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AUGUST 2011

## 12 CLASS A'S UNDER \$100K



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# AFFORDABLE CLASS A'S

It seems like only yesterday that a big Class A motorhome was 30 feet long. Luxury coaches stretched to 33 feet while some of the highlines measured beyond 35 feet — clearly not the norm. Buyers had to part with about \$1,000 a foot for a well-equipped luxury coach, which was considered a hefty price tag for the “biggies.” I distinctly remember traveling in 33-foot Apollos, Kings Highways, Executives and others, feeling like I was wrapped in pure opulence every time I headed out of town. But “yesterday” was in the '70s.

Fast-forward to today and 33 feet seems almost entry level. A large number of Class A coaches sold in the last decade were 35 to 40 feet, with some going to 45 feet. Buyers managed to take events in stride when gas-powered coaches went north of \$100,000 in the last decade, but that was a dubious milestone. While the feeding frenzy for super long, luxurious coaches has slowed a bit, America's appetite for high-tech equipment, spaciousness, convenience and better performance has not waned. Neither has the desire for better livability and amenities.

The way things were going, most buyers figured that fully equipped Class A's below the \$100,000 threshold were quickly becoming extinct, and if they did find one in that category, it would be like buying a car with manual windows and no air conditioning. You'll find that quite the opposite is true after reading our article, “The Price Is Right,” starting on page 62.

Motorhome enthusiasts are thinking a little differently these days, driven by a number of factors, including fuel costs, access to public facilities, storage and overall maintenance. Smaller price tags and shorter coaches are locking onto buyers' radar. I don't need to explain why people want to spend less; that's human nature. And we can debate the attributes of a shorter coach over a longer model, and vice versa, all day; the consideration here is dependent on lifestyle and personal interests. While affordability should be



an important factor, value can easily trump the other decision-making elements that drive buyers to enter the motorhome lifestyle — or make a trade.

Slideout development has changed the paradigm. A 30-foot coach with a full-wall slideout or multiple slides will have more livability than a 38-footer with no slides. Manufacturing efficiencies and judicious use of building materials — many times lightweight composites — have made it possible to produce economical coaches without sacrificing the amenities.

For example, take a look at the A.C.E. by Thor Motor Coach, featured on page 58. Here's a nimble 29-footer with a single slide that, after taking a few cues from European builders, will sleep six in comfort, has lots of walk-around room and sensational storage. Riding on the venerable Ford F53 chassis, like the others in our survey, the A.C.E. has decent performance, good handling characteristics and the exterior lines that make it feel equally at home in a U.S. Forest Service campground as in a nice RV resort. And it barely breaks the \$100,000 retail price point with full-body paint and other niceties like a rear-view camera and leveling jacks. Lose the body paint and jacks, and I've seen dealers selling these coaches for as little as \$70,000.

The A.C.E. is but one in a varied field of value-priced coaches. All the motorhomes on these pages — from well-known manufacturers in the industry — are chock-full of features, such as solid-surface countertops, stainless steel sinks, big LCD TVs and convenient sleeping for families. There's even a surprise or two, including an outdoor kitchen.

High-end diesel-pushers will always be popular among motorhome enthusiasts, but it's the feature-rich entry-level offerings that will keep the people coming. And that's a good thing. ♦

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## “WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE RESTAURANT YOU’VE DISCOVERED ON YOUR TRAVELS AND WHY?”

That’s the question we asked in our May issue, and here are some of the replies we received.

### A BARREL OF FUN — AND GOOD FOOD

Our favorite restaurant is Cracker Barrel. We can pull into its parking lot late at night (sometimes we’ll be alone or maybe we’ll see a few other RVs parked there for the night), then wake to a nice breakfast. Also, most Cracker Barrels are located next to a major motel where we can pick up free Wi-Fi.

**DOUG MOESTA | PENSACOLA, FLA.**

### CAVE CUISINE

Eating a gourmet meal at The Cave Restaurant in Richland, Mo., is a unique dining experience. In 1989, a former owner, his wife and a couple of workers tirelessly hammered and blasted 2,100 tons of rock to create a restaurant that seats 225 people. It’s a wonderland of stone, cave walls, waterfalls, fountains with fish and a spiral staircase that climbs up the cliff face to the restaurant.

We parked our vehicle in the parking lot and a van drove us to an elevator, which carried us up 150 feet into a mountain cave. The unusual lamps, railings and fixtures are made out of horseshoes and tools. Enjoy the view through a huge window overlooking the Gasconade River, and don’t forget to bring your camera.

On-site you will find a self-contained RV area, canoe rentals, float trips, fishing and rental cabins.

**ARLENE AND PETE CHIAROLANZIO | FLORHAM PARK, N.J.**

### MAGNIFICENT MARATHON MEAL

My wife and I just returned from a monthlong motorhome trip through southwest Texas, New Mexico, and ending up in Sedona, Ariz.

On our return we traveled old U.S. Highway 90, which skirts Mexico. We spent the night in Marathon, Texas, population 482. We didn’t expect to find the best restaurant of our entire trip in this small out-of-the-way place.

We made dinner reservations at Gage Hotel, known for its unique original western décor. The dinner was magnificent, and the food was cooked to perfection!

The location of Marathon is a popular crossroads as it is the gateway to Big Bend National Park, a national treasure.

If you are ever in this area, do yourself a favor and stop in at Gage Hotel. You will be pleased you did.

**STEVE AND AUBARA FOTIADES | TIKI ISLAND, TEXAS**



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### ON THE TRAVEL MENU: BLACK BART'S

Without question, our favorite restaurant while traveling in our RV is Black Bart's Steakhouse, Saloon and Musical Revue, located in Flagstaff, Ariz. In fact, it is the only restaurant that we deliberately put on our traveling agenda and we have been RVing throughout the western states, mostly the Southwest, since 1970.

The food is very good and reasonably priced. The service is outstanding as most, if not all, of the servers are college students attending Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff. These enthusiastic students not only serve your dining needs but they also entertain you with singing and interacting throughout the evening.

Black Bart's also has a nice, large RV park adjacent to the restaurant that has 174 full-hookup sites, can accommodate RVs of all sizes and is also reasonably priced. The campground is in a wooded area typical of the Flagstaff region. It is located at an altitude of 6,850 feet and so affords a cool respite from the high summer temperatures of the Southwest.

**NICHOLAS D. CROW**  
RANCHO CUCAMONGA, CALIF.

### MISSING COPILOT

Looking at the May cover ("Tour de Force, Winnebago's Flagship Class A"), I noticed the copilot was not seated. Did she just go out the door? Is the pilot grinning?

**TOM ROBINSON** | SWANSEA, ILL.

### IN-LAW'S EXIT?

The May cover shows the Tour parked at a location that might enable the driver to let his mother-in-law exit first.

**GEORGIA HOPE CARSON**  
ORCHARD, TEXAS

*It certainly is a drop-dead gorgeous seaside location, isn't it? Thank you both for your wicked sense of humor.*

### FAULTY COMPARISON

In the May issue a subscriber makes the point that a 370-mile trip to visit his daughter is greener in his hybrid than in his motorhome ("Hybrid vs. Coach: No Comparison," P.O. Box). Clearly, nobody can argue differently. However I doubt anyone would consider an RV a commuting vehicle, which is exactly what a 370-mile drive stay-

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**WHAT YOU'RE SAYING ON OUR FACEBOOK PAGE:**

We shared a link to an article predicting that driving habits would change once pump prices exceeded \$4 a gallon. We asked our fans at what price point their RVing habits would change. Here's what some of them said:

**Roger Schade:**  
*Already have. Sadly.*

**Joseph Cassarella:**  
*Last time gas prices hit record levels we embarked on a cross country trip and it cost us nearly \$2K in additional fuel costs. This time, I think we may just sit at home.*

**Rhonda Kirby-Eckenrode:**  
*We will use the RV but stay a little closer to home. Sorry, Pictured Rocks and Lake Superior ... maybe next year.*

**Bob Davis:**  
*We won't take any fewer trips unless gasoline hits \$5 per gallon. Like Rhonda, we'll maybe limit the distances we're willing to travel for a while.*

**Mary Lou Pulaskey:**  
*They have already changed. If this keeps up we will be changing our address to wherever we are at \$4 a gallon.*

**Geri Holmes Galloway:**  
*Already decided to cancel one of our big trips. Currently still planning to go on the other big one in September. Other than that, only short distance adventures.*

**Gary Getman:**  
*I have already changed my RVing — I have dropped anchor in Arkansas — gas is at \$3.35 now!!*

**Peggy Cravey Jarvis:**  
*I don't care if it gets to \$4 a gallon. I planned for this 22 years ago and now I can hit the road. I have a diesel and I love it.*

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ing in a relative's house for free is.

That is hardly the RV lifestyle — only a comparison between the gas mileage of an RV and a hybrid is valid and the same can be said of a hybrid and virtually any vehicle.

Now if you want to talk about a few months' vacation traveling around the U.S. eating, sleeping, etc., in a hybrid versus an RV, then that would be a better comparison. That is the RV lifestyle!

**TIM DORÉ | WILSONVILLE, ORE.**

**SPOTS OFF WITH MR. CLEAN**

I just finished reading the article "Getting the Dirt Off" in the May issue. I was surprised that you didn't mention the Mr. Clean system for auto washing that also works on RVs. I've been using it for the last eight years on my 38-foot Damon Intruder and have never had to dry the motorhome to keep it from getting water spots.

It is a simple device and you obviously need a good brush on a pole, but the rest of the equipment is a lot less expensive than the ones mentioned in your article. A starter kit on Amazon is only \$19.95 for the device, soap and filter. It doesn't produce the kind of foam that DP Xtreme does but it's sufficient.

Protect All Polish, Wax & Treatment, which is mentioned in Wheels & Gear ("Multi-Surface Protector," May), is also a great product. I even use it on my windshield to repel water like Rain-X.

**BILL FARR | BUCHANAN, MICH.**

**A SOLUTION TO FOGGED WINDOWS**

Regarding "Window Woes" (Hot Line, May), I experienced the same problem as Tom Duncan. About eight years after I purchased my 1998 Beaver Monterey Class A motorhome seven of the dual pane windows gave out.

The windows were manufactured by Norco, a company that at that time warranted them for one year. I contacted the company and they were of no help. Then I attended an RV convention in Indio, Calif., and discovered RV Glass Solutions of Eugene, Ore.

Mark Beaty, who works out of an RV Glass Solutions satellite shop in Tolleson, Ariz., is a true artist with these windows. My motorhome is being repainted so I took the seven windows to Beaty. He took them apart, polished them and did his

magic in a month.

As for the price, replacement windows cost about \$2,000 each. A couple of my windows had glass so deeply etched that the panes had to be replaced. The total bill for my seven windows was less than \$3,000.

These people do a fabulous job and I highly recommend them.

**MICHAEL MALONEY  
LA CRESCENTA, CALIF.**

**FOGGED WINDOW FIX**

In the May issue, Hot Line noted that window seal failure is one of the most common complaints it receives. I am not surprised by this, as I have also experienced fogged windows on my 2004 Fleetwood Bouncer, which has SeGi dual pane windows. In my case, the window seal failure occurred on all of the SeGi dual pane windows, except two windows that had an early 2003 manufacture date.

I first called Fleetwood and SeGi with no resolution offered. After that I was determined to find a solution to the problem. I found Dave Root RV Glass Repair in Bend, Ore. The company specializes in rebuilding RV dual pane windows.

Once a year Root takes his business on the road and travels to many West Coast cities, which makes window repairs convenient. The cost to rebuild the window is less than half the cost of a new window.

**COREY WALLACE | MURRIETA, CALIF.**

**CAMPING WORLD TO THE RESCUE**

In "Dual Roof Air Conditioners" (Coach & Powertrain, May), it was stated that dual air conditioners on 30-amp circuits in Class A motorhomes are not feasible. My wife and I read the article with interest because we have just put a second unit in our 2004 Holiday Rambler Admiral.

We were given the choice from our dealer to convert our 30-amp motorhome to a 50-amp circuit at a cost of about \$3,900. Then we went to Camping World and the service manager there suggested we add a unit to the bedroom. He told us they could design a 50-amp plug-in with two 30-amp outlets attached to it, at a dramatically reduced price.

This solution has proven to be very satisfactory. The cost: \$1,300. Again,

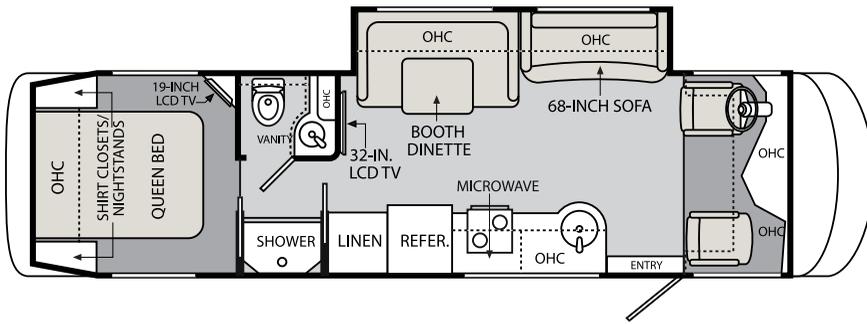
Camping World to the rescue!  
**PAT AND JULIA KELLY**  
**MESA, ARIZ.**

**FLOORPLAN FAUX PAS**

Nice feature article on the Monaco Vesta 32PBS (June). However, the floorplan shown on page 57 does not match the photos or the description of the model you reviewed. What gives?

**CHRIS HORST | ARVADA, COLO.**

*The floorplan we erroneously published was of the Monaco Vesta 35PBD. Below is the floorplan for the 32PBS.*



**THE IMPORTANCE OF REGISTRATION**

When we purchased a new 2003 Damon Intruder Class A motorhome in March 2003, we did not realize that the warranty information was not sent to the various manufacturers. Therefore, when Dometic Corp. issued a recall on our refrigerator, we did not know it and were not contacted.

On March 14, the refrigerator stopped working and had to be replaced with a new one. The old unit could not be repaired. The new unit, including installation, cost \$2,397.

It might be helpful to inform your

readers to always make sure the owner's registration is completed for warranty and notification purposes. Also, at least once a year for big items such as refrigerators, contact the manufacturer with the model and serial number to find out if a recall has been issued. If I had done this, the old unit may still be working and I would not have incurred such a large expense. I did register our new refrigerator with Dometic.

**ALLAN CUNNINGHAM**  
**WALDEN, N.Y.**

**GOING SHORTER**

I look forward to MotorHome magazine every month. I wish that it would include more articles on motorhome reviews and test drives but I understand that you have only so much space available each month.

I have just begun looking for a new motorhome to replace my Chinook Glacier (I love the motorhome but hate the ride) and it appears that more and more manufacturers are making smaller,



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more fuel-efficient Class A's. This includes the shorter diesels, both pushers and front-engine designs. I have been looking at the 30-foot Tiffin Allegro Breeze and the 34-foot Monaco Vesta.

Thanks for publishing an interesting and informative magazine.

**SCOTT CHARMAC  
LONG BEACH, CALIF.**

**A TRUE QUEEN**

I have been a MotorHome reader for many years. I am in the market for a coach and enjoy the articles, quick reviews and full tests that you publish on various motorhomes. However, you routinely use the term "queen size" for a bed that is not the standard 60-inch by 80-inch mattress that the bedding industry has dubbed a queen bed. I appreciate that on many of the floorplans you do provide the dimensions for the beds, but I suggest that you not use the term "queen" unless the mattress meets the 60-inch by 80-inch standard. I just want a queen bed that truly is a queen bed.

**JIM SHORT | VISALIA, CALIF.**

**COACH WARRANTY LACKING**

As I look around at the various RV models, I can't help but wonder why, when a motorhome is so expensive, the coach warranty is so low? It seems to be this way across the board and I find that rather strange. The chassis on the one I had in mind is warranted for three years and 50,000 miles, but the coach part is only warranted for one year and 15,000 miles. It would seem that after spending that kind of money for a motorhome you should have a better warranty.

By the way, your magazine is tops in my book; keep up the good work.

**DOUG NELSON  
CLINTON, IOWA**

**QUESTION:**

Do you think that motorhome warranties are lacking considering the cost of buying a motorhome? Why or why not?

Send your comments to MotorHome, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001; or email [letters@motorhomemagazine.com](mailto:letters@motorhomemagazine.com). ♦

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## Welcome to the land of “aaahs.”

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\*400-hp initial production, 450-hp with 2010 EPA emissions running line change Fall 2010



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# escapes

edited by PATRICIA MARROQUIN

EVENTS | NOTEWORTHY | WHEELS & GEAR | CROSSROADS

## There's a better way to experience scenic Glenwood Canyon along

Interstate 70 in Colorado than looking out the window of your motorhome. Stop, park and hike the short but steep path to Hanging Lake. Waterfalls cascade into this glacial limestone lake. The water is so crystal clear that you can count the speckles on the trout. It's a strenuous hike — the trail rises more than 1,000 feet in just over a mile — but well worth the effort.

Wear sturdy shoes and take plenty of water and your camera. Leave your fishing poles in your motorhome since they are not allowed; neither are dogs.

If you don't have two hours for a round trip to Hanging Lake, Glenwood Canyon Recreational Trail is another option for stretching your legs. This popular paved biking and hiking path can be entered from several trailheads, including Hanging Lake.

Hanging Lake trailhead is at exit 125, which is only accessible from eastbound I-70. If you are traveling westbound, turn around at the Grizzly Creek rest area near mile marker 129.

After your hike, stop at Glenwood Hot Springs to soak your muscles. Stay overnight at Glenwood Canyon RV Resort just east of Glenwood Springs at exit 119. For more information, call 888-445-3696 or log on to [www.visitglenwood.com](http://www.visitglenwood.com). — *Mary Zalmanek*

## HANGING LAKE

TAKE A BREATHER AT THIS GLACIAL LAKE WITH WATERFALLS IN GLENWOOD CANYON, COLO.

PHOTO: GLENWOOD SPRINGS CHAMBER RESORT ASSOCIATION



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## AUG. 1

The **Atlantic City Airshow**, “Thunder Over the Boardwalk,” is the East Coast’s largest beachfront air show, taking place on the famous boardwalk-lined shores of Atlantic City, N.J. Routines are performed by military and civilian pilots, including the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds, and reach up to 15,000 feet and as low as 50 feet over the Atlantic Ocean with their aerobatic maneuvers. The U.S. Army’s Golden Knights will also perform parachute jumps; 888-228-4748, [www.atlanticcitynj.com/acairshow.aspx](http://www.atlanticcitynj.com/acairshow.aspx).

**AUG. 3-7** | Making the trek to Alaska in your motorhome this summer? Be sure to attend **Valdez Gold Rush Days** in Valdez, Alaska, to immerse yourself in the history of the region while having a great time. The five-day-long event starts off with a king and queen crowning at a picnic supper and celebrates the frontier-style living of the gold rush days with an old-time fashion show with can-can dancers, wine walk, gold panning, parade, geocaching, scavenger hunt, open air market and themed dance; [www.valdezugoldrushdays.org](http://www.valdezugoldrushdays.org).

**AUG. 4-6** | Raspberry season starts a little earlier in Garden City, Utah, than many locations in the U.S., and it is celebrated with **Raspberry Days Festival**, held

annually the first Thursday through Saturday of August. Don’t miss out on the juicy raspberries and pancake breakfasts or try a Bear Lake raspberry shake. There will also be a Little Miss Berry Pageant, craft booths, parade, rodeo and fireworks. The Bear Lake KOA offers full hookups and plenty of amenities; 800-448-2327, [www.bearlake.org](http://www.bearlake.org).

**AUG. 12-14** | You don’t have to be a kid to appreciate Kool-Aid and all of the family-friendly activities at **Kool-Aid Days** in Hastings, Neb. The event celebrates the invention of Kool-Aid, Nebraska’s official soft drink, by Edwin Perkins in

1927 and “kids” of all ages can visit the World’s Largest Kool-Aid Stand for a refreshment, watch the boat races and Kool-Aid drinking contest, check out the rides at the Kool-Aid Classic Car Cruise of America, and more; 402-461-8405, [www.kool-aiddays.com](http://www.kool-aiddays.com).

**AUG. 19-21** | Get your tickets now to the popular ninth annual San Diego Bluegrass Festival, **Summergrass**, on the grounds of the Antique Gas & Steam Engine Museum in Vista, Calif. Entertainment includes bluegrass bands from across the country complemented by music workshops; jam sessions; and

by MEAGHAN ALFIER

food, apparel and music vendors. Dry camping and some electric hookup spaces are available on-site; 858-679-4854, [www.summergrass.net](http://www.summergrass.net).

**AUG. 20** | Outdoor recreation often comes in the form of a boat as well as an RV, and those who appreciate the former will enjoy the **Antique and Classic Boat Show** at Lakefront Park in Pewaukee, Wis. The show runs from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and displays more than 30 antique and classic boats from southeast Wisconsin dating as far back as the late 1920s. The boats will be moored along the Pewaukee Lake shoreline and there will also be an art fair; 262-691-2341, [www.glacbs.org](http://www.glacbs.org).

**AUG. 25-28** | The oldest continuously active agricultural fair in the United States has much more than farm animals (although there are certainly plenty of those). **Brooklyn Fair** in Brooklyn, Conn., features live entertainment from country music performers, home and garden exhibits and contests, games for the whole family, historical displays, carnival rides and great food in addition to draft horses and livestock shows; 860-779-0012, [www.brooklynfair.org](http://www.brooklynfair.org).



## RV SHOWS

**AUG. 12-13**  
Colorado RV  
Liquidation Super Sale  
Denver; 303-892-6800

**AUG. 19-21**  
17th Annual Summer  
Boat & RV Super Sale  
Richmond, Va.;  
804-425-6556



## GETTING A CHARGE OUT OF RV PARKS

Across the country, campground operators are reporting a gradual uptick in inquiries from electric vehicle owners who are considering using campgrounds as refueling stops on long-haul trips. Travelers who do this typically have adapters with

them that enable them to plug into 50-amp/240-volt electric pedestals that campgrounds often provide with their RV sites.

Among campgrounds that offer this service are two in Maryland: Cherry Hill Park, which charges \$10 for a four-hour charge, and Holiday Park Campground, which charges \$8.50 for a four-hour charge.

While the concept of using campgrounds as refueling stops for electric vehicles is enticing for many park operators, if the concept takes off, campgrounds may need to eventually install dedicated receptacles for electric vehicles so as not to tie up too many campsites with electric vehicles, said Wade Elliott, president and CEO of Utility Supply Group, an RV and electric vehicle pedestal supplier based in Preston, Wash.

As of press time, the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds said it plans to create a listing of parks that offer electric vehicle refueling services on its Go Camping America website, [www.gocampingamerica.com](http://www.gocampingamerica.com).

## HEALTHY EATING AT NATIONAL PARKS

National Park Service (NPS) Director Jon Jarvis has announced a new service-wide Healthy Foods Strategy, to provide healthy food options to national park visitors. Jarvis made the announcement as part of the Healthy Parks Healthy People US conference in the spring. Participants discussed how the NPS can most effectively help drive health and wellness initiatives in America's parks, and how parks can promote healthy lifestyle changes.



"The Healthy Foods Strategy will help ensure that our 281 million annual visitors have access to healthy, sustainable and high-quality food at reasonable prices, while reducing our overall impact on the environment," Jarvis said.

The NPS is evaluating the food served in its parks. The new food program piloted at Muir Woods National Monument in the Golden Gate National Recreation Area in California, which features organic, fresh, local foods and other healthy menu items in its café, shows how park concessions can effectively support healthy food choices, Jarvis said.

For more information, visit [www.nps.gov/public\\_health/hp/hphp.htm](http://www.nps.gov/public_health/hp/hphp.htm).

## News Briefs



In a continuing effort to help preserve the environment and to encourage parks to become more eco-friendly,

Woodall's has announced the Woodall's/ARVC Plan-It-Green "Green Friendly" Park Program. As part of the program, Woodall's has posted an application on its Facebook fan page ([www.facebook.com/woodalls](http://www.facebook.com/woodalls)) that is a searchable database of "green-friendly" parks. Working together, Woodall's and National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (ARVC), with some guidance from Leave No Trace (an organization dedicated to the responsible enjoyment of the outdoors), developed some green-friendly criteria for RV parks and campgrounds and will use this criteria to designate an RV park or campground green friendly. RVers may explore green-friendly parks by visiting [www.facebook.com/Woodalls?sk=app\\_10442206389](http://www.facebook.com/Woodalls?sk=app_10442206389) on Woodall's Facebook fan page.

### Winnebago Industries

has announced details of its 2011 factory tour schedule. Winnebago's factory in Forest City, Iowa, the largest RV factory in the world, has been featured in such TV shows as National Geographic's "Ultimate Factories" and the Science Channel's "How It's Made." Visitors will get to see firsthand what was featured on these shows, with free tours of the Forest City manufacturing facilities offered twice daily through Oct. 28, and once daily Oct. 31 to Nov. 23. Each tour lasts about 90 minutes. Visitors can also tour a museum at the visitors center. For more information, call 641-585-6936 or go to [www.winnebagoind.com/company/visit-us](http://www.winnebagoind.com/company/visit-us).



Camping World RV, the nation's largest RV retailer, was recently ranked as the No. 1 seller of motorized RVs by Statistical Surveys for the 2010 calendar year. Camping World RV gained an 11 percent increase in motorized unit sales over 2009. "We are very pleased with our strong 2010 results, which capped off a terrific year for our team," said Marcus Lemonis, chairman and CEO of Camping World. "In 2011 we are seeing progressively improved market conditions and we are confident in experiencing robust sales growth across our RV product offering."



## BETTER HOMES & GARDENS — FOR YOUR MOTORHOME

A good mattress is an important element in starting off a day on the right foot, especially when you're on the road and could really use the energy gained from a good night's sleep. Serta has introduced the new **Better Homes & Gardens mattress collection** specifically for RVs and available only from Dometic, so RVers can experience the residential mattress feel for a restful sleep.

The collection consists of three types of mattresses — Horizon Innerspring, Adventurer Euro Top Foam and Horizon Euro Top Innerspring — that all come in 60-inch by 74-inch, 60-inch by 80-inch or 72-inch by 80-inch sizes. The entry-level Horizon Innerspring uses the Bonnell hourglass-shaped coil system with lofted fiber fill and foam; the Adventurer has a dense foam core plus egg-crate convoluted foam and memory foam; and the top-of-the-line Horizon Euro Top has the best combination of coils and foam for ideal comfort and comes with a 10-year replacement warranty according to the company.

Pricing for the Better Homes & Gardens collection ranges from \$487 to \$1,000. **Dometic, 800-544-4881, [www.dometicusa.com](http://www.dometicusa.com).**



## MINI SOLAR PLUMBING VENT

Any RVer who has ever experienced an unpleasant smell in their motorhome as the result of plumbing gases having nowhere to escape knows the value of a good plumbing vent. Ultra-Fab's new **Mini Solar Plumbing Vent** automatically removes plumbing odors and moisture with no wiring required according to the company.

The vent is a universal design that replaces most RV plumbing caps and installs easily on the rooftop. It uses solar power to move the fan to provide silent and reliable ventilation. Its powdercoated finish ensures its durability against the elements.

The Mini Solar Plumbing Vent retails for about \$30. **Ultra-Fab, 574-294-7571, [www.ultra-fab.com](http://www.ultra-fab.com).**



## SHADE SAVER

If your motorhome's window shades need a few fixes here and there but you'd rather avoid the cost and labor involved with installing new shades, you can preserve what you have with United Shade's new **Pleated Shade First Aid Kit**.

