48)



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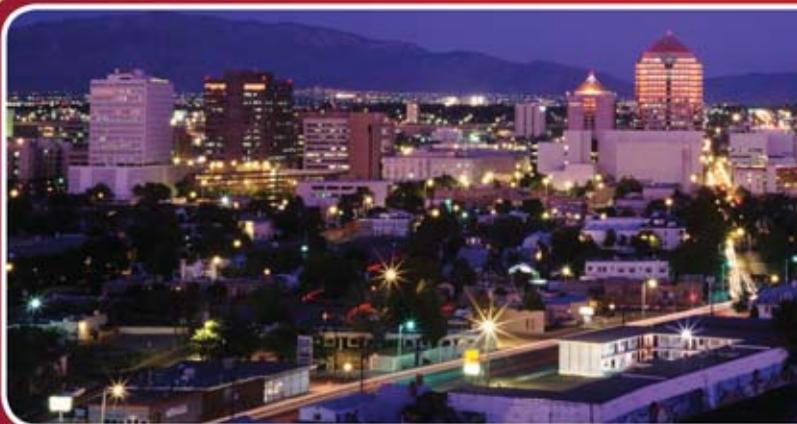


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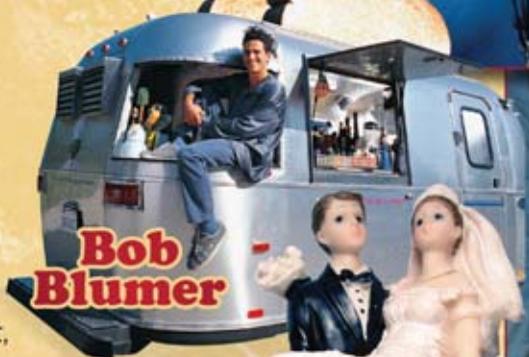
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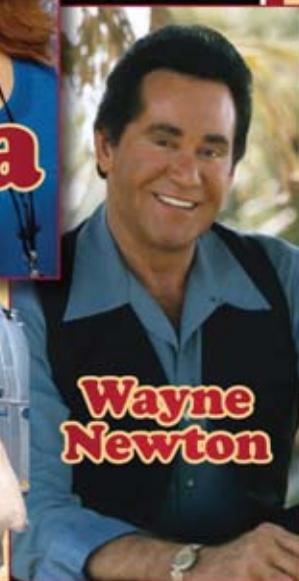
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## HOW-TO: DIESEL WATER INJECTION



1) There's a lot to disconnect before removing the Duramax intake manifold. 2) While the intake manifold is off, remove the EGR cooler and clean it with a wire brush and brake cleaner. (The buildup of carbon can cause the engine to run poorly over time.) 3) Use a vise to hold the intake manifold steady while drilling the hole for the AEM injector.



4) A trick to speed up the tapping process is to put the tap in a variable-speed drill and run it in slowly. Coat the tap liberally with cutting oil. 5) The AEM injector screws into the manifold. The plastic outer shield unscrews revealing an injector with a wire mesh screen over the end. That makes it easy to clean. 6) Be careful when reinstalling the manifold that you don't hit the newly installed injector.

(continued from page 44) water/methanol mix.

AEM's water-injection system is fully automated, using a computer to inject water by varying the amount as the boost pressure rises between 15 to 35 pounds: The higher the boost, the more water is injected into the intake manifold.

### Behind Water Injection

Most RVers — and diesel owners in general — do their utmost to keep

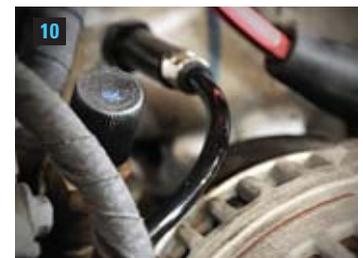
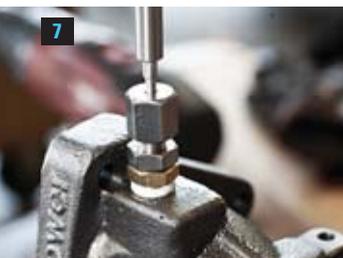
water out of the fuel. But with water injection, the H<sub>2</sub>O used in the kit doesn't go anywhere near the fuel tank. It's injected right into the intake manifold.

Mollica says when atomized water is subjected to the high temps in the cylinders it instantly turns to steam, and that sudden expansion pushes down on the pistons, giving additional torque (power). Water injected into the intake helps make power and lower EGTs because the water molecules

help raise the charge-air density, which means there's more oxygen available in the diesel for a cleaner, more robust fuel burn.

When the water instantly changes from liquid to steam when it hits the cylinder, it absorbs heat. That equates to a drop in the exhaust gas temps. (A side benefit is the "steam" that is now in the exhaust helps to reduce the oily build-up of unburned fuel in the EGR manifold.)

7) The OEM exhaust manifold doesn't have an EGT bung. So we removed the stock manifold and replaced it with a BD Diesel high-performance manifold (it flows more exhaust) that is fitted to accept an EGT probe. The water-injection system only affects performance when the boost exceeds 13 to 15 psi. The replacement higher-performance exhaust manifold evens exhaust flow between banks to improve turbo spool-up response and doesn't contribute to lower EGTs or improve fuel economy. 8) The AEM water reservoir can be mounted in the bed. We chose the passenger's side to make the high-pressure line to the injector an easier, shorter run. 9) A safe place to mount the high-pressure pump is on the passenger's-side frame rail, just aft of the front bed mount. 10) The feed line to the injector can be run over the intake manifold because it's not hot.





11) The hole for the AEM pressure sensor line can be drilled at the same time as the injector fitting. But this step (see sidebar) shows both can be done without removing the intake — if you use heavy grease on the drill bit to capture the shavings. 12) Install the T-fitting and do not overtighten. Follow the directions closely.

## A Reliable Upgrade

It took about six hours for a good shop to install the AEM 50-state legal Water-Injection System on a GM Duramax, our test truck. That time may be more or less on other diesels.

About half of that time was used to remove the intake manifold, install the AEM injector, and drill and install an optional AEM EGT probe in the exhaust manifold to better monitor EGTs under load. (We used AEM's gauges.) The remainder of time for this installation was spent running the wiring harness, installing the 5-gallon water reservoir and pump in the truck, mounting the optional gauges and installing the pyro sender in the exhaust manifold. It's not a difficult job from a wrenching standpoint and any RVer who is a DIYer could handle the job.

AEM's instructions that come with the kit are very detailed, so we are only showing the highlights and steps that can save you time or confusion.

The water-injection system turns on and off with the flip of a switch, and if the water gets low, it automatically turns off and the truck is back operating like stock. When the AEM water injection is in play, it's a very cool diesel engine upgrade — in more ways than one. 🚚

**AEM Electronics:** 310-484-2322, [www.aemelectronics.com](http://www.aemelectronics.com)

Special thanks to the installation shop: *Truck Supply & Outfitters*, 205-553-4203, [www.trucksupplyandoutfitters.com](http://www.trucksupplyandoutfitters.com); and to *BD Diesel Performance*, [www.dieselperformance.com](http://www.dieselperformance.com).



## A LITTLE DAB'LL DO YA

THIS TRICK CAN SAVE HOURS OF TIME WHEN DRILLING AND TAPPING DIESEL INTAKE MANIFOLDS

**When it comes to installing** a boost gauge and/or flow meter sensors into aluminum intake manifolds, most DIYers remove the manifold for fear of getting shavings inside the tracts. Metal shavings in the intake are bad news. So the normal, play-it-very-safe mode is to remove the intake so you can do the work on the bench where any shavings that may have slipped into the intake while you were drilling and tapping can be blown out.

But getting the intake off a diesel takes 3 to 4 hours. And some DIYers are impatient.

Here's how the pros cut that time down to minutes — it's a great way for seasoned mechanics to save shop labor time. They simply leave everything in place and use bearing grease on a drill bit to keep the metal shavings from getting inside the intake. It should be noted that this method, while seemingly quite easy, is best left to the professionals.

### THE PROCESS IS SURPRISINGLY SIMPLE

1. Dab the drill bit into thick axle grease so there's a dime-sized glob stuck to the tip. Then drill slowly (this keeps the drill bit cool so the grease stays in place) until the grease blob is covered with metal shavings.
2. Pull the drill bit away from the engine and wipe the glob of metal-shaving-coated grease on a shop rag.
3. Reload the bit with grease and repeat the process again. This might take two or three passes to get through the aluminum manifold.
4. Once the bit breaks through, use a small, flat screwdriver (with grease on its blade) to carefully remove any shavings that might remain on the inside of the hole.
5. Now, to tap threads, place the tap into a variable-speed drill and dab the tap into the grease. Insert the tap into the hole and very slowly let the drill do the turning. Remove the tap once or twice to clean and reload. Using a drill to tap the threads is for the professional installer or seasoned DIYer. The average home mechanic, while accomplished enough to take on a job such as this one, should probably use a traditional-style manual tap handle to run the tap into the manifold. Per usual practice, back the tap off a quarter-turn or so now and then to clear the chips. Use of the grease on the threads works with the manual tap system, as well.
6. A dab of grease on a small screwdriver works great removing shaving bits stuck around the inner perimeter of a newly drilled/tapped hole. This trick can save you more than an hour in valuable shop labor when it comes to installing sensors for turbo boost and water/methanol-injection flow gauges. —BWS



# ROLLING ALONG SAFELY

FINDING THE RIGHT  
TRAILER TIRES AND  
TAKING CARE OF THEM  
PROMOTES TROUBLE-  
FREE TRAVEL AND  
LONGEVITY

It's not that unusual for owners of trailers to be thinking about tires. If you're going to take towing safety seriously, you have to give attention to these seemingly simple circles that provide your connection to the ground, which is as true for a trailer as it is for a tow vehicle. In fact, trailer tires are expected to put up with heavier loads, unusual turning abuse and inconsistent use. Selecting and maintaining trailer tires is an important aspect of the trailer life.

## ST vs. LT

What is a trailer tire and how is it different from a light truck tire? Most trailer tires are specifically designated "ST" because as Special Trailer tires they are designed to handle stresses that are not common to "LT" or light truck tires.

You may have noticed that tight turns with your tandem- and triple-axle trailer put tremendous side loads on the tires. You can see it

in the sidewalls or hear it coming from the contact patch. ST tires are designed to handle these side stresses; LTs usually are not.

ST tires are also specifically designed to resist movement that can cause trailer sway, which can be a tremendous advantage in trailer handling.

According to some ST tire manufacturers, the polyester cords used in ST tires are bigger than those found in a comparable P-metric or LT tire. For the most part, the size of these components is directly relative to the tire's size and load rating regardless of the tire's type, be it ST, LT or P-metric, and the components are correctly sized for a given tire.

