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Villagio 25QBS

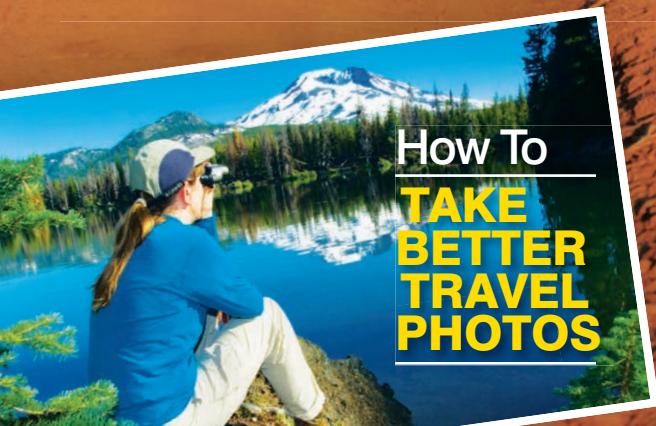
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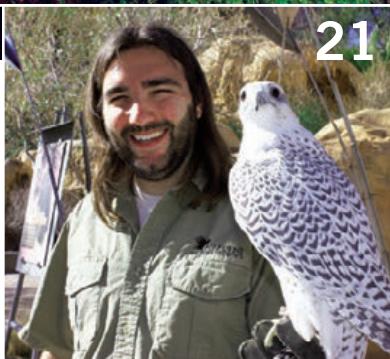
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On The Cover: The upscale Villagio by Renegade RV features full-body paint and aerodynamic fiberglass front and rear caps (see test on page 54). Photo by Scott Hirko.

ALWAYS LOOKING AHEAD

As we put the finishing touches on this month's issue, our heads were squarely focused on winter, which was still a month away. Publishing really messes with the minds of those responsible for assembling this magazine, or any magazine, for that matter, that follows a strict schedule to meet the printer's deadline. As the files for the February issue were sent to the printer, the staff was getting ready for Thanksgiving. When the first copies of this issue landed in our offices, our personal lives were fully immersed in the Christmas holidays and ushering in a new year, but we thought about Christmas last August while working the December issue.

As you receive this issue, the editorial staff is concentrating on the upcoming summer travel season, but in real time the latter part of fall and the coldest months of the year were still ahead. For editorial people, the calendar of events is just a guideline.

The calendar month of February will take my wife, Lynne, and I to California's Central Coast, where we'll meet up with a group of other RV enthusiasts who we travel with frequently. Since it will actually be winter, the evening campfire will surely be welcome. Other trips to California's Sierra Nevada foothills and Quartzsite, Ariz., will feel like distant memories as we flip through the February issue, even though they actually didn't happen yet. Magazine editors live their lives in fast-forward, which is something most of us get used to over time.

In real time, we were getting sneak peaks at new motorhomes for 2015 even before we cut into our turkey, and were busy working travel stories for summer destinations so readers will have enough advance information to map out routes and make RV park reservations.

As part of this thinking-ahead process, we're featuring destinations that are popular with snowbirds, but also good places to go in spring and summer. For example, Las Vegas, Nev., (page 21) offers tremendous possi-



bilities: fairly stable weather, great campgrounds, nearby recreation, and, of course, the casino and entertainment venues. Texas is one of America's greatest playgrounds, offering countless places to visit and things to do. In this issue, we're concentrating on four Texas State Parks (page 38). Since everything is bigger in Texas, plan on spending time exploring the vast countryside.

Near and dear to my heart are the baseball training camps featured in "Take Me Out to the Ballgame," found on page 45. It's fun to see your favorite big league players in Florida and Arizona — two premier locations for snow-weary motorhome enthusiasts and summer sun worshipers.

Not everyone will travel in winter, using the time instead to tinker with their coach and get it ready for the upcoming travel season. There is no shortage of projects like replacing a toilet that is often neglected — and probably tolerated for too long. It can be upgraded in just a few hours using simple hand tools. New designs and lightweight materials have made new toilets much more user friendly, like Thetford's Residence, a composite toilet that looks and works like its porcelain counterpart. We walk you through how to replace an old throne with a new Residence on page 58.

Tires are also often overlooked until failure creates travel havoc and costly-to-repair damage. Using a sophisticated monitoring system, like the one presented on page 64, gives you the peace of mind knowing you'll be traveling safely.

Our job is to keep you informed of the newest coaches and products, and provide valuable, timely articles on interesting and exciting places to go. The process is fun, even if the calendar is not our best friend. ♦

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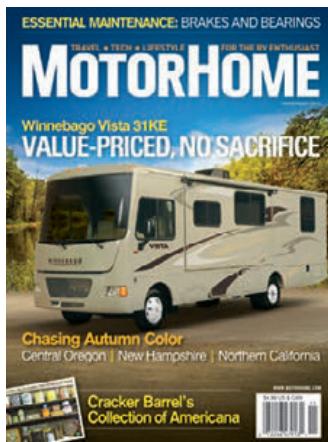
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IF YOU HAVE AN AFTERMARKET GPS, WHERE IS IT POSITIONED IN YOUR MOTORHOME'S COCKPIT AND WHY?

That's the question we asked in our November 2013 issue, and here are some of the replies we received.

FLOOR TILE BASE

I have a Winnebago Vista with a large dash area and windshield that are far from the driver's seat. To make my Rand McNally GPS serve me better, I use an 8-by-8-inch piece of floor tile as a base. I glued a soft cloth to the bottom (to protect the dash and reduces sliding), and use the windshield attachment device to attach the GPS to the tile. I can move the unit to the left, center, or right side of the dash depending on how the light hits the driving area.

CHUCK WAITS | VIA EMAIL

NO SCOFFLAW

My 1999 Pace Arrow Vision has a TV in the dash on a spring-loaded lift. It's housed with a cover that matches the rest of the dash. I screwed a piece of plexiglass on it and put the GPS and my iPhone on it with holders designed for suction on glass. I not only comply with California law, but the GPS is close to a power source and my reach.

LAWRENCE MAGID | VIA EMAIL

MAGELLAN MATTERS

I searched www.magellan.com and found a Magellan Dash-Mat Mount. I can reach it on my dash, I can see it clearly, and if necessary I can hand the unit to my co-pilot to add a new address or just check out where the next fuel station is.

I want to know what other RVers think of the Magellan RV GPS. I would have liked to have had one this past summer when we took a trip to Yellowstone National Park. We climbed around 5,300 feet after leaving Sheridan, Wyo., and went through switchback after switchback only to drop that much on the other side with a lot less room in the switchbacks.

THE ANDERSONS | FAIRFIELD, CALIF.

UPSIDE-DOWN SOLUTION

We have our Rand McNally 7710 GPS mounted on a ceramic saucer plate turned upside down. If you mount the GPS suction cup to the underside of the saucer plate this provides stability when it's on top of the dash. We also use painter's tape to hold the plate in place. It's mounted near the middle of the driver's seat and the passenger seat where it can be reached by both of us.

RICK AND SUE KERLIN | VIA EMAIL

HUSH LITTLE GPS

Our GPS is "mounted" on a bean bag mount and placed on the dashboard. My wife is my navigator while I am driving and I am her navigator when she is driving. We silence the "voice" so that it does not continually tell us it is "recalculating" or instruct us to "make a U-turn in 300 feet." When a change is coming up, the passenger tells the driver the details at the appropriate time, and confirms that the correct action was taken. The rest of the time, we travel along in relative quiet, enjoying each other's company as well as the scenery.

RICHARD MAIN | RIO RANCHO, N.M.

A CUSTOM CREATION

Our Class A motorhome is a 38-foot 2007 Four Winds Magellan. The cockpit has a center dash with the backup camera monitor, radio and heater controls. I made a custom removable mount for our large screen Magellan Maestro 4040 GPS that mounts just above the backup monitor. It makes the GPS visible and accessible to the driver and the passenger. It is also close to a 12-volt DC source.

SANDY DONOVAN AND DICK KASHDIN | BUFFALO, N.Y.

COASTING ALONG

I made a GPS "coaster" by using a 4-by-4-inch piece of plexiglass with a 6-by-6-inch wood frame around it. I put cork on the bottom of the frame to prevent sliding. I stick the window mount on the plexiglass and move the GPS screen so I can see it. I then place the coaster on the dash or move it to the center console. From there, information can be input by the passenger without climbing or sitting on the dash while attached to the window. I can also put the GPS on the driver's-side left dash near the mirror to glance at both while traveling.

GREG GEORGE | MARIETTA, OHIO

GOOD FOR DRIVER AND CO-PILOT

Our Garmin GPS sits mid-dash in our Class C so both of us have a good view. We use a Garmin Portable Friction Mount (Part No. 010-11280-02), which can be curved to conform to the shape of the dash and stays put very well. In addition, it can be moved and reshaped, so we just transfer it to the dash of our dinghy when we are out and about.

ALLEN CHAPMAN | VIA EMAIL



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GIMME A GARMIN

I have an older 7-inch Garmin StreetPilot 7200 that I've had in my last two Monaco RVs. I placed it in both coaches on a Garmin mount on the dash, just above the factory backup camera screen. This location keeps my attention to one area.

B. JERRY ELLISON | VIA EMAIL

CLEAR VIEW OF THE SKY NOT NEEDED

I put my GPS on the dash next to the in-

strument cluster housing. It works well there despite being set back from the clear view of the sky. In fact, I can plug it in my office to program a route and it has no difficulty finding the satellites it needs.

PAUL THORPE | GIG HARBOR, WASH.

NO-SUCTION SOLUTION

Finding a location for my 7-inch touch-screen GPS unit was difficult because the texture of my RV's plastic dash prevented

the suction cup from sealing. I wanted to put the unit just above the rear view monitor and radio display, so I bought a plate of plexiglass and cut a piece a little larger than the suction cup of the mount. I used double-sided, non-permanent tape to attach the plexiglass to the dash and poof ... the mount is just where I want it.

JIM SHORT | VISALIA, CALIF.

ABOVE THE DOGHOUSE

I have a 1997 32-foot Bounder motorhome. There is a small cabinet with drawers located on top of the doghouse. The top of the cabinet has a rough finish, so I cut a piece of plastic to fit into the top left corner and screwed the plastic into place. I clean the plastic with an alcohol wipe and attach my Rand McNally 7710 GPS to the plastic. I then adjust the GPS so that I have an unobstructed view. It stays in place until I want to remove it by releasing suction.

STEVE BOTELHO | VIA EMAIL

FRONT AND CENTER

I use an aftermarket GPS because it helps me to avoid low bridges and stay off roads I shouldn't be on with my rig. I have a Garmin Denzl 760. When I purchased it, I also bought a Garmin bean bag. I have a Class A coach with a curved dashboard where the instruments are located. The bean bag sits on the dash in front of the driver and is held in place with hook-and-loop fastener, which is attached to the bottom of the bean bag and the dashboard.

**ALDEN WHITEHEAD
EAST NORTHPORT, N.Y.**

RIGHT AT HAND

I have had three Garmin GPS units and I use a Garmin accessory dashboard mount. It acts as a small "sandbag" with a gripping bottom to minimize sliding and has a bracket on the top where a Garmin arm secures to hold the GPS. When in the RV, this sits on the edge of the dashboard, just to the right of my right hand on the steering wheel. When needed in the toad, it easily adapts similarly to the toad dashboard.

TOM MOSHER | MESA, ARIZ.

DON'T CLUTTER THE WINDOWS

Our 2011 Windsport has a flat area in the front center of the dashboard just above the radio console. We put ours there using

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a suction cup bracket with an arm. We can set it so the driver can see it easily and the passenger can reach over and remove the GPS unit from its bracket without dislodging the suction cup in the event we need to search for services at upcoming exits or to consult the turn list. We've found this to be the best solution for us. It keeps from cluttering up the windows as well — we have a TPMS monitor attached there.

LONNIE D. CLARK | VIA EMAIL

WHERE'S WAL-MART?

I have a Rand McNally 7710 in my 2013 Class C. Although my coach has a built-in GPS, that unit doesn't have all the features of the 7710 specific to RV travel. After considering where to place it, I decided to order a 3¾-inch plastic disk used for mounting accessories on truck dashes. I glued it to the top of the dash halfway between me and the passenger seat.

After 5,000 miles, I think I made the right decision. My wife, the navigator, uses the GPS more than I do. She often unplugs it from the dash to do searches for campgrounds, gas stations, food stops, rest areas or just to find where the next Wal-Mart is.

BOB LOPEZ | PLAINFIELD, ILL.

INCREASED CABINET STORAGE

One suggestion to Sarah Rayburn's November 2013 question about storage, there are sliding wire mesh storage baskets available. The baskets allow you to see the contents easily and they are strong. They slide in and out on rails, which must be fastened to a cabinet shelf surface.

Be sure to measure carefully for width, height and depth to allow proper clearance. Do not install baskets in high cabinets with sides that are so tall you can't reach the contents. The stationary rails must be mounted straight and parallel. Use mounting screws that won't penetrate completely through the bottom of the cabinet. Buy baskets that have stops so they will not slide completely out of the rails when you pull them out. And install safety clips, lanyard pins, rods, or clamps to prevent the baskets from sliding when the rig is in motion.

EDWARD PHILLIPS | HIGDEN, ARK.

MORE TIPS ON CABINET STORAGE

In reference to Sarah Rayburn's issue with cans and items rolling around in her cabi-

nets, I use cardboard box tops, such as those on a box of copy paper. They are tall enough so I can see what's in it, and if an item falls over, it's contained in the box.

I cut a 3- to 4-inch flap in the front of the box top so that I can reach in. I don't cut the flap off, but when traveling, push the flap back toward the inside of the box top. If there's something in the back of the box I need, I use my folding step to be able to see and reach items in the back.

I also have two small stacking bins that are perfect for smaller items. I got those at a dollar store. They are not very deep and I can stack two of them and fit them on the upper shelf in the cabinet.

GERI GALLOWAY | VIA EMAIL

WHITE MOUNTAIN MEMORIES

I enjoyed the article "Adventurous Autumn in New Hampshire's White Moun-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

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Join us this spring at a show near you!

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Jan. 8-11	Colorado RV Adventure Travel Show	Colorado Convention Center
Jan. 10-12	Washington Camping RV Expo	Dulles Expo Center
Jan. 10-12	North Carolina RV & Camping Show	Greensboro Coliseum Complex
Jan. 16-19	Mid-America RV Show	Bartle Hall - Kansas City
Jan. 17-19	New Jersey RV & Camping Show	New Jersey Expo Center
Feb. 6-9	Minneapolis/St. Paul RV, Vacation & Camping Show	Minneapolis Convention Center
Feb. 7-9	Richmond Camping RV Expo	Richmond International Raceway Complex
Feb. 14-16	Richmond Boat Show	Richmond International Raceway Complex
Feb. 14-16	Atlantic City RV & Camping Show	Atlantic City Convention Center
Feb. 20-23	Kansas Sports, Boat & Travel Show	Kansas Pavilions, Wichita KS
Feb. 21-23	North Carolina RV & Camping Show	Charlotte Convention Center
Feb. 27-March 2	Colorado RV, Sports, Boat & Travel Show	National Western Complex
Feb. 28-March 2	South Carolina RV & Camping Show	TD Convention Center
Feb. 28-March 2	Rhode Island RV & Camping Show & Sale	Rhode Island Convention Center
March 7-9	National Capital Boat Show	Hampton Roads Convention Center
March 14-16	Virginia RV Camping Show	Dulles Expo Center
April 11-13	El Paso RV Show	El Paso Convention & Performing Arts Center
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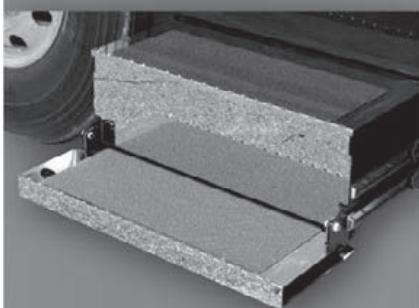
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tains” (November 2013). We have made a couple of motorhome trips to the Northeast from our home on the West Coast to do some “leaf peeping” with the most recent of those being in 2011. We have thoroughly enjoyed these trips.

On each trip we go to the Mount Washington Hotel for dinner. On our last visit, we sat on the Grand Veranda looking at the spectacular color on a nearby hillside. We saw a woman holding an old black and white photograph of three men in suits who were sitting on the same veranda.

We started up a conversation and learned that one of the men in the photo, which was taken in 1944, was her father, John Beyen, who at the time was the Netherlands’ representative to the 1944 International Monetary Fund meeting being held at the hotel. She was attempting to identify the exact spot where the photo had been taken as she wanted her own picture to be taken at that same location while holding the old photograph of her father. We helped her determine the location by counting light fixtures and downspouts that were in the background and gladly took the photo she was seeking.

It’s just one of the fond memories of our visits to the Mount Washington Hotel.
JIM SWINFORD | CARPINTERIA, CALIF.

GREAT NOVEMBER ISSUE

I am a new RVer. *MotorHome* has been a wonderful help in getting me acquainted with what is proving to be a surprising number of important details. I think of *MotorHome* as having three sections: articles on the mechanics of driving, articles about touring and the advertisements.

Usually I hate ads, but in this case I find them to be particularly helpful to understanding the nature and range of possibilities. I suppose as time goes by the ads will become less interesting. I also suppose as I get better at maintaining and driving my vehicle the “how to do it articles” will gradually become less interesting. But the last category, “the joys of touring” will always be of interest. In this regard, let me single out my favorite from the November 2013 issue, “Savoring Sonoma.” It was well written and provided just the kind of information needed to entice me and my wife to that part of the country.

TERRY ANDERSON | UPSTATE N.Y.

THE BEST COACH FOR FULL TIMING

I have a question to pose. Currently what motorhome is best designed and constructed for the rigors of full-time living?
ROGER HAGEN | HENDERSON, NEV.

QUESTION:

Which motorhome do you think is best suited for full-time living and why?

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Georgetown's attractive NEW Prestige Package gives the look of full body paint, at a fraction of the cost.

- Georgetown's NEW stainless steel residential appliance package includes a 22.5 cu. ft. refrigerator, microwave and an undermount oven.
- The kitchen features custom LG solid surface countertops, and an undermount sink. Flush solid surface covers extend workspace over the sink and stovetop.
- A residential hand-laid glass tile backsplash is the perfect blend of decorator styling and functionality.
- Special touches like a gooseneck faucet with sprayer and LED accent lighting complete the look.

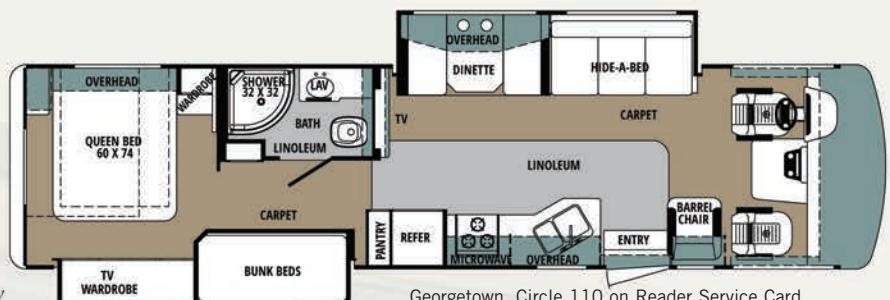


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escapes

edited by EILEEN HUBBARD

ROAD FOODIE | WHEELS & GEAR | NOTEWORTHY | CROSSROADS

ONE OF THE MOST
SCENIC DRIVES
IN **SOUTHEAST**
ARIZONA

At 9,157 feet in elevation, Mount Lemmon is the highest point in the Santa Catalina Mountains north of Tucson, Ariz. On a warm, sunny day in February, we drove our dinghy vehicle on the Sky Island Scenic Byway to the top of the mountain. It's a popular route for cyclists; there may have been more bicycles than cars making the 27-mile, 6,000-plus foot ascent.