The pleated-shade repair kit comes with parts and illustrated directions for repairing up to five two- and four-cord day/night shades or two-cord night shades. According to the company, most other shade repair kits do not provide enough to repair as many shades and customers often have to purchase additional material.

The United Shade Pleated Shade First Aid Kit has a retail price of \$19.49.

**United Shade LLC, 877-262-0954, [www.unitedshade.com](http://www.unitedshade.com).**

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## Views from the Road

Al Luehmann and his wife, Mary, are committed RVers from the North Star State of Minnesota. When they're away from home, Al and Mary enjoy our country's beautiful landscape in their 2007 Itasca Horizon motorhome, spending the winter months in Casa Grande, Arizona.

Al describes his time on the road as "a way of life after you retire. I have a whole new set of friends from around the country - we've become a family."

Even when traveling, he enjoys the comforts of home, including live TV. Al chose DISH Network to bring TV to his RV because of the unique service benefits.

"The ability to deactivate it whenever we aren't using the motorhome is a terrific feature. Plus, the rate was better than the competition, and we can get high definition free. I would highly recommend DISH Network service."

And what does he watch most when on the road? "Sports - the (Minnesota) Vikings and Wild, and my wife is a Jimmie Johnson (NASCAR) fan."

So what's next for Al and Mary? "Nova Scotia - beautiful country - and Yosemite."

Happy travels.



Al and Mary traveling the country



# escapes

# CROSSROADS



PHOTO: NEELA BHAGAT

## SEA, SAND AND SUN PARADISE

**St. George Island is one of Florida's best kept secrets on the**

"Forgotten Coast." Located about 75 miles southwest of Tallahassee off U.S. Highway 98, St. George Island is accessed by a scenic, four-mile-long ocean-spanning bridge. This 22-mile barrier island has mild weather, the emerald green waters of the Gulf of Mexico and Apalachicola Bay, and stunning, sugar-white beaches. Pristine salt marshes support a profusion of bird and marine life. Abundant shelling and fishing makes this an angler's delight.

Once a sleepy area of sand dunes and pine groves, vacation homes and businesses now occupy the majority of the island.

Part of the two-time national gold medal-winning Florida State Park system, Dr. Julian G. Bruce St. George Island State Park occupies nine miles of the eastern end of the island. There are 60 campsites with water and electricity, and good service facilities.

The island's laid-back ambiance attracts visitors like a magnet year-round. Beautiful beaches, spectacular sunsets and waterfront dining are an unforgettable experience.

**For more information**, contact St. George Island State Park, 850-927-2111, or visit [www.floridastateparks.org](http://www.floridastateparks.org). — *Neela Bhagat*

## CAPITAL CAMPGROUND

**Cherry Hill Park, a first-rate** campground in College Park, Md., offers so many attractions for RVers it could be a destination unto itself. Spread across 64 rolling-hill acres, the park features 350 full-hookup sites, two swimming pools, several bathhouses, two large playgrounds, a game room, an exercise room, a laundry room, a café, a one-and-a-half-mile hiking trail, and even an outdoor movie theater (open April through October).

Nonetheless, says Mike Gurevich, who with his wife, Linda, owns and operates the campground, most guests stay at Cherry Hill Park for its proximity to Washington, D.C. Since parking in Washington can be tricky, the campground provides a bus stop with about 40 buses a day departing for the Metro that runs into downtown. Arrangements can also be made for bus tours of Washington, D.C., Mount Vernon and Arlington Cemetery in Virginia (with campers picked up at Cherry Hill Park).

**For more information**, call 800-801-6449 or go online to [www.cherryhillpark.com](http://www.cherryhillpark.com). — *Pamela Selbert* ♦



PHOTO: MIKE GUREVICH

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# LOUISIANA BATTLEFIELD



RETURN TO THE TURBULENT DAYS OF THE CIVIL WAR AND STROLL **PORT HUDSON STATE HISTORIC SITE**, WHICH COMMEMORATES THE LONGEST SIEGE IN U.S. HISTORY

**Y**ou don't have to be a Civil War buff to appreciate this historic site where the longest siege in American history took place on May 23, 1863. For me, it was a step back in time, as I wandered over the green landscape with its redoubts, artillery displays and earthworks. A trail system led me over a landscape where 30,000 Union troops were pitted against 6,800 Confederates. What chance did the Confederates have? Nevertheless, there occurred some of the bloodiest and most intense fighting in the entire Civil War. It was John Irving who once said, "The object of war is to survive it." Not many Confederates did. There were thousands of casualties on both sides.

For the Confederates holding Port Hudson, it was a hopelessly outnumbered situation against the Union forces. As one day followed the next their ammunition dwindled along with their food supplies. They had no choice but to eat horses, mules and even rats. With the Confederate surrender of Vicksburg, the defense of Port Hudson became pointless and the Union Army entered Port Hudson on July 9, 1863.

Several living history events are held throughout the year, conducted by authentically costumed interpreters demonstrating Civil War weapons and equipment. I could just imagine what re-creating the Civil War battle must have looked like.

Climbing the steps to the top of the observation tower presents another perspective of the battlefield. Scattered stands of magnolias reach upward and from below I could imagine artillery fire and the noise of shots

**Top to bottom:** The Siege of Port Hudson is re-enacted at Port Hudson State Historic Site — albeit with a much smaller number of people than the 30,000 Union and 6,800 Confederate soldiers who fought at the original battle. Period meals are prepared at the encampment and help make visitors feel like they've really stepped back in time to the Civil War. This 42-pounder cannon was manufactured for the U.S. Navy in 1821 and has traveled from the USS Delaware to a Navy yard to Fort Livingston and finally to Port Hudson for its preservation.



PHOTOS: BILL STOUGHTON (CANNON); LOUISIANA OFFICE OF TOURISM (RE-ENACTMENT)

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The headstones at Port Hudson National Cemetery mark the grave sites of Union veterans from the Civil War through veterans of the Persian Gulf War. The 1879 brick and stone lodge (which currently serves as administrative offices) can be seen in the distance with the pump house to the right. Right: A visitor at the re-enactment encampment tries on some of the Confederate period accoutrements.



and shells filling the air. From beneath me I had a mental image of a regiment of blue-coated troops marching out of the shadows of the forest into the sunlight to do battle.

It was a first for two African-American units that were chosen to participate in the fight. It had the distinction of being the first engagement of any magnitude between whites and African-American troops in the war. Their attack against a well-defended Confederate position was commended and led to the approval of African-American troops in the Civil War.

I watched their story unfold and also the Siege of Port Hudson through an audiovisual program shown in the Interpretive Center. Murals, exhibits and displays of Civil War artifacts in the center brought my visit to Port Hudson State Historic Site to an end.

However, there was one more site to visit, Port Hudson National Cemetery, on the south boundary of the battlefield. Established in 1867, it is the final resting place of Union veterans from the Civil War through the Persian Gulf War.

I parked next to the 1879 picturesque brick and stone lodge that houses the administrative offices. At the flagpole circle a bronze plaque affixed to the flagpole reads: United States National Military Cemetery, Port Hudson, Established in

1867, Interments 3804, Known 542, Unknown 3262.

I strolled among the upright rows of headstones, over a well-landscaped lawn dotted with mature trees. It was a beautiful, tranquil setting, fitting for a memorial, and for an epilogue to end my journey. ♦

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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888-677-3400,  
[www.crt.state.la.us/parks/iphudson.aspx](http://www.crt.state.la.us/parks/iphudson.aspx).



PHOTO: BILL STOUGHTON  
PHOTO: LOUISIANA OFFICE OF TOURISM

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User Guide

Contents

# THE 2011 **RV-OOPS AWARDS**

FROM DUMB TO DUMBEST,  
HERE ARE THIS YEAR'S **TOP 10 BLUNDERS**

by LARRY MACDONALD



## “What’s the dumbest thing you’ve ever done while RVing?”

Nearly every motorhome owner can recall doing something that put a damper on their camping experience. It might have been minor, such as forgetting a patio mat, or major, such as damaging the motorhome. Let’s face it: As RV owners, we know the drill of setting up and breaking camp, and we certainly know the rules of the road. But far too often we rush through things, become impatient or get distracted

while multitasking.

Regardless of the reasons, mishaps do occur, not only to newbies but also to longtimers. However, the good news is that many of these blunders can be avoided if we just remember to slow down, be patient and focus on one task at a time with a clear mind. Arrival and departure checklists help, too.

In last year’s article (“The 2010 RV-Oops Awards,” May 2010), I asked readers to share their mishaps with me so that oth-

ers could benefit from their experiences. Thank you to those readers who responded. From your emails, together with my interviews, I selected the 10 most serious motorhome mishaps and ranked them from “dumb” to “dumber,” with the “dumbest” deserving of this year’s top RV-Oops Award.

Typically, dumber things result in more expensive repair bills. For example, last year’s winner blew the engine in his motorhome by never checking the oil, not once, during a year of extensive travel.

ILLUSTRATIONS: CHRIS MURPHY

## DUMB THINGS

**NO. 10** “Out of sight, out of mind” applies in spades to TV antennas. Occasionally, you’ll see a motorhome traveling down the highway with the antenna raised. Those are the lucky ones. Grant never made it to the highway. His raised antenna hit a tree limb while exiting the campground. WHACK! Fortunately, he was able to find repair parts at a local RV dealer, where the clerk made him feel better by saying: “It happens all the time.”

Grant has since solved the problem of forgetting to lower his antenna by “attaching a long piece of velvet material to the crank handle.” For those models that raise and lower electronically, a long piece of velvet material could be attached beside the switch as a reminder. Personally, I would put “lower antenna” on my Departure Checklist; then attach a long piece of velvet material beside the checklist as a reminder to use it.

**NO. 9** Most motorhome owners remember to plug in their shorepower cord upon arrival at a campground and, if they do a walk-around, remember to unplug it before departure. That’s what I thought until Charlie told me about the time he left a campsite in his Class C motorhome after doing a walk-around inspection. A hesitation in forward movement was followed by a noise from the rear of his motorhome. TWANG! In his rearview mirror, he saw the power pole quivering back and forth. Upon inspection, Charlie was reminded that the power outlet on this pole was elevated 5 feet above the ground. He had suspended the cord by his RV ladder and actually walked under it during his walk-around. No harm done.

Since that incident, Charlie always walks around his motorhome twice, once looking down and once again looking up, vowing never again to forget to unplug his power cord. Many motorhome owners admit to driving down the road with a trailing power cord, which is usually damaged beyond repair from being dragged on the pavement. Charlie at least had a reasonable excuse for forgetting to unplug. For electrical connections at ground level, not doing a walk-around can be a costly error.

**NO. 8** Bill and Jane had just finished dressing for church and had about a half-hour before leaving. While Jane continued to put on her makeup, Bill noticed his black-water tank was three-fourths full and decided to use the time to empty it. He pulled the black-water valve and let it drain. Since he still had some time left, he decided to rinse out all the paper and sewage in the top quarter of the tank by filling it completely, which he estimated would take about 12 minutes. At the 12-minute mark, the “full” indicator light was not yet on, so he yelled to his wife to check the water level in the toilet. She obliged by pushing the button that electronically opens the flap valve. WHOOSH! A brown geyser spewed onto



her hair, face and clothing as well as the bathroom walls, ceiling and floors. As the screaming waned, Bill shut the water off and drained the tank while Jane jumped in the shower, “fussing the entire time.” Bill cleaned up the mess as best he could and they still made it to church, a bit late.

But the story doesn’t end there.

In his sermon about taking God and spouses for granted, the pastor remarked that everyone should regularly “fertilize their relationship with God and their spouse.” Bill, biting his tongue to keep from laughing out loud, leaned over and whispered to Jane, “I fertilized you this morning.” She playfully hit him.

*Helpful hint:* Tank lights are not always reliable indicators of fullness. But even if they are, *never* flush out your black-water tank after dressing for church!

**NO. 7** On an extensive trip in their Class C motorhome, Don approached a bridge with a tollbooth. He drove ahead slowly, ensuring that the motorhome height did not exceed the gate overhead and that the side mirrors did not exceed the entrance width. As he entered the payment area, CRUNCH! “What the heck was that?” Backing out, he discovered that a 3-foot-high cement wall just below the passenger-side mirror had ripped off the front bracket of his awning. Moving over to an unoccupied lane, Don duct-taped the bracket in place, allowing him to proceed to a dealership for a proper repair.

Don now has a new rule, which all motorhome owners should adopt when passing through tollgates: “Always use the lanes intended for semi-trailers.”

**NO. 6** Most campers take pride in the appearance of their motorhomes, ensuring that they are washed on a regular basis. Of course, doing so usually involves the use of a ladder to reach the upper areas. Be careful, very careful, when using a ladder.

After a long trip south for the winter, Ross’ motorhome needed some serious cleaning. He got out his 7-foot folding ladder and climbed up to the next-to-top rung to wash above the windshield. Suddenly, the ladder began to fold underneath him. He watched helplessly as the pavement rushed up to stop his fall. Ross lay there wondering how badly he was hurt while RV neighbors rushed over to help, calling an ambulance and making sure he didn’t try to get up. X-rays at the hospital showed multiple broken bones: arm, pelvis, shoulder and ribs.

During his lengthy recovery, Ross had lots of time to think about what went wrong, confirmed by examining his ladder’s remains — he had neglected to lock the four rails of the ladder. Fortunately, Ross reported that he has sufficiently recovered to again wash his motorhome — “but only if someone holds the ladder.”

*Helpful hint:* Make sure your ladder is locked and has a secure footing. And never stand on the top two rungs — the higher you go on a ladder, the more it hurts when you fall. A long-handle brush can be used to clean the upper portions of your motorhome. If you have balance problems, consider hiring someone to do the work.

## DUMBER THINGS

**NO. 5** Arriving at a friend's home after dark in his new Class A, Danny asked if he could use a garden hose to fill his freshwater tank. Leaving his flashlight in the coach, he hurriedly attached the hose and busied himself with other things. About 20 minutes later he heard the reassuring sound of water coming out of the overflow. When he went to turn off the faucet he noticed brown waste running down both sides of his motorhome. Inside, he discovered the same stinking mess running out of the bathroom onto the carpets.

Danny had mistakenly attached the garden hose to his black-water-flush inlet, which he said was "frighteningly close to the freshwater inlet." Had he used a flashlight, he might have seen the decal: "Do Not Use Flush Unless Black-Water Valve is Open."

In the short term, Danny hired professional carpet cleaners. In the long term, he solved the problem by purchasing a larger coach with the freshwater intake and black-water-flush intake in separate compartments. Now he just has to remember which intake is in which compartment!

**NO. 4** Judy's husband, who refused to give his name, left his new laptop computer on the dining table, then headed down the highway in their Class A with their grandkids in the motorhome. An unexpected panic stop

object in motion, at 60 MPH, tends to remain in motion until it smacks into a wall during a panic stop."

Judy and her husband now make sure that all loose objects are secured before they hit the road. I reassured Judy that they are not alone. I've yet to meet a single motorhome owner who hasn't broken a wine glass, candleholder, coffee cup, or other item that should have been safely tucked away before getting underway. Such minor mishaps don't qualify for a top 10 Oops Award, but a smashed computer? That qualifies.

**NO. 3** Having just returned home from a solo week-end camping trip in his new Class A, Richard decided to back into his gated RV pad. First, he blocked open the steel gate; then he got back inside and proceeded to back up. Within a few seconds, he heard a loud RIPP! A quick assessment showed that the gate had partially closed by the wind, grabbing the rear compartment door and peeling the coach open like a tin can. Several months and \$8,000 later, his motorhome was like new again.

Now here's the sad part: Had Richard waited 30 minutes, his son would have been home to assist as an observer, preventing this mishap from ever occurring.

**NO. 2** Ian lives on a seldom-traveled rural road and was planning to back his motorhome into his driveway between two stone pillars. Imbedded in the pillars were upturned angle irons, intended to support a gate, which had yet to be installed.

While maneuvering his motorhome sideways to the road, he slowly backed up but seemed to be hung up on something. Wouldn't you know it? A rare traffic jam was forming on the road, two cars from one direction, and one from the other.

Frustrated and annoyed, Ian "poured the coal to her" to pull across the road so that traffic could pass. KABOOM! What he was hung up on was one of the angle irons, which had become wedged in the passenger-side rear panel. As he zoomed ahead, the rear panel ripped off and the pillar was dragged down. The bill for motorhome repairs came to \$8,500, plus the cost of rebuilding the pillar.

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resulted in all unsecured items, including the computer, becoming airborne projectiles. WHAM! His computer was damaged beyond repair, a \$3,000 lesson in Newton's first law of motion, paraphrased: "An

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“What’s the most common mishap that RVers report?” I would have to say that backing into things is extremely popular, and yet so easily preventable.

*Helpful hint:* Always have someone watching behind your motorhome when backing up, ideally with communication headsets, to provide direction.

### DUMBEST THING

**NO. 1** Art and his wife were returning home in their Class A from an enjoyable camping trip with their grandchildren. They took a toll-road exit and pulled into a restaurant parking lot. While there, Art’s wife opened the bedroom slide to get something. After lunch, they drove out of the parking lot onto the on ramp of the toll road, and approached the tollbooth. CRUNCH! The coach stopped abruptly when the still-extended slide, on the driver’s side, smashed into the booth. To his dismay, Art hadn’t once looked into his rearview mirror, until that fateful moment.

Although drivable, the motorhome had such extensive damage that their insurance company wrote it off. The tollbooth was also totaled. Art said he was “a wreck for the next several days.”

You might like to know that Art and his wife are still together, have bought another coach, and continue to enjoy

camping with their grandchildren.

*Helpful hint:* Always do a walk-around before starting out on a trip, and again whenever your motorhome has been left unattended for any length of time. It only takes a minute and can save big bucks in repair bills — just ask Art!

Several other RVers have confessed to driving with a slide extended, mostly without incident. However, one man did report getting his bedroom slide caught on a telephone pole line, causing extensive damage to the slide. It surprises me that motorhome manufacturers allow the engine to start when a slide is extended. Some coaches may have warning lights on the dashboard, but if drivers don’t look in their rearview mirror, why would they look at their dashboard?

Well, there you have it, the RV-Oops Awards for 2011. The names of recipients were changed to protect the guilty. Remember, we can learn by having mishaps or we can learn by reading about the mishaps of others, which is so much cheaper. We hope none of us will repeat any of this year’s blunders.

Once again, I encourage readers to email me at [captmac@shaw.ca](mailto:captmac@shaw.ca), indicating what dumb thing you did, how you resolved it and how you might have avoided it in the first place. Who knows? You might make the list for our 2012 RV-Oops Awards. ♦



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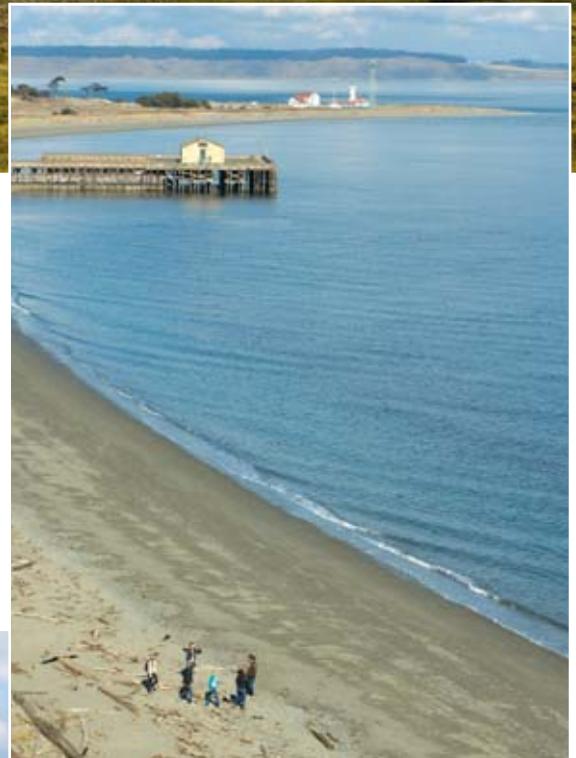
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# FRIENDLY FORTS

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Imagine a place where playing children have replaced marching soldiers, where kites now fly instead of artillery shells, where families laugh together around campfires in the same places that troops once trained to fight "the war to end all wars." Now imagine that there are four of these sites next to each other in a beautiful setting that seems tailor-made for exploring in a motorhome. Such is the case in Puget Sound, where century-old coastal defense forts are now home to some of the best camping opportunities in the Northwest.

At the close of the 19th century, America was becoming concerned about protecting its coasts from attack by enemy fleets. In Puget Sound, the Washington cities of Seattle, Tacoma and Olympia



Clockwise from top: The Chetzemoka ferry docks right next to the campground at Fort Casey and passes by every 90 minutes, but it is surprisingly quiet. Point Wilson Lighthouse can be seen in the distance from this vantage point at Fort Worden. The marine science center sits on the pier. Adjacent to the parade ground at Fort Flagler are barracks, officers' housing and a hospital.

PHOTOS: DAVID SHARPE



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Clockwise from top left: Fort Worden's upper campground is sheltered among the trees. This massive gun at Fort Casey used its own recoil to retract below the surrounding parapet for reloading. The picnic area on a bluff at Fort Ebey invites kite fliers of all ages. The author's wife enjoys the water view through their motorhome's window.



were considered particularly vulnerable, but the juiciest target was the newly constructed Navy Yard in Bremerton. The solution was to build a series of artillery forts along the narrow northern entrance to Puget Sound, creating a "triangle of fire" through which enemy fleets would have to sail to reach their targets. Rendered obsolete by the advent of aircraft and better naval weapons, these forts were later used as induction and training centers during both World Wars, then eventually sold to the state of Washington to become state parks.

All four sites now welcome campers, including motorhomes of all sizes, to visit and explore the many activities the area has to offer. History buffs will find the old concrete bunkers and gun emplacements fascinating, while kids will enjoy games such as hide-and-seek and capture the flag. Dogs are welcome at all the parks (on leash). Stately Victorian officers quarters

and utilitarian barracks flank large, grassy parade grounds. Many of these structures have been restored for use as vacation rentals, conference and retreat centers, and even community colleges.

Nature lovers enjoy the miles of hiking trails or just sitting and enjoying the spectacular views of mountains and water, while others will be fascinated watching huge ships sailing gracefully by. (On one recent trip, we watched a nuclear missile submarine headed out to sea being closely guarded by its escorts.)

These parks are very popular in the summer, but we prefer to visit in the off-season after the crowds have gone back into hibernation. It's not unusual to have the campgrounds to ourselves then, reveling in the peace and quiet. Deer and bald eagles are seen in abundance, and orcas may even be spotted in the waters, along with the more common harbor porpoises,

seals and sea lions.

All four state parks lie within the rain shadow of the Olympic Mountains, so they get about half the rainfall for which the Pacific Northwest is famous. It rarely snows here, and when it does, the snow usually melts away within a day or two. The one significant weather issue here is wind — when storms approach the wind can be quite exhilarating, making us glad we've left our tenting days behind and have a nice, snug motorhome to shelter in. The campgrounds in each of these parks are exposed to these winds, but all also offer more sheltered areas nearby.

Located about 90 minutes north of Seattle, it takes less than a single tank of fuel to visit all four of these forts, a huge bonus given today's prices. We'll begin our tour on Whidbey Island, which forms the eastern shore of Admiralty Inlet, the narrow entrance to Puget Sound. Whidbey is an island that is about 60 miles long running north and south, and can be reached by ferry at the south end, or across a spectacular bridge on the north end.

**FORT CASEY**

Located a few miles south of the peaceful and scenic little town of Coupeville, Fort Casey was built on an outcrop of land that was once home to a lighthouse. The lighthouse itself was moved a bit farther up the hill and now houses an interesting visitor center and museum. Walking through the concrete gun emplacements at Fort Casey overlooking Puget Sound, we have to wonder what life was like for the soldiers stationed here a century ago. The massive rifled gun looming above us is intimidating even at rest, but standing nearby when it was fired must have felt like the end of the world. Capable of firing a 617-pound shell nearly eight miles to sea, most of the original guns were sold as scrap, making Fort Casey the only place in Puget Sound where they can still be seen.

The campground is nestled into the hillside below the fort, with some sites literally right on the water's edge. Most of the 35 sites are large and offer spectacular views of the Olympic mountains and Admiralty Inlet. Despite the fact that this camp-

ground is dry-camping only, with no hookups or dump station, it is very popular among visitors with motorhomes (including 40-foot Class A coaches) because of its location right on the water. A free dump station is available for those who need to use it, in Coupeville at the top of the boat ramp about five miles from the campground. Sites are first-come, first-served, and no reservations are accepted. Right next to the campground is the State Ferry dock, where campers are treated to closeup views of the Chetzemoka ferry every 90 minutes.

Despite the proximity to the campground, the ferry is surprisingly quiet and little is heard of the instant rush hour it creates as it unloads. Just beyond the ferry terminal lies Crockett Lake and Keystone Spit, where birders often gather to watch migratory birds, including owls, raptors, geese and eagles.

**FORT EBEY**

A few miles north is Fort Ebey. Though not part of the original "triangle of fire," Fort Ebey consists of a single battery of two gun

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Fort Ebey's bluff trail offers spectacular views of Puget Sound, including Mount Rainier about 100 miles away. Below: The entrance to Fort Casey State Park is easily identifiable from overhead, for obvious reasons.



emplacements, built in the 1940s to supplement the older forts to the south. Much of the park sits atop a 200-foot-high bluff looking directly out the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and the view from the picnic area is astounding — we think it's the best place to watch sunsets in the entire Puget Sound region. If you're lucky you may be able to watch paragliders launch from the flat just below the picnic area as they hang on the updrafts created by the steep bluff. Hikers, cyclists and horse riders enjoy the 28-mile network of forest trails here.

Fort Ebey is an excellent alternative when the winds are gusting at Fort Casey, as the campground is set in a forested area that offers some shelter. There are 39 sites here, with 11 partial-hookup sites. As at Fort Casey, the nearest dump station is in Coupeville.

**FORT WORDEN**

Returning to Fort Casey, we board the Washington State Ferry (\$30 for our 25-foot motorhome) for the half-hour ride over to Port Townsend. On the north side of town lies Fort Worden. The old buildings

here at the fort have been restored, and now house a community college, a marine science center, a hostel and even a wood-working school that specializes in teaching traditional hand-tool skills.

The main campground has 50 full-hookup sites, located in a large, open meadow area at the base of the hill. Nearby is Point Wilson Lighthouse and a large gun battery, which makes a wonderful place to soak up the sun while watching shipping traffic make the turn from the Strait of Juan de Fuca into Admiralty Inlet. A second camping area is somewhat more sheltered and is located just west of the large parade ground and officer's housing. Here we found 30 partial-hookup sites with a dump station. Both campgrounds are inviting, with large and level spaces.

The main gun line is located on Artillery Hill, closed to vehicle traffic but accessible via a moderate hike up the 250-foot hill. For those unable to make this hike, Battery Kinzie (right beside the main campground) and others are more easily reached on the lower levels of the fort. Be sure to check out Alexander's Castle, built in 1883 by a Scot-



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FRIENDLY FORTS

tish reverend as a gift for his prospective bride, who, it turned out, had married another by the time he returned to Scotland for her. Now it is available as a vacation rental, and is the oldest building in the park.

Fans of the 1982 movie "An Officer and a Gentleman" will recognize Fort Worden, as the movie was filmed almost entirely there. During our visit, we rented the movie, and enjoyed picking out all the locations we'd been visiting during the day.

**FORT FLAGLER**

Although located only about three miles away across Port Townsend Bay, we had to drive about 20 miles around the bay to reach Fort Flagler, but this short drive is well worth the effort. Again, there are two campgrounds, both located inside the bay and somewhat sheltered by the point the fort itself sits upon.

