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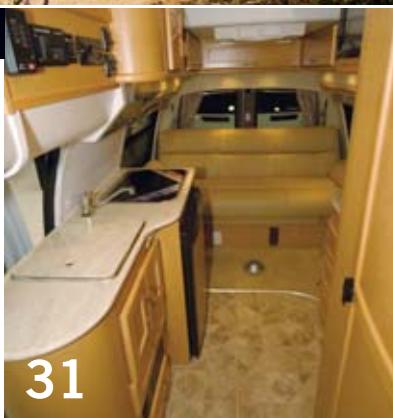
Twin full-wall slides and an enclosed bed-and-bath master suite make this Class A one of a kind

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**On The Cover:** The rolling hills of the Santa Ynez Valley in Southern California are ideal for putting the Rexhall Aerbus T-Rex 375 SS through its paces (see test on page 38). Photo by Fred Pausch.

## GOOD OL' DAYS

**W**hen summer rolls around, it's hard not to think of the Fourth of July. For me, it's the perfect holiday to be on the road. Circling the motorhomes at a social gathering, centered around aromatic barbecued favorites, is just part of the celebration. Reliving the efforts of our ancestors as they launched this land into an independent country — the reason, after all, that we celebrate the day — should be the principle theme of any Fourth of July festivity.

But it's easy to forget our past as we bury our faces in iPhones, computer screens and other technological wizardry. While everyone seems to be tweeting on Twitter, when it comes to RVing, I'm trying to hold on to as much of the past as possible — without being called a caveman.

My penchant for reminiscing really came to light at a traditional jazz festival some friends and I attended in Monterey, California, last spring. Our group, which we affectionately call the Jazz Nuts, headquartered our rigs at the Laguna Seca Recreation Area campground for the long weekend. We're all hooked on traditional jazz, and we meet at a number of festivals throughout the year.

That first day, we were enjoying a performance by the Sisters of Swing, an awesome threesome that emulates a USO show during World War II. When these three modern-day ladies (who really *are* sisters) broke into the national anthem, I couldn't help but stare at a gentleman who obviously (by the hat he was wearing) served during WWII. There stood a man who undoubtedly was up in years, erect as a board, saluting the flag without moving a muscle. It was a powerful sight.

While fighting back tears of emotion, thoughts of "how things use to be" were racing through my head. Could I be that old fashioned? I don't think so — heck I have an iPhone, am computer literate and spend time on the Internet. But what bothers me is the reality that we're erasing from our personal memory many of the traditions that not only made



this country great, but provided a platform for enjoying the simple things in life. The dwindling number of surviving WWII veterans is just one example of how the paradigm has shifted in the way we evaluate our lives, especially the way we travel in our RVs. We're losing touch with the way things use to be; life is becoming too complicated.

When I looked around the venues for the jazz performances that weekend, it was painfully clear that us "old timers" filled the rooms. Are we losing our traditions? I'm afraid so.

But the lack of enthusiasm for traditional music on the part of our young people is only one tiny aspect of our changing lifestyle. The other day I was looking at back issues of *MotorHome* and *Trailer Life* (our sister publication) from the '70s and came across a number of photos of people having fun outdoors in rustic settings that made me yearn for the old days. It's no secret that my wife, Lynne, and I relish partying with our motorhome friends in posh RV resorts, but I think we need an occasional dose of the old days. We need balance.

With that in mind we plan on retracing some of the more interesting trips we've taken throughout the years. One example is finding a Fourth of July celebration in a small town, where we can participate in a number of simple — and traditional — events. We did that too many years ago, when we landed in a small town in Idaho on the Fourth of July and had a great time watching the hometown parade, eating locally cooked foods and viewing the fireworks while sitting outside our rig.