Mount Lemmon is considered a "sky island," a mountain surrounded by lowlands of a dramatically different environment. The base is typical Sonoran Desert with saguaros, cholla and prickly pear cacti. We passed through six vegetation zones, the same ones that would be encountered on a drive from Mexico to Canada.

At the top, the village of Summerhaven and Mount Lemmon Ski Valley sit surrounded by pines, spruce, firs and aspen groves. The ski area is open five days a week (closed Tuesdays and Wednesdays) when there is adequate snow from December to April. When Tucson's summer temperatures hit 100 degrees, Summerhaven offers a 30-degree reprieve from the heat.

From the base, the drive to the top takes about an hour, but allow extra time to hike, photograph and admire the view. — *Mary Zalmanek*

SKY ISLAND NATIONAL BYWAY

JAVA JIVE: THE ROAD TO GREAT COFFEE

Here are some places to buy freshly roasted, whole coffee beans (and most ship):

BEAN NORTH, Whitehorse, YT, Canada. Roasts its own fair-trade beans from coffee farmers around the world. They also make terrific lattes. www.beannorth.com

KAHLADI BROTHERS, Anchorage, Alaska. Its hearty coffees are perfect for cold weather. www.kaladi.com

PHIL & SEBASTIAN COFFEE ROASTERS, Calgary, AB, Canada. Specialize in not over-roasting coffee to achieve smooth blends. www.philsebastian.com

PEET'S COFFEE, nationwide locations. This is my favorite "big company" roaster. It offers mild, medium, and strong roasts and beans from all over the world. www.peets.com

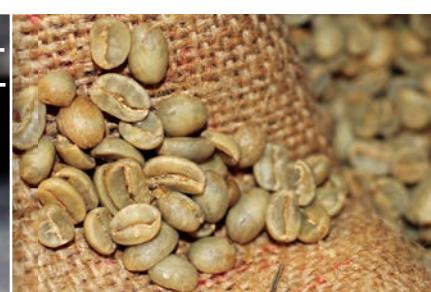
GREENWELL FARMS, Big Island, Hawaii. Kona tends to be a mild coffee and Greenwell's is amazingly fresh with fruity notes of the island. www.greenwellfarms.com

HEART, Portland, Ore. This roaster is committed to bringing out the unique flavor of each bean. www.heartroasters.com

RITUAL COFFEE ROASTERS, San Francisco, Napa, Calif. Works with small farmers and focuses on the terroir (soil, climate) of the bean instead of a particular roasting style. www.ritualroasters.com



COFFEE. JAVA. MOJO.
MORNING MUD. CUP OF JOE.



Who doesn't love the taste and smell of a cup of freshly brewed coffee in the morning, especially during the colder winter months? As RVers, we have the advantage of being able to make fresh, hot coffee in our motorhomes. Buying coffee roasted in different places around the country — even other countries — is a fun way to explore the world.

So what makes great coffee? Everyone's taste is different. Some like robust; others prefer milder coffee. But here are some things that coffee experts say make the best coffee.

FRESHNESS. Coffee derives its rich, aromatic flavors from the oils in the beans. As soon as a green coffee bean is roasted, the oils begin to age, dry out, and can even become rancid. Grinding and exposure to air, light, and heat accelerate aging and kill flavor. Coffee baristas suggest buying whole beans, storing them in a cool, dark place for no more than two weeks and grinding them just before brewing. Obviously, that means pre-ground coffee isn't very fresh and won't give you the most delicious coffee. And pre-ground coffee pods, while convenient, can be notoriously lacking in flavor.

ENOUGH COFFEE. Use at least two heaping tablespoons for each 6 ounces of coffee (or 2.75 tablespoons for 8 ounces). This may seem like a lot if you're used to weak, see-through coffee, but give it a try and you'll get real coffee flavor.

RIGHT TEMPERATURE. Boiling coffee water re-roasts (and over-roasts) coffee. If you're using a kettle, take it off before it steams or whistles and let stand for a minute or two. Experts say 205 degrees Fahrenheit is the perfect brewing temperature.

From top: Green coffee beans begin to lose their oils (which impart flavor) as soon as they are roasted. Making coffee with a drip filter can produce very smooth results. To make espresso in your motorhome, you don't need a double-cup espresso maker like this one.

BEST METHOD. Many of us use auto drip or perk coffeemakers, but there are other ways to make coffee. For hearty coffee, try a French press. Put ground coffee in the bottom, add hot water and slowly push down the plunger. Or check out a stovetop or automatic espresso machine that extracts the coffee liquid with pressure for a deep java flavor.

If you like a smooth cup, try pour-over brewing. This is how I make my own coffee. You can use a single or multi-cup V-dripper. Simply put the coffee in a paper or gold filter into the dripper and pour hot water over the grounds.

PHOTOS: BOBBIE HASSELBRING



NEW LIVING SPACE

A new rear-bathroom floorplan has been added to the lineup of “wide-body” Class B motorhomes from Pleasure-Way Industries. The new Prestige, based on a Ford E-series cutaway chassis powered by the V-10 Triton gas engine, includes a streetside tri-fold sofa/bed/dining area, curbside galley with Corian countertop and a large rear bath with separate Corian-surface shower. An all-molded-fiberglass exterior is standard, and Baltic birch drawers and maple cabinetry are used throughout the interior. Additional features include all-LED lighting, a Continental spare tire setup, a tankless water heater, a 2.8-kW generator, a hitch receiver rated at 5,000 pounds, an LCD TV with Blu-ray player and an 11-foot power awning.

Pleasure-Way Industries Ltd., 800-364-0189, www.pleasureway.com



BATTERY MAINTENANCE

Topping up your battery’s cells with water is a necessary part of RV maintenance procedures and the HydroLink Watering System from Trojan Battery Company can simplify that sometimes-messy chore, especially in close quarters. Trojan batteries are popular with RVers and HydroLink provides a permanently attached set of hoses, with automatic level indicators and shutoffs in each battery cell, that allow the user to add water precisely as required with no need to move the batteries or get too close to the acid in the cells. HydroLink is available on new Trojan batteries or can be retrofitted on existing Trojan batteries already in use.

Trojan Battery Co., 562-236-3038 www.trojanbattery.com

CAMPFIRE CONTROL

Any old handy stick can be used to push logs around in a campfire, but for the ultimate in burning control, the Fire-Stick may be the best answer. The Fire-Stick is a tool that allows users to safely and painlessly handle and manipulate burning logs, hot coals and anything related to a campfire. The stainless-steel handle has grips that keep the user’s hands cool, and the stainless-steel tongs can also lift and maneuver cook pots, a cooking grille or other campfire accessories. A hole in the tip and hollow handle mean you can also blow on the fire in just the right spot as needed.

Fire-Stick LLC, 608-617-3437, www.fire-stick.com



RV SHOWS

FEB. 5-9
48th Annual Detroit Camper & RV Show
 Novi, Mich.
 517-349-8881 x11

FEB. 6-9
47th Annual Minneapolis/St. Paul, Vacation & Camping Show
 Minneapolis, Minn.
 847-229-6730

FEB. 6-9
2014 Edmonton RV Expo & Sale
 Edmonton, Alberta, Canada
 780-455-8562

FEB. 6-9
The Seattle RV Show
 Seattle, Wash.
 206-719-1277

FEB. 6-9
Ocala RV Show
 Ocala, Fla.
 813-741-0488

FEB. 6-9
Erie RV, Camping & Powersports Spectacular
 Erie, Pa.
 814-790-5079

FEB. 7-9
29th Annual Richmond Camping RV Expo
 Richmond, Va.
 804-337-6479

FEB. 12-16
46th Annual Chicago RV & Camping Show
 Rosemont, Ill.
 847-934-8300

FEB. 13-16
Jacksonville RV Show
 Jacksonville, Fla.
 813-741-0488

FEB. 13-16
West Palm Beach RV Show
 West Palm Beach, Fla.
 813-741-0488

FEB. 14-16
Germain RV Show
 Estero, Fla.
 239-482-6006

FEB. 14-17
Northeast RV Show's New Product Show
 Suffern, N.Y.
 845-343-2772

FEB. 14-17
Red Deer RV Show
 Red Deer, Alberta, Canada
 403-343-1464

FEB. 14-17
19th Annual Atlantic City RV Show
 Atlantic City, N.J.
 804-243-8847

FEB. 14-17
52nd Annual Springfield RV, Camping & Outdoor Show
 West Springfield, Mass.
 413-781-2267

FEB. 14-16, 21-23
49th Annual Maryland RV Show
 Timonium, Md.
 410-561-7323

FEB. 20-23
Austin RV Expo
 Austin, Texas
 512-366-7135

FEB. 21-23
Georgia RV & Camper Show
 Norcross, Ga.
 770-279-9899

FEB. 21-23
North Carolina RV Dealers Association RV Show-Greensboro
 Greensboro, N.C.
 336-317-5538

FEB. 21-23
25th Annual North Carolina RV & Camping Show-Charlotte
 Charlotte, N.C.
 804-243-8847

FEB. 21-23
Central Alberta RV Show
 Red Deer, Alberta, Canada
 877-356-9399

FEB. 27-MARCH 2
Toronto International RV Show
 Toronto, Ontario, Canada
 905-659-8800

FEB. 27-MARCH 2
Central NY RV & Camping Show and Sale
 Syracuse, N.Y.
 877-228-8240

FEB. 27-MARCH 2
57th Annual Colorado RV, Sports, Boat & Travel Show
 Denver, Colo.
 847-229-6730

FEB. 27-MARCH 2
Battle Creek Camper & RV Show
 Battle Creek, Mich.
 517-349-8881 x11

FEB. 27-MARCH 2
Central Florida RV Show
 DeLand, Fla.
 813-741-0488

FEB. 28-MARCH 2
Kentucky RV Show & Liquidation Sale
 Covington, Ky.
 941-780-0538

FEB. 28-MARCH 2
Mid-Atlantic Motorsports & RV Show
 Fredericksburg, Va.
 540-548-5555

FEB. 28-MARCH 2
2014 Ottawa Spring RV Show
 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
 877-817-9500

FEB. 28-MARCH 2
3rd Annual South Carolina RV & Camping Show-Greenville
 Greenville, S.C.
 804-243-8847

FEB. 28-MARCH 2
21st Annual Rhode Island RV & Camping Show
 Providence, R.I.
 804-337-8463

News Briefs

In November 2013, **Carefree RV Resorts** announced the continuation of its discount offer to active and veteran military servicemen and women and their families at 40 parks in Florida, Texas, New Jersey, North Carolina and California for another year.

"At Carefree RV Resorts we value all of our customers, but it is with great pride that we get to continue to extend our 50 percent discount to the active and veteran servicemen and women who protect our country's democracy and keep us safe," said Mike Rosenhagen, Carefree RV Resort's Vice President of Operations, who is also a retired U.S. Army Major.

CNBC has greenlit a second season of the original reality series, "The Profit," ordering eight new episodes. The entrepreneurial TV series features Marcus Lemonis, chairman and CEO of **Camping World Inc.** and **Good Sam Enterprises LLC**, who saves struggling businesses while investing his own cash in the process. Season two is scheduled to premiere January 21 at 10 p.m. ET/PT.

According to a new study released by **The Outdoor Foundation** and sponsored by **The Coleman Co.**, 38 million Americans over the age of 6 participated in camping during 2012. The data is based on an online survey of more than 42,000 Americans. Some of the findings include: 74 percent of participants camped in a public campground; the average camper went on 5.8 camping trips; participants traveled a mean of 200.7 miles away from home to camp; 44 percent of campers plan their trips at least one month in advance; 78 percent of adult participants camp with friends; and hiking is the most popular activity to participate in while camping.

Allied Specialty Vehicles Inc. (ASV) has formed **Allied Recreation Group Inc. (ARG)**, and appointed John Draheim as CEO for the new group. ARG will include **American Coach**, **Fleetwood**, **Holiday Rambler** and **Monaco** brands. Additionally, the group also owns the Beaver, National and Safari brands. The brands will be produced at the company's manufacturing campus in Decatur, Ind. "We have invested in four of the most renowned brands in the industry and our success in rebuilding Fleetwood and American Coach sets the stage for a similar return to power for Monaco and Holiday Rambler," said Jim Meyer, COO of ASV. "We have been working diligently since May to develop a new lineup of product for Monaco and Holiday Rambler that will reinvigorate the brands and return them to the extraordinary reputations they once held," said Draheim.



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Like RVers themselves, we're always moving forward. For proof, look no further than the new Winnebago Forza™ and Itasca Solei™

These all-new models offer the performance and comfort of a high-end diesel pusher without the big-ticket price tag. Each double slideout floorplan, the 34T and the bath-and-a-half 38R, is loaded with premium amenities – residential appliances, Corian counters and efficient LED

lighting – as well innovative interior features that bring new flexibility to motorhome living.

But don't let their sleek profile fool you: the storage capacity of these coaches is phenomenal: up to 228 cubic feet on the 38R, by far the best in class!

See your nearest Winnebago or Itasca dealer, call 800-643-4892, or see our entire lineup at WinnebagoInd.com.



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Unfolded Kar Kaddy™ SS
length is 133".



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escapes CROSSROADS

GILCREASE MUSEUM

Set amid the wooded landscape of the Oklahoma's Osage Hills, is the Gilcrease Museum, home to one of the most extensive collections of Western art and artifacts in the country. Among the museum's 12,000 pieces of fine art are paintings by such familiar Western artists as Albert Bierstadt, George Catlin, Thomas Moran, Frederic Remington, and Charles Russell, for whose work the Gilcrease is best known.



The collection was begun by Thomas Gilcrease, born in 1890, whose mother's Creek Indian ancestry entitled him to tribal membership, and thus an allotment of 160 Oklahoma acres south of Tulsa. The land would become one of the state's major oil fields. In 1922 he founded Gilcrease Oil Co., which he established in San Antonio, Texas. Soon a wealthy man, Gilcrease traveled abroad and began collecting art. Pride in his Native American heritage and interest in the history of the American West provided a focus for his collecting. He opened his first museum at the oil company's headquarters in 1943.

Within a few years he returned with his company and growing art collection to Tulsa, and in 1949 opened a gallery on his estate, where it stands today. In 1962, Gilcrease, through his foundation, deeded the museum and grounds to the City of Tulsa.

I recommend Riverview RV Park, 918-245-8588, <http://riverviewrvok.com>, with paved, full-service sites and stunning high-up views over the Arkansas River.

For more information on Gilcrease Museum, call 918-596-2700 or go online to www.gilcrease.utulsa.edu — Pamela Selbert

A LION, TIGERS AND A BEAR ... OH, MY!

Located just south of Atlanta, Ga., in Locust Grove, is Noah's Ark — a sanctuary for domestic, wild and exotic animals. Set on 250 acres, this rescue center provides care and treatment for more than 1,000 animals. Visitors can walk around an area where animals, such as deer, goats, etc., are allowed hand-to-paw contact with people. I have been there several times and it's a great place to visit. A few years ago they rescued a zebra that was found wandering beside Interstate 75, which received substantial media attention. The facility also has a Children's Care Home with animal-assisted therapy for foster children. Noah's Ark's Animal Habitat is open to visitors Tuesday through Saturday from Noon to 3 p.m. Admission

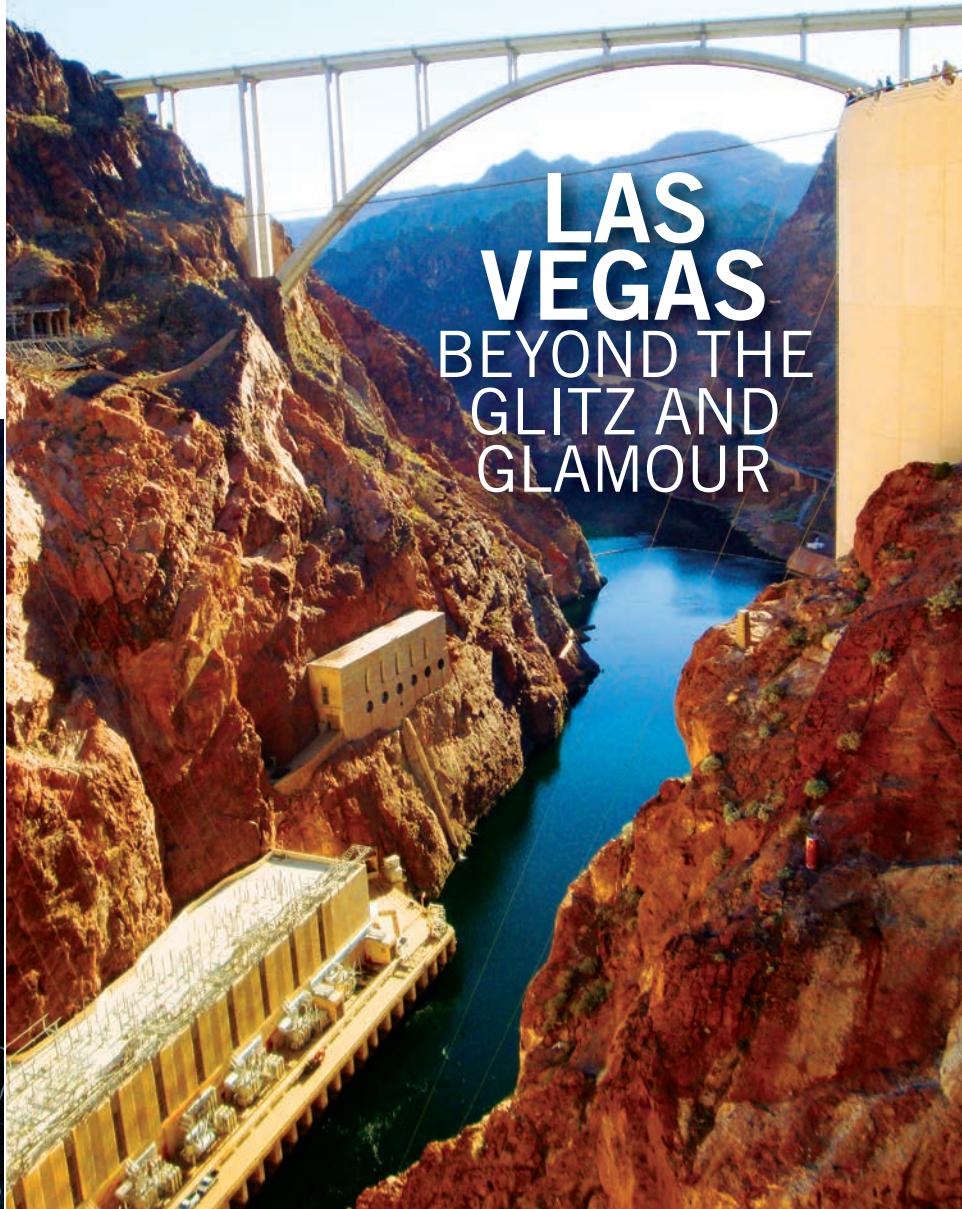


is free, but they also accept donations, and motorhome parking is available.