ST tire compounds contain chemicals to resist weather and ozone cracking, which are conditions that trailer tires often endure during long-term storage. Characteristics of these tire compounds also address the inconsistent duty cycles of trailer tires that go from extended



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURERS





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inactivity to hard use.

Use of non-ST tires should only be done at the recommendation of the trailer manufacturer. There is no shortage of "experts" online who will swear that ST tires are a conspiracy and that LT tires are better for trailering, but problems with ST trailer tires are likely to stem from not properly maintaining tires, running them underinflated, speeding or a plethora of other trailer-tire mishandlings. We are going to go with the recommendations of the trailer makers and the tire industry.

With that said, some RVers have experienced seemingly unexplained failures with ST tires on appropriately set-up trailers, especially off-brand tires imported from overseas and sold in this country at bargain prices. Some of those people solve their problems by switching to comparably sized LT tires with the same or higher maximum load ratings. This is one option to keep in mind in the event you're experiencing ongoing trouble with ST tires.

## Bias-ply or Radial?

Bias-ply tires are designed with cords that are oriented at about 60 degrees from the direction of travel and are layered to crisscross over each other. This design makes bias-ply tires more rugged, which is a good fit for some rougher terrain and some off-roading. The cord pattern creates a greater resistance to sidewall punctures.

Radial tires feature plies that run perpendicular to the direction of travel. Radial tires deliver a smooth ride, better tread wear and retain less heat, which also extends tire life.

Since bias-ply and radial tires have dramatically different construction and handling characteristics, you should never mix the two types of tires. Always choose one or the other for your trailer. Bias-ply tires are rarely found on new trailers these days.

## Blow Up or Blow Out

Tires should be inflated to the pressure recommended for the trailer. A majority

of trailer-tire blowouts are due to an underinflated tire, which creates excessive heat, damages the tire liner and causes the tire sidewall to rupture. If a trailer tire has a maximum pressure and not a maximum load at a minimum pressure printed on the sidewall, it should not be exceeded, but trailer tires like all tires should be inflated based on load, which will not necessarily require the maximum or minimum pressure printed on the sidewall.

Tire pressure should be checked when the tires are cold, before use and not when they have been directly exposed to sunlight. Visually inspecting trailer tires before use is important, but also use a tire-pressure gauge to read the actual pressure. The stiffer sidewalls of ST tires can often hide the potentially underinflated tire.

Goodyear recommends that a tire that has been run even 20 percent underinflated be dismantled and inspected by a trained professional.

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Tires that have been run underinflated shouldn't be aired up without a full inspection. A tire puncture causing a slow leak can go undetected if you're not diligent in checking tire pressures. Also, tires naturally lose a pound or two of inflation pressure per month.

Trailers with multiple axles require the tires to be identical in size to properly manage the weight of the trailer for their expected load capacity. Maxxis recommends consulting with your trailer manufacturer when considering larger tires as an option for your trailer. The trailer manufacturer can give you specific information on load capacities and tire sizes. In general, you can replace the same size tire with a higher load capacity, but never go to a lower load rating for your trailer.

While tire-care products can make tires shine and look great, don't use those that contain alcohol or petroleum distillates. They can cause tires to dry out, become weather cracked and wear more quickly.

## Tire Lifespan

It seems counterintuitive, but trailer tires that are regularly used can have a better lifespan than those that are kept in storage. During use, tires release compound lubricants that can help extend tire life. A tire that is not in use can degrade from ultraviolet (UV) exposure.

The life expectancy of a trailer tire varies from manufacturer to manufacturer; however, most are between 3 to 8 years, regardless of mileage. Carlisle Tire estimates that one-third of a tire's strength is gone in approximately 3 years. Carlisle says to consider replacement after 3 years, regardless of tread depth remaining; and at 5 years definitely replace. That's just one company's recommendation.

Other tire manufacturers generally suggest a tire be replaced at 7- or 8-year intervals. Frequent and detailed inspection can help you gain perspective on the tire's ongoing condition as its projected lifespan nears its end.

## Tips for Storage

If the trailer is fitted with bias-ply tires and will be stored for an extended period (say, six months), it should be put on blocks to avoid flat spotting the tires. For shorter-duration storage, place each tire on a waterproof surface — such as a plastic kitchen cutting board, some type of thick rubber mat or a piece of sheetmetal on a piece of plywood — to help isolate the tires from groundwater that can soak up into the tire and accelerate tire degradation.

Weather cracking occurs naturally in trailer tires from exposure to heat and sunlight so they should be protected from ozone, UV and heat-related exposure during storage. Storing the trailer in a cool, dark garage will prolong tire life. A less-costly option is to use tire covers available at RV accessory retailers, as these covers shield the tires from sunlight and other storage abuses.

## Speed

Speed kills trailer tires. Most ST tires are designed to be run at a maximum



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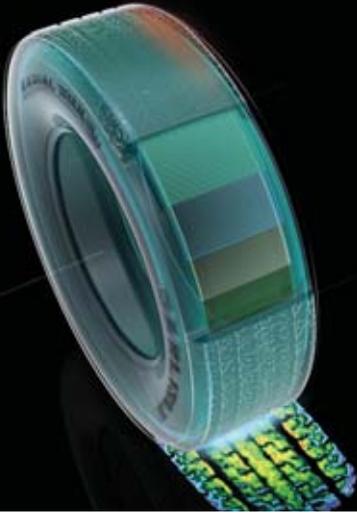


## ROLLING ALONG SAFELY

of 65 mph. Higher speeds cause the buildup of heat, which seriously impacts the life and wear of the trailer tires.

### Alignment

Trailer alignment can be the cause of tire wear and tear. Finding a shop that is equipped to check and fix alignment



issues could mean better trailer-tire life.

Alignment items to be checked include camber, toe-in, and ensuring that the axles are parallel to each other and perpendicular to the hitch pivot point. A well-equipped shop can adjust all of these characteristics to help you achieve long and reliable tire life.

### Balance

It's not a commonly known practice, but balancing trailer tires can help extend tire life as well as the lifespan of wheel bearings and other axle components. An out-of-balance trailer tire is a bad idea just as an out-of-balance tire is a bad idea on a tow vehicle. There's no one in a trailer to feel the shaking and vibration from out-of-balance tires, but that doesn't mean the shaking isn't happening or it's not affecting the trailer's hardware. Trailer tire balancing is cheap insurance.

### Read the Manufacturing Date

Tire makers are required to display the four-digit manufacturing date of the tire at the end of the DOT number on the tire sidewall. Check this number even when you're buying new tires to make sure they were recently manufactured and not already missing a part of their useful life sitting on a shelf. The first two digits are the week and the second two are the year of manufacture. So, if the number reads "1912," they were manufactured in the 19th week of 2012.

Keeping your trailer tires up to date not only avoids delays on your trips, but keeps your family and fellow travelers safer. Save your creativity for your camp cooking and not for selecting trailer tires. Replace with the right tires as recommended by the trailer's manufacturer or by qualified engineers in the tire industry. Following are popular trailer-tire options.

« Carlisle's illustration shows the anatomy of a radial ST trailer tire.

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« The "RH" Radial Trail is the newest iteration designed for better tracking and longer life. Heat Shield Technology is a specially engineered blend of polymers that are more heat resistant and dissipate heat faster. The Radial Trail is offered in a wide variety of sizes and load ranges. The tire has ultra-high-strength steel belts and is reinforced with microfiber. Variable pitch design reduces road noise and heat buildup. Lower rolling resistance contributes to fuel mileage savings.  
**800-827-1001, [www.carlisletire.com](http://www.carlisletire.com)**



## GOODYEAR

« The Marathon from Goodyear is the company's long-running radial designed specifically for trailer towing. Sizes are available for travel trailers, pop-up campers and fifth-wheel trailers. The Marathon tires are designed to deliver dependable highway stability, positive traction and long-lasting wear.  
**[www.goodyearrvtires.com](http://www.goodyearrvtires.com)**



## GOODYEAR

« Goodyear's G614RST features shallow tread, which the company claims provides even wear and reduces running temperatures for casing toughness. The solid, rounded shoulder ribs increase rib stability to promote even wear.  
**[www.goodyearrvtires.com](http://www.goodyearrvtires.com)**



## HERCULES

« Hercules engineered its Power STR radial with advanced tread compound designed to reduce rolling resistance, which helps increase fuel economy. The tread compound also helps promote longer lifespan. Hercules Power STR tires have a 36-month limited warranty against manufacturer workmanship defects from the date of purchase. Power STR is available in a variety of sizes to meet trailer and load-range needs.  
**800-677-3573, [www.herculestire.com](http://www.herculestire.com)**



## MAXXIS

« The Maxxis M8008 ST Trailer Radial is a Specialty Trailer tire that utilizes manufacturer experience from the past four decades. It features an advanced tread compound designed to decrease rolling resistance to help improve fuel economy and tread life. The M8008's reinforced belt package uses double steel-belted construction, which adds vehicle towing stability and strength. These ST radials are designed to provide excellent shock absorption, plus superior load-handling performance.  
**800-462-9947, [maxxis.com](http://maxxis.com)**



## TOWMAX

« The Power King Towmax STR has been designed to deliver long-lasting and dependable performance for travel trailers and fifth-wheels. Several major U.S. trailer manufacturers now use the Towmax STR as original equipment fitment on select models. The Towmax STR features advanced construction technology, which is said to offer superior strength and durability, as well as an optimized five-rib tread design for maximum ride stability and long tread life.  
**866-822-4968, [www.towmaxtires.com](http://www.towmaxtires.com)**



## TRAILER KING

« Trailer King's ST Radial has a center groove solid rib that is designed for consistent, even tracking and enhanced shoulder design. Better heat dissipation results in long tread life and even wear. The ST Radial also features nylon overlay construction on all sizes that is said to enhance strength and durability in high-load applications. They also come with a full written nationwide limited warranty.  
**866-822-4968, [www.powerkingtires.com](http://www.powerkingtires.com)**





# Multi Tools

Keystone's Outback 230RS and the Ram 1500 offer an array of recreational options

**K**eystone RV provides recreational enthusiasts with choices that range from super lightweight towables that can be pulled behind a compact SUV to high-luxury fifth-wheels that require serious towing machinery. Somewhere in between is the Outback 230RS. It's half-ton towable with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 7,550 pounds and an overall length of 27 feet from rear bumper to ball coupler, and yet it continues to deliver choices. Within its approximately 23 feet of interior space, the 230RS model Outback travel trailer features a rear slideout containing a king-size bed, high/low convertible dinette (part of the Outback Comfort Package that is a standard build option on the 230RS), flip-down sofa, a well-equipped kitchen

and modest bath. In addition, the front end of the trailer is filled with a generously sized twin-bunk room that doubles as an ATV or motorcycle transport section with a weight capacity of 1,000 pounds.

