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TRAILER LIFE

FOLLOW THE ROAD TO ADVENTURE

MARCH 2014

Towable Rig Roundup!

TRAILERS

Heartland North Trail
KZ Sportsmen Sportster

GUIDE

Tent and Hardwall
Pop-Ups

PREVIEW

What's New
for 2014



SOUTHWEST SOJOURNS

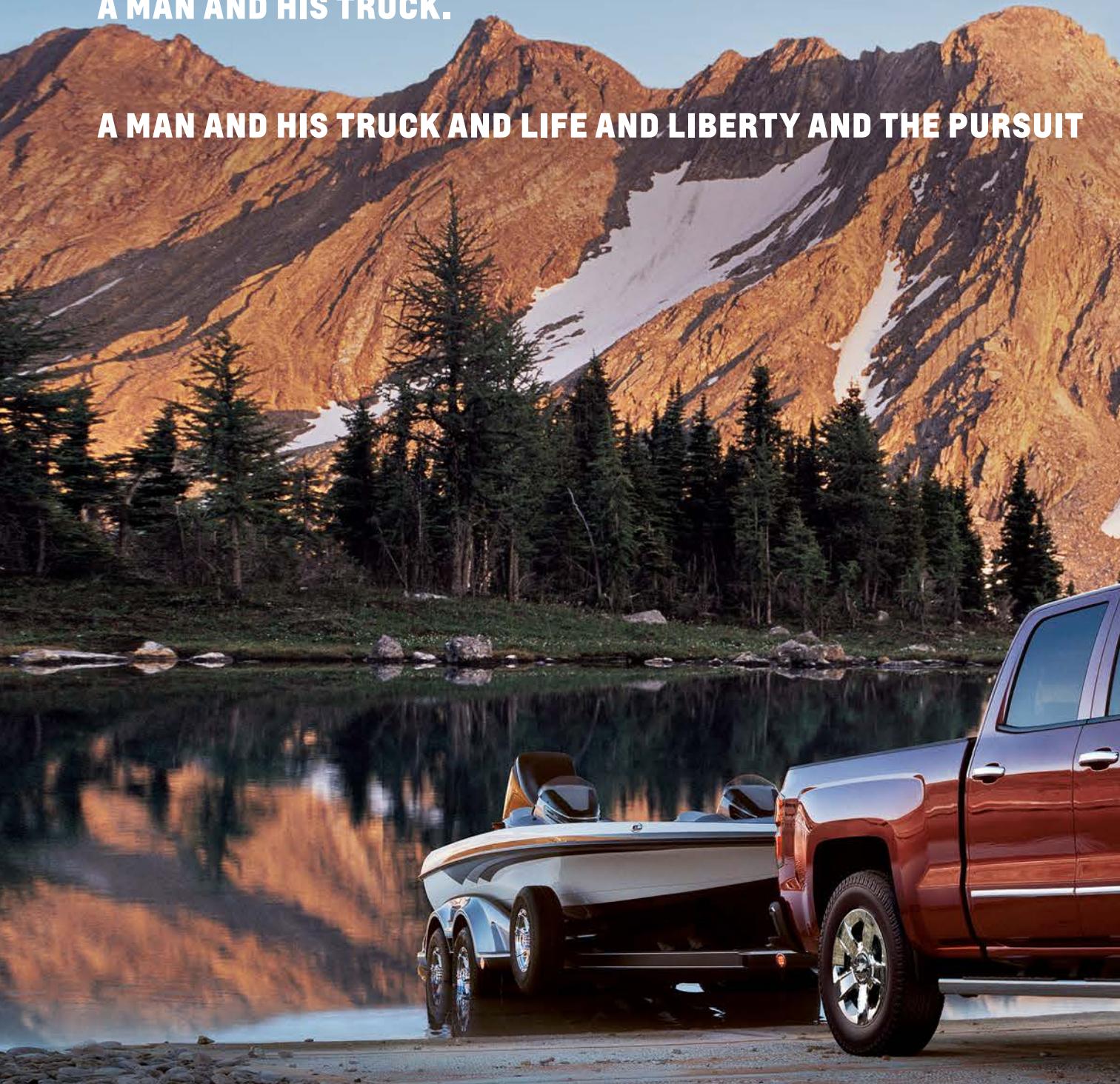
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in New Mexico
- ▶ Exploring Texas
Hill Country

10 TOP
SPRING
FLINGS

A MAN.

A MAN AND HIS TRUCK.

A MAN AND HIS TRUCK AND LIFE AND LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT



ALL-NEW CHEVY SILVERADO OFFERING THE BEST TOWING OF ANY TRUCK IN ITS CLASS: 12,000 LBS* TRAILERING

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FIND NEW ROADS™





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Sarasota, Florida

Publisher Bob Livingston
Editorial Director Eileen Hubbard
Managing Editor Donya Carlson
Technical Editor Chris Hemer
Senior Art Director Rick Damien
Production Director Bob Dawson
Production Manager Brenda Hutchinson
Sales Administrator Katey Purgatorio

Consulting Editors Wes Caughlan, Ken Freund, Jeff Johnston
Contributors Bob Ashley, Kristopher Bunker, Kathy Cabrera, Bill and Jenn Gehr, Bill Graves, James Richardson, Pamela Selbert, Mary Zalmanek

Vice President National Sales Terry Thompson
Tel 206-283-9545 Fax 206-283-9571

RV Marketplace/Classifieds Kathy Schurman
516 Maple Knoll Way NW, St. Michael, MN 55376
Tel 763-497-2458 Fax 270-438-4757
kathy.schurman@goodsam.com

Sue Seidlitz (Southwest Region)
10556 Combie Road #6443, Auburn, CA 95602
Tel 530-268-3005 Fax 530-653-2090
sue.seidlitz@goodsam.com

Tacy Hendershot-Sargent (Southeast Region)
1010 SW Lighthouse Drive, Palm City, FL 34990
Tel 772-288-0387 Fax 772-288-0085
thendershot@goodsamfamily.com

Lou Cicirelli (Northeast Region)
1400 NW 108th Avenue, #266, Plantation, FL 33322
Tel 954-297-9234
lcicirelli@goodsamfamily.com

Scott Oakes (Northwest Region)
1818 Westlake Avenue, N. #420
Seattle, WA 98109
Tel 206-283-9545 Fax 206-283-9571
scott.oakes@goodsam.com

Crompton Holdings Scott Crompton (Detroit, MI)
2031 Kings Highway, Shreveport, LA 71103
Tel 334-546-7243 Fax 334-356-7740
scottcrompton@mac.com

Chairman Emeritus Art Roose
Publisher Emeritus Bill Estes

GS MEDIA & EVENTS

President Mark Boggess
Senior Vice President/Group Publisher Bob Livingston
Vice President/Advertising Sales Terry Thompson

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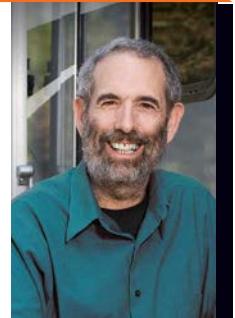


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New Models Abound

Enthusiastic buyers are treated to a wide selection of trailers, fifth-wheels and towing equipment

Getting into the RV lifestyle has never been easier. There are hundreds of fifth-wheels and travel trailers to choose from, starting with tiny teardrops and ranging up to super-luxurious fifth-wheels. And tow vehicles are pretty plentiful. All one has to do is look at what's on the streets and highways to realize that just about everything these days can tow something, although trailer towing is more popular with owners of pickups and SUVs.

Brisk trailer sales have propelled the towable segment of the RV industry into red-hot status, evident by the eye-popping number of rigs that were on display during last year's two major trade events. Some of these offerings are described in Bob Ashley's overview of what's new for 2014, starting on page 68.

I am particularly impressed by the number of lightweight trailers on the market that offer livability that goes well beyond basic. Even the folding trailers — soft and hard sided — provide creature comforts that were uncommon just a few years ago. A good sampling of these easy-to-tow and affordable trailers is featured on page 78.

While it's going to be a banner year for trailer variety, the industry is also on a quest to find new hooks that will entice others to experience the lifestyle. Jayco made a bold — and innovative — move by introducing its concept of a European-style travel trailer. Whether or not the Jay Smart goes into production remains to be seen, although it was very popular among dealers and the media. Jayco's approach takes the best from Europe and adds the amenities expected of North American buyers for a very fresh look at towables. Grab handles on each corner — commonly used by European RVers to move trailers by hand into tight quarters — didn't go unnoticed. I suspect that if Jayco posts into production with the Jay Smart, others will follow suit and the lightweight towable segment will be in for a paradigm shift.

The prospect of towing a trailer may make some newbies unnecessarily squeamish. Jeff Johnston dispels the "mystery" of towing in the *Setting Up a Tow Vehicle* article on page 36. As Johnston explains, the selection of equipment has never been better. Doing it right makes the experience safe and comfortable.

Whether you prefer to commune with nature or want all the conveniences for long-term travel, there's a travel trailer or fifth-wheel that will fit your needs. The hardest part is wading through the extensive product lineup. But that's a good problem to have. 🚐

— Bob Livingston, publisher

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FUN FACT

March used to be the first month in the early Roman calendar, and was named Martius. In the northern half of the world, spring begins on March 19 to 21, when the sun is directly over the equator.

More Ethanol Input

I enjoyed Bill Graves' January *America's Outback* column on ethanol in gasoline. I feel, however, that he should have pointed out that for all the good ethanol does, there's also the bad. Not mentioned is that ethanol does real damage to many engines by having a detrimental effect on gaskets and other parts. This has become apparent to me, personally, by the damage it did to my outboard engines — \$1,500 worth.

Also, many of us fly older airplanes that used to be able to run legally on car gasoline. Now they can't because of the proven damage the ethanol does to these engines. If we use ethanol-laden gasoline, it will void the legal certificate we have to use car gasoline. Furthermore, the price of corn that we consume for food has been proven to have risen significantly because much of it is used as a gasoline additive.

Other than these omissions, I thought it was an interesting article on a visit to an ethanol factory.

Vince Flynn, Coronado, California

Bill Graves' article on ethanol paints a rosy picture based on information

provided by the producer. Corn-based ethanol is economically feasible only with government subsidy! It enriches corn farmers while raising food prices worldwide. It is an inefficient product that is merely a feel-good for the environmental crowd. It has caused much grief for owners of anything mechanical because of the tendency of ethanol to soften or attack seals, gaskets, rubber and other products produced prior to its common use.

Jim Leiss, Via email

Regarding *A Lesson in Ethanol* by Bill Graves in the January issue, years back when Brazil was experimenting with which plant was the more productive, corn was ruled out on a yield-per-ton return. There are many grasses, switch and sugar cane, that yield better returns per unit input. This information was available from Brazilian research. Graves did not touch upon how the use of corn for ethanol affected the commodities market for human feed grain consumption.

I would have liked to have read the answer on why in the United States corn is picked over other products that

have better yields per unit. Seems like we had our heads in the wrong end of the research tunnel, unless we look at it from the money end. If you can drive up the cost of corn to support fuel production, the corn producers get a good rate of investment and the production facility can survive on federal subsidies for alternative fuel research, which was known to be outdated.

The article was a primer in ethanol and is limited in worthy public knowledge.

John Mitchell, Via email

Some Ideas

I enjoy the magazine very much, and especially like the articles on new areas to visit with my fifth-wheel. Perhaps you could do some articles on more out-of-the-way treks in the Northwest that are reachable with a 30-foot fifth-wheel. I also enjoy your articles on solar power.

George Small, Vancouver, Washington

Trailer Life is the best magazine for me. I'd like to see articles on more affordable, economical trailers with

In the Pages of *Trailer Life*

As a loyal subscriber and an avid reader of your magazine, I have enjoyed many pleasant outings visiting some of the places written about in the pages of *Trailer Life*. The information provided has helped me with campsites, things to see and do, and, most of all, the people who are always willing to provide a hand to see that your stay with them is a great experience. We are planning a trip to New Market, Virginia (thanks to Arline Zatz's article in September 2013's issue), and already the reservations (I made at the campground mentioned in the article) have been a very positive experience.

Thanks to *Trailer Life*, the planning of this trip, the time of year we are going (leaf changes) and the things we plan to do are exciting.

Having said all of this, it seems to me that there are too many companies "passing the buck," so to speak. I

wonder why some folks have a hard time when it comes to getting warranty and repairs done on their RVs. While I like reading *RV Action Line*, why does it have to come to this? It seems that a dealership and manufacturer should work together to get the issues fixed and put us on the road so we can enjoy places our rigs were designed to take us!

Keep up the good work with the magazine. You do make a difference in the camping world.

Nick Morris, Berlin, Maryland



PHOTO BY JOEL ZATZ

family friendly bathrooms. That's my only complaint about current RVs! It seems trailer bathrooms are still mildly cramped — although the quality of RVs is top-notch.

Jesse Duke, Kenedy, Texas

Road Call

Regarding the Garfields' letter in the February issue, "Courteous Service," complimenting a company for staying open to fix a flat, I would disagree. The Garfields had discovered a flat on their tow vehicle's inside dual tire. Coastal Car Care instructed them to drive it in. If a service center suggested running on a flat dual to me, I'd find another service provider willing to perform a road call. It's never a good idea to run on a flat dual since doing so could easily shred the tire, leaving a road hazard trail of debris behind, not to mention ruining the tire. I drove tractor-trailer rigs for 35 years, and never intentionally drove on a flat dual.

Paul Wilcox, Troutdale, Oregon

Tire Turmoil

After reading "Bubble Trouble" in January's *RV Action Line*, I want to put my two cents in about trailer tires. I'm pushing 70 years old and from the late '60s through part of the '90s, I towed fifth-wheel trailers and travel trailers as long as 40 feet. I had zero tire problems until the later part of the '90s, and for sure after 2000. Part of this reason is that more tires are made in China. Some trailer manufacturers are installing these cheap tires that are made in China and they do not hold up to the task that a trailer requires for good, strong tires. Three years ago, I bought a new 36-foot Bighorn fifth-wheel made by Heartland and, of course, it had those tires made in China. I had the dealer remove those tires and install heavy-duty truck tires of my choice and have had no problems so far.

Michael Jackson, San Diego, California

Happy Customer

I'd like to commend you for publishing such a wonderful magazine. The articles are all well written. I'm especially fond of *10-Minute Tech* and *RV Clinic* and anxiously await each

month's issue of *Trailer Life*.

In keeping with the theme of this letter, I want to let you now about an experience I had with SHURflo. I'd recently bought a used trailer and the vent in the bathroom was broken. After some investigating, I discovered it was a SHURflo Comfort Air Platinum. I emailed the company

with a part request and offered to pay for it but, instead, it was sent to me free of charge. It's refreshing when a company knows the true meaning of customer service.

Next time I'm in need of a pump, a vent or some other item for my trailer that SHURflo makes, I'll buy from them.
Howard Grant, Via email ✉

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Weaver Nancy Kaufman at the loom in her gallery and studio in Hannibal. (Right) John Whitt of Bent Tree Gallery, maker of rustic furniture and accents, in Clarksville.

PHOTOS COURTESY HANNIBAL CVB

50 Miles of Art

Twice a year the Missouri communities of Hannibal, Louisiana and Clarksville host artisans who create one-of-a-kind masterpieces

by Pamela Selbert

It's always a good time to drive U.S. Highway 79, a designated state scenic byway in eastern Missouri. The lovely 86-mile route, which runs from Interstate 70 in St. Peters to Interstate 72 in Hannibal, rolls along the hills and parallels the Mississippi River, providing spectacular high-up views of the river and surrounding countryside.

The drive is popular at all times of the year, even on the coldest days of winter, as that's when eagle watching is at its best. Large numbers of bald eagles can be seen perched in trees or on ice floes below the locks and dams on this stretch of river, waiting for an easy meal.

But twice a year — in March, when trees and flowering plants are coming back to life, and November, when fall color is at its height — there's another excellent reason to make the trip: a festival called "50 Miles of Art." The

two-day events — March 29-30 and November 1-2 in 2014 — showcase and celebrate art along 50 miles of this scenic corridor from Clarksville to Hannibal. More than 40 galleries, studios and crafts shops take part.

The 50 Miles of Art event was begun by two local artists — potter Steve Ayers, owner of Fresh Ayers Gallery in Hannibal, and pen-and-ink artist John Stoeckley, who runs Reflections of Missouri Gallery in Louisiana (about 30 miles south of Hannibal) — according to Michael Gaines, executive director of the Hannibal Arts Council, which helps orchestrate the festivals.

Northeast Missouri has in recent years become something of a mecca for artists working in various media, and for fine craftspeople (weavers, furniture makers, glass blowers and goldsmiths), with numerous galleries

and studios located along the 50-mile stretch, Gaines explained.

Several of the artists enjoy international reputations, and many more have been recognized by juried competitions. Ayers and Stoeckley wanted to spotlight the area and its attractions, which also include several parks, numerous restaurants and even an Old-World-style chocolates company (Stam Chocolaterie in Hannibal), where white, dark and milk chocolates are handcrafted as "edible art."

For more information and maps, call the Hannibal Arts Council at 573-221-6545 or visit www.50milesofart.com. Injun Joe Campground, with 25 full hookup sites, is located about 3 miles south of Hannibal at 14113 Clemens Drive in New London, Missouri, 573-985-3581, www.injunjoecampground.com.



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CrossRoads Rezerve

For 2014, CrossRoads Recreational Vehicles has made its value-based Rezerve, previously part of the company's Zinger series, a stand-alone towable. Currently, six fifth-wheel floorplans ranging from 28 to 34 feet, and nine travel-trailer floorplans,



Shown is the RFZ28RL travel trailer interior in onyx decor with glazed cherry cabinet doors.



ranging from 28 to 36 feet are available. Company Sales Manager Troy Nusbaum said they picked the Rezerve name because "we feel this lineup is a little more exclusive, a little more opulent than the Zinger product." The Rezerves have Secure Stance axles to reduce trailer sway, two-tone laminated fiberglass side walls and more slides. Inside, standard features include residential furniture, a sleeper sofa, AM/FM/CD/DVD stereo system, a flush floor slideout with a large dinette window, solid-surface countertops, pleated day/night shades and hardwood cherry cabinet doors. Freshwater capacity is 54 gallons, and an outside shower is standard. Prices range from the low \$20,000s to \$30,000.

260-593-3850, www.crossroadsrv.com

Tennessee Luxury RV Resort

A luxury private RV resort is scheduled to open in March in Dandridge, Tennessee. Anchor Down RV Resort, located next to Douglas Lake near the Great Smoky Mountains, has 171 full-hookup sites, plus four cabins. Lakefront and lake-view sites are available, as are pull-through and buddy sites. The roads are paved, and campsites have concrete pads, firepits or fireplaces, cable hookup and free Wi-Fi. Campground amenities include a pool, bathhouses with private rooms and showers, golf cart rentals, volleyball courts, a playground and a boat ramp. Nightly rates range from \$49 to \$139.

877-784-4446, www.anchordownrvresort.com



Best (and Worst) Driving Songs

Insurance.com surveyed 2,000 18-and-older drivers to identify which are the best (and worst) driving songs for the road. Journey's "Don't Stop Believing" came in as the winner with 30 percent voting it as best song. Queen's "Bohemian Rhapsody" came in second, with other notables the apropos "Life is a Highway" by Tom Cochrane, coming in at 21 percent in fifth place, and "Every Day is a Winding Road" by Sheryl Crow (13 percent). Sammy Hagar's "I Can't Drive 55" and AC/DC's "Highway to Hell" topped the list of write-in choices.

It's also been decided to keep the dogs in as "Who Let the Dogs Out" was voted worst driving song.

Dream Machines

If you're into motorized mechanical marvels, you're in for a treat at the annual Pacific Coast Dream Machines Show in Half Moon Bay, California, April 27, 2014. More than 2,000 antique, vintage, classic, custom and exotic vehicles will be on display. There's something for everyone to view: Automobiles ranging from oldies to goodies that include custom hot rods and muscle cars; vintage warbirds and homebuilt aircraft; military tanks; custom bicycles; Model T fire engines; and antique tractors and trailers. Additionally, helicopter and plane rides are offered. There will be live music and kids' amusements — all this takes place at the Half Moon Bay airport, within walking distance of the ocean.

Admission is \$20 for adults, \$10 for those 65 and older and children ages 11-17, \$5 for kids 10 and younger. Nearby RV parks include Pillar Point RV Park (650-712-9277) and Pelican Point RV Park (650-726-9100).

650-726-2328, www.miramarevents.com/dreammachines



NEWSWIRE

ACHIEVEMENT



Trailer Life Publisher Included in Hall of Fame's Class of 2014

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

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

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

AWARD



Ashley Receives RVIA Journalism Award

The Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA) honored *Trailer Life* contributor Bob Ashley with the association's Distinguished Achievement in RV Journalism Award on Dec. 3, 2013, in Louisville, Kentucky.

According to a report in *RVIA Today*, Ashley has covered the RV industry for nearly 20 years as a writer for *RVBusiness*. He has also been a frequent contributor to *Trailer Life* and *MotorHome*. Ashley specializes in writing about the research, development and production of RVs and has covered the industry's evolution in product development from the front lines. He also examines key legislative issues affecting the RV industry in his "Public Domain" column in *RVBusiness*.

RVIA's Distinguished Achievement in RV Journalism Award recognizes journalists for exemplary coverage of the RV industry or RV travel before national audiences.

PUBLIC LANDS



Fee-Free Days for 2014

Mark your calendar for the following fee-free public land days for the new year. Participating agencies include the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Bureau of Reclamation (USBR), National Park Service (NPS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS). The entrance fee waiver, however, does not include amenity or user fees for camping, boat launches, transportation or special tours.

April 19-20, National Park Week's Opening Weekend - NPS

June 14, National Get Outdoors Day - USFS

Aug. 25, National Park Service's 98th Birthday - NPS

Sept. 27, National Public Lands Day - Corps, BLM, USBR, NPS, FWS and USFS

Oct. 12, National Wildlife Refuge Day - FWS

Nov. 8-11, Veterans Day Weekend - USFS

Nov. 11, Veterans Day - Corps, BLM, USBR, NPS and FWS 🚗



SPRING FLINGS

Ten top RV spots sure to delight everyone in the family

For many of us, spring represents getting our RVs out of storage, shaking off the sleet and snow, and saying goodbye to thermal underwear and heavy winter coats. Spring break may be the only week we can get away as a family and enjoy the outdoors before the summer. It's just you, your family, your RV and the open road — so we've compiled a list of spring-break family friendly destinations that are sure to entertain all those on board!

ARIZONA: GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK

A powerful and inspiring landscape, the Grand Canyon overwhelms with its immense size. While most of the 5 million people a year who see the Grand Canyon do so from overlooks along the South Rim, true adventurers can bear witness to the Inner Canyon by hiking foot trails leading to the bottom or taking a boat through the canyon on the Colorado River. The South Rim's visitor services (camping, lodging, restaurants) are open year-round (North Rim's facilities open from mid-May to mid-October).