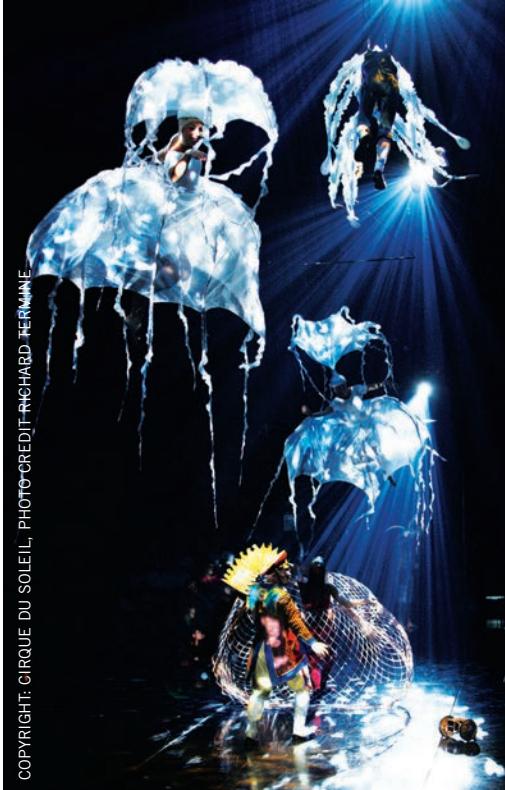
For more information, call 770-957-0888 or visit www.noahs-ark.org. — Roger Fenton ♦

THE GAMBLING CAPITAL OF THE WORLD OFFERS MUCH MORE THAN JUST GAMING

The Las Vegas Strip draws visitors from all over the world with its gambling, glitz and glamour. However, I wanted to see what lies beyond the slot machines and poker



LAS VEGAS BEYOND THE GLITZ AND GLAMOUR

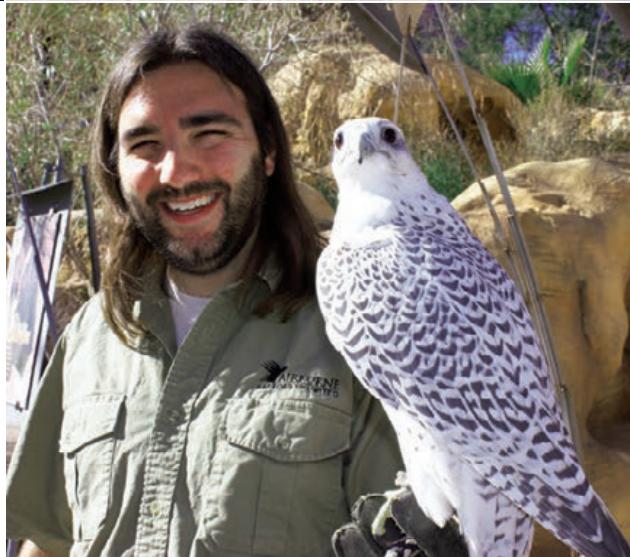


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tables, since I've never been much of a gambler. The only payoff I've received from gambling is being able to indulge in a short-lived fantasy of philanthropy when I plunk down \$2 on a large Powerball jackpot.

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines fantasy as "the free play of creative imagination," and there's plenty of that in Las Vegas' hotels and entertainment. Creativity abounds in everything from Bellagio's fountains to Cirque du Soleil's eight shows. My husband, Jim, and I joined the throngs of tourists checking out the attractions on the Strip.

Our first stop was the Bellagio



Clockwise from above: Hoover Dam, on the border between Arizona and Nevada, is an engineering wonder. Brian Ferko, a volunteer handler for Wings Over the Springs, an animal show at the Springs Preserve, posed for photos with Sugar, a beautiful gyrfalcon. Cirque du Soleil's "Love," a celebration of Beatles music, features colorful costumes and talented dancers in "Octopus' Garden."

PHOTOS: MARY ZALMANEK

Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area offers 19 hiking trails in the Mojave Desert.



Hotel, which has three must-see, free attractions: the Fountains of Bellagio, Fiori di Como, and the Conservatory and Botanical Gardens. The 8-acre lake in front of the hotel features the Fountains of Bellagio, a dancing water extravaganza synchronized to music and light. Crowds gather to see

one-song shows that take place every 30 minutes in the afternoon and early evening, and every 15 minutes from 7 p.m. to midnight. More than 1,200 nozzles are used, some shooting water blasts as high as 460 feet into the air. We were mesmerized as we watched streams of

water sway and spray to Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On."

When the song ended, we followed our hearts to the Bellagio lobby. Our eyes were drawn to the extraordinary chandelier in the lobby created by world-renowned glass sculptor Dale Chihuly. Fiori di Como,



Clockwise from above: Participants examine fake crime scenes during the CSI Experience at MGM Grand Hotel. Visitors listen to real FBI surveillance tapes on wiretapping equipment in an interactive exhibit at The Mob Museum, which is housed in a former federal courthouse. Bellagio Hotel's Conservatory and Botanical Gardens celebrates Chinese New Year with an 18-foot-tall money tree symbolizing prosperity.

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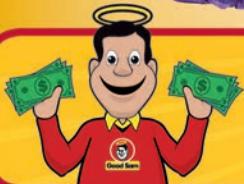
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Heavy-duty piping with reinforced corners.

Blue #69180 Orange #69182
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9,000 BTU



165 sq. in. cooking surface

Carry bag included

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Stainless steel burner. Porcelain-enamel coated cast iron cooking grid. Uses disposable propane cylinders (sold separately).

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160 lb. capacity

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Sized for little campers. 23½"L x 15"W x 26½"H. Ship Wt. 5 lbs.

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Clamps onto tables, desks or tailgates. Holds up to 80 lbs. Folds to 18" x 20" x 3" for easy storage and transport. 18"W x 40"L table surface. | Ship Wt. 13 lbs.

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which means “flowers of Como,” contains 2,000 hand-blown glass blossoms. The brilliantly colored sculpture, inspired by the flowers at Lake Como in Italy, fills a 70-by-30-by-12-foot ceiling coffer.

After snapping a few photos, just like

all the other tourists, we entered the Conservatory and Botanical Gardens behind the lobby. Open year-round, it has five seasonal themes including the holidays, Chinese New Year, spring, summer and fall. Plants, flowers and trees are artfully

arranged to complement the time of year. We were delighted by the Chinese New Year exhibit with six larger-than-life mannequins of children whose clothes were fashioned from 1,800 carnations, mums and roses, and an 18-foot-tall money tree



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Next, we strolled down the Strip. At the Fashion Show Mall, we found Tix4Tonight, a half-price ticket booth. We had decided which shows and attractions we wanted to see, but didn't have tickets yet. The discounted prices allowed us to stretch our entertainment dollars. Since we were able to get next-day tickets for Cirque du Soleil's "Love," we made plans accordingly. We also bought tickets for

The CSI Experience, the Mob Museum and other attractions on our agenda.

Since CSI is one of our favorite TV shows, we decided to check out the CSI Experience at the MGM Grand. We got to play the role of crime scene investigators at this interactive attraction. Upon entering, we were assigned to investigate one of three murders. After inspecting the crime scene, we studied text messages, fingerprints, tire tracks, DNA, drugs and bugs

in various lab stations. Our test results, and the medical examiner report, helped us narrow down the list of suspects. Just like on TV, we identified the killer in about an hour.

The highlight of our time in Las Vegas was seeing Cirque du Soleil's "Love," a celebration of the musical legacy of the Beatles. Just as in any Cirque du Soleil performance, there were talented gymnasts and dancers, colorful costumes and memorable characters. Seeing all this put to Beatles music left me gasping — literally — with awe. The graceful movement of the costumes in "Octopus' Garden" made me feel like I really was "under the sea, in an octopus' garden in the shade." The theater at The Mirage Hotel was built specifically for this show, with speakers in every seat. Even though we bought our tickets the day before, we lucked out with sixth-row seats.

The next morning we were ready to enjoy the great outdoors. The Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area is located 17 miles west of the Las Vegas Strip. It features a visitor center, a one-way 13-mile scenic drive and more than 30 miles of hiking trails. Discovery Plaza, an open-air exhibit at the Visitor Center, details how the elemental forces of earth, fire, air and water have shaped the landscape over 600 million years. We learned about this desert canyon's geology and its early inhabitants, from dinosaurs to native people, explorers, ranchers and miners. Hoping to spot some of the fauna and flora described in the printed guide, we drove along the scenic road, stopping often at trailheads. While hiking, we saw red-tail hawks and cactus wrens, along with several other birds.

Two downtown attractions were on our to-do list: the Mob Museum and the Fremont Street Experience. The Mob Museum, the National Museum of Organized Crime and Law Enforcement, showcases the notorious battle between opposite sides of the law. It is located in a former federal courthouse, one of 14 in the nation that held Kefauver Committee hearings to expose organized crime in 1950-51. These hearings, televised live just as many Americans were buying their first TVs, made Tennessee Senator Estes Kefauver famous. The courtroom was re-

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stored to its original 1933 beauty as part of a \$42 million construction project. The museum houses many one-of-a-kind artifacts, including the brick wall from the St. Valentine's Day Massacre in Chicago, and interactive exhibits, such as the one that allowed us to listen to real FBI surveillance tapes on wiretapping equipment. These stories bring to life the roles of law enforcement and the Mob in Las Vegas and the world.

Just a short distance from the Mob Museum is the Fremont Street Experience. The city's first hotels and casinos were built on Fremont Street in 1905. Many of those businesses still exist today in what has become a five-block-long pedestrian mall. It is covered by a barrel vault canopy called "The Space Frame," which is 90 feet high at the peak and 1,500 feet in length. Imagine an overhead TV screen with more than 12 million synchronized LEDs. That is the venue for the Viva Vision! light and sound presentations. A different show runs every hour on the hour from dusk to midnight and features music from artists such as Queen, Bon Jovi and The Doors. While waiting for the next show to begin, we watched street performers and artists.

A great way to start a new day is by touring the Springs Preserve, which sits on 180 acres and includes colorful botanical gardens, museum galleries, walking trails and animal shows. We took our seats in the center of the indoor theater in the Origen Museum before the start of "Wings Over the Springs," a seasonal show that features birds of prey in free-flight presentations. Little did we know that we were directly under the flight path of these birds. We could feel the force of their wings as they flew inches above our heads.

The entire Springs Preserve campus is a great example of sustainable living. Exhibits focus on clean energy, recycling, green building practices and water-smart landscaping. The Preserve is owned by the Las Vegas Valley Water District. Of course, water is a valuable commodity in the desert. The Preserve is built around a spring that was the original water source for Las Vegas. After watching a film about Hoover Dam entitled "Dam, This is a Lot of Work," we added a visit to the dam to

our next day's itinerary.

Hoover Dam, a concrete dam on the border between Arizona and Nevada, was built during the Great Depression. When the plans were drawn in the 1920s, many engineers said it would be physically impossible to build. Yet, in 1935, 21,000 workers achieved the unachievable. Before the dam could be built, four tunnels were driven through the canyon walls to divert the Colorado River away

from the construction site. Considered an engineering marvel in its time, Hoover Dam remains just as impressive today. In 1999, the Construction Industry Manufacturers Association named it one of the Top 10 Construction Achievements of the 20th Century.

Two guided tours are offered at Hoover Dam. We opted for the 30-minute Power Plant Tour since the 1-hour Dam Tour was sold out. We saw the power



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LAS VEGAS: BEYOND THE GLITZ AND GLAMOUR

plant and visitor center, but missed out on the passageways within the dam itself. The 17 main turbines have a capacity of 2080 megawatts and generate an annual average of 4.2 billion megawatt hours of energy that is distributed to customers in Arizona, Nevada and California.

Lake Mead was created when Hoover Dam backed up the waters of the Colo-

rado River. It's the largest reservoir in the U.S. when at maximum water capacity, and a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts. More than 9 million visitors come each year for boating, fishing, water skiing, swimming, kayaking, camping, hiking and other outdoor pursuits. Four campgrounds provide RV sites with full hookups.

Our last day in Las Vegas happened to be opening day of the new sporting clay courses at the Clark County Shooting Complex. Steve Carmichael, Park Supervisor and member of the Trapshooting Hall of Fame, was kind enough to give us a tour and a short lesson. With his patient guidance, I actually hit a few of the targets. The new course takes shooters to 30 stations across 75 desert acres in a sport also known as "golfing with guns." Shooters ride from station to station in a golf cart outfitted with shotgun racks.

The complex has rifle, pistol, shotgun and archery ranges, and 80 RV sites with full hookups. A separate work-camper area with covered RV sites is for volunteers who work 15 hours a week in exchange for a free site. Carmichael credits these folks for keeping the complex clean and ensuring its 5-star image.

When we got home and compared notes with friends who had also recently vacationed in Vegas, they were astonished that we hadn't gambled. They had paid for their entire trip — including airfare and hotel — with their winnings. I was equally shocked that they hadn't seen a single show or attraction. We agreed to go back together. We'll see Cirque du Soleil's newest show about Michael Jackson, "One." And I promised to spend \$20 at a slot machine, just to have the complete Vegas experience. ♦



Mary and Jim Zalmanek enjoy traveling in their 2003 Safari Trek when they are not at home in Monument, Colo. Mary is the author of *The Art of the Spark* (www.artofthespark.com).

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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www.clarkcountynv.gov/depts/parks/Pages/clark-county-shooting-park.aspx

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by RHONDA OSTERTAG

Sunrise at Parrish Park, Fla. To complement the sunrise color and give focus to your image, look for boats, piers and other subjects. Inset: Roseate spoonbill in Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, Titusville, Fla. Wildlife refuges expand the photographic opportunity for visitors to Florida's Space Coast.



With a good camera and your motorhome's ticket to adventure, you have all the ingredients to whip up the perfect martini to lasting memories. But a few photography tips to improve the concoction couldn't hurt.

For those who do not travel with an in-house photographer, I tapped my personal professional to let you in on a secret or two. Whether you seek mountain or sea, forest or desert or prefer a good rummage in the past, professional outdoor photographer George Ostertag, with his decades of book, calendar and editorial experience, has tips for you.

COASTS

If you are drawn to shorelines, nationwide there are plenty of destinations: lake, ocean and gulf. Space Coast on Florida's east-central Atlantic shore, the sunrise coast, is one that inspires.

Coasts are big subjects made up of visual planes and lines. When photographing, pay attention to the horizon. Keep it straight, and avoid having the horizon split your image in half





Above: Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness Area in Adirondack Park, N.Y. Look for features such as this boardwalk trail, which leads the eye into the photograph. Left: Eighth Lake Campground, Inlet, N.Y. When shooting interior forests, muted light and overcast skies work best.

or decapitate people. Occasionally, a 50-50 sky-water ratio can have impact but generally it fails to win praise. Use it sparingly.

For the best imagery, plan your schedule to avoid shooting during the harsh light of midday. It overpowers natural subjects and is unflattering to people. Use your midday strolls to select your shots for sunrise or sunset. Although color is great, look for subjects such as trees, piers or boats for focal interest in the otherwise flat landscapes of water, beach and sky.

Also, be aware of the sun's movement and know what you want to record. Along the sunrise coast, offshore objects will appear in silhouette in morning and lit at sunset.

Lower your stance to add foregrounds. Washed pebbles, ripples, scalloped tide lines, roaming gulls, disappearing footprints, shells and flotsam will help draw your audience into the scene.

For practice, Florida's Space Coast offers 72 miles of beaches from Cocoa Beach to Sebastian Inlet. Canaveral National Seashore (a 24-mile-long wilderness beach to the north), NASA's Kennedy Space Center, Merritt Island National

Wildlife Refuge and hammock shade invite excursions. Sunning, beach strolling, hiking, water sports and wildlife watching, as well as the urban pursuits of the coastal communities, may further summon your photographic muse. Public and private campgrounds offer attractive bases.

Space Coast, 877-572-3224, www.visitspacecoast.com.

FORESTS

Forests compose a big part of the American fabric and outdoor playground. With both conifer and broadleaf species and distinct four-season discovery, New York's Adirondack Park shapes an ideal photo destination.

As in almost all photography, lighting is key, and interior forests shoot best under the muted light of overcast skies and rainy days. Under full sun, the contrast between shadow and light is too strong and detail is lost. But, sunlight does allow you to create effect, with sunbursts, spotlights, backlit elements and shots up through the canopy. When shooting across forest



Left: Mosaic Canyon, Death Valley National Park, Calif. Look for interesting ways to convey scale and perspective, as well as tell the story of a place. Above: Sand verbena and desert primrose in Desert Lily Sanctuary, Riverside County, Calif. Chasing the seasons serves photographers. Spring blooms lend color, vibrancy and a wow-factor to the usually dusky desert.

Take plenty of shots to improve your chances for success. This is one of the true advantages of digital photography. Afterward, be ruthless when you review your images, keeping only the very best. You won't have regrets for missing the moment, and friends and family will be willing future subjects if you keep only the most flattering images.

expanses, low angle light brings out dimension.

In forests, noise (unwanted distractions) can creep into images. An errant branch or grass, a detractive background, a movement, an unexplained shadow or sun spot, all can steal impact. So study shots carefully and minimize the unwanted. The cleaner the shot, the better, especially if you intend to enlarge the image, which only amplifies the problem.

Another common error is overloading your image. While the stunning tree, the babbling brook, the wildflower, the rock and your child all engage, take a moment to decide your point of interest. You always have the option of multiple shots. Also, give your image breathing space around the edges. When the combining of subjects requires the use of the far edges of your photograph, feature each subject separately.

Flowing water is a common complement to forest photography. If your camera has the capability, a slow shutter speed gives water a desirable blurred effect. Polarizers can help reduce light to slow shutter speeds. They also remove glare from leaves,

water surfaces and wet rocks.

Adirondack Park pops with special places to port the camera. Within its forest are cobalt lakes and summit peaks, the Adirondack Museum at Blue Mountain Lake, Lake Placid's Olympic history, charming hamlets and Camp Santononi (a classic Adirondack Great Camp and National Historic Place). Trails, canoe routes and driving routes open discovery. Adirondack Park Visitor Interpretive Centers at Paul Smiths and Newcomb will help you sort options.

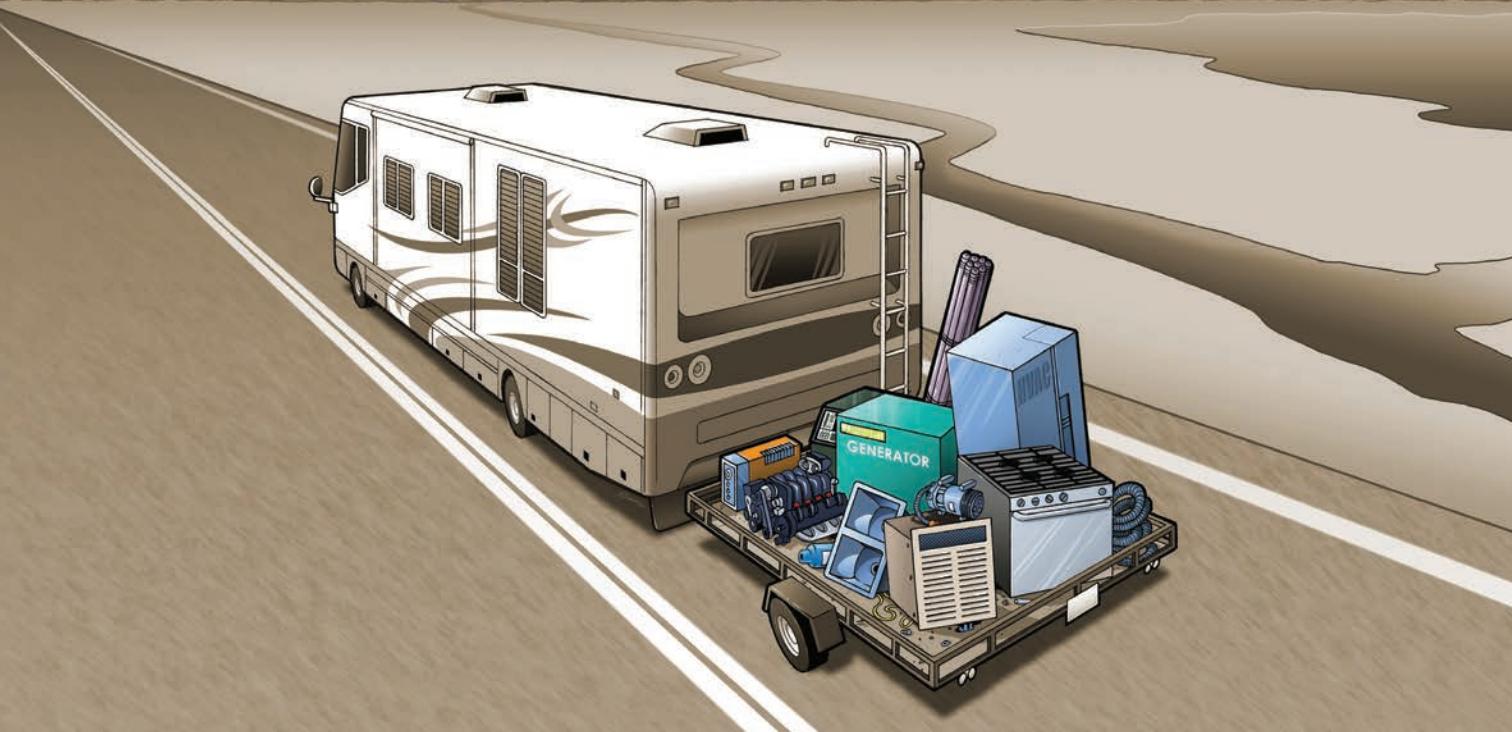
Private and public campgrounds serve the region, with three-season camping for the most part. For more information, call 800-487-6867, or go to www.visitadirondacks.com.