The Outback looks sleek and sublime on the road behind the 2013 Ram with its fiberglass front cap, LED hitch lights and deluxe graphics package (all a part of the Outback Luxury Package, also a standard build option). Once the travel trailer was parked in camp and fully operational that pocketknife personality of the 230RS is fully realized.

Unlocking and bringing the 75-inch-long by 56-inch-wide loading ramp to the motorized toy section of the trailer's front bunkroom should be done with care. It's not very heavy, and can be accomplished by one adult, but the ramp

door is not sprung. It should be noted that for those with long wheelbase toys, there is a dealer-available ramp extension. Two vents for fumes (one low and another high on the streetside wall) help keep the room aired out. The floor is coated with a heavy-duty nonskid surface, and four large D-ring tie downs are strategically placed in the floor for securing bikes or an ATV. Once your machines have been off-loaded, the ramp can be closed and the room returned to duty as sleeping quarters, for which it is well equipped.

For two-legged occupants, creature comforts abound in the bunkroom. The bunks are positioned along the front wall; the top bunk measures 75-by-28.5 inches, while the bottom is 33.5 inches wide. Both have a 3-inch-thick foam



mattress that is fine in the short run, but I would toss a self-inflating sleeping pad on top of each for a little extra "cush" during those long trips. Two double 12-volt DC lights, as well as two speakers are mounted in the ceiling. A pair of 120-volt AC duplex outlets (one near the floor, another close to the ceiling) are in the bulkhead wall near the aft streetside corner; and nearby the upper 120-volt AC outlet is a 12-volt DC power point and cable TV outlet in the ceiling and the LCD TV mount location is marked on the bulkhead wall.

The bunkroom also holds the only wardrobes in the entire trailer — two three-quarter-length hanging wardrobes stacked upon each other. The battery disconnect switch (another piece of the Outback Luxury Package) is located in the bottom of the lower wardrobe.

Stepping through the interior door that leads from the front bunkroom to the main living quarters, the bath is the first thing encountered. It's positioned on the street side and is also conveniently the first thing found upon opening the 25-inch-wide main door to the Outback 230RS. Inside is a 19-by-33-inch shower with a large domed skylight so an adult can stand tall for a rinse. A large shelf inside the stall can hold a few shower essentials.

The bathroom is not big, but just large enough to not make life difficult while using the facilities, and it offers a real porcelain flush-pedal toilet, a good-



**(Left)** Galley is not exceptionally large, but does have all the essentials. Counter space can be supported by the adjacent dinette. **(Right)** Sofa, opposite the dinette, is situated in what can be considered the living room. It's very comfortable for seating, but only suitable for one person as a bed.

sized sink cabinet and small countertop with a 13-by-8.5-by-5-inch-deep plastic sink. Below is enough cabinet space for bathroom commodities and access to plumbing. Above and to the right is a decent-sized cabinet with four cubbies for towels and other necessities, and directly above the sink is a mirrored-door medicine cabinet. A dual 120-volt AC outlet is on the wall close to the right of the cabinet, but we found no heat register in the bathroom, and that's going to be chilly during cold weather. Directly above the toilet is a ceiling vent with a fan with an on/off switch.

The kitchen is small, but enough for this trailer, as it has the essentials. It features a three-burner Atwood stovetop with a Wedgewood Vision

oven that provides a 15.5-by-5.75-inch opening for cookware or frozen ready-to-bake goodies. A microwave, part of the Outback Comfort Package, is in the cabinet above the stovetop. Mounted in the faux-marble-looking countertop is a 21.5-by-13.5-by-6.5-inch-deep plastic sink, and a high-arch faucet that allows larger pots and pans to fit underneath it. What remains of the counter is an area to the right of the sink that measures about 16 by 25 inches that can be used for food prep; other than that, the 24-by-39-inch dinette tabletop can be used for extra workspace.

There is a reasonable amount of cabinet and drawer space above and below the stovetop and sink for storage; but directly across the aisle and

**(Left)** A king-size bed fills all the available space afforded by the unique rear slideout (right). Overhead cabinets on both sides of the bed are available for storing clothing and bedding. Windows on both sides and the head of the bed offer great visibility and air circulation. The slideout covers the dinette and couch when retracted, which limits the use of the living room until the trailer can be opened up.



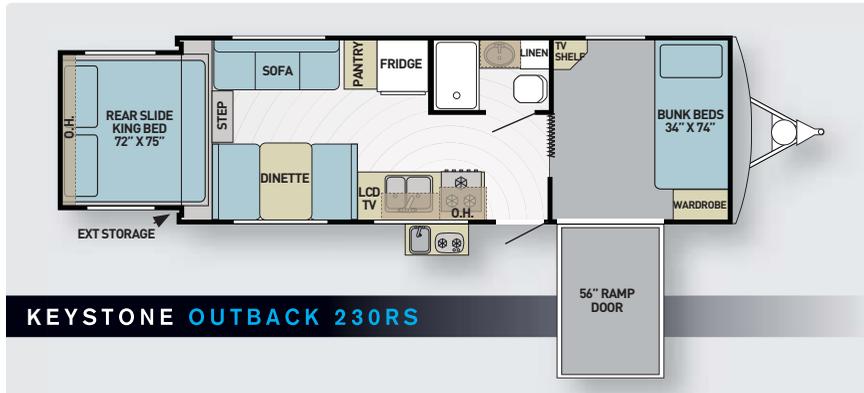
aft of the 6-cubic-foot refrigerator/freezer is a pantry cabinet with three 26-inch-deep cubbies with openings of about 14 by 13 inches and a small storage drawer below that. The test unit also offers an outside camp kitchen that provides a two-burner stovetop for easy meals when the weather allows and a small sink for cleanup. Best for quick breakfasts or lunches, the stovetop can be fed LP-gas from a connection near the frame and the sink hooked up to

a water outlet inside the cabinet from which the camp kitchen unhinges. The convertible dinette and flip-down couch are directly across from each other in what could be called the "living room." The diminutive dinette can squeeze in four adults, but is realistically comfortable for two adults and two children, one of each to a side. Set up for sleeping, the well-padded platform (as with most rigs, the firm seat cushions double as mattress sec-

tions) measured 39 by 72 inches, but that provided just enough room for one 6-foot adult to barely stretch out and be touching each end. This is a better place for a shorter teen or a couple of kids, and at just 39 inches wide, it's not going to work all that well for more than one. The same goes for the 62-inch-long, flip-down couch. Although it's a darn good seating surface, when made down for bedding, even if it is 40.5 inches wide, there is an uncomfortable crease (valley) down the length of it that could use another thick mattress surface placed atop of it.

Two heat registers are in the floor of the kitchen area, making it a toasty warm place to work. It is also well lighted, as there is a double 12-volt DC light directly over the center of the kitchen counter, another in the kitchen area ceiling, and another near the door to the front bunkroom. There is also a ceiling air conditioning vent in the kitchen area to keep it cool when needed.

To uncover this living room, the



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rear slideout must be extended. This is done through a switch on the master control panel (part of the Outback Comfort Package) located with all the other control switches for the trailer's electric functions on the wall next to the bathroom door. The 73.5-by-75-inch master bed is essentially the heart of the slideout, and storage cabinets for bedding and clothing located at ceiling height on both sides of the bed are set in a cage-like structure hung on two rails from the ceiling. The entire structure slides out of the back end of the trailer. Once this is done, another heat register was revealed in the floor between the dinette and couch, as well as three double 12-volt DC lights.

One of the characteristics of the Outback 230RS that we especially liked is the arched ceiling interior — it helped give the relatively small living space a "bigger" feel. Plenty of windows in the living area and the slideout added to that light and open feeling, too.

Our test truck for this trailer review



The redesigned interior of the Ram 1500 has a huge touchscreen that can be used to control radio, heating, air conditioning and telecommunications. Seating is outstanding and large windows provide excellent visibility.

was the 2013 Ram 1500 Outdoorsman Crew Cab 4x4. Although barely noticeable in the photos, there have been some major improvements. New for 2013 is the availability of an air-ride suspension system for the Ram 1500,

and it truly delivered what we believe is best-in-class ride and handling. The system offers a silky-smooth road feel, yet kept firm command and control of the vehicle; and could be automatically or manually adjusted to five different ride-

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it's only downhill  
part of the time.



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**SPECIFICATIONS**

**2013 Keystone Outback 230RS**

Exterior Length (bumper to ball)	27'
Exterior Width	8'
Exterior Height	10' 11"
Interior Width	7' 9"
Interior Height	7'
Construction	Aluminum framed walls, floor, front and rear, block foam and blanket insulation; composite fiberglass arched truss roof with blanket insulation and rubber membrane; front gelcoat fiberglass cap
Freshwater Cap.	43 gal.
Gray-Water Cap.	30 gal.
Black-Water Cap.	30 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	15 gal.
Water-Heater Cap.	6 gal.
Refrigerator	6 cu. ft.
Furnace	30,000 Btu
Air Conditioner	13,500 Btu
Converter	30 amp
Battery	12-volt, dealer supplied
Tires	ST225/75R15D
Suspension	Equa-Flex TrailAir Leaf Spring
Weight	5,086 lbs.
Hitch Weight	590 lbs.
Axle Weight	4,496 lbs.
GVWR	7,550 lbs.
GAWR	(2) 4,400 lbs.
Cargo Carrying Cap.	2,464 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$28,791
	(plus freight and dealer prep)
MSRP, as tested	\$28,791
Basic Warranty	12 months (limited)
Keystone	866-425-4369, www.keystonerv.com

**2013 Ram 1500**

MPG	Solo: 17.2; Towing: 10.6
0-60 mph, towing	13.2 sec.
40-60 mph, towing	6.8 sec.
Engine	5.7L V-8 Hemi MDS VVT
Horsepower	395 @ 5,600 rpm
Torque	407 @ 3,950 rpm
Transmission	6-speed automatic
Axle Ratio	3.55:1
Fuel Cap.	26 gal.
Tires	LT265/70R17
Suspension	Front: Upper and lower A-arms, auto-leveling air suspension system, stabilizer bar; Rear: Hotchkiss live axle, five-link with track bar, auto-leveling air suspension system, stabilizer bar
Brakes	Four-wheel disc ABS
Tow Rating	8,450 lbs.
GVWR	6,800 lbs.
GCWR	14,150 lbs.
Weight as Tested	5,665 lbs.
Length	19' 1"
Wheelbase	140.5"
MSRP, base	\$36,740
MSRP, as tested	\$46,920
Basic Warranty	3-year; 5-year powertrain
Ram	www.ramtrucks.com

height settings for the best ride and aerodynamic performance for the situation and terrain. It not only delivered up to 4 inches of lift, offering best-in-class ground clearance of 10.7 inches for off-highway adventures, but also provided auto load-leveling capability, detecting load on the suspension from a trailer. The air pressure in the system increased where necessary until the vehicle reached appropriate ride height, and leveled the truck, improving loaded ride quality and control.