The beach campground offers 57 full-hookup sites at the edge of a forest, which provides additional shelter during windy days. An upper campground has 47 dry-camping sites, but the park warns that large RVs should not enter this area due to tree cover. There are spectacular views of Port Townsend across the water, as well as the local paper mill and the ammunition loading dock on Indian Island, an active munitions depot for the U.S. Navy. Camping here is closed from Nov. 1 to March 1.

From the campground, a trail winds through the forest for a little over a mile before reaching the main gun line, consisting of six large gun emplacements. Another half-mile brings hikers to the parade ground, flanked by rows of barracks and officers' housing, as well as the base hospital, which was being restored when we visited. A short distance away is a battery that has had two smaller guns mounted. A final mile down the paved road leads back to the campground, passing a series of mortar emplacements along the way. Alternatively, you can drive to most of these locations except the main gun line, which requires a level walk of about a quarter-mile from the parking area.

It is refreshing to know that there are places where peace and quiet have replaced destructive power. The forts of Puget Sound once guarded its treasures, but now have become treasures themselves — places that welcome motorhomes into these astoundingly beautiful settings. ♦



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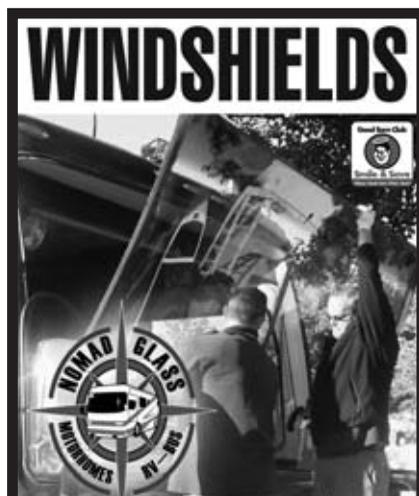
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A road trip that covers 16 states promises lots of adventures — sometimes you need to pull over and take a break. Left: The author's wife and their pug are ready to hit the road.

A C

**T**hree months before a seven-week, 9,000-mile trip from Florida to many points west my idea of a motoring vacation was a night at a Marriott or Holiday Inn Express. I knew zero about recreational vehicles. It was my wife, Patricia, who enlightened me about the benefits of a home on wheels. She camped as a youngster in Michigan. I'm originally from Brooklyn, N.Y., where there are virtually no RV parks.

Traveling by car was a passion. Each year we motored out west, staying at expensive hotels and eating in restaurants. Both types of establishments were impersonal, artificial places that simply became a blur.

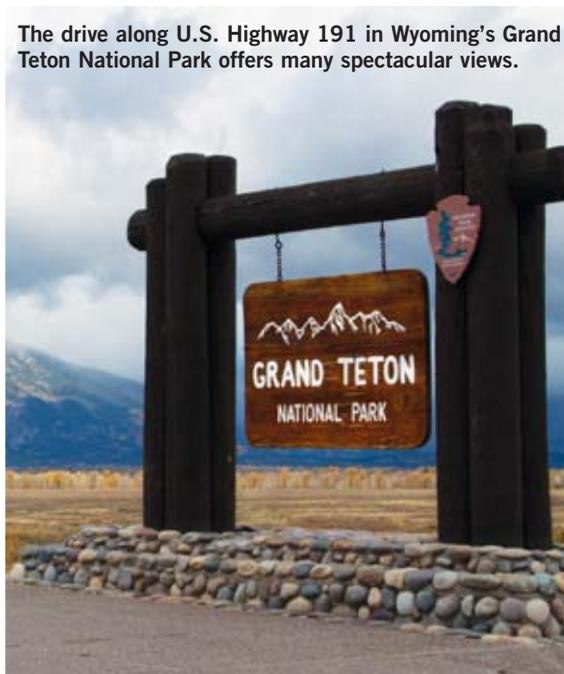
When I retired last year we placed extended motor trips to distant western locations on our agenda. The thought of all those hotel rooms, the restaurant dining, having to pack and unpack the car each day, and reports of growing bed bug infestations at hotels led us to take a serious look at RVing.

Florida is home to numerous motorhome dealers. It wasn't long before we settled on a barely used 27-foot Coachmen Freelander we named "Christine" to give it a personality. Christine Coachmen became her formal name. Why not? We named all of our vehicles. There was Irene Impala, Mary Metro, Alicia Cavalier and Agnes Aveo.

Our inaugural journey to Ocala, Fla., was a comedy of errors. I managed to trap my hand in the awning.



The drive along U.S. Highway 191 in Wyoming's Grand Teton National Park offers many spectacular views.



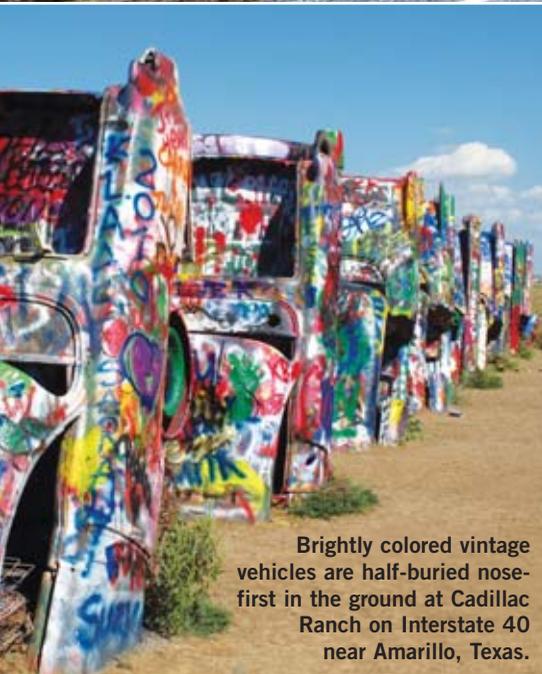
PHOTOS: THOMAS MICHALSKI

# NEOPHYTE CAMPERS TAKE ON ROSS-COUNTRY TRIP

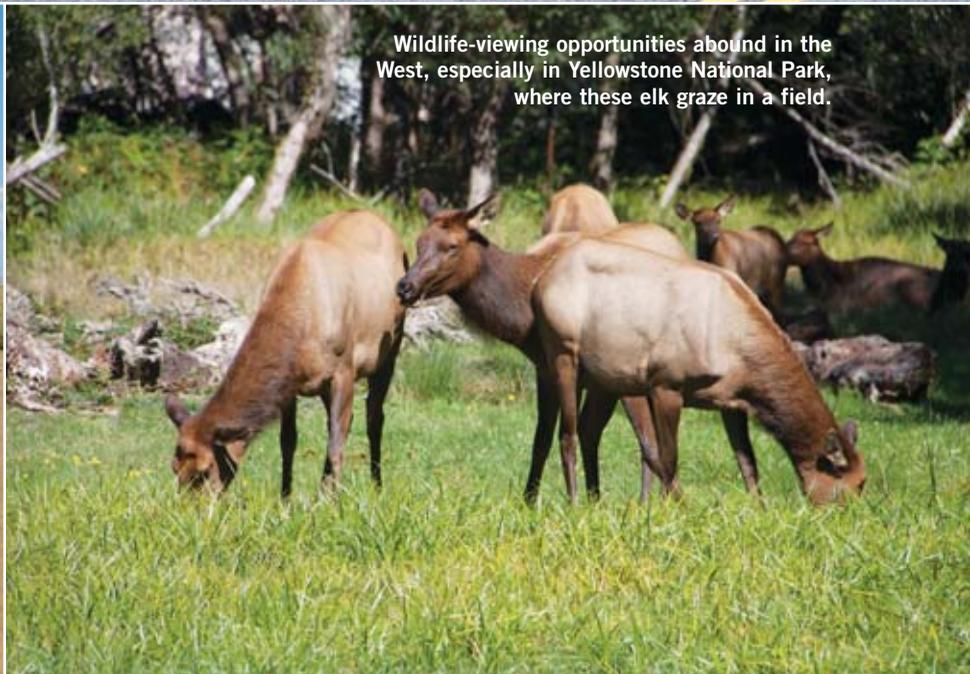


A MOTORHOME  
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TIMES CAN BE LIKE  
A BAPTISM BY FIRE

by THOMAS MICHALSKI



Brightly colored vintage vehicles are half-buried nose-first in the ground at Cadillac Ranch on Interstate 40 near Amarillo, Texas.



Wildlife-viewing opportunities abound in the West, especially in Yellowstone National Park, where these elk graze in a field.



The high cliffs offer breathtaking views of the Pacific Ocean coastline in Central Oregon.



The giant trees at California's Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park make the author's Class C seem tiny in comparison.

I injured the other when my wedding band became ensnared on the ladder while climbing down from the motorhome's roof. (I just had to see what was up there.) My wife short-circuited the electrical system with a defective hair dryer. And I didn't know enough to empty the gray-water tank until it backed up into the shower. (No one told us about that.)

A fellow traveler offered a crash course on sanitation, electricity and unfolding the awning without amputating anything. He "repaired" the TV by simply pushing a button that changed the system from antenna use to cable. By the end of that first weekend I was raising and lowering the awning, draining the holding tanks and performing other tasks like a pro. I also learned from a magazine article that the Mercury convertible Desi Arnaz and Lucille Ball used in the 1950s movie "The Long, Long Trailer" in real life could

not have done the job.

A few more weekend trips in the motorhome prepared us for our cross-country trek. I was ready to use the knowledge I'd gleaned from talking with fellow campers and reading scores of books and magazines. I learned the hard way, for example, that you can't open a slide with the motorhome's ignition key in the ON position to play the radio.

Our trip took us through 16 states, into big cities such as San Francisco, Memphis, Tenn., and Albuquerque, N.M., and through countless small towns. We gawked at the Grand Canyon, Yosemite National Park and the Tetons. We toured what is left of the original Route 66 and visited the historic districts of Santa Fe, N.M., and Astoria, Ore. And all the while our faithful motorhome proved its grit by remaining reasonably trouble-free, with the exception of a flat tire caused by an

improperly installed tire extender.

We learned early on that Christine didn't need to be loaded down with 50 quarts of soft drinks, 30 gallons of bottled water and other comestibles that added to her weight and lowered the miles per gallon. We were not pioneers in a covered wagon like the Donner Party heading out west for the first time in the 1840s. In the High Sierras near Truckee, Calif., in fact, we visited Donner Memorial State Park, where I joked rather loudly about eating one's relatives. "I wonder," said I, much to the annoyance of a nearby couple, "if they ate Aunt Philomena and Uncle Abraham with or without mayonnaise."

We camped at a lot of RV parks during our trip — some were excellent and others were very poor. One so-called "resort" had no running water and the owners tried to sell us the place! A campground in

Grand Canyon Railway provides daily service between Grand Canyon Depot and Williams Depot.



Winslow, Ariz., like many sites along Historic Route 66, depends on tourist dollars. The old railroad town achieved national fame in 1972 when it was referenced in the Eagles song, "Take it Easy," "standing on a corner in Winslow, Arizona."



Wyoming resembled a dumping ground for ancient RVs. Another unforgettable park was operated by a strange man with a fetish for stuffed birds. I was overjoyed to have my own shower rather than use one at his facility. I imagined him wearing a dress and carrying a large knife like Norman Bates in the movie "Psycho."

Overall, though, the campgrounds we stayed at were well-maintained and offered pools, Internet service, coin-operated laundries, LP-gas sales and cable TV. They also welcomed pets. A few RV park owners even presented our little pug, Sophie, with goody bags filled with biscuits.

One of the highlights of the trip was our visit to Santa Fe, N.M., where we set up camp at the centrally located Trailer Ranch RV Resort. The campground is an over-55 community and offers full hookups, high-speed Wi-Fi, cable TV and more. We purchased city transit system tickets and took a bus from the RV park to the historic district, visiting the Plaza that was constructed around 1610, the Cathedral Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi,

built between 1869 and 1887, and the seemingly countless gift shops, restaurants and art galleries.

A few days later we stayed at Grand Canyon Railway RV Park in Williams, Ariz. This big-rig friendly park has 124 full-hookup sites, a convenience store, fitness trail and a pet resort. It is located within walking distance of the downtown district on Historic Route 66 and Williams Depot of Grand Canyon Railway that offers daily train service to the great chasm. Motorhomes are not allowed along the South Rim road, but buses and walking trails are available. We camped at Grand Canyon Railway RV Park for three nights and soon learned that multiple-day layovers at stimulating locations not only rejuvenate the mind and body, but also reduce fuel consumption.

Death Valley National Park was our next stop. During our visit the temperatures soared above 100 degrees, hot enough to cook a meal on a rock or the pavement (well, almost). Strong desert winds took on the persona of a giant hair dryer, and

the motorhome's air-conditioning system struggled to keep the inside temperature at a comfortable level. Must-see attractions in Death Valley include Scotty's Castle, Cottonwood Mountains, ghost towns such as Rhyolite and the sliding rocks of Race-track playa, which have puzzled geologists for decades.

The National Park Service campgrounds in Death Valley only offer primitive camping; if you need a site with hookups try the privately owned Panamint Springs Resort RV Park, which is located inside the park.

After enjoying modern RV travel we decided to rough it at Yosemite. Like most national parks, Yosemite offers activities such as biking, hiking, tours, museums and spectacular scenery. Yosemite, also like many national parks, does not usually offer modern amenities such as cable TV and Internet service. We stayed at a primitive campsite that was more than 7,000 feet up a mountain. The cost was only \$10 a night.

The park ranger handed me a flier

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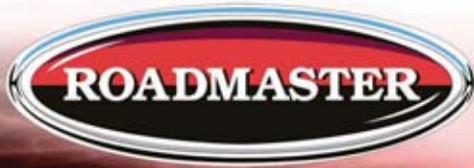
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## NEOPHYTE CAMPERS TAKE ON A CROSS-COUNTRY TRIP

that announced in bold red letters: “You are now in bear country!” Shortly thereafter I discovered that firsthand when I opened the side door and came face to face with a black bear. A Davy Crockett I am not. The bear looked at me and I looked at it. I slammed shut the door as the animal fled into the woods. So, yes, there really are bears roaming around our national parks. And there are government rules to protect humans from often hungry and dangerous wild animals.

The No. 1 highlight of our trip was the coastal drive from just outside of San Francisco, where we picked up California State Route 1 and then U.S. Highway 101 through California, Oregon and Washington. The scenery is incredible, with high cliffs overlooking the Pacific Ocean on one side and mountain ranges on the other. There are scads of small towns such as Bodega Bay in California, where Alfred Hitchcock’s “The Birds” was filmed. We enjoyed Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, Coos Bay and Astoria in Oregon, and the quaintness and beauty of Washington.

Each area of the country offers its own traditions, attractions and myths. Bigfoot, a half-man and half-beast, allegedly roams the woods of Northern California. There were claims of living dinosaurs in another. Some legends mention ghost ships. The Pacific Ocean’s foggy landscapes, seals, whales and lighthouses with their interesting histories leave tourists in awe. One of the nicer RV parks on that leg of our trip was Crescent City/Redwoods KOA in Crescent City, Calif.

Weather played a significant role during our travels. While we experienced the heat of the desert, we also drove through snowstorms at some of the higher elevations of Montana and Wyoming. It was cold enough in Yellowstone National Park to wear a heavy coat while viewing the boiling water springs and Old Faithful. Park personnel are quick to warn about wild bison, moose, elk and other animals. It’s not uncommon for beasts to attack people, cars and RVs if provoked. One man reportedly once attempted to place his small son on the back of a wild buffalo. The massive animal didn’t appreciate that one bit and butted the man with the velocity of a freight train.



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By the end of our trip some of the campgrounds were already closed for the season and the weather was unpredictable. While staying at Sleepy Hollow Campground in Wall, S.D., for example, the temperatures rose into the mid-70s one October afternoon. The next day the prairie winds forced thermometer readings into the 30s. The little town off Interstate 90 has one main attraction, Wall Drug, that sells everything from Native American artifacts to stuffed mythical jackalopes that are marketed as being part jack rabbit and part antelope. Sleepy Hollow RV Park and Campground is only one block away from Wall Drug.

Our last cold-weather stop was Fishberry Campground in Valentine, Neb., a family-owned facility with full hookups and other amenities. Its motto is "Green Grass, Golden Sun, Good Times!" The cold Nebraska winter was beginning to settle in when we pulled into this 24-space campground that is located in the middle of a working ranch. The cost was about \$20 for the night.

We spent almost two months on the road and camped at 40 RV parks, sometimes for multiple days, at a total cost of \$1,406.22. The average site ran about \$32, with a low cost of \$10 at Yosemite to a high of \$70.15 in one small town that literally was located in the middle of nowhere.

Fuel ranged from about \$2.75 a gallon in Florida to nearly \$5 in some parts of California. The total gasoline tab came to \$3,277.04. Christine's thirsty V-10 engine guzzled about a gallon of gas every eight miles. There were lows of about 5 MPG over mountains and highs of almost 13 MPG on level stretches of highway. Costs for food, routine maintenance, a few restaurant meals and souvenirs came to \$2,671.08. The seven-week motor trip totaled \$7,354.34.

By the end of the pilgrimage we were true campers. We faced problems with the same grit as other pioneering RVers and learned quickly from our mistakes. When in doubt we sought help from fellow travelers.

Would we buy another RV? Of course. We learned to love the lifestyle and taking Christine Coachmen on the road to places we'd never been before ... but will go to again and again. ♦

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# WILLKOMMEN, MISSOURI!

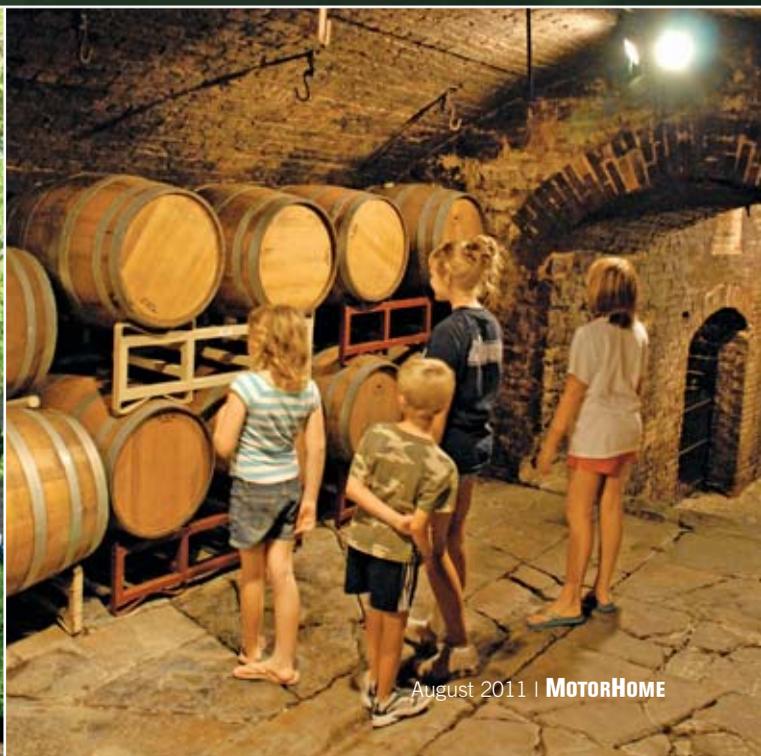
GERMAN CULTURE AND OLD-WORLD WINEMAKING ARE SHOWCASED ALONG THE STATE'S HERMANN WINE TRAIL

by PAMELA SELBERT

PHOTO: MISSOURIWINE.ORG



PHOTO: MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM



August 2011 | MOTORHOME

**A** bottle of harvest peach wine from Stone Hill Winery in Hermann, Mo., has sat unopened on a shelf in my pantry for nearly two decades. It was a gift from my mother — and the problem is, on her long-ago visit to the winery she bought us two bottles of the stuff, which turned out to be nectar of the gods.

The winery no longer makes peach wine and hasn't for years, so what to do? Uncork the second bottle and temper the pleasure with knowing we'll never get another one? Of course not — so there it sits.

Stone Hill, founded in 1847, now makes its 27 varieties of wines only from grapes, all are exceptional — particularly a cream sherry that even Harvey might envy, we discovered on a visit.

My husband, Guy, and I enjoy following wine "trails," a pastime that has led us all over the country. On this occasion we chose the Hermann Wine Trail, developed in 2005, that funnels visitors through the green and gold rolling hills of east-central Missouri, land early German settlers called Rhineland, for its resemblance to the country they'd left behind.

Among the seven wineries on the trail are several of Missouri's oldest. All are either on or adjacent to Highway 100, along a meandering 20-mile route

between Hermann and New Haven that roughly parallels the south bank of the silvery-mocha Missouri River.

Enologist Patty Held, current president of the Hermann Wine Trail and former public relations director for Stone Hill Winery (she's also the daughter of owners Jim and Betty Held), was instrumental in creating the trail, which she believes offers "a real opportunity to promote the rich wine history of this area." Winemaking in Hermann dates from 1837, with the arrival of the first German settlers, members of the German Settlement Society of Philadelphia, who had come west in search of a locale where they could preserve their culture, she explained.

By the turn of the 20th century, much of the wine made in the United States came from Missouri (according to the source, 8 to 48 percent). And for a year or two around 1900, Missouri was the leading wine-producing state, says Jon Held, Stone Hill's vice president/general manager, with nearly every drop made from grapes grown on 11,000 acres of vineyards in or near Hermann, home at the time to some 60 wineries.

Stone Hill won its first award at the 1873 World Exposition in Vienna, and later took honors at eight world's fairs, including Grand Medal at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis.

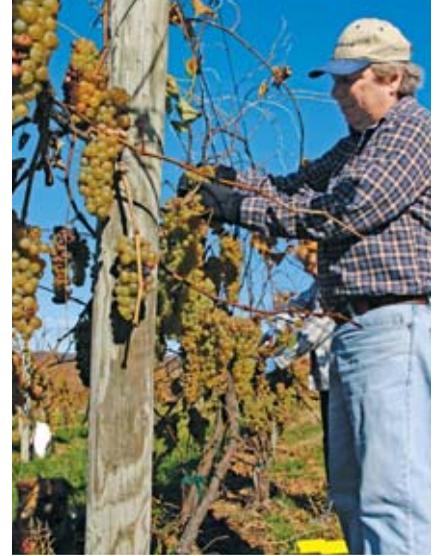


PHOTO: MISSOURIWINE.ORG



Opposite page, bottom, left to right: Hermannhof Vineyards is a National Historic Site and comprises several antique buildings. Children tour the Old World-style cellars at Hermannhof, which stores its wine in oak barrels. This page, top to bottom: A man picks and prunes the grape vines during harvest time so that the winemaking process can begin. A fanciful creature holds his lamp from the ceiling of the tasting room at Hermannhof. A signpost points the way to Stone Hill Winery and overlooks the quaint town of Hermann.



PHOTOS: GUY SELBERT



PHOTO: MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Clockwise from top left: Sisters Sue McCarthy and Beth Hyser work at the counter of Röbbler Winery. They are the daughters of owners Robert and Lois Mueller. An Amtrak train near Hermann runs alongside the continent-vaulting Missouri River that gives the state its name. Stone Hill Winery's green vines grow 11 varieties of grapes, including Chambourcin, Traminette, Norton, Vignoles, Catawba and Concord.



PHOTO: MISSOURI WINE.ORG

**HERMANN IS FAMOUS FOR ITS CELEBRATIONS, AMONG THEM:**

- Wurstfest, usually the fourth weekend in March (sausage makers present the “best of the wurst”).
- Maifest, the third weekend in May (a traditional German celebration of spring).
- Old-Fashioned Fourth of July (fireworks and fun on the riverfront).
- BarBQ & Brats Festival, fourth weekend of September.
- Oktoberfest, first four weekends of October.
- Children’s Christmas Lantern Parade, the weekend after Thanksgiving.
- Kristkindl Markt, the first two weekends in December (Christmas markets reminiscent of those in Germany that offer a variety of wares).

**ANNUAL WINE TRAIL EVENTS INCLUDE:**

- Wine 101, the second weekend in January.
- Chocolate Wine Trail, the third weekend in February.
- Norton Wine Trail, first weekend of May.
- Berries and BarBQ, last full weekend of July.
- Holiday Fare Wine Trail, the third weekend in November.
- Say Cheese Wine Trail, second weekend of December.

Motorhomers following the wine trail might like to camp at Hermann Camping and RV Park, which offers 18 paved, level sites. Full hookups cost \$30 per night, \$25 for water and electric and \$15 for dry camping. The campground is at the south end of town in Hermann City Parks off Highway 100 West at Gasconade Street. For reservations, call 573-486-5400.

When Prohibition shut down wine production in 1920, Stone Hill was the second-largest winery in North America, producing nearly 1.3 million gallons annually, said Danielle Schmidt, a member of the cellar staff at Stone Hill.

Then for 44 years Stone Hill’s cavernous cellars grew mushrooms. And around Hermann many vineyards were removed, though Schmidt notes that a 120-year-old patch of pre-Prohibition vines, Nortons (now Missouri’s state grape) survived and is still producing. But viticulture (growing grapes for winemaking) in Missouri didn’t resume until 1965, when the Helds reopened Stone Hill, now in the National Register of Historic Places.

Today, said Held, Stone Hill grows 11 varieties of grapes on 182 acres at seven sites (away from highways and auto fumes, she points out). And the winery, from its vantage atop Hermann’s highest hill, looks out over the town and surrounding area, and down on a dozen or more rows of Nortons, thick with lush, purple clusters of grapes on this occasion, that span the steep hillside.

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User Guide

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Stone Hill, which also has locations in Branson and New Florence, produces about 260,000 gallons of wine a year. (Danene Beedle, marketing director for the Missouri Wine and Grape Board, notes that in 2010, Missouri's nearly 100 wineries made 925,000 gallons, ranking

the state ninth in the country in wine production.)

Since 1993, Stone Hill has won more than 3,600 awards at competitions across the country. Guided tours of the historic cellars are available, and the winery also includes an extensive gift shop and Vintage Restaurant for lunch and dinner.

Held notes that Missouri can take pride in having rescued the French wine industry more than a century ago. In the 1870s, she said, a root louse or nematode known as "phylloxera" had destroyed French root stock. But thanks to Hermann area grape growers, who sent over cuttings of pest-resistant native grapes (possibly including some Nortons) for grafting, French winemaking was saved.

Other wineries on the Hermann Wine Trail include Hermannhof, also in Hermann; Dierberg Star Lane Winery Tasting Room, next to Hermannhof; Adam Puchta; OakGlenn, just outside the town; Bias, near Berger; and Rößler.

Hermannhof, a complex of antique buildings overlooking the river and stretching up a steep hillside in the historic district of town, began life as Kropp Brewery in 1852, says affable William Wallace "Billy" Grace, Hermannhof's wine taster and a wealth of local lore.

The winery, also a National Historic Site, now owned by bank president Jim Dierberg and his wife, Mary, had been converted to apartments during Prohibition, with residents using the magnificent arched-brick wine cellars for a trash dump, said Grace. The Dierbergs reopened the winery in 1978, and today grow grapes on 53 acres and produce 15 wines, for a total of 45,000 gallons annually.

Entertaining Grace led us through the Old World-style cellars, where dozens of "lightly toasted" oak barrels full of wine are stored and the musty scent of wine hangs in the air, then to the subterranean "library," once used for storing bottles of wine, where special events are now held. Hermannhof, he says, has a ghost — of a worker killed in the cellar a century ago when a wine barrel rolled over him. The ghost is a prankster, sometimes appearing in photographs, he adds with a smile, pointing to a framed photo of several visitors and a large, mysterious white spot.