DESERTS

Deserts, such as California's Mojave, enchant and inspire photographers, but require some accommodation to get the best shots. In this land of harsh light, you will want to adjust your personal clock, rising to take advantage of pre-dawn/early morn-

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Above: View of South Sister and Sparks Lake along Cascade Lakes National Scenic Byway, Deschutes National Forest, Ore. Don't always insist on having people look into the camera. Instead, allow their gaze to draw your audience into the moment. Right: A waterfall along French Pete Creek Trail in Three Sisters Wilderness, Willamette National Forest, Ore. Slow shutter speeds give water a flowing appearance, while the use of a foreground and a setting clean of noise gives the image full play.

ing light and late afternoon shadows and sunset. Midday is for siestas or an air-conditioned trip to your next photo spot.

The low-angled light at the day's edges softens shadows and warms tones to reveal the dimension and detail of the dusky arid expanse, while showing humans at their photogenic best. A bath of warm light or halo of backlighting lends magic to a desert's thorny subject matter.

Matching your travel to the bloom season broadens shooting options. Wet winters bring desert annuals and cactus flowers (February to April), for stunning images contrasting the soft and the sharp, the colorful and the muted.

Train your lens on both big and small scale subjects. But, before stooping for your shot, be sure to check behind and below you for any pointed messages. Most things that grow in the desert wear thorns, claws, spines and blades for protection and water conservation.

The Mojave's reach across southeastern California encompasses such named places as Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Parks, Mojave National Preserve (the desert's heart), and ghost towns, alkali flats, blowing dunes, imploring Joshua trees, needling cacti and rocky jumbles. Desert rambles,

history-tracking and nature and wildlife study fill days and memory cards, while public and private campgrounds roll out restful nights under the stars.

Contact California Tourism, 877-225-4367, www.visitcalifornia.com or www.nps.gov for information on Mojave National Preserve and Death Valley and Joshua Tree National Parks.

MOUNTAINS

Motorhome travelers have a host of great mountaintops and ranges to explore, with the Oregon Central Cascades being representative. Mountains make grand subjects, as well as shot backdrops, and changes in weather and season broaden the possibilities. Mountains are ideal to convey height, scale and distance. You can capture them head-on or in the wavy duplicate of a lake reflection. Whether you sleep on the mountain's breast or in the valley bottom, there are winning images.

When photographing mountains, do not forget to capture the environment: the raised flag over a lonesome lookout, the breakaway rock of a cliff, the wind-sculpted tree, the Alpine meadow, the larcenous jay or industrious grass-gathering pika. Each adds to the mosaic of place.

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HAVE CAMERA — WILL TRAVEL FROM PAGE 35



Above: Mariachi band at Mission San Jose in San Antonio Missions National Historical Park, San Antonio, Texas. Take advantage of re-enactments and performances to bring life to history. Right: A Mexican cannon along Battlefield Trail in Palo Alto Battlefield National Historical Park, Texas. Choosing contrasting colors can draw interest to the main subject.



When photographing friends and family on a mountain, it is often more moving to have them look away from the camera. Face them toward the mountain — the view it delivers or one of the mountain's many aspects — and let the observers' gaze carry you into the moment.

Posed shots are too often stiff shots. When friends are engaged in an activity, keep shooting and experiment with the shots to get the perfect expression, movement or mood. Remember, you, the photographer, also can move to capture the right angle of light and the right expression.

As in all photography, pay attention to lighting. A great subject under flat or harsh light is disappointing, whereas good lighting can render even a dumpster photogenic.

Oregon's Central Cascades skyline engages with such volcanic peaks as Newberry Crater, Black Butte, Mount Bachelor, Mount Jefferson, Mount Washington, Three Sisters and Three-fingered Jack. High lakes, tumbling waterfalls, lava flows, wild and scenic rivers and untouched wilds urge forth visitors and await capture in pixels (or film).

Forest service and state park campgrounds and private RV resorts allow campers to choose their preferred mix of comfort to wild and proximity to their chosen subject. Hiking, fishing, mountain biking, rafting, boating, horseback riding, golf and a host of winter activities suggest outings and photographs. You can also shop, dine or visit a desert museum.

By driving Cascade Lakes Scenic Byway south from Bend to Sparks Lake, you can walk Ray Atkeson Memorial Trail. (Trailhead parking is best reached by dinghy vehicle.) The short memorial trail leads to a favorite photography spot of Atkeson, Oregon's former photographer laureate. Morning light is best.

Central Oregon Visitors Association, 800-800-8334, www.visitcentraloregon.com.

THE PAST

Historical places have great visual and emotional appeal and the historical missions,

Leisure Travel Van, Circle 130 on Reader Service Card



forts and battlefields of Texas encapsulate this. Each has a story to tell. By working the camera to show overviews and close-ups, foregrounds and backdrops, candid and enactments, you uncover that story.

Shooting at unconventional times or angles or juxtaposing modern and old lends a personal spin or interpretation. When photographing historical features, do not forget the signs. They allow you both to track your travels and caption images. Some may suggest photographs you may not have considered.

Lighting is again important to convey the richest image. Tripods (when allowed) or well placed beanbags can help steady the necessarily slow shots under dim conditions.

Whenever possible, photograph historical sites during sobering quiet as well as the stir of enactment. For enactments, consider a tightened focus on hands, feet, guns, tools and costumes as well as the big scene.

While exploring Texas's history, you can take in the state's wildflowers and colorful birds, gardens, zoos, dining and nightlife. RV resorts and state park campgrounds serve nomads.

Travel Texas, 800-452-9292, www.traveltex.com. ♦



Rhonda Ostertag is a freelance writer who travels and collaborates with her husband, photographer George Ostertag. The couple lives in Oregon when not on the road.

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by DONNA IKENBERRY



Golden-fronted woodpecker



Mexican hat, aka coneflower



Northern earless lizard



Most of the trails in Seminole Canyon State Park & Historic Site allow biking and hiking.

PHOTOS: DONNA IKENBERRY

Texas is big, and has more than enough state parks to keep RVers busy exploring for a long time. Although I haven't visited them all, I do have four favorites — Palo Duro Canyon, Caprock Canyons, Seminole Canyon and Davis Mountains. The first two, Palo Duro Canyon and Caprock Canyons, are located in the Panhandle Plains Region, both of which are located southeast of Amarillo, Texas, and are must-sees.

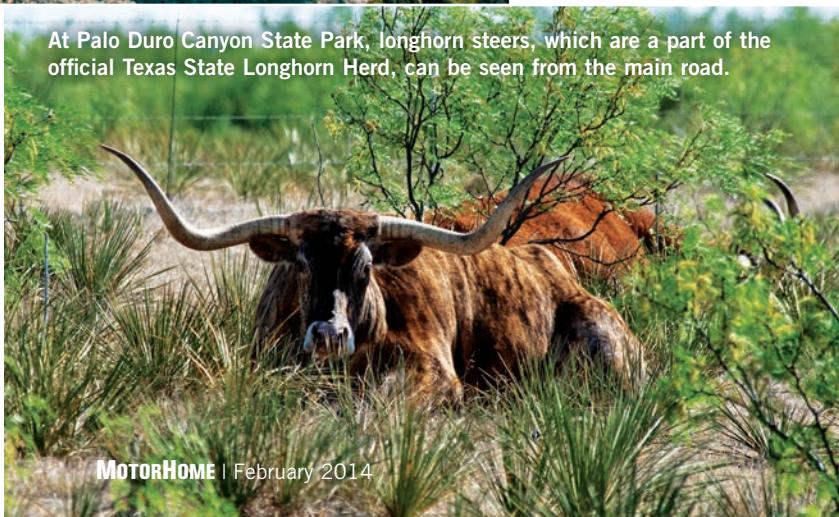
PALO DURO CANYON STATE PARK

Although not as dramatic as the Grand Canyon, Palo Duro Canyon is said to be the second largest canyon in the country. Though it might seem smaller than it is, Palo Duro Canyon is actually 120 miles long, nearly 20 miles wide and as much as 800 feet deep. And unlike the Grand Canyon, where access to the bottom is only by foot, mule or raft, Palo Duro is accessible by RVs, even bicycles.

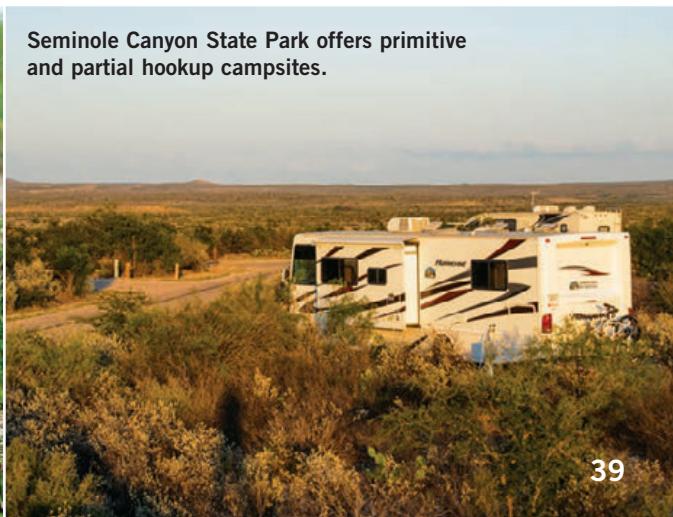
Protected since July 4, 1934, when the park officially opened, it consists of 29,182 acres. The Civilian Conservation Corps, known as the CCC, built the park. Comprised of young men and military veterans, the men worked from 1933 until 1937 developing road access to the canyon floor, as well as constructing the visitor center, cabins, shelters and park headquarters.

Palo Duro Canyon is a favorite for several reasons. First, it is a great place to see and photograph wildlife. Within minutes of our arrival, in fact, while searching for a campsite, I photographed a brilliant, golden-fronted woodpecker. My husband, Mike, and I knew right then that we had hit the jackpot and opted to spend several days in the state park.

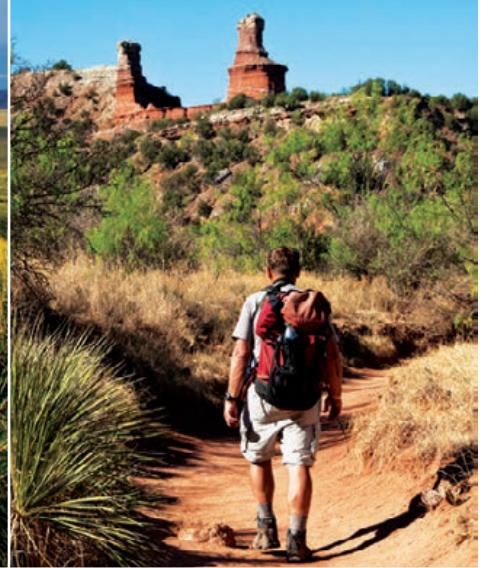
The park is also a tree-filled landscape and a wonderful place to hike, mountain bike or relax under the shade. Palo Duro means "hard wood" in Spanish, thus the place was named for the tough wood of the Rocky Mountain juniper trees found here. In May, look for wildflowers such as Indian blanket, Blackfoot daisy, tansy aster, and the blossoms of prickly pear



At Palo Duro Canyon State Park, longhorn steers, which are a part of the official Texas State Longhorn Herd, can be seen from the main road.



Seminole Canyon State Park offers primitive and partial hook-up campsites.



Clockwise from above: Lighthouse Trail is Palo Duro Canyon State Park's most-popular trail and leads to beautiful rock formations. RV sites at Davis Mountains State Park range from water only to full hookups with cable TV. Scenic Skyline Drive, in Davis Mountains State Park, provides spectacular mountain vistas of the park and beyond to Fort Davis.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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SEMINOLE CANYON STATE PARK & HISTORIC SITE

432-292-4464
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PALO DURO CANYON STATE PARK
CAPROCK CANYONS STATE PARK & TRAILWAY



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RVers will find several campgrounds with trails near all of the camp areas. Most of the trails are accessed by foot, horseback and mountain bike. Lighthouse Trail is the most popular trail in the park. It leads to the Lighthouse, a 310-foot high rock formation formed by erosion, and a National Natural Landmark.

As you explore, be sure to keep an eye out for the endangered Texas horned lizard and the Palo Duro mouse. In addition to these two endangered species, there are mule deer, coyotes, Barbary sheep (an introduced species), bobcats, roadrunners, cottontails, wild turkeys, Mississippi kites

and western diamond-back rattlesnakes. When driving the canyon rim, just past the entrance station, look for longhorn steers. Part of the official Texas State Longhorn Herd, the animals are fenced in and do not roam the park.

Reach the park by driving south from Amarillo or north from Lubbock and exit on Texas Highway 217. Follow the signs 10 miles east. There's a daily fee for being in the park and another fee for camping. The park has 32 RV sites with 30-amp service and water, and 47 RV sites with 50-amp service and water. The fee is \$24 per night.

CAPROCK CANYONS STATE PARK & TRAILWAY

Caprock Canyons is known for its extreme weather. Fashioned over millions of years by wind and water, the park is located along the Caprock Escarpment, a long, narrow rocky formation stretching as

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high as 1,000 feet. Its bluffs and steep, colorful canyons are fun to explore. Visitors can hike or bike or drive the main park road in search of fantastic scenes and abundant wildlife.

Opened in 1982, Caprock Canyons State Park consists of 15,313 acres. Here, flora and fauna are varied. Above the escarpment, you'll find High Plains with short-grass prairie. In the western half of the park, the canyons offer scrub oak and juniper trees. In the bottomlands, search for grasses, hackberries, wild plum thickets and cottonwood trees.

During our spring visit we found wildflowers and animal life. Caprock Canyons boasts a number of wildlife species. More than 12,000 years ago, the region was home to the now-extinct mammoth and giant bison. There were even camels and horses when the climate was cooler. Humans caused the demise of gray wolves and black bears in the area by the 1950s.

Visit today, and you might see pronghorn, mule deer, white-tailed deer, coyotes, bobcats, raccoon, jackrabbits, gray fox and African aoudad sheep (an intro-

duced species), and bison. Part of the Official Texas State Bison Herd, these woolly animals roam free on more than 700 acres near the entrance to Caprock Canyons State Park.

As we hiked some of the park trails, I imagined life 10,000 years when the region was first inhabited by the Folsom culture. Artifacts from the archaic period, which lasted from 8,000 to 2,000 years ago, include boiling pebbles for heating food, knives, dart points and grinding stones.

Today, there are almost 90 miles of multiuse trails for hikers, bicyclists and horseback riders. When you visit, be sure to check out the Caprocks Canyon Trailway. Opened in 1993 as part of the national Rails-to-Trails program, the trailway crosses 46 railroad bridges. Information about the trails can be found at park headquarters, located 3 miles north of Quitaque. The park has nine RV sites with water only (\$14 per night), 25 RV sites with 30-amp service and water (\$15 per night), and 10 RV sites with 50-amp service and water (\$20 per night).

SEMINOLE CANYON STATE PARK & HISTORIC SITE

Head south to Big Bend Country and you'll find Seminole Canyon State Park & Historic Site. Located off U.S. Highway 90, the park is a delight with ancient pictographs, trails to hike or mountain bike and a spacious campground as well.

The park is home to Fate Bell Shelter, one of the oldest cave dwellings in North America with some of the oldest Native American pictographs. Sign up for a tour to see the pictographs, as visitors are not allowed in the canyon area without a guide. Tour times vary depending on the season, so contact the park for more information.

Opened in February 1980, the park, which is west of Comstock, contains 2,172 acres. Today's visitors see something very different from early man. First visited around 12,000 years ago, it was a time when elephants, bison, horses and camel (species that are now extinct) roamed the countryside. Earlier visitors witnessed lush landscapes with trees such as oak, juniper and pines, as well as flourishing grasslands.



About 7,000 years ago, the climate changed and inhabitants saw a land more closely resembling what we see today. It was probably during this time that inhabitants painted more than 200 pictograph sites, everything from single paintings to art panels hundreds of feet long. Though you might recognize the animals in some of the painted figures, no one really knows the meaning of the paintings.

During our visit, we searched for local wildlife such as white-tailed deer, armadillos and raccoon, but we only saw some feral goats across the canyon from where we stood. However, seeing the pictographs and feral goats, along with some fossilized shells, made our visit worthwhile. The park has 15 dry camping sites (\$8 per night), eight sites with shared water nearby (\$14 per night), and 23 sites with electricity and water (\$20 per night).

DAVIS MOUNTAINS STATE PARK

The Davis Mountains State Park is last on my list, but certainly not least. Located northwest of Seminole Canyon, also in Big Bend Country, it is a terrific place for a

scenic drive, a hike or a mountain bike ride. Equestrians (who must bring their own horses) also have the opportunity to enjoy 7 miles of trails in Limpia Canyon Primitive Area. And if you enjoy birds, be sure to visit the bird feeding and watering areas. Like many of the other parks, the CCC was responsible for developing much of this park.

The park offers everything from plains grasslands to pinyon-juniper-oak woodlands. This means a varied habitat for all sorts of animal life, including Montezuma quail. Although not common, species regularly seen include scrub jays, curve-billed thrashers and white-winged doves. Rock squirrels are the most common mammal, but be sure to search for javelinas early and late in the day.

Located 4 miles northwest of Fort Davis, Davis Mountains State Park is comprised of 2,708 acres. Situated roughly halfway between the more famous Guadalupe Mountains and Big Bend national parks, you'll be surprised to know that the Davis Mountains are the most wide-ranging mountain range in Texas. Formed

by volcanic activity about 65 million years ago, the mountains were named for Jefferson Davis.

Davis Mountains State Park has 33 sites with water or shared water nearby (\$15 per night), 34 sites with partial hookups (\$20 per night), and 27 full-hookup RV sites (\$25 per night).

Nearby Fort Davis, also named for Davis, who was U.S. Secretary of War and later president of the Confederacy, is a must-visit. In fact, for the more adventurous hiker, there's a trail that leads from the state park to Fort Davis.

Just 4 miles south of the town of Fort Davis, is the Chihuahuan Desert Nature Center & Botanical Gardens, a fun place to explore. And while you're in town be sure to drive the 75 miles long Scenic Loop Drive. The highest elevation on the loop is about 6,700 feet, which makes this the highest public highway in Texas. ♦



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

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TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL- GAME

WARMER WEATHER BECKONS
RVERS TO **SPRING TRAINING CAMPS**

BY DENNIS AND CHERYL DENOI

If you could ask your motorhome where it would like to go this spring, it just might reply, "Take Me Out to the Ballgame!" That is, to Major League Baseball's (MLB) spring training camps, which are located in Florida and Arizona. A leisurely trip to the warm spring weather of either of these two Sunbelt regions might be just what the doctor ordered.