Other upgrades include electric power steering, which takes the task of constantly turning the truck's rack-and-pinion pump away from the Hemi, helping to improve fuel economy. A redesigned frame that is lighter yet sturdier, as well as reducing the weight of some of the critical components and content (such as an aluminum hood), has shed pounds from the 2013 Ram. Inside the Ram, a redesigned interior with all-new heat, vent and air conditioning controls and a new multimedia system make the Ram much easier to use and enjoy.

The huge 8.4-inch touchscreen (or manual controls) could be used to con-

trol almost everything, including audio, climate control and telecommunications. Seating comfort is outstanding, and visibility through the large windows is generous. And the truck's locking RamBox feature built into the bedsides adds even more utility to what is already an outstanding pickup.

The Keystone Outback 230RS is easily hauled by the 5.7-liter Hemi V-8-powered Ram. The design and size of the engine give it all the muscle necessary, but the engine's variable-valve timing (VVT) and fuel-saving cylinder shut-off technologies helped provide better fuel economy. The VVT reduces the engine's pumping work by closing intake valves later in the cycle. Its MDS technology allows the V-8 to operate as a four-cylinder engine when all that power is not needed, optimizing fuel economy. Combined with the six-speed automatic transmission that offers better economy and also allows the driver to select and hold a gear that is best for specific driving conditions, the engine and tranny take the 2013 Ram 1500 Outdoorsman Crew Cab 4x4 to a new level of towing performance, comfort and fuel economy. 🚚

**Toys can be stored in the space rearward of the front bunk beds. Ramp is not supported by a spring mechanism, but is not that heavy. Ramp extension can be provided by selling dealer.**



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User Guide

Contents



# LOADED and LIGHT

No need to sacrifice upscale amenities with these 11 full-featured lightweights

**F**uel-conscious families looking to get into the RV lifestyle or veteran travelers who want to downsize from their big rigs don't have to forego upscale amenities.

Many RV manufacturers are appealing to both demographics with lightweight travel trailers that are designed to be towed by fuel-efficient vehicles equipped with amenities that compare to residential living.

It's not unusual for lightweight travel trailers to have elaborate kitchens with Corian countertops or other solid-surface facings, leather furniture, fireplaces or HDTVs that rotate so they can be seen in the living area and the bedroom.

Although some have dry weights of around 7,500 pounds, requiring a half-ton pickup as a tow vehicle, others as short as 16 feet come in as light as 2,900 pounds and can be

towed comfortably with an SUV or crossover vehicle.

Buyers should exercise caution when choosing a tow vehicles based on dry weight. To be sure, taking the trailer to a scale to determine true weight with fluids full is the best way to properly match a tow vehicle to a trailer, especially when relying on smaller vehicles with lighter towing capacities.

"We are giving customers some of the luxuries they don't usually see in a travel trailer," said Ryan Elliott, product manager for Dutchmen's Aerolite travel trailer. "And you can still tow it with a half-ton pickup or beefed up SUV."

Some manufacturers take the guesswork out of buying a new RV by limiting options, such as the Travel Lite Cobblestone, which has a molded front cap that looks like a wall of granite coming toward you. The effect is striking.

Looks aside, the key to Cobblestone's success, from the perspective of Travel Lite Vice President Dustin Johns, is that the trailer leaves the factory loaded — there are no options. "I can't think of another thing to put in this RV," Johns said.

## Forest River Rockwood Signature Ultra-Lite



PHOTOS COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS

## Airstream Sport 22FB



John Stringer, with Forest River's Flagstaff/Rockwood Division, sees the trend toward lighter travel trailers among people who have owned larger RVs before. "A big part of the light-weight growth has been previous owners who want to move into something lighter," Stringer said.

As manufacturers have worked to reduce weight, many have relied on so-called composites, or lightweight space-age material that commonly can be found in side walls and subsurfaces throughout an RV. Weight also is saved, even if it's only a few pounds, with LED lighting, for instance, inside and out in many models.

All of this comes at a cost, however. If you want luxury, you're going to pay for it. Lightweight, upscale trailers typically start in the mid-\$20,000 range and rapidly increase from there — some topping out on the other side of \$40,000.

Here is a look at some lightweight upscale travel trailers available this year:

## Airstream Sport

Airstream has been building travel trailers for more than 75 years and the Jackson Center, Ohio, RV builder has figured out how to pack a lot into a little package in the Sport, available in 16- and 22-foot floorplans. With dry weights of 2,900 pounds and 3,600 pounds, respectively, the Sport can be towed by small pickups or SUVs. Primarily a couple's trailer, the Sport offers layouts with a rear bed and a wet bath (16CNB) or a front-bed configuration with a full rear bath (22FB). The exterior still has Airstream's iconic bullet shape with bright aluminum side walls accented by a chrome beltline and rub-rail inserts. Features include LED taillights, front tinted panoramic windows, exterior showers, cast-aluminum heated-and-enclosed tanks, stainless-steel sink, removable under-bed storage boxes and a bright aluminum-finished interior. MSRP: \$40,491 (16CNB); \$47,467 (22FB).

[Airstream](http://www.airstream.com), 877-596-6111, [www.airstream.com](http://www.airstream.com)

## Bigfoot Industries

Travel trailers from Canadian manufacturer Bigfoot Industries, Armstrong, British Columbia, are built much like a boat, with two molded fiberglass shells — a top and a bottom — that eliminate the need for traditional framing. Available in 17- and 25-foot rear-entry floorplans, dry weights are 3,100 pounds and 4,450 pounds, respectively. As might be expected from a Canadian manufacturer, Bigfoot travel trailers offer four-season comfort with ducted furnaces and air conditioners along with high insulation values. Standard features include thermopane windows, stainless-steel sinks, face-framed double-screwed cabinets, spring-filled foam mattresses, heated-and-enclosed tanks, stabilizer jacks, oven and range top, electronic water heater, porcelain toilet and outdoor shower. MSRPs: High \$30,000s to low \$50,000s.

[Bigfoot RV](http://www.bigfootrv.com), 250-546-2155, [www.bigfootrv.com](http://www.bigfootrv.com)

## Dutchmen Aerolite

Dutchmen Manufacturing Company, Goshen, Indiana, seeks to equip its Aerolite with amenities not typical to lightweight travel trailers, including king beds, aluminum wheels, tinted frameless windows, power awnings,



## Bigfoot 2500 Series



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## LOADED AND LIGHT

Dutchmen Aerolite 315BHSS



heated-and-enclosed underbellies, and an outdoor camp kitchen and shower. Dutchmen offers a wide variety of layouts among Aerolite's 15 floorplans, ranging from an 18 $\frac{1}{2}$ -footer with bunk extensions to a traditional triple-slide 37-foot layout. The 35-foot triple-slide 319BHSS floorplan is a standout with a bath-and-a-half and two rear bunks. Equipped with lightweight Schwintek slideouts, the 319BHSS front bedroom has a dry weight of 6,974 pounds for a retail price in the low \$30,000 range.

[Aerolite](http://www.aero-rv.com), 574-537-0600, [www.aero-rv.com](http://www.aero-rv.com)

### EverGreen Ever-Lite

EverGreen Recreational Vehicles prides itself on building among the first "green certified" RVs with its Ever-Lite, an eight-floorplan travel trailer series. In the RV context, that means that

the company practices recycling and waste reduction in its construction techniques while using composite materials in its RVs. The Ever-Lite, built with lightweight recyclable materials from Compositenk Inc. in its side walls and wall linings, is certified "green" by nationally recognized TRA. Available in 27- to 36-foot lengths with up to three slideouts, Ever-Lite dry weights range from 4,400 to 7,600 pounds. Even then, the Middlebury, Indiana-based manufacturer EverGreen doesn't come up short with amenities that include Corian countertops, aluminum-framed windows, front and rear stabilizer jacks, solid-wood cabinet doors, crown molding, double-door refrigerators and raised-panel interior doors. MSRP's start at \$26,900.

[EverGreen Recreational Vehicles LLC](http://www.goevergreenrv.com), 574-825-4298, [www.goevergreenrv.com](http://www.goevergreenrv.com)



EverGreen Ever-Lite 31REW





Forest River Rockwood Signature Ultra-Lite

### Forest River Rockwood Signature Ultra-Lite

There are plenty of floorplans to choose from in Forest River's Rockwood Signature Ultra-Lite series — 19 of them, in fact, 10 of which are designed with V-nose front ends. That not only makes them more aerodynamic, but also allows the Middlebury, Indiana, manufacturer more interior flexibility. The traditional fiberglass-and-aluminum Signature, with a front cap and optional tan side walls, comes in lengths from 30 to 32 feet with up to three slideouts — all with dry weights lighter than 7,500 pounds. With very few options, the Signature Ultra-Lite is equipped with Dexter torsion axles for more stability, electric awnings, frameless windows, Corian countertops, stainless-steel appliances, solid-wood raised-panel cabinet and door fronts, Lazyboy leather recliners and 32-inch LCD HDTVs with surround sound. Base MSRP: \$32,600.

Forest River Inc., 574-642-2640, [www.foresriverinc.com](http://www.foresriverinc.com)

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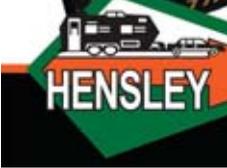


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Heartland NT31BHDD

### Heartland RV North Trail

For 2013, Heartland RV has introduced a 36-foot double-queen-bed rear-bunk layout in its lightweight widebody North Trail travel trailer series. The Heartland NT31BHDD (continued on page 68)

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## LOADED AND LIGHT

(continued from page 65)

floorplan, with a dry weight of 6,399 pounds, is designed with a single sofa/booth dinette "king" slideout. It's available with white or distinctive tan side walls and black accents around the windows, doors and baggage doors. The aluminum-and-laminated-fiberglass NT31BHDD offers an outside kitchen and a rear door that opens into the bath area. Standard features include 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>-foot ceilings, an outdoor shower and speakers, heated-and-enclosed underbelly, dual ducted-air, LCD TV, radius countertops, conventional oven with three-burner stovetop, raised-panel overhead cabinet doors and Beauflor floors. MSRP: \$27,750.