While I still think vinyl records sound better than CDs, I assure you I don't drag my knuckles while walking. I just think there was a lot going on in the "good ol' days" that made us the kind of people RVers are. ♦

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Subscription price United States and possessions: 1 year: \$19.97, 2 years: \$34.97, 3 years: \$47.97. All other

countries, including Canada and Mexico, add \$12 per year. *MotorHome* is a registered trademark of Affinity Group Inc. Copyright 2009 by Affinity Group Inc. All rights reserved. *MotorHome* (ISSN #0744-074X) is published monthly by TL Enterprises from editorial and business offices at 2575 Vista Del Mar, Ventura, CA 93001.

**Printed in the United States. Periodical postage paid at Ventura, CA 93001 and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send all change of address inquiries to: MotorHome, P.O. Box 445, Mt. Morris, IL 61054-0445. Publication Sales Agreement No. 1488163; Canadian Post Sales Agreement No. 40012332. Canadian return address: Affinity Group, Inc., 4960-2 Walker Road, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6J3. Authorized Subscription Agent – AGA.**

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## GOT A SECRET CAMPING LOCATION YOU'D LIKE TO SHARE?

That's the question we asked in our April issue, and here is one of the responses we received.

### BOONDOCKING BEAUTY

My husband and I have a favorite boondocking spot: the north section of Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota, where we awoke one morning to find a herd of 25–30 buffalo licking the barbecue grate at our site and grazing on the grass nearby. We also experienced one of the most beautiful pink sunsets we've ever seen, over the Little Missouri River. We read about this park in your magazine, which is why we continue to subscribe to *MotorHome* — the travel articles are absolutely wonderful and very helpful in planning our travels.

**REGINA HOLLIS | LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY**

### EASY ACCESS

"Magical McKenzie River," in the April issue, is one of the best written articles I've read, with detailed information on what to see (with directions) and what to do. I wonder why *MotorHome* doesn't allow subscribers to download articles for future reference like many other periodicals do? I'd like to have the information accessible for my next trip to the Northwest.

**NELDA SEIVER | PORT ARTHUR, TEXAS**

*Each month, selected features from the current issue are posted to our Web site, [www.motorhomemagazine.com](http://www.motorhomemagazine.com). While not every article is available on our Web site, subscribers do have access to additional features when they log in.*

### STANDING BY YOUR SINK

Like John Warner ("Sink Woes," April), my husband and I lost our vanity sink on a trip. We were traveling in our 1999 Monaco Diplomat when a small bottle fell out of the medicine cabinet and put a hole in the sink. We stopped at a Home Depot in Louisiana and found a replacement sink that fit perfectly. We later learned that Monaco had a problem with that model sink, which they were replacing; they sent us a check for our repair.

**MARY ANN MILLER | PEACHTREE, GEORGIA**

### VAZU WITH A 'Z'

I found an error in your magazine while looking up the Vazu vases (*Wheels & Gear*, April). You must have accidentally substituted an "s" for the "z" in the Web address.

**LYNNETTE AHAUS  
YOUNGSVILLE, LOUISIANA**

*You're correct. The Web address should read: [www.vazuusa.com](http://www.vazuusa.com). We apologize for the error.*

### Question:

**How has the economy affected your summer travel plans?** Please send your comments to *MotorHome*, 2575 Vista del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001; or send us an e-mail at [letters@motorhomemagazine.com](mailto:letters@motorhomemagazine.com). ♦



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*Harold Case; Londonderry, NH  
PowerPack Owner*

You've been together every step of the way. Mile after mile, she's been your family's passport to fun times and lasting memories. RV'ing is a meaningful part of your life, especially in today's economy where the simple things can make all the difference. Purchasing a new motorhome is a costly proposition. Getting a few more years of service from your motorhome is a smart alternative. The **Banks PowerPack® system** can transform your rig into a hill-flattening monster by adding up to **119 more hp** and **284 more lb-ft of torque**. She'll stay in higher gear longer, become up to **19% more fuel efficient**, and renew the excitement you felt the day you bought her!