The Grand Canyon Association (www.grandcanyon.org) offers the Grand Canyon Field Institute's fun and informative classes and guided tours, backpacking and river trips. On exploring the canyon especially as a family, Miriam Robbins, director of communications and publishing, Grand Canyon Association shared: "Grand Canyon National Park is an amazing place for families

to visit and enjoy. While many people plan several-day backpacking or hiking trips, there is so much to enjoy on the rim from hiking and biking along the rim, to listening in on ranger programs. Grand Canyon Field Institute offers half-day walking rim tours guided by a Grand Canyon expert. Families can go at their own pace and learn about wildlife, ecology and geology at Grand Canyon."

Also fun for children is the Grand Canyon Field Institute's Junior Ranger program.

Open RV parks in March and April accessible to the Grand Canyon:

Grand Canyon Railway RV Park, Williams, Arizona, 800-843-8724, www.thetrain.com/lodging/rv-park

Grand Canyon / Williams KOA, Williams, Arizona, 800-562-5771, www.grandcanyonkoa.com

Grand Canyon Lodges Trailer Village, Grand Canyon, Arizona, 928-638-2631, www.grandcanyonlodges.com/trailer-village-705.html



CALIFORNIA: SOUTHERN

Speaker and author Gretchen Breuner, who took a three-month RV trip through 19 states with her three young children, lists Southern California as a top family RV trip pick. Breuner, who wrote a book on her experiences (*The RoadScholar: Lessons from the Scenic Route*, www.theroadscholarz.com) shared, "I would definitely recommend San Diego. The climate is perfect in spring. There are the beaches, LegoLand, San Diego Zoo, Sea World and plenty of great places to eat, along with wonderful museums."

Another regional event that's ideally timed with spring break travel months is the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park's annual spring desert wildflower season. Located two hours from San Diego, the dry, rugged landscape of California's

Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona. (Top) The Springs at Borrego RV Resort, Borrego Springs, California.



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SPRING FLINGS

largest state park (encompassing more than 600,000 acres) displays a kaleidoscope of wildflowers, from tiny bursts of color no larger than the head of a pin, to towering ocotillos with fiery spines of scarlet blossoms between March and April. Also in March, a daffodil display comes alive in the quaint Gold Rush mountain town of Julian, known for its apple pies and woodsy hiking trails (60 miles from San Diego).

Regional RV accommodations include:

The Springs at Borrego RV Resort & Golf Course, Borrego Springs, California, 866-330-0003, www.springsatborrego.com

Pinezanita RV Park & Campgrounds, Julian, California, 760-765-0429, www.pinezanita.com

Mission Bay RV Resort, San Diego, California, 877-219-6900, www.missionbayrvresort.com



Disney World, Florida

FLORIDA: ORLANDO

For reasons that, of course, include one very famous mouse, Orlando, Florida, makes for a prime vacation family RV spring-break destination. Well-known theme parks include Walt Disney World Resort, Universal Orlando Resort and SeaWorld Orlando. When planning a trip to Disney, especially, it's important during extremely busy seasons like spring break to reserve everything from camping sites to your day-to-day itinerary in the park months ahead of time. Disney World visits also don't have to be all about young kids — you'll

find plenty of guest offerings catering to "mature" visitors as well — like the springtime Epcot International Flower & Garden Festival (March 5 to May 18, 2014), the ESPN Wide World of Sports Complex, amazing dining options and spa treatment at the Disney Saratoga Springs Resort. Additional Orlando fun-finds include 150-plus golf courses and hundreds of lakes for fishing and boating.

Both a snowbird and spring-break destination, RV camping options abound in the greater Orlando area. Below we highlight three with easy access to area highlights:

Disney World Campsites at Fort Wilderness Resort, Lake Buena Vista, Florida, 407-939-5277, <https://disneyworld.disney.go.com/resorts/campsites-at-fort-wilderness-resort>

Tropical Palms Resort, Kissimmee, Florida, 800-899-5137, <http://tropicalpalmsresortfl.rv.calls.net/rv-camping>

Orlando Southwest/Fort Summit KOA, Davenport, Florida, 888-562-4712, <http://koa.com/campgrounds/orlando-sw>

GEORGIA: ATLANTA

Atlanta makes for an easy and fun family spring-break destination for RVers, owing to its accessibility to history, world-renowned tourist sites and scenic natural attractions. To appease a range of ages and interests, a family friendly trip to the city of Atlanta could include a visit to the Georgia Aquarium (the world's largest), the World of Coca-Cola and the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site.



Boston Public Garden, Massachusetts

And, to explore nature outside of the city, head to Georgia's most-visited attraction, Stone Mountain Park, which



Stone Mountain Park, Georgia

is home to the world's largest piece of exposed granite rock and longest-running laser show. This park also offers 3,200 acres of natural beauty, where you'll find family oriented recreational activities, special events, lodging and camping. Travel one hour north of Atlanta to Dawsonville, Georgia, to also explore Amicalola Falls State Park, named for the Cherokee Indian word meaning "tumbling waters." Visitors to Amicalola will find just that when hiking to see the 729-foot waterfall tucked away in the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains.

RV parks:

Stone Mountain Park, Stone Mountain, Georgia, 800-385-9807, www.stonemountainpark.com

Jones RV Park, Norcross, Georgia, 770-923-0911, www.jonesrvpark.com

Atlanta-Marietta RV Resort, Marietta, Georgia, 770-427-6853, www.amrvresort.com

MASSACHUSETTS: BOSTON

If the right recipe for a family vacation includes a touch of learning with a lot of fun, then Boston in the springtime should be on the bucket list for RVers heading toward New England. "Spring break is a terrific time for families to

FLORIDA PHOTO COURTESY WALT DISNEY WORLD; GEORGIA PHOTO COURTESY STONE MOUNTAIN PARK; MASSACHUSETTS PHOTO BY RICK HARRIS

visit Boston, when they can combine school searches with plenty of opportunities to enjoy all the city has to offer," said Patrick Moscaritolo, president and CEO of the Greater Boston Convention & Visitors Bureau. "Young children will delight with hands-on activities at the Boston Children's Museum while the Museum of Science or a Blue Man Group performance will put smiles on the faces of tweens and teens. The entire family can learn a little history while walking The Freedom Trail or exploring the city on a bike or trolley tour. And, of course, there's always a day at Fenway Park to make lasting memories. Boston is America's original theme park, ready to entertain and amuse any time of year, and springtime in Boston always holds something extra special for all who visit."

Other fun activities in Boston in the springtime include the city's historic St. Patrick's Day (March 17) festivities and Restaurant Week (March 16-21 and 23-28). In April, the Swan Boats (a welcome sign of spring, and the only ones in the world of their kind) go back in the Boston Public Garden and the Red Sox start their season. Patriot's Day Weekend (April 21) commemorates the annual Boston Marathon.

While many RV parks provide access to Boston between May and October, the following RV facilities are open during the spring break months of March and April:

Circle CG Farm Campground, Bellingham, Massachusetts, 508-966-1136, www.circlegcfarm.com

Friendly Beaver Campground, New Boston, New Hampshire, 603-487-5570, www.friendlybeaver.com

Boston / Cape Cod KOA, Middleboro, Massachusetts, 800-562-3046, <https://koa.com/campgrounds/boston> (spring camping season begins March 15)



Hocking Hills State Park, Ohio

OHIO: HOCKING HILLS STATE PARK

For a feel of Appalachia without leaving Ohio, visit the park described as being "very unexpected for the Midwest." Thundering waterfalls and blooming

wildflowers account for the scenic appeal in spring.

"The Hocking Hills are the ideal place for families to enjoy an unforgettable spring break together," said Karen Raymore, executive director of the Hocking Hills Tourism Association. "Dozens of hiking trails take your family past spectacular waterfalls and natural wonders. Plus, there are loads of other free and very affordable one-of-a-kind activities to keep the family active and entertained."

Rent an all-terrain vehicle — or ATV — to experience Hocking Hills Nature Trails. If off-roading doesn't suit you, try canopy zipline adventures from Hocking Hills Canopy Tours. Visit www.explorehockinghills.com to discover all ranges of family fun from hiking, horseback riding to rock climbing, canoeing and kayaking.

RV parks include:

Hocking Hills State Park Campground, Logan, Ohio, 866-644-6727, 740-385-6165, <http://parks.ohiodnr.gov/hockinghills>

Hocking River RV Park, Logan, Ohio, 740-331-4840, www.hockingriverrvpark.com

Walnut Creek Campground & Resort, Chillicothe, Ohio, 740-774-1203, www.walnutcreekcampground.com



Beavers Bend State Park, Oklahoma

OKLAHOMA: BEAVERS BEND STATE PARK

Beavers Bend State Park in southeast Oklahoma is one attractive family spring-break destination with more than 16 miles of hiking and

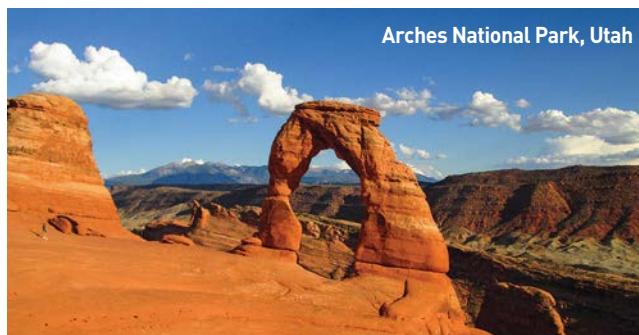
biking trails, trout fishing, river float trips, horseback riding, golfing, train rides and numerous other family activities. Free local activities, onsite and nearby, include live radio shows in the town of Broken Bow, goat-feeding at Honey Bear Ranch, chainsaw sculpting at Hochatown Junction Station and yakanoes (combination kayak and canoe) cruising at Broken Bow Lake. The park offers traditional outdoor fun at its year-round nature center as well as several festivals throughout the year.

RV parks:

Beaver's Bend Resort Park, Broken Bow, Oklahoma, 580-494-6300, www.beaversbend.com

Hotchatown RV Park, Hotchatown, Oklahoma, 580-494-6765, www.hochatownrvpark.com

Broken Bow Inn & RV Park, Broken Bow, Oklahoma, 866-863-3735, 580-584-9103, www.brokenbowinnandrvpark.com



Arches National Park, Utah

UTAH: MOAB

On why the previously mentioned RV enthusiast and author Gretchen Breuner considers Moab a top choice for spring break as a family, she stated that the parks in the area offer "hours of beautiful tours and history; the geography is so unique."

And, on taking advantage of all of the area's opportunities and activities specifically in the spring, Karla VanderZanden, the director of the Canyonlands Field Institute (www.cfimoab.org) shared: "Moab is just minutes from Arches National



SPRING FLINGS

Park and Canyonlands National Park is just over a half-hour drive. If you're visiting Moab this spring, the desert flowers will be blooming so it's the perfect time to tour the parks. Canyonlands Field Institute is based in Moab and we have low-cost half-day and full-day tours of both parks. Our naturalists are gifted interpreters. They will make it fun and exciting to learn about the flowers, the extravagant geological formations and ancient Native American rock art."

Moab is also well known for miles and miles of the "greatest mountain biking on the planet." There is a huge variety of trails for mountain bikers of any level, including the famous Slickrock Bike Trail that is formed by Navajo sandstone.

Area RV resorts include:

Moab Valley RV Resort, Moab, Utah, 435-259-4469, www.moabvalleyrv.com (opens March 1)

Spanish Trail RV Resort, Moab, Utah, 800-

787-2751, www.spanishtrailrvpark.com
Riverside Oasis Campground & RV Park, Moab, Utah, 877-285-7757, www.riversideoasis.com (opens March 15)

WASHINGTON: MOUNT RAINIER

For the Pacific Northwest, RV travelers yearning for some exploration this spring, one attraction that will not disappoint is majestic Mount Rainier National Park in Washington. A glacier-clad volcano of immense proportions, at 14,411 feet, it dominates the skyline for hundreds of miles. The surrounding area boasts spectacular glaciers and miles of permanent snowfields. Conveniently located 54 miles southeast of Seattle, the park appeals to visitors seeking a family's weekend getaway or spring break week. Nature lovers can stroll through the old-growth forest and visit the tumbling waterfalls. If you're an experienced climber, take advantage of any number of guided trips for those keen on tackling the grand peak.

According to Mary Kay Nelson, executive director of Visit Rainier, "Mt. Rainier offers a joyful awakening of life as winter transitions into spring. At higher elevations snow may linger, providing fun recreational opportunities; however, a journey to the lowlands promises rushing waterfalls, emerging wildflowers and wildlife rearing their young in the wilderness. Families can find myriad activities and exploration opportunities, as well as the sense of renewal that comes each spring."



Mount Rainier, Washington

RV parks within easy access of Mount Rainier:

Alder Lake Park, Eatonville, Washington, 888-226-7688

Mounthaven, Ashford, Washington, 360-569-2594, www.mounthaven.com

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WASHINGTON, D.C.

From the National Cherry Blossom Festival (March 20 to April 13, 2014), to historical landmarks, to scenic nature, there are numerous reasons to enjoy a family trip this spring in Washington, D.C. One being that perhaps only in America can you visit the nation's capital in the afternoon, drive 12 miles, and lay your head down by nightfall in the solitude and tranquility of a national park campground. Called an "Urban Oasis" by the National Park Service, the Greenbelt Park in Greenbelt, Maryland, is open year-round and has miles and miles of hiking trails. To enjoy the city's landmarks and be active, consider a guided bike tour offered by tourist companies like Bike and Roll, Bike the Big Capital and Capital City Bike Tours. Tours are suitable for most fitness



Greenbelt Park, Maryland

PHOTO COURTESY OF NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

levels — including for young children — since the National Mall is relatively flat. Take a moment to also enjoy history from the water with Capitol River Cruises on the Georgetown Waterfront, an hour-long sightseeing tour from the Potomac River. And, with 19 world-class museums, a zoo and nine research centers, the Smithsonian is a must-have item on your family trip checklist for kids and grown-ups alike.

RV accommodations:

Greenbelt Park, Greenbelt, Maryland, 301-344-3948, www.nps.gov/gree (no electric or water hookups available. Campsites open to RVs, hot showers, bathroom facilities and dump station available to registered campers)
Cherry Hill Park, College Park, Maryland, 800-801-6449, www.cherryhillpark.com
Aquia Pines, Stafford, Virginia, 540-659-3447, www.aquiapines.com 📞



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Antennas shown with tripod mount TR-1518 (sold separately)

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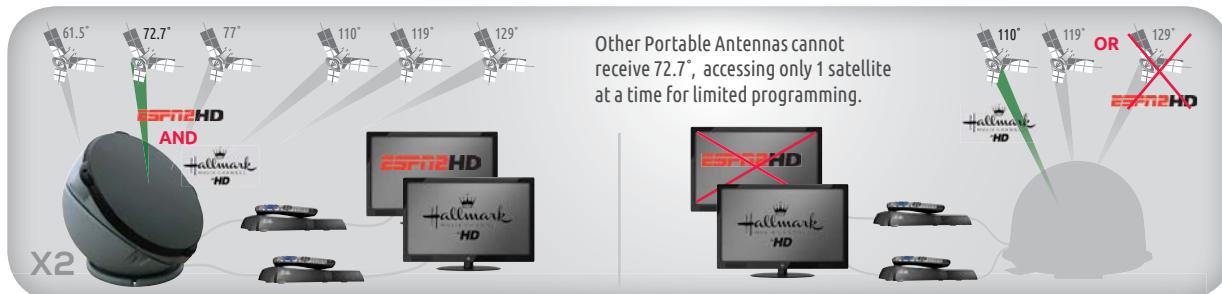


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*Coverage areas may vary slightly; weak spots include the Pacific Northwest and areas in the Great Plains.



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NEW MEXICO'S ENCHANTED SUNRISE

The first week of October, hundreds of colorful balloons illuminate the Albuquerque skyline as thousands of smiling, upturned faces watch

article by **Mary Zalmanek**
photos by **Mary and Jim Zalmanek**

The Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta is claimed to be the most-photographed event in the world, and for good reason. Here I am at the 2013 event, and just about everyone has a camera, phone or tablet pointing skyward, hoping to capture the magic in pixels. For me, no matter how beautiful the photos are, they are just reminders of why I must go back again. There's nothing like being on the field at dawn when the first balloon goes up flying an American flag. The national anthem plays and activity comes to a respectful halt, while people hold their right hands over their hearts. When the Mass Ascension begins, the crowd cheers as each subsequent balloon lifts off over a two-hour period. Soon the sky is filled with more than 500 colorful hot-air balloons, including 100 special shapes. It's always memorable when the day starts with a trio of giant bumblebees in hot pursuit of Darth Vader and Elvis Presley.

From its humble beginnings in 1972 with 13 balloons, Balloon Fiesta has grown into the world's premier balloon event. The massive nine-day celebration starts on the first Saturday in October at Balloon Fiesta Park. The grass launch field covers 72 acres. This city is uniquely suited to host the event due to the Albuquerque Box, a pattern of predictable winds that occur about 30 percent of the time in early October, allowing balloonists to navigate in a vertical box. Cool morning temperatures and the geography of the Rio Grande Valley cause lower winds to blow south and higher winds to blow north. By adjusting altitude, skillful pilots can make several passes and return to the launch field to land.



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PATHWAY X1 AND PATHWAY X2

NEW MEXICO'S ENCHANTED SUNRISE

After the balloons took off, my husband, Jim, and I explored Main Street on the east side of Balloon Fiesta Park, a one-third-mile expanse of food, merchandise and exhibits. The Balloon Discovery Center had interactive exhibits that explained the principles of ballooning, its history and safety aspects. We admired the variety of arts and crafts for sale in the art tent. Several vendors offered Balloon Fiesta memorabilia, including pins, badges and T-shirts. Pins are especially popular, with 60,000 sold every year. Two "Trading Only" sessions allowed collectors to meet other pin enthusiasts from around the world.

Elsewhere in the park, entertainment abounded. Seven professional carvers from all over the United States and one from Zimbabwe competed in the Chainsaw Carving Invitational. They created amazing wood sculptures that were sold at auction, or raffled to benefit the Albuquerque Area Firefighters Random Acts. In the music tent, a talented group of children from Interplay, a local school of music, sang and danced their way into our hearts. Other kids expended their energy on a short zip line or the "Walk on Water"



Balloon Fiesta launch directors, also known as Zebras, handle crowd control and work with the pilots to ensure safety during the launch.

attraction (picture them inside a big inflatable ball bobbing around on a pool). Sunday morning of the first weekend, classic cars filled the field for the Fiesta of Wheels Car Show.

We returned to the field on Saturday afternoon to watch preparations for the America's Challenge, a distance race for gas balloons. Due to a worldwide shortage of helium, all five balloons in the 2013 race were filled with hydrogen. Gas balloons can stay aloft for two to three days. After they took off and

drifted northeast, we tracked their progress on a mobile app. The winning team flew 2,300 miles to land in Ontario, Canada, more than 60 hours later.

On five of the nine evenings, balloons were tethered and inflated just before dusk for the popular Balloon Glows. As we walked amongst the balloons, the Balloonmeister counted down to ignition. When the "all glow" command was issued, pilots fired their burners. These evenings culminated with spectacular fireworks shows.

Balloons fly directly over the Airstream Rally during the Mass Ascension.



It's no wonder that 800,000 people attend the fiesta each year. The best way to avoid traffic jams caused by that many people is to stay in the RV parks near the field. If you are lucky enough to own an Airstream, you can get a VIP dry camping site adjacent to the launch field. In 2006, Ken Johansen organized the first Airstream Rally at the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta, with 20 attending. In recent years, the rally has grown to 200 sites. Registration opens to Wally Byam Caravan Club International (WBCCI) members on January 15, and opens to all other Airstream owners on February 15 (sorry, no SOBs — Some Other Brands — allowed). Email Johansen to register (see page 25). The rally, which runs from Friday to Tuesday the first weekend in October, fills up quickly.

In this crowd of die-hard Airstream fans, one man stood out. Fred Coldwell has been the historian for the vintage club for 10 years. Not only could he answer just about any question about trailers built before 1969, he told me (admittedly an Airstream novice) about the history of WBCCI. Wally Byam, who founded Airstream in 1931, led some famous caravans, including a nine-month, 18,000-mile journey from Capetown to Cairo in 1958. Byam's spirit of adventure lives on today with caravans exploring every corner of North America. Two such groups traveled together to the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta as part of longer excursions.

Not only do Airstream owners get parking that lets them be on the launch field less than 15 minutes after getting out of bed, at least one lucky woman got a bird's-eye view of the festivities. When a volunteer coordinator came to our Friday night gathering asking for chase crew volunteers, Cathy and Byron Wright raised their hands. The Wrights, who live full time in their Airstream, were attending the Balloon Fiesta for their second time. After a brief orientation, they spent the next four mornings helping to take the basket out of the truck, unfolding the balloon and operating the fan. Shortly before liftoff on Saturday, Paul Heiken, a balloonist from Oregon, invited Cathy to ride

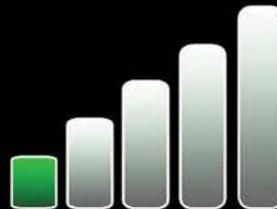
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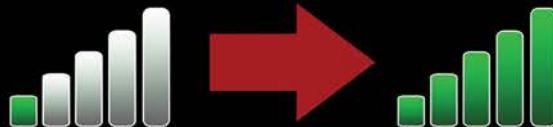


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NEW MEXICO'S ENCHANTED SUNRISE



with him. While the rest of the chase crew followed in a pickup, she floated 1,400 feet above the city. Back on solid land, Paul conducted Cathy's "First Flight Ceremony" with a champagne toast. Her excitement convinced me to volunteer for a chase crew for the upcoming 2014 Balloon Fiesta.

One of the more unique vantage points to view the balloons and escape the crowds is from the Rio Grande River via kayak. Kelly Gossett, owner of New Mexico Kayak Instruction, leads guided tours every morning during Balloon Fiesta. The gentle winds of the Albuquerque Box usually carry the balloons directly over the river. Dave Millican, a tour guest, saw two groups of 30 to 50 balloons as the kayakers neared Balloon Fiesta Park. "The balloons were illuminated in the cloudless sky by the rising sun," Millican said. "The quiet was only disturbed by our paddles, the sound of the balloon burners and the conversation of the pilots and crew. It

was a beautiful way to explore the Rio Grande and enjoy the fall colors in the Bosque (the cottonwood forest along the river)."

The Bosque is also a popular place for biking. The Paseo del Bosque Trail, a paved 16-mile multiuse trail, runs along the east side of the Rio Grande. Some folks from the Airstream Rally biked for several hours one afternoon while admiring the views and wildlife native to the area. In the early mornings, many people ride to Balloon Fiesta on this trail and leave their bikes at the free Bike Valet, which is staffed by local bicycle group volunteers.