**Heartland RV, 877-262-8032, [www.heartlandrvs.com](http://www.heartlandrvs.com)**

### Keystone Bullet Premier

The outdoor kitchen that swings out on the Keystone Bullet Premier 32BHPR floorplan is notable in that it is fully loaded with all the amenities. With a 34-foot 9-inch length and 7-foot arched ceilings, the 32BHPR has a dry weight of 6,180 pounds. Featuring a single 36-inch-deep slideout containing a convertible bed and convertible dinette along with double-bed rear bunks and a front queen bed, the fiberglass-and-aluminum Premier 32BHPR can sleep up to 10 people. Features include a color-infused, dual-radius gelcoat



fiberglass front cap, pass-through storage, frameless tinted windows, rolled roof edges, aluminum wheels, Williamsburg leather furniture, flush-mounted puck lighting, smoked-glass mullion cabinet doors and a full entertainment center with a 46-inch LCD TV. MSRP: \$35,481.

**Keystone RV, 866-425-4369, [www.keystonerv.com](http://www.keystonerv.com)**

### KZRV Spree

The new 34-foot 8-inch triple-slide Spree 322RES floorplan from KZRV, Shipshewana, Indiana, is designed for folks who want to decide the specific features they want in a trailer. Standard with fiberglass-on-aluminum side walls, the Spree 322RES can be spiffed up with the company's LX option that includes a fiberglass front cap, high-gloss gelcoat exteriors, awnings with LED lights, 32-inch LED TVs, 6-foot 10-inch barrel ceilings and innerspring mattresses. Standard package options that also will upgrade the Spree 322RES include Corian countertops, a light-tan champagne exterior, front and rear stabilizer jacks and outside grill. The Spree 322RES

LX, with a dry weight of less than 7,300 pounds, has a retail price of \$35,950. It is among 16 24- to 36-foot Spree layouts offered by KZRV.

**KZRV LP, 260-768-4016, [www.kz-rv.com](http://www.kz-rv.com)**



### Lance 2295

A fireplace is optional in the new Lance 2295 travel-trailer floorplan, which is designed with an almost 7-foot-long streetside dinette slideout. The Lancaster, California-based manufacturer lightens the entire fiberglass-and-aluminum Lance line by using Azdel composites and substrates both inside and out. The 27-foot Lance 2295, with a dry weight of 4,185 pounds, has a private front bedroom with a walk-around queen-size bed with wardrobes on each side along with a rear bath that extends the width of the trailer to provide a private dressing area with a wardrobe. A fireplace or additional storage can be located beneath a 32-inch LCD TV that rotates between the living area and the bedroom. The Lance 2295, with \$28,557 MSRP, also is the company's first travel trailer with a pullout exterior kitchen with a two-burner cooktop and sink.

**Lance Camper, 661-949-3322, [www.lancecamper.com](http://www.lancecamper.com)**



Northwood Snow River Rugged Lite

## Northwood Snow River Rugged Lite

Northwood Manufacturing in La Grande, Oregon, combines upscale amenities with a luxury cabin feel in its two-tone Snow River "Rugged Lite" travel trailer, available in 25- to 30-foot lengths. With three single-slide floorplans, Snow River dry weights range between 5,000 and 6,000 pounds. Snow River's white fiberglass side walls are highlighted by a mocha front cap and black exterior

accents. Inside, distressed solid-wood cabinets and interior doors framed in black give the Snow River a cabin-like feel. Designed as a four-season coach that can be used off-road, Snow River has a 20-watt solar panel, Lippert Equa-Flex suspension with off-road clearance, black aluminum wheels, 1-inch-thick luggage doors and heated-and-enclosed tanks along with pass-through front storage. Base MSRPs: \$23,000 to \$29,000.

**Northwood Manufacturing Inc.,**  
800-766-6274, [www.northwoodmfg.com](http://www.northwoodmfg.com)

## Travel Lite Cobblestone

With five 15- to 23-foot floorplans, including a new 22-footer with a slideout, the Cobblestone travel trailer from Travel Lite, New Paris, Indiana, is void of options. That means Cobblestone, with a dry weight between 2,500 and 3,000



Travel Lite Cobblestone

pounds, has features that include power awnings; electric A-frame jacks; 19-inch flat screen TVs with DVD players; molded "Granicote" countertops; raised panel cherry cabinets; dinette tables; 3-cubic-foot, three-way refrigerator; two-burner stovetops with built-in microwaves; beveled-edged hardwood floors and heated holding tanks. The Cobblestone also is designed with a "Granicote" finish on the front cap that sports specs of white, black and dark brown to create a granite-looking appearance. Retail prices start at \$17,999.

**Travel Lite, 855-831-3525,**  
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**WALK-THROUGH:** NORTHWOOD ARCTIC FOX 35-5Z

# A Rig for All Seasons

Northwood's Arctic Fox 35-5Z features four-season livability and high-end appointments

**W**hen looking for a new fifth-wheel, one aspect that's often overlooked is the four-season livability. The fact is, not all trailers are created — er — built, equal, which can certainly put a damper on your RVing experience in the sweltering heat of the August sun or during a frigid February blizzard. So, if you're somebody who likes to brave the harshest elements, it's important to select a trailer that is designed to stand up to Mother Nature.

Northwood Manufacturing hangs its hat on four-season livability and sturdy construction designed to afford owners the opportunity to camp year-round. "We feel that we are the

standout manufacturer when it comes to four-season RVing," says Donald Cochran, national director of sales for Northwood Manufacturing. "Our units feature a go-anywhere, camp-at-any-time attitude. We make the four-season RVs not only to withstand the snow, but they're also going to stay cooler when it's hot out."

The triple-slide Arctic Fox, Silver Fox Edition, 35-5Z features this four-season construction, which starts from the ground up. All Northwood trailers are built on a certified proprietary chassis. "We are the only manufacturer in the industry that features a certified chassis we build ourselves. Once we build it to the proper speci-

fications to withstand the elements, we have a third party certify it for us," says Cochran.

The aluminum-framed Arctic Fox uses all plywood construction, and the roofing features R18 insulation — plus 5½-inch rafters — all of which are covered by a layer of Astrofoil. Each holding tank under the Fox is individually heated and enclosed, which not only aids in protection from extreme weather, but also adds to overall durability. Northwood fifth-wheels have higher ground clearance than most trailers to allow owners to head to remote areas; in addition, it aids in



(Top) The Silver Fox's master bedroom features a comfy queen-size bed and plenty of storage. A king bed is optional. Space for the optional washer/dryer is a plus. (Exterior) The Arctic Fox sits a bit higher than most fifth-wheels to allow for off-pavement exploring.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER





the prevention of tail scraping on steep driveways. The test fifth-wheel is also equipped with the optional thermal pane windows (\$2,175) to help control the elements, and the 5th Airborne pin box (\$653) to control the trailer while towing.

Once inside the 35-5Z, it's pretty obvious that the fiver is more than a Spartan adventurer's trailer. The first thing that grabs your attention is the gourmet island kitchen with solid-surface countertops, storage cabinets and a dual-basin sink. The antique-finished kitchen cabinetry and residential lighting throughout the trailer add to the luxurious feeling. Just beyond the galley lies the living area, which is smartly appointed with a sofa bed with optional air mattress (\$548) in the rear and two rocker recliners immediately across from the 42-inch HDTV. This setup

**(Above left) The island kitchen is great for entertaining, with a dual-basin sink, solid-surface countertops and plenty of storage in antique-finished cabinetry. (Above right) The optional electric fireplace is an affordable way to add elegance to any floorplan.**

allows for viewing of the TV from the recliners — which is most likely where the owners will sit — representing a subtle difference than the usual seating arrangement where the recliners are in the rear. The 35-5Z we tested is equipped with the optional electric fireplace (\$675), which is a great way to up the ante in terms of elegance in a trailer.

The bathroom is located amidships and is surprisingly roomy, offering owners and guests plenty of room to attend to grooming duties. The lav is accessible through the hallway or the master bedroom, which allows you to divert traffic away from your bedroom.

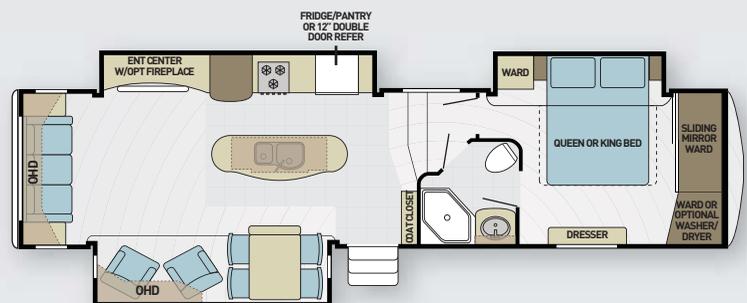
The bedroom continues the residential feel of the Arctic Fox, with the queen

bed (king bed option is \$285) nestled into a slideout for added space. Nightstands, a wardrobe and a mirrored closet handle the storage duties, and a washer/dryer option (\$1,643) means you don't have to lug your dirty clothes to the local laundromat.

When it comes time to lay your money down for a new trailer, fit and finish can make a huge difference. Northwood has not only paid close attention to things like seams, joints and drawer catches, but has also made it pretty clear the 35-5Z is built for the long haul. With certified four-season living, a host of upscale residential appointments and a decent bang for your buck value, this new Arctic Fox fiver quite literally demands your attention. 🚐

## QUICK INFO

Exterior Length	38' 11"
Exterior Width	8' 6"
Exterior Height (including A/C)	13'
Interior Height (Living Room / Bedroom)	8'6" / 6'6"
Freshwater Cap.	72 gal.
Black/Gray Water Cap.	65 gal./72 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	20 gal.
Hitch Weight	2,373 lbs.
GVWR	16,300 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$65,025
MSRP, as tested	\$69,211



**Northwood Manufacturing, 800-766-6274, www.northwoodmfg.com**  
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### Bye-Bye Grease and Grime

Green Hornet Super Concentrated Cleaner/Degreaser is an industrial-strength cleaner for RVs. The ingredients allow for the product to be watered-down in various dilution ratios to remove black streaks, clean awnings and rubber roofs, and wipe away grime from other RV surfaces. The company claims that one bottle takes the place of an entire cupboard of cleaning products. The non-abrasive cleaner/degreaser is packaged in a biodegradable, non-flammable 64-ounce bottle, and a 32-ounce trigger-spray version is coming soon.

Available at retail supply stores or enter your zip code in the "Where to Buy" field on the company's website.