Hermannhof, where a large sign

reads "Willkommen," also includes a deli and gift shop, and is in the process of renovating a grain elevator building and ice house across from the Hofgarten, said Grace.

Adam Puchta Winery, on Frene Creek two miles west of Hermann, was established in 1855, and is the oldest continuously owned family farm winery in the U.S. Adam Puchta had come here as a child with his parents from Bavaria (where they were winemakers) in 1839, and after giving in to gold fever in the early 1850s, returned from three years in California to build a winery on land adjoining his father's. The sixth generation of Puchtas now makes award-winning wine — the Signature Port and Anniversary Port are especially tasty — in a homey, rustic setting. Antique memorabilia, including the original winemaking equipment, is on display.

OakGlenn Vineyards and Winery, two miles east of Hermann, is perched high on a bluff at the end of a steep gravel road (motorhomers will want to drive their tow cars), and offers breathtaking views of the river and rolling hills beyond. The winery, says employee Carol Warnebold, stands on a site first farmed by horticulturist George Husmann in 1859. He was a pioneer in hybridizing grapes to match local environment, and later became one of the first vintners in California's Napa Valley. Like the other wineries along the trail, OakGlenn grows Nortons for a richly mellow wine.

Bias Winery, seven miles east of Hermann near Berger (rhymes with "merger") off Highway B, is on a 64-acre farm also high atop bluffs overlooking the pastoral Missouri River Valley. Founded by Jim and Norma Bias in 1980, the winery was sold to Kirk and Carol Grass in 2004. Bias was the first in Missouri and second in the nation to operate as a combined winery and microbrewery, which was started in 1998.

You'll find Bias to be quite welcoming and friendly, with plenty of outdoor seating that offers views of the seven-acre vineyard. During the winter months you can sit inside in front of a large stone fireplace while enjoying a glass of wine or a beer, and Bias also serves a variety of foods from cheese platters to hamburgers. Dogs are welcome on the property grounds (not inside the main building) as long as they are leashed.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

### ADAM PUCHTA WINERY

573-486-5596,  
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WILLKOMMEN, MISSOURI!

Bommarito Estate Almond Tree Winery near New Haven, although not part of the trail, opened in 2000, four years after owner Nick Bommarito first planted vines. Norton, Vignoles, Chambourcin, St. Vincent and Vidal Blanc currently grow on nine of his 21 acres. He contracts workers for the annual picking and pruning, but says he and his family make all the wine — 1,000 cases a year.

Large metal disks — awards — hang around the necks of several bottles in Bommarito's tasting room, and the owner proudly explains that in 2007 his Norton Red Missouri Port won "Best in the United States" and "Best in Class" in the National Norton Competition. His Norton and port wines have also won many awards at the state and international level. The port is mild, sweet and delicious.

Last on the wine trail is Röbbler Vineyard Winery in New Haven (the unusual name is a contraction of owner Robert Mueller's name, explain daughters Beth Hyser and Sue McCarthy). Mueller and his wife, Lois, bought the 85-acre farm, which produced corn and soybeans at the time, from Alphonse Meyer in 1987. Meyer's family had lived there for more than a century, said Hyser. Now, though Alphonse is dead, his large family gathers at the winery every year on his birthday.

The Muellers planted grapes in 1988 and reaped their first harvest three years later, Hyser said. Now the 17-acre vineyard produces mainly French hybrids, and the winery makes 10 wines, including Vidal, Seyval, Traminette, St. Vincent, Norton (of course) and a sweet red called Kassefest. Awards have been numerous, including the prestigious "Best of Show" presented by then-Gov. Mel Carnahan at the Missouri State Fair for Röbbler's 1991 Norton Reserve. It was, says Hyser, the "first time a red wine had won the award in Missouri."

Of all the wineries on the trail, Röbbler, which sits high with elegant views of surrounding farmland, seems the most family-friendly. During our visit children were enjoying snacks while their parents sipped wine, and at least three families had brought their dogs on leashes.

Smiling, McCarthy said, "Dogs are welcome here." And with that an already lovely day got even better. ♦

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# FOLLOWING LEWIS AND CLARK'S FOOTSTEPS



MORE THAN 200 YEARS LATER,  
MEET DESCENDANTS OF  
THE NEZ PERCE PEOPLE  
WHO HELPED THEM AND  
SEE HISTORIC SITES ALONG  
IDAHO'S NORTHWEST  
PASSAGE SCENIC BYWAY

by RHONDA OSTERTAG

**F**or me, the Northwest Passage is the road home. I live in Oregon, but my roots are in Montana, and this Idaho byway bridges the way. It's familiar, comfortable and always stunningly beautiful. For the 1803-1806 Lewis and Clark Expedition, this passage arguably held the greatest uncertainty — uncertainty they'd reach the Pacific Ocean, uncertainty they'd ever return home.

In 1805, with rations, morale and strength all but spent, the Corps of Discovery struggled through the snowy Bitterroot Mountains over Lolo Pass and the way west. Descending into Idaho, the exhausted explorers met the Nez Perce Indians, whose hospitality assured their survival and entry into the history books. Indeed, without this assistance, the fate of the Corps may well have been a lost chapter, an unsolved mystery, a case for CSI.



PHOTOS: GEORGE OSTERTAG

It's a relatively easy one-mile hike to these gorgeous natural pools fed by steaming mineral water known as Jerry Johnson Hot Springs. The springs are in Clearwater National Forest, which borders Northwest Passage Scenic Byway, and also offers miles of hiking trails and historic sites.



This page: A wooden bridge offers hikers an easier alternative than rafting for crossing Lochsa Wild and Scenic River. Camping is available at Hells Gate State Park. Opposite page, clockwise from left: The calm, relaxing waters of Selway Wild and Scenic River make it popular for fly-fishing. This 1837 cottonwood-log canoe on display at Nez Perce National Historic Park was fashioned by the Nez Perce for missionary Henry Spalding. Lochsa Historical Ranger Station has been restored to appear as it did in the 1920s.

## THE BYWAY

The Northwest Passage Scenic Byway is a designated State Scenic Byway and an All-American Road. This scenic motorway follows U.S. Highway 12 and commemorates the Corps of Discovery in its despair and triumphs, the Nez Perce people — the Nimiipuu — who befriended them, and by extension, the government that sent them. The main byway spans some 175 miles from Lewiston, Idaho, to the Montana border at Lolo Pass. From the low country of the Snake River to the summit of the Bitterroots, it hugs course with the Clearwater, its Middle Fork and the Lochsa rivers, for spectacular windshield viewing.

At Kooksia, a highway spur leads 27 miles to Grangeville. It follows state Route

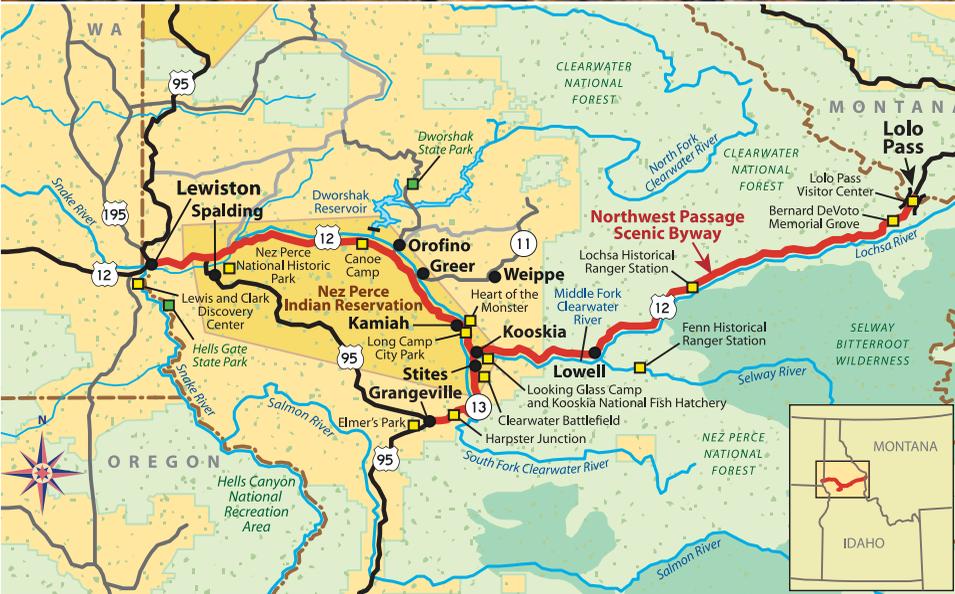
13 south along the South Fork of the Clearwater River. Historical sites include the Heart of the Monster in east Kamiah, a formation that marks the creation of the Nimiipuu. A few miles south of Stites, byway travelers skirt Clearwater Battlefield, a vestige of the 1877 Nez Perce War. Ascending “Harpster Grade” to the serene Camas Prairie, with its wheat, alfalfa and wildflowers, a display of a locally excavated mammoth skeleton is well worth visiting. It is located at Eimer’s Park near the junction of Idaho Highway 13 and U.S. Highway 95 in Grangeville.

U.S. Highway 12 loosely traces the indigenous Lolo Trail, followed by Lewis and Clark. The Nez Perce seasonally traversed this ancient trail connecting their home

fishing grounds with the buffalo hunting grounds in Montana. En route, we, like the explorers, meet the Nez Perce.

Climbing east across north-central Idaho, the byway bears witness to these rugged trails, passing Lewiston (the largest city on the tour and a logical start), Spalding, Orofino, Kamiah and Kooskia. From here, communities get smaller, so fuel up and stock up for the Bitterroots.

Numerous park and roadside stops offer peeks at the past. The dark ribbon of the wide, lazy-bending Clearwater River and its Middle Fork and the choppy, irrepressible Lochsa River send byway travelers to phone books and computers looking up outfitters for rafting and kayaking trips. As a participant, I found that the tamer



MAP: SUE CARLSON

Clearwater better matched my temperament and adventure level. But I do love to watch the river runners on the Lochsa Wild and Scenic River. Lochsa is Salish Indian for “rough water.” More than 40 class III-IV rapids punctuate its flow, which peaks mid-May to late June.

Calmer stretches appeal to anglers and fly-fishers, as does a side trip up the Selway, another Wild and Scenic river, at Lowell. Few pursuits are as relaxing as looping a fly line over postcard-pretty water and watching low-flying geese flap upstream. The Nez Perce traditionally practiced a fish-based culture reliant on abundant salmon, a resource they continue to harvest by treaty right. Nowadays, popular sport fish are spring Chinook salmon and steelhead (rain-

bow trout that migrate to the ocean as juveniles, and return to fresh water as adults). Some fishing is catch and release (consult Idaho Fish and Game for regulations).

For recreational boating and fishing, Dworshak Dam, near Orofino, shapes a 53-mile-long, 16,000-acre reservoir on the North Fork of Clearwater River. Dent Acres Campground features electric hookups, boat ramp and docks. Dworshak and Kooskia National Fish Hatcheries welcome visitors.

At the journey's start, Hells Gate State Park, on the Snake River south of Lewiston, likewise offers boater recreation, with jet-boat tours departing from the park to head up the deepest canyon in North America. This river-oasis park is both gateway to the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail and Hells Canyon National Recreation Area. It has camping and houses Lewis and Clark Discovery Center, where exhibits give structure to the drive, its history and stops.

Overnight locations are well-spaced. Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, state park and private campgrounds meet the gamut of comfort, scenic and recreational needs. U.S. 12's ascent to Lolo Pass is a slow, winding two-lane highway, but the towering Bitterroot Mountains, cascading Lochsa, and western conifer forest deserve a slow look.

**LEWIS AND CLARK SITES**

The expedition traveled this route west in fall 1805 and east again in spring 1806 on the return home. Heading east from Lewiston and the Lewis and Clark Discovery Center in Hells Gate State Park, you are treated to lowland scenery of the Clearwater. You again tag up with Lewis and Clark at Canoe Camp (near Orofino). A dugout canoe signals your arrival. Here, in 1805, at a 4,000-year-old Nez Perce fishing village, the Corps fell ponderosa pines to fashion five dugout canoes to continue downstream to the Columbia River. There is on-site picnicking and a trail.

Kamiah was the site of the Asa Smith mission (1839), which ministered to the Nez Perce, and Long Camp (1806), where Lewis and Clark waited six weeks for the snow to come off the mountains and allow passage east. They stayed with the Nez Perce, shared medicine, and readied for travel. It was perhaps the most carefree time of the expedition.

Twelve miles west of the Montana

border, Bernard DeVoto Memorial Grove preserves old-growth cedars that stood witness to the expedition era and honors the author/historian who compiled an abridged edition of the Lewis and Clark journals. Interpretive signs and short trails introduce the grove. Lolo Pass Visitor Center at the border recaps the tour with exhibits and nature trails and an earned rest from the steering wheel.

**NEZ PERCE SITES**

Nez Perce National Historical Park is a patchwork of 38 sites across Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana that preserve and interpret the heritage of the Nimiipuu people (Nez Perce is a misnomer because this group of people never practiced nasal piercing). The Nez Perce rendered invaluable aid to captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark by drawing maps, providing food and sharing knowledge.

The Nez Perce raised both hide tipis and oval multifamily houses at their riverside villages. The houses were covered with tule reed mats. In places along the river, depressions mark even more ancient underground pit house sites. Salmon, eels, venison, camas and other roots were dietary staples.

Ten miles east of Lewiston, the park visitor center at Spalding has a dazzling collection of artifacts, exhibits, a film and photography. On-site are a Nez Perce family cemetery, a replica sweat lodge and an 1837 cottonwood-log canoe fashioned by the Nez Perce for missionary Henry Spalding. Objects displayed here include cedar baskets, beadwork, pipes and smoking mixtures, Chief Joseph's bearclaw necklace and bone breast plate, a ceremonial horse saddle and medicine dance wands.

At Greer, there is a sign for Gold Rush Historic Byway, which follows state Route 11 for 17 miles to Weippe and its Discovery Center, passing through Weippe Prairie where Clark made first contact with Nimiipuu. The center's exterior wall murals and interior exhibits help explain the expedition and tribal life.

In a grassy clearing, east of Kamiah, Heart of the Monster is a geologic feature that forms the creation story of the Nez Perce. A walking path leads to the heart and audio stations recite the legend of Coyote and Monster in English and Nez Perce.

East of Kooskia, Looking Glass and his band faced the military campaign of Gen-

eral Oliver Otis Howard in 1877, which sought Nez Perce confinement to a reservation. Had the Nez Perce a looking glass to the future, their welcome to Lewis and Clark in 1805 may not have been as gracious.

**U.S. FOREST SERVICE SITES**

Two historical ranger stations are worth a visit: Fenn (on Selway Road), a 1930s ranger station built by the Civilian Conservation Corps and in the National Register of Historic Places, and Lochsa, a restored 1920s workstation, where forest personnel were based for toil in the remote backcountry. Self-guided tours introduce each.

**MORE ABOUT THE BYWAY**

The byway is part of the Idaho Birding Trail; its wayside and camping spots serve birders with forest, meadow, riparian and wetland habitats attracting an array of bird species. Spy woodpeckers and soaring eagles, grouse and Clark's nutcrackers. Deer, elk and moose are common wildlife sightings.

The national forest bordering the byway holds fine trails, traveling to vista heights, historic sites, tumbling waters and hot springs. My husband and I hiked up Warm Springs Creek to Jerry Johnson Hot Springs (clothing optional). It's a beautiful mile-long forest walk with a picturesque creek, yellow arnica blooms, and a weeping-rock of steaming mineral water feeding natural pools.

Museums, summer festivals, powwows, and small town offerings further recommend the byway. All point me home. ♦

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# I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW

INSTALLING VELVAC'S LOW-MOUNT MIRRORS IMPROVES VISIBILITY, MOTORHOME AESTHETICS AND SAFETY

by BILL AND JENN GEHR



**D**riving any motorhome — large or small — takes some skill and acclimation. No matter the size of the motorhome, side mirrors are the most important factor when calculating a lane change or backing into a campsite.

The ability to execute a safer and clearer move no matter what the driving circumstance was of great concern to the owner of a motorhome whose

original side mirrors were too small for the coach and lacked any blind spot coverage. Clearly, it was time for a change.

With a conservative budget in mind and the need for the highest possible performance, the owner opted to replace the existing Velvac mirrors with an upgraded set that included a large, 62-square-inch flat glass as well as a 30-square-inch, adjustable convex mirror that's suitable for any size

PHOTOS: JENN GEHR

driver. Velvac's Model 2025 low-mount mirrors satisfied these requirements.

Since the new set had a similar configuration as the existing mirrors, the same basic location could be used for mounting the base to the side of the motorhome. This saved time and money, and the results were outstanding.

Installation of the Velvac 2025 mirrors required the removal of the existing side mirrors. Years of beach living had taken a toll on the mounting screws. One of the badly rusted screws actually broke off and required the use of vice-grip pliers and penetrating oil to remove the stubborn beachcomber.

Once the four old screws and the old mirror were removed, the supplied rubber gasket was used as a template for drilling the new mounting holes. Silicone rubber sealant was applied in the mounting holes to ensure protection from the elements.

To position mirrors it's necessary to enlist the help of an assistant to hold the new housings in place so that the four mounting screws can be tightened. Once that's accomplished, the cosmetic caps are pressed into place, covering the screw heads. The process is repeated on the opposite side of the coach.

The new, upgraded, glossy-black mirrors look great and truly update the exterior of the coach. But form must meet function in order for the mirrors to best serve the driver. To properly adjust, the primary driver sat in the captain's chair and set the angle of the mirror for best possible viewing of the side and back of the motorhome. An Allen wrench was used to tighten the head once adjusted. Next, the angle of the convex mirror was adjusted to best expose any hidden blind spots. The entire installation took 1½ hours. The retail price of the mirrors is \$595.

This simple upgrade to the Velvac 2025 low-mount mirrors brought a big smile to the owner's face as her expectations were exceeded in helping her to see clearly again — and have renewed confidence that her motorhome is safe to navigate on the highways and in RV parks. ♦

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



1. The old Velvac mirror lacked adequate size — especially with the aftermarket stick-on blind spot mirrors.



2. Use the supplied Velvac gasket as the template for drilling the new holes.



3. Once the holes have been marked, pre-drill with the proper-size drill bit.



4. Peel and stick the Velvac gasket and place onto the new mirror base.



5. Apply silicone sealant to the old and new holes to ensure waterproofing.



6. With one hand, hold the mirror in place and install the supplied screws.



7. Install the decorative caps that come with the mirrors for a finished look.



8. With the primary driver sitting behind the wheel, loosen the Allen screws and adjust the mirror head into the desired position.



9. Clearly you can see the difference between the old and new mirrors. Mission accomplished!

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# THOR A.C.E.

THIS ENTRY-LEVEL MOTORHOME INCORPORATES SOME OF THE BEST FEATURES OF A TRADITIONAL CLASS C IN A COMPACT CLASS A PACKAGE

by CHUCK AND TERESA CAMPBELL

# M

otorhomes have evolved through countless incarnations and technical advancements over the years, a metamorphosis driven in large part by consumer tastes, economic issues and manufacturers trying to field a new or improved product each year. Nonetheless, many buyers can no longer afford or are willing to pay high prices for mega-built, over-accessorized coaches. More consumers are now looking for back-to-basics models that contain the essential performance and residential features needed for comfortable, efficient RVing without busting their wallets.

In response to public feedback requesting a motor-

home that meets these expectations in form, function and price, a group of engineers at Thor Motor Coach of Elkhart, Ind., went back to their drawing boards in efforts to develop the ideal, economically feasible Class A from the ground up. The result is the new A.C.E. EVO 29.1.

“My engineering team had a special mission to create a value-packed, innovative motorhome with an entry-level price point that had not been de-contented or cheapened in the process,” Bill Fenech, the company’s president and CEO, explained in an interview. “My staff took what users claimed were the best things from Class A and Class C motorhomes and combined

Top: One of the A.C.E.’s options is a full-body paint package, which is available in two color schemes: crystal (shown) or graphite. Right: The 50-inch by 73-inch bed above the cockpit electrically drops down for extra sleeping capacity.



them into our new A.C.E. — Class A and C evolution rolled into one vehicle.”

We recently had the opportunity to field-test an A.C.E. EVO from Road Bear RV Rentals & Sales in Agoura Hills, Calif., to see just how well Thor Motor Coach had met its overall design and pricing objectives. If first impressions are any indicator, our test coach with its compact, streamlined profile shows that something quite different is afoot.

Externally, the A.C.E., which measures out at 29 feet 7 inches, still retains the appearance of a Class A, but borrows a bit of Class C DNA with its distinctive front eyebrow ridge above a downsized, one-piece windshield. Added to this is an eye-catching chrome grille that opens for easy access to the engine compartment, and an attractive basic graphics package over white, gelcoat fiberglass side walls (when full-body paint is not ordered). Altogether, the smart-looking coach with front and rear molded end caps, plus a rigid steel rear bumper, sets a new Class A standard in form as well as curb appeal.

Our test unit carried a suggested base retail price considerably lower than the average Class A at \$88,853, but still contained a full complement of necessary amenities and self-containment features needed for long-term travel and livability. Even as an entry-level model, the A.C.E. still has many standard features including a 24-inch LCD TV with swing-out arm in the living area, a china toilet, outside shower and electric drop-down bunk that adds significantly to its residential utility.

Besides the basics, our motorhome with its front living/dinette area, midcoach galley, split bathroom/shower facility and rear bedroom with queen bed came with enough options to make life on the road even more pleasurable. The coach contained useful extras such as a 4.0-kW genset (\$488) and a backup camera with monitor (\$743) that helped boost the final suggested price to \$91,927. You can also add hydraulic leveling jacks for \$3,675 and full-body paint for \$8,243.

### POWERTRAIN AND PERFORMANCE

Sliding into the A.C.E.'s well-padded captain's chairs, we fired up the coach's big Triton 6.8-L, 362-HP V-10 engine, dropped the five-speed TorqShift transmission's shift lever into DRIVE, and headed for a nearby freeway. The cockpit had the usual Class A roominess and feel about it, with the exception of a narrower, one-piece windshield. Surprisingly, this feature provided sufficient forward and peripheral views of our surroundings with no adverse effects, and proved to be an excellent departure from traditional Class A glass that often tends to let in much more heat and sunlight than one might want.

The coach is built on Ford's robust and proven F53 gasoline chassis, and for the most part handled well throughout the majority of our test.

It is uncertain whether it was the chassis' relatively shorter 190-inch wheelbase, its spring rates in relation to lighter coach weight or 19.5-inch wheels and tires, but



From top: The A.C.E.'s midcoach galley is located in the motorhome's only slideout and features a booth dinette, lots of cupboards and drawers, and a pullout pantry. The dinette and convertible sofa across the aisle have scratch-resistant, vinyl-covered seat pads with an extra-padding option. Walk-around space in the rear bedroom is tight, but it houses a 60-inch by 74-inch fixed queen bed and plenty of storage. The black-backed gauges in the cockpit may be a bit difficult to read in strong sunlight.

### 2011 THOR A.C.E. EVO 29.1

#### WHAT'S HOT

Large rear pass-through storage bay with 85 cubic feet of space. Dedicated exterior compartment can accept more than four batteries, depending on size. Pet-friendly items including a retractable kibble station, scratch-resistant vinyl floor covering, curbside front window for exterior viewing. Easy access to front engine area through hinged grille plates.

#### WHAT'S NOT

Cockpit area a bit noisier than most when vehicle is under acceleration and when traversing rough highway surfaces. Black dash backing made reading gauges difficult under brighter sunlight conditions. No grab handle available when exiting coach.



out interior arrangement, with residential amenities that are friendly to humans as well as to pets. The A.C.E. is almost like the Swiss army knife of motorhomes, offering a collection of popular, user-preferred standards along with a few other things unique to an entry-level Class A.

The unit's floorplan is not new to the industry, nor is its metal-framed, thermobonded fiberglass side wall coachwork. However, it does combine most of the necessary motorhome elements for two adults plus several guests in less than 30 feet. No raffish or kitschy interior adornments can be found here. Instead, every feature is simple, well thought out, and conveniently placed for optimum usability.

You could almost say that the engineers have left no space unused in this freshened-up layout. A classic example of this is the twin-dish kibble station that slides out drawer-like from beneath the shower stall.

Décor within the motorhome is the company's Mink collection, which includes cherry wood cabinetry, brushed nickel hardware and tile-patterned vinyl flooring in varying shades of brown. Counter surfaces in the kitchen, bedroom and bathroom areas are hard surface composites using a lightly flecked pattern, while window coverings consist of tan, pleated nightshades. As intended, the interior décor is very basic, but also subtly stylish, and intended to endure lots of abuse without showing it.

After a day of roaming rural byways and suburban streets, we finally put in for the evening at a full-service RV park. Since the afternoon was warm, we flipped on the ducted air conditioning, popped out the kitchen/living room slide and settled in.

A compact, compartmentalized kitchen and booth dinette are located streetside in the unit's lone slideout, which measures about 8.5 feet long by 2 feet deep. During our stay, we found the dinette made an ideal place to kick back and relax, and also a handy location for parking our laptop and other miscellaneous items (a dash-mounted, slideout computer tray is also available in the cockpit).

Putting dinner together the first evening, we found the streetside kitchen's immediate proximity to the dinette made getting meals from the stovetop to the table convenient. Even though diminutive in

it turned in 0 to 60 MPH runs averaging 19.1 seconds. Ample passing power was also noted, with 40 to 60 MPH times averaging 9.7 seconds.

Pulling several grades in the 6 to 7 percent range didn't slow us down much either, and we were able to maintain 50 to 65 MPH under most circumstances, unless slowed down by traffic. Coming off the other side of these passes was made easier and safer using the powertrain's tow/haul feature that downshifts the transmission with a mere tap on the brake pedal. For the most part, we were able to easily descend any given downgrade in the 7 percent range averaging 55 MPH at 3,800 RPM in second gear without having to use our brakes.

At slower speeds through busy tourist towns, we easily made our way along city streets and through several parking lots, thanks mainly to the unit's tight steering and good highway feedback. The coach was also capable of quick stops when unexpected traffic impediments popped up. Later in the day, we effortlessly navigated our way through the arcane interior confines of an RV park with no problems whatsoever.

Though the A.C.E. proved to be a very versatile, worthy performer under just about all circumstances, it still had the gasoline-powered chassis of the traditional Class A, and the overall weight that goes with it. As such, we were not surprised that we averaged 7.1 MPG for our trip.

#### VERSATILE LIVABILITY

Some of the biggest news regarding the A.C.E. is its uncomplicated yet well sorted

**Clockwise from top: The eye-catching chrome grille sits below the distinctive front eyebrow ridge and opens for easy access to the engine compartment for maintenance. A unique twin-dish kibble station pulls out from below the shower stall. Premium brushed nickel accessories highlight the attractive décor in the lav.**

hitting several unexpected bumps and dips in the freeway at 65 MPH produced a pretty bumpy ride, which is fairly common with the Ford chassis. We also noted much more noise in the cockpit when traversing coarse highway surfaces that could be a result of not enough sound-deadening materials in the engine compartment.

Trying to read the dashboard's black-backed gauge clusters also proved to be a challenge. I'm not sure if it was my tired, old eyes or something else, but I couldn't see a thing for several seconds after glancing from the brightly lit outside to the darkened gauges inside, until my eyes somewhat adjusted. Even then, gauge readings were not all that easy to discern.

On a more positive note, the 7-ton unit plus passengers and cargo had no problems where raw power was concerned. Early timed acceleration runs were fairly representative for a vehicle of this size, as



size, the kitchen includes lots of cupboards and drawers within arm's length and a handy pullout pantry for canned goods and such.