The Anderson Abruzzo International Balloon Museum is just south of Balloon Fiesta Park. We enjoyed learning about the history of ballooning, starting with the first flight in 1783, and the role it has played in adventure, scientific experiments, warfare and the exploration of space. The museum is named in honor of two New Mexico

balloonists, Maxie Anderson and Ben Abruzzo, who were part of the first helium balloon crews to successfully cross the Atlantic Ocean in the Double Eagle II in 1978 and the Pacific Ocean in the Double Eagle V in 1981. Gondolas from both crossings and equipment from other historic flights are displayed. Interactive exhibits educate and entertain adults and children alike.

We tore ourselves away from the fiesta long enough to visit three of Albuquerque's many popular attractions. Tim's Place — "the world's friendliest restaurant" — is a must-do for breakfast or lunch. While the food is very good, it's the owner himself who inspires. Tim Harris is believed to be the only person with Down's Syndrome to own a restaurant. Six days a week he welcomes people at the door with a handshake or a hug. "Free hugs, available upon request" are on the menu. The Hug Meter on the wall has recorded more than 42,000 hugs.



(Above left) Sign posts marking the distance to cities around the world attest to the international appeal of Balloon Fiesta; 18 countries were represented in 2013.

(Above right) Around 100 special-shaped balloons were at the 2013 Balloon Fiesta.

He is so happy to come to work that Harris does a “dance off” in the parking lot. From an early age, his parents encouraged him to be independent and successful. When he was in high school, Harris was voted Homecoming King and Student of the Year. He graduated from college, and then spent two winters living aboard a sailboat and exploring the Bahamas with his parents. As an athlete, he’s earned more medals in the Special Olympics than Michael Phelps earned in the Olympics. His life story has been covered by *People* magazine, NBC, ABC, CBS and NPR, just to name a few. In his spare time, he is a motivational speaker.

After we were fed and hugged, we went to the National Museum of Nuclear Science and History, the nation’s only congressionally chartered museum in its field. It tells the story of the Atomic Age, from its pioneers in early research through today’s peaceful uses of technology. Science fans will appreciate the periodic table of elements engraved on the lobby’s marble floor. In Little Albert’s Lab, interactive exhibits and a robotic puppet of Albert Einstein capture the attention and imagination of younger visitors. The 5-acre outdoor Heritage Park behind

the museum contains bombers, jets, rockets and missiles.

Beer lovers — that includes me and my husband — were delighted to discover that the New Mexico Brew Fest and Music Showcase coincides with Balloon Fiesta. It is held in Villa Hispana at Expo New Mexico, the state fairgrounds, from 1 to 6 p.m. on the first Saturday in October. More than 20 New Mexico and eight out-of-state breweries offered tastes of their beers last year. Whole Foods and several other food vendors, including one operating out of a cute Airstream, kept the masses well fed. Three bands played rock and reggae on the main stage, and an 11-piece German oompah band gave the gathering an Oktoberfest feel on a shaded patio.

If Balloon Fiesta is on your bucket list, there’s no time like the present — 2014’s event is scheduled for October 4 to 12. You’ll soon discover that once is not enough. 🚗

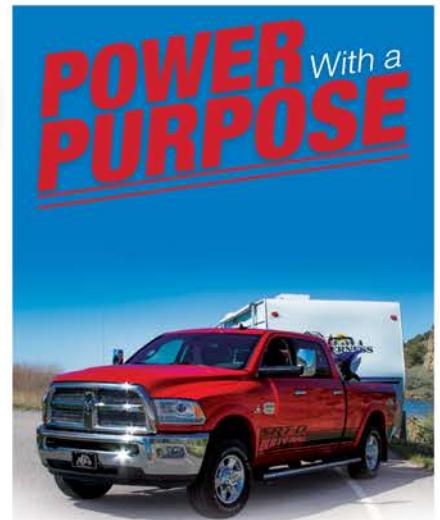
Mary and Jim Zalmanek enjoy traveling in their 2003 Safari Trek when not at home in Monument, Colorado. They attended the Airstream Rally in a 1975 31-foot Sovereign as guests of Roger Mosley and Marty Brodzik.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Balloon Fiesta www.balloonfiesta.com

Airstream Rally Ken Johansen, FourCornersUnit@hotmail.com

New Mexico Kayak Instruction Kelly Gossett, www.newmexicokayakinstruction.com



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Canyon of the Eagles Resort, nestled in a private nature park, is an idyllic launching point for water-related activities, wildflower viewing, cave exploring and wine tasting



Very few places can compare in scenery with the Texas Hill Country in the springtime, particularly when there has been a favorable winter season with early spring rains. The countryside is blanketed with bluebonnets and Indian paintbrush, and at many points along the roads, vehicles are stopped while admirers photograph the wildflowers. Few places in the country can compare to this state's springtime visual show.



There are plenty of excellent places to enjoy nature's display in the Hill Country. One that is off the beaten path, yet a gem of a destination for RVers and nature lovers, is Canyon of the Eagles Nature Park and Resort. As the advertisement says, "Where the road ends, the adventure begins!" This 943-acre nature preserve and resort is located on Lake Buchanan at the end of a rural road about 15 miles northwest of Burnet and 45 minutes west of Austin. Don't know Burnet? Burnet (pronounced "burn it") is about 35 miles west of Interstate 35 along State Highway 29. Three miles west of Burnet take Farm Road 2341 north to its end. It dead ends at the Canyon of the Eagles Resort. Now for the adventure.

Canyon of the Eagles gets its name because American bald eagles make their winter home in the surrounding area, and the "canyon" refers to the steep cliffs of the Colorado River, which was dammed in 1938 to form Lake Buchanan. One of the six lakes formed by dams managed by the Lower Colorado River Authority (LCRA), Lake Buchanan at 22,000 acres, has the largest area at normal pool of all the LCRA lakes. The other lakes — Inks, LBJ, Marble Falls, Lake Travis and Lake Austin — along with Buchanan, make up the region called the Central Texas Highland Lakes. Some references note that a seventh lake, Lady Bird Lake, is part of the Central Texas Highland lakes, but all are managed by the LCRA,



(Top) Lake Buchanan is a great place for all kinds of water recreation — boating, fishing and sightseeing. **(Above middle)** Favorable soil and climate make an excellent combination for wineries in the Texas Hill Country. **(Above)** Habitat for good bass fishing can be found in smaller lakes of the Hill Country.



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TEXAS HILL COUNTRY GEM

whether it is six or seven.

The resort and nature park are maintained for the flora and fauna of the area with the developed portion occupying a small percentage of the 943 acres. There are 14 miles of hiking trails throughout the property, providing close-up opportunities to view its wildlife and wildflowers. The park is situated on a bluff overlooking Lake Buchanan and its vantage point affords some beautiful sunsets, so much so that there is a vista called Sunset Point.

Amenities at the resort include 61 guest rooms, an outdoor swimming pool, an excellent eatery called the Overlook Restaurant, a gift shop, meeting facilities, a park store, 34 campsites from rustic to improved, 24 RV sites with full hookups and an amphitheater. There is also a boat dock with 3 miles of lake frontage. One unique attraction at the resort is the Austin Astronomical Society's Eagle Eye Observatory. A section of the park's 943 acres is set aside to accommodate two large telescopes. Once a month the Austin Astronomical Society has a public "star party" for viewing the nighttime sky. The remoteness of Canyon of the Eagles makes an ideal locale for this facility. Guests at the resort have access to the observatory, and they can even bring their own telescopes.

One of the resort's campgrounds, Tanner Point, has 10 primitive wooded campsites with views of Lake Buchanan. Another is Chimney Slough, which has 24 improved sites



Lake Buchanan has excellent striper fishing. For best results, hire an experienced local guide.

in a well-shaded woodland setting. The RV park can accommodate large rigs and trailers up to 45 feet in length. Some of its 24 sites have lake views, but all have 30/50-amp electricity, water and sewer. Only the RV site renters may utilize the resort's amenities, such as the swimming pool and recreation room. All campers have access to the restaurant, hiking trails, and to the camp store and lake. The resort is pet friendly but pets must be on a leash while on trails and in public areas.

Programs at Canyon of the Eagles include guided educational hikes and talks, reptile demonstrations, sessions



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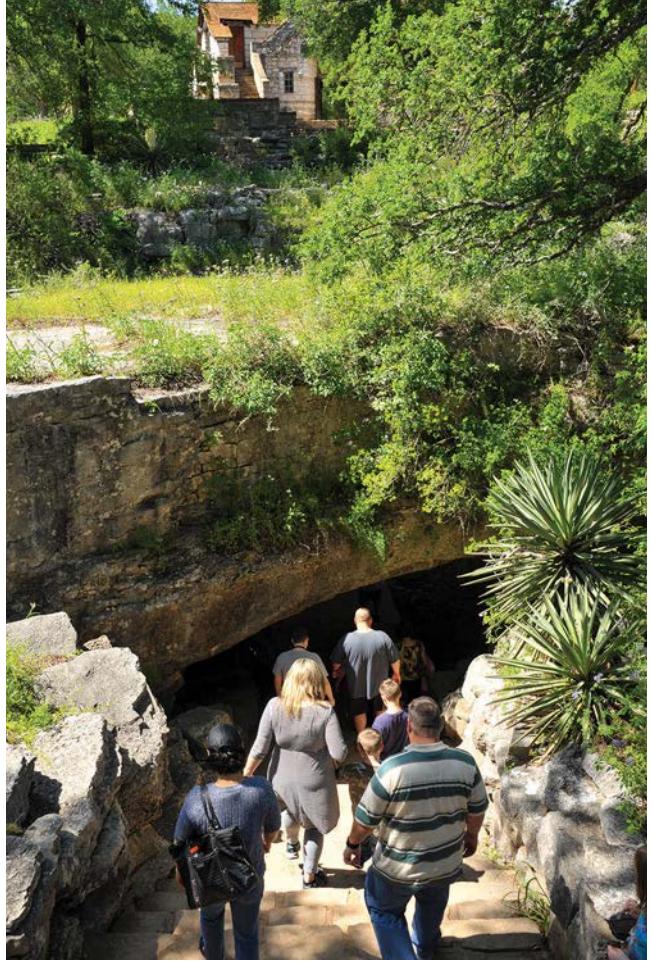
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with a cowboy poet, Owl Prowls and movies under the stars. Birdwatching is a popular pastime since the endangered black-capped vireo and the golden-cheeked warbler make the area their home. At the park store on the shore of Lake Buchanan, one of the local concessionaires, Buchanan Adventure Tours, provides rental kayaks, paddle boards and canoes, and offers guided birdwatching and geo-caching trips, hiking and fishing.

Within an hour's drive of the resort many other activities are available to visitors to the Hill Country. Whether it is water-related activities like fishing or boating, sightseeing or wildflower watching, cave exploring, investigating restaurants and wineries, or shopping, there are plenty of things to do. The nearby towns of Burnet, Marble Falls, Bertram, Lake Buchanan Dam and Tow have a multitude of activities to discover.

Exploring Lake Buchanan is one of the most popular activities of the area. The Vanishing Texas River Cruise dock is a short drive from Canyon of the Eagles. The two-hour cruise aboard the double-decker boat Texas Eagle takes passengers into Lake Buchanan and through the canyons of the Colorado River when the lake levels are high enough.

(Right) Longhorn Cavern is a day-use-only park, and is just a short drive from Canyon of the Eagles. RV camping is also available at close-by Inks Lake State Park.



THERE WILL BE MUD.

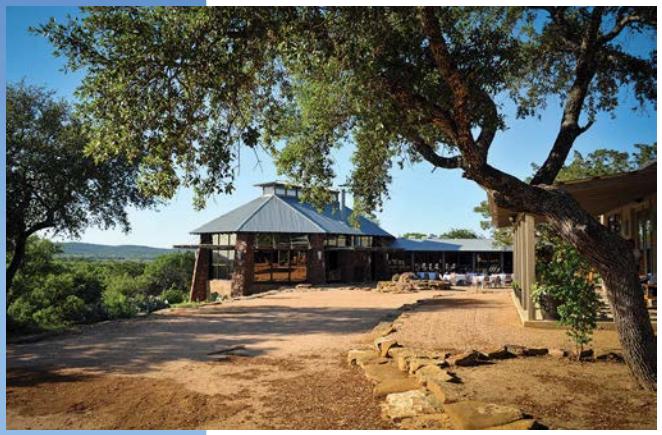
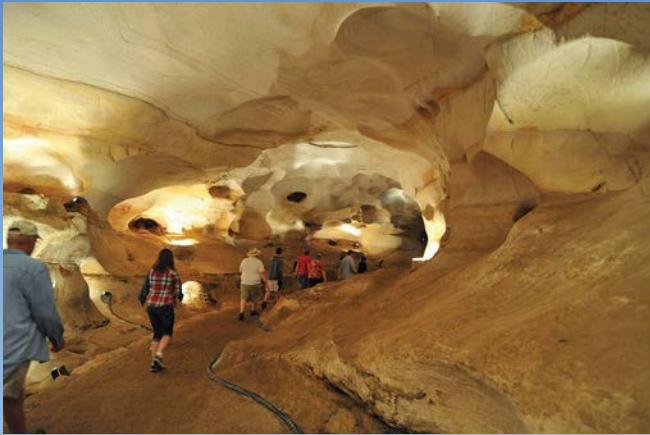
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The route passes sheer cliffs and waterfalls, the most notable is Fall Creek Falls. Wildlife may be seen along the banks, and shore birds and an occasional osprey or eagle could make an appearance. If the water levels are too low for an excursion into the canyon, then a unique opportunity may present itself. Before the

lake was formed, there were a couple of communities forced to relocate to higher ground. One of them was the Bluffton community. Remains of part of the original town are visible on an island exposed during low water in the lake. The cruise (reservations recommended) will make a stop for visitors to get a glimpse at Old Bluffton if lake

levels prevent the Texas Eagle from going upriver through the canyon.

Fishing for striped bass, largemouth bass or catfish is another popular way to enjoy being on Lake Buchanan. A boat ramp is located at Burnet County Park, but not at Canyon of the Eagles. Experienced fishing guides are available to make for a more profitable and rewarding excursion on the lake. During the spring season, the striped bass get a lot of attention from anxious anglers and their guides. Two of the best guides on Lake Buchanan are Ray Williamson and Clancy Terrill. Both are experienced and know the lake and the quarry.

Within the resort much of the landscape is prime wildflower country. But the route to Canyon of the Eagles along FR 2341 is also excellent bluebonnet viewing. Indian paintbrush, Indian blanket, white prickly poppy, larkspur and phacelia may also appear during the spring wildflower season. But just about anywhere in the Hill Country, wildflowers are prolific if the growing season has been to their liking.

Burnet is considered one of the best places in Texas for viewing wildflowers and has been designated by the Texas state legislature to be the "Bluebonnet Capital of Texas." And because of the town's location and designation, an



(Top left) Many legends are attached to Longhorn Cavern. **(Top right)** The Overlook Restaurant at Canyon of the Eagles is aptly named — it sits on a bluff overlooking Lake Buchanan. **(Left)** A visit to the Texas Hill Country in the spring is doubly rewarding — great weather and bluebonnets.

annual Bluebonnet Festival is held on the second weekend of April. It draws an average of 30,000 visitors.

For visitors wanting to go deeper into the Hill Country and Texas state parks, the Longhorn Cavern State Park would be a good place to begin. Longhorn Cavern is located south of Burnet in Burnet County and is classified as a scenic park. The cave was formed by the downward action of water on the limestone dissolving it and creating underground streams, over thousands of years, which cut through the solid rock beneath the limestone. The unique result is the Longhorn Cavern, which has many legends associated with it. Among them is one that suggests that the outlaw Sam Bass hid a valuable cache of stolen money inside the cave. Another says that Texas Rangers rescued a kidnapped girl from Indians in the cave. But the cave has been used as a shelter since prehistoric times. Cherokee Indians used the cave and Confederates made gunpowder in

the cave during the Civil War.

The state park offers guided tours lasting approximately one hour and 25 minutes. They occur at regular intervals in the constant 68-degree cavern. The hike is a 1¼-mile round trip. Much of the stone work at the park was done by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and there are displays about the CCC in the original administration building.

The Overlook Restaurant at Canyon of the Eagles offers a wide assortment of special dishes in addition to its views of Lake Buchanan and colorful sunsets. While exploring more of the Texas Hill Country, be sure to drop in at some of the local restaurants in Burnet and other small towns around Lake Buchanan. At the southern end of the lake is the town of Buchanan Dam, and the Tamale King restaurant is noted for its great Mexican dishes. It is located west of Burnet on Highway 29. Marble Falls, south of Burnet on U.S. Route 281, has a wide variety of restaurants and shopping opportunities. It sits on

another of the Lower Colorado River Authority lakes — called Lake Marble Falls.

There are some 30 wineries in the Texas Hill Country, mainly because of the favorable soil and growing conditions. Fall Creek Vineyards first opened in 1975, making it the oldest winery in the Hill Country. It has award-winning brands and offers wine tasting, tours and hosts special events.

Another Hill Country winery is located south of Burnet near Inks Lake. Perissos Vineyard and Winery boasts theirs is 100 percent Texas home-grown and also has won numerous awards for its wines. The name is not a family name, but “perissos” is a Greek word found in the Bible that means “exceeding abundantly, beyond what is expected, imagined or hoped for.”

For the extreme athlete to the curious outdoorsman, the Reveille Peak Ranch has much to offer guests and visitors. The ranch covers 1,300

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acres with the dominant feature of the landscape being the granite Reveille Peak. Outdoor activities include 62 miles of diverse trails for mountain biking, running and hiking. Visitors can stroll through the Texas wildflowers or watch for ospreys or painted buntings, or fish in the private lake for black bass and bream. The ranch hosts group events and individuals. The RV park is reserved for participants in events.

Reveille Peak overlooks Inks Lake and Lake Buchanan and the view from the top of the granite peak is a wide panorama of the Texas Hill Country and these two lakes. Visitors will be pleasantly surprised at the landscape of the ranch with its incredible display of springtime wildflowers.

Other opportunities for outdoor recreation are available throughout the Texas Hill Country. Canyon of the Eagles Nature Park has 14 miles of trails through its predominantly live oak and juniper woodland with a scattering

of grassland areas. A "Guide to the Hiking Trails" booklet is available at the resort and gives good detail of the trails in the nature park. In addition to trail length, the booklet provides information on the endangered species that may be spotted along each trail. However, some trails may be closed during parts of the year due to the protection of endangered species.

A visit to Canyon of the Eagles will provide guests a great place to stay while exploring the Texas Hill Country, particularly during the spring wildflower season. But anytime during the year there is something going on at the resort. The attractions and outdoor recreational opportunity on and around Lake Buchanan will add to the enjoyment of a Hill Country visit.

Getting to Canyon of the Eagles is easy. From Burnet and Highway 29, take FR 2341 north for about 15 miles and at the end of the road, the adventure begins. 🚗

IF YOU GO

Buchanan Adventure Tours

San Marcos, Texas, 512-353-3946
www.buchananadventuretours.com

Canyon of the Eagles

Burnet, Texas
512-334-2070, 800-977-0081 for reservations
www.canyonoftheeagles.com

Fishing Guides

Ray Williamson, 512-825-8746
www.raysstriperguideservice.com

Clancy Terrill, 512-633-6742

www.centraltexasfishing.com

Longhorn Cavern State Park

Burnet, Texas, 877-441-CAVE
www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/longhorn_cavern

Reveille Peak Ranch

Burnet, Texas, 512-755-4417
www.rprtexas.com

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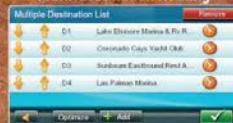
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SETTING UP A TOW VEHICLE

A FEW PIECES OF HARDWARE CAN HELP ENSURE TOWING TIME IS SECURE AND SAFE

by Jeff Johnston

Vehicles of all sizes are pressed into trailer towing duty these days. Everything from the largest pickups down to compact SUVs, minivans and smaller cars can be appropriately fitted for towing service. This is in large part due to the huge variety of trailer sizes and weights available today. In addition, depending on the vehicle's size and desired tow rating, many of today's towing enthusiasts can purchase a trailer that can be towed right off the dealer's lot because the auto manufacturers have been including full-feature towing hardware as factory-original-equipment in a number of vehicle classes.

If the vehicle you have in mind doesn't come with or is optioned out with all the goodies for towing, the aftermarket makes it easy to find all the hardware you need. There's also a lot of variety available so you can choose the system that's just right for you.

There are certain required pieces of equipment that must be on most tow vehicles including the hitch, brake control and wiring. These essential items tie the tow vehicle and trailer together and ensure the combo will perform in a safe, controlled manner.

With these "must-have" items covered, there are a number of optional features that can further enhance the towing experience. You may find it helpful to add air bags for extra rear-end support, for example, and it's always good to take a look at wear items such as tires, shock absorbers, brakes and steering components to ensure

everything is in top-notch shape. All of these components must do a good job when the tow vehicle is running solo and when it's forced to work extra hard with a trailer in tow.

The Hitch Receiver

Many vehicles are sold with a factory-equipment bumper that includes a hitch ball mount. While this setup is fine under ideal circumstances, a bumper-mounted hitch should be considered for light-duty use only. Most such hitches are rated around a maximum of 5,000 pounds of trailer weight and 500 pounds of hitch weight, so technically that's enough for many of the lightweight trailers on the market. However, it's very difficult to change the ball height on a bumper hitch, so the trailer's towing attitude is at the mercy of the bumper height. I'm sure most of us have seen a truck bumper-ball used

to connect a trailer that has its hind end almost dragging on the ground. A weight-distributing (WD) hitch also can't be used on a bumper-ball setup. In this case, hitch weight is carried by the ball only and sway control could be problematic.

The best plan is to install a hitch receiver and use an appropriate hitch head assembly, either weight carrying or weight distributing. A hitch receiver is far stronger than a bumper and a more secure means of setting up a strong and safe hitch assembly.

The hitch receiver is a welded or bolted-together steel unit that is attached to the frame under the tow vehicle's aft end. Most are powder-coated for corrosion resistance. They're available in several classes and can be identified by the square receiver tube

Draw-Tite (Cequent) Max Frame Receiver is typical of the bolt-on hitch receiver units on the market.



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More great news: Winnebago and SunnyBrook each offer a complete line of towable RVs in a wide variety of sizes, features and floorplans.

Winnebago travel trailers and fifth wheels lead the way in fun and innovation, incorporating the same high standards for design and construction made famous by their iconic motorized counterparts.

SunnyBrook travel trailers and 5th wheels are designed and built with quality and value born of commitment to detail. Time-tested construction methods, old-world craftsmanship and user-friendly function make every SunnyBrook an instant classic.