**MSRP: \$10.99**

800-338-3155, [www.walex.com](http://www.walex.com)

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### Green Technology Trailer Hitch Receiver

Curt, manufacturer of a wide range of towing products, has a new finish for its hitch receivers. Each receiver is dipped in a liquid Aquence-coat (A-coat) before it gets a powder-coat finish. A-coat is a revolutionary finish with green technology. Curt claims that it is the only company on the market to use A-coat technology. The combination of finishes then co-cure together in a finishing oven and provide what the company claims is the most rust- and chip-resistant hitch receiver available. An opening in the frame allows the A-coat to cover the hitch receiver from the inside out, which further protects it from rust and corrosion.

**MSRP: starts at \$124.99**

877-287-8634, [www.curtmfg.com](http://www.curtmfg.com)

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### Compact Microwave

Need a microwave that won't eat up a lot of counterspace? The Franklin Chef FR787 is a compact stainless-steel microwave that is 17 inches wide by 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches high and 12<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inches deep. It weighs 26 pounds, and has an easy-to-clean interior, according to the company. The FR787 is UL and CUL approved for U.S. and Canadian installations. It provides 700 watts of cooking power, has a push-button door release and a 10-inch turntable. This compact microwave features six one-touch menus and 10 power levels, one- to six-minute express cook buttons and a 30-second quick-start button. Also included is a child safety control panel lock.

**MSRP: \$189.99**

941-378-9727, [www.salvinco.com](http://www.salvinco.com)

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## Banks AutoMind Programmer for 2011-2012 Chevy/GMC 6.6-L Duramax LML

The Banks AutoMind Programmer is now available for the 2011-2012 Chevy/GMC 6.6-liter Duramax LML diesel trucks. The programmer has four tuning levels that allow an increase in rear-wheel power up to 113.3 HP and 180.3 LB-FT of torque in the Super Sport setting.

The all-in-one programmer plus scan tool can be updated via the Internet and features preloaded dyno-tested tuning levels including Economy, Work/Tow, Sport and Super Sport settings. The AutoMind's Economy mode delivers improved mileage by tuning the fuel injection, timing and transmission characteristics, while the Work/Tow, Sport and Super Sport tunes provide power and torque increases. The Banks iQ combined with the AutoMind module offers the convenience of accessing the various tunes through the interactive 5-inch screen of the iQ.

The AutoMind can display a host of critical engine functions and provides "service technician" diagnostic capabilities with its ability to scan and clear vehicle trouble codes. Advanced tuning options are available at any of the four settings or at the stock level. These include adjustment or removal of the engine rev limiter and/or the top

speed limiter in addition to the ability to calibrate the speedometer based on tire size or gear ratio. For more information contact Banks Power, 800-695-1428, [www.bankspower.com](http://www.bankspower.com).

### New GM Trucks Have Higher MPG

General Motors announced that 2014 Chevrolet Silverado and 2014 GMC Sierra pickups will have EPA-rated fuel economy mileage figures as high as 16/23 MPG; they go on sale later this summer.

The trucks will use the latest iteration of GM's 5.3-liter V-8, and according to ratings, will beat Ford F-150s with EcoBoost engines by 1 MPG, 2 MPG better on the highway cycle than Ford's F-150 powered by a 5.0-liter V-8, and top V-8-powered Ram 1500s by 3 MPG. The new 5.3-liter V-8 will be rated 355 HP and 383 LB-FT of torque — 40 HP and 48 LB-FT higher than the prior version. Silverado and Sierra can be equipped to tow up to 11,500 pounds with the 5.3-liter engine.

### Autonomous Vehicles Are Coming

According to a J.D. Power and Assoc. survey, 37 percent of U.S. consumers are interested in autonomous (self-driving) driving technology. Roughly 90 percent of accidents are said to be due to human error. Driverless vehicles may reduce the number of crashes, although computers are not infallible, which leads to liability issues.

Nevada was the first state to approve the use of autonomous vehicles. Florida and California have also passed laws allowing self-driving

vehicles, and now Michigan is introducing legislation to permit testing autonomous cars on public roads. Like other states that allow testing autonomous vehicles, the Michigan law will require a driver to be onboard at all times to take over in an emergency.

Google reports that its self-driving Toyota Prius and Lexus RX 450h test vehicles have traveled more than 300,000 miles. Onboard computers using video cameras, radar sensors and light-detection devices, interpreted by artificial-intelligence software, direct the vehicles via servos and other electronic controls.

Traditional auto manufacturers are also working on autonomous vehicles. The leading edges of this technology can be seen in self-parking systems, adaptive cruise control, lane-departure warnings, automatic emergency braking and GPS guidance. The 2014 Mercedes-Benz S Class will reportedly have limited self-driving capabilities, as it will be able to autonomously drive in traffic and on highways.

### App Helps Find Alternative Fuels

Owners of vehicles using alternative fuels can have a hard time finding a place to refuel. Cleaner and Greener Fuels, by Leonardo Academy, is a free app that provides users with interactive maps to direct them to nearby alternative fuel stations in the United States. The app covers electric vehicles, along with those using Compressed Natural Gas (CNG), biodiesel, Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), E85 ethanol, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) and even hydrogen. Information comes from a database from the Department of Energy's Alternative Fuels Data Center. It also provides info on blend types, advice on accessibility, payments and Web links and is offered for iPhones and Android devices. 📱



Banks' AutoMind programmer is a tuner/scan tool for gasoline and diesel pickups that displays critical engine functions and provides "service technician" diagnostics.

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User Guide

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# Guiding You Home

Torklift's GlowGuide entryway handrail employs a unique mounting system and comes with a couple of surprises

**DIFFICULTY** 1 2 3 4 5

**TIME TO COMPLETE** 1½ HOURS

**TOOLS NEEDED** DRILL/SCREW GUN,  
DRILL BITS, SOCKET WRENCH SET,  
SILICONE RUBBER CAULKING

Getting in and out of an RV seems like a simple enough proposition, but an unexpected misstep can result in injuries that can ruin a trip, or worse, require protracted medical attention. Depending on the RV, the entry steps can be sized smaller than one is normally used to, or be at heights that are not natural to a normal stride. Probably one of the most overlooked areas of safety — until it's too late — is the entryway handrail.

The majority of manufacturers

equip their rigs with handrails that only offer assistance coming and going from the top step; from there it becomes awkward to reach and retain a suitable grip. In some cases the grip area is barely larger than the average-size hand. Until recently, there have been very few products available to provide a full-length, add-on handrail without serious modifications. Thanks to well-known RV aftermarket supplier Torklift International, the GlowGuide is now available to help remedy this ailment.

The GlowGuide is an adjustable full-length handrail that ties into the RV at three points for maximum support and is designed to be universally mounted, regardless of the RV style or shape.

The GlowGuide comes packaged with every possible mounting bracket and all the bolts, screws and molly rivets needed for the installation. Detailed instructions accommodate a wide variety of framing and entry steps. Installation of the GlowGuide is a relatively straightforward process that only requires common hand tools. To begin, find the RV Step Mount Cage Bracket and determine the best way to attach it to the bottom entry step. This bracket is versatile and can be adapted to most steps. Two-face tape is used to facilitate the installation. Once this procedure is complete, it's a matter of locating the attachment points for the door and strut mounts. Due to the multitude of installation and assembly possibilities it's best to carefully read through the instructions and find the appropriate method for your specific RV before drilling away.

After deciding the best way to affix the two remaining brackets there will only be four small holes to drill, followed by selecting the appropriate hardware. Don't forget to use silicone rubber when adding new holes and hardware to any side wall. The system is comprised of three telescopic aluminum arms and all three have the same length of adjustability. The upper door



**HANDRAIL TO HANDY WASH BRUSH** » Don't miss a step with Torklift's GlowGuide, which attaches to your RV at three points, glows in the dark and extends into a long-reach brush.

mount goes to the entryway, the lower arm attaches to the step and the strut can be attached to the bumper (depending on door location) or on the side wall, depending on the location of the entry door. The adjustability feature allows the arms to be tightened in positions that allow for best personal support.

There are two choices for storing the arms: Either take the system apart and store in an exterior compartment, or just fold it up against the wall and lock it in place. The location of an existing grab handle may preclude storing the arms against the side wall, as it did with the trailer we used for the install. Disassembly takes only a few minutes.

The GlowGuide offers handrail assistance from the top step all the way to the ground, which provides ergonomical support. Although the GlowGuide may not appear to be massively stout, considering it weighs only 44 ounces, we found that when assembled correctly it's quite strong and sturdy. To make nighttime use even safer, strategically mounted glow-in-the-dark stickers illu-



**A wash brush provided with the GlowGuide kit (left) can be attached to one of the handrail arms. Once extended (up to 53 inches), the wash brush can be used to cover out-of-reach areas. The lower handrail, attached to a step (right), reaches the ground so users can be fully supported.**

minate for up to 10 hours, which makes the arms highly visible.

Oh, did I mention that the GlowGuide also doubles as an adjustable, long-reach wash brush? Remove one of the arms, attach the wash brush that comes with the kit, and the handrail can be extended from 32 to 53 inches, giving it plenty of reach for washing your RV.

The GlowGuide is made in the

United States and has a limited lifetime warranty. Two kits are available, one for scissor steps used for pickup campers for \$196, and the other for conventional steps on most trailers and fifth-wheels. The model for the trailer retails for \$206. 📞

**GlowGuide**, 800-246-8132, [www.torklift.com](http://www.torklift.com)

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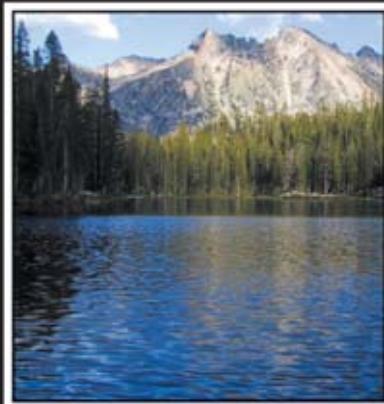
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## PHANTOM TV FASTENERS

**Q** I purchased a 36-foot Alpenlite fifth-wheel built by Western Recreational Vehicles in Yakima, Washington. This unit has a Sharp flat-screen TV. I'd like to remove the old TV and install an HD flat-screen TV. I cannot figure out how the manufacturer installed this TV. I looked all over and cannot find any screws that are holding the unit in, and it's built into a cabinet, so I can't figure out how to get the TV loose. Can you give me some advice on how to remove this TV? When I pull the top of the TV it seems to be free, but the bottom of the TV is secured.