If you're not a diehard baseball fan, you might be wondering why you would want to take a trip to see spring training. I'll admit I'm not a baseball fanatic — it's Cheryl who carries that title in our family — but I am an adventurous RVer and I can tell you that a visit to spring training offers outstanding

camping, RV tailgating, sightseeing and other activities to keep everyone satisfied.

Spring training plays an important role in MLB and dates back to the 1880s. Originally, teams were spread across the United States with no rhyme or reason; however, following World War II, spring training camps were slowly consolidated into just two locations, the Grapefruit League in Florida and the Cactus League in Arizona. More recently, the league's 30 professional teams were evenly distributed to facilitate improved scheduling.

The fan portion of spring training begins in late February and runs until the end of March, with



Fans from all over the country enjoy a spring training game at Diablo Stadium in Tempe, Ariz.



Above left: Authors Dennis and Cheryl DeNoi in the owner's box at Camelback Ranch-Glendale, home of the Los Angeles Dodgers. Above right: Kris, Sue, Junior and Kevin Echternkamp relax at Camelback Ranch-Glendale during a Cactus League game.

multiple games and teams playing just about every day of the week. The weather in Arizona normally alternates between a cool 70 degrees to a warm 85 degrees, with plenty of fresh air and sunshine. You should anticipate slightly warmer weather and humidity in Florida.

The Grapefruit League will play more than 200 games in 13 fan-friendly and

RV accessible stadiums across central Florida. The ballparks are situated along both coasts, from Dunedin to Fort Myers on the west coast and Lake Buena Vista to Jupiter on the east coast.

Ever since American industrialist Henry Morison Flagger started developing Florida's first improved roads and railroads in the late 19th century, the Sunshine State has been a major tourist destination. Your spring training vacation experience can be enhanced with some additional planning and visits to the state's many tourist websites. After all, where else can you watch a baseball game one day and see a live underwater

mermaid show the next day?

The Cactus League's 11 spring training ballparks are conveniently distributed in seven centrally located cities in the greater Phoenix metropolitan area. Spring training ballparks are much smaller than their Major League stadium counterparts and have a fan-based, laidback atmosphere with plenty of activities for visitors of all ages.

As with our family, spring training is an annual occurrence for many of its tens of thousands of fans and therefore some advance planning may be in order as far as campgrounds and other lodging accommodations are concerned. However, with



Tailgating at Surprise Stadium, the spring training home for the Kansas City Royals and the Texas Rangers.



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Above top: One of the many campgrounds you can stay at during spring training is Phoenix Metro RV Park. Above right: Cheryl DeNoi staking out her spot on the lawn at Scottsdale Stadium for a Cactus League game. Above: Los Angeles Dodgers warming up prior to a spring training game. Below: The entrance to Goodyear Ballpark, spring training home of the Cincinnati Reds and the Cleveland Indians. Bottom: Up-close and personal with legendary former manager of the Dodgers, Tommy Lasorda in Vero Beach, Fla., former spring training home of the Los Angeles Dodgers.

up their “camps” side-by-side or other desired configurations and start the party or just relax under their awnings. The park’s grounds and stadiums also open early so fans can buy food, drinks and souvenirs. More importantly, they can observe their favorite players participating in activities such as batting practice, grass drills and practice games.

Spring training is the closest you may ever come to what Kevin Costner’s character Ray Kinsella experienced in the classic 1989 movie *Field of Dreams*. That’s because at most every turn there are



a little persistence, latecomers should be able to obtain good game tickets and RV accommodations, and enjoy a variety of other activities in between games. Online ticket sales start around \$7 for lawn seating and run as high as \$35 and up for premier seating and high-demand games.

One of the biggest benefits of spring training is the RV friendly attitude throughout the stadiums, all providing outstanding car and RV tailgating opportunities with parking fees ranging from \$10 to \$25. Most ballparks have designated parking for tailgating fans that vary from hard pack ground and gravel lots to fully paved parking areas with lush green grass. Families and friends routinely put together sandlot-type baseball games right in front of their RVs; before, during and after the Major League baseball games they came to watch.

Many spring training RVers choose to camp light at their RV parks so they can quickly pack up each morning and drive their rigs to the ballpark for the day. Fans can begin arriving at the ballparks as early as two hours before the start of the games. Rigs traveling together can sometimes set

CACTUS LEAGUE

- ◆ ARIZONA DIAMONDBACKS
- ◆ CHICAGO CUBS
- ◆ CHICAGO WHITE SOX
- ◆ CINCINNATI REDS
- ◆ CLEVELAND INDIANS
- ◆ COLORADO ROCKIES
- ◆ KANSAS CITY ROYALS
- ◆ LOS ANGELES ANGELS OF ANAHEIM
- ◆ LOS ANGELES DODGERS
- ◆ MILWAUKEE BREWERS
- ◆ OAKLAND ATHLETICS
- ◆ SAN DIEGO PADRES
- ◆ SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS
- ◆ SEATTLE MARINERS
- ◆ TEXAS RANGERS

GRAPEFRUIT LEAGUE

- ◆ ATLANTA BRAVES
- ◆ BALTIMORE ORIOLES
- ◆ BOSTON RED SOX
- ◆ DETROIT TIGERS
- ◆ MIAMI MARLINS
- ◆ HOUSTON ASTROS
- ◆ MINNESOTA TWINS
- ◆ NEW YORK METS
- ◆ NEW YORK YANKEES
- ◆ PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES
- ◆ PITTSBURGH PIRATES
- ◆ ST. LOUIS CARDINALS
- ◆ TAMPA BAY RAYS
- ◆ TORONTO BLUE JAYS
- ◆ WASHINGTON NATIONALS

opportunities for chance encounters and autographs with up-and-coming stars as well as big league heroes. The old-school fans are always on the lookout for the legendary players of the past who often serve as temporary consultants during spring training games. Foul balls are another favorite among fans of all ages, and there is no limit to the number of balls an eager fan can snag, get autographed and take home.

Each Major League team goes all out to make their park the fan favorite and wants all guests, theirs and the visiting team's fans, to feel at home. Most seats are so close to the action on the field that you can not only hear the interaction from player to player and their managers, but you can actually carry on conversations with players waiting in the on-deck circle, those in the outfield, and even with players and coaches in the dugouts.

During the past five years, we have visited 10 Cactus League and five Grapefruit League ballparks. All of the parks have special features, but our two favorites are in the Cactus League. The first, Camelback Ranch-Glendale Stadium in Phoenix, Ariz., is one of the newer best complexes in the league. The Los Angeles Dodgers and the Chicago White Sox share this 141-acre baseball paradise and alternate home games. Besides having the finest RV tailgating accommodations that we have found, the 10,500-seat campus is laid out around a 1,300-foot lake and its desert-friendly design is reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural genius. Besides the main stadium, there are several accessible practice fields, workout areas and an impressive batting practice cage. The food and beverage concessions vary from traditional ballpark eats to local gourmet favorites and tend to be more affordable than their regular-season counterparts. When deciding on seating, don't count out the cheap seats or the lawn areas, as they can be just as enjoyable, more relaxing and allow for easier access; kids love the lawn area, too.

The Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim's Diablo Stadium is another of our favorites. It was built in 1968, and although it's older, it received a major renovation in 2005 and maintains a neat, well-groomed appearance. The Angels and Diablo Stadium are steeped in history as Gene Autry,

"The Singing Cowboy" owned the team for many years. The playing field still carries his iconic name. Diablo is conveniently located in Tempe, Ariz., and offers amenities such as free trolley service to and from the games and outstanding food concessions. Its RV parking/tailgating area is generally unrestricted and there are plenty of opportunities for early arrivals to stake out their favorite parking spot. Fans are so close to the action that it's common for practice and game balls to come rolling past your motorhome; we have never heard of any broken windshields, but would take this situation into account when staging your rig.

When it comes to selecting accommodations, one of the biggest considerations is proximity to your favorite teams and stadiums, especially in Florida where the ballparks are situated on either coast. In Arizona, the greater Phoenix area has an extensive freeway system so no RV park is too far from a ballpark, and less time on the road means more time at the ballpark. There are numerous RV parks and campgrounds associated with both spring training regions. Several carry all 9's and 10's on the Good Sam Rating system and are listed in the new Good Sam RV Travel Guide & Campground Directory. There are also several helpful websites that can help make even a first-time visitor look like a spring training pro when it comes to selecting a campground, buying game tickets, and locating entertainment and dining options.

We encourage you to dig out your old baseball glove, knock the winter dirt off of your faithful coach, grab a few friends and family, and head to the spring training region of your choice. Soon, you too will be singing, "I don't care if I never get back!" ♦

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CHEAPER HEATING

ADDING AN **RV COMFORT SYSTEMS ELECTRIC ELEMENT** TO AN EXISTING FURNACE MAY BE A COST-EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO BURNING LP-GAS

by BILL AND JENN GEHR

Running a typical forced-air furnace on LP-gas is becoming a more expensive proposition, obviously because propane has skyrocketed in price. Many owners who camp with hookups will use portable electric heaters (or heat pumps, if so equipped) to offset some of these costs, as long as the outside temperature is not too severe. Bothell, Washington-based RV Comfort Systems has developed a product that adds an electric option to most RV forced-air furnaces, giving owners added heating flexibility.

Similar to water heaters equipped with an electric option, RV Comfort Systems' solution allows users to choose between electric or gas heat. The CheapHeat electric add-on system is so efficient that some owners could make it through an entire winter without the need to refill the propane tank. Depending on how the RV is used and other factors explained below, the savings on propane alone could eventually pay for the CheapHeat system, especially for full timers.

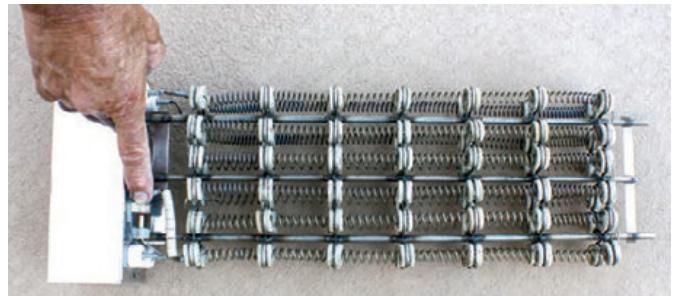
Electric heating coils and the controller are the key components of the CheapHeat system. Three models are offered, so the chances of retrofitting just about any furnace are pretty good. The uniquely designed heating coils are highly efficient and fully protected by a fusible link safety device that prevents overheating if the blower motor fails.

The CheapHeat's specialized controller is designed to receive a signal from the furnace when it's time to cycle on, activating the heating coils and sending warm air through the existing system of ducting and registers using the furnace's blower motor. A switch allows the user to choose between gas and electric heat.

Another benefit of the CheapHeat system is the elimination of cold air blowing during pre-cycling without heat until ignition, as well as the post-cycle cool down. Also, the blower motor is likely to



Above: The plenum normally arrives in the kit without the ducting holes, but was factory predrilled for the specific furnace used in the test installation. Below: The heating element is equipped with a fusible link that prevents catastrophic failure.

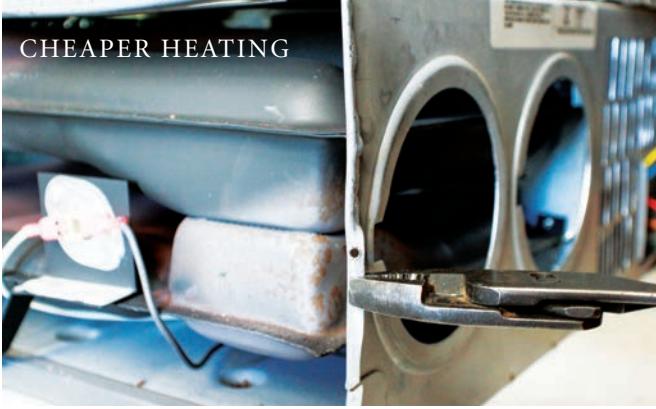


Flexible ducting is routed from six ports in the stock Suburban furnace used for the CheapHeat retrofit.



The ducting and collars are removed from the rear panel of the furnace to start the installation process.

CHEAPER HEATING



On this Suburban furnace, pliers were used to fold the tabs flat on both sides of the furnace to allow the new plenum to fit properly.



After the heating element is installed into the plenum, the plenum is installed to the rear of the furnace and high-temperature aluminum foil tape is used to seal the edges.

last longer, since it will not be subjected to the intense heat that surrounds it during normal heat cycling in the gas mode.

A few things have to be considered when ordering the CheapHeat system. The cabinet adapter must be ordered to mate to the existing furnace brand, which will be a Suburban or Atwood. It's also critical that the motorhome can handle the power requirements of the electric coils. There are three available models. The DH-50 puts out the most heat and draws 21.6 amps from each of two legs of 120-volt AC power. The middle unit (DH-37) draws 15.6 amps from each of two 120-volt AC legs and the smaller system (DH-18) draws 15.6 amps but from only one 120-volt AC leg, which makes it the only unit that can operate on 30-amp service. The other two require 50-amp service.

Cost also needs to be measured. The manufacturer provides a chart that equates the output of each CheapHeat model to a standard gas-fired, forced-air furnace used in an RV. The claims are based on 60 percent efficiency of the gas

furnace, which is somewhat controversial. All RV furnaces are AGA (American Gas Association) certified to be 80 percent efficient, but testing by RV Comfort Systems technicians reveals that that figure may be a little optimistic. No doubt RV furnaces suffer from efficiency losses; you can experience that by feeling the amount of heat that blows through the exhaust. In some cases, the bluing of the metal exhaust shroud suggests that the temperature has reached higher levels than what is expected of a furnace that is only losing 20 percent efficiency. Nevertheless, the subject continues to be debated and buyers need to be cognizant of the numbers when trying to amortize the cost of the CheapHeat addition.

There's no question that the user will save money running the electric heat when hooked up to power that is not metered. In many cases, there will also be savings when staying in parks with metered electric, which is normally the case when full timing, but that depends on the cost of electric and LP-gas —

and, of course, outside temperature and desired comfort levels.

Installation of the CheapHeat system requires a working knowledge of AC wiring and electrical codes. The company recommends that a certified RV technician performs the retrofit.

The heat plenum adapter adds 6 inches to the back of the furnace, which means that adequate space is required. Prior to installing the plenum adapter, the technician will have to notate the number of flexible heat ducts connected to the existing furnace and drill the appropriate number of holes in the plenum using a 4-inch hole saw following the chart diagram in the instruction manual. Once that's completed, the duct collars are installed and the tabs bent back 90 degrees, securing the collars to the plenum adapter.

When installing the heat coils into the plenum adapter, it's important that the fusible link is at the bottom. From here, all the collars and flexible ducts are disconnected from the furnace prior to



The two circuit breakers were purchased from a local home improvement center.



Before installing the Scotchlok on the air switch wire, make sure the correct wire is selected. The Scotchlok connects the wire from the controller to the fan motor feed wire.



At the top, the junction box for the 50-amp service is installed. Below is the disconnect switch, and the system controller is mounted to the right.

The orange, 10-gauge Romex runs between the J-box to the disconnect switch to the controller, then runs down to the heating element. The flexible heat ducting is attached to the plenum.

installing the plenum adapter assembly onto the rear of the furnace. For maximum airflow, the joints should be sealed with 3M high-temperature metal tape (not supplied).

Before attempting any AC wiring, the coach must be unplugged from shorepower (and the inverter off, if so equipped). All wiring should be 300 V NEMA rated and meet all national, state and local codes. The wiring exercise requires routing low and high voltage wires from the shorepower junction box to the disconnect switch to the CheapHeat controller box, and hookup of the changeover switch. A wall in the furnace compartment was 2 feet from the incoming 50-amp service panel and 3 feet from the furnace, which simplified the three-hour installation.

It's best to mount the controller and the two 30-amp breakers (purchased from a home improvement or hardware store) within 10 feet of the furnace. The ideal choice for mounting the gas/electric selector switch is near the existing wall thermostat that controls the air conditioning

and heating. After establishing there was enough clearance to run the wiring to the controller, the switch was easily cut into the wall.

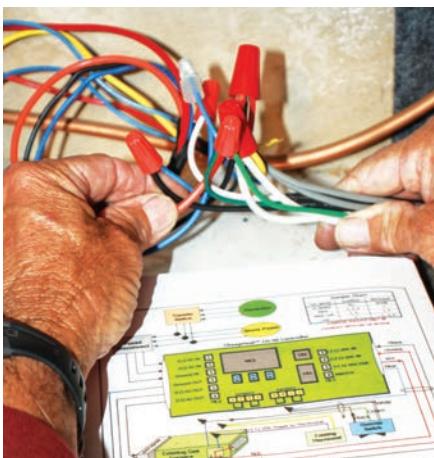
After double-checking all wiring connections and plugging the rig into shorepower, it was time to perform a run test. This is performed by turning the changeover switch to the gas position. The thermostat was set to the "heat" position and 10 degrees higher than the inside room temperature. The furnace came on and the gas ignited. Once gas operation was verified, the thermostat was turned off, the changeover switch moved to the electric position and the thermostat turned back on. When the switch is set to electric heat, the thermostat wire to the circuit board/gas valve is interrupted so the burner will not ignite. Power is then routed directly to the fan motor, which pushes the air over the heated electric coils that are also activated. The fan and the CheapHeat came on instantly. Allow the system to run for the recommended 20 minutes the first time it's operated to burn off any residue

and make certain there are no problems.

In the first week, the CheapHeat was tested in a high-altitude park in Colorado where the temperature was very cold. The system we installed requires 50-amp service, which the park had. The electric heat raised the temperature rapidly and felt every bit as warm as the gas heat. Thanks to CheapHeat, we saved substantial money on propane since we were able to use the electric heat exclusively, and the electric power was not metered. It was also nice to eliminate the 17-mile trip to town necessary to refill the propane tank.

The CheapHeat system is a practical solution to the high cost of LP-gas and may be amortized over a short period of time, especially if the motorhome is used in cold climates and in parks where electric is included in the site fee. All three models come standard with a one-year limited warranty and retail prices ranging from \$249 to \$695. ♦

**RV Comfort Systems, 425-408-3140,
www.rvcomfortsystems.com**



It takes patience to follow the color-coded wiring diagram, but the instructions walk the installer through the process.



The gas/electric selector switch was mounted in the panel that also housed the existing dual thermostat.



VILLAGIO 25QBS

RENEGADE'S LATEST FLOORPLAN PACKS UPSCALE, BIG COACH FEATURES IN A SPRINTER-BASED CLASS C

by CHRIS HEMER

PHOTO: SCOTT HIRKO

Living on the road, regardless of the size of the coach, always requires some degree of compromise. Whether it's a trade off between power and fuel economy, features and price, or size and maneuverability, balancing what you want with what you need is the first step toward finding a coach that fits your lifestyle.

Of course, compromise becomes even more of a factor when choosing a small Class B or C motorhome. While there are a multitude of nice, well-equipped models to choose from, many

fall short when it comes to providing a luxurious living experience. Indeed, it may have all the hallmarks of a luxury coach, such as leather furniture and solid surface countertops, but it usually ends up feeling like what it is: a nice small motorhome. If this works for you, as it does thousands of other motorhome owners, great. If not,

you should take a look at the Villagio by Renegade RV.