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SETTING UP A TOW VEHICLE



The Equal-i-zer sway control hitch combines the usual fully adjustable WD features plus four-point sway control using built-in components rather than add-on hardware.

that provides the hitch head mounting point. Class 1 and 2 hitches use a 1¼-inch opening and can be rated up to a 3,500-pound trailer with up to 350 pounds of hitch weight. Class 3 and 4 hitches have a 2-inch-square receiver opening and can be rated as high as 12,000 pounds for trailer weight and 1,000 pounds of hitch weight. At the high end are the Class 5 receivers rated for an 18,000-pound trailer and 1,800 pounds of hitch weight.

Receivers are available as factory options on a wide range of tow vehicles,

and for those not so equipped, aftermarket models are readily available. A hitch receiver is also very useful for attaching a wide variety of aftermarket accessories such as bicycle racks and storage pods.

Many receivers also include a bracket for installing the necessary trailer-wiring receptacle and that saves having to drill and mount such a bracket elsewhere on the vehicle's aft end. Most vehicles with tow packages come factory equipped with the wiring receptacle.

Choosing a Hitch

Unlike the old days when three or four companies reigned supreme in the industry, there are many choices when selecting a hitch for any tow vehicle.

Price is a factor. If you buy a WD setup from a cut-rate supplier and it's about one-third the cost of a similar product from a known, reliable company, you will likely get what you pay for in the form of a product made



B&W Hitch designed its Companion fifth-wheel hitch series to work with its Turnover ball mount that leaves the bed empty when the hitch is removed.

cheaply overseas and sold at a rock-bottom price. This is too important a piece of equipment to choose based solely on cost. Spend a few dollars on a good hitch and you won't regret it.

Choose a hitch that's rated high enough to handle the intended load, but it also doesn't make sense to buy too much hitch. That's where today's manufacturers have the problem solved inasmuch as they offer hitches, including WD versions, for everything from the smallest teardrop on up to the biggest fifth-wheel mansion.

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¹Requires two parallel-linked EU2000i generators. *Warranty applies to all Honda GX Series Engines and GX Series-powered Honda Power Equipment, 100cc or larger, purchased or put into rental service since January 1, 2009. Exceptions apply. See full warranty details at honda.com. Does not apply to EU1000 models. Please read the owner's manual before operating your Honda Power Equipment and never use in a closed or partly enclosed area where you could be exposed to poisonous carbon monoxide. Connection of a generator to house power requires a transfer device to avoid possible injury to power company personnel. Consult a qualified electrician. ©2014 American Honda Motor Co., Inc. Honda Generators, Circle 116 on Reader Service Card



SETTING UP A TOW VEHICLE

If you have a truly sturdy tow vehicle and a very small, lightweight trailer, it's possible you won't need a WD hitch. In that case, one of the many ball mounts on the market will do the job. The amount of drop, or how low the ball is positioned relative to the receiver tube, allows you to set up a trailer in a safe, nearly level towing mode.

WD hitches haven't changed much overall except for some technical tweaks and anti-sway related additions (see the section on Sway Control) to specific models. Most of these hitches are similarly arranged, although the details vary from company to company.

Each one includes a ball mount/hitch head that attaches to a shank that is designed to be used in a square-tube receiver. The head can usually be adjusted up or down to help arrive at a level trailer stance and fore-and-aft tilt adjustments are also normally provided. The tilt settings help the user set up the best spring-bar adjustment. A pair of spring bars provide the WD feature and



PullRite makes a fully automatic sliding fifth-wheel hitch, the SuperGlide, that makes it extra easy to tow a fifth-wheel trailer with a shortbed truck.



The Reese by Cequent Titan hitch is a manual-release sliding model designed for use in shortbed pickups.

a pair of brackets are installed on the trailer A-frame to secure the bar ends.

All of these WD hitches perform a specific function, which is helping to distribute the trailer's hitch weight between the front and rear axles on the tow vehicle as a means of helping maintain steady, reliable driving manners. A weight-carrying hitch allows the trailer hitch weight to load the rear axle while simultaneously unloading weight from the front axle, and that can create unsteady, erratic

driving situations. Use of a WD hitch is especially important on smaller tow vehicles with softer suspensions that are pulling so many of today's lightweight trailers. A pickup is designed to carry extra weight so it can handle more of a load, but it still needs a WD hitch when the trailer is a larger size.

Fifth-Wheel Hitch

You don't usually need to buy a separate mount for a fifth-wheel hitch because it's often part of the package.



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Some manufacturers offer different mounting options for their hitches such as quick-release variants or those that leave the truck bed completely empty when the hitch is removed. Some pickups can be factory-equipped with an under-bed hitch mount, such as the Ford factory-supplied "puck mount" system, so all you need to buy is the hitch assembly, which can be ordered from the factory. GM and Ram have similar arrangements.

At the lower end are hitches with fixed heads that tilt fore-and-aft only. Next up are those with side-to-side tilt capability and that's a good choice because it makes hitching and unhitching on uneven terrain much easier. This feature also reduces strain on the hitch area because the hitch head can move freely when the tow vehicle and trailer are on uneven road surfaces.

Some hitches include air- or rubber-cushioned mounts that help reduce road impacts that are otherwise trans-

mitted from the truck's rear axle up to the trailer.

If you have a shortbed truck you'll need to be aware of your cab-to-trailer clearance in tight turns. Some fifth-wheel trailers are built with extra clearance in mind, but buying a hitch designed for such use is a good solution. In effect, the hitch head must be moved back from its towing position during tight turns, then returned to its original position for towing. Various manually released and adjusted models are on the market, but the PullRite, for example, offers the SuperGlide fully automatic hitch to address this clearance problem. It's a bit more costly, but it delivers huge peace of mind.

Leaving the bed free of mounting hardware when the hitch is removed is important to many pickup users. Several fifth-wheel hitch manufacturers offer different configurations, most of which are proprietary to a given brand of hitch.

As an example, B&W uses a clever

dual-purpose fifth-wheel hitch mount called a Turnover Ball that works with its line of Companion hitches. The Turnover mechanism is used to mount the fifth-wheel hitch in the bed. When removed, the mount can support a hitch ball for towing a gooseneck-type agricultural or industrial trailer. Remove the ball, and the bed is free of protruding hardware.

B&W is also among the companies offering other mounting options, including a low-cost, in-bed rail system.

Brake Control – Whoa, Nellie!

Laws vary by state, but if you'll be towing a trailer in excess of 1,500 pounds, it should have a brake control. Not using one on a travel or fifth-wheel trailer would be sheer foolishness.

A brake control is an adjustable device installed in the tow vehicle that activates the trailer's brakes in conjunction with the tow vehicle's brakes. A proportional system is ideal so the trailer brakes will be applied appropriately



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SETTING UP A TOW VEHICLE



1) Tekonsha's Prodigy P2 brake control by Cequent is a state-of-the-art model with a functional readout screen and can handle up to four axles on one trailer. 2) The Blue Ox Sway Pro hitch includes built-in sway control in addition to its WD components. 3) Husky's Center Line hitch includes WD, sway control and "trailer centering" provided by spring-loaded compression cylinders that automatically help bring a trailer back to center during episodes of sway. Its "easy adjust" head angle adjustment system makes for precise setup during installation. 4) A specially articulated hitch head and WD mechanism allows the Hensley Arrow to provide the user with stable, sway-free travel-trailer towing.

with tow vehicle braking.

Today's aftermarket controls are far more sophisticated than their earlier brethren. They provide smooth braking action when properly set up. Some models also provide instant driver feedback that informs the operator of the amount of trailer brake application, and provides troubleshooting codes such as short or open circuits as needed, and other analysis.

Some late-model vehicles come

equipped with integrated trailer brake controls. These are marvelous pieces of gear because they're tied directly into the vehicle's powertrain management system and are fully integrated with the vehicle's driving-related electronics.

Brake controls use one of two general systems: Time-based or inertia-based. Both types are activated as soon as the driver steps on the brake. A time-based model ramps up the trailer braking effort at a set rate

until it reaches 100 percent braking.

An inertia-based model senses the tow vehicle's deceleration rate and uses that data to proportionally apply the trailer brakes. Generally, an inertia-based, proportional control is more effective, especially during panic stopping.

Many recent-model vehicles have a trailer brake wiring harness under the dash with color-coded connections. Some include a pigtail harness and plug designed to be wired to the brake control

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Consider the price of your tow vehicle and trailer, and your family's safety when shopping for a brake control. Don't buy the cheapest one on the market. Choose one that has the features you need to provide the safest trailer stopping power.

Sway Control

This only applies to travel trailers because fifth-wheel trailers, due to the mechanics and physics of hitch placement, usually don't have inherent sway characteristics and very seldom get out of hand. That's not to say a travel trailer naturally will have a sway problem; that's dependent on weight, length, balance and hitching.

Some sway control devices are add-ons that are used with existing WD hitches while many others are integral parts of the hitch.

Some WD hitches such as the Hensley Arrow and PullRite use completely different mechanical systems to achieve remarkable degrees of sway control. The PullRite is essentially a travel-trailer hitch that uses a curved rail and roller system to move the hitch pivot point closer to the tow vehicle's rear axle. In effect this causes the travel trailer to tow with the stability characteristics of a fifth-wheel.



The Hensley Arrow WD hitch utilizes a hitch head with a pivoting mechanism to create a fifth-wheel-like towing experience. The Hensley moves the effective hitch pivot point toward the rear axle without involving any moving parts in that area. It's hard to describe how well this product works until you've had a chance to tow with it. The hardware is somewhat heavy and costly but it

The use of Bilstein aftermarket shock absorbers offers ride and handling improvement for your tow rig.

virtually eliminates sway.

The Cequent Straight-Line WD hitch uses a mechanism that's been on the market for a long time. It reduces sway using a pair of pivoting arms that help anchor the spring bar ends in place, creating lateral resistance, which deters trailer sway.

Another form of spring bar sway control is used on the Equal-i-zer hitch. This system relies on resistance in four points, two in the ball mount and one on the trailer end of each spring bar bracket. This mechanical configuration provides highly effective sway control, and is easy to set up and take down.

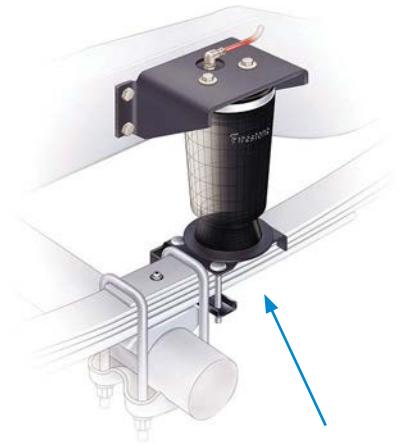
Blue Ox's Sway Pro WD hitch uses resistance to movement at the spring bar mounts to deter sway. In addition, the company's new Rotating Latch spring bar chain hangers provide resistance to lateral spring bar movement to control sway.

Options

Naturally, it behooves trailer owners to make sure the tow vehicle is in good condition. Wear items like tires should be inspected and replaced as needed. Other parts such as shock absorbers may be in good shape, but solo driving and towing performance can be improved by installing high-quality aftermarket shock absorbers.

It's never a good idea to overload a vehicle's gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) or gross axle weight rating (GAWR) but sometimes even a properly loaded vehicle can sag in the back end. Air bags, which install over the rear axle to provide extra load-carrying support, are dependable, effective accessories that are available to fit many towing-appropriate vehicles — from the smallest SUVs to the biggest pickups. Air pressure can be adjusted to meet the varying demands of towing or solo driving. Kits, such as the Firestone Sport-Rite, are available with everything from a manual-fill air valve to an on-board air compressor with remote in-cab adjustment capabilities. Air bags don't increase rear axle GAWR, but they help level a vehicle with a heavy load out back.

Be aware that towing-related ac-



Air bags, such as these Sport-Rite models from Firestone, can help boost a tow rig's sagging rear end when it's loaded to its factory-specified cargo or tow rating.

cessories will not increase the vehicle's manufacturer-established tow rating. That can only be done by an extensive series of engineering tests and a recertification process. The devices you add only make your tow vehicle perform better for its intended use.

From the factory or via the aftermarket parts supply chain, it's easy to outfit a vehicle for proper trailer towing. Selecting the right parts and knowing how to use them will result in many miles of trouble-free, enjoyable towing. 🚚

SOURCES

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www.blueox.com

Cequent
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www.huskytow.com

PullRite
www.pullrite.com

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TV FOR THE RV

Selecting the proper satellites and equipment for enhanced signal reception in your RV will have you surfing in no time

Watching TV just ain't what it used to be, whether at your residence or from the comfort of your favorite campsite. And that's a good thing. New technology continues to lead to vastly improved audio and video quality, as well as a seemingly endless ocean of programming that can even be tailor-made for the specific viewer. But in order to reap the benefits of all those new bells and whistles, RVers need to ensure their rigs are properly set up, and that means so much more than a pair of pliers and a bent clothes hanger.

It all starts with acquiring a signal. And, as you know from your residential home, that is accomplished via a satellite TV provider, DISH Network and DirecTV being the two most prominent options stateside (Bell in Canada). The decision as to which provider to select can be as simple as continuing to use your current provider (in which case you may even be able to use the same receiver that's in your living room). Both DISH and DirecTV offer pay-as-you-go options that don't require you to lock in to a two-year contract.

Once you've selected a provider, you can then determine the number of receivers you'll need, and also if you'd like high-definition programming, a DVR, etc. Then it's time to grab a bucket of popcorn and beam in the signal from the sky. But how does that happen, really?

It's that signal acquisition that we are focusing on: satellite and broadcast antennas and accessories. What we generally call a satellite (the dish on the RV's roof) is actually an antenna, the same as a batwing unit found on many RVs. They are designed to pull in the provider's signal, and as with any products, all are not created equal (You'll also notice that some of the products are designed for in-motion use, which is great for motorhome owners who ride inside the RV, but trailerists can save money on non in-motion models). That's why we've included some of the top antenna products from the "Big Three" to help you turn your mobile living room into a campsite home theater. Just be sure to keep the volume at a reasonable level so as not to disturb the neighbors

King Controls

The Tailgater VQ2500 (\$349) features fully integrated antenna and receiver software, which leads to automatic satellite acquisition with no separate remote control or power source required. Just connect the Tailgater to a DISH receiver via the supplied 50-foot coaxial cable and you'll be enjoying DISH HD programming in no time. The custom designed user interface with on-screen graphics makes for easy setup. Just place it anywhere in your campsite with a clear view to the southern sky; it even displays that the satellite signal is partially or completely blocked via on-screen diagnostics. For reception of DISH Network SD and HD programming only; requires customer supplied DISH-Network-compatible receiver.





The Relay (\$699.95) offers the same features as the Tailgater but in a traditional roof-mounted dome designed for permanent installation. The Relay is ideal for RVers who want a quick DISH Network satellite TV setup while parked in areas generally clear of trees and other obstacles.

The Relay can be wired through an A/B switch to allow use of a Tailgater portable antenna when parked in the trees, and also enables users to upgrade their existing roof mounted satellite dish, King-Dome or others, to full HDTV capabilities with no need to install additional cables or find an

external power source. Dual LNB (low-noise block) allows viewers to watch different channels on the same satellite with a second receiver.



The Rover (\$899) offers one-touch, automatic satellite acquisition in a full-sized dome, which helps get the best possible picture quality during inclement weather. The Rover works with a variety of satellite receivers for DirecTV, DISH and Bell, though its HD reception is limited to some DISH receivers only. The Rover features dual LNB, which enables viewers to watch different channels from the same

satellite, provided they have connected a second receiver. The Rover is connected via coax cable only, meaning there is no need for a separate power cable.



The portable **VuQube** satellite antenna is designed to get reception anywhere, though users will need to provide a receiver and TV. The VuQube FLEX (\$649) features a wireless remote for easy operation, and is completely self-contained in a weather-resistant enclosure. Simply push a button to

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Champion 3100W Inverter Cover #70826



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- 8 running hours at 50% load
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Champion 9500/7500 Watt Cover #58186



Wireless Remote

Champion 2000W Inverter Generator #57595

- 2000 starting watts, 1700 rated watts
- Two 5-20R 120-volt/20-amp AC outlets
- 3.5 HP 80cc OHV 4-stroke, single cylinder, air-cooled engine
- Low oil shut-off
- Overload protection
- 1 gallon fuel tank
- Easy pull recoil start
- Sound level 53 dBA from 23'
- Weight 48 lbs.



Champion 2000W Inverter Generator #70828

- 2000 starting watts, 1700 rated watts
- Two 5-20R 120-volt/20-amp AC outlets
- 3.5 HP 80cc OHV 4-stroke, single cylinder, air-cooled engine
- Low oil shut-off
- Overload protection
- 1 gallon fuel tank
- Easy pull recoil start
- Sound level 53 dBA from 23'
- Weight 48 lbs.



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Champion 2000W Inverter Parallel Kit #56521

Connect two 2000W inverter models.

Champion 2000W Inverter Cover #70825



Champion 4000/3500 Watt Generator, 49 State #67293

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Champion 4000/3500 Watt Generator, CARB Compliant Model #54136

Champion 4000/3500 Watt Generator Cover #58187

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automatically lock-on the satellite(s) for the service provider of your choice. The FLEX works with a variety of receivers for DirecTV, DISH and BELL TV (DISH-HD-Capable only). Simple coaxial cable connection with no external power cable required. Owners have the option to add a second receiver to watch different channels off the same satellite on two different TVs.



King-Dome's **JACK** broadcast antenna (\$159.99) includes a built-in amplifier for improved reception. The JACK also includes a built-in digital TV signal meter that displays the best direction to point the antenna before scanning for available channels. This feature, called SureLock, is also available à la carte (\$39.95) to add to an existing antenna. A JACK replacement head for Winegard's popular Sensor antennas (\$49.95) is available as well.



KVH

KVH's crown jewel, the in-motion **TracVision A7** (\$3,995), is only 5 inches tall and supports more than one TV. The dome is available in a high-gloss black or silver automotive-grade finish, and is compatible with virtually all standard factory-installed and aftermarket video systems, including those with S-video inputs. The A7 includes an exclusive compact 12-volt DC DirecTV receiver that retains the program guide for a quicker start-up process. The system is easily controlled thanks to onscreen

TRIPOD TIME

Once you've purchased a portable antenna, there is still one more option to consider: a tripod. Although many conventional antennas require roof mounting, sometimes that is just not practical, as drilling holes into your roof or side wall just to watch *Matlock* reruns doesn't seem too appealing. And, although the portable systems are often designed to stand on the ground, it's generally a good idea to use a tripod to help minimize the moisture, mud and grime that these units can collect. Traditional "home-made" remedies often include plywood, pavers, bricks and/or milk jugs, but for true durability, we recommend a sturdy tripod designed specifically for the job.

Generally, a simple Internet search for satellite tripods will reveal a variety of options. I found an especially helpful site to be www.satelliteoasis.com. The site features tripods and accessories for all the major providers, and a category search can generally produce the product you need. Another resource is www.campingworld.com, which carries Winegard tripods (listed below), often for even better prices than offered by the manufacturer.

Winegard Tripods

◀ The TR-1518 Carryout Tripod Mount (\$89.99)

is an aluminum tripod designed to elevate the Carryout portable satellite antenna off the ground for protection from mud and water. The mount is easy to assemble and features adjustable height and leveling settings ranging from 14.5 inches to 22 inches. The TR-1518 can be secured against wind using an anchor loop, and quickly disassembles when it's time to break camp. Plus, Winegard claims the mount is compatible with the King Controls VuQube antennas, offering versatility across the board.



◀ The TR-3535 Satellite Tripod Mount with Carry Bag (\$89.95)

is constructed using sturdy powdercoated steel with 1.66-inch OD mount pipe. The TR-3535 is compatible with all DISH Network, Shaw Direct and Bell home antennas, plus all DirecTV home antennas except the Slimline models. The tripod features fully adjustable legs that allow up to a 45-degree angle setting for increased stability. The legs also expand and retract between 28 and 37 inches for a sturdy base. The kit includes a nylon tote bag which attaches to a leg when not in use to store the included three ground anchors, satellite-alignment compass and bubble level. When not in use, the 10 1/2-pound tripod folds to a compact 36 inches.



◀ The TR-2077 Satellite Tripod Mount (\$49.99)

is constructed on a heavy-duty ABS flat base with convenient azimuth degree markings molded in. The 18-inch pole and detachable legs attach to the base but can be easily removed for storage and portability. The TR-2077 works with most standard 18-inch satellite antennas and mounts. The kit also contains a ground anchor/bungee, a compass and a level.



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messaging and a backlit RF/IR remote control that allows users to change channels even if the receiver is out of your sightline (i.e., in a cabinet). As of presstime, the TracVision A7 is currently only available with DirecTV standard-definition programming.



KVH also offers the SlimLine Series multi-directional roof-mount antennas. The **TracVision R1DX** (\$2,195) is billed as the smallest and lightest in-motion satellite TV system on the market. The compact, 12.5-inch-diameter system allows users to enjoy DISH Network

standard/HD programming throughout the continental U.S. Plus, the R1DX supports automatic satellite switching from your remote control (a KVH exclusive), and gives viewers the ability to hook up multiple receivers in different locations within the RV. The antenna features single-cable installation, plus the WhisperDrive motor technology leads to super-quiet operation.



The R1ST (\$2,195) offers the same benefits as the R1DX, but is compatible with DirecTV standard-definition programming only.



Winegard

New from Winegard is the **Pathway X2**, which is a fully electric portable DISH-Network only system designed to support two receivers. The X2 (\$449) features a grip handle for easy carrying, while an eyelet on its base provides the ability to lock up the unit for added security. Included is a 25-foot coaxial cable, along with two coaxial outputs. It is also available bundled with a compatible DISH Network receiver for \$499.

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Winegard's popular **Sensar** bat-wing broadcast antennas feature a built-in amplifier designed to offer users VHF/UHF reception wherever they park their RV. The antenna can be raised, lowered and rotated from inside the trailer or motorhome. The Sensar IV VHF UHF HDTV (\$106.25) antenna integrates the UHF-enhanced Wingman antenna to capture even more programming. The Wingman UHF Performance Enhancer (\$29.99) is also available à la carte.



The **RS 3000** (\$89.99) is an omni-directional broadcast antenna designed to support two receivers and to continuously find and acquire any available VHF, UHF and FM broadcast signals within a 35-mile radius of a parked vehicle. Plus, it is capable of receiving free over-the-air programming from many major networks (note that subscribing to a provider will always result in more channels).

Trav'ler dish antennas are designed to allow viewers to watch all satellites simultaneously, eliminating the delay

of satellite switching. They are available for DISH Network, DirecTV, Bell and Shaw Direct; the Trav'ler SK SWM3 Slimline (\$1,799) is touted by Winegard as the only satellite antenna to offer full DirecTV HD programming. The SWM3 is a good choice for RVers who wish to utilize the HD DVR functions on their equipment.