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# escapes

by DENISE SANTOYO

EVENTS | NOTEWORTHY | WHEELS & GEAR | CROSSROADS

## DON'T LOOK DOWN ROYAL GORGE BRIDGE AND PARK

### The next time you're driving along U.S.

Highway 50 west of Cañon City, Colorado, you'll want to stop at the Royal Gorge Bridge and Park for a visit. It's a great place for RVers, with plenty of parking and numerous campgrounds in the area. In addition, there are shows, rides and live entertainment.

The world's highest suspension bridge is located here and it's a breathtaking sight to behold, though you'll have to take your dinghy across — motorhomes are not allowed onto the bridge. Completed in Nov-

ember 1929, the bridge is 1,260 feet long.

In addition to viewing the Royal Gorge from the bridge, there are other thrills, such as the world's steepest incline railway. There is also a carousel, burro rides, shows, a small wildlife park with native animals, a petting zoo and more. During peak season (late April through early October) a trolley operates, or ambitious visitors may cross the bridge on foot. For more information, call (888) 333-5597, or visit [www.royalgorgebridge.com](http://www.royalgorgebridge.com). — *Donna Ikenberry*



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## escapes EVENTS

**JULY 2-5** | Help fight hunger while enjoying the blues at the world-class **Safeway Waterfront Blues Festival** in Portland, Oregon.

Featuring legendary performer Etta James and others, the annual festival is a celebration of soulful artistry while working to combat hunger with the Oregon Food Bank. Attendees are invited to bring two cans of nonperishable food stuff along with their \$10 suggested admission donation; (503) 973-FEST, [www.waterfrontbluesfest.com](http://www.waterfrontbluesfest.com).

**JULY 4** | Let freedom sing this Independence Day at the **Music City July 4th** festival in Nashville, Tennessee. Check out the family fun zone, the exciting musical performance lineup, visit food and vendor booths and watch one of the best fireworks displays in the country at this free celebration; [www.musiccityjuly4th.com](http://www.musiccityjuly4th.com).

**JULY 11** | Car lovers get a treat at the **Classy-Chassis Car Show and County Flea Market** at beautiful Poplar Grove Plantation in Wilmington, North Carolina. Vintage cars, music, food, shopping and fun are the order of the day at this free festival, and visitors are invited to explore the lovely plantation grounds, listed in the *National Register of Historic Places*; (910) 686-9518, [www.poplargrove.com](http://www.poplargrove.com).



**JULY 11-12** | Native American potters, weavers, painters and jewelers will demonstrate their skills and crafts at the **12th Annual Prescott Indian Art Market** in Prescott, Arizona. Stop by the Sharlot Hall Museum gardens to enjoy cultural presentations, musical performances and tasty Indian fry bread; (928) 445-3122, [www.sharlot.org](http://www.sharlot.org).

**JULY 20-26** | Step back in time to the era of the Revolutionary War and War of 1812

Find more events at  
[www.motorhomemagazine.com/calendar](http://www.motorhomemagazine.com/calendar).



## JULY 9-12

**Bastille Days** is the place to be this summer in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Complete with a 43-foot replica of the Eiffel Tower, the festival is sure to delight Francophiles of all ages with strolling minstrels, musical entertainment, food demonstrations and a reenactment of the storming of the Bastille/5K run. The festival is free and will take over Milwaukee's East Town; [www.easttown.com](http://www.easttown.com).

during **Pioneer Life Week** at Carter Caves State Resort Park in Olive Hill, Kentucky. Highlights include lantern tours of Saltpetre Cave, tomahawk throwing, black-powder rifle demonstrations, spinning and weaving demonstrations, primitive fire making and a seed-spitting contest. The park's campground features 89 campsites with utilities; (800) 325-0059, [www.parks.ky.gov](http://www.parks.ky.gov).

**JULY 25-26** | Spicy food, original salsa, lively music and cool ocean breezes are on the menu for Oxnard, California's **Annual Salsa Festival**. Parking and admission are free, and the festival features a street market atmosphere, with food booths, arts-and-crafts vendors, an outdoor stage showcasing live music and a salsa-tasting tent with dozens of salsas dished up by local home cooks and restaurateurs; (805) 247-0197, [www.oxnardsalsafestival.com](http://www.oxnardsalsafestival.com).