**Arthur Gentilin, Via email**

**A** RV designers, like automobile engineers, often strive to have as few visible fasteners as possible. That's great for visual cosmetics but can be a challenge when it's time to disassemble something. Many flat-screen TVs on fixed-position mounts simply hang in place. They can be removed by lifting the TV up and perhaps slightly forward at a bit of an angle to disengage the brackets in back. In some cases, there may also be a release latch that has a loop of cable hanging down or a lever arm that you need to pull to disengage the mechanism and free it for the lift-and-remove process. The engagement part of the bracket is generally robust enough that the usual road bumps won't cause the TV to fly free. If in doubt, visit your local TV dealer and take a look at the mounting brackets it sells to get an idea what you'll be dealing with in your RV. — **Jeff Johnston**



## WEIGHT-DISTRIBUTING HITCH – REQUIRED?

**Q** I've been told by dealers and friends that I need to use a weight-distributing (WD) hitch. I've towed my 2004 Springfield 189FL trailer approximately 9,000 miles using a conventional hitch with no problems. The towing terrain has included mountains and wide-open spaces, and has been with and without windy conditions. I do use an anti-sway device, but that's it. I've even towed our trailer 100-plus miles before remembering I forgot to put the anti-sway

device on, with no bad effects. When we travel we keep our weight minimal, including empty holding tanks. Our tow vehicle is a 2009 Chevy 1500 Silverado Crew Cab, 5.3-liter 2WD, with the heavy-duty towing package and 20-inch wheels. When the trailer and truck are loaded and the trailer is hitched, our truck bed and trailer are perfectly level according to our "bubble level." The specs are as follows:

Hitch weight: 460 pounds; trailer dry weight: 3,780 pounds; trailer gross vehicle weight (continued on page 85)

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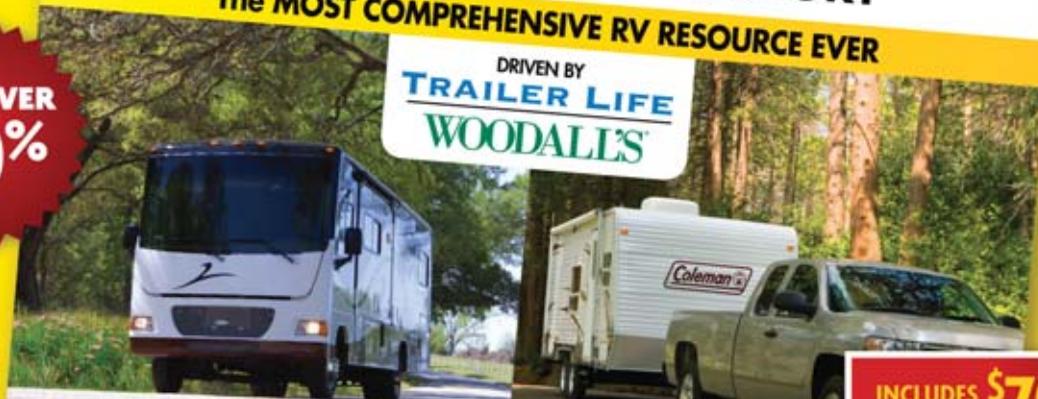
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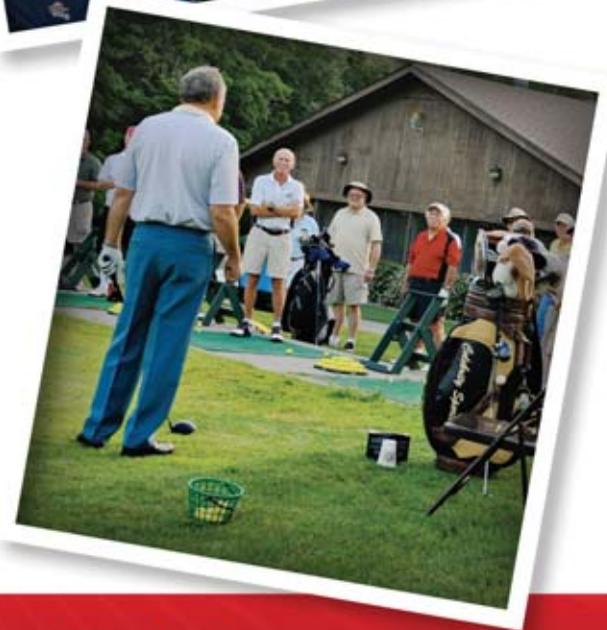
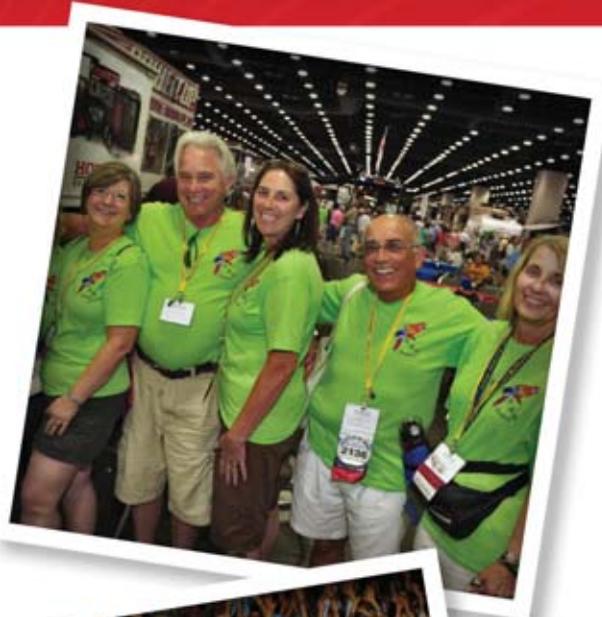
Ranging in size from 50 rigs to over 500, Samborees are RV get-togethers planned by state and provincial directors, making each Samboree unique. Along with fun and games, many Samborees include RV exhibits and educational seminars. Most states and provinces have a Samboree each year!

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rating (GWR): 5,960 pounds. We carry approximately 1,200 pounds of clothing and miscellaneous items, including items in the truck bed. According to Chevy, our truck has a 15,000-pound gross combination weight rating (GCWR) and our truck weighs approximately 5,500 pounds.

Do you think I need a WD hitch?

R. DeMers, Via email

A "Need" is an interesting term in this case. Given your towing history and the description of your truck and trailer combination it's clear you don't specifically need a WD hitch. Why argue with success, right? Your truck can obviously handle the trailer's moderate hitch weight without any noticeable aft-end sagging that could affect steering. A WD hitch is most useful when the trailer hitch weight causes the tow rig's aft end to sag enough that its steering and handling are affected, in which case the WD brings the aft end back up and distributes part of the hitch weight

to the tow vehicle's front end. This keeps the lashup on an even keel and maintains safe steering and handling manners. Your use of the sway control device is just icing on the cake. — J.J.

**TRAILER SHOCK ABSORBERS**

Q I have a 1995 Coachmen Catalina Lite fifth-wheel trailer. I would like to install shock absorbers to keep bounce to a minimum. I know *Trailer Life* had an article on this in the past but I can't find the article or retrofit kits or anyone who can tell me anything about where shocks can be installed inboard or outboard of the box frame. Outboard frame space is limited because the tires are close to the frame.

What angle front or aft of axles is OK for the shocks? I understand once anchor points are established on the frame and axles, I can measure static points with the trailer level and order shocks. Also the trailer has been raised per your article in the April issue. The trailer ended up about 4 to

5 inches higher. Thanks for any help.  
Ron Gamble, Fairmont, West Virginia

A Adding shocks to a trailer is a good idea and fortunately, Monroe sells a variety of shock absorber retrofit kits for trailers. Visit any auto parts shop and have them search "Monroe Trailer Retrofit Kit" or try, as an example, part number RB511, one of nine kits is lists for different axle sizes and frame configurations. One of those kits will be just right for your trailer, then as you suggested, have the parts counter person help you select the right shock absorbers to fit the mounting points and length and you're good to go.

There's nothing wrong with mounting the shocks inboard of the frame if that's where the space works out best. Shocks should be mounted as close to vertical as possible to make them the most effective relative to the axle movement, but as much as 15 or 20 degrees away from vertical is fine as well. — J.J.

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**WEIGHT WORRIES**

**Q** We have a 2011 Keystone Outback 298RE. I am towing it with a 2010 Chevrolet Silverado 2500 HD 4x4 crew cab, with a 6-liter V-8 gas engine and a 4.10:1 axle ratio. I'm using an equalizer hitch with anti-sway bars. We have weighed everything and are within maximum rating limits. The problem is the trailer. The GVWR is 9,000 pounds and it weighs in at 9,030 pounds fully loaded.

I can dump the 30 pounds, but is the camper really up to an 8,000-mile cross-country trip at this weight? Everything is stock and the tires have only a couple of thousand miles on them. They are load-range D trailer tires and have been balanced. I would really appreciate your opinion.

**Ken Grassel, Via email**

**A** When you weighed your trailer, did you simply park it on the scale with the A-frame jack down and take one overall reading? Or did you also measure separately how much weight was on the axles? As long as the trailer's overall weight does not exceed the GVWR and the axle weight doesn't exceed the gross axle weight rating (GAWR), you should be OK. Tires must also be inflated for the actual load. However, whenever possible, I suggest you travel with your water tank at a low level, because at about 8 pounds per gallon, that's an easy way to save weight. If you do find that you are having problems with tire failures, consider replacing them with load-range E tires and appropriate inflation pressures based on load-inflation tables. Keep in mind that once the hitch weight is subtracted from the overall trailer scale weight the axles must be within their GAWR ratings.

When weighing a trailer it's important to do so without the equalizing hitch or friction-type anti-sway devices attached. It's a bit of a chore to remove these on or just before pulling onto the scale, but both devices will cause incorrect trailer hitch weight readings. — **Ken Freund**

**BENT AXLE BLUES**

**Q** We own a 2011 fifth-wheel SURV that we bought new. By scale weight, it is not overloaded, and the load is

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distributed as the weight should be on hitch and axles/tires. The tires are kept inflated at the pressure printed on the sidewall. I had the tires balanced right after we purchased the unit. Almost every mile is on interstate highways, except for the short drive at the end of a trip to parks. After 9,000-plus miles in the first 14 months of ownership, the inner tread of all four tires is wearing. It is the same amount of wear on the inner tread of the two tires on the left side and of the two tires on the right side; all four now look the same. This was obviously easy to see when we had the wheels off repacking the bearings; the tread is evenly worn away in the inside of the tires. I plan to find a shop that can align trailer axles. Should I be looking for any other cause?

**Randall Treadwell, Kettering, Ohio**

**A** It's good to hear that you weighed your rig to check for overloading. You might also confirm that the axles are rated properly for your trailer. One other possibility is that the wheel bearings are too loose, allowing the wheels to camber out at the bottoms. This would usually be accompanied by wavy uneven tread wear, but it should be checked.