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RoadTrip roof-mounted antennas feature a compact 20-inch footprint and support two receivers. The RT 4000S (\$1,199) is a stationary antenna that is 15.6 inches tall, while the RT 4000T (\$1,499) is an in-motion unit that's 12.9 inches tall. Both models are compatible with the major satellite providers (DISH/Shaw HD, SD; DirecTV SD).



The **GM-1518 Carryout Portable Satellite Antenna** (\$699) is a portable antenna that works with most receivers. It supports two TVs (on the same satellite) and is compatible with DISH Network, DirecTV and Bell. The Carryout weighs only 11.5 pounds and plugs in to a 12-volt DC outlet. Other popular versions of the Carryout Antenna include the rugged RealTree camouflage edition (\$899) and the GM-5000 Carryout Anser Hybrid Automatic Portable Satellite Antenna (\$449), which can support two receivers watching separate shows. 📺

SOURCES

Bell Express
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DirectTV
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DISH Network
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King Controls
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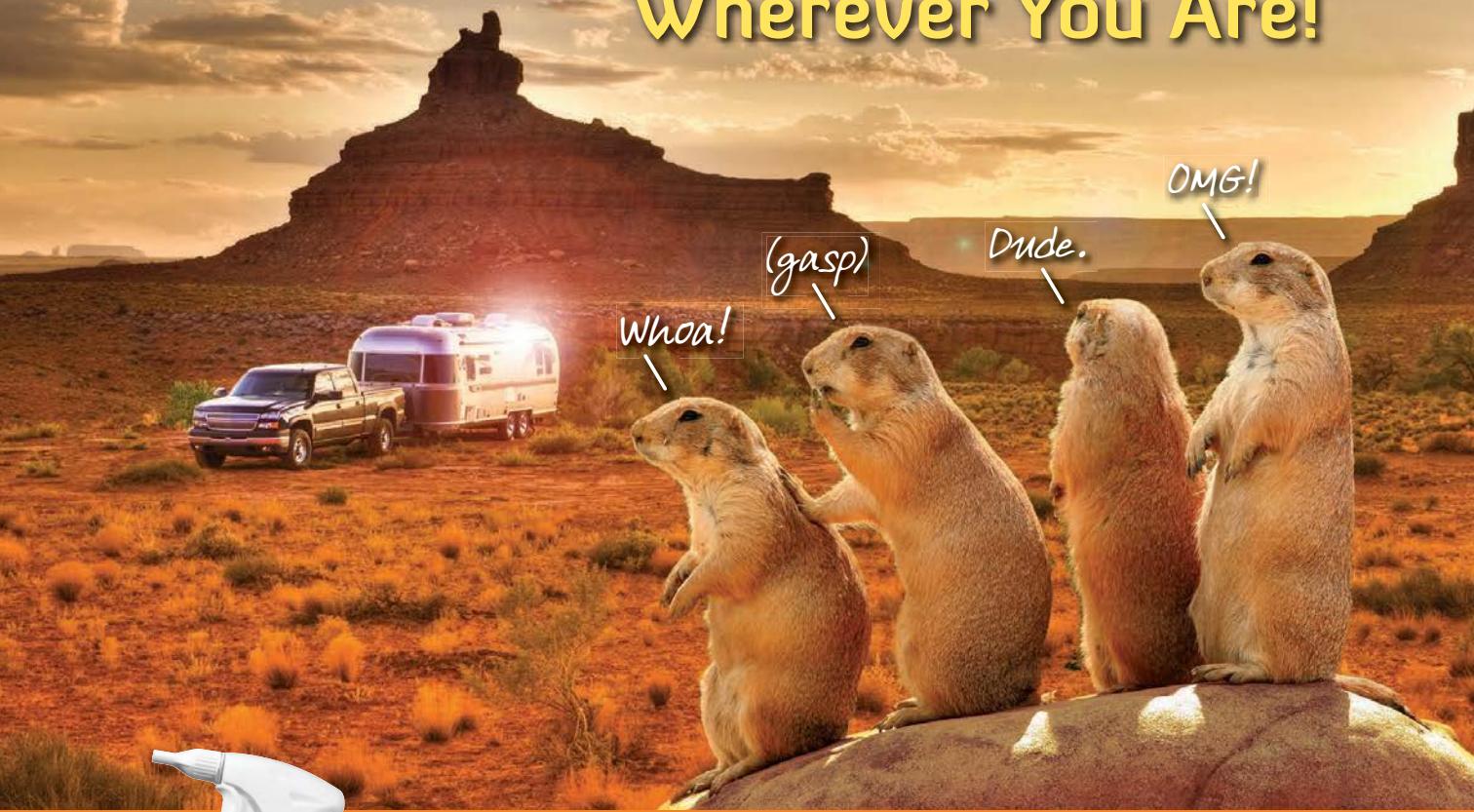
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Heartland North Trail

With a rear bunkhouse and outdoor entertainment built in, the King Slide 33TBUD promises fun for the family

article and photos by **Chris Hemer**

There's little question that lightweight travel trailers are the hottest segment of the RV market today, and with good reason. Fluctuating fuel costs, combined with a preponderance of half-ton trucks and SUVs, have made every manufacturer take a close look at their lightweight offerings. And where these trailers used to sacrifice some amenities in order to shed excess pounds, lighter materials and high-tech manufacturing methods have made it possible to produce surprisingly large and well-equipped travel trailers weighing well south of 10,000 pounds.

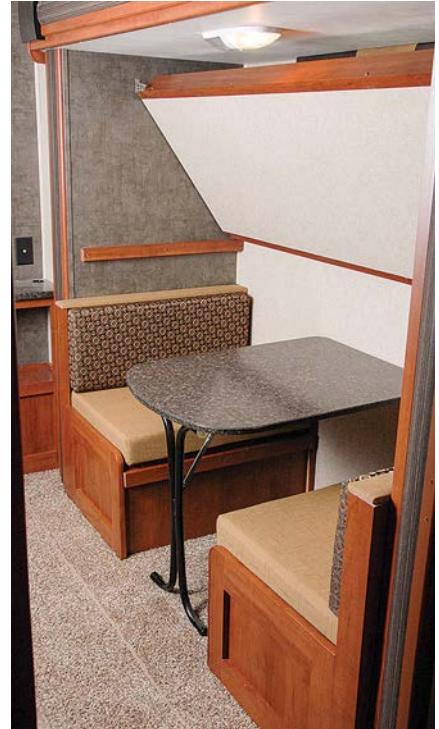
Such is the case with Heartland's North Trail King Slide 33TBUD travel trailer. Twenty years ago, who would have thought you could own a 37-foot, triple-slideout trailer with a dry weight just shy of 7,500 pounds? In fact, the

33TBUD is one of nearly a dozen King Slide models, the smallest of which is 32 feet 6 inches long and has a dry weight of 6,695 pounds. Then there are an additional eight North Trail travel trailers, and four more in the line's Focus Edition. To say Heartland is committed to lightweights is an understatement, for sure.

Besides being the largest King Slide model in the North Trail line, what makes this floorplan interesting is its family friendly layout. Not only can it sleep five to six people, it features a dedicated rear bunkhouse for the kids. While this feature may not be uncommon in travel trailers, Heartland takes the concept a step further with a pair of bunk beds, the streetside of which converts into its own mini dinette. There's also plenty of storage for toys and such,

and even a bookcase with a top shelf that's TV ready. The kids should have very little to complain about; the only thing we'd like to see is a little more light. There are only two small windows back here, and the curbside one gets blocked when the upper bunk is raised to make headroom for the dinette. A large rear window would be a nice addition.

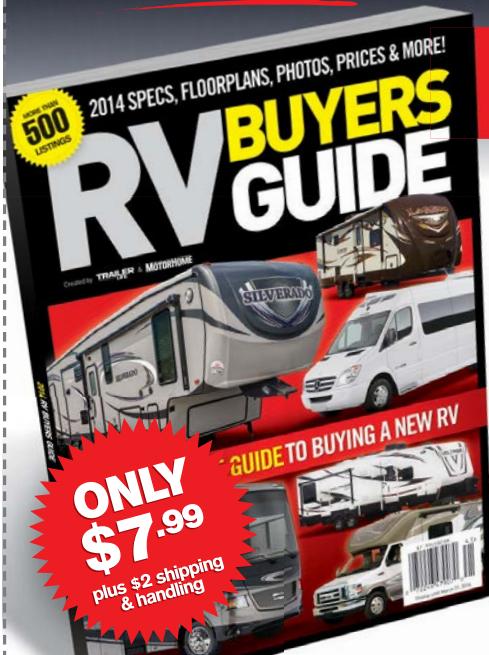
Moving forward, Heartland did a very nice job making the living area feel expansive and luxurious. The centerpiece is the island kitchen, which features a residential-style pull-out faucet in a contemporary, brushed nickel finish. There's plenty of meal prep space here, adequate cabinets, and a large (but shallow) pantry on the back wall that can accommodate an array of seasonings, canned goods and the like. The cabinets look good and seem well made, and the drawers are all equipped with ball bearing drawer guides for smooth operation. A 6-cubic-foot, double-door Norcold refrigerator, Suburban three-burner range with oven



(From left) Bathroom area offers adequate room for the task at hand, and uses a Jack and Jill arrangement with doors to the bedroom (shown) and living area. Rear bunks on street side convert to a mini dinette for the kids, but the top bunk blocks light from the window.

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(Left) Living area offers a warm feel, with a dinette and couch that face the TV on the opposing wall. The Caliber Edition option package includes dark solid-surface counter-tops, as well as a stainless-steel sink. Island is roomy and well lit, and with its sink covers, offers plenty of room for meal prep.

and a microwave round out the galley area. In the streetside slideout is a dinette with removable table and a couch that faces a 32-inch TV and AM/FM/DVD player on the opposing wall.

As you look to the front of the living area, you'll find there are two doors: One that accesses the bedroom, the other, the bathroom. Having two doors side-by-side looks odd, but a bigger issue is that, once the large slideout is pulled in for travel, you can't access the bedroom or the bathroom. In fact, you can't access the rear bunkhouse, either. And since the slideout is on the street side, deploying it for a quick pit stop by the roadside isn't an ideal situation.

The bath area is roomy enough, however, and features a large shower with glass door, a good-size lavatory with storage and a mirrored medicine cabinet. An opposing door leads into the front bedroom, which is equipped with a 60-by-74-inch queen bed with nightstands on either side. Nothing to write home about here, but the area has enough room to get some shuteye at the end of a long day of adventure — and that's all most of us really want anyway.

Outside, the North Trail King Slide 33TBUD offers numerous outdoor entertainment options. At the curbside corner, a compartment door opens on gas struts to reveal a refrigerator and slideout countertop, and the back wall is TV ready with 120-volt AC and cable outlets. Outdoor speakers are standard, as is a TV in an exterior compartment. Plenty of room for outdoor gear is provided by a large, fully finished pass-through storage area up front.

Heartland is very proud of the North Trail's construction details, which include a fully enclosed underbelly with heated holding tanks and gate valves, laminated/insulated floor and roof, 2-inch laminated side walls and insulated slideout rooms. In fact, Heartland maintains that the North Trail has been

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With the North Trail King Slide 33TBUD, the amenities don't end when you walk outside. An outdoor entertainment center with refrigerator and pull-out counter, combined with outdoor speakers, TV and the large power awning (part of the Caliber Edition) make for great fair-weather gatherings.



"comfort tested" at extremes ranging from 0 to 100 degrees Fahrenheit and is backed by an All Season Warranty.

One disadvantage we've noticed with large, lightweight trailers is that they can be difficult to tow, as their expansive side walls and feathery nature make them easy to blow around. Heartland thoughtfully addressed this issue as well, with Wide Trax axles that are spaced farther apart for better stabil-

ity, the Correct Track trailer alignment system and standard radial tires. After towing the North Trail to the hills north of our offices in Southern California we can say that these additions really did seem to work — the trailer towed as steady as a rock.

The Heartland North Trail lineup comes very well equipped as standard, providing pretty much everything an adventurous family could need. But if you want to up the content level, opt for the available Caliber Edition (\$2,999)

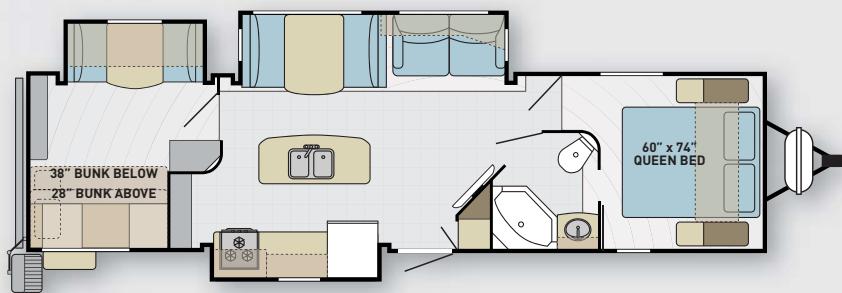
we sampled here, which adds solid-surface countertops, stainless-steel sink, aluminum wheels, a pull-out bike rack, spare tire, power awning, power jacks, the aforementioned 32-inch LCD TV, slam latch baggage doors, porcelain toilet and hidden cabinet hinges.

Like most travel trailers, the Heartland North Trail King Slide 33TBUD is not without its quirks — but it is a well-built, well-equipped travel trailer that tows like a dream and offers room for the whole family.

QUICK INFO



Exterior Length	36' 11"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	6' 6"
Exterior Height	11' 1"
Freshwater Cap.	36 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	37 gal. / 37 gal.
LP-gas Cap.	10 gal.
Weight (dry)	7,499 lbs.
Hitch Weight	624 lbs.
GVWR	9,600 lbs.
MSRP Base/As Shown	\$32,549 / \$35,548



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2014 Toyota Tundra

Lightweight trailers are designed for half-ton trucks, so we paired the Heartland North Trail King Slide 33TBUD with the redesigned 2014 Toyota Tundra. Featuring a muscular new exterior as well as a more refined interior, the new Tundra is an improvement on what was already a very capable package. Toyota provided us with a Tundra Double Cab standard bed 4WD in Limited grade, which includes the 381-horsepower 5.7-liter engine, six-speed automatic transmission and tow package, as well as exterior upgrades like chrome door handles/mirrors, billet-style grille insert and a Deck Rail System that makes it easier to manage bed cargo.

The test truck was also equipped with a couple of option packages. The Limited Premium Package includes features like parking assist sonar and driver/front passenger power windows with auto up/down (\$595), while the TRD Off-Road Package replaces the Limited's standard 20-inch wheels with 18-inchers and off-road tires, and adds Bilstein shock absorbers, engine/fuel tank skid plates and TRD decals, a bargain at \$45 (when added to the Limited grade). With the addition of available running boards (\$345) the cost of truck came to \$41,970, including \$995 in destination fees — a great value.

As equipped, the truck has a tow rating of 9,900 pounds per the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) J2807

towing standards (which Toyota adopted in 2010) making it a perfect match for the North Trail's 9,600-pound GVWR. Towing mirrors are also an option (which we think is odd, considering the Limited grade comes with a tow package) but were not included on this truck, so we made due with aftermarket add-on mirrors (not pictured) when towing.

The most common suggestion Toyota received about the previous generation Tundra was a more welcoming and less work-oriented interior. So while it retains Tundra hallmarks like large knobs that can be used with or without work gloves, it's also more ergonomic and more comfortable than before. For example, the reach to the audio and HVAC controls has been shortened by 2.6 inches, and materials have been upgraded for a more premium feel, especially in the Limited, Platinum and new 1794 Edition grade.

The Limited grade's leather-trimmed seats are available in Black, Graphite and Sand Beige, the latter of which is the color of the test truck's interior. These seats are heated, and the driver's seat is power operated. With dual-zone climate control, power sliding rear window, auto-dimming rear view mirror with compass and Toyota's Entune Premium Audio with Navigation and App Suite, we found the Limited's cabin is a very comfortable place to spend time. We particularly appreciated the armrests, which are



The Tundra's dash layout is very clean, with logically placed controls and a center-mounted touch-screen display. Between the large speedometer/tachometer is a multi-information LCD screen. Back seat offers adequate room, but if you really want to stretch out, opt for the Tundra CrewMax.

deeply padded right where the point of your elbow lands when driving. Easily legible instruments and multiple storage compartments make the truck very easy to use. About the only thing we wished for was better-looking faux-wood trim (which comes with the Limited grade) or an option for a different adornment.

Whether driving solo or towing, the Tundra is a pleasure. The engine is as smooth as a Swiss watch, yet emits a satisfying growl when pedal meets metal. The transmission, which seems to anticipate which gear is needed for a given condition, remains one of the best available. And while the ride is firm, it never felt rough, even over the heaving pavement transitions and expansion joints of the Los Angeles freeway system.

If a capable, comfortable half-ton truck is on your shopping list this year, you should definitely take the Toyota Tundra into consideration. 🚚

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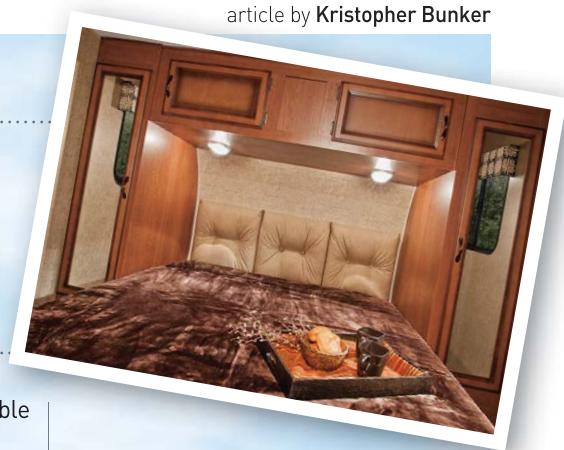
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WALK-THROUGH: KZ SPORTSMEN SPORTSTER 265TH

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When searching for a toy hauler, buyers are often faced with a tough decision: Do I want a full-featured trailer that just so happens to hold motorcycles, or do I want a stout garage-on-wheels that will hold my toys without worry, but is merely a minor improvement over tent camping in terms of comfort and livability? This decision is no doubt driven by that individual's level of "adventure," as off-the-beaten-path types are often more prone to leaning toward function rather than form, while the "occasional weekend warrior" may prefer additional amenities and electronic comforts. Enter the KZ Sportsmen Sportster, a line of trailers aimed at off-road enthusiasts and available in four fifth-wheel and three travel-trailer configurations. As we learned after spending some time in the mid-profile 265TH fiver, buyers

need not decide between highly livable and highly functional — it may just be possible to have the best of both worlds.

The KZ's dual-purpose functionality begins with the construction techniques on the Sportster. The fiver (and its namesakes across the model line) is built to be lightweight and easy to tow, utilizing wood rafters, plywood decking, aluminum-laminated side and front walls, a fiberglass exterior and a one-piece seamless Superflex rubber roof. All of which adds up to a fifth-wheel that can be towed by many half-ton pickups (properly equipped, of course). The Dexter Nev-R-Adjust electric brakes help make towing easier, while a streamlined front end keeps things looking good while on the road.

As with any toy hauler, the garage/cargo area is the main attraction with the Sportsmen, attention that is espe-

cially warranted due to the available options resulting in a number of completely different configurations.

The 9-foot 6-inch cargo area in the 265TH comes standard with eight tie-down rings, a 72-inch rollover jiffy couch (think jackknife) and a free-standing folding table. From there, buyers can opt for the 2nd Flip Jiffy option (pictured; \$652), or a single power bed (\$1,440) or dual power beds (\$2,250). You can also add a pull-down rear screen door (\$660) for a bit of separation and a swivel rocking chair (\$580; not available with the 2nd Flip Jiffy option) for additional seating.

The galley is located amidships and features a three-burner stove, oven, microwave and dual-basin sink streetside, while the roomy 8-cubic-foot refrigerator (\$255) is located



The 265TH feels much more spacious than its sub-29-foot length due to some smart appointments by KZ. (Top) Comfortable queen bed features integrated padded headboard.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE MANUFACTURER

curbside, a configuration that worked out nicely during our review. My initial concerns that the kitchen area would be too cramped were quickly allayed after a bit of strategic planning and communication with the other campsite “chefs.” We would have appreciated a bit more cabinet space, but that’s a gripe we seem to have with most trailers, even those that are 10 feet longer and twice as expensive.

The bathroom is a bit tight, granted, but again, features all the comforts of a larger trailer. The toilet was set at an angle that maximizes the space, and the built-in medicine cabinet with an integrated mirror offers ample space for toiletries and the like. The RV-tub/shower combo is always a hit with the little ones (and the grateful parents who appreciate a little more space to bathe the kiddos).

A trip up a couple of steps (and past the roomy linen closet) to the master bedroom reveals still more practical floor planning, with dual mirrored wardrobes, a couple of overhead cabinets and a comfortable pillowtop mattress (\$220). An integrated fabric headboard is the only bit of pomp in the room; it’s for recharging after a day on the dunes, not for hanging out, after all.

There are a number of options available on the Sportsmen fifth-wheels for the adventurous RVer, including a prewire for a second air conditioner and 50-amp service (\$415), a ladder (\$145), an LED lighted power awning (\$325) and an outside grill (\$270).

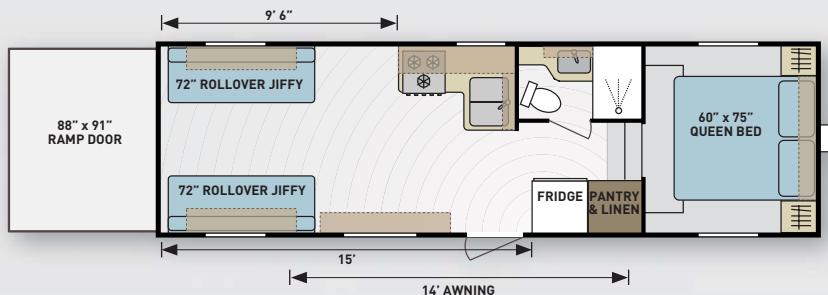
The 265TH features a surprising amount of livability in a relatively small package. After my initial walkthrough, I was surprised when the tape measure reached a figure south of 30 feet for overall length; this is likely due to the smart footprint and open-air feeling of the cargo area, in addition to the fact that KZ has wisely chosen to include the essentials and little more. This feat becomes even more impressive when you realize the 265TH doesn’t have any slideouts. And, given the ability to customize the layout to precisely what you’re looking for, the Sportsmen Sportster is a great choice for an adventurous RVing family. 🚐



(Top) Abbreviated galley space is quite useful once a cooking-prep plan is in place. (Above) Power rear bed over two jiffy couches offers a variety of sleeping — and seating — options when the toys are outside.