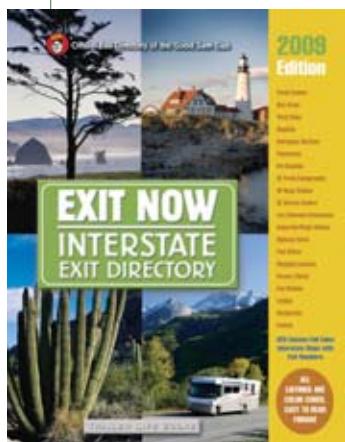


## LAZYDAYS EMPLOYEES CELEBRATE OPENING OF CHILDREN'S SHELTER

The **Lazydays Partners Foundation** — a nonprofit corporation formed by the employees of Lazydays RV Center — together with Kids Charity of Tampa Bay, Florida, recently celebrated the official opening of A Kid's Place, a state-of-the-art center for abused, abandoned and neglected children. The new shelter provides a 60-bed safe haven for children who have been removed from their homes due to a crisis situation.

During the grand opening event, the Lazydays House — one of the facility's first shelter homes to open its doors — was also commemorated. The 3,200-square-foot Lazydays House is nestled among four other Kid's Place homes on the facility's 5-acre campus. To date, the employees of Lazydays have generated pledges of more than \$1 million for children's charities in the Tampa Bay area.

For more information, go to [www.ldpf.org](http://www.ldpf.org).



## EXIT STRATEGY

Trip planning just got a bit safer, smarter and easier than ever before with Trailer Life Books' newest edition of its interstate exit directory, *2009 Exit Now* (MSRP \$24.99). With more than 600 pages of color-coded listings and information, the intrepid traveler can locate anything from RV service centers to pharmacies to campgrounds while traveling the nation's highways and byways.

Organized by interstate, not state, the *2009 Exit Now* — *Interstate Exit Directory* includes critical driver alerts, advising motorists about potential steep grades, stretches of fuel-stationless interstate and sometimes-dangerous left exits. Bonus features include travelers' gems and "locals-only" tidbits, such as local parks and monuments, hidden campgrounds and the best family restaurants. The spiral binding allows for lay-flat ease of use as you journey down the road.

**Trailer Life Books, (888) 557-3743,**  
[www.TrailerLifeDirectory.com](http://www.TrailerLifeDirectory.com).

## News Briefs

RV'er confidence remains high according to the biannual Campfire Canvass survey of RV owners, conducted by the **Recreation Vehicle Industry Association (RVIA)**. Fifty-five percent of survey respondents intend to use their RVs more this summer than last year and only 4 percent say they'll use their RVs less this year. Three-fourths said they plan to take more mini-vacations so they can escape stress, spend more quality time with family, and enjoy nature and other outdoor activities.

Eighty-six percent say RVing is an affordable way to travel; three-fourths save at least 25 percent when they travel in an RV and more than a quarter save 35–50 percent. Sixty-eight percent of RV owners said they believe this is good time to buy an RV. According to the survey, 45 percent of RVers are considering another RV purchase. Twenty-four percent are looking to buy in the next year; another 48 percent within two years.

When RVers hit the road this season, state and national parks will be among the most popular destinations — 77 percent will visit state parks, while 64 percent will visit national parks. Favorite activities while on the road include sightseeing, cookouts, hiking/walking, attending festivals and fairs, visiting theme parks and going to family reunions. Sixty percent of RVers are planning on traveling during the Fourth of July weekend.

Grand Rapids, Michigan-based Statistical Surveys, Inc., has ranked **Camping World, Inc.**, with 77 stores nationwide, the number one U.S. dealer for motorhomes, towables and combined towables and motorhomes in 2008. The top five retailers for motorhomes were, in order: Camping World; Lazydays RV Center, Seffner, Florida; General RV Center, Detroit, Michigan; Giant RV, Montclair, California; and Mike Thompson's RV, Santa Fe Springs, California.