Making things even more comfy, the dinette's scratch-resistant, vinyl-covered seat pads plus those of the 60-inch-long curbside convertible sofa had received an extra padding option (\$45) that was well worth the money. Whether dining, spread out on the couch reading a book or catching a program on the amidships-mounted, 24-inch LCD TV, the forward living area proved to be quite comfortable and residential.

Thor takes pride in its extra-wide entryway that also houses an added assortment of handily placed storage bins. One such cranny, called a "mud room," is situated in the side of the stairwell, and is helpful for stowing wet, dirty items. Another is a drawer built beneath a step, and can be used as a small toolbox. Topping things at the head of the stairs is a tall, shallow closet for storing a broom and a couple of hanging jackets.

Stepping up and into the coach is aided further by a convenient exterior grab handle for extra support and safety. What is slightly incongruous, though, is there is no similar support device on the way out.

Bathing in the 35-inch by 22-inch shower stall worked out well, with premium, brushed nickel shower fixtures, 84 inches of head space and a "micro anti-bacterial" shower curtain that kept water on the inside of the stall where it belonged.

At night after busy days in the outdoors, we snuggled up in the rear, 60-inch by 74-inch queen bed. We appreciated the fixed queen that gave us refreshing sleep, while the room also contained overhead and side cabinets with side drawers for stowing clothing and other accessories. Walking space around the bed was pretty tight because of the compact floorplan.

Those who wish to take along addi-

tional passengers will appreciate the A.C.E.'s additional sleeping options. Key among these is a 50-inch by 73-inch electrically actuated drop-down bed above the cockpit, which replicates overhead sleepers found in many Class C's. If more space is needed, the sofa folds out into a nice platform of 40 by 60 inches, and the dinette can even be converted to a tidy, 38-inch by 60-inch berth.

Loading our test unit before departing, we made full use of its cavernous rear pass-through storage compartment by tossing in a heap of stuff: large folding chairs, a couple of coolers, tool boxes, and a jumble of other outdoor gear. We never did come close to filling up this spacious 8-foot-wide area, which is accessible from both sides of the unit via large doors, and has a generous 85 cubic feet of storage capacity. We also used the smaller street and curbside compartments for other items such as firewood.

Because of the chassis' 16,000-pound gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), and 14,400-pound wet weight including water and LP-gas, users are left with a comparatively modest cargo capacity of 1,560 pounds (not including passengers). With two adults, and maybe a few kids and a pet onboard, the coach's maximum cargo capacity would more than likely be in the 1,000-pound range.

Some might suggest that Thor Motor Coach's A.C.E. EVO 29.1 Class A is the same old sixes and sevens, just done another way. In our estimation, this would not be an accurate assessment.

Thor's A.C.E. concept succeeds in combining the best of what a Class A coach can offer, with a few Class C features thrown in for good measure. The melding of these two engineering traditions ultimately results in a back-to-basics, affordable and very usable motorhome that should have more than above average consumer appeal. ♦

## SPECIFICATIONS

### PERFORMANCE

**FUEL ECONOMY:** 7.1 MPG

**ACCELERATION:**

0-60 MPH: 19.1 SEC

40-60 MPH: 9.7 SEC

### CHASSIS

**MODEL:** FORD F53

**ENGINE:** TRITON 6.8-L V-10

**SAE HP:** 362 HP @ 4,750 RPM

**TORQUE:** 457 LB-FT @ 3,250 RPM

**TRANSMISSION:** 5-SPEED TORQSHIFT WITH TOW-HAUL

**AXLE RATIO:** 4.88:1

**TIRES:** 225/70R19.5

**WHEELBASE:** 190"

**BRAKES, F/R:** DISC/DISC WITH ABS

**SUSPENSION, F/R:** TAPERED MULTI-LEAF

**FUEL CAP:** 80 GAL

**WARRANTY:** 3 YRS/36,000 MILES

### COACH

**EXT LENGTH:** 29' 7"

**EXT WIDTH:** 8' 3"

**EXT HEIGHT:** 11' 11"

**INT WIDTH:** 8' 0"

**INT HEIGHT:** 7' 0"

**CONSTRUCTION:** STEEL/ALUMINUM FRAMING, FIBERGLASS SKIN WITH THERMOPLASTIC POLYOLEFIN (TPO) ROOF, POLYSTYRENE BLOCK FOAM INSULATION

**FRESHWATER CAP:** 50 GAL

**BLACK-WATER CAP:** 29 GAL

**GRAY-WATER CAP:** 44 GAL

**WATER-HEATER CAP:** 6 GAL

**LP-GAS CAP:** 20 GAL

**AIR CONDITIONER:** 13,500 BTU

**FURNACE:** 35,000 BTU

**REFRIGERATOR:** 6 CU FT

**CONVERTER:** 55 AMP

**BATTERY (3):** 1 12-VOLT CHASSIS, 2 12-VOLT COACH

**AC GENERATOR:** 4.0 KW

**BASE MSRP:** \$88,853

**MSRP AS TESTED:** \$91,927

**WARRANTY:** 1 YR/15,000 MILES

### WET WEIGHT

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

**FRONT AXLE:** 5,920 LBS

**REAR AXLE:** 8,520 LBS

**TOTAL:** 14,440 LBS

### CHASSIS RATINGS

**GAWR, F/R:** 6,500/11,000 LBS

**GVWR/GCWR:** 16,000/26,000 LBS

**ROCCC:** 1,560 LBS

(DEDUCT WEIGHT OF PASSENGERS FOR NET CARGO CAPACITY)

**GAWR:** GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING

**GVWR:** GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING

**GCWR:** GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING

**ROCCC:** REALISTIC OCCUPANT AND CARGO CARRYING CAPACITY (FULL WATER, NO PASSENGERS)

### THOR MOTOR COACH

800-860-5658,

WWW.THORMOTORCOACH.COM.

CIRCLE 141 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

# THE PRICE IS RIGHT

THINK A CLASS A COACH IS OUT OF YOUR PRICE RANGE? THESE MOTORHOMES UNDER \$100,000 WILL MAKE YOU THINK AGAIN

by BOB ASHLEY

## Want a full-size coach without paying in excess of six figures?

There are more Class A motorhome choices out there for less than \$100,000 than you might think.

And while all are gas-powered and most are characterized as “entry level” in RV manufacturers’ lineups, they are not without many of the amenities you’d expect to find in more expensive motorhomes — solid-surface countertops, multiple slideouts and full-body paint.

Those are available standard on some coaches and as options on others.

Most builders of affordable motorhomes also pay attention to the storage needs of today’s RVer, borrowing from their European brethren who have been building compact coaches for years.

The under-\$100,000 crowd primarily falls into the 29- to 30-foot range, although there are exceptions, such as 35-foot floorplans in the Forest River Georgetown VE and Thor Motor Coach Hurricane and Windsport. For those looking for more compact floorplans, there’s also a 26-foot Winnebago Vista and an Itasca Sunstar.

One thing they all have in common is their Ford F53 Super Duty chassis mated to a 362-HP Triton V-10 engine — the largest gas power plant available for motorhome chassis. The gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR), however, ranges from 16,000 pounds to 22,500 pounds.

## WINNEBAGO VISTA/ITASCA SUNSTAR



The Winnebago **Vista** and Itasca **Sunstar** feature two floorplans — the 26-foot Vista/Sunstar 26P built on a Ford chassis with a gvwr of 16,000 pounds and the 30-foot Vista/Sunstar 30W that is mounted on the Ford platform with a gvwr of 18,000 pounds. A large wardrobe with drawers highlights the bedroom in the double-slideout Vista/Sunstar 26P, retailing from \$90,745 to \$90,943. Dual living room slides and a large under-bed storage area with curbside exterior access are featured in the Vista/Sunstar 30W, retailing from \$96,844 to \$97,202.

## FOREST RIVER GEORGETOWN VE SERIES



A 19½-foot full-wall slide in a 30-foot floorplan is one of six layouts in the Forest River **Georgetown VE** series, which the company calls “The Elegant Alternative.” With base prices ranging from \$86,300 to \$91,000, Georgetown VE’s 28- to 35-foot floorplans are built on the Ford platform with a gvwr from 18,000 to 20,500





pounds. At its price, the Georgetown VE has a lot of amenities, including 77 cubic feet of pass-through storage beneath the rear bedroom. Standard features include stainless steel sinks, 32-inch LCD TVs and solid-surface countertops and sink covers.

#### THOR MOTOR COACH HURRICANE/WINDSPORT



Thor Motor Coach's less-than-\$100,000 lineup includes six 31- to 35-foot floorplans with up to three slideouts in the **Hurricane/Windsport**. Built on a Ford chassis with a GVWR of 15,700 pounds or 18,000 pounds, the Hurricane/Windsport features one-piece fiberglass front and rear caps, automotive-style dashboard with flip-out computer tray for the passenger,



rotocast plastic storage compartments, Onan Microquiet 4.0 kW gas generator, leatherette furniture and captain's chairs, china bowl toilet, and cherry or glazed-maple cabinetry. Base price is \$89,865.

#### HOLIDAY RAMBLER ALUMA-LITE CLASS A



Two 32-foot floorplans are now available in the 2012 Holiday Rambler **Aluma-Lite Class A**, a new low-profile aerodynamic coach built on the Ford chassis with a GVWR of 18,000 pounds. Designed with 100 cubic feet of exterior storage, the Aluma-Lite single-slide 32PBS and dual-slide 32SBD floorplans are equipped with hardwood cabinets throughout, a 32-inch LCD TV, U-shaped booth dinette, 62-inch-long convertible sofa, full-height kitchen rollout pantry and queen-size bed with large wardrobe. Base price is \$95,660.

## MONACO RIPTIDE



Two dramatic exterior packages and three interior décors distinguish the 2011 Monaco **Riptide**, two floorplans of which — the 31-foot single-slide 30PBS and 34-foot triple-slide 32SBT — fall into our under-\$100,000 category. Both are assembled on a Ford chassis with a GVWR of 18,000 pounds. The two floorplans are equipped standard with 5,000-pound hitch receivers and 4.0 kW generators and feature pass-through storage, a booth dinette, convertible sofa, plush carpet, hardwood cabinets and 19- and 26-inch LCD TVs. Prices start at \$92,424.

## FLEETWOOD STORM



Designed to sleep as many as eight travelers, the Fleetwood **Storm** has three 29- to 31-foot floorplans. The double-slide 32BH is equipped with two dinettes, one of which converts into a mid-coach drop-down bunk bed. All floorplans, built on a Ford chassis with a GVWR of 16,000 pounds or 18,000 pounds, feature a second Hide-a-Loft queen-size bed that descends from over the cockpit. Amenities include glazed hardwood cabinet doors with hidden hinges, full basement storage and Flexsteel furniture. Base price is \$82,000.

## THOR MOTOR COACH A.C.E.

The new 29-foot **A.C.E.** motorhome from Thor Motor Coach is an evolutionary unit that combines aspects of Class A and C motorhomes. Built on a Ford chassis with a GVWR of 16,000 pounds,



the A.C.E. (an acronym for Class A & C Evolution) cockpit is more akin to Class C's with a modest eyebrow above the windshield that houses an electric drop-down bed. With a base



price of \$88,853, A.C.E. has optional full-body paint and is equipped with a kibble station in the hallway for pet food, residential linoleum, and leatherette cockpit seats and convertible sofas. (For a more in-depth look at the A.C.E., see our test starting on page 58.)

## COACHMEN MIRADA



Forest River's Coachmen division offers three 29- to 34-foot **Mirada** Class A double-slideout floorplans with base prices ranging from \$95,982 to \$99,995. The 34-footer is built on a Ford chassis with a GVWR of 22,000 pounds — the heaviest in the under-\$100,000 class — while the other Miradas have a GVWR of 20,500 pounds. Standard features include 6.5 kW generators, Corian countertops, rear- and mid-coach pass-through storage and a Dream Dinette, a gas strut-operated dinette that converts into a bed.



**FLEETWOOD TERRA**



and are built on a Ford platform with a GVWR of 18,000 pounds or 22,000 pounds. Features include Villa Comfort Fit furniture and a gas-strut-powered Dream Dinette to make conversion to a bed easier. Also, Thor recently debuted an outdoor kitchen option for the single-slide 35-foot 34SS floorplan that includes an LP-gas grill, mini-fridge and integrated stainless steel sink. Base price is \$95,965. ♦

Considered a crossover between a Class A and C motorhome by its maker, the Fleetwood **Terra**, with a \$99,000 base price, is available in two 31- and 34-foot double-slideout floorplans on a Ford chassis with a GVWR of 22,000 pounds. Each is equipped with Fleetwood's Hide-a-Loft drop-down bed over the cockpit. A queen-size bed in the rear bedroom along with a convertible dinette and sofa up front create a sleeping capacity for eight adults. Standard features include hardwood cabinet doors, Corian countertops, a soft-touch ceiling and basement storage.

**THOR MOTOR COACH DAYBREAK**

A 27-foot-long full-wall slideout opens up the living area and bedroom considerably in Thor Motor Coach's 35-foot **Daybreak 3370** floorplan, one of four Daybreak models beneath the \$100,000 threshold. Available in 29- to 35-foot lengths, the motorhomes are equipped with full basements

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**COACHMEN RV**  
800-353-7383,  
www.coachmenrv.com.  
CIRCLE 135 ON  
READER SERVICE CARD.

**FLEETWOOD RV**  
800-322-8216,  
www.fleetwoodrv.com.  
CIRCLE 136 ON  
READER SERVICE CARD.

**FOREST RIVER**  
574-296-7700,  
www.forestriverinc.com.  
CIRCLE 137 ON  
READER SERVICE CARD.

**HOLIDAY RAMBLER**  
800-245-4778,  
www.holidayrambler.com.  
CIRCLE 138 ON  
READER SERVICE CARD.

**ITASCA**  
641-585-3535,  
www.goitasca.com.  
CIRCLE 139 ON  
READER SERVICE CARD.

**MONACO RV**  
800-634-0855,  
www.monacocoach.com.  
CIRCLE 140 ON  
READER SERVICE CARD.

**THOR MOTOR COACH**  
800-860-5658,  
www.thormotorcoach.com.  
CIRCLE 141 ON  
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**WINNEBAGO**  
641-585-3535,  
www.gowinnebago.com.  
CIRCLE 142 ON  
READER SERVICE CARD.

Roadmaster's Sterling tow bar connects an Itasca coach and a Honda CR-V, with the capability of unhitching in a bind.



# OUTFITTING A HONDA CR-V FOR FLAT TOWING

ROADMASTER'S STERLING ALL-TERRAIN TOW BAR CREATES A STRONG, VERSATILE LINK BETWEEN COACH AND DINGHY

by BRAD CLAYTON

**O**nce in a while, those of us who tow dinghy vehicles get into "oops" situations in which we need to unhitch the car and back out. Unfortunately, it may happen that the car is at too much of an angle relative to the motorhome, creating so much tension that we can't release the tow bar arms. What to do now?

The Roadmaster Sterling All-Terrain

tow bar has the answer: a feature called the Freedom Latch that is designed to allow the owner to release the arms even when the motorhome and dinghy are in a bind. The latch is a patented cam design that multiplies force when the owner pulls one of the release levers.

The latch is but one of the features of the Sterling that make it a top contender with motorhomers who tow cars, SUVs and light trucks. Made of aircraft-grade aluminum with stainless steel telescoping

inner arms, the bar weighs 35 pounds and is rated to tow up to 6,000 pounds.

Roadmaster mates this bar and several others in its towing products lineup with mounting brackets (also called baseplates) built for specific dinghy vehicles — in this case a 2011 Honda CR-V. We arranged for installation of the tow bar (\$950 Camping World President's Club price) along with Roadmaster's mounting bracket (\$460) and wiring/safety cable kit (\$240) at the Camping World store in Henderson, Nev.

## THE INSTALLATION

The Camping World technicians we enlisted for the project know tow bar jobs so well that their moves seemed almost choreographed — nice to find that level of experience. In terms of effort, they rate the CR-V at or near the top of the list for ease of installation.

Installation of the Roadmaster mounting bracket involves removal of the Honda's radiator cover and front plastic fascia, exposing the metal bumper core. Removal of the core exposes two square openings in the car's frame rails, into which the mounting bracket is inserted. The bracket is well-made and a precise fit, bolted into place using the



Made of aircraft-grade aluminum with stainless steel arms, the Sterling has integral channels for cables and wiring.



The Honda CR-V grille/bumper fascia was easily removed for installation of the mounting bracket for towing.



Original Honda fasteners were used when bolting the Roadmaster mounting bracket to the frame.



The mounting bracket was a precise fit for the CR-V, inserted into the car frame in place of the bumper core.



Quick-disconnect assembly adds rigidity for towing and offers easy disassembly, leaving two small receiver tubes visible on the car.



A taillight lens for the CR-V is easily removed, exposing wiring into which diodes are spliced and connected to the motorhome wiring harness.

same 10 frame-attached nuts that Honda used for attachment of the bumper core.

The Roadmaster bracket is quite beefy, which is the company's recipe for protecting the car in areas that receive towing force — force that Honda didn't have in mind when it engineered the car.

The Honda fascia was trimmed slightly to permit inserting two arms into the mounting bracket. The arms would be the connecting points to the Roadmaster quick-disconnect system, the front-of-car hardware to which the tow bar would be attached.

The quick-disconnect system is very substantial and is hardly a stylish addition to the CR-V, but a plastic cover (\$80) can be set in place when not towing. Or the assembly can be removed in three pieces by removing clips, hitch pins and padlocks, leaving only two small, square receiver tubes protruding from the black Honda fascia.

### LIGHTS, TURN SIGNALS AND A FUSE

Onward to the Roadmaster wiring kit, which consists of a wiring harness complete with diodes (one-way electrical "valves") that are spliced into the running light and brakelight wires to prevent feedback problems while connected to the

motorhome's lighting system.

When towing the CR-V for long periods, Honda recommends that a fuse be removed from an under-dash fuse block to keep the radio/navigation system from drawing down the battery, which could happen over a number of hours with the key in the accessory (ACC) position (necessary to unlock the steering wheel).

Therein lies a problem: The fuse is very difficult to access even once — much less on a daily basis — and the solution is to wire a fused ON/OFF switch into the Honda fuse receptacle and locate the switch within easy reach under the instrument panel.

After that procedure, the car was ready. We hitch-pinned the tow bar in place and connected the safety cables, which have hooks at one end and at the other, very easy-to-connect steel beads that are inserted into convenient anchor points on the car bracketry. The Roadmaster wiring harness as well as the cables are conveniently routed partially through channels in the tow bar arms.

### DROP RECEIVER

It became apparent that the motorhome hitch receiver was too high. Roadmaster specifies that the tow bar should not be

more than 3 inches out of level, and our motorhome was 5.5 inches higher than the attachment points on the car. We used a Roadmaster 6-inch drop receiver (\$90) to lower the tow bar to a level position, although a 4-inch drop receiver would have been a better choice.

The drop receiver increased the length between the motorhome and car by 10.5 inches, which is convenient if the owner wants to mount a bicycle rack on the receiver. For owners who don't, it would be convenient if Roadmaster would offer a shorter drop receiver because the tow bar instructions recommend against extending towing length. The longer drop receiver also requires a more expensive wiring harness, and safety cables.

The Roadmaster owner's manual was thorough on how to use the equipment, and the Camping World staff took the time to explain everything in detail. The project took about 5.5 hours at \$89 per hour which, when added to the cost of the component parts, brought the total to \$1,840.

### ON THE ROAD

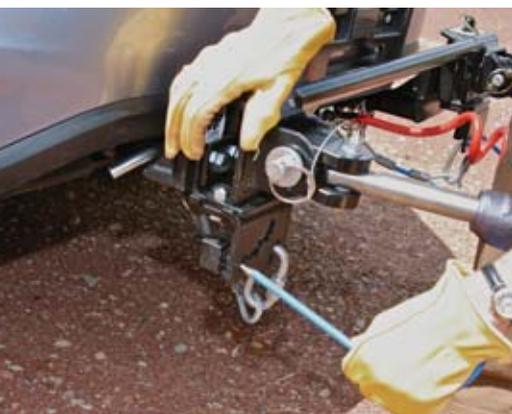
The towing length added by the drop receiver caused the tow bar to swing in a



The Sterling tow bar is easy to handle and collapses for storage behind the motorhome. A drop receiver is used to lower the bar to a level position.



Roadmaster's Freedom Latch eases the release of tow bar arms even when they're under pressure in a bind.



Convenient slots for steel safety cables speed up the hitching procedure.

larger vertical arc as the coach traveled undulating road surfaces, but the Roadmaster equipment nevertheless guided the Honda with precision, to the extent that we were only minimally aware that the car was back there. Motorhome tracking on curves was not altered; there was no jerky motion from the car on rough pavement, and no slack in the tow bar assembly that would have resulted in banging noises.

Hitching and unhitching the Sterling tow bar went very smoothly, even when the motorhome and car were in a bind. The quality of the bar was apparent to the eye, and obvious during everyday use.

### HONDA CR-V

The CR-V is approved by Honda for flat towing with a couple of pre-tow procedures: While idling the engine, press the brake pedal and move the shift lever through all its positions. Then shift the transmission to DRIVE and hold for five seconds, then to NEUTRAL and idle for three minutes. (Warning: severe transmission damage will occur if the vehicle is shifted from REVERSE to NEUTRAL and then towed; it must be shifted from DRIVE to NEUTRAL after idling for five seconds.) Next, turn the ignition key to the ACC position, which shuts the engine off but leaves the steering wheel unlocked. The above procedure should be repeated after eight hours of continuous towing. Removing the aforementioned fuse also is recommended (only remove the fuse after you have performed the transmission shifting procedure and the key is in the ACC position). Also make sure the radio and any items plugged into the accessory power sockets are turned off so they don't drain the battery.

The CR-V is a popular choice as a dinghy vehicle on several counts. The car is relatively lightweight (3,554-pound curb weight for the 4WD EX-L model), gets 21 MPG in the city and 27 MPG on the highway, has a firm suspension and good road manners, comfortable seating and 4WD versatility (optional). The price for the fully loaded CR-V 4WD EX-L model is \$29,895. The car's few negatives include slightly elevated road noise and modest acceleration with its 180-HP 2.4-L 4-cylinder engine.

The Honda is a good choice for motorhomers who are shopping for a versatile midsize, midpriced SUV as a tag-along, and the Roadmaster Sterling is an effective way to tow it. ♦

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

#### CAMPING WORLD

800-626-3636,  
www.campingworld.com.

#### HONDA

800-999-1009,  
www.automobiles.honda.com.

#### ROADMASTER

800-669-9690,  
www.roadmasterinc.com.  
Circle 143 on Reader Service Card.

## EVEN BRAKE

### PROPORTIONAL BRAKING FOR DINGHY VEHICLES FROM ROADMASTER



An air compressor and inertia-sensing controls are contained in the Even Brake unit, which is attached to the brake pedal before each towing session.

**F**ew of us who tow dinghy vehicles would complain that we have too much braking capability in view of the fact that the combined weight of our motorhomes and dinghy vehicles may range from 10 to 20 tons.

Consideration of our personal safety, chassis manufacturer requirements, state/provincial towing laws and personal liability have combined to bring supplemental braking for our dinghy vehicles into increasingly sharp focus.

Chassis manufacturers and motorhome builders address the issue in various ways, so it's necessary for motorhome owners to check their owner's manuals for specifics.

For example, Ford's service brakes are rated for operation up to the chassis gross vehicle weight rating (gvwr) and requires auxiliary braking for a vehicle or trailer weighing more than 1,500 pounds. Freightliner Custom Chassis states that auxiliary braking systems are a must for dinghy vehicles or trailers weighing more than 1,500 pounds.

Roadmaster, a veteran in the towing equipment business, is at the forefront of the issue with products such as Even Brake, a portable unit suitable for a wide variety of flat-towed dinghy vehicles. The product is designed to sense changes in the inertia of the motorhome and activate dinghy brakes



The monitor reflects the status of the Even Brake and signals when brakes are applied.



A clamp fitted to the pedal allows the Even Brake to actuate brakes during towing.



The transmitter relays performance and troubleshooting data to the monitor.

at varying levels proportionally.

Even Brake is popular with motorhomers who may change dinghy vehicles on a relatively frequent basis. The unit requires no equipment in the motorhome other than a wireless monitor that communicates functional status and braking activity of the Even Brake.

An alternative for motorhome owners who don't change vehicles as often is Roadmaster's BrakeMaster, which requires installation of equipment in the motorhome but utilizes a more compact brake pedal actuator in the dinghy vehicle.

Even Brake is the simplest to install, including an air compressor, brake-pedal actuator, inertia sensor and controls in a single unit. But it requires placing and removing the unit on the floor of the dinghy before and after each towing session. Both units utilize a breakaway switch that actuates if the dinghy vehicle was to separate from the motorhome during towing.

We arranged for a road test of the Even Brake in a 2011 Honda CR-V towed by a Ford-based 35-foot Itasca motorhome, with the installation performed at Camping World in Henderson, Nev.

Although the Even Brake unit is portable, two compact ancillary components are permanently installed in the dinghy: the ICX transmitter, attached to the cowl below the steering column, and a breakaway switch. Even Brake is plugged into the transmitter in preparation for towing and it sends data to a wireless monitor attached to the motorhome dash. The transmitter also is connected via a cable to a breakaway switch, which is attached to the lower front fascia on the Honda and would activate the brake unit if the car were to become detached from the motorhome during towing.

The Even Brake unit is powered via a cigarette lighter receptacle (12-volt DC). Addition of a cigarette lighter receptacle was necessary in the CR-V because the two standard receptacles were deactivated by removal of a fuse from the Honda fuse block (see accompanying story). With the installation complete, we were ready to tow.

The routine is to complete all pre-tow procedures before positioning the Even Brake on the floor in front of the driver's seat. A steel shaft with a clamp protrudes from the Even Brake, and the clamp must be affixed to the brake pedal. Instructions are specific on how the Even Brake should be positioned between the seat and the brake pedal so the unit is braced for action. Attaching the clamp to the brake pedal was a bit difficult in the Honda because the seat cannot be moved back as far as is the case in larger vehicles, but the procedure was easier after a few run-throughs.

Two Even Brake cords were connected, one to the ICX transmitter and the other to power, causing an internal air compressor in the brake unit to build pressure to an automatic shutoff point. This was reflected in a READY TO TEST message on the monitor. Then we set the braking sensitivity and force (pedal pressure) to medium levels.

Pressing a test button caused the Even Brake to pump the Honda brake pedal three times, which bled vacuum from the power brake unit. Everything was correct, and the unit gave us a green light; the motorhome monitor flashed the words TEST IS GOOD, SYSTEM READY. We were ready for the road.

While driving, we used medium pedal pressure in the motorhome for our first brake actuation, and the inertia-sensing Even Brake took a fraction of a second to

actuate. A red light was illuminated on the left corner of the monitor and the word BRAKING flashed on the screen. We could feel the braking of the CR-V — a gentle tug and a continued feeling of drag, which is what we had expected from a 3,600-pound car behind a 22,000-pound motorhome. We braked repeatedly, varying the amount of pressure on the brake pedal, and the Even Brake responded consistently.

Then we increased the force setting to maximum and could feel a modest increase in braking force, again not expecting dramatic braking difference due to the motorhome/car weight difference. Later we rode in the car's passenger seat while it was being towed (on a controlled course — do not attempt on a public road), and could see and feel the Even Brake actuating in response to each motorhome brake action — other than gentle pressure on the pedal, which did not actuate the unit.

Even Brake did not actuate on steep downhill grades when we downshifted to lower gears to restrain speed, which prevents continuous dinghy braking and the chance of brake overheating.