QUICK INFO

Exterior Length	28' 6"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	7' 7"
Exterior Height	12' 2"
Freshwater Cap.	75 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	32 gal./32 gal.
LP-gas Cap.	10 gal.
Hitch Weight	1,356 lbs.
GVWR	8,800 lbs.
Base MSRP	\$29,995



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NEW FOR 2014

article by **Bob Ashley**
photos by **Shawn Spence Photography**

From diminutive teardrop camping trailers to wide-body toy haulers, this year brings an exciting host of towables, many with a European influence

The European influence on the American RV market has become more evident in the 2014 model year, as domestic manufacturers continue to borrow design cues from across the pond. Notable among them are the Jay Smart, a concept towable from Jayco, the diminutive T@G from Little Guy Worldwide; and the reissued Element travel trailer from EverGreen Recreational Vehicles.

Other manufacturers have followed suit, adopting design strategies that have long been popular in Europe, including smaller floorplans and the increased use of composites and other materials to reduce weight.

But that's not all. Innovation and new offerings from familiar manufacturers are also in the offing. For example, a solar option has been added to Forest River's diminutive r-pod series for 2014, along with a rear door floorplan. The 8-foot-wide r-pod is reminiscent of the early teardrop trailers but is equipped with slideouts, queen beds, dinettes and kitchens.

Until this year, Topeka, Indiana-based CrossRoads Recreational Vehicle's smart-looking Reserve towable was part of the company's Zinger series. For 2014, Reserve is available as a stand-alone travel trailer and fifth-wheel brand with 15 floorplans.

Airstream, meanwhile, has softened the interior of its Land Yacht travel trailer that debuted in 2013 as a concept vehicle, while Prime Time RV, a division of Forest River, introduced its first toy hauler, the Spartan fifth-wheel.

KZRV also brought several new models to the table for 2014, including the lightweight Spree Connect travel trailer and the Gold Rush by Durango, an upscale fifth-wheel. And Starcraft RV, well known for its line of lightweight towables, introduced its A-frame-style Comet Hardside folding camping trailer.

Of course, these are only a few examples of what makes this year a great one for RVers. And while we don't have room to feature every new product or update, here's a broader look at some of the notable towable offerings for 2014.



Augusta Luxe ▲

Augusta RV made waves in the fall with the introduction of its polished-looking, upscale Luxe fifth-wheel concept vehicle sporting a chic full-paint, high-gloss, gelcoat exterior and a residential interior replete with quartz countertops and knotty alder and light maple cabinetry.

Although some changes are in store before the aluminum-framed 40-footer debuts (it should be available by the time you are reading this), it will have the same eye-catching curb appeal that it sported when shown initially to dealers, according to Marketing Director Chris Epps.

"We decided to tweak it a little bit and take some weight out of it. That's the big thing," Epps said. "We're adding a few new features for technology purposes that are very innovative and cutting edge."

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NEW FOR 2014

he assured, won't change, including a rear cap design borrowed from a high-end bus conversion. A retail price has yet to be established.

Augusta RV

574-848-0200, www.augusta-rv.com



Coachmen Apex ▲

It's hard to imagine, but with double-over-double bunk beds, a convertible sofa and a front queen bedroom, the new 28-foot Coachmen Apex 259BHSS travel trailer floorplan can sleep eight people.

The double-entry 259BHSS is one of three new 8-foot wide-body Apex floorplans in 28- to 31-foot lengths featuring 40-inch flush floor slideouts — all weighing less than 6,000 pounds.

"The Apex line is a neat little lightweight package for people who are looking for more room, less weight and better towability," said Apex Sales Manager Tracy Anglemeyer.

Indeed, the laminated fiberglass-and-aluminum Apex lineup also offers the ultimate in versatility with three hybrid, six 7½-foot-wide and 11 8-foot-wide floorplans. "We cover the gamut of lightweight," said Anglemeyer.

With MSRP's of about \$30,000, the three new floorplans offer glazed cherry cabinets, Congoleum Grand Canyon flooring and black appliances.

With the Forest River Coachmen Division marking its 50th year, an anniversary package includes a painted fiberglass front cap, power A-frame jack and interior LED lighting.

Coachmen Recreational Vehicles

800-353-7383, www.coachmenrv.com

Cyclone CY 4200 ▶

An attached side patio offers unique entertainment opportunities in the wide-body, 44-foot Cyclone CY 4200 toy hauler fifth-wheel from Heartland



EverGreen Element

Recreational Vehicles.

"We incorporated a side patio into the living space of the kitchen and living area," said A.J. Jones, Cyclone general manager. "Usually when you're camping, you're either outside or inside. There's no interaction between who's inside and outside the RV. This allows for an open flow between the two."

The side patio drops down, much like the rear ramp does on the toy hauler, and is capable of supporting up to 1,000 pounds. Additionally, the 10-foot-by-7-foot patio contains a 40-inch flatscreen TV, built-in refrigerator and bar table with a sliding glass door opening into the trailer.

The 12-foot garage, with an 8-by-8-foot loading ramp that can double as a second patio, also has a second bathroom and a sleeping loft above.

Retailing for about \$90,000, the double-slide CY 4200 floorplan, featuring a front king bedroom, is one of 13 Cyclone fifth-wheel floorplans available for 2014.

For those wanting a primitive camping experience, the CY 4200 has a

dedicated 1,000-watt inverter coupled with two 6-volt batteries that will allow the fifth-wheel to operate for 48 hours off the grid.

Standard interior features include LED lighting throughout, solid-surface countertops, 23-cubic-foot refrigerator, and Broyhill furniture, including electric recliners.

Heartland Recreational Vehicles

877-262-8032, www.heartlandrvs.com

EverGreen Element ▲

After a two-year hiatus, EverGreen Recreational Vehicles has reintroduced — or "reimagined" in the company's words — the European-inspired Element travel-trailer series. Available with a lower price, the 2014 spread-axle Element initially features two double-slide 30- and 32-foot floorplans with four others in lengths between 25 feet and 34 feet planned for early this year.

With a new distinctive front cap that can be optioned with a front window, EverGreen has paid close attention to design. Both of the initial front



Cyclone CY 4200

queen-bed floorplans have island kitchens with 8-cubic-foot refrigerators, Corian solid-surface countertops, glazed hardwood cabinets and full-size composite sinks.

With MSRPs that begin at \$34,900, other Element standards include fully enclosed and heated underbellies, painted tri-color vacuum-bond fiberglass-on-aluminum side walls, frameless, automotive-type windows, LED lighting throughout, residential-style furniture, entertainment centers, full wardrobes and 46-inch showers with glass enclosures.

EverGreen Recreational Vehicles
574-825-4298

www.goevergreenrv.com



Grand Design Solitude ▲

Manufacturers have introduced front living room fifth-wheels in the past that have drawn big RV show crowds. Then, they'd drop them because, as "sexy" and "cool" as they were, these novel towables weren't all that practical or they didn't sell well.

But Grand Design RV claims to have solved the riddle with its new 40-foot, 379FL front living room Solitude, a wide-body fifth-wheel with an extra-spacious upper deck area. Comfortably seating up to eight, the living area sports a large recliner or hide-a-bed sofas that can sleep four along with theater seating directly in front of a 50-inch HDTV.

The 379FL, with a retail price of about \$80,000, is one of four 36- to 40-foot floorplans in the all-new Solitude line.

"Our goal in creating the front living room Solitude was to take what's sexy about it — the 'cool' factor — and make it livable and practical and something that the customers, the full-timers, can use," Grand Design

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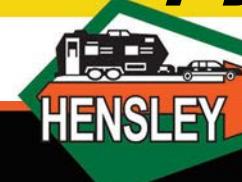
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NEW FOR 2014

President Don Clark said of the 379FL.

The floorplan houses plenty of pass-through storage and a kitchen with a huge island featuring a curio cabinet that facilitates a major amount of countertop space. Other details include a painted front cap, high-gloss fiberglass side walls with color-matched fender skirts, frameless windows, enclosed-and-heated tanks, and underbelly storage.

Grand Design Recreational Vehicles
574-825-8000
www.granddesignrv.com



Gulf Stream Streamlite Champagne ▲

Aimed at the half-ton tow-vehicle market, Gulf Stream Streamlite's upscale Champagne Edition is the highest line of lightweight travel trailers the company offers.

Distinguished by its full painted front cap, the Champagne Edition — available in seven 26- to 32-foot floorplans — also offers a power A-frame jack, power stabilizer jacks and power awnings.

There's also a deep slide — which, like the side walls, is vacuum-laminated and backed by Azdel composites — and up front, solid-wood pocket doors and a queen-size bed with a chest of drawers.

Standards include LED lights inside and out, Congoleum flooring, Lane theater seating, an exterior mount for the TV (you just pick it up off of its mount inside and hook it up outside), choice of free-standing dining table or dinette with inner-spring seating and a huge amount of storage.

Options include frameless windows, all stainless-steel appliances and a fireplace. MSRPs range from \$23,093 to \$33,453.

Gulf Stream Coach
800-289-8787
www.gulfstreamrvtrailers.com



Jayco Jay Smart ▲

The ultra-lightweight Jay Smart, a concept towable from Jayco, appears to be less a U.S. travel trailer built with a smattering of European influences than it is a European caravan "Americanized" for domestic use.

That's not surprising, given that one of Jayco's design and engineering consultants on this project has been working on European "caravans" — as travel trailers are called in Europe — for three years.

By reconfiguring the trailer's center of gravity through a modified chassis and extended A-frame — the low-slung Jay Smart is designed to have a low hitch weight of between 100 and 150 pounds. With four 19- to 26-foot rear-bath floorplans in the works, the Jay Smart weighs in at between 2,400 and 4,100 pounds.

Other innovations include the use of a friction pad that allows the coupler to lock down tightly to prevent chocking, an optional manual maneuvering system attached to the axles to enhance positioning into tight locations

and acrylic windows throughout. All floorplans feature LED indirect lighting along the ceiling. A retail price has not yet been set.

Jayco
574-825-5861, www.jayco.com

Keystone Big Sky ▼

Beyond the standard amenities available on Keystone RV Company's upscale 40-foot Montana Big Sky fifth-wheel, the thing that catches your attention is that hard-to-define aspect called eye appeal.

The high-end Big Sky joins the Montana, Mountaineer and High Country fivers in the nation's top-selling fifth-wheel series. Available initially in two 37- and 40-foot 100-inch wide-body floorplans, the Big Sky will be available in two other layouts with up to five slideouts.

"For the last couple of years, the Big Sky has been an option package," said Southeast District Sales Manager Mark Krol. "Now we are differentiating it by separating it into its own set of floorplans and its own production line so that we can more aggressively attack the high-end market."

Standards are impressive and include full-body paint, dual metal-wrapped power awnings with LED lighting, a 12-cubic-foot Dometic refrigerator, Corian granite-style solid-surface countertops, hardwood cherry cabinets, fireplaces, leather theater



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seating, 80-inch sofas with built-in end tables, wood-plank linoleum flooring, 48-by-30-inch showers, outside entertainment centers, 8,000-pound axles, disc brakes and a six-point automatic leveling system.

MSRPs range from \$85,000 to \$110,000.

Keystone RV Company
866-425-4369, www.keystonerv.com

Lance 2212KS ▶

Lance Camper Manufacturing Corp. has produced the company's first toy hauler — a 22-foot, half-ton towable travel trailer with a streetside kitchen slide and a unique sink configuration that slides out of the way to create 12 feet of horizontal space to store toys and gear.

Lance says that 18- and 26-foot floorplans, all built on a newly designed Z-drop frame to increase outside storage, will be added to the toy hauler series in the near future.

The front bedroom Lance 2212KS has a dry weight of 6,310 pounds with a cargo capacity of about 4,000 pounds.

Twin convertible sofas that fold up against the side walls in the cargo area increase sleeping capacity, while the cargo ramp is protected by an automatic rear awning.

Featuring high-gloss fiberglass side walls on a lightweight aluminum superstructure and an aerodynamic front cap, the Lance 2212KS MSRP



starts at \$39,000.

Lance Camper Manufacturing Corp.
661-949-3322, www.lancecamper.com

Lifestyle Luxury RV Alfa Gold ▼

Lifestyle Luxury RV has resurrected the Alfa Gold fifth-wheel brand that those who live on the West Coast might recognize by its distinctive straight-line roof.

"Our ability to replicate, innovate and improve upon quality resulted in the resurrection of this Western classic," said Mark Boessler, president of the EverGreen Recreational Vehicles subsidiary.

Built on Lifestyle's "Titan Structure" double-stacked box-steel superstructure, Lifestyle's 2014 102-inch wide-body Alfa Gold fifth wheel is available in six 34- to 41-foot floorplans, including a unique five-slide double-bunk, double-bath arrangement. With the wide-body layout, barrel ceilings and 7-foot-tall slideouts, the Alfa Gold feels as



Lifestyle Luxury RV Alfa Gold

spacious as any fifth-wheel you're going to find.

All floorplans have six-point automatic leveling, front bedroom double-door wardrobes, washers and dryers, king-size beds, Martha Stewart Corian countertops, side-by-side refrigerators and dishwashers, plush furniture and hardwood cherry cabinets with radius doors.

Retail prices range from \$69,000 to \$89,000.

Lifestyle Luxury RV

574-825-5578, www.lifestylelrv.com

Livin' Lite Camplite ▶

Livin' Lite Recreational Vehicles continued its tradition of building towables without a stick of wood in its all-new half-ton towable Camplite fifth-wheel.

The key to bringing in 28- and 32-foot floorplans with dry weights of 5,830 pounds and 6,490 pounds, respectively, is a Lite-Tech lightweight steel frame from a Northern Indiana specialty



frame designer. "Traditional fifth-wheels were too big and bulky to be built on it," said Scott Tuttle, president of Livin' Lite, which was purchased in September by Thor Industries. "We really want half-ton towable owners to feel comfortable towing the Camplite fifth-wheel, and the Lite-Tech frame allowed us to hit our weight goals."

The Camplite fifth-wheel, which

retails for \$39,900 to \$49,900, is a new cog in Livin' Lite's lineup that also includes lightweight all-aluminum or aluminum-and-composite folding camping trailers, truck campers, toy haulers and travel trailers.

"The big focus of the company has been building RVs that can be towed by half-tons, cars, crossovers and minivans," says Tuttle. To that end, the



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unit features cabinets framed in tubular aluminum with lightweight wood-look Azdel composite doors, as well as Azdel in the side walls, floor and roof.

Available with one or two slideouts, the Camplite fifth-wheel's exterior is offered in a variety of metallic automotive colors to match the tow vehicle.

Living' Lite Recreational Vehicles
574-862-2228, www.livinlite.com

T@G by Little Guy ▶

Massillon, Ohio-based Little Guy Worldwide — which bills itself as the world's largest distributor of teardrop camping trailers — first unveiled its new solar-ready MyPod camper in the fall, then closed out the year with the all-new T@G, which debuted at the National RV Trade Show in December 2013.

A smaller derivative of the company's popular European-derived T@B travel trailer, the retro-looking T@G weighs less than 900 pounds and can be towed by virtually any vehicle



with a four-cylinder engine — motorcycles included.

T@G boasts a queen-sized bed, air conditioner, sight-and-sound center, propane cylinder and battery, and initially is available in a single 11-foot floorplan with an MSRP of about \$10,900.

"We were looking for something that had a little more headroom on the

side, because a lot of the time women feel closed in in our trailer," said Chris Baum, chief operating officer.

That's important, in that 15 to 20 percent of Little Guy's customers are single women who appreciate the company's lightweight, uncomplicated units.

Little Guy Worldwide
877-545-4897, www.golittleguy.com

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POP-UP ROUNDUP

Whether you're new to RVing or simply prefer being closer to the outdoors, folding camping trailers are a great option to truly take it all in

by **Kristopher Bunker**

For many RVers, their love affair with the great outdoors began with a tent. You throw the dome into the pickup bed, add some firewood, some duffels and a cooler and you're off to find the perfect spot. Tent camping is often the springboard to RVing; once you get a taste of communing with Mother Nature, you want more ... though sleeping on the hard ground (or a constantly deflating mattress) seems to get really old as the years go by.

A folding camping trailer is a great choice to allow you many of the comforts of conventional trailers in an easy-to-tow, economical package.

Of course, there are some concessions to be made. Folding camper trailers are a bit more abbreviated than their hard-side counterparts, and though they offer a surprising amount of comfort and copious interior space, they are still for the most part exposed to the elements, meaning the manufacturers must pick and choose which amenities to include. Being exposed to the elements can be a good thing because you can lie in bed and hear the river gurgling close by, the sounds of animals, wind in the trees and so forth — and that brings you a step closer to being right there with the natural world. The ones with tent fabric are less insulated so you are closer to environmental conditions. Bottom line: You shouldn't expect dual slideouts or posh, fifth-wheel-

like appointments in these adventure-seeking trailers, but you should expect to be pleasantly surprised at what is included, such as full-featured bathrooms, smartly appointed galleys and comfortable sleeping accommodations.

Aliner Classic

Aliner, based in Mount Pleasant, Pennsylvania, has manufactured hard-sided A-frame pop-up campers for more than 30 years. Aliner trailers feature smooth lines and the sleek fiberglass exterior that has become synonymous with the A-frame-type folding camping trailer. Unlike folding camping trailers with fabric side walls, the Classic features full-insulated hard walls throughout. It's also fast and easy to set up. The 15-foot Classic shown is Aliner's flagship model, and features the VersaDine Five-Way Dinette. As its name implies, the VersaDine setup is quite handy, as it seats four for comfortable dining, is a storage area when the trailer is being towed and folds down to a 40- by 76-inch bed. Classic standards also include a 3-cubic-foot refrigerator, indoor/outdoor stove and outside shower. Some optional features include front and rear dormers, front storage box and tray, air conditioner, furnace and water heater.

Ext. Length	15'
Ext. Width	6' 6"
Ext. Height, travel/in camp	4' 9"/10' 2"
Int. Height, in camp	8' 2"
Freshwater Cap.	11 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	N/A
LP-gas Cap.	5 gal.
Hitch Weight	190 lbs.
GVWR	2,100 lbs.
MSRP	\$15,300-\$21,000

Aliner, 724-423-7440, www.aliner.com





Chalet RV XL 1935

The XL 1935 is a front-kitchen unit with a hard-sided dormer as standard equipment. Chalet A-frame-style, all-hard-wall trailers are constructed of fully vacuum-bonded fiberglass, and are fully insulated — including the floor. In fact, Chalet actually builds in an interior front and rear wall for added insulation, making the trailers fit for the best (or worst) of Mother Nature's offerings. Large pass-through storage provides space for your stuff, and smoked safety-glass windows offer peace of mind while in camp. Interior standards include a 3-cubic-foot refrigerator/freezer, a double-

bowl sink, hardwood cabinet doors and a three-speed reversible fan.

Ext. Length	18' 7"
Ext. Width	7' 2¾"
Ext. Height, travel/in camp	6' 2"/10' 11"
Int. Height, in camp	8' 7½"
Freshwater Cap.	15 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	N/A
	20 gal. (with wet-bath option)
LP-gas Cap.	10 gal.
Hitch Weight	370 lbs.
GVWR	3,500 lbs.
MSRP	\$20,583

Chalet RV, 541-791-4610,
www.chaletrv.com

Coachmen Viking/ Clipper 2485SST

These siblings from Coachmen offer a host of appointments and amenities designed to get you ready to camp in no time. Perhaps most impressive is the Canimex dual-drive winch system, which enables users to set up the trailer in as little as 15 seconds using a cordless drill and the provided bit (which also works on the stabilizing jacks). The trailers are constructed with laminated gelcoat-fiberglass walls, while a Polyflex woven



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POP-UP ROUNDUP

moisture barrier keeps condensation at bay. Plus, the laminated bed platforms are designed to deflect cold air, thus aiding in a good night's sleep. Features such as a swing-level galley, the Glide-N-Lock bed system and the E-Z Drop-Down Step System make life in camp easier, while the radial tires, AL-KO ultralube axles and electric brakes help with towing.

Ext. Length, travel/in camp:	18' 5" / 24' 5"
Ext. Width	7' 1"
Ext. Height, travel/in camp	4' 7" / 9' 3"
Int. Height, in camp	6' 10"
Freshwater Cap.	23 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	6 gal./N/A
LP-gas Cap.	5 gal.
Hitch Weight	282 lbs.
GVWR	3,502 lbs.
MSRP, base	\$15,345

Viking RV/Clipper RV, divisions of Coachmen RV, 800-368-2829, www.coachmenrv.com



Forest River Flagstaff HW27KS

The Flagstaff High Wall model HW27KS offers many of the conveniences of a conventional travel trailer, with the added bonus of improved maneuverability and fuel economy while towing. An impressive amount of counterspace, upgraded appliances and a hard-wall shower with a freshwater toilet add up to residential-type comfort. The fiberglass exterior, power lift system, microwave and outside grill help make the Flagstaff a highly livable unit. A slide-out kitchen with a sink and stovetop/oven utilize the space nicely while in camp, while the torsion E-Z lube axles, power lift system

and aluminum wheels are welcome additions while on the road. Available options include a forced-air furnace, a 13,500-Btu air conditioner and a large three-way refrigerator.

Ext. Length	19' 4"
Ext. Width	7' 9"
Ext. Height, travel/in camp	5' 11" / 10' 6"
Int. Height, travel/in camp	3' 10" / 7' 5"
Freshwater Cap.	26 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	12 gal./12 gal.
LP-gas Cap.	10 gal.
Hitch Weight	370 lbs.
GVWR	3,870 lbs.
MSRP	\$16,900

Forest River, www.forestriverinc.com

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Rebate form will be available at SafeTAlertRebate.com beginning March 1, 2014!



Forest River Rockwood HW296

The Forest River Rockwood High Wall model HW296 has been designed for families who want the features of a travel trailer in a much lighter towable option. The cherry-wood colored cabinetry, stainless-steel finished appliances and upscale tile-look floor help elevate this folding camping trailer to a class of its own. The convenient hard-wall shower with residential-style freshwater toilet is a departure from many of the more primitive folding camping trailer options, while the AM/FM CD/DVD player and LCD TV allow you to bring the comforts of home to your campsite. Standards include a heated inner-spring mattress, a power lift system, a hot-water package

that includes an exterior shower and a Create-A-Breeze roof vent, among others. Buyers can opt for a refrigerator and improved climate-control systems as well.

Ext. Length	21' 4"
Ext. Width	7' 9"
Ext. Height, travel	6' 0"
Ext. Height, in camp w/ A/C	10' 7"
Int. Height, travel/in camp	3' 10" / 7' 5"
Freshwater Cap.	26 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	12 gal./12 gal.
LP-gas Cap.	10 gal.
Hitch Weight	373 lbs.
GVWR	4,573 lbs.
MSRP	\$18,000

Forest River, www.forestriverinc.com

Jayco Jay Series 1208

The popular Jay Series from Jayco combines a full-featured kitchen, sleeping for up to eight and a long list of impressive amenities in multiple family friendly floorplans. Jay Series trailers are built on a heavy-duty, corrosion-resistant A-frame and feature a scratch-resistant aluminum exterior finish. Each floorplan, like the 1208 seen here, features a king-size bunk and plenty of storage space. Plus, buyers can choose among different dinette options and sofa arrangements. Standard amenities include an acrylic sink and faucet, a water-heater bypass, tinted vinyl windows with fine mesh screening and real wood drawers with ball-bearing drawer guides. To complete the package, the lift system is covered with a lifetime warranty.