Built on the Sprinter 3500 chassis, the Villagio follows Renegade's philosophy of using commercial grade chassis, which allows designers to offer outstanding durability in addition to luxury features. In this case, the Sprinter 3500, with

2014 VILLAGIO 25QBS

WHAT'S HOT

Great floorplan, modern interior design, very well equipped

WHAT'S NOT

Unsupportive cockpit seats, spongy brakes, uneven interior heat



PHOTO: SCOTT HIRKO

From top: The Sprinter cockpit offers great visibility and logically placed controls, but the seats may not be to everyone's taste. Villagio's galley is ultra modern-looking and offers a surprising amount of cabinet space. Counterspace in the galley is adequate for preparing simple meals. The elegant-looking living area door, with frosted glass inserts, also serves as the bathroom door when swung all the way in.

its dual rear wheels, has a gross vehicle weight rating (gvwr) of 11,030 pounds. Updated for 2014, the Sprinter features restyled headlights, grille and front fascia for an unmistakable Mercedes-Benz countenance. A 2.1-liter four-cylinder diesel and seven-speed automatic transmission are now offered as the standard powertrain, but the test unit was equipped with the familiar (and more powerful) 3.0-liter diesel V-6 and five-speed automatic transmission.

Stepping into the Villagio's cockpit reveals the commercial roots of the chassis. The controls are straightforward, although the European logic for placement and labeling will likely take some getting used to. Ditto the seats, which come with the chassis and are classic Sprinter: clunky, difficult to adjust, and generally unsupportive. However, basing a coach on this chassis also has some advantages, not the least of which are cruise control, load adaptive electronic stability control and power/heated exterior mirrors. This chassis also comes with four-wheel disc brakes with ABS, although we found brake feel to be excessively spongy on this coach.



PHOTOS: CHRIS HEMER



The bedroom is elegant and cozy, with a good-size wardrobe (left) and a perfectly placed LED TV (optional). There's adequate overhead cabinet space, and plenty of overhead lighting — we just wish there were individual switches for both sides of the bed.

This could be an isolated case, but it's certainly something that warrants consideration should you decide on a test drive.

Once on the highway, we found the Villagio to be a pleasure to drive. As we made our way along U.S. highway 101, we noted that the coach was stable at highway speeds, and the ride quality was very good. Likewise, the chassis seemed to exhibit excellent stability, although we didn't encounter any side winds that might have put its composure to the test. We traveled without drama along the coast, admiring the azure Pacific Ocean as the descending sun made its way toward the horizon.

Our destination was Flying Flags RV Resort and Campground in Buellton, Calif. — just a few minutes drive from the tourist mecca of Solvang, and close to Santa Barbara's Central Coast wine country. Flying Flags offers more than 300 well-manicured sites to choose from, with full hookups (50 amp available), pool and well-equipped store. There are also super-premium sites located at the end of each row, featuring a large concrete pad, fire pit and gas barbecue. It's a great place to spend a few days with friends and family.

Once set up with the optional power stabilizing jacks (\$1062.10) down and



SPECIFICATIONS

PERFORMANCE

FUEL ECONOMY: 15.4 MPG

ACCELERATION

0-60: 22 SEC

40-60: 13 SEC

CHASSIS

MODEL: RENEGADE VILLAGIO 25QBS

ENGINE: 3.0-LITER MERCEDES-BENZ TURBODIESEL

SAE HP: 188 @ 3,800 RPM

TORQUE: 325 LB-FT @ 1400-2400 RPM

TRANSMISSION: 5-SPEED AUTOMATIC

AXLE RATIO: 4.18:1

TIRES: LT215/85R16

WHEELBASE: 170"

BRAKES, F/R: HYDRAULIC DISC WITH ABS

SUSPENSION: INDEPENDENT WITH MONO-LEAF SPRING AND STABILIZER/

LEAF SPRING WITH STABILIZER BAR

FUEL CAP: 26.4 GAL

WARRANTY: 3 YRS/36,000 MILES

COACH

EXT LENGTH: 25'

EXT WIDTH: 92.25"

INT WIDTH: 89.5"

INT HEIGHT: 80"

CONSTRUCTION: ALUMINUM FRAMING, VACUUM-BONDED WALLS, FLOOR, ROOF

FRESHWATER CAP: 34 GAL

BLACK-WATER CAP: 29 GAL

GRAY-WATER CAP: 29 GAL

WATER-HEATER CAP: 6 GAL

LP-GAS CAP: 11.9 GAL

AIR CONDITIONER: (1) 13,500 BTU

FURNACE: 18,000 BTU

REFRIGERATOR: 7.0 CU-FT

CONVERTER: 55 AMPS

BATTERY: (1) 12-VOLT CHASSIS,

(1) 12-VOLT COACH

AC GENERATOR: 3.6 KW LP-GAS

MSRP: \$122,070

MSRP AS TESTED: \$133,634

WET WEIGHT

(WATER & HEATER, FUEL, LP-GAS TANKS FULL; NO SUPPLIES OR PASSENGERS)

FRONT AXLE: 3,580 LBS

REAR AXLE: 6,360 LBS

TOTAL: 9,940 LBS

CHASSIS RATINGS

GAWR, F/R: 4,410/7,720 LBS

GVWR/GCWR: 11,030 LBS/15,250 LBS

ROCCC: 1,090 LBS

GAWR: GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING

GVWR: GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING

GCWR: GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING

ROCCC: REALISTIC OCCUPANT AND CARGO

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The bathroom in a Manhattan apartment? No, but brushed-nickel fixtures and a clean design give the Villagio's bathroom a high-end feel.

the power awning deployed, we were able to admire the Villagio in its natural setting. There's no question that this is a luxury coach; with its three-color full-body paint in Shadow Mist, aerodynamic front/rear fiberglass caps, frameless windows and chrome wheel simulators, it really is a handsome motorhome. There's also plenty of storage in the top-hinge compartments, although these are better suited to long, slender items than large square ones. For example, if you want to bring along lounge chairs, you're going to have to get creative.

Villagio comes in three floorplans: The 25RBS, the 25TBS and the new 25QBS, which we tested. This is one of the best floorplans we've encountered in a Sprinter-based coach, because it uses space efficiently and creates a distinct living/bedroom area in a way that is both roomy and cozy. The single streetside slideout is wide and deep, and really transforms the living area once it is deployed. The area contains a 7-cubic-foot refrigerator and a 1-cubic-foot convection microwave, plus a stainless-steel sink and a two-burner cooktop, both of which have glass covers. Countertop space isn't what we'd call abundant, but it did have enough room to prepare simple meals.

Across from the slideout is a jack-

knife sofa that folds out to accommodate guests, and contains a bottom drawer in which to store the dining table. It's a good use of space, but we found that the drawer constantly opened and closed around corners, which was distracting. Some stronger detents, or some other retention device would be welcome. There's plenty of cabinet storage in the galley, and even more above the cab behind the 26-inch LED TV — although we wish this space had been used to stow a residential-style Blu-ray player and receiver rather than make due with the dash-mounted, automotive-grade DVD player that also serves as the radio (and optional navigation unit in our test coach, \$583.70). To the right of the TV, behind a cabinet door, there is a command center that includes tank levels, generator start/stop, power cut-off switch and other necessities. It is logically located and easy to reach.

After watching some evening programming on the standard 26-inch LED TV above the cab, it was time to hit the hay in the well-appointed rear bedroom. Where most Sprinter-based coaches we've tested make due with a full bed in the corner (many of which have one corner shaved off for walk-around room) the Villagio offers a miniature version of a master bedroom you would find in a much larger coach. The 60-by-75-inch queen bed is horizontally opposed, and although there is no slideout, the area still feels roomy enough. There is plenty of overhead cabinet space, and one good-size wardrobe that should be adequate for two people on a weeklong excursion. The test coach was also equipped with a 26-inch LED TV in the bedroom, mounted on the side of the wardrobe wall — the perfect location for viewing while laying on the very comfortable mattress.

Another big surprise in this little motorhome was the bath area, and the thoughtful way in which it was designed. Instead of a curtain or an accordion door between the bedroom/living area, the elegant-looking bathroom door with its frosted glass inserts (part of the Décor Upgrade package, \$1,168) serves this purpose. When you're ready to sleep (or don't want guests to see into your bedroom), simply open the bathroom door all the way, and it latches between the two areas. Of course, this leaves the toilet/lav-

without a door, but it can always be pulled shut again if you need bathroom privacy.

As you should expect, the bathroom is small, but again, is well executed and has a high-end feel. For example, there's a glass vessel sink with brushed-nickel faucet, overhead medicine cabinet, and enough cabinet/counter space for your necessities. There's even a vitreous porcelain toilet with a power flush system that automatically fills the bowl with a predetermined amount of water, then flushes with just one touch. It definitely ups the wow factor — but we wonder if this coach, with only 29 gallons of black-tank capacity, is the best application for a toilet that doesn't allow you to control how much water is used with each flush. We could see that, if we weren't hooked up, the black tank would be full within a couple of days.

The corner shower, with its glass door, is as large as many we've found in full-size motorhomes, and is roomy enough for most average-size people to get the job done. Overall, the master bedroom/bath area is very comfortable and surprisingly spacious, and only has room for improvement in a couple of areas. One, it would be nice if the reading lights above the bed could be controlled individually, instead of all coming on when the switch is activated; and two, we'd prefer to have the furnace located somewhere else besides right next to the bed. Not only is it noisy (granted, you get used to it over time) but we found that, since the thermostat is in the bedroom too, it made the bedroom warm, while the living area stayed cold. This made for a chilly transition in the morning when we went into the galley to make coffee. Leaving the bedroom door open all night solved this problem the next morning, but we think there should be a better solution.

No coach is perfect, however, and we really enjoyed our time in the Villagio. It is a very well-equipped coach in base form; aside from the options mentioned, the only other equipment added to the test unit was an 3.6 kW LP-gas generator (\$4,507) and a 6-gallon LP-gas/electric water heater (\$65) bringing the total as-tested price to \$133,634.50. That's a lot of money for a Sprinter-based coach, but we found that the Villagio also has a lot more to offer than the average small Class C. ♦

RECLAIMING THE THRONE

Living in your castle on wheels likely empowers a sensation of royalty as if you're the king or queen, comfortably embedded in your personalized kingdom. In this particular scenario, there lies another type of seat, quite private and often referred to as a throne of sorts. Of course, I'm describing the toilet seat.

Nearly every RV in production today offers full plumbing, including all the necessary sanitary provisions. However, the toilets provided by the factory aren't always up to par with individual expectations or quality. Whether your current model doesn't flush well or sits at an unusual height for your comfort, or you've always wanted porcelain but didn't want to make the additional investment (and add more weight to your coach), Thetford has a practical, new option — the Aqua Magic Residence.

While there are many choices when considering a replacement toilet, Thetford steps up to the plate with an entire lineup of new toilets, varying in style and features. The Residence is intended to mimic the much-loved traits of a typical residential toilet while focusing on what's important for the average RVer. Of the many features of the Residence, probably the most im-

portant is the premium lightweight construction complete with matching, comfortable full-size seat and cover. The new Thetford Residence is made of composite materials and weighs only 9½ pounds. If you don't tap on it, you'll think it's a porcelain toilet.

The other factors when choosing a toilet are the flushing design and mechanism. To help improve flow of the flush, a system was integrated that provides 100 percent bowl coverage, using enough water pressure to surround the entire inner perimeter and wash down the contents completely with every flush. This type of system ensures a clean bowl, which is an issue with toilets with lazy water distribution. Backing up the upgraded rinsing system is a huge ball valve, which aids greatly in efficiency, providing a clean flush with each opening and closing. Also adding to the list of beneficial features is the improvement in seat height. The Residence sits at an ADA compliant 18 inches at the seat, allowing for more overall comfort. The taller height may not seem to offer much compared to other toilet models, but let me be the first to tell you that this small boost makes all the difference in the world when dealing it comes to getting on and off the throne.



1. First, remove the shroud around the base of the old toilet (if so equipped) to expose the water connection and the nuts that hold the toilet in place.



2. This water line was easy to remove, but if space is tight, be prepared to work by feel. Water pressure should have been relieved, but have towels on hand to soak up any leaking water.



3. The nuts that hold the toilet snug to the floor flange are removed with a wrench or socket; they should not be too tight.



4. The back of the Residence (left) is different from the original toilet. A new water line may be needed to make the connection.

THETFORD'S AQUA MAGIC RESIDENCE TOILET LOOKS LIKE A FULL-SIZE PORCELAIN BOWL, BUT IS MADE OF LIGHTWEIGHT COMPOSITE MATERIALS AND USES A ROBUST FLUSHING MECHANISM

by KEVIN LIVINGSTON

For those who have an existing toilet on a built-up platform, the low-profile model is 14 inches high.

The installation of the Aqua Magic Residence is really quite straightforward and can usually be handled by the casual owner/installer. It requires 9½ inches from the back wall to the center of the closet (floor) flange, and the toilet is a tad wider than 15 inches and almost 20 inches long. Most bathrooms will have enough space, but if the area was designed around a basic plastic toilet with a top-mounted, hand-operated flush handle, careful measurements are in order.

Begin by grabbing a simple ratchet set with a few extensions. Most likely, the nuts are going to be either 7/16- or 1/2-inch. Now is a good time to make sure the water system is off and the pressure is relieved. Even so, be prepared to soak up any residual water. Remove the two mounting nuts from the floor flange. Some toilet models might require the removal of a shroud to expose these nuts. Next, remove the water line and sprayer hose off the wall clip, if so equipped. The old toilet can be lifted off the old floor flange seal with little effort. Expect a little cleanup at the floor

before proceeding with the installation. Locate the new T-bolts and place them in the appropriate slots in the flange mounted to the floor. If your bathroom is fully carpeted, set the toilet over the T-bolts, trace the outline and cut the carpet to reveal the floor. Next, put the new flange seal onto the toilet, making sure that the lip side is facing down and reset the toilet over the T-bolts using body weight to press it to the floor. While sitting on the toilet, use the appropriate ratchet and socket combo to tighten the nuts until the new Residence is stable, which may require an assistant depending on your dexterity. If an



CONTINUED ON PAGE 63



5. Thetford supplies a nipple for connecting a spray nozzle to the toilet. A hose and nozzle can also be ordered with the toilet.



6. The original hose and spray nozzle were removed from the old toilet and reused on the new Residence.



7. The nipple in back of the new toilet is cut with a knife so that the hose from the retained spray nozzle can be installed.



8. Hose from the old spray nozzle is installed on the nipple of the new toilet with a hose clamp. This is done prior to toilet installation.

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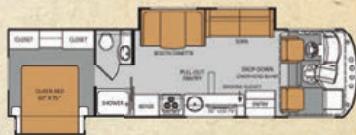


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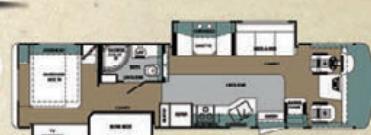


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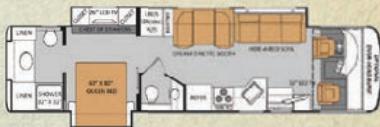
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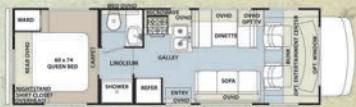
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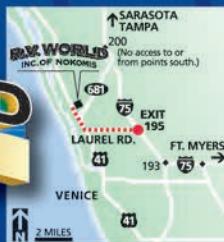
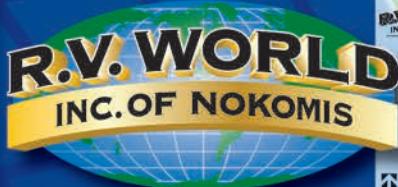
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9. The Residence meets ADA requirements for toilet seat height of 18 inches, which is considerably taller than the original toilet.



10. Here, the old flange seal is lifted from the floor. Plan on a little clean up, and be sure to wear protective gloves.



11. T-bolts are slid into the appropriate slots in the old flange. Chances are good that the slots will line up with the new toilet.



12. New flange seal is positioned on the Residence, making sure that the lip side is facing down.



13. The seal will stay in place as the toilet is turned over for mounting on the flange bolts. Nuts are tightened to compress toilet onto the seal. Nut caps are used to finish off the install.



14. The toilet in this location was a tight fit, but additional height improved usability. Toilet requires 9½ inches clearance from back wall to the center of the floor flange.

assistant is not available, the nuts can be snugged evenly using care not to overtighten.

The next step is to reattach the water line, which may need to be cut or modified to reach properly. We took the opportunity to reuse the sprayer that was connected to the old toilet. This was done by simply cutting the appropriate nipple on the water valve and securing the hose using a clamp before mounting the new toilet. The Residence can also be ordered with an optional hand spray already attached. The water can now be turned back on and the line/fittings double-checked for any leaks.

So, how did it work? Amazing! There is no comparison to the toilet that came with the rig. The existing toilet developed valve issues shortly after putting it into service and barely spewed

droplets of water to flush the contents. The Residence is comfortable to sit on and uses a foot pedal for flushing. The pedal is also used to add water to the bowl before using. Not only did the taller seat height improve use in the very tight space allocated for the toilet, but the jet-stream-like water flow allowed the contents to move through the open valve with virtually no staining on the bowl, minimizing cleanup.

The Thetford Aqua Magic Residence is a great choice for owners looking for a competitively priced, standard-size toilet replacement for any RV. The toilet is available in white and bone colors and retails for \$229, but better pricing can be found on the Internet and at Camping World.

Thetford Corp., 800-543-1219, www.thetford.com ♦

MONITORING TIRES

VALOR TPMS CHECKS PRESSURE AND TEMPERATURE, REPORTING CHANGES TO THE DRIVER FAST ENOUGH TO PREVENT FAILURES AND COLLATERAL DAMAGE

by BILL AND JENN GEHR

No matter what vehicle you drive, maintaining your tires is important to both longevity and safety. But when it comes to your RV, tire care becomes even more crucial, as a blowout can result in expensive damage to your coach.

Although they are designed for many years of heavy-duty use, motorhome tires are not invincible and require regular monitoring and maintenance to ensure the highest level of safety and service life.

Tires have a tough job to do and are often ignored, partly because air is not as readily available while on the road. Maintaining proper air pressure will not only extend the life of each tire but can possibly improve fuel economy.

Ontario, Canada-based Valor TPMS is a very well respected company that specializes in tire-monitoring devices for the mining and commercial truck industries. Two and a half years ago, the company launched an RV-specific tire pressure



Monitor is mounted on windshield bracket with suction cup. Switch (on side) toggles between air pressure and temperature. Shown here is air pressure for tires on front axle.



Wheels are removed from the motorhome so that tires can be dismantled, providing access to the inside of the wheels for installation of the sensors.

monitoring system (TPMS) that is one of the most sophisticated and reliable devices on the market today. The system incorporates air pressure monitoring as well as internal tire temperature that warns the driver immediately of necessary pressure adjustments and impending failure.

Valor's TPMS RV kits use internally mounted sensors that the company claims are accurate to within .3 degrees Fahrenheit and .4 PSI, and the batteries used in the sensors are designed to last seven years. The sensors record information every four seconds during impending failure and report otherwise every 16 seconds. For use on motorhomes, two antennas are needed to transmit signals, one at each axle. A coax cable extends to a "T"

fitting at the front axle where one antenna is located. From there, another coax cable is routed to the rear axle where the second antenna is located. The dual antennas are designed to eliminate the common "hit and miss" signal to the monitor and are needed to deliver a warning signal in the four-second intervals.

Sensors can also be installed on the dinghy vehicle wheels, alerting the driver of failures that are otherwise hard to discover while driving. The obvious benefit is tire pressure monitoring for the dinghy vehicle, but the temperature feature can also alert the driver if there's a malfunction in the braking device, if so equipped. One owner towing a Honda CR-V was not aware the brakes were lightly engaged due

to a malfunctioning auxiliary brake unit; tire damage was extensive. Alerting the driver to temperature change would have likely prevented this failure.