The monitor will signal if improper positioning or adjustment of the Even Brake causes it to press the dinghy brake pedal when it shouldn't, and the system includes a number of other diagnostic functions.

The Even Brake system performed consistently well and gave us more of a feeling of security any time we encountered the need for aggressive braking.

Camping World lists the Even Brake at \$1,300 and the BrakeMaster ranges between \$922 and \$1,389, depending on motorhome application. Cost of the Honda installation was \$279, including \$237 for labor plus the cost of a brakelight switch and cigarette lighter receptacle.

## U WILL LIKE THESE HANGERS-ON

The cabinets in my motorhome wouldn't stay closed, since they didn't have a positive latching lock. I took a plastic-coated clothes hanger and cut it into 5-inch-long pieces. Then I bent each piece into a U shape. Now, when I travel, I drop the U-hangers over the cabinet door handles and all the doors stay closed. And the plastic-coated hangers don't scratch or rub the wood surface.

**JOSEPH PECK | RIO RANCHO, N.M.**



## SOFT SOLUTION ▲

Remember the last time you had to fight your new plastic sewer hose to get the tank adapter fitting or the dump elbow fitting in place and clamped? Well, fight no more.

To begin with, slip a hose clamp onto each end of the hose and position it loosely about 6 inches from the end. Then simply soak the end of the hose in hot water for a few minutes to soften it (or, if you're using your furnace, hold it up to the exhaust until it heats up), and slide the fitting into position. Then tighten the clamps and you're finished.

**STUART WEST | OSSISPEE, N.H.**

## ▼ AVOIDING OIL STARVATION



The one cautionary step often overlooked by RVers who change the motor oil in their dinghy vehicle or motorhome is prefilling the new oil filter before installation. Not even all of the pros do it.

A dry filter means that the engine's oil pump cannot pressurize internal oil galley until this 1- to 2-quart void is filled. Simply put, by failing to perform this important oil change step, you can force your vehicle's engine to run for up to 30 oil-starved seconds before wear-preventing lubricant can reach vital parts.

Thankfully, it's a simple matter to avoid this unnecessary period of accelerated engine wear. All you have to do is top off the filter with oil before you spin it into place. (Caution: Be sure to deduct the amount of oil used for this purpose from the total engine-fill specifications. If you don't, an overfilled crankcase will result.)

As might be imagined, this job is easily accomplished if the filter mounts vertically on the engine. However, it is slightly more time-consuming and tricky if your engine has its filter canister placed in a near-horizontal plane.

When filling these filters, pour the oil in a little at a time, turning the container on its side and rotating it so the dry element material can absorb as much of the oil as possible. Continue pouring only until the oil level reaches the bottom of the threaded opening as the filter is held in the horizontal plane. Be careful not to overfill, or you'll experience spillage during filter installation.

Adopting this prefill precaution requires only a small extra effort. The reward for your thoroughness is near-instant lubrication at startup and an engine undamaged by owner-induced oil starvation.

**RICHARD MATER | SANTA MARIA, CALIF.**



## SCREENING OUT BUGS ▲

Bugs are a fact of life in many camping environments. Still, I wasn't willing to give up the pleasures of sitting out under the awning in the evening. My solution was to enclose the sides of the awning with screens.

I bought two mosquito-net screen panels that together were 2 feet longer than the three sides of the awning. This 2-foot overlap became the doorway. The inner screen is pegged to the ground; the outer screen lays against it and closes the opening. A few fishing sinkers sewn into the bottom hem of the outer screen keep it in place. Hook-and-loop fasteners attach the screens to the motorhome, and a muslin panel closes off the space between the coach and the ground.

**HERBERT SUTTON  
SUN CITY WEST, ARIZ. ♦**

## WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

**Quick Tips**, MotorHome's monthly column of useful, handy and simple tips by fellow RVers, is looking for submissions. Please send your favorite do-it-yourself ideas to: MotorHome Quick Tips, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001, or email [info@motorhome.com](mailto:info@motorhome.com). Be sure to include any photos, illustrations or drawings, if necessary. If your tip is selected for publication, you'll receive \$35.

ILLUSTRATIONS: BILL TIPTON

# techsavvy

HANDS-ON | HOT LINE | COACH & POWERTRAIN



HANDS-ON | by KEVIN LIVINGSTON

## THINKING THERMAL

Dual pane, replacement roof vent caps help moderate temperature and condensation



**It seems no matter how carefully we plan our**

excursions, weather can affect the comfort zone inside our motorhomes. Most motorhomes can handle limited temperature extremes, but there are always a few areas that can use some improvement. One area that is often overlooked is the roof vent. Maybe it's due to its small stature, assuming there's not much that can be gained by making modifications to insulate against large swings in temperature.

For those of you who have stuffed pillows or other insulation into the roof vent trim — or even snapped on insulated material that covers the opening, there's an alternative. Heng's thermal vent lid is a replacement roof vent cap on steroids.

The thermal vent lid is similar in design to a double-paned window, using dual layers instead of only one that allows for a sealed air pocket between the layers. The two layers are made of quality plastic and are void of any seams or welds that can compromise longevity. This proven method of insulation helps get the upper hand on heat loss when the furnace is on and keeps the heat out when the air conditioner is working. And it helps prevent condensation, which leads to annoying dripping, frame sweating

and the formation of mold.

As with any standard roof vent, the installation of Heng's thermal vent lid requires very little time and effort to make the exchange. The first step is to remove the screen and crank mechanism before safely climbing on the roof. Using a pair of needle-nose pliers, gently unwind one of the small metal coils retaining the roof vent. Now just slide the old vent lid out, swap in the new vent lid and twist the metal tab back into the original coiled shape again. Reassemble everything else in the reverse order and that's it.

To test we replaced one of the two factory-installed roof vent caps with Heng's insulated counterpart. Using an infrared temperature gun, we measured the temperature on the interior

side of both caps, recording a 10-degree difference. While additional insulation support may still be needed in extreme temperatures, Heng's thermal vent lids are certainly worth the few extra dollars, especially since they are more stout than the standard lids, which is a plus all by itself. They will fit Ventline, Elixir or Heng's universal vents, and you can find them for \$25 to \$30 by surfing the Internet. **Heng's Industries, 877-295-1205, [www.hengindustries.com](http://www.hengindustries.com).** ♦



PHOTOS: KEVIN LIVINGSTON



## Cancellation Aggravation

HOPING TO RECEIVE A FULL REFUND ON A SERVICE CONTRACT THAT HE NEVER USED, A READER ASKED HOT LINE FOR HELP. HE EXPLAINED:

I purchased a new Holiday Rambler RV from Veurinks' RV Center in April 2006. On the advice of the financial representative at the dealership, I also bought a 60-month extended service contract written by Signet Financial Group of Vacaville, Calif. According to the terms of the contract, if it was not used during the 60 months, the purchase price would be refunded. This contract has run the full 60 months and has never been used.

I sent a certified letter to Signet Financial Group requesting my refund, but the letter was returned as undeliverable. I have been doing some research online and it appears that Signet has taken money, and advantage, of many others and has fled California.

Can Hot Line help?

**HAROLD KRUIHTOFF  
PIERSON, MICH.**

*In our attempt to assist Kruithoff we tried calling Signet's office (always getting a busy signal) and accessing its website (reading "Under Construction"). An Internet search led us to online reports about notices that were sent out to certain dealers from Signet President Gregg Lehmann that stated, "It is with great regret that I must announce, effective immediately, Signet Financial Group Inc. (SFG) is ceasing operations due to lack of capital necessary to support continued operations."*

*Though we couldn't help Kruithoff get his money back, we do suggest that he and other Signet customers file a complaint with their state's Attorney General's office as well as file a complaint in California, where Signet was based. And remember, when it comes to extended service contracts, if it sounds too good to be true, it usually is.*

**WHEN IT COMES TO  
EXTENDED SERVICE  
CONTRACTS,  
IF IT SOUNDS  
TOO GOOD TO BE  
TRUE, IT USUALLY IS.**

### THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM

*After twice being denied reimbursement for repairs to his brakes by the chassis manufacturer, a reader asked Hot Line to intervene. He explained:*

My 2003 Fleetwood Southwind motorhome had brake failure in June 2009 while I was traveling in Wyoming. I was able to bring the coach to a coasting stop, and after waiting two hours I had brakes again. I immediately drove it to a local shop for repair.

The repair technician cleaned the master cylinder reservoir and flushed the brake hydraulics. He told me that the right rear ABS sensor came apart due to the heat from the brakes.

A few days later I took the motorhome to another repair shop to have the ABS sensors replaced. They told me that the right ABS sensor had come apart and the left ABS sensor was about to come apart because of the heat. They replaced both sensors.

When I returned home I received a safety recall (regarding the Bosch brake caliper campaign) from Workhorse Custom Chassis that described exactly what had happened to my motorhome when I was in Wyoming. I contacted my local Workhorse dealer and was told that they would order the calipers but they didn't know how long it would take to receive them.

In the meantime, I requested reimbursement from Workhorse for the expenses caused from this occurrence (\$146.90 for flushing the brake fluid and \$280.39 for the two new brake sensors). Workhorse denied reimbursement.

Five months later the calipers were in stock so I took the motorhome in to have the calipers replaced. During the service the technicians found extensive damage and ended up replacing the brakes, rotors, seals, etc. I decided to again submit a claim to Workhorse for these additional costs. It was once again denied.

I think Workhorse is in the wrong, and I want to be reimbursed in full for my expenses. I drove a 100-ton crane for 20 years in mountain conditions; I know how to brake. This damage was due to the faulty calipers — it was not because of me.

**PHILIP SEWALL  
VENTURA, CALIF.**

*Hot Line contacted Workhorse Custom Chassis to see if it would reconsider Sewall's case. Soon thereafter, a company representative responded with the following letter:*

Thank you for contacting Workhorse Custom Chassis and forwarding correspondence from Philip Sewall. We appreciate the opportunity to have reviewed the situation regarding the interim repairs.

Workhorse has authorized reimbursement in the amount of \$280.39 to Sewall for the ABS sensor repairs.

The cracking of rotors happens during an extended period of time due to constant heating and cooling (normal to a friction braking system). The metal expands and contracts at different rates depending on the driver, application, towing, etc., until it meets the end of its service life either due to cracking or being below minimum thickness specification. The rotors show no sign of a caliper malfunction.

Again, thank you for the final opportunity to review this matter further.

**DEBRA ANDERSON  
REIMBURSEMENT COORDINATOR  
WORKHORSE CUSTOM CHASSIS  
TROY, MICH. ♦**

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

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**USED 2010 Four Winds CHATEAU 21C** **NOW \$45,687** (888) 641-0925 Kaysville, UT STK# KY37606



**USED 2008 Gulf Stream YELLOWSTONE 6316Y** **NOW \$46,967** (888) 641-0925 Kaysville, UT STK# KY36429



**USED 2003 Gulf Stream SUN VOYAGER 8378 MXC** WAS \$64,995 **NOW \$46,995** SAVE \$18,000 (888) 450-7060 Dothan, AL STK# DOT38465



**USED 2005 Forest River GEORGETOWN 326DS** WAS \$88,576 **NOW \$49,777** SAVE \$38,799 (888) 727-2952 North Little Rock, AR STK# LIT15862



**USED 2008 Coachmen FREEDOM EXPRESS 311S** WAS \$78,885 **NOW \$49,988** SAVE \$28,897 (888) 348-5909 Avondale, AZ STK# AV014355



**NEW 2010 Four Winds CHATEAU 28A** WAS \$83,160 **NOW \$49,995** SAVE \$33,165 (866) 820-0335 Council Bluffs, IA STK# CBI8512



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 21C** WAS \$72,499 **NOW \$49,995** SAVE \$22,504 (888) 696-2165 Savannah, GA STK# SAV14903



**USED 2009 Winnebago CHALET 30B** LIST PRICE \$63,777 **NOW \$51,438** SAVE \$12,339 (888) 480-3175 Roseville, CA STK# SAC13156 VIN# A02063



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 21C** WAS \$69,156 **NOW \$52,995** SAVE \$16,161 (888) 674-0275 Gulf Breeze, FL STK# GB37965



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 21C** WAS \$71,788 **NOW \$54,950** SAVE \$16,838 (888) 850-5575 Wood Village, OR STK# POR36025



**USED 2000 Tiffin ALLEGRO BUS M-39** WAS \$69,988 **NOW \$54,988** SAVE \$15,000 (888) 475-5918 Robertsdale, AL STK# RD38400



**USED 2008 Coachmen FREEDOM EXPRESS 26S0** **NOW \$54,995** (888) 815-7523 Woodstock, GA STK# WDS15618



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 21C** WAS \$85,559 **NOW \$54,995** SAVE \$30,564 (866) 502-8238 Bath, NY STK# BAT67361



**USED 2009 Winnebago VISTA 30BR**  
 WAS \$78,855 **NOW \$54,995** SAVE  
 \$23,860 (877) 289-0812 Las Vegas, NV  
 STK# LVN36786



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE**  
**21C** MSRP \$75,020 **NOW \$54,995** SAVE  
 \$20,025 (888) 641-0925 Kaysville, UT  
 STK# KY37582



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 21C** WAS  
 \$69,649 **NOW \$54,995** SAVE \$14,654 (888) 242-  
 0293 Madison, WI STK# MAD15280



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE**  
**21C** WAS \$71,868 **NOW \$54,995** SAVE  
 \$16,873 (888) 450-7060 Dothan, AL STK#  
 DOT38108



**USED 2006 Gulf Stream INDEPENDENCE**  
**33** WAS \$69,995 **NOW \$54,995** SAVE  
 \$15,000 (888) 568-2177 Burlington, VA  
 STK# FRV9990



**USED 1998 Safari SERENGETI 3706** LIST PRICE  
 \$70,987 **NOW \$57,989** SAVE \$12,998 (877) 834-  
 0429 Bakersfield, CA STK# SLV22031 VIN# 110491



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE**  
**21C** LIST PRICE \$74,148 **NOW \$57,995**  
 SAVE \$16,153 (888) 331-1595 Santa  
 Clarita, CA STK# AMRV21253 VIN# A61442



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE**  
**21C** WAS \$72,231 **NOW \$57,995** SAVE  
 \$14,236 (888) 801-3226 Byron, GA STK#  
 MAC15295



**NEW 2011 Four**  
**Winds FREEDOM ELITE**  
**21C** WAS \$72,202  
**NOW \$57,995** SAVE  
 \$14,207 (888) 815-7523  
 Woodstock, GA STK#  
 WDS15383



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE**  
**21C** LIST PRICE \$71,665 **NOW \$57,995**  
 SAVE \$13,670 (877) 834-0429 Bakersfield,  
 CA STK# SLV21206 VIN# A61462



**USED 2007 Coachmen CONCORD 275DS**  
**2 SLIDES!** **NOW \$58,500** (888)  
 617-5406 Oakwood, GA STK# ORV15727



**USED 2007 Forest River LEXINGTON**  
**283TS GRAND TOURING** **NOW \$58,995**  
 (888) 815-7523 Woodstock, GA STK#  
 WDS15581



**USED 2004 Tiffin ALLEGRO BAY 32BA**  
**NOW \$59,945** (888) 614-5201 Draper,  
 UT STK# ABRV36569



**NEW 2010 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE**  
**26E** WAS \$84,995 **NOW \$59,945** SAVE  
 \$25,050 (888) 475-5918 Robertsdale, AL  
 STK# RD36851



**USED 2006 Fleetwood**  
**BOUNCER 36Z** WAS  
 \$79,995 **NOW \$59,995**  
 SAVE \$20,000 (888)  
 474-1330 Bartow, FL  
 STK# DCW8044



**USED 2007 Coachmen CONCORD 300TS**  
 WAS \$79,995 **NOW \$59,995** SAVE  
 \$20,000 (888) 474-1330 Bartow, FL STK#  
 DCW7676A



**USED 2010 Four Winds CHATEAU 31P**  
 WAS \$78,855 **NOW \$59,995** SAVE  
 \$18,860 (877) 289-0812 Las Vegas, NV  
 STK# LVN36787



**NEW 2011 Four Winds  
 FOUR WINDS SIESTA  
 21BC** WAS \$79,405  
**NOW \$59,997** SAVE  
 \$19,408 (888) 471-  
 3546 Chichester, NH  
 STK# GRV506771



**USED 2010 Four Winds CHATEAU 28A**  
**NOW \$59,999** (888) 905-0490 Anthony,  
 TX STK# LC15722



**USED 2009 Winnebago CHALET 30B** LIST PRICE  
 \$77,806 **NOW \$61,152** SAVE \$16,654 (888) 479-  
 3568 Vacaville, CA STK# VAC13159 VIN# A02624



**USED 2010 Damon DAYBREAK SPORT  
 3211** LIST PRICE \$84,323 **NOW \$62,146**  
 SAVE \$22,177 (888) 479-3568 Vacaville,  
 CA STK# VAC14093 VIN# 435902



**USED 2000 Monaco WINDSOR 38'SLD**  
**NOW \$63,995** (888) 614-5201 Draper,  
 UT STK# ABRV36744



**NEW 2010 Four Winds  
 FREEDOM ELITE 31R**  
 WAS \$95,454 **NOW**  
**\$63,995** SAVE \$31,459  
 (866) 820-0335 Council  
 Bluffs, IA STK# CBI10562



**USED 2007 Winnebago  
 SIGHTSEER 35J** WAS  
 \$87,855 **NOW \$64,995**  
 SAVE \$22,860 (877)  
 289-0812 Las Vegas, NV  
 STK# LVN36539A



**USED 2009 Fleetwood TIOGA 31M**  
 WAS \$84,345 **NOW \$64,995** SAVE  
 \$19,350 (888) 315-7967 Tucson, AZ STK#  
 TUC14361



**USED 2010 Winnebago CHALET 24JR**  
 WAS \$82,999 **NOW \$65,499** SAVE  
 \$17,500 (888) 454-1707 Kissimmee, FL  
 STK# KS8029



**USED 1998 Gulf Stream TOURMASTER  
 8404** WAS \$84,995 **NOW \$66,858** SAVE  
 \$18,137 (888) 254-9145 Meridian, ID  
 STK# MER12639A



**NEW 2011 Four Winds  
 FOUR WINDS 31K**  
 MSRP \$92,178 **NOW**  
**\$66,995** SAVE \$25,183  
 (888) 905-0490 Anthony,  
 TX STK# LC15106



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE  
 26E** MSRP \$86,621 **NOW \$67,900** SAVE  
 \$18,721 (888) 844-1758 New Braunfels, TX  
 STK# SW9364



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE  
 28U** WAS \$90,572 **NOW \$67,995** SAVE  
 \$22,577 (888) 617-5406 Oakwood, GA  
 STK# ORV15570



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE  
 31R** WAS \$91,653 **NOW \$68,995** SAVE  
 \$22,658 (888) 474-1330 Bartow, FL STK#  
 DCW7930



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE  
 31R** MSRP \$91,653 **NOW \$69,900** SAVE  
 \$21,753 (888) 844-1758 New Braunfels, TX  
 STK# SW9464



**NEW 2010 Four Winds HURRICANE 31G**  
 WAS \$104,791 **NOW \$69,995** SAVE  
 \$34,796 (877) 289-0812 Las Vegas, NV  
 STK# LVN36915



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 31R** WAS \$98,146 **NOW \$69,995** SAVE \$28,151 (888) 463-3995 Fountain, CO STK# KC2608015



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 31R** WAS \$95,813 **NOW \$69,995** SAVE \$25,818 (888) 727-2952 North Little Rock, AR STK# LIT10888



**NEW 2011 Jayco GREYHAWK 26DS** WAS \$92,435 **NOW \$69,995** SAVE \$22,440 (888) 819-7952 Longmont, CO STK# KC110807



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 31R** WAS \$95,173 **NOW \$69,995** SAVE \$25,178 (888) 801-3226 Byron, GA STK# MAC15506



**NEW 2011 Jayco GREYHAWK 31SS** WAS \$93,914 **NOW \$69,995** SAVE \$23,919 (866) 415-9726 Golden, CO STK# KC510715



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 31R** WAS \$92,119 **NOW \$69,995** SAVE \$22,124 (888) 902-8565 Tallahassee, FL STK# TAL36883



**NEW 2012 Thor Motor Coach ACE EV029.1** WAS \$92,497 **NOW \$69,999** SAVE \$22,498 (877) 554-3516 Lakewood, NJ STK# LAK8779



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 31R** WAS \$92,407 **NOW \$69,999** SAVE \$22,408 (888) 454-1707 Kissimmee, FL STK# KS8002



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FOUR WINDS 31K** WAS \$96,855 **NOW \$72,877** SAVE \$23,978 (888) 672-5049 Syracuse, NY STK# SYU65453



**USED 2006 Georgie Boy CRUISEMASTER 3775DS** **NOW \$73,967** (888) 641-0925 Kaysville, UT STK# KY36704



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 23S** WAS \$97,691 **NOW \$73,995** SAVE \$23,696 (888) 692-9016 Myrtle Beach, SC STK# MB123670



**USED 2008 Coachmen CONCORD 275DS** WAS \$125,881 **NOW \$74,899** SAVE \$50,982 (866) 755-9604 Charleston, SC STK# CHN124687



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 31R** WAS \$95,810 **NOW \$74,900** SAVE \$20,910 (888) 801-3226 Byron, GA STK# MAC15414



**USED 2009 Damon DAYBREAK 3576** WAS \$98,064 **NOW \$74,995** SAVE \$23,069 (888) 542-3819 Mesa, AZ STK# MES14359



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 31R** WAS \$95,359 **NOW \$74,995** SAVE \$20,364 (888) 696-2165 Savannah, GA STK# SAV15321



**USED 2007 Coachmen EPIC 3580TS** WAS \$109,900 **NOW \$75,888** SAVE \$34,012 (866) 289-0113 Chattanooga, TN STK# CH6283



**NEW 2011 Winnebago ACCESS 26Q**  
 WAS \$91,870 **NOW \$75,997** SAVE  
 \$15,873 (888) 463-3995 Fountain, CO  
 STK# KC211041



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FOUR WINDS 25C** WAS \$95,139  
**NOW \$76,111** SAVE  
 \$19,028 (888) 542-3819 Mesa, AZ STK#  
 MES12640



**USED 2006 Gulf Stream SUN VOYAGER 8379** LIST PRICE \$104,227 **NOW \$76,514** SAVE \$27,713 (888) 479-3568 Vacaville, CA STK# VAC11858A VIN# 410129



**USED 2006 Winnebago ADVENTURER 33V** WAS \$109,950 **NOW \$76,950** SAVE \$33,000 (888) 850-5575 Wood Village, OR STK# POR36499



**NEW 2011 Four Winds CHATEAU CITATION 28BK** WAS \$99,333 **NOW \$76,988** SAVE \$22,345 (888) 457-4801 Colfax, NC STK# CFX3297



**NEW 2010 Itasca CAMBRIA 30C** LIST PRICE \$105,804 **NOW \$79,301** SAVE \$26,503 (888) 480-3175 Roseville, CA STK# SAC10924 VIN# A37830



**USED 2006 Holiday Rambler VACATIONER 34PDD** **NOW \$79,864** (888) 614-5201 Draper, UT STK# ABRV36616



**USED 2006 Alfa FOUNDER 40FD**  
 WAS \$129,995 **NOW \$79,995** SAVE \$50,000  
 (888) 450-7060 Dothan, AL STK# DOT38552



**NEW 2011 Four Winds CHATEAU CITATION 26BE** WAS \$103,097 **NOW \$79,995** SAVE \$23,102 (888) 454-1707 Kissimmee, FL STK# KS7743



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 23S** WAS \$101,574 **NOW \$79,995** SAVE \$21,579 (888) 696-2165 Savannah, GA STK# SAV14902



**NEW 2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 26BE** WAS \$97,934 **NOW \$79,995** SAVE \$17,939 (888) 242-0293 Madison, WI STK# MAD15125



**NEW 2011 Four Winds CHATEAU 31P** WAS \$97,759 **NOW \$79,997** SAVE \$17,762 (888) 692-9016 Myrtle Beach, SC STK# MB125164



**NEW 2010 Damon DAYBREAK 34SS** WAS \$107,482 **NOW \$79,999** SAVE \$27,483 (888) 672-5049 Syracuse, NY STK# SYU65418



**NEW 2011 Damon DAYBREAK 3211** WAS \$115,193 **NOW \$81,999** SAVE \$33,194 (877) 554-3516 Lakewood, NJ STK# LAK8722



**NEW 2010 Itasca SUNSTAR 30W** WAS \$104,078 **NOW \$82,995** SAVE \$21,083 (888) 475-5918 Robertsdale, AL STK# RD36784



**NEW 2011 Four Winds HURRICANE 31D** WAS \$103,042 **NOW \$84,595** SAVE \$18,447 (888) 463-3995 Fountain, CO STK# KC210637



**NEW 2011 Four Winds CHATEAU CITATION 24SB** WAS \$122,806 **NOW \$84,995** SAVE \$37,811 (888) 474-1330 Bartow, FL STK# DCW7742



**NEW 2011 Damon DAYBREAK 3211**  
 WAS \$110,907 **NOW \$84,995** SAVE  
 \$25,912 (888) 801-3226 Byron, GA STK#  
 MAC15959



**NEW 2010 Four Winds WINDSPORT 31G**  
 WAS \$106,870 **NOW \$84,995** SAVE  
 \$21,875 (866) 754-7302 Greenwood, IN  
 STK# GRW324483



**NEW 2011 Four Winds WINDSPORT 33T** WAS  
 \$125,299 **NOW \$85,995** SAVE \$39,304 (866) 610-  
 5049 Akron, OH STK# SRV17669



**NEW 2011 Jayco MELBOURNE 26A** WAS  
 \$104,115 **NOW \$84,997** SAVE \$19,118  
 (888) 463-3995 Fountain, CO STK#  
 KC210830



**NEW 2010 Four Winds WINDSPORT 32V**  
 WAS \$127,401 **NOW \$85,900** SAVE  
 \$41,501 (866) 754-7302 Greenwood, IN  
 STK# GRW324482



**NEW 2010 Damon DAYBREAK 34SS** WAS \$112,215  
**NOW \$86,995** SAVE \$25,220 (888) 457-4801 Col-  
 fax, NC STK# CFX3283



**USED 2003 Newmar DUTCH STAR 40**  
 WAS \$105,995 **NOW \$86,995** SAVE  
 \$19,000 (866) 415-9726 Golden, CO STK#  
 KC511158B



**NEW 2011 Damon Challenger 32VS**  
 WAS \$128,683 **NOW \$89,562** SAVE  
 \$39,121 (866) 775-0682 Roanoke, VA  
 STK# ROA14216



**USED 2007 Holiday Rambler VACATIONER 36WBD**  
**NOW \$89,875**  
 (888) 905-0490 Anthony,  
 TX STK# LC15556P



**NEW 2010 Itasca NAVION 24A** LIST  
 PRICE \$122,525 **NOW \$89,898** SAVE  
 \$32,627 (888) 479-3568 Vacaville, CA  
 STK# VAC11168 VIN# 363994



**NEW 2011 Damon DAYBREAK 3370**  
 WAS \$113,646 **NOW \$89,995** SAVE  
 \$23,651 (888) 617-5406 Oakwood, GA  
 STK# ORV15409



**NEW 2011 Four Winds HURRICANE 31J**  
 WAS \$109,956 **NOW \$89,995** SAVE  
 \$19,961 (888) 848-7312 Columbia, SC  
 STK# COL124397



**NEW 2011 Four Winds HURRICANE 32A**  
 WAS \$108,831 **NOW \$89,995** SAVE  
 \$18,836 (888) 848-7312 Columbia, SC  
 STK# COL16726