The **Good Sam Club** recently announced the recipients of its 2009 Welcome Mat awards, aimed at recognizing RV-friendly businesses for their customer service and commitment to the RV lifestyle. This year's honorees include **Flying J** (Best Fuel/Gas Station and LP-Gas Outlet); **Wendy's** (Best Fast-Food Restaurant); **Cracker Barrel Old Country Store and Restaurant** (Best Sit-Down Restaurant); **Saturn** (Best Dinghy Vehicle); and **Wal-Mart** (Best Shopping Center).





## WIRESTRAP PEEL-AND- STICK WIRE FASTENER

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## SEEING GREEN

Nikon goes green with its latest eco-friendly offering, the **Ecobins Binoculars** (MSRP \$169.95). Available in 10 × 25, the Ecobins binoculars feature Eco-Glass lead- and arsenic-free lenses and prisms. Non-chloride rubber, and no harmful inks or dyes, are used in the binoculars' production, and they are compact, rugged, water- and fog-proof. Additional features include aspherical eyepiece lenses that provide distortion-free viewing; multi-coated lenses to offer maximum brightness, contrast and true color; diopter control with click-stop adjustment that corrects right-eye/left-eye imbalance; and 15.9 mm, turn-and-slide rubber eyecups, which allow the binoculars to be comfortably used by eyeglass wearers or those with uncorrected vision.

The Ecobins binoculars come with a carrying case and strap that is equally green. Constructed from environmentally friendly Tencel fiber — made from the wood pulp of sustainable eucalyptus forests and 50 percent more absorbent than cotton — the case is durable and makes it easy to bring the Ecobins binoculars along on your next hiking or birding trip.

**Nikon Sport Optics, (800) 645-6687, [www.nikoncobins.com](http://www.nikoncobins.com).**



## LIGHTING THE WAY ... AGAIN

For many RVers, the iconic sound of Coleman gas lanterns will forever remain a part of their outdoor experiences. For a new generation of campers, Coleman introduces the next evolution of its recognizable fire-engine red portable camp lights.

The versatile new Coleman **"Quad Lantern"** (MSRP \$69.99) reinvents that original camp light with battery power, using the high intensity and power-saving abilities of a long-lasting LED. Six 5 mm wide-angle LEDs built into four highly polished portable reflector units provide 190 lumens of 360-degree light. The innovation of removing one or all of the four lamp panels from the base for use as personal lights makes this lantern perfect for the kids or walking the dog.

Eight D-cell batteries power the system and add proper ballast to the otherwise very lightweight housing and recharges each of the NiMH batteries in the portable units, providing up to 75 hours of lantern light or up to 1½ hours of light from each portable unit, according to Coleman. Portable units have their own ON-OFF switch, and a recessed carrying handle on the base provides safe hanging from a tree or an awning.

**The Coleman Company, (800) 835-3278, [www.coleman.com](http://www.coleman.com).**

— Fred Pausch

## THIMBLE ISLANDS

### A little-known secret along the Connecticut shoreline

is a group of tiny islands hidden in the Long Island Sound. The Thimble Islands number anywhere from 100 to 365, depending on the tide and on what you consider to be an island. Many of these rock formations are so small, they are occupied by just a single home. One island is filled by a lone gazebo.

Tour boats take groups from Stony Creek, the islands' neighboring mainland town, out onto the water for 45-minute narrated cruises. Tour season begins in May and runs through October, weather permitting. Kayaking tours are also available. In Stony Creek, you can relax on the beach,

get a bite to eat, and stroll around to look at the town's quaint old New England houses.

The Thimble Islands are small, but their location is prominent. Nearby are many RV parks and campgrounds. The largest of these is Hammonasset Beach State Park, with 558 sites, showers, a general store, dump stations and an outdoor movie screen. Other parks in the area include Aces High RV Park, with 90 sites, full hookups and laundry facilities. The hiking trails and ponds are particularly enjoyable.