An auto disconnect feature is unique to the Valor TPMS. For example, if sensors are installed on the dinghy wheels and the vehicle is driven away from the motorhome, the display monitor will go into a battery saving mode after five minutes.

Upon reconnecting, the monitor automatically locates the sensors and begins reporting in 15 seconds, thus eliminating the cumbersome chore of reprogramming.

A "data download" feature records all sensor readings on an internal storage device within the display unit. The monitor displays information from each axle



The tires are completely removed from the wheels using a tire machine. Not all tire shops are equipped to handle motorhome tires.



Proper preparation is important. The mounting surface for the sensor should be cleaned with rubbing alcohol and a clean rag.



To prevent a mix up with the sensor modules, individual plastic bags were used — and marked — to store the components.



Remove double-sided tape film before locating the sensor on the inner surface of wheel. It's best to locate in flat channel.



Barcode label matching module and sensor is attached to wheel surface for identification and replacement, if necessary.



Long strap for extra security is used, ensuring sensor will not come loose while in motion. Extra material can be trimmed.

PHOTOS: JENN GEHR



Sensors (50 psi) for dinghy vehicle wheels replace the stock valve stems. Installation also requires removal of wheels and tires.



Rare earth magnet holds the antenna to clean metal surface. It's best to mount as close to center of axle as possible.



Pay close attention to the pins that plug into the back of the monitor. These pins are delicate and can bend easily.

every 16 seconds and the data from the sensors is stored every 30 minutes. If a problem is discovered by the sensors — either temperature or pressure — the unit records every four seconds on that axle and provides an audible warning. The data is stored within the monitor and can be extracted and analyzed to determine the date and time the tire lost pressure, helping to pinpoint problems—for example, when the tread began to separate or lose pressure. Valor has a download tool that can be used to access stored data at a later date. This could come in handy if the information is needed settle a tire claim.

Installing the sensors will require a trip to a tire shop capable of handling large motorhome wheels. Tires and wheels will have to be dismantled — including the spare — to complete the sensor install. Tire shops are typically busy, so to eliminate any confusion and/or chaos with the installation, we separated the sensors and tiny bar code tags and put them into individual plastic bags that were marked for their respective wheels. This prevents potential mix-ups at the tire store.

Each sensor arrives in the kit with high quality, double-sided tape on the back, so it's important to use a soft rag and rubbing alcohol to carefully prep the mounting site. After cleaning the area

where the sensor will be attached to the wheel, it was installed per the markings on the plastic bag. The tiny module was held for installation into the monitor at a later point, and the matching bar code identification sticker was placed next to the sensor. Save the other matching bar code tag for your files in case there is a problem with the sensor down the road.

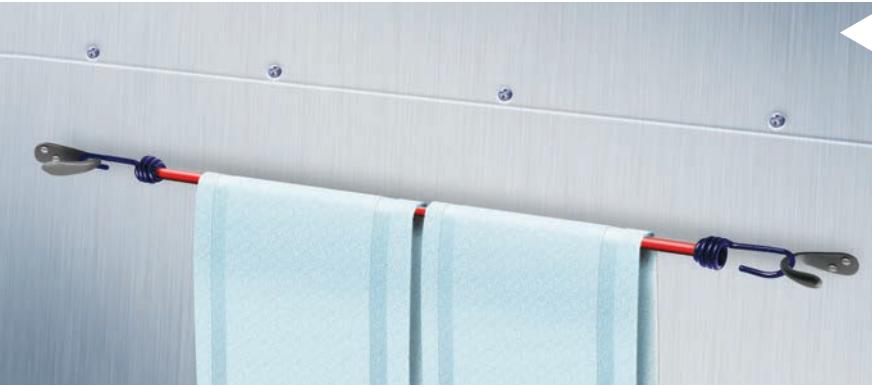
Once the sensor is in place, a stainless steel hose clamp is routed through the sensor and around the rim, cut to length using tin snips and tightened securely. After repeating this process on all of the wheels, the tires were reinstalled onto the wheels, the air pressure set to 110 PSI and the wheels mounted back onto the motorhome. Once the tire is free from the wheel, the installation of each sensor takes only five minutes; the whole sensor mounting process, including dismantling/remounting the tires, took about an hour.

After selecting a location on the motorhome dash, the monitor is installed using the mounting bracket. Make sure the monitor does not obstruct your vision; use of the suction cup bracket allows easy relocation, if necessary. Before installing the monitor, follow the instructions carefully, making sure that the power switch is off and that the delicate pins on the modules are not bent during the process.

With the monitor in place, the antenna extension coax cable is routed through the firewall and run along the frame to the “T” fitting near the front antenna using the supplied ties to secure the cable. The cable ties are not tightened at this time. The coax cable is connected to the “T” and run along the frame to the rear antenna and secured with the provided cable ties. The magnetic antennas are installed between the front and rear axles, centered between the tires and as close to the axle as possible. The antenna whip must be pointing downward. Rare earth magnets used to secure the antennas are very strong — so strong that it took both hands and firm pulls to remove them from the metal surface.

After double-checking the installation and tightening all cable ties, the monitor is plugged into the 12-volt DC power outlet in the dash that's live when the ignition is turned on. This will prevent the sensors from transmitting to the monitor while the coach is not being driven. With the ignition in the “run” position, the monitor is turned on by pressing the switch that's located in the back. Within a few minutes, the sensors will register with the monitor and all of the pressures for the individual tires (including the spares) will be accurately

CONTINUED ON PAGE 80



NEAT AND DRY

I wanted a towel rack in my utility bay to keep towels neat and to have a place for them to dry. I was unable to find a rack at my local hardware store that did not interfere with the other components in the utility bay. I then came up with a solution using two small coat hooks and a bungee cord. I installed the two hooks horizontally — about 24 inches apart — and then stretched an 18-inch bungee cord between them. It is the perfect solution for keeping my towels neat and dry.

TOM GRIMES | ST GEORGE, UTAH

ON THE LEVEL

I came up with the easiest, most convenient way to level my Class C motorhome. I drilled two holes in the aluminum running boards next to the driver's door and laid a \$1 torpedo level (9-inches long) flat on the running board. After comparing it to my refrigerator bubble level, I noticed they were both identical. Now, when I stop somewhere, before removing my seatbelt and putting the motorhome in park, I crack open the door just a few inches and look straight down at the level. If it's off a little, I ease forward or backward until it's perfect.

WENCE TINTEIRA | ST. LOUIS, MO.

AN EXTRA-LONG HAND

I needed a long-reach tool to pass the power cord and water hose under my motorhome when services are on the "wrong side." I also needed something to position pads under my leveling jacks and (sometimes) to position leveling blocks. I found that using my awning rod was inadequate; so I came up with something better. I removed the "spinner" from a paint roller tool and bought an adjustable (3- to 6-foot) paint roller extension pole that screws into the handle. I now have a handy, all-purpose hook on a long-reach pole. I use a ball bungee to secure items to the hook when there is nothing it can grab. I have also used it to retrieve objects that mysteriously gather under my coach from a variety of sources.

**EDWARD PHILLIPS
GREERS FERRY, ARK.**



STATIONARY SOAP DISPENSER ▼

Rather than have soap bouncing around in the sink or taking up space on a shelf in my motorhome, I installed a countertop soap dispenser next to the kitchen sink. It is a simple matter



of drilling a hole through the counter in accordance with the instructions on the package, but first make sure there is enough clearance under the counter to install and remove the bottle. The dispensers are available in home goods stores, and you should be able to find one with a finish that matches the other fixtures in your coach.

FRANK WINTER | MANALAPAN, N.J. ♦

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Quick Tips, *MotorHome's* monthly column of handy, simple tips by fellow RVers, is looking for submissions. Please send your favorite DIY ideas to: *MotorHome Quick Tips*, 2750 Park View Ct., Ste. 240, Oxnard, CA 93036, or email letters@motorhomemagazine.com. Be sure to include photos, illustrations or drawings, if necessary. If your tip is selected for publication, you will receive \$35.

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HANDS-ON | HOT LINE | COACH & POWERTRAIN

HANDS-ON | *by* OWEN MITCHELL

TOW DEFENDER

Roadmaster's safeguard against dinghy paint damage

Despite full-width mud flaps that hang behind the dual rear wheels of most motorhomes, the tires usually kick up enough stones, sand and debris to damage the paint, chrome and windshield of a dinghy vehicle — unless a defense is mounted.

One such product is the Tow Defender by Roadmaster, which is designed to keep the rocks and debris where they belong — below the vehicle.



The Tow Defender is a large (72-by-50-inch) panel of vinyl-coated mesh that is secured by steel tubing fore and aft, providing a horizontal barrier between the motorhome and dinghy. Rocks and sand that get by the motorhome's mud flap are deflected down to the road surface.

At first glance, the Tow Defender may appear to be something of a hassle to deploy and stow with every hitching or unhitching procedure. It isn't, thanks to good design and to well-made hardware. And the installation is easy.

The mesh is suspended above the tow bar by an ingenious but simple system of steel



Tow Defender's mesh material is suspended over the tow bar, covering the space between the motorhome and dinghy vehicle.

TOW DEFENDER

bars and struts. A collar is fitted on the tow bar shank (stinger) of the tow bar assembly, which in our case is a Roadmaster Sterling.

Attached to the collar are two pivoting steel tubes and two gas struts that form the moveable end of the Tow Defender. These tubes and struts allow the Tow Defender to compress at either forward corner when the motorhome is being steered sharply left or right.

At the aft (dinghy) end of the mesh is another steel tube; while towing, it's secured with steel clips to brackets that are latched to the tow-bar bracket assembly. The Tow Defender instructions and the parts list illustration offer perspective on how the components are arranged (<http://roadmasterinc.com/support/manuals.html>).

Installation involves removal of the tow bar from the hitch receiver so the Tow Defender collar — with its steel tubes and gas struts — can be slid onto the shank. The tow bar is reinstalled, and the mesh is fed onto the hardware. If the mesh is too long (fore to aft), about 10 inches of adjustment is provided, but longer is better (more coverage). Brackets are installed on the car's tow bar hardware, and the Tow Defender is ready to defend.

When not in use, the unit is stored above and forward of the tow bar. To deploy following tow-bar hitching, two straps are released and the unit is rolled out and clipped to the car's tow bar bracket. It takes less than a minute, and about the same time during the stowing process.

A couple of caveats: 1. According to the Roadmaster instructions, check the clearance between the Tow Defender and motorhome body during tight turns. If it's insufficient, a hitch extension may be needed. 2. Location of rear-venting exhausts (engine, generator) may be an issue for possible damage to the mesh.

Instructions are detailed and Roadmaster has done a fine job with quality on this product, including powder coating of the steel components. The Tow Defender can be found at RV parts retailers (and online) for \$399 plus shipping.

**Roadmaster Inc., 800-669-9690,
www.roadmasterinc.com ♦**



Rolling out the mesh material takes less than a minute. The collar holds hardware to the tow bar shank; the other end is attached to the baseplate brackets.



Material rolls up and is strapped in place on the tow bar shank; no need to remove between uses since it doesn't interfere with the tow bar in stored position.



Tubes and struts fold the material for clearance when turning in either direction. Material pops back into place when turn is completed.



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

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

Uneven Motorhome Tire Wear

EXPERIENCING MORE WEAR ON THEIR MOTORHOME'S FRONT TIRES THAN ON THE REAR TIRES, TWO READERS CONTACTED HOT LINE FOR HELP. THEY WROTE:

We purchased a Forest River Georgetown 378 XL Class A motorhome in March 2012. After our most-recent trip, we noticed the front tires were wearing down ¼-inch more than the rear tires. The motorhome only has 7,000 miles on it.

I contacted Ford and was told that the company will not cover the alignment on any motorhome. The customer service representative I spoke with at Ford stated that Forest River should have had the alignment checked before the motorhome left the factory. I then contacted Forest River and was told that it will not cover any charges because the motorhome is more than a year old.

I had to pay for a front-end alignment and to have the front tires moved to the rear rims, as well as balancing all four tires. We are asking Hot Line for help in having these charges reimbursed to us by Forest River.

**ROBBIE AND PAULA WRIGHT
MANVEL, TEXAS**

Hot Line contacted Forest River on the Wrights' behalf. The company did not respond directly to Hot Line regarding our inquiry, but we did receive a follow-up response from Robbie Wright that provided a happy ending. It read:

Thank you very much for your help with Forest River. Originally, the Motorized Retail Warranty Representative for Forest River stated that they were unable to offer any assistance, as Forest River has a one-year or 12,000-mile warranty. After they received the letter from Hot Line, I received a check from Forest River for the full amount.

We enjoy reading *MotorHome* magazine — keep up the good work.

R.W.

WARRANTY REFUND REQUEST

Attempting to collect a refund on their cancelled warranty, two readers asked Hot Line for help. They wrote:

We have a problem with an extended warranty company. We purchased an extended warranty from US Direct on Feb. 14, 2010. On Jan. 3, 2013, we totaled our RV. Upon returning home, we contacted US Direct to cancel the warranty and did everything the company asked us to do. We were told that we should receive a refund within two to three weeks, and then was told four to six weeks because their processor was down.

On Aug. 21, 2013, I was told a check was mailed due to an expired credit card on file. We verified the credit card number they had; it was the same and had an expiration date of 2016. To date, we have not received either the refund check or a credit on our credit card.

We have contacted American Guardian Warranty Services directly for assistance to get our money back with no success. If Hot Line could help us, it would be greatly appreciated.

**CHARLES AND DOROTHY WALKER
MOUNT PLEASANT, MICH.**

Hot Line contacted US Direct on the Walkers' behalf. The company did not respond to our first inquiry, nor to our second inquiry mailed 45 days later. The Walkers sent us a follow-up response that put an end to their frustration. It read:

Thank you very much for your help. We finally received our money this week.

D.W. ♦

TO CONTRIBUTE TO HOT LINE, please refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 12.

Towing a Long Load

We'd like to buy a Built Rite double-deck trailer for a boat and SUV to tow behind our motorhome. Built Rite said any motorhome with a 300-hp diesel or greater and a 10,000 pound tow rating will work (I will not be exceeding the 10,000 pounds). They also said they've never heard of anyone being ticketed for exceeding the 60-foot max two-vehicle length laws in some states.

I'm concerned that 300 hp does not seem adequate to get over the Rockies or Appalachians, even on the interstates. What's your opinion? If I exceed the 60-foot maximum by a foot or two, what are my chances? Is this a common infraction?

BILL CARY | LANSING, MICH.

Hill-climbing performance depends mainly on horsepower versus overall weight of the motorhome and trailer as well as the driver's perception of what constitutes adequate performance. Turbodiesels have a lot of torque and pull better for a given horsepower rating than gasoline engines. As long as you are within the manufacturer's ratings, you should be safe; it will just be a matter of how slowly you'll ascend long, steep grades. I suggest you talk to owners of similar coaches who tow in similar circumstances and get their outlook.

I won't speculate on your odds of being ticketed, or how common that infraction is — I just don't recommend breaking the law. I do recommend you check the laws for the states you intend to tow in and plan accordingly. Since Built Rite states on its website that it will custom-build trailers, it should be able to build one for you that will meet length requirements.

REMOTE STORAGE

I have a question about storing an RV. We are considering downsizing to a gated community where our coach would be in an open lot. How do I ensure that the batteries will stay charged

and that the coach won't just bake out there? And what about loading and unloading in the short period of time allotted? I'd like to know how other RVers handle this, and get some tips to help me make an educated decision.

J. CAPELLANI | PALATKA, FLA.

There are a number of things you need to consider, including security, rodents, climate and weather. If you can't readily remove the batteries and keep them in your garage on a maintenance charger, you should disconnect them from the motorhome so there are no parasitic loads to drain them. Then connect a small solar panel designed to keep batteries charged — an assortment of these are available through www.campingworld.com. In damp climates, ventilation and dehumidification are important. Install weather covers over the vents and keep them open slightly,

and use a desiccant product like Driz-Air (www.drizair.com). In sunny climates, you should keep an RV cover over the motorhome — there are a number of companies that manufacture these in different materials to suit the environment you're in. If break-ins are a concern, you may have to install an alarm that is battery-powered or can run off the solar-charged batteries. Rodents can get in and do extensive damage, including chewing wires, upholstery, etc. You may elect to use traps and/or poison bait, but there are also many non-poison-related home remedies, available by a Web search, for discouraging rodent infestation in RVs. For packing, consider a folding cargo cart such as those used for boats at marinas for hauling stuff back and forth.

DIESEL FAN DRIVE CONTROL ASSEMBLY

We have a 2005 Monaco Camelot motorhome with a 400-hp Cummins engine. There is a fan drive control assembly that controls fluid for the cooling fan hydraulic motor. The item is manufactured by Sauer-Danfoss. The problem is, the control will go to full flow the majority of the time, so the engine runs at 160 degrees.

I have spoken with the manufacturer and Monaco, and was told to replace the assembly. I was also told if the proper signal is not getting to the assembly, the default setting is full flow. This assembly is approximately \$1,000 and I do not want to spend that kind of money if I don't have to. Any advice would be greatly appreciated.

DON SWENSON | CAMP VERDE, ARIZ.

Assuming the unit has been properly diagnosed, you should be able to find a remanufactured or used unit for a fraction of that price. A quick check on eBay showed several for sale, although without the model number I can't be sure which one fits your motorhome. This brand is commonly used in trucks, buses and other heavy vehicles and equipment.

Do a Google search with the make and model number and you should be

JUST ABOUT ALL TOWING COMPANIES SHOULD KNOW THE PROPER WAY TO TOW A MOTORHOME.
TOWING A MOTORHOME ON A FLATBED IS IDEAL BECAUSE NOTHING ELSE NEEDS TO BE DONE OTHER THAN TO TIE IT DOWN PROPERLY.



able to find one for a reasonable price.

SCOOTER TRANSPORT SOLUTIONS

We purchased a used 2004 Holiday Rambler 30-foot motorhome with a GM V-8 gas engine. Currently, we tow an El Camino, but we would like to purchase a van to transport our handicap scooters and keep them out of the weather. Every van I have checked would put us above the 5,000-pound limit. Is it possible to upgrade the Allison transmission to allow us to tow more than 5,000 pounds? Thanks for any direction you can point me.

BOB SCARBER | SEATTLE, WASH.

I don't recommend trying to exceed the manufacturer's towing limit. You should be able to find a light minivan or compact SUV that's towable (check MotorHome's annual dinghy guides for the appropriate model years) and within the weight limit. Otherwise, you might consider getting a small enclosed cargo trailer with a low floor and ramp, although this would preclude you from towing a dinghy vehicle.

HOW TO TOW A MOTORHOME

We have a 1997 Coachmen 30.5-foot Class C on a Ford E-chassis powered by a V-10 engine. We've owned it one year. Recently, I had a hard-start problem, which I managed to fix on the road. I was going to use a towing service and it would have been for 100 miles. Can this motorhome be towed with the rear wheels on the ground, or should all wheels be on a flat bed? If all wheels must be up, what type of tow truck should be used?

STEVE HOLLIDAY | VIA EMAIL

Just about all towing companies should know the proper way to tow a motorhome, which is similar to a truck. However, it's good for coach owners to be educated in this matter. At one time, I worked for a large towing company. Towing a motorhome on a flatbed is ideal because nothing else needs to be done other than to tie it down properly. However, it takes a very large flatbed or low-boy trailer and specialized tractor to pull it, and it is very expensive.