**NEW 2010 Damon DAYBREAK 35BD**  
 WAS \$116,520 **NOW \$89,997** SAVE  
 \$26,523 (888) 903-6787 Harrisburg, PA  
 STK# HAR65959



**NEW 2011 Damon DAYBREAK 35BD**  
 WAS \$114,232 **NOW**  
**\$92,995** SAVE \$21,237  
 (866) 502-8238 Bath,  
 NY STK# BAT66203



**NEW 2011 Damon DAYBREAK 3370**  
 WAS \$118,673 **NOW \$93,995** SAVE  
 \$24,678 (866) 502-8238 Bath, NY STK#  
 BAT66202



**NEW 2011 Winnebago VISTA 35F** WAS \$121,893 **NOW \$96,900** SAVE \$24,993 (888) 819-7952 Longmont, CO STK# KC110938



**NEW 2011 Damon DAYBREAK 36SD** WAS \$122,803 **NOW \$98,890** SAVE \$23,913 (888) 896-2801 Albuquerque, NM STK# ARV15433



**NEW 2009 Damon AVANTI 3106** WAS \$149,999 **NOW \$98,999** SAVE \$51,000 (866) 648-5288 St. Augustine, FL STK# JAC38675



**NEW 2011 Damon AVANTI 3106** WAS \$142,858 **NOW \$99,995** SAVE \$42,863 (888) 682-3036 Churchville, NY STK# CHU67883



**NEW 2011 Four Winds HURRICANE 34U** WAS \$124,621 **NOW \$99,995** SAVE \$24,626 (888) 474-1330 Bartow, FL STK# DCW7855



**NEW 2011 Four Winds HURRICANE 34B** WAS \$123,334 **NOW \$99,997** SAVE \$23,337 (888) 692-9016 Myrtle Beach, SC STK# MB123912



**NEW 2010 Itasca REYO 25R** LIST PRICE \$142,336 **NOW \$103,887** SAVE \$38,449 (888) 479-3568 Vacaville, CA STK# VAC12802 VIN# 430912



**NEW 2010 Four Winds WINDSPORT 32V** MSRP \$141,464 **NOW \$104,995** SAVE \$36,469 (888) 668-6715 Katy, TX STK# KAT9077



**NEW 2010 Itasca SUNOVA 33C** LIST PRICE \$140,213 **NOW \$104,995** SAVE \$35,218 (888) 331-1595 Santa Clarita, CA STK# AMRV21788 VIN# A00071



**NEW 2010 Four Winds SERRANO 31V** LIST PRICE \$151,647 **NOW \$107,995** SAVE \$43,652 (888) 331-1595 Santa Clarita, CA STK# AMRV20880 VIN# 439409



**NEW 2011 Winnebago VIA 25T** WAS \$133,340 **NOW \$108,977** SAVE \$24,363 (877) 450-7415 Island Lake, IL STK# CRV5780



**NEW 2011 Damon CHALLENGER 32VS** WAS \$132,354 **NOW \$108,988** SAVE \$23,366 (888) 457-4801 Colfax, NC STK# CFX3707



**NEW 2011 Winnebago SIGHTSEER 33C** WAS \$140,860 **NOW \$109,800** SAVE \$31,060 (888) 696-2165 Savannah, GA STK# SAV14725



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31Z** WAS \$149,593 **NOW \$109,950** SAVE \$39,643 (888) 850-5575 Wood Village, OR STK# POR35284



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31Z** WAS \$154,618 **NOW \$109,995** SAVE \$44,623 (866) 502-8238 Bath, NY STK# BAT66685



**NEW 2010 Winnebago SIGHTSEER 37L** WAS \$147,631 **NOW \$109,995** SAVE \$37,636 (888) 682-3036 Churchville, NY STK# CHU64953



**NEW 2010 Winnebago VIA 25R** WAS \$139,816 **NOW \$109,995** SAVE \$29,821 (888) 682-3036 Churchville, NY STK# CHU64956



**NEW 2010 Itasca REYO 25R** WAS \$141,980 **NOW \$109,999** SAVE \$31,981 (888) 457-4801 Colfax, NC STK# CFX3751



**NEW 2011 Four Winds WINDSPORT 36F** WAS \$155,190 **NOW \$114,995** SAVE \$40,195 (866) 820-0335 Council Bluffs, IA STK# CBI11295



**NEW 2011 Damon AVANTI 2806** WAS \$157,118 **NOW \$119,898** SAVE \$37,220 (888) 672-5049 Syracuse, NY STK# SYU66198



**NEW 2011 Four Winds WINDSPORT 32V** WAS \$147,061 **NOW \$114,995** SAVE \$32,066 (866) 415-9726 Golden, CO STK# KC511344



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31V** WAS \$160,882 **NOW \$118,995** SAVE \$41,887 (888) 682-3036 Churchville, NY STK# CHU67585



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31Z** WAS \$157,226 **NOW \$119,977** SAVE \$37,249 (888) 471-3546 Chichester, NH STK# GRV507098



**NEW 2011 Winnebago VIA 25Q** WAS \$151,902 **NOW \$119,980** SAVE \$31,922 (866) 775-0682 Roanoke, VA STK# ROA13986



**USED 2007 Holiday Rambler NEPTUNE 37PBD** **NOW \$119,995** (888) 614-5201 Draper, UT STK# ABRV35967



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31Z** WAS \$161,366 **NOW \$119,995** SAVE \$41,371 (888) 896-2801 Albuquerque, NM STK# ARV15099



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31X** MSRP \$159,878 **NOW \$119,995** SAVE \$39,883 (888) 905-0490 Anthony, TX STK# LC15344



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31X** WAS \$155,501 **NOW \$119,995** SAVE \$35,506 (888) 859-6653 Hillsboro, OR STK# HIL35965



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31V** WAS \$155,440 **NOW \$119,995** SAVE \$35,445 (888) 902-8565 Tallahassee, FL STK# TAL37337



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31X** WAS \$153,407 **NOW \$119,995** SAVE \$33,412 (888) 242-0293 Madison, WI STK# MAD15290



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31X** WAS \$153,117 **NOW \$119,995** SAVE \$33,122 (877) 450-7415 Island Lake, IL STK# CRV5826



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31V** WAS \$152,592 **NOW \$119,995** SAVE \$32,597 (866) 610-5049 Akron, OH STK# SRV17673



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31V** WAS \$152,293 **NOW \$119,995** SAVE \$32,298 (866) 610-5049 Akron, OH STK# SRV17672



**NEW 2011 Four Winds WINDSPORT 34U**  
 WAS \$152,217 **NOW \$119,995** SAVE  
 \$32,222 (866) 415-9726 Golden, CO STK#  
 KC511345



**USED 2006 Fleetwood EXCURSION 39V** WAS \$150,990  
**NOW \$119,995** SAVE  
 \$30,995 (866) 610-5049 Akron, OH STK#  
 SRV17857



**NEW 2011 Damon CHALLENGER 37KT**  
 WAS \$149,610 **NOW \$119,995** SAVE  
 \$29,615 (866) 502-8238 Bath, NY STK#  
 BAT68818



**NEW 2011 Winnebago VIA 25Q** WAS \$149,017  
**NOW \$119,995** SAVE \$29,022 (888) 682-3036  
 Churchville, NY STK# CHU69422



**NEW 2010 Itasca SUNCRUISER 35P**  
 WAS \$163,611 **NOW \$119,999** SAVE  
 \$43,612 (888) 471-3546 Chichester, NH  
 STK# GRV506358



**NEW 2011 Damon CHALLENGER 35SD**  
 WAS \$155,443 **NOW \$123,789** SAVE  
 \$31,654 (866) 755-9604 Charleston, SC  
 STK# CHN125802



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31X** WAS \$155,688  
**NOW \$126,540** SAVE  
 \$29,148 (866) 775-0682 Roanoke, VA STK#  
 ROA15915



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31V** MSRP \$157,821  
**NOW \$126,900** SAVE  
 \$30,921 (888) 844-1758  
 New Braunfels, TX STK#  
 SW9713



**USED 2006 Gulf Stream FRIENDSHIP 8387** **NOW \$128,495** (888) 696-2165 Savannah, GA STK# SAV15004



**NEW 2011 Four Winds WINDSPORT 36F**  
 WAS \$165,413 **NOW \$129,690** SAVE  
 \$35,723 (888) 674-0275 Gulf Breeze, FL  
 STK# GB38688



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31V**  
 WAS \$163,029 **NOW \$129,777** SAVE  
 \$33,252 (888) 860-8684 Strafford, MO  
 STK# STR14180



**NEW 2011 Damon AVANTI 2806**  
 WAS \$158,196 **NOW \$129,995** SAVE  
 \$28,201 (888) 903-6787  
 Harrisburg, PA STK#  
 HAR69334



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31Z**  
 LIST PRICE \$157,005 **NOW \$129,995**  
 SAVE \$27,010 (877) 834-0429 Bakersfield,  
 CA STK# SLV21125 VIN# 440281



**NEW 2011 Four Winds WINDSPORT 36F**  
 WAS \$159,995 **NOW \$129,998** SAVE  
 \$29,997 (866) 673-0250 Statesville, NC  
 STK# STA125744



**NEW 2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31X**  
 WAS \$164,437 **NOW \$131,549** SAVE  
 \$32,888 (888) 542-3819 Mesa, AZ STK#  
 MES11775



**USED 2005 Gulf Stream CRUISER 8411**  
 WAS \$178,500 **NOW \$135,888** SAVE  
 \$42,612 (888) 484-3906 Spartanburg, SC  
 STK# GR125018



**USED 2006 Country Coach INSPIRE 40**  
 WAS \$179,995 **NOW \$139,000** SAVE  
 \$40,995 (888) 568-2177 Burlington, WA  
 STK# FRV9582



**NEW 2011 Damon ASTORIA 3470** WAS \$198,138 **NOW \$147,995** SAVE \$50,143 (866) 820-0335 Council Bluffs, IA STK# CBI12208



**USED 2005 Holiday Rambler IMPERIAL 40PAQ 4/SLIDE TAG AXEL** **NOW \$149,995** (888) 617-5406 Oakwood, GA STK# ORV15868



**NEW 2011 Damon ASTORIA 3470** WAS \$207,512 **NOW \$159,788** SAVE \$47,724 (888) 850-5575 Wood Village, OR STK# POR35547



**USED 2007 Fleetwood PROVIDENCE 39L** **NOW \$149,995** (888) 815-7523 Woodstock, GA STK# WDS15677



**USED 2003 American EAGLE 42E** WAS \$194,820 **NOW \$159,500** SAVE \$35,320 (888) 727-2952 North Little Rock, AR STK# LIT12372



**USED 2009 Coachmen PATHFINDER 405FK** WAS \$199,858 **NOW \$159,985** SAVE \$39,873 (888) 848-7312 Columbia, SC STK# COL15951



**NEW 2010 Four Winds MONTECITO 38E** WAS \$252,102 **NOW \$159,995** SAVE \$92,107 (866) 610-5049 Akron, OH STK# SRV17063



**NEW 2009 Fleetwood EXCURSION 40E** WAS \$259,375 **NOW \$169,900** SAVE \$89,475 (866) 754-7302 Greenwood, IN STK# GRW603148



**NEW 2011 Damon ASTORIA 3470** WAS \$229,702 **NOW \$174,995** SAVE \$54,707 (888) 860-8684 Strafford, MO STK# STR10855



**NEW 2011 Damon ASTORIA 40KT** WAS \$253,165 **NOW \$175,950** SAVE \$77,215 (866) 754-7302 Greenwood, IN STK# GRW326201



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 3680** WAS \$241,643 **NOW \$176,995** SAVE \$64,648 (866) 820-0335 Council Bluffs, IA STK# CBI10465



**NEW 2010 Four Winds MONTECITO 38D** WAS \$239,602 **NOW \$179,702** SAVE \$59,900 (888) 542-3819 Mesa, AZ STK# MES13854



**NEW 2010 Four Winds MONTECITO 40J** WAS \$267,589 **NOW \$179,888** SAVE \$87,701 (888) 568-2177 Burlington, WA STK# FRV9206



**USED 2010 Damon TUSCANY 4072** WAS \$229,950 **NOW \$179,950** SAVE \$50,000 (888) 850-5575 Wood Village, OR STK# POR36611



**NEW 2011 Itasca MERIDIAN V CLASS 34Y** WAS \$220,249 **NOW \$179,950** SAVE \$40,299 (888) 859-6653 Hillsboro, OR STK# HIL34193



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4072** WAS \$249,777 **NOW \$179,995** SAVE \$69,782 (888) 896-2801 Albuquerque, NM STK# ARV15100



**NEW 2011 Damon ASTORIA 40BQ** WAS \$243,701 **NOW \$179,995** SAVE \$63,706 (888) 625-5187 Ft. Myers, FL STK# FTM12509



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 3680**  
WAS \$241,956 **NOW \$179,995** SAVE \$61,961 (888) 625-5187 Ft. Myers, FL STK# FTM14579



**NEW 2011 Damon ASTORIA 40KT** WAS \$238,864 **NOW \$179,995** SAVE \$58,869 (888) 625-5187 Ft. Myers, FL STK# FTM14847



**NEW 2011 Damon ASTORIA 40BQ** WAS \$229,715 **NOW \$179,995** SAVE \$49,720 (888) 903-6787 Harrisburg, PA STK# HAR70556



**NEW 2011 Itasca MERIDIAN V CLASS 34Y** WAS \$227,834 **NOW \$179,995** SAVE \$47,839 (888) 475-5918 Roberts-dale, AL STK# RD37227



**USED 2007 Alfa ALFA GOLD 40FD** **NOW \$184,985** (888) 641-0925 Kaysville, UT STK# KY37608



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4078** WAS \$249,627 **NOW \$186,995** SAVE \$62,632 (888) 625-5187 Ft. Myers, FL STK# FTM14572



**NEW 2010 Damon TUSCANY 3680** LIST PRICE \$247,363 **NOW \$188,218** SAVE \$59,145 (877) 834-0429 Bakersfield, CA STK# SLV20949 VIN# AS7295



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4072** WAS \$248,629 **NOW \$189,619** SAVE \$59,010 (866) 289-0113 Chattanooga, TN STK# CH5621



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4051** WAS \$262,625 **NOW \$189,895** SAVE \$72,730 (888) 682-3036 Churchville, NY STK# CHU68568



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 3680** WAS \$239,050 **NOW \$189,899** SAVE \$49,151 (888) 692-9016 Myrtle Beach, SC STK# MB124303



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 3680** MSRP \$244,993 **NOW \$189,990** SAVE \$55,003 (888) 668-6715 Katy, TX STK# KAT9537



**NEW 2010 Damon TUSCANY 3680** MSRP \$252,276 **NOW \$189,995** SAVE \$62,281 (888) 668-6715 Katy, TX STK# KAT9433



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4072** WAS \$234,871 **NOW \$189,995** SAVE \$44,876 (888) 903-6787 Harrisburg, PA STK# HAR70909



**NEW 2010 Four Winds MONTECITO 38E** WAS \$231,317 **NOW \$189,995** SAVE \$41,322 (866) 502-8238 Bath, NY STK# BAT70557



**NEW 2010 Damon TUSCANY 4051** WAS \$254,370 **NOW \$190,778** SAVE \$63,592 (888) 348-5909 Avondale, AZ STK# AV013722



**NEW 2010 Itasca MERIDIAN 40L** LIST PRICE \$258,991 **NOW \$191,961** SAVE \$67,030 (888) 480-3175 Roseville, CA STK# SAC10219 VIN# AU2275



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4072** WAS \$262,090 **NOW \$195,995** SAVE \$66,095 (888) 625-5187 Ft. Myers, FL STK# FTM12481



**NEW 2011 Damon ASTORIA 40BQ** WAS \$245,878 **NOW \$198,999** SAVE \$46,879 (866) 648-5288 St. Augustine, FL STK# JAC39714



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 42RQ** WAS \$271,094 **NOW \$199,995** SAVE \$71,099 (888) 896-2801 Albuquerque, NM STK# ARV15101



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4051** WAS \$250,525 **NOW \$199,899** SAVE \$50,626 (877) 554-3516 Lakewood, NJ STK# LAK8389



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 3680** WAS \$300,981 **NOW \$199,995** SAVE \$100,986 (866) 755-9604 Charleston, SC STK# CHN123967



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 42RQ** WAS \$270,441 **NOW \$199,995** SAVE \$70,446 (866) 289-0113 Chattanooga, TN STK# CH5623



**USED 2007 American Coach TRADITION 42R** WAS \$269,995 **NOW \$199,995** SAVE \$70,000 (866) 673-0250 Statesville, NC STK# STA123975



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4051** WAS \$269,105 **NOW \$199,995** SAVE \$69,110 (888) 692-9016 Myrtle Beach, SC STK# MB125175



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4072** WAS \$258,948 **NOW \$199,999** SAVE \$58,949 (866) 648-5288 St. Augustine, FL STK# JAC39712



**NEW 2011 Damon ASTORIA 40KT** WAS \$259,099 **NOW \$209,590** SAVE \$49,509 (888) 860-8684 Strafford, MO STK# STR14141



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4078** WAS \$259,995 **NOW \$209,788** SAVE \$50,207 (866) 673-0250 Statesville, NC STK# STA125617



**NEW 2010 Itasca ELLIPSE 40BD** WAS \$300,497 **NOW \$209,899** SAVE \$90,598 (888) 672-5049 Syracuse, NY STK# SYU65370



**NEW 2011 Winnebago JOURNEY 40U** WAS \$279,122 **NOW \$209,987** SAVE \$69,135 (877) 450-7415 Island Lake, IL STK# CRV5770



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4051** WAS \$307,736 **NOW \$209,995** SAVE \$97,741 (866) 755-9604 Charleston, SC STK# CHN124297



**NEW 2010 Winnebago TOUR 40BD** WAS \$289,025 **NOW \$209,995** SAVE \$79,030 (877) 450-7415 Island Lake, IL STK# CRV5468



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 42RQ** WAS \$272,416 **NOW \$209,995** SAVE \$62,421 (888) 463-3995 Fountain, CO STK# KC211225



**NEW 2011 Damon ASTORIA 40KT** MSRP \$270,109 **NOW \$209,995** SAVE \$60,114 (888) 668-6715 Katy, TX STK# KAT9657



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4078**  
**WAS \$262,889 NOW \$209,995** SAVE \$52,894 (877) 450-7415 Island Lake, IL STK# CRV5696



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 42RQ** WAS \$307,560 **NOW \$215,995** SAVE \$91,565 (866) 754-7302 Greenwood, IN STK# GRW326093



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 40LX** WAS \$271,254 **NOW \$215,995** SAVE \$55,259 (888) 727-2952 North Little Rock, AR STK# LIT11551



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4072** WAS \$268,246 **NOW \$215,995** SAVE \$52,251 (888) 860-8684 Strafford, MO STK# STR10857



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 42RQ** WAS \$289,859 **NOW \$216,995** SAVE \$72,864 (888) 625-5187 Ft. Myers, FL STK# FTM13272



**NEW 2011 Winnebago JOURNEY 40L** WAS \$299,058 **NOW \$219,063** SAVE \$79,995 (866) 775-0682 Roanoke, VA STK# ROA13987



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 42RQ** WAS \$274,549 **NOW \$219,989** SAVE \$54,560 (888) 457-4801 Colfax, NC STK# CFX3695



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 42RQ** WAS \$281,526 **NOW \$219,995** SAVE \$61,531 (888) 903-6787 Harrisburg, PA STK# HAR70558



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 42RQ** WAS \$269,383 **NOW \$219,999** SAVE \$49,384 (877) 554-3516 Lakewood, NJ STK# LAK8385



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 42FK** WAS \$313,863 **NOW \$229,668** SAVE \$84,195 (866) 775-0682 Roanoke, VA STK# ROA16310



**NEW 2011 Four Winds MONTECITO 42C** WAS \$298,740 **NOW \$229,987** SAVE \$68,753 (888) 896-2801 Albuquerque, NM STK# ARV15097



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 4051** WAS \$282,438 **NOW \$229,995** SAVE \$52,443 (888) 903-6787 Harrisburg, PA STK# HAR68821



**NEW 2011 Itasca MERIDIAN 40U** WAS \$285,053 **NOW \$231,855** SAVE \$53,198 (888) 471-3546 Chichester, NH STK# GRV507245



**NEW 2011 Damon TUSCANY 42RQ** MSRP \$294,076 **NOW \$239,900** SAVE \$54,176 (888) 844-1758 New Braunfels, TX STK# SW9179



**NEW 2011 Winnebago TOUR 42AD** WAS \$379,054 **NOW \$289,401** SAVE \$89,653 (866) 775-0682 Roanoke, VA STK# ROA13575



**USED 2009 Monaco DYNASTY STAFFORD 45** WAS \$387,785 **NOW \$319,995** SAVE \$67,790 (877) 289-0812 Las Vegas, NV STK# LVN37628

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1998 Georgie Boy CRUISE AIR 36FT	GB38760	A	\$36,890	\$30,890	(888) 674-0275
2000 Fleetwood BOUNDER 31W	KC110941C	A	\$39,995	\$34,995	(888) 819-7952
2004 Gulf Stream BT CRUISER 5270	TAL38954	B	\$44,995	\$38,995	(888) 902-8565
2004 Fleetwood TIOGA SL 31W	POR36613	C	\$49,950	\$44,950	(888) 850-5575
2004 Damon DAYBREAK 3285F	GR125952	A	\$56,445	\$47,998	(888) 484-3906
2006 Forest River SUNSEEKER 3100	SAC11807A	C	\$56,248	\$48,632	(888) 480-3175
2003 Fleetwood PACE ARROW 37A	AMRV22305	A	\$59,995	\$49,995	(888) 331-1595
2009 Winnebago CHALET 31C	MES16220	C	\$59,875	\$49,995	(888) 542-3819
2007 Jayco GREYHAWK 31SS 2/SLIDE	GB38693	C	\$64,900	\$56,700	(888) 674-0275
2008 Winnebago CHALET 30BR	SLV21887	A	\$64,540	\$57,441	(877) 834-0429
2007 Damon DAYBREAK 33	KC510574BB	A	\$69,995	\$58,995	(866) 415-9726
2009 Coachmen SPORT 315	COL125418	C	\$70,500	\$59,995	(888) 848-7312
2007 R-Vision TRAIL AIR 36	KC110327B	A	\$69,995	\$59,995	(888) 819-7952
2004 Winnebago BRAVE 32V	KS8000	A	\$64,995	\$59,995	(888) 454-1707
2010 Four Winds CHATEAU 31R	KS8030	C	\$71,739	\$59,999	(888) 454-1707
2007 Fourwinds HURRICANE 34S	KS8151A	A	\$66,670	\$59,999	(888) 454-1707
2009 Damon DAYBREAK SPORT 3204	AV014351	A	\$69,888	\$62,888	(888) 348-5909
2010 Four Winds HURRICANE 31D	FRV9994	A	\$74,858	\$64,995	(888) 568-2177
2008 Gulf Stream BT CRUISER 30	KC110449B	B	\$69,995	\$64,995	(888) 819-7952
2007 Coachmen MIRADA 31DS 2/SLIDE	GB38690	A	\$72,228	\$65,900	(888) 674-0275
2004 Winnebago ADVENTURER 33V	SAC13301	A	\$74,817	\$68,433	(888) 480-3175
2005 Itasca SUN CRUISER 35A	RD38285	A	\$74,995	\$69,955	(888) 475-5918
2008 Itasca NAVION 24H	KC5CG1006B	C	\$75,995	\$69,995	(866) 415-9726
2006 Damon INTRUDER 373	COL16604	A	\$94,952	\$82,995	(888) 848-7312
2006 Gulf Stream ENDURA 6340D	AMRV22308	C	\$89,995	\$83,995	(888) 331-1595
2009 Coachmen FREELANDER 2100CB	STA124880	C	\$99,888	\$88,995	(866) 673-0250
2007 Damon CHALLENGER 37TS	TUC13253	A	\$93,576	\$89,554	(888) 315-7967
2005 Monaco CAYMAN 36	HIL36266	AD	\$98,950	\$89,950	(888) 859-6653
2003 Winnebago ULT. FREEDOM 40KD	AV014334	AD	\$99,988	\$89,995	(888) 348-5909
2005 Winnebago JOURNEY 39K	TUC15688	AD	\$117,769	\$109,725	(888) 315-7967
2006 Fleetwood BOUNDER 38N	GB38746	AD	\$119,900	\$114,900	(888) 674-0275
2009 Itasca SUNCRUISER 32H	HIL36279	A	\$129,950	\$117,950	(888) 859-6653
2008 Gulf Stream CRESCENDO 40UL	JAC35737	AD	\$149,995	\$129,999	(866) 648-5288
2008 Sportscoach PATHFINDER 386QS	COL15877	AD	\$151,639	\$139,858	(888) 848-7312
2006 Coachmen SPORTSCOACH 40TS	STA125988	AD	\$163,894	\$149,450	(866) 673-0250
2006 Alfa GOLD 40FD	STA123826	AD	\$169,995	\$149,654	(866) 673-0250
2010 Damon ASTORIA 3772	KC111066B	AD	\$175,000	\$164,995	(888) 819-7952
2006 Holiday Rambler SCEPTER 40PDQ	ARV15579	AD	\$198,700	\$191,521	(888) 896-2801
2008 Winnebago VECTRA 40FD	KC111394B	AD	\$209,995	\$199,995	(888) 819-7952
2005 Monaco EXECUTIVE 45PBQ	RD38157	AD	\$249,988	\$219,750	(888) 475-5918

## BRAND NEW MOTORIZED RVS

YEAR/MANUFACTURER/MAKE/MODEL	STOCK #	TYPE	LIST	NOW*	PHONE NO.
2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 21C	SAC13851	C	\$69,156	\$57,995	(888) 480-3175
2011 Four Winds CHATEAU 25C	SAV14428	C	\$89,912	\$74,995	(888) 696-2165
2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 31R	MER12338	C	\$96,995	\$82,995	(888) 254-9145
2011 Itasca SUNSTAR 26P	MAD16013	A	\$101,968	\$84,895	(888) 242-0293
2011 Jayco GREYHAWK 31FK	ABRV35940	C	\$96,048	\$86,442	(888) 614-5201
2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 23S	FRV10158	C	\$92,988	\$87,999	(888) 568-2177
2011 Itasca NAVION 24K	MAD16014	C	\$108,252	\$89,895	(888) 242-0293
2011 Four Winds HURRICANE 31J	TAL37869	A	\$105,962	\$89,995	(888) 902-8565
2011 Four Winds FREEDOM ELITE 23S	LVN36940	C	\$101,145	\$89,995	(877) 289-0812
2011 Damon CHALLENGER 32VS	LAK8517	A	\$111,564	\$93,589	(877) 554-3516
2011 Damon DAYBREAK 3370	WDS15408	A	\$113,566	\$94,995	(888) 815-7523
2011 Winnebago VIEW 24K	SYU66161	C	\$110,321	\$95,887	(888) 672-5049
2011 Winnebago VIEW 24J	HIL35767	C	\$111,891	\$99,950	(888) 859-6653
2010 Winnebago ERA 170XL	TAL38560	B	\$119,258	\$99,995	(888) 902-8565
2011 Winnebago VIA 25R	CRV5975	AD	\$131,957	\$109,995	(877) 450-7415
2011 Damon CHALLENGER 32VS	DCW8515	A	\$125,938	\$109,995	(888) 474-1330
2011 Damon CHALLENGER 32VS	LC15329	A	\$127,734	\$114,995	(888) 905-0490
2011 Itasca REYO 25Q	GRV507290	AD	\$128,465	\$117,995	(888) 471-3546
2011 Itasca SUNOVA 33C	MAD16010	A	\$134,140	\$119,895	(888) 242-0293
2011 Itasca REYO 25Q	MB124228	AD	\$143,448	\$119,995	(888) 692-9016
2011 Winnebago VIA 25R	KC210685	AD	\$142,003	\$119,997	(888) 463-3995
2011 Winnebago VIA 25R	GR124366	AD	\$139,518	\$119,998	(888) 484-3906
2011 Itasca REYO 25T	SYU66936	AD	\$140,037	\$124,489	(888) 672-5049
2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31Z	MER10588	AD	\$148,995	\$124,858	(888) 254-9145
2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31X	MER11688	AD	\$160,995	\$135,858	(888) 254-9145
2011 Itasca SUNOVA 37L	GRV506357	A	\$149,517	\$137,877	(888) 471-3546
2011 Winnebago SIGHTSEER 33C	LAK8711	A	\$140,187	\$137,982	(877) 554-3516
2011 Four Winds SERRANO 31X	KAT9806	AD	\$165,238	\$147,995	(888) 668-6715
2010 Winnebago JOURNEY EXPRESS 34Y	SLV21000	AD	\$216,724	\$188,228	(877) 834-0429
2011 Damon ASTORIA 40KT	CFX3813	AD	\$203,084	\$189,899	(888) 457-4801
2011 Itasca MERIDIAN V CLASS 34Y	AMRV21753	AD	\$230,954	\$194,795	(888) 331-1595
2011 Damon TUSCANY 4051	CH6063	AD	\$250,120	\$209,981	(866) 289-0113
2011 Damon TUSCANY 4072	GRW325755	AD	\$245,823	\$215,995	(866) 754-7302
2011 Damon ASTORIA 40BQ	KAT9658	AD	\$253,594	\$224,950	(888) 668-6715
2011 Damon TUSCANY 42RQ	JAC39715	AD	\$287,985	\$239,999	(866) 648-5288
2011 Damon TUSCANY 42FK	JAC39713	AD	\$287,958	\$239,999	(866) 648-5288
2011 Damon TUSCANY 42RQ	STR15659	AD	\$296,320	\$245,995	(888) 860-8684
2011 Damon TUSCANY 42RQ	STR13524	AD	\$294,755	\$245,995	(888) 860-8684
2011 Damon ASTORIA 40BQ	SW9692	AD	\$276,995	\$249,900	(888) 844-1758
2011 Damon TUSCANY 42RQ	LIT13266	AD	\$299,981	\$259,995	(888) 727-2952

\*Government fees, state taxes, title, license and dealer fees as applicable will be added to comply with state vehicle codes. Sales tax not applicable in OR. In Arizona, prices plus doc. fee of \$369 and pre delivery inspection. In California, prices not inclusive of government fees and prep charge, finance charge, or emissions testing charge. Freight costs vary by state. Not applicable in CA, OH, TX or OR. In Texas, 'List Price' is equal to 'MSRP'. Inventory and floorplans vary by location. VIN numbers posted at dealership. Advertised inventory available at time of printing. Void where prohibited by law. May not be combined with any other offer and not applicable to prior sales. Offer valid at any Camping World RV Sales or FreedomRoads dealer only. Dealer not responsible for typographical errors. See dealer for details. Offers expire 7/31/11.