Ext. Length, travel/in camp	18' 2" / 23' 4"
Ext. Width	7' 1"
Ext. Height, travel/in camp	5' / 6' 11"
Int. Height, in camp	7'
Freshwater Cap.	17 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	5 gal./11 gal.
LP-gas Cap.	5 gal.
Hitch Weight	270 lbs.
GVWR	3,490 lbs.
MSRP	\$12,750

Jayco, 574-825-5861,
www.jayco.com





Palomino 12FS Basecamp Edition

Palomino Basecamp Tent Campers are built with family campers in mind. These trailers, like the 12FS shown here, feature spacious, fully furnished interiors and specially designed features for ease of operation. An electric lift with available remote makes setting up a snap, while the bed ends are laminated with Thermofoil insulation for increased comfort. Palominos are also built for the road with a strong steel frame, high-quality side walls, a Line X front wall rock guard and a one-piece fiberglass roof. Offered in eight floorplans, the interiors feature high-grade components such as Serta

mattresses and LED lighting, while family friendly features include a roomy 66- by 80-inch front sleeping area, and a 60- by 80-inch rear sleeper.

Ext. Length, travel/in camp	17' 10"/ 23' 10"
Ext. Width	7' 1"
Ext. Height, travel/in camp	4' 8" / 6' 10"
Int. Height, in camp	7'
Freshwater Cap.	18 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	N/A (cassette toilet)
LP-gas Cap.	5 gal.
Hitch Weight	232 lbs.
GVWR	3,552 lbs.
MSRP	\$8,100-\$13,100

**Palomino RV, 269-432-3271,
www.palominorv.com**

Starcraft Comet H1232MD

Starcraft has introduced the Comet Hardside series for 2014. Comet trailers feature solid construction, with a heavy-duty A-frame, vacu-bonded fiberglass walls and a Structurwood floor that's sealed with a Darco underbelly. E-Z Lube torsion axles help make towing a breeze, and the standard refrigerator, microwave and three-burner cooktop are much appreciated while in camp. Three out of the four floorplans in the Comet Series feature storage decks, including the H1232MD shown here. All Starcraft trailers are backed by a limited two-year warranty.

Ext. Length	18' 8"
Ext. Width	7' 1"
Ext. Height, travel/in camp	5' 2" / 8' 2"
Int. Height, in camp	8'
Freshwater Cap.	23 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap.	N/A
LP-gas Cap.	10 gal.
Hitch Weight	220 lbs.
GVWR	3,250 lbs.
MSRP	\$11,779

**Starcraft RV, 800-945-4787,
www.starcraftrv.com**



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✓ Get Ready for the Road

A thorough checkup will help ensure trouble-free days during the upcoming spring travel season

The onset of spring, with its warmer days, beckons RVers to get their rigs ready to hit the road for new adventures. We've compiled a number of helpful tips for a thorough spring checkup that will ensure your RV performs as well as possible throughout the upcoming travel season.

Let's start with de-winterization, for those who have stored their RV in preparation for freezing temperatures.

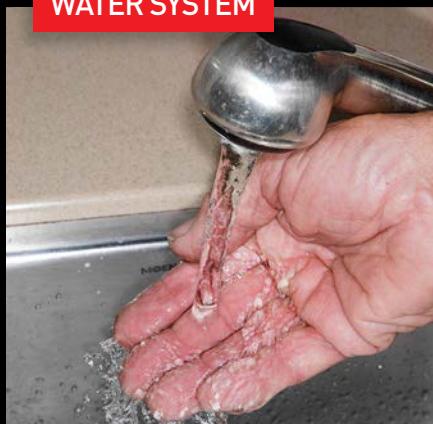
Attention is first given to the water system; thoroughly drain and flush the antifreeze from the entire water system, including the toilet and water heater. Start by returning the water heater bypass valve to its normal mode/position. After the antifreeze has been flushed, household bleach (without extra cleaners) can be used to sanitize the freshwater tank. Use ¼-cup bleach diluted in water for every 15 gallons of

tank capacity. Once the bleach is added (either via a gravity fill or pumped in), fill the water tank to the full mark, and pump the bleach-water solution through the entire system and allow it to stand for five to six hours.

Drain the water tank and open the low point valves to drain the water lines. Remove the plug or anode rod from the bottom of the water heater and allow the water to drain. This is a great time to replace a spent anode rod (if there is only 25 percent of the material showing) and flush the water heater. You'll also want to flush the freshwater system until you are sure that any foul taste and odor are gone. Baking soda added to the tank (about half a cup) will help remove any offensive odors. You may need to flush the system more than once. Leave the demand-water pump on (all faucets closed) for 48 hours to thoroughly check for any water leaks that may have shown up during storage. If the pump cycles with all faucets closed, there may be a leak in the system (or the pump needs repair).

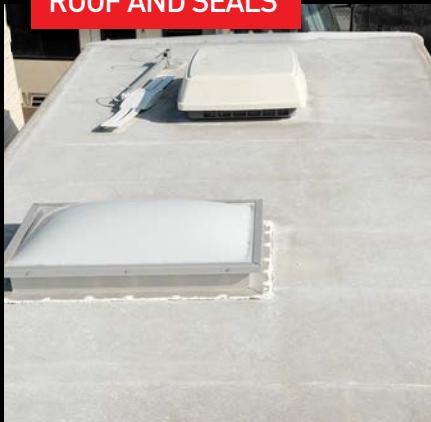
Now is a good time to give your trailer a bath. Washing the rig will allow you to get up-close and personal with areas that are often out of sight, and thus, out of mind. Start on the roof. Care must be taken when walking on the roof, especially a rubber roof that is wet. Use a non-caustic product to clean a rubber roof. Membrane suppliers to the industry recommend using Spic and Span cleaner

WATER SYSTEM



(Left to right) Flush the water system until all the antifreeze is gone — the water should run clear and smell clean. The Suburban water heater anode rod doubles as a drain plug. Replace the anode when only 25 percent of the material is remaining. Inspect the water heater burner, gas valve and pressure relief valve, and replace any corroded or rusty parts. Operate the water heater one full cycle for a complete test.

ROOF AND SEALS



(Left to right) After a thorough washing of the rubber roof membrane, inspect it carefully as it may need some type of maintenance. The vents, seams, antennas, skylight or other accessories may need scraping and resealing. Look out for window caulking that has gone bad. If you see cracks, shrinkage and missing seals, scrape and recaulk as needed before wet weather returns.

with a medium-bristle brush, and for tough stains, Murphy Oil Soap. If you have an aluminum or fiberglass roof, any type of car-wash product and the same medium-bristle brush will do the job. Pay close attention to the rubber membrane for any cracks or deterioration of the white surface coating.

While scrubbing the roof, be on the lookout for deteriorated caulking that will often show up around vents, seams and antennas. Also inspect the plastic vent lids and skylights for sunlight deterioration and cracks.

Washing the RV and rinsing thoroughly around the windows will help locate possible leaks. Carefully inspect window seals and caulking around compartments and accessories. It's also a good time to wax the exterior.

Routine tire inspection is a critical part of regular maintenance as well as an integral procedure during the spring checkup. Note the date of manufacture from the D.O.T. code that is located on the outside tire sidewall, but sometimes found on the inside of the tire, depending on how it's mounted. Every tire contains the week and year of manufacture.

The general rule of thumb is that trailer tires will time-out after seven years, regardless of tread condition. Most trailer tires time-out. During inspection, check every tire for cuts, cracks or bubbles — including the inside sidewall. Inflate the tires to the correct pressure. To determine the

proper pressure, either refer to the RV manufacturer's weight label (assuming the RV is not overloaded) or weigh the wheels individually and consult the tire manufacturer's load and inflation tables.

Battery condition can be problematic after long periods of storage without proper charging. Battery maintenance not only ensures proper function, but will extend service life as well. The specific gravity can be checked using a hydrometer in open-cell batteries, while a multimeter can be used to establish state of charge for sealed batteries. Remove any corrosion from the posts and the terminals; baking soda and water works well, but commercial cleaners and acid neutralizers are

available. Replace any cable terminals that have been damaged by corrosion. After cleaning, coat the battery terminals and posts with a protectant; this will help prevent future corrosion. When replacing batteries, always replace all of them, not just one of two, or two of four.

Safety and efficiency are what we want from the propane system. Before opening the valve after winter storage, carefully inspect the regulator, rubber hoses and fittings, and inspect the cylinders for corrosion and/or other damage. LP-gas regulators do not last forever, and are often overlooked. Some technicians recommend replacement every five years, but professional LP-gas suppliers can help make that determi-

TIRES



Check the D.O.T. code on all tires. The last digit indicates the year of manufacture. Steel-belted radials will need replacement if they are more than seven years old. Large cracks like these on the tire's sidewalls or treads are a sure sign that the tires need to be replaced.

✓ Get Ready for the Road

nation. Have the gas pressure tested by a certified technician, and ask to have a leak-down test performed annually.

Service all appliances after the propane system has been thoroughly tested. Start with the refrigerator; check the burner area for any debris or rust. If mothballs or dryer sheets were used, remove them before operating the refrigerator for the first time. Using compressed air, clean the burner tube and the flue. Check all the electrical connections for corrosion.

Illuminate the back of the refrigerator with a flashlight and look upward to check for any birds nests or other debris that may have found a winter home during storage. Start the refrigerator on gas, and listen for a flame to ignite. Let the refrigerator run on gas for several hours to be certain it will reach the set cooling temperature. Turn the gas off, open the doors of the refrigerator and let it sit for a few hours. Close the doors, select electric and allow to run long enough to verify that it



works properly in this mode.

Before testing the forced-air heating system, use a bright flashlight to look in to the exterior vent, checking for mud dauber nests or any other type of debris. Check the return air grille to be sure that it is free of any obstructions. Set the thermostat for 10 degrees

higher than the ambient temperature and let the furnace run. Listen for any variation in fan speed. If you notice a fluctuation in the fan speed, have the furnace checked by a professional. Use a bright flashlight to inspect the floor registers or heat ducts for any debris or obstructions. Let the furnace run for 10 to 15 minutes, and again listen for any variation in fan speed. If necessary, consult an RV repair technician to make sure the fan motor is not on its last legs.

Continuing the spring overhaul, clean the water heater flue and burner assembly with compressed air. Visually check the burner assembly and all LP-gas and electrical connections. Replace the burner and the spark probe assembly if they are rusted. Start the water heater on gas, and let it run through a full cycle to be sure that it is functioning properly. Check the TP valve, commonly known as a pop-off valve, for any leaks, corrosion or dripping during the heating cycle. If the TP valve is leaking, make sure the air space at the top of the hot water tank is restored before replacing the valve. To restore the air space, drain the tank and replace the plug/anode. Open a faucet in the system and allow the tank to fill.

If the water heater is equipped with an electric element, turn off the gas, open a faucet to run some hot water out of the tank and turn the electric on. Be sure it heats to temperature.

Check the LP-gas, smoke and carbon-monoxide warning detectors.

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Start by replacing the battery in the smoke detector (which should be done once a year). Push the test button in each device to verify proper operation. Most of these detectors will not last the lifetime of your RV; check with the manufacturer, or look on the back of the detector to see if there's an expiration date. And don't forget the fire extinguisher. It should be tested and replaced according to the manufacturer's timeline as well.

With summer right around the corner, servicing the rooftop air conditioner(s) is prudent. Clean or replace the intake filters first. Rooftop air conditioners should have their shrouds removed and the condensers cleaned with compressed air (regulated to 80-90 PSI). Be sure to check all connections and the fan motor for corrosion and rust. Grab that bright flashlight and check the inside evaporator for any buildup of dirt, oil or other debris that could affect the air conditioner's efficiency. Using a vacuum cleaner, remove any loose debris or dirt. Straighten bent cooling fins. Use mild detergent to clean off any oil or sticky residue; warm water and mild soap may also be used to gently hand-wash intake filters that are in good condition. Plug in to shorepower and run the air conditioner(s); carefully listen for any variation in fan speed. Check the temperature at the registers and be certain that the air is cold and the air-conditioner(s) is functioning properly.

Next, inspect the ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) receptacles and all 120-volt AC outlets; there should be no loose or faulty outlets. Don't forget the outlet that the refrigerator plugs in to. At this time, inspect the condition of the power cord (and any extension cord) for burns or a partially melted end; replace if either look unsafe.

Test the microwave oven. Using a glass of water, run the microwave for two minutes and be sure the water reaches a point of near boiling.

Grab the flashlight again and open all cupboards/closets and look for signs of moisture intrusion that may have

occurred during winter. Also be on the lookout for mold and mildew. Mold, and any water stains that have formed on the ceiling, can be cleaned with a product called InstaGone. Check under the galley, and open all drawers and inspect behind them with the flashlight as well. Look for mice, rat's nests or dead critters.

Checking the operation of the waste valves will help eliminate inopportune failures down the road. Fill the gray and black tanks to roughly half and add food dye. Let the water and food dye solution sit for two or three days with the valves closed and look for any signs of leakage. Freezing weather can damage the holding tanks as well as the dump valves.

Remove the sewer hose from its storage area and inspect for cracks on the seals, tube or fittings. Better to find out now that there is a pending problem than when your RV's full black tank needs dumping.

With the correct oil or silicone spray, lubricate the slideout mechanisms per the manufacturer's recommendations.

Open the patio and window awnings to check for proper operation and inspect the fabric for any damage or mildew that may have occurred during storage. Clean the fabric with Murphy Oil Soap or a mild detergent and let the material dry thoroughly before rolling up the awning. Using a ladder, check the fabric on all slideout toppers. Inspect the mounting hardware and spring mechanisms.

Take a few minutes to check the turn signals, backup lights, taillights and clearance lights for any bulbs that may not be functioning. The two most common problems come from corrosion or a burned-out element. Check taillight and clearance light lenses for cracks or broken pieces and make sure the seals between the light fixtures and exterior surface have not been breached. If so, reseal with RV caulking.

Taking the time to give your RV a thorough spring checkup will make for much more enjoyable travels. And finding the little problems before they become big headaches also keeps more money in your pocket! 🚚

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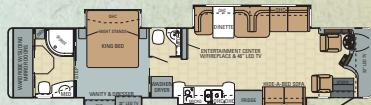
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All Units Are 2013 Model Year Unless Otherwise Noted.



Mach 8 Cooling

Summer is on its way ... are you ready for cooler camping? The line of Coleman-Mach RV air conditioners and heat pumps from RV Products has expanded with the addition of the Mach 8 Cub. Designed to offer the best cooling capacity versus power consumption in the RV industry, the Mach 8 Cub weighs around 85 pounds and has a 9,000-Btu cooling capacity, making it ideal for smaller RVs where size is limited, but cooling performance can't be sacrificed. The Mach 8 Cub features the same 8.5-inch, ultra low-profile as the other Mach 8 models, as well as two fan motors for high energy efficiency and superior cooling performance at low and high fan speeds, according to the company.

MSRP: \$870

316-832 3400, www.airxcel.com

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Need a Lift?

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

MSRP: \$45.99-\$52.99

303-233-6083, www.hatchlift.com

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Quick Flat Fix

Ideally, all tubeless tires should be repaired from the inside out — but in an emergency situation, that's not always possible. The Stop & Go Tire Plugger allows for a quick, on-the-wheel repair to virtually any tubeless tire, according to the company, and it seals the puncture on the inside. The Tire Plugger is a spring-loaded gun that "drives" the plug into the hole, where the shaft of the plug expands under pressure to fill the puncture. Meanwhile, the mushroom head of the plug seats on the inner wall of the tire, preventing air from escaping. The kit includes the gun, nozzle, probe tool, reamer/rasp tool, retractable blade, 25 rubber mushroom plugs and detailed instructions.

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First-Aid for Shades

Window shades make a significant contribution to the privacy and overall comfort of our rigs, but they get dirty. Give them the love and attention they deserve with United Shade's Spray 'n Brush RV shade cleaner. The product uses an advanced surfactant formula that works to break the chemical bond between soil and fabrics, according to the company. For heavily soiled fabrics, the product's cap features a built-in brush that is designed to penetrate and remove tough stains. United Shade also offers a repair kit that includes all the parts and complete directions for repair of two-cord day/night shades, four-cord day/night shades and two-cord night shades.

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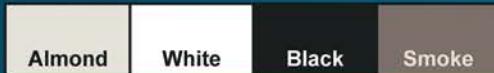
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SSBC Stainless-Steel Brakes

Many owners soup up their vehicles' engines to tow heavy trailers and get better hill-climbing performance in the mountains, but give no thought to improving stopping power. SSBC (formerly Stainless Steel Brake Corp.) pioneered stainless-steel-sleeved calipers for Corvettes and Mustangs in 1975 and today has advanced design, manufacturing and test facilities. These allow SSBC to make a wide variety of kits and components well suited for the extreme demands of towing. The company offers a wide selection of stock replacement, brake upgrade and conversion kits for most popular 1500, 2500 and 3500 series trucks and SUVs commonly used as tow vehicles.

SSBC produces high-performance two-, four-, six- and eight-piston calipers with corrosion-resistant stainless-steel pistons, which are designed to provide major improvements in stopping power while insulating the brake fluid against fade-inducing heat for extra safety. Multi-piston calipers distribute the clamping force more evenly over the brake pads and rotor, which reduces deflection and twisting for increased braking force.

SSBC calipers are made from lightweight aluminum, instead of cast iron like many stock units. The calipers are available polished or powder coated in a variety of colors to make them stand out when using custom wheels. To complement the calipers, SSBC offers Big Bite cross-drilled rotors in stock and oversized diameters for brake upgrades, which significantly reduce brake operating temperatures, and resist fading. SSBC reports that Big

Bite rotors typically run 200 degrees cooler than stock rotors. They are available as an original-equipment replacement, or as an upgrade to any kit the company offers.

SSBC's Truck Stop performance disc brake program offers a wide variety of kits for every budget. There are stock size slotted rotors and pad upgrade kits that fit in stock wheels, along with quick-change aluminum caliper upgrades that work with existing stock rotors and wheel sizes. For trucks using 18-inch or larger wheels, SSBC offers larger-diameter turbo-slotted or Xtra Life plated 14-inch rotors, which are compatible with stock calipers. Larger-diameter rotors provide more "leverage," which results in the system having more effective "brake horsepower."

Kits are available for most popular models, including Chevrolet Silverado 1500 through 3500 series, Tahoe, Avalanche, Suburban, Blazer, S10 and C/K10; GMC Sierra 1500 through 3500 series, Yukon; Cadillac Escalade; Ford F-150 through F-350; and Dodge Durango, Dakota and Ram trucks. For more information contact SSBC Performance Brake Systems, 800-448-7722, www.ssbrakes.com.

SSBC offers replacement calipers and rotors and pads for brake upgrades on stock and oversize wheels.

Bully Dog Adds Toyota Tundra Applications

Bully Dog's product line of gauge tuners has expanded with application coverage for Toyotas. Bully Dog now offers the GT T+ for the 5.7-liter TRD supercharged (which can be dealer installed and are emissions and warranty compliant) Tundra pickups from 2007-2013 in addition to 4.0-liter V-6 and naturally aspirated 5.7-liter V-8 engines. This GT product is modeled after the previous tuners, but also offers extra features that include ABS Zero Point Calibration, ECT Reset (transmission learned values delete) and Traction Control. According to Bully Dog, tuning for the 5.7-liter Supercharged Tundra produced 72 horsepower gains using 93-octane premium pump gas. For more information call 877-285-5936 or visit www.bullydog.com.



More Turbocharged Engines Coming

Automotive manufacturers have been scrambling to meet upcoming fuel-economy regulations. Smaller, lighter vehicles with more efficient powertrains are a key part of the solution. All diesel engines currently on the market are turbocharged. Now, more compact turbocharged V-6 gasoline engines are replacing naturally aspirated gas V-8s in the quest to maintain power and improve mileage of new models.

Honeywell International Inc., which claims to be the largest maker of turbochargers in the world, predicts that turbos will be factory installed on about 40 percent of all road vehicles sold worldwide by 2018. Turbocharged vehicles sold in North America are projected to climb from approximately 3.9 million to about 6.5 million. 🚗



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Hold On

Rail Mate offers a helping hand for those who can use a little assistance negotiating entry steps

DIFFICULTY 1 2 3 4 5

TIME TO COMPLETE 1 HOUR

TOOLS NEEDED DRILL MOTOR, BIT, WRENCHES, VICE-GRIP, PLIERS

Getting in and out of a trailer or fifth-wheel seems like an easy enough proposition, but the elevation changes while negotiating three or four steps and the sometimes-narrow foot platforms can impact stability and lead to a fall. Handrails attached to the sidewalls — and those that pivot out for additional extension — are helpful except for those who are too short to reach the rail. A better solution is to have something to hold onto from the ground and all the way up into the trailer. The Rail Mate, manufactured by Stromberg Carlson, a major supplier to the RV industry, gives the user full support using a bracket that attaches to the step and the ground to stabilize the other end.

While the Rail Mate might look somewhat bulky to manage at first, in reality it's a very light apparatus that is



(Clockwise from top) Receiver on bracket was cleaned out so railing leg could slide freely. Front railing leg can be adjusted for the ground surface and pinned in place; foot has a hole for staking into soft ground. Vice-Grip is used to hold mounting plate in place for drilling holes.

completely removable and easy to store when traveling (which is required). The handrail is about 38 inches tall and 25 inches deep and is easy to grab from just about any angle. A lower railing, parallel to the top handle, can be used by shorter people or youngsters.

Installation is straightforward and requires a drill motor, bit and a couple of wrenches. The bracket is designed to be mounted to the side of the step. Once lined up, the bracket can be held in place with Vice-Grip locking pliers so the holes can be marked and drilled. The only tricky part is making sure the bolt heads don't interfere with the step mechanism, and that there's access for a wrench. Although the kit calls for the use of five bolts, we found that four worked better because of clearance issues on the three-step model we enlisted for the install. The four bolts, spaced properly, provided plenty of support for the railing.

Once the bracket is in place, the railing is slipped into the square re-

ceiver and locked with a set-bolt, after the front leg extension is adjusted so it hits the ground and can be pinned. Normally, this process should only take a minute or two, but we had to clean out some welding debris from the inside of the receiver that was restricting movement of the railing leg. The fit is fairly tight, which is a good thing, but the railing leg needs to move freely inside the receiver to allow for final adjustment, depending on the ground surface.

Positioning in relation to normal egress and ingress is excellent. Users can get a hold while standing on the ground and will feel comfortable (and safe) pulling on the railing or pushing down. It's not really designed to take a lot of lateral pressure. If someone loses his/her balance and leans to the side, the railing will flex to the point where leverage might cause bending, but will certainly break a fall.