If a rear-wheel drive motorhome is towed from the front with the rear wheels



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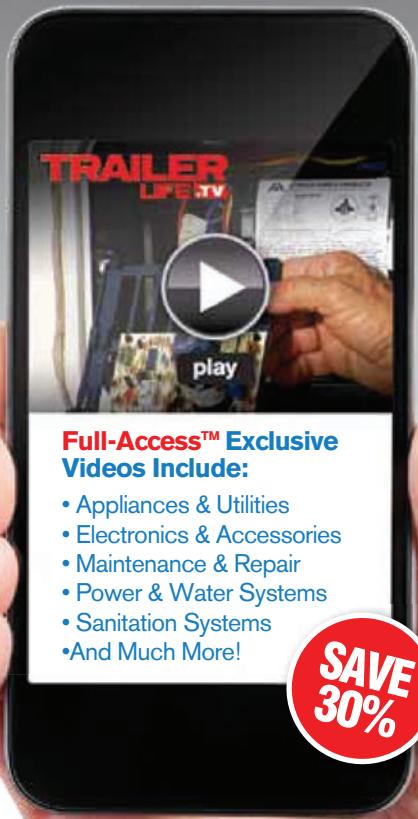
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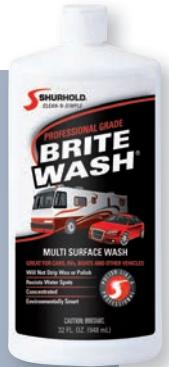
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COACH & POWERTRAIN

RV WASH AND MITTS

Shurhold Industries' Wash Mitt, Deluxe Wash Mitt and Brite Wash can help RV enthusiasts wash their rigs without dragging out a bunch of supplies. The Wash Mitt is made from soft, synthetic, absorbent fibers, while the Deluxe Mitt is made from genuine lamb's wool. Both feature a shaped thumb and elastic band base, for a comfortable, easy and snug fit. Both versions can be used wet or dry. Brite Wash, meanwhile, is scientifically formulated to clean fiberglass, clear coat, metal, rubber and painted surfaces, according to the company. The environmentally friendly product reportedly removes dirt, grease, salt and other substances without dulling an RV's finish or stripping wax or polish. Shurhold, 800-962-6241, www.shurhold.com/rv



on the road for more than a short distance, the drivetrain needs to be disconnected so that the transmission is not being turned by the driveshaft (which can damage it). This can be accomplished by detaching the driveshaft from the rear axle. Most motorhomes can't be lifted from the rear for towing because the bumper and rear body structure are not strong enough to handle the weight and stress. A long rear overhang also precludes using a wheel-lift system on them.

DYING BATTERIES

I'm having battery problems with my used 2005 Forest River Class B on a Ford E-450 chassis. I bought it last year. The coach batteries, newly purchased from Costco, keep going dead even while the unit is plugged into shorepower. For some reason, the converter isn't keeping the batteries charged. I am not savvy regarding battery problems, so I don't know what to do, what to test or how to test, or whether to take the unit to a local RV repair shop. My wife thinks the problem is something simple, something we are overlooking, that we can repair ourselves. Any help you can offer will be greatly appreciated.

FRANK BAKER | ATWATER, CALIF.

Virtually all modern RVs have a number of parasitic loads, so if the batteries are connected and they are not getting charged, they will become discharged in fairly short order.

You'll need to measure voltage at the batteries both with the coach plugged in

to shorepower, and unplugged. If the voltage is the same both ways, it means the batteries are not being charged. If they are not, you should go to the converter, and check to ensure that it is getting power. It should be warm to the touch and humming slightly.

It could be that the circuit breaker protection has popped; check for that right away. Then check for output voltage coming from the converter — it should be about 13.2 to 14.6 volts. If it's not, take it to an RV shop. If it is, trace the wiring from the converter to batteries to find the break.

TIRE SWAP FEEDBACK

This is in response to "Tire Size Swap" in the December 2013 issue. I did the exact swap from 255/70R/22.5 to Good-year 275/70R/22.5 on my 2003 Cheetah three-slide 37-foot pusher. I now run Michelins of this size (I have 120,000 miles on the motorhome), and I have nothing but good results with the bigger tires. I have aluminum wheels and did not have spacing problems with my rears. The speedometer might have changed a slightly, but I did not notice any difference in hill climbing and my ride and gas mileage have improved. Tire wear is less, especially on the fronts, because the larger contact patch spreads the load over a slightly larger area. I hope this helps.

KERRY SHAW | VIA EMAIL

Thanks for writing. There is a lot of interest in tire swaps lately and first-hand information is valuable.

DIM DIRECTIONALS

We have a 2002 Class C 31-foot Gulf Stream motorhome. It runs well, but we have always had dim rear directional signals. If I put the emergency flashers on, they are barely visible. My husband notices a big difference between the intensity and brightness of the brakelights versus the signals. We think this could be a safety issue in an emergency situation. The flasher was recently changed and all new bulbs were installed. How can we troubleshoot this problem? Could the stalk on the column be causing this?

JAN BATSCH | VIA EMAIL

The dim lights may have a poor ground connection. To verify this, temporarily run a test wire with alligator clips from the ground side of the lights to a clean, solid ground on the chassis. If they brighten, clean and repair their ground connections. If that doesn't help, measure voltage at the bulb sockets (it should be around 12 volts). If it's lower, work your way back in the circuit to find where the voltage drop occurs.

DRIPPING DOLPHIN

We have a 2003 Dolphin 5320 Class A motorhome and we love it. However, it has one problem that I have not been able to fix. When I fill the gas tank, if I try to fill it to the top, it overflows. Not from the gas fill spout, but from somewhere inside. Consequently, we can never fill the tank to its full capacity, not to mention the danger of spilling gas on the ground. Is there some type of vent that could be causing the problem?

JOHN DEYOUNG | CANYON LAKE, CALIF.

The gas tank should have two adjacent hoses going to the filler neck area. The smaller one is a vent hose, which allows air to escape as the tank is filled. This hose has probably become detached or rubbed through. It should run from the tank to the filler neck connection without interruption. Follow it under the vehicle and you'll likely discover where the leak originates.

FORD CUTS OUT

We have a 1999 Dutchstar motorhome with a Ford V-10 6.8-liter EFI motor and

it is driving me and my mechanic nuts. I have 107,000 miles on it and it has run fine until now. Every once in a while it will lose power, usually at low speeds like climbing a ramp to the freeway, or up a steep grade, but even on the flats. The loss of power only lasts for maybe five minutes and then it clears up and returns to normal operation. This will only happen five or six times on a 750-mile trip. I can drive all day and it will not do it once and of course when my mechanic is with me it will not act up, it just runs normally. It makes no difference if the gas tank is full, half full or if the engine has run for an hour or 15 minutes. It will do this little act whenever, with little consistency. We have installed new spark plugs, replaced a faulty coil, checked the fuel pump pressure and the air intake is clean. Any ideas?

**LARRY BRANDT
KELOWNA, BRITISH COLUMBIA,
CANADA**

A faulty coil will cause one cylinder to skip, but won't result in a dramatic power loss, which is what I believe you are describing. Your description is consistent with a faulty in-tank fuel pump, which this model is notorious for. Most technicians only test fuel pressure at idle in the shop, not under full load out on the road. In fact, I'm surprised you still have the original pump. I am quite sure you will find pressure drops off when the engine cuts out. Ford sells an improved pump that typically solves this problem.

OIL PRESSURE CONCERN FEEDBACK

I was reading the December 2013 issue and came across a letter (Oil Pressure Concern) from Bob Gagnon regarding low oil pressure in his 330-hp Cat. You made suggestions as to what he should have checked. I might add having the oil filter changed may help increase pressure. A dirty or clogged filter will cause a decrease in oil pressure also. Owning a Cat engine with 1.3 million miles, the first thing I do when I see a drop in pressure is replace the oil filter, it makes a difference. Not sure if he has resolved his issue, you may want to pass this suggestion on to him too.

**JON KEMP
DORCHESTER, ONTARIO, CANADA**

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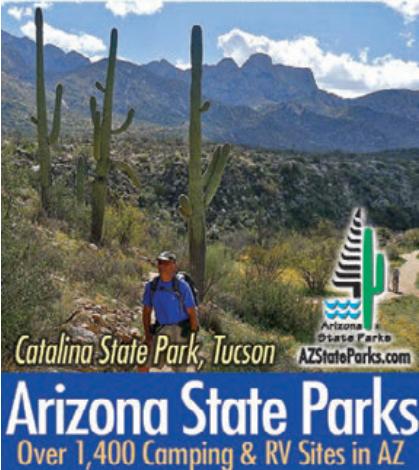
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COACH & POWERTRAIN

Thanks for writing. A partly clogged filter certainly could reduce oil pressure, so it should be checked. However, I hope that is not the only criteria you use for changing filters. They should be changed before that becomes an issue.

SOLVING WINDSHIELD WIPER PROBLEMS

I have a 2007 Fleetwood Southwind on a Workhorse chassis (i.e. GM components) and while driving in a heavy rain, I was unable to change the interval setting on the wipers. The permanent solution came from my dealer. There was an electrical connector on the wires that went to the wiper motor. Apparently this connector was getting wet. The solution was to use dielectric grease in the connector, then reposition the connector to avoid getting water into it (the connector was originally at the bottom of a loop of wire). After this, the wipers have been working just fine for years.

BERNARD JURGIEL
WESLEY CHAPEL, FLA.

Thanks for writing, Bernard. We heard from several readers who had this problem. Moisture in the connections certainly could cause havoc, and the fix is quite simple ... and virtually free.

USING LEVELING JACKS FOR STORAGE

I had hydraulic jacks installed on my Itasca Spirit 31C by HWH in Moscow, Iowa. Should jacks be involved in any way during storage of several months, either partially or fully down? This would be in cold weather conditions in Minnesota. I may or may not want to remove it from storage during the winter to travel west. Storage is on asphalt. I do put fiberglass-like boards down for my tires to rest on.

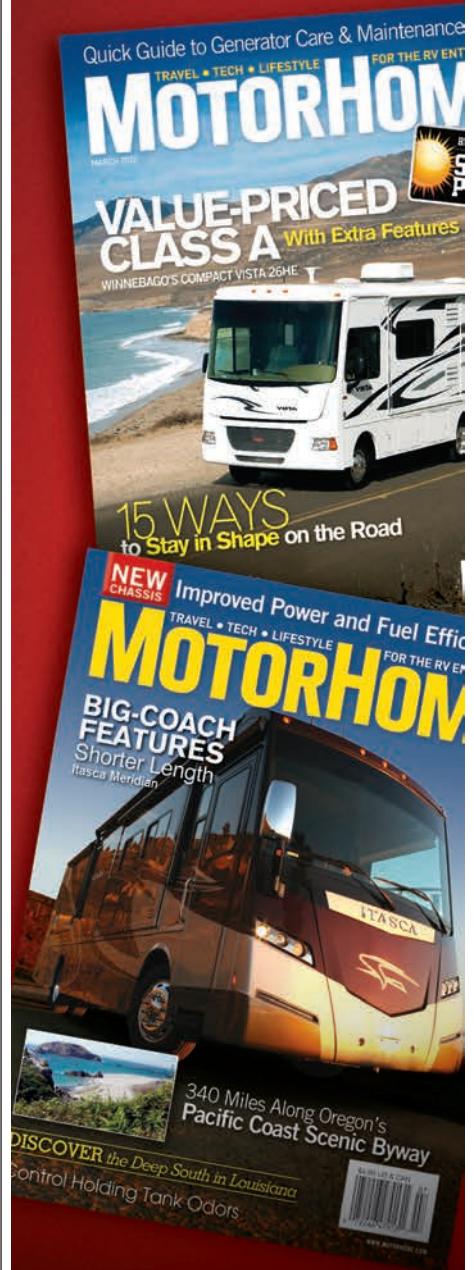
JIM WALSH | VIA EMAIL

No, the jacks should only be used for short-term leveling. I believe you will find that in the instructions. They can leak down over time, and the pistons may corrode. ♦

TO CONTRIBUTE TO COACH & POWERTRAIN, refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 12.

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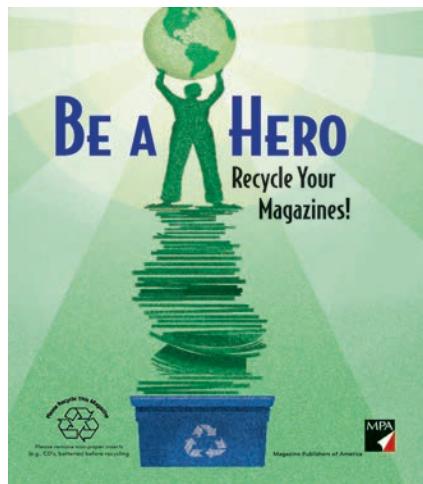
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displayed on the monitor. The baseline pressures for your particular tires are then set. Rotating the tires is not a problem with this system; after any change in location, the appropriate ID module can be repositioned in the back of the monitor.

ROAD TEST

With the base pressure set at 110 PSI on all six tires, the motorhome was driven at the 65 MPH speed limit. The pressure climbed as the tires heated up, and after about 25 miles, the pressure and temperature in all tires stabilized. The left front tire settled in at 125 PSI and the duals recorded 124/122 PSI; the right front was running at 124 PSI and duals at 121/123 PSI. The temperature stayed at about 125 degrees at each tire after starting at 59 degrees. The spare started at 110 PSI and rose to 113 PSI and the tire temperature started at 56 degrees and settled in at 79 degrees. Clearly, the spare is affected by radiant heat from the roadway and the sun.

In order to simulate a flat tire situation, air pressure on one tire was reduced to 60 PSI while the coach was running and in PARK. By the time the driver got back into the cockpit, the low-pressure alarm was sounding and that specific tire position on the Valor display monitor was flashing. After returning the flat tire to a normal pressure, the monitor automatically reset.

Pressure was monitored both manually and via the Valor system during a 500-mile road test — it performed accurately and without any interruptions or failures. For the first time in years, I noticed how this additional peace of mind allowed me to relax with a newfound confidence in overall tire awareness. A system for six wheels retails for \$625; additional sensors are \$54.29 each and additional straps are \$5.22. Parts are covered by a one-year warranty. ♦



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

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Everyone from physicians to philosophers will tell you the same thing: the way to lasting health and happiness is to learn to live in the moment. Give up regrets about the past, let go of worries about the future and simply concentrate on being right here, right now.

While following this simple philosophy isn't always easy, I do have a particularly timely suggestion for anyone interested in seeing it in action: Visit New Orleans this month, during the height of Mardi Gras.

If this sounds like a peculiar detour on the road to contentment, allow me to explain. Having lived in New Orleans during my misspent youth, I can tell you that if there's one thing the people here know about, it's living in — and, frankly, enjoying the heck out of — the present moment.

While this *joie de vivre* spirit is an integral part of life in New Orleans year-round, it peaks during carnival season. Spend some time here during the two weeks of parades that lead up to Mardi Gras Day (aka: Fat Tuesday, or March 4 everywhere else) and you'll begin to understand why they call this The City That Care Forgot.

You see, unlike the typical processions that take place in other parts of the country, Mardi Gras parades are all about audience participation. While words on the page can't possibly do these lighthearted spectacles justice, trust me when I say that standing on the curb with arms outstretched, pleading with the masked riders aboard the passing floats to throw you strings of plastic beads or other cheap trinkets, is an experience everyone should have.

Now, if this spectator thing seems a little too tame, I'll let you in on a little-known secret: Some of the organizations — better known as krewes — that put on these parades will gladly accept out-of-towners as members. And if you thought being part of the crowd was a good time, you'll find actually riding on a float dispensing brightly colored baubles to the adoring masses takes the fun to a whole new level.

My friend Pasquale and I discovered this amped-up Mardi Gras experience a few years ago when we joined the Krewe of Orpheus (504-822-7200, www.kreweoforpheus.com), a so-called super-krewe with a reputation for putting on particularly lavish parades. Little did I know I'd signed on for what would



PHOTO: SKIP BOLEN/SKIPBOLENSTUDIO.COM



turn out to be one of the most extraordinary “in the moment” evenings of my entire life.

As our float turned the corner that marked the official start of the parade route, we were greeted by a sea of eager upturned faces and a

wall of sound that can only come from thousands of people simultaneously yelling “*Throw me something!*” From that moment forward, there was no thinking of the past or future as we chucked beads out into the crowd as fast as we could grab them from our stash.

Five long hours later, our float swept into the New Orleans Convention Center to the cheers and applause of friends and well-wishers attending the annual Krewe of Orpheus ball. While we appreciated the warm welcome, even this star-studded black-tie celebration seemed like a letdown after what we'd just been through.

Looking back on this over-the-top Mardi Gras experience, it occurs to me that it's not the memories of where I've been or the daydreams about where I'm going that make RV travel so rewarding. It's the countless opportunities I get to experience the joys of living in the moment, right here and right now along The Road Ahead. ♦

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



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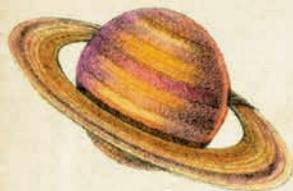


Fig. 1 Saturn



Fig. 3 Asteroid Gaspra



Fig. 5 Mercury



Fig. 7 Jupiter

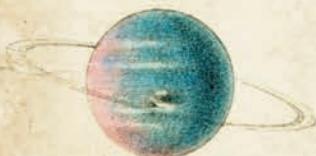


Fig. 2 Neptune



Fig. 4 Phases of the Moon



Fig. 6 Mars

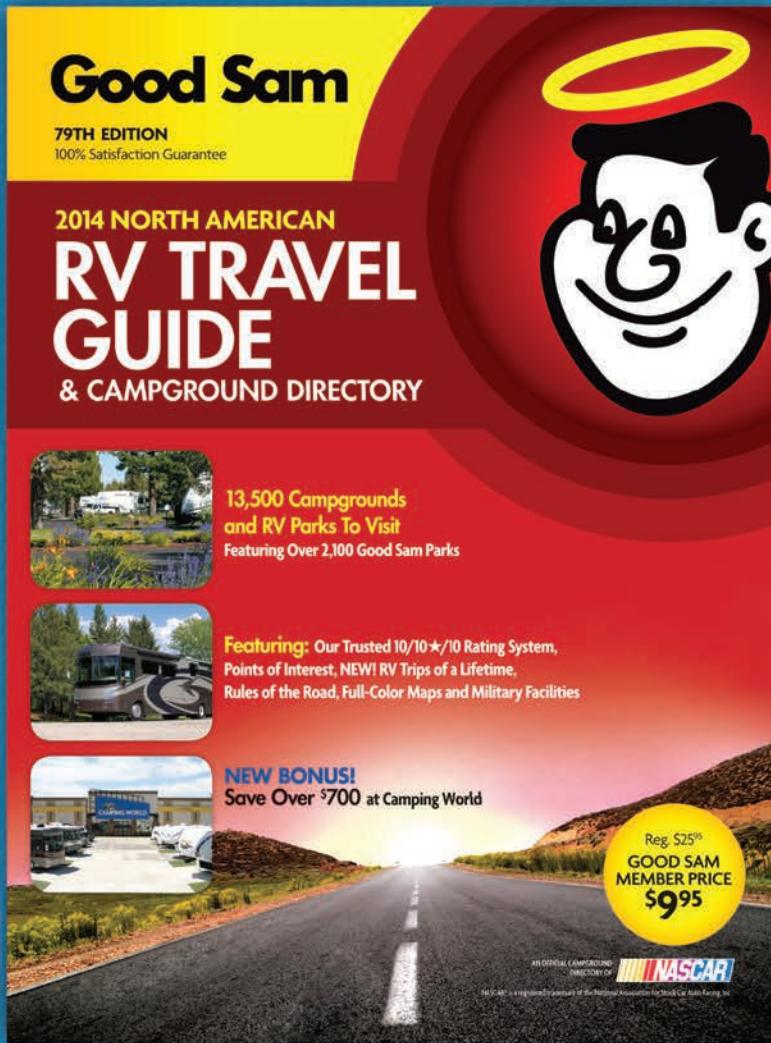
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