FR014522-0511

## Water in a Workhorse

I own a 2004 Newmar Scottsdale Class A motorhome on a Workhorse chassis that I bought new. On two occasions, most recently this past summer while driving in a rainstorm, the engine began to miss. There was no practical way to pull over and stop in the area. I barely made it home, a distance of 40 miles. Having experienced this before, I knew the problem was a water-soaked air filter, which I confirmed when I was able to stop.

Newmar has placed the air inlet in front of the radiator, behind the grille, to gain a ram-air effect. In the tube that runs down to the filter there is a nipple to drain water out of the ingested air, but it can't be very effective if you want to get the ram-air effect. I called Newmar and they said I was the only one who had reported this. I think this is a serious problem, but don't know how it should be solved. I would appreciate any advice. Thanks.

**MERRILL KENYON**  
LOS ALAMOS, N.M.

*Inspect the entire inlet system to ensure that it's watertight, with no leaks at any connections. One solution is to place a drop light in the inlet and look for light. Cracks or pieces that were not assembled properly, or are not watertight, can usually be sealed with room-temperature vulcanizing (RTV) silicone. Winnebago also has an air-inlet deflector, part number 1541810110A, for use on the Workhorse chassis. Consider adding that to prevent water entry.*

### 'SENSITIVE' CRUISE CONTROL

We have a 2001 Georgie Boy Landau

motorhome on a Ford chassis and it has a very sensitive cruise control. When climbing even a small hill or overpass, the cruise control guns the engine and inevitably causes the transmission to shift. If I see the hill coming up, I now take it off cruise control and use the gas pedal to prevent it from shifting. If I can do it, the cruise control should be able to do it. Is there a way to "desensitize" this thing? I wouldn't even care if it dropped a few miles per hour going up a hill. What do I need to adjust?

**JOHN FOWLER**  
OLD TOWN, FLA.

*This is a fairly common complaint. Unfortunately, the Ford cruise controls are not adjustable. If anyone has found a practical, safe way to "desensitize" the cruise control, please let me know.*

**WITH A PAIR OF 12-VOLT BATTERIES IN PARALLEL, THE WEAKEST ONE DRAWS POWER FROM THE STRONGER ONE WHEN THEY SIT IDLE. THAT'S ONE OF THE REASONS WHY WE GENERALLY DON'T RECOMMEND THEM AS A FIRST CHOICE.**



### 6- OR 12-VOLT COACH BATTERIES?

I have a 1997 Fleetwood Southwind motorhome that has a pair of 6-volt batteries in series, but they need to be replaced. Since I almost never dry-camp, why can't I install two 12-volt batteries in parallel? The 12-volt marine batteries are easier to find and cost less.

**ORLYNN EVANS**  
HOUSTON

*With a pair of 12-volt batteries in parallel, the weakest one draws power from the stronger one when they sit idle. That's one of the reasons we generally don't recommend them as a first choice. If you don't need much capacity, just install one 12-volt battery and save even more money.*

### EMERGENCY BATTERY START

I have a 2007 Winnebago Access Class C on a Workhorse chassis with a 6.0-L V-8 engine. The unit came new with two 12-volt house batteries and one chassis battery. The other day the chassis battery was low and could not start the engine. My motorhome has an emergency start switch located under the dashboard that is supposed to temporarily connect the house batteries to start the engine. The procedure is to make sure the battery connect switch for the house batteries is ON, then press and hold the emergency start button and turn the key to START. When I do this and press the emergency start switch I hear the relays clicking, but there is no power to start the engine. In fact, there is no power to anything; the dome light isn't brighter and the dash lights don't light. The engine battery does have some juice and the house batteries are fully charged.

What could be the reason the switch does not work? Also, I would assume this switch did not work when I bought the unit new, and now it's out of warranty. Could this be covered?

**BOB AMOROSO**  
DENVER

*I seriously doubt that it will be covered by warranty due to the age of the motorhome, but the good news is that it*

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

shouldn't be a big, expensive problem. If the relay clicks, it means the circuit that is supposed to activate it is working. So you only need to measure the voltage going to the relay, and also on the output side when the emergency start button is pushed, to see if power is getting through. If the coach batteries really are charged, it's quite possible the contacts inside the relay are bad and it's not transferring power as it should, or there's a bad connection.

### DISCHARGED DINGHY DEUX

I had the same problem with my Chevy HHR battery going dead as described in "Discharged Dinghy" (Coach & Powertrain, February). I found out it was very easy to turn the key two clicks instead of one, which will run the battery down even though the fuse they recommend to remove is removed. One click is OK, two clicks equal a dead battery.

**VERN CLANTON  
ROCHESTER, ILL.**

*Thanks for writing. Readers take note. This is a common cause of dead dinghy batteries.*

### DIESEL FUEL ADDITIVES

I just bought a 2004 Itasca Meridian with a Caterpillar 330-HP engine and would like to know your thoughts on diesel fuel additives. I have been using Sea Foam Motor Treatment. Is this a waste of money?

**JAKE MILLER  
TUCSON, ARIZ.**

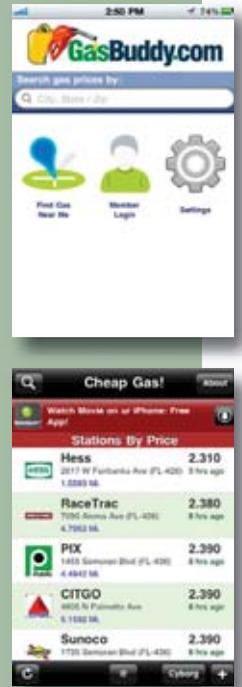
*I checked with Caterpillar's RV Tech Center (877-777-3126) and the official position is that the company does not test or recommend any fuel additives. I think that generally nothing is needed, but in certain cases such as microbe problems or extended storage, fuel additives and stabilizers should be used.*

### FUSE KEEPS POPPING

My motorhome is a 2001 Newmar Mountain Aire with a Workhorse gas chassis. I have a fuse that controls the brakelights, cruise control and the ABS system that keeps popping. When I put a new fuse in it pops immediately. I replaced the brakelight switch and that didn't solve the problem. If I unplug the brakelight switch

### FUEL PRICE APPS

With fuel prices through the roof, it's possible to use your smart-phone to find the lowest prices in the area. Look up the applications (apps) for GasBuddy, Gasbook, CheapGas and FuelFinder and start saving money. Mac users, go to [www.apple.com/itunes](http://www.apple.com/itunes). Android users, go to <http://market.android.com>.



the short will disappear and after a period of time (a few days to several weeks) it returns. I then put a new fuse in, and as soon as I connect the brakelight switch the fuse pops.

I took the coach to a Workhorse dealer. They charged me \$200 and said they were unable to find the short. There are no other dealers in my area. What do you recommend?

**PAUL SHIELDS  
EAST WAREHAM, MASS.**

*There must be a short to ground in the brakelight circuit. I would take the taillights apart and check to see if there's a problem there, such as moisture, corrosion or a shorted socket or wire. If you don't find the problem there you'll have to trace the wiring. There are special short finder tools available from auto parts stores and tool dealers that help. You also might consider temporarily running new wires to the brakelights to see if that solves the problem.*

### DINGHY IDLING DISCUSSION

In the April issue, Wayne Nelson asked about idling a towed dinghy ("Dinghy Idling"). You stated that you did not

## FOR THOSE OF US WHO WANT TO BOONDOCK (DRY CAMP) AT LEAST OCCASIONALLY, SUBSTANTIAL HOUSE BATTERIES CAN BE VERY IMPORTANT IN AVOIDING LOSS OF POWER IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT.

When it's time to replace batteries, our goal should be acquiring the largest batteries in terms of reserve capacity that we can fit into our battery compartments. Deep-cycle batteries are the correct choice, and they're available in three types:



- Flooded (open cell), above
- Gel cell (sealed)
- Absorbed glass mat (AGM, sealed), right

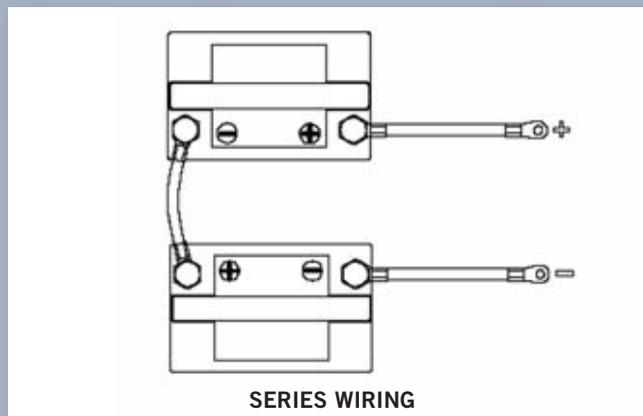


All of these deep-cycle units utilize heavier lead plates than do starting batteries, and they're designed to store more energy. The differences lie in technology. In flooded (open-cell) batteries, the electrolyte (sulfuric acid and water) is liquid, subject to gassing and spillage. In gel batteries, electrolyte is suspended in a gelled state, while in AGM batteries it's contained in micro-fiber glass separators between the plates.

Reserve capacity is measured as the number of minutes a battery will sustain a 25-amp load before dropping to 10.5 volts, but other factors enter the picture. AGM and gel batteries can be recharged faster than flooded batteries, and their self-discharge rate is low while in storage. Gel and AGM batteries are maintenance free, while flooded batteries release gas (explosive hydrogen and oxygen), along with small amounts of electrolyte, which causes corrosion.

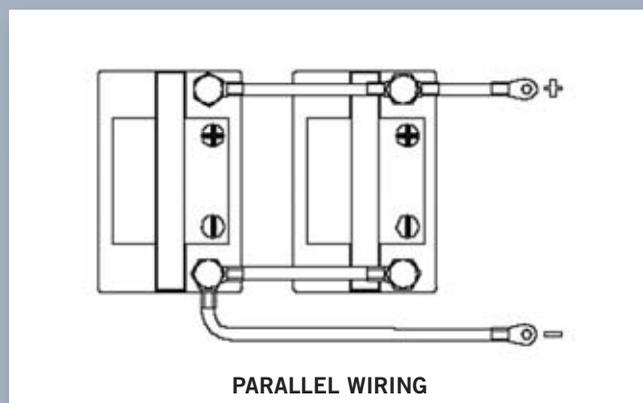
The primary advantage of the flooded design is price, which can be lower by as much as 50 percent. Also, flooded batteries are less sensitive to overcharging.

Maximum charge voltage varies a bit among brands: 14.7 for flooded, 14.1 for gel and 14.4 for AGM (at 70 degrees Fahrenheit). The AGM units are less sensitive to overcharging than gel, will endure more charge/discharge cycles and have the highest rate of charge acceptance — which is why they usually are preferred in RV situations.



In terms of reserve capacity, a popular AGM choice is the Lifeline GPL-4CT, a 6-volt battery rated at 492 minutes ([www.lifelinebatteries.com](http://www.lifelinebatteries.com)). When two 6-volt batteries are wired in series (as in the above diagram) for 12-volt output, the rating remains the same as that of a single 6-volt battery — in this case, 492 minutes.

An alternative is a pair (or more) of 6-volt flooded batteries such as Trojan T-125s ([www.trojanbattery.com](http://www.trojanbattery.com)). Two wired in series are rated at 488 minutes. Although less expensive, they lack the AGM efficiency features mentioned earlier. Trojan also makes AGM batteries.



If your coach utilizes 12-volt house batteries wired in parallel (as in the above diagram), the ratings are doubled — i.e., a common Group 27 12-volt battery may be rated at 186 minutes each, or 372 minutes for a pair.

Lifeline offers a calculator on its website for sizing your battery bank to your estimated load.

Beyond choosing the best capacity, effective charging is essential. Check specifications of your converter/charger to learn if it has multistage capability. If not, consider a converter such as the Xantrex Truecharge 2, which offers efficiency as well as specific settings for various types of batteries. ♦

**TECH TIP**

Owners of Ford and GM chassis can obtain official service manuals, owner's manuals, electrical troubleshooting manuals (ETMs), wiring diagrams, service bulletins and more from Helm Inc. The manuals are available online at [www.helminc.com](http://www.helminc.com) or by calling 800-782-4356.

recommend it because of engine failure concerns, such as overheating and low oil pressure. This is factual and good advice, but more importantly there is a safety issue involved.

I have a Roadmaster Even Brake system, and the manual clearly states that all engine vacuum must be depleted in the dinghy to avoid excessive braking force. In fact, it even states that the system should not be installed in a vehicle that does not have power brakes for the same reason. The braking system applies rather hard force based on the assumption that the dinghy has power brakes and the vacuum is depleted and the engine is not running. I assume this is the case with all systems, but can only comment on the Roadmaster Even Brake System that I have. I hope that this will be passed on.

**RICK YURIS**  
LUDLOW, VT.

*Thanks for writing, Rick. Although I was focused on problems related to the engine, your letter provides another caveat for readers.*

**DUAL AIR CONDITIONER PROBLEM**

We have a 2003 Holiday Rambler motorhome with two roof-mounted air conditioners and 50-amp service. Both air-conditioning units operate OK on shorepower together, or separately the front A/C operates on the generator, but the rear A/C won't come on with the generator. This problem just began; previously the rear A/C operated OK on the generator. The generator is a 5,500-watt unit and is working properly. What's going on here? Where should I be looking for the problem? Thanks.

**DANIEL YUROVICH**  
ELYRIA, OHIO

*That's an unusual one. Since it worked before, the problem is likely in the generator/shorepower transfer switch assembly. Perhaps there is a burned contact or something like that. If you don't know how to test the transfer switch you should hire an electrician to sort it out.*

**JUMP-START TIPS**

I am writing regarding Doug Brenton's question ("Starting Surges," May) and the reply about battery surges when jumping from one vehicle battery to another. First, make sure the key is in the OFF position at all times until you are ready to start the engine. Many people hook the cables up to the dead battery and immediately try to start the vehicle. In most cases this works OK with no damage; however, that is the procedure that will give you the strongest surge. In my opinion, the safest way to start a vehicle is to first hook up the two batteries (positive red terminals first) and let it charge the dead battery without trying to start the vehicle. Let this stand and charge for a few minutes. It usually only takes five minutes. Disconnect the jumper cables and then try to start your engine from its own battery. If this doesn't work, repeat the procedure and try charging for 10 minutes. Disconnect the cables and try starting it again. Depending on how low your battery is (and you are also concerned about damaging both vehicle electrical

systems), you can just connect the two batteries without starting the charging vehicle. Batteries that are connected together will tend to equalize, but this will take longer. These methods can also be used when being jumped by service power packs to prevent electrical surge damage.

**DAVE MCCLELLAN**  
PERU, MASS.

*Thanks for taking the time to write. It's also important to avoid making sparks near a battery because the hydrogen gas can explode. The last connection should be the ground side; connect the clamp to a clean metal ground instead of at the battery terminal.*

**LOOSEN THE CAPS?**

When charging 12-volt batteries, should the caps be loosened or removed?

**ROBERT MASON**  
SALT LAKE CITY

*Batteries get charged all the time by the alternator when you are driving, without anyone having to loosen or remove the caps. It's only necessary if you are using high voltage charging, which causes gassing and heat. This is known as equalization, and is only done periodically with certain chargers connected to lead/acid, deep-cycle batteries. Under normal circumstances, a general rule of thumb is to*

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**FREE SCALE TIP**

I stumbled onto a solution to finding individual weights for each wheel on my motorhome. Driving into Oregon a few miles east of Redmond, I pulled into a closed state weigh station to stretch and walk around my coach. I noticed that while there wasn't anyone around, the LED sign for weight readouts shone brightly. It dawned on me that the scale must still be operational. So I drove the front of my motorhome onto the scale and sure enough got the weight. I drove ahead and did the same for the rear axle. I then backed off of the scale and again pulled forward to just place my right front wheel on the scale and recorded that number. I pulled forward and got the weight for the right rear dual. With those numbers I had everything I needed.

Subtracting the right wheel reading from the total front weight gave me the left front number; same with the rear. The scale platforms are level with the adjacent asphalt so there is no significant coach lean to introduce error. I repeated this exercise a couple of years ago and it still worked.

I have found that at least the "non-interstate" scales in Oregon are generally closed on Sundays and holidays, possibly others. It may also be possible for people to have their motorhomes weighed on other days in other states, particularly at weigh stations that are on lesser-traveled highways. Even if they are in operation the operators may help you out if they aren't busy with the big trucks. Now I am able to go to the tire loading table in my manual and determine the optimum tire pressure.

**GLEN LARSON**  
CHATTAROY, WASH.

*limit the charging rate to 20 percent of the amp-hour rating of the battery.*

there's dirt in the tank.

**PAT PATTERSON** | ST. CHARLES, IOWA

**DIRTY DIESEL**

I would like to know how to clean a fuel tank that has dirt in the bottom. We bought a used 2004 Holiday Rambler motorhome around the first of the year. When we picked up the coach, the tank was empty; the dealer followed us to the station and put \$100 worth of fuel in. My husband also added Power Service Clear-Diesel to the tank.

We made it about 15 miles and the engine started cutting out, so we called the dealer and he said it was because we added the Clear-Diesel, which we don't believe. So we made it to a truck stop by our home after 80 more miles of the engine cutting out and running rough. They changed the fuel filters and it ran fine.

Recently we went camping about 30 miles from home and we stopped to fill the fuel tank. When we got back on the road, the engine started cutting out. As soon as we changed the filters again it ran great. These had about 5,000 miles on them. So all we can think of that's wrong is that

*Very often, additives don't work, as you've experienced. If your fuel tank has a bottom drain, draw off excess water and fuel contaminants from the bottom of the tank into a catch pan until clean diesel fuel appears. If your fuel tank does not have a bottom drain, you may be able to find a shop that will clean out fuel tanks with a suction device and tube (many marinas do this). Unfortunately, to really clean a tank it needs to be drained so that it can be removed and flushed out thoroughly. You should be able to find a truck shop (some radiator shops do this, too) that will drain and clean it out. Other than that, you can carry spare filters and learn to replace them yourself (and bleed air from the system afterward) to save money. ♦*

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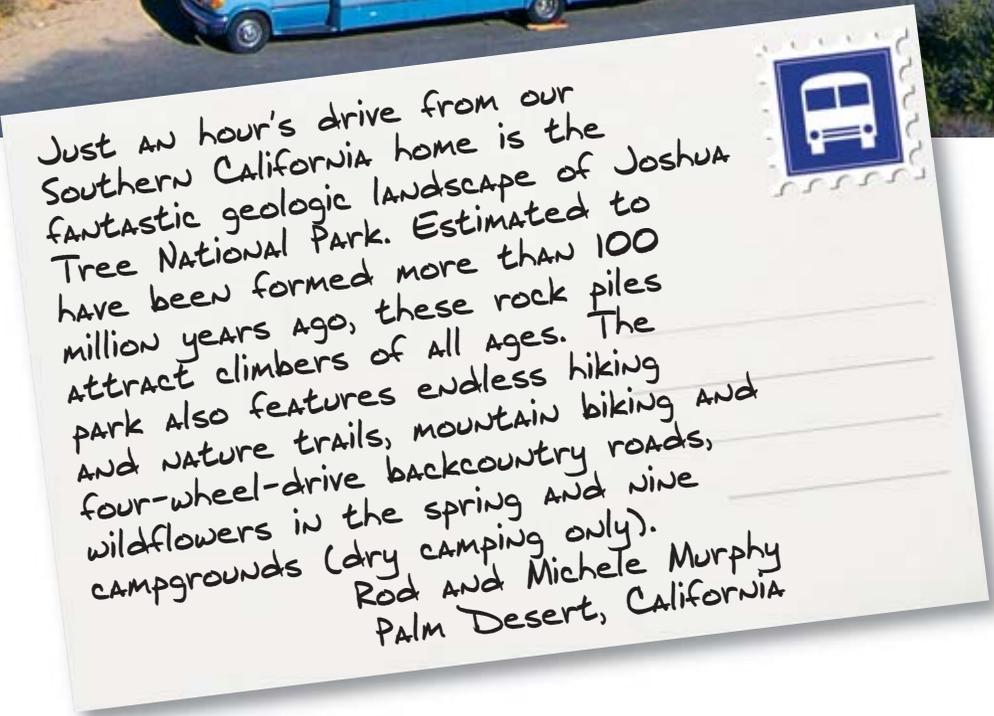
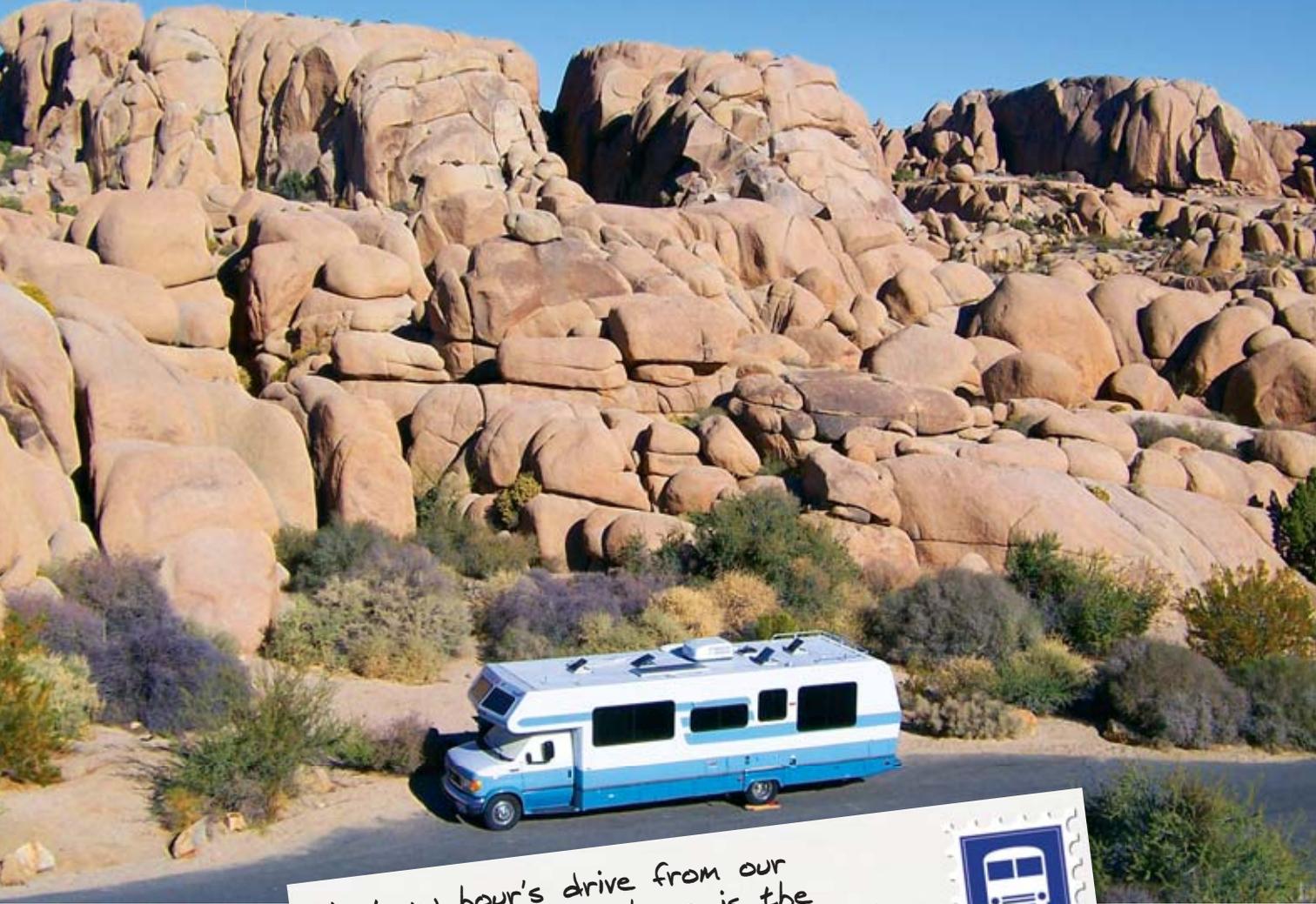
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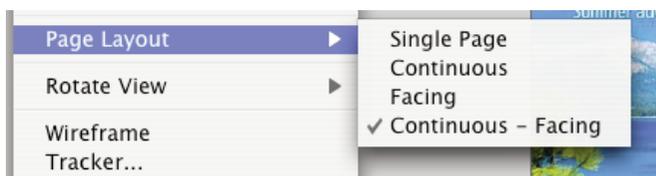


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