The Rail Mate is designed to fit most three- and four-tier steps and is made in the USA. It sells for \$129.95 at Camping World, which is a small price to pay for those who can use a little help going up and down the steps. 🚐

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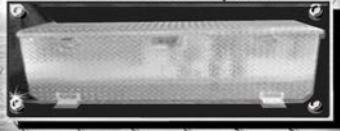
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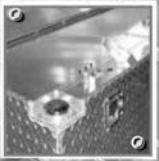
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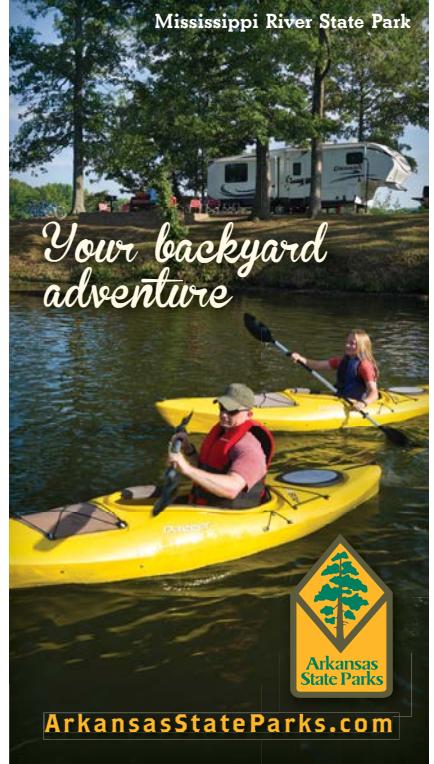
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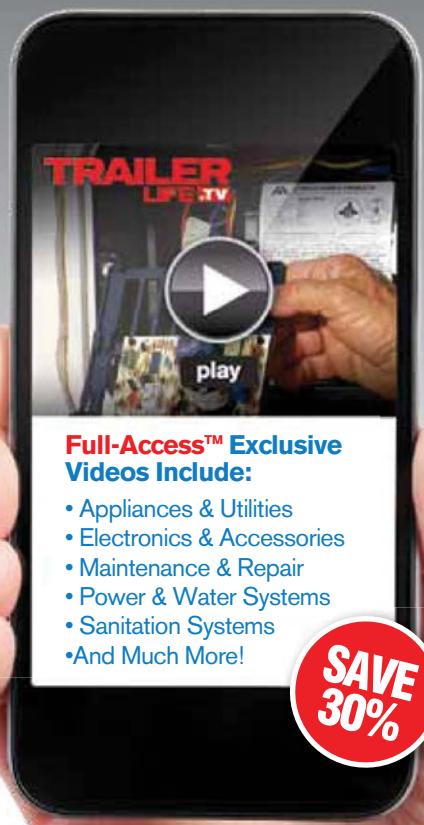
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FURNACE TOO HOT

Q I have an Atwood furnace in a 2014 Open Range fifth-wheel. The fan comes on, then shortly afterward, the burner lights and runs for about five minutes. Then the burner goes off for 30 seconds, then lights again and runs for about four minutes, then goes off, then a couple of minutes later the fan goes off. If it has to run longer than 10 minutes to keep it warm, it cycles off and on more than once before it shuts off. The temperature coming out of the register in the bedroom was around 170 degrees. The register was hot to the touch; it felt like it could burn me.

The bedroom register is about 5 feet away from the furnace. Should the discharge be that hot? The dealer said this is something they never check and have not heard back from the manufacturer.

Al Van Hoff, Via email

A You didn't say which model Atwood you have, Al, but regardless, it should definitely not be putting out 170-degree Fahrenheit air or making a register hot to the touch. Warm, yes, but not hot like that! The furnace contains a limit switch that's supposed to shut it down when it exceeds its maximum operating temperature, and these switches are rated at temperatures ranging from 130 degrees up to 190 degrees, measured near the furnace heat chamber. I'd recommend you stop using it immediately and have the furnace checked by a qualified repair center, perhaps a different one than the guys who told you it was "something they never check."

— **Jeff Johnston**



SOUNDING OFF ON SAG

Q I enjoyed the "Pickup Aft-End Sag" letter in the December 2013 issue, but it failed to mention the clearance between the fifth-wheel overhang and the tow vehicle's bed rail. Truck sagging reduces this clearance and could allow the fifth-wheel to hit the top of the bed rail when the trailer is on an incline that the tow vehicle is not on, such as when pulling out of a fuel station with the street at a lower level. This condition can become worse when turning. My rig was level and it received three grooves in the right

bed rail and two in the left bed rail due to this condition. I have since raised my fifth-wheel pin 1½ inches (last available bolt holes) to alleviate that. While this places the front of my fifth-wheel up a little from level, there shouldn't be any additional grooves scraped into the truck's bed rail.

Bryan Berlin, Tucson, Arizona

A As a rule, we recommend a minimum of 6 inches of clearance between the bed rail and the trailer. If a user typically drives over a lot of

THE TECH TEAM



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



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

READER SERVICE

dirt roads or other less-civilized situations, more clearance is a good idea, as needed. For the average driver, who sticks to the pavement, 6 inches is a good start. — J.J.

Q In the December 2013 letter about pickup aft-end sag, I have never seen a 26-foot fifth-wheel make a 2500-model truck sag. Generally, a truck like that will sag because of different conditions such as possible broken springs, fifth-wheel hitch installed incorrectly (if it is a new install), hitch deck height set too low, etc. Or, if it has a slider, it could be in the rear position. As for the trailer, it could be overloaded in the front (which I doubt), or the kingpin box could be longer (replaced by the original owner for turning clearance). To tell the owner to add air bags before checking these things is not within safety reason. I also have experience pulling new and used trailers of different lengths, as a business using 2500-3500 short- and longbeds and never had one sag. Thank you for letting me vent on this accident waiting to happen.

Mike Whitmer, Mesa, Arizona

A Never say never, Mike — but we agree that 5 inches seems like a lot of sag. Your suggestions about items to check are worth following up on, though we suspect the owner already went through the obvious basics when troubleshooting this matter. Some base-model 2500-series trucks have surprisingly soft rear springs and can display a degree of sag under a modest load. So, droop is possible, but checking all the options is also a good idea. Thanks for the suggestions. — J.J.

WELDED OR FASTENED?

Q We're looking to purchase a new mid-profile fifth-wheel soon. Most seem to have a welded aluminum frame, while at least one newcomer, the Shasta Phoenix, advertises a mechanically fastened aluminum frame. We like the Phoenix, however, I want a unit with a solid structure that will last. I'm afraid mechanical fasteners may loosen over time and contribute to failures of the

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

wall or roof systems, including fiberglass cracking or delamination. The Shasta website provides no details on its fastening system and two emails to Shasta's customer service department have gone unanswered. Any insight you can provide on the pros and cons of welded versus mechanical fastening would be appreciated.

Ken and Bobbie Stagg, Yreka, California

A Most manufacturers use welded frames, but a few use mechanically fastened frames, although those are few and far between these days. The mechanical fastener types we've seen include an angle bracket at a joint that's riveted in place or interlocking structural members, also riveted. Both systems work, and properly done, there's nothing wrong with mechanical fasteners. As you may imagine, the salesperson for a given product will stress their company's methods over those of the other guys.

If a salesperson says a welded joint

is too brittle and prone to cracking with frame flex, it's not a truly meaningful comment. Most aluminum frames are used in laminated construction, where the frame, insulation, interior and exterior skins are bonded together with heavy-duty construction-grade adhesive. It's a pretty stiff assembly. If there's enough frame flex within that assembly to allow cracking at a joint, it means the structure has somehow failed, for example by massive delamination, and the RV owner would have a lot more to worry about than welds cracking.

Try calling the manufacturer to get an answer to your questions, since it seems to be ignoring your electronic information request. — **J.J.**

BRAKE REPLACEMENT

Q I have an Everlite 27-foot trailer and I want to put brake pads on it. My question is, are they the same as regular brakes on a car, or because of the

electric part are they different?

Wayne Ledoux, Via email

A The brake shoes (pads are what you'd use on a disc-brake system) on a trailer are virtually identical to what's used on a car with drum brakes. The shoes are a specific type for use on the RV axle, of course, meaning you can't just slap in any old type of shoe. You'll need to search for the correct make and model to get the right brakes. But they install and are adjusted in much the same way, per the instructions that go with your vehicle's axle. — **J.J.**

A/C INSTALL

Q We have a 1956 Airfloat trailer and would like to put an air conditioner in it. We have only found A/C units that fit in a square hole; our air vents are round, and I don't want to cut them. This might be a problem, but I know that if anyone can find the answer, you guys can!

Roy Dunn, Shelton, Washington

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A Your trailer's age means it was built before standardization became common throughout the RV industry, and that means any kind of A/C installation will need to be a custom job. You'll need to be sure any wiring is done to current code standards so it can handle the load of an air conditioner. As for the round vent opening and square A/C mount, that's going to be difficult, because the part of the mechanism that installs inside the trailer is tied to the outside parts through a square opening. This is going to call for some custom work, so Googling a custom shop in your area is likely your best answer. Good luck! — **J.J.**

FROZEN BLACK- AND GRAY-WATER HOLDING TANKS

Q Due to unforeseen circumstances, we are staying in our RV in Missouri. During the last several days, our holding tanks have frozen, and we are unable to continue our travels. Do you have suggestions on how to get the ice out?

Jerry Hardesty, Buffalo, Missouri

A You could try pouring nearly boiling water through the toilet and sinks, or aiming a 150W floodlight bulb or an infrared bathroom heating bulb at the underside of the tank to keep it from freezing. Use weatherproof fixtures and three-wire grounded wires, plugged into GFCI outlets, and don't lay them in dry weeds or in wet conditions. Support the fixtures on bricks or rocks. Frozen freshwater supply hoses and holding tanks can be kept ice free with thermostatically controlled wire wraps and heat pads, available in RV supply, hardware and farm supply stores.

Once you get the ice out, pour windshield washer fluid in the tanks after dumping if you prefer not to install heat pads. The amount will vary depending on the temperatures. — **Ken Freund**

2WD OR 4WD?

Q In the very near future, I will be ordering a new, 1-ton crew-cab dually pickup with a diesel to tow our

fifth-wheel trailer. What are the pros and cons of a 2WD as opposed to a 4WD vehicle used primarily for recreational towing?

Ed Harris, Howell, Michigan

A The only downside to 4WD is the extra cost of the truck, and there's a bit of a fuel economy loss due to the extra hardware weight that you need to haul around. The sophisticated front-end suspensions used today have more or less leveled the playing field as far as ride quality and handling are concerned, although a 4WD may still be somewhat stiffer up front. A judgment on that is up to you and your test-driving evaluations. The 4WD is really handy if you plan to travel in frequently bad weather, such as on snow, or on unpaved roads where a loss of traction can occur. There is no reduction in towing stability, braking or other driving characteristics. Ask yourself how often you've been in a spot where your vehicle has completely lost traction when towing and needed to be

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towed. If the answer is seldom to never, and your towing situation is not likely to change in the future, a 2WD will do just fine. — J.J.

GMC LAUNCH SHUDDER

Q I was having the same problem as mentioned by Bill Sadler ("Launch Shudder," January) with a GMC short box truck, and all the changes you suggested were of no help. We finally got the OK to install a one-piece driveshaft. Problem solved, and all the other things that were tried were returned to original stock and the truck was good.

Bill Bickel, Via email

A Thanks for writing and sharing your solution. Launch shudder is an oscillation, and all chassis have a natural frequency that varies with spring rate, driveline angularity and length, wheelbase, etc. Problems like this can be caused (and cured) by a number of different things, as you found out. — K.F.

QUESTIONS ON GENERATOR USE

Q In 2011, I bought a used 2010 Aliner Ranger camper. I am writing to you so I can get some advice on how to use my equipment. I sometimes camp with no hookups.

I saw the DC lights inside the camper getting dull. I hooked up my 2012 Yamaha EF 2000is inverter generator for an hour of charging. I thought everything was fine, until I moved to the next campground with full hookups. I was hooked up to shorepower and noticed the DC lights were out. I checked the battery and it was dead. When I got home I went to the RV dealer and he explained that sometimes upon hooking up a generator it can blow out the converter. It was the first time I used my generator. He said sometimes the small Elixir Industries Model # ELX-30 converter cannot take the power input of a generator. Because it is located in a small space, one could not upgrade to a stronger converter. I had the genera-

tor checked out and voltage and amps are good. I installed a new ELX-30 converter and am back to working properly.

Do you think I should unhook the battery and put a generator on it to charge the battery alone, and unhook the battery to use generator power inside the camper to avoid damage to the camper converter? I thought normal use would be to plug into the generator and it would result in 120 volts inside the camper with 12 DC power charging the battery. If I disconnect the battery, could I use the genset for 120 volts AC in the camper, without damaging the DC converter? Your opinion would be greatly appreciated.

Ernest Soderland, Via email

A It is possible that a portable generator can damage the converter. Generator power may not be as "clean" as power from commercial generation; voltage spikes, surges, frequency and uneven non-sine AC waveforms may cause problems. But your Yamaha is a

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You can disconnect the battery from the Aliner camper and charge it directly with the genset, but gensets typically don't have a sophisticated charging output. Many built-in power converters also don't have a "smart" battery charging circuit. Therefore you'd be better off with a portable automatic battery charger run off the genset to charge the battery when needed from the generator.

The battery serves to stabilize voltage and soaks up AC ripples in the 12-volt DC circuit that come from the converter. But it's not needed for the 120-volt AC circuit. I believe the converter was defective. — K.F.

TIRE TIPS

Q I drove a big truck for more than 29 years. One thing I was very fussy about was watching tire air pressure. The company had a setup on the air line that ran through the shop. It was a tee that had an air stem that would allow you to check the accuracy of the air gauge. The closer the compressor, the truer it would read.

If you buy a pressure gauge and only pay a couple of bucks, you may not get good readings. Look at the pressure gauges your tire shop uses. If it is a reputable shop you will see a good brand. Check your vehicle's air pressure when the tires are cold. If they are low at highway speeds you will blow out the tires.

Avoid making nearly 90-degree backup angles, as this will overstress the tires and may weaken the sidewalls of the tires. This could also cause a blowout.

Thanks for your great magazine.
Jim Trexler, Altoona, Pennsylvania

A Thanks for writing, Jim. Jack-knifing when backing does put a lot of stress on tires and axles. I recommend purchasing a good-quality analog dial-type tire gauge (with a rubber guard around the gauge) or a digital electronic type. Digitals tend to

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be accurate and often have a resolution of ½ psi, but they are usually fragile, and when the batteries go dead, they are useless. — K.F.

SPRING (NOT AUTUMN) LEAVES

Q A couple of months ago, I bought a new Montana 347THT toy hauler. I had a Ford F-350 to tow it with, but decided I didn't need that much truck, so we checked out a ¾-ton Ford. According to all the numbers we looked at, this truck should handle the load, so we bought it. We took the truck down to pick up our new trailer, and found that when we hooked up to the fifth-wheel, the rear of the truck squatted 4 to 5 inches. You could tell that this truck wasn't doing the job.

Looking into the problem, we found that the truck had only three leaf springs. Looking at other ¾-ton Fords, we found that some had three springs and some had four, and could find no reason why, nor could the dealer tell me why. We wound up adding another leaf and the dealer chipped in \$70 toward the cost. Have you had other inquiries about this difference in springs on the Ford F-250?

Dick Talbot, Proctor, Minnesota

A I have not seen any queries regarding this specific combination, but over the years have seen many different spring combinations come through on various models of trucks. Often, spring packs are indicative of rear gross axle weight ratings (GAWR), which can be discerned by reading the factory label on the truck. If spring sag is too much, but the truck scale shows that the loaded weight on the axle is within factory-rated limits, adding more spring leaves or air bags are the most popular ways of dealing with the problem. — K.F. 📧

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Feb. 28-March 2	South Carolina RV & Camping Show	TD Convention Center - Greenville
Feb. 28-March 2	Rhode Island RV & Camping Show & Sale	Rhode Island Convention Center
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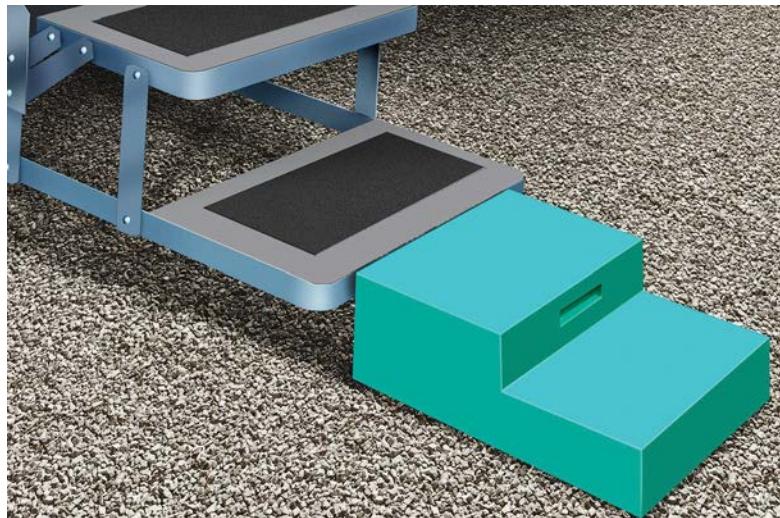
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Greasy Stow-Away

As anyone who pulls a travel trailer knows, storing the ball mount when not towing can be a challenge. I have found a way to solve the problem: I put the head of our Reese hitch in a 14-gallon plastic bin. When I am not towing the trailer, the hitch rides safely and cleanly in the back of my truck. When the trailer is in storage, the ball mount stores in the trailer in a space next to the queen-size bed. I put the plastic that wrapped the new mattress for the bed in the bottom of the bin for cushioning and it adds stability. The small can of grease for the hitch ball fits nicely in the bin, too. Storage and the greasy ball are no problem anymore and I don't bang my shin on the ball mount because it's no longer in the truck's receiver when the trailer is disconnected.

Don Pearson, Bellingham, Washington



Texas Two-Step

I have a Dodge 2500 four-wheel-drive truck with oversize tires and had to add a 3-inch lift on my fifth-wheel to tow level and have proper clearance over the bed. This created another problem, as my family is vertically, as well as physically, challenged.

To correct this, I simply went to Tractor Supply Co. and purchased a Horsemen's Pride 2-Step Mounting Block (\$50). It lines up perfectly with my RV's steps and also helps gain access to my truck bed for servicing needs. I hope this will be useful to other Rvers who need a lift!

Mike Turner, Texarkana, Texas

QUICK FIX

Easy Backup

In the January issue, some readers commented about having difficulty backing up to hitch a trailer. I have no trouble backing up to a fifth-wheel — and no one else should, either. I put some white paint on the front edge of the plate of my fifth-wheel hitch. I make sure I do not look over my shoulder. I look in the rear-view mirror, line up the paint spot with the pin and back straight to it the first time. —Ron Hickey, Jackson, Michigan 🚚

To send your submission, write to: *10-Minute Tech*, 2750 Park View Court, Suite 240, Oxnard, California 93036 or email: 10minutetech@trailerlife.com. Please include an illustration or photo if applicable. *Trailer Life* will pay you \$35 for original *10-Minute Tech* ideas.

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V-J Day Kiss

A 25-foot-tall sculpture of the famous embrace marking the end of World War II graces Bayfront Drive in Sarasota



A Paul Bunyan statue in Northern Minnesota would not surprise me any more than would seeing a lake up there. They go with the territory — like a statue of General Eisenhower at the D-Day Memorial.

I am in Sarasota, Florida, driving along the water's edge on Bayfront Drive. From the street, the bay appears

as one humongous marina, what a visitor would expect to see in this city on the southwestern coast of the state. Then came the unexpected: In a grassy strip, on the bay side of the drive, is a bigger-than-life statue replicating the famous V-J Day photograph of a Navy sailor kissing a girl in Times Square.

As a perpetual student of the war in the Pacific, I know that day well — it was almost 70 years ago — the day the war ended with Japan. Photographer Alfred Eisenstaedt was on the streets of New York that afternoon — August 14, 1945, as the crowds started to form. He later wrote: "I saw this sailor running along the street grabbing any and every girl in sight ... I was running ahead of him with my Leica looking over my shoulder. Then suddenly, in a flash, I saw something white being grabbed. I turned around and clicked the moment the sailor kissed the nurse. If she had been dressed in a dark dress I would never have taken the picture. If the sailor had worn a white uniform, the same."

The following week, that black-and-white photo was given a full page in *LIFE* magazine. It has become the icon of that momentous day. The girl in the picture, Edith Shain, died in 2010 at 91. The identity of the sailor has never been established for certain, but a number of guys have said that they remember the event well.

But why here? With no unique identity with V-J Day or relationship with New York, except that a lot of New Yorkers retire down here or least spend their winters, why is this statue in Sarasota?

On second thought, why not? It's a national symbol — we as a country, Sarasota included, suffered through the war and we all certainly celebrated the end of it. The



Sculpture replicas of the "V-J Day Kiss" photograph have gone on display at many World War II memorial sites around the country. This one in Sarasota's Bayfront Park is one of the largest produced. For many, the sculpture represents the end of the war, hence the title, "Unconditional Surrender."

picture represents the joy and relief that we felt that day.

I guess it should be expected that some day a sculpture would be made, a three-dimensional rendering of that historic photographic. This is not the only one. Sculptures like it can be found at World War II memorial sites around the country where vintage artifacts are displayed.

J. Seward Johnson produced the 25-foot sculpture called "Unconditional Surrender" in 2005. It came on loan to Sarasota as part of its "Season of Sculpture" that runs every January through May. When May came that first year, many in Sarasota wanted "Unconditional Surrender" to stay. Others called it "tacky" and wanted it gone. The controversy apparently raged until a person gave the city \$500,000 to the keep the sculpture in place for the next decade. The city commissioners accepted the gift after months of debate.

Some folks in Sarasota, namely the Sarasota Public Art Committee, still want it gone. They claim that it is not art. I side with those who say, "So what?" It captures a moment in American history and a proud moment at that. And they are hard to come by these days.

I don't think the critics get it — it's what it represents that's significant, not what it is. I am told it's an ongoing debate. I suspect those who remember or understand the joy of that day in 1945 — more importantly, the price we paid to get there — will win this one.

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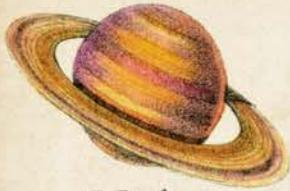


Fig. 1 Saturn

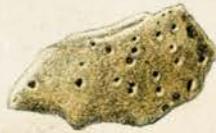


Fig. 3 Asteroid Gaspra



Fig. 5 Mercury



Fig. 7 Jupiter



Fig. 2 Neptune



Fig. 4 Phases of the Moon



Fig. 6 Mars

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