There is a shop not too far from you, Bud's Body Shop Inc. (574-293-6002, [www.budsbodysshop.biz](http://www.budsbodysshop.biz)) in Elkhart, Indiana, that specializes in trailer-axle alignments. The shop has been aligning trailer axles since 1968 with much success. The axles do not have to be removed, and can be corrected in a few hours or less, assuming that spindles are not bent, which may require replacement. Several RV manufacturing companies such as Keystone, Forest River, CrossRoads RV, as well as Dexter Axle send their customers to Bud's for alignments. — K.F.

### TRAILER TIRE TIP

**Q** I have read a lot about trailer tire failures and recommendations for proper inflation, loading, etc. One thing I haven't seen anyone point out is the fact that all ST trailer tires are speed rated at 65 MPH. Centrifugal force varies directly with the square of the speed, so



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at 75 MPH the tires are stressed 33 percent more than at 65 MPH. I don't think many people are aware of this limitation on ST trailer tires.

Scott Parma, Keller, Texas

**A** Thanks for writing, Scott. Heat is a tire killer, too, and driving faster causes the tires to heat up more. According to the Tire and Rim Association (TRA), ST tires with no other specific speed rating are rated at 65 MPH, but for those drivers who wish to drive at maximum speeds of 65 to 75 MPH, the user should add 10 PSI. For driving 76 to 85 MPH, the user stays at the additional 10 PSI, but must reduce the maximum load by 10 percent (according to TRA load tables). I contacted Goodyear and its spokesman for trailer tires confirmed the company is in agreement with the TRA guidelines.

Having said that, we recommend that trailerists slow down and smell the roses. Towing at 55 MPH is safer, is the maximum legal towing speed in some states, and will prevent many tire failures and save a lot of fuel as well. — K.F.

**ELECTRIC WATER-HEATER CONVERSION**

**Q** The Hott Rod water heater I used last summer worked beautifully. The heating element, however, replaces the anode rod in my Suburban water heater. Without the protection from the anode rod, is the integrity of my heater tank compromised?

Paul Weis, Loveland, Colorado

**A** Yes, an anode must be used in any water heater that came with one from the factory. The Hott Rod kits should come with a reducer that adapts them to a Suburban water heater and includes a built-in anode. If for some reason you don't have this, contact the manufacturer at 800-456-4498 or www.hottrod.net. — K.F.

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## Bookends That Stay in Place

Our RV manuals, maps and camping catalogs had several homes inside our RV but never stayed in place because they fell over during travel and ended up in a messy pile. Our local camping store had the answer. The solution is a refrigerator shelf guard. We purchased two with lengths to fit the shelf vertically. It has dual adjustable rods connected together. When placed in the vertical position inside one of our upper cabinets it forms the perfect "bookend" for all our coach documentation and maps.

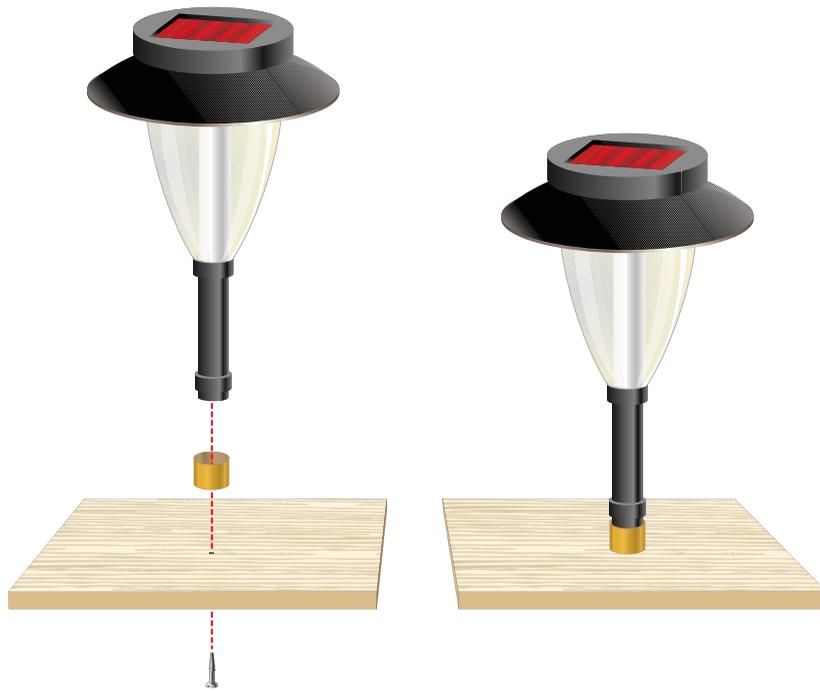
**Danny Lindstrom, Salinas, California**



## Bright Idea for Yard Lights

Those decorative battery-powered LED yard lamps are great around your RV site. But site pads are usually so compacted and impenetrable that inserting the bayonet is almost impossible. Making bases for these lights is simple and inexpensive. First, for each lamp, cut an approximately 8-by-8-inch square from 1/2-inch plywood. Drill a small hole through the center of 1/2-inch copper pipe cap. Screw the cap to the center of the plywood square with a 1/2-inch sheet-metal screw. Now remove the bayonet end from the lamp shaft. The shaft should now slip easily into the upturned pipe cap. The lamps can be easily moved to follow the sun for charging. Storage is no problem since the lamp and the new base separate easily.

**A. F. Collier, Stockton, California**



### QUICK FIX

#### Theft-Proof Propane Cylinders

In order to stop theft of propane, I purchased a good-quality 4-inch padlock. Then I drilled two holes in the wing nut and in the bar for holding propane cylinders firmly in place. I placed the lock on and closed it! Problem solved.

**Melvin Miner, Norway, Michigan**

To send your submission, write to: 10-Minute Tech, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, California 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.

# Lourdes of America

## A site for pilgrimage and prayer



**D**riving the 70 miles from Santa Fe to Taos, the state of New Mexico offers a couple of two-lane choices. The High Road goes through the backcountry and it's the scenic route. The other road runs through the valleys along the Rio Grande. It's called just what it is: Highway 68, and on the map it's a red line. The High Road is a gray line and changes numbers as it goes along.

The High Road winds through the Sangre de Cristo Mountains where ridges and rock formations change color as the day passes. The road crosses high desert, spotted with bushes that are nature's only gift of green to these rolling knolls of sand.

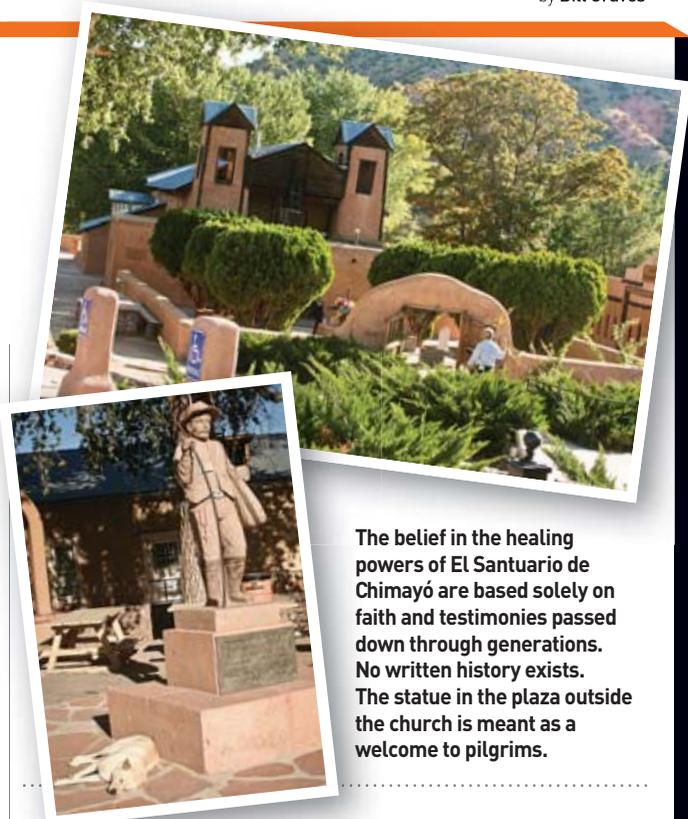
The villages along here tap into the bloodlines of the original Spanish explorers of 400 years ago. They carry on the customs, religious beliefs and work of those early settlers. Their language is closer to that of Madrid than of Mexico.

I exited the High Road at Chimayó — a scattering of little houses with plots of peppers and chilies out back. Tall cottonwood trees tell of a mountain stream or two somewhere close.

I was here to see an old, adobe church — a shrine actually, built in 1816 — called El Santuario de Chimayó. Miraculous healing is believed to occur here where a wooden crucifix was pulled from the ground in 1813. The church is reportedly built on the spot where it was discovered.

The church has two high windows and walls of adobe 3-feet thick. Indirect lighting draws the eye to the altar and the wooden altar screen behind it, which is a masterpiece of wood carvings and color. The room has a solemnity and tranquility that has settled in, I think, after a couple of centuries of prayers being said here.

To the left of the altar is the vestry or prayer room. Off of it is the El Posito (the Little Well), a tiny candlelit room off to the side of the altar. It has a round opening in the flagstone floor where people can scoop up the *sagrada tierra* (sacred earth) to take with them. I am told some eat it. It is replaced daily by blessed dirt or sand from close by. They go through 25 to 30 tons of it a year.



**The belief in the healing powers of El Santuario de Chimayó are based solely on faith and testimonies passed down through generations. No written history exists. The statue in the plaza outside the church is meant as a welcome to pilgrims.**

The vestry's ceiling is low. With a dirt floor and no windows, it has the feeling of a cave. The walls are lined with castoffs — hundreds of crutches and canes along with walkers, wheelchairs and braces. Apparently, myriad people have left this room convinced that they did not need them anymore.

"It is believed to be one of the truly holy places in America," Lorraine Vigil explained. "Long before the Spaniards came, the Native Americans believed this valley to be holy." Lorraine has lived here all her life, as has her family for several generations.

"During Holy Week, this is the site of the largest religious pilgrimage in the country. Most of the people come on foot, some from as far away as Albuquerque (90 miles). Many carry crosses.

"I live nearby. On Good Friday the crowd passing my house is so heavy I don't even try to go out. About 30,000 people come here for Easter. They line up for hours to get in the church."

I told Lorraine that I had heard that the crucifix that had been pulled from the ground had been taken to Santa Cruz by a local priest. But three times it disappeared and was later found back here in its original location.

"Over the years, many stories have been told about the crucifix," Lorraine said. "But nothing was written down. So believe what you choose."

Welcome to America's Outback. 📧

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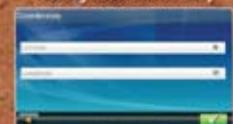
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