**For more information**, call (888) CT-VISIT, or go to [www.ctvisit.com](http://www.ctvisit.com) — *Sabina Lohr*



## FORT DAVIS NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Located about 220 miles southeast of El Paso, Texas, Fort Davis was originally established in 1854 to protect emigrants and stagecoaches and to guard the mail that traveled over the road between San Antonio and El Paso.

In 1963 the old fort was designated the Fort Davis National Historic Site. It remains one of the most complete surviving examples of the typical frontier military fort in the Southwest.

The visitor center, museum and auditorium are located in what was once an enlisted men's barracks. A

14-minute video on the history of the fort is shown in the auditorium every 30 minutes daily. During peak visitation times, park rangers and volunteers dress in period costume and reenact life as it was when this fort was one of the most active military posts in the West. There is also a self-guided walking tour that explores the restored fort, from the careful replicas in the barracks to the hospital — currently under renovation but still available for touring.

**For more information**, call (432) 426-3224, or visit [www.nps.gov/foda](http://www.nps.gov/foda). — *Richard & Ellen Thane*



PHOTO: ASHFALL FOSSIL BEDS/  
UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA  
STATE MUSEUM

## FOSSILIZED HISTORY

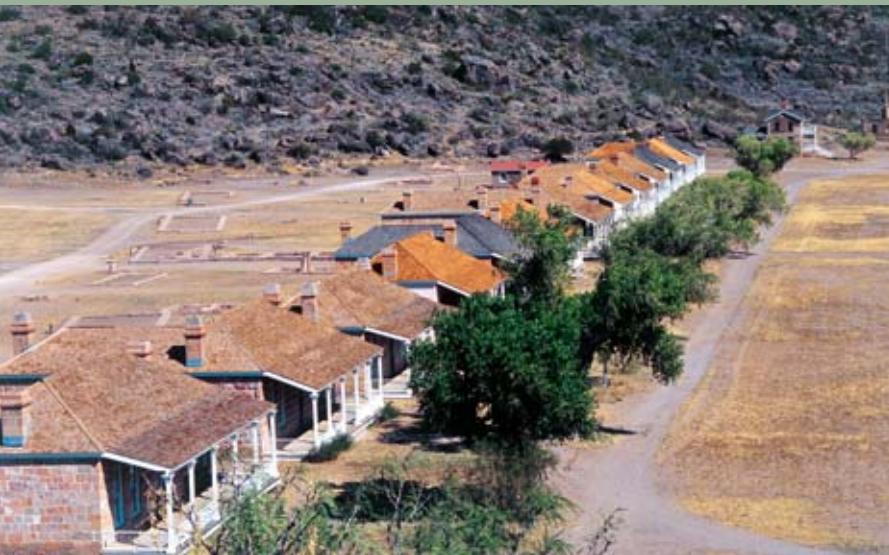
### While traveling through Nebraska it can

be hard to imagine an African safari's worth of animals grazing the plains and sandhills, but if you could have visited millions of years ago you would have seen rhinos cavorting, elephants trumpeting and camels walking about.

I got a glimpse into the past at Ashfall Fossil Beds State Historical Park, a National Natural Landmark, and learned that the preserve there is one of the best around. Intact fossils have been discovered here, animals that were doomed when an eruption miles to the west buried them in a thick layer of ash. Today, a huge mass of fossils are located under the cover of a shelter, and include barrel-bodied rhinos, three-toed horses, llama-like camels and saber-toothed deer.

The park is located in northeast Nebraska, four miles east and six miles north of Orchard, and is open May to October.

**For more information**, call (402) 893-2000, or visit [www.ashfall.unl.edu](http://www.ashfall.unl.edu). — *Donna Ikenberry* ♦



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# RIDDLES & RUNES

DISCOVER NORSE HISTORY  
IN ALEXANDRIA AND  
THE SURROUNDING  
MINNESOTA COUNTRYSIDE

by MARION AMBERG

## Columbus discovered America, right?

“Uff da, no!” quip Scandinavian residents in Alexandria, Minnesota. “The Vikings were here long before Columbus was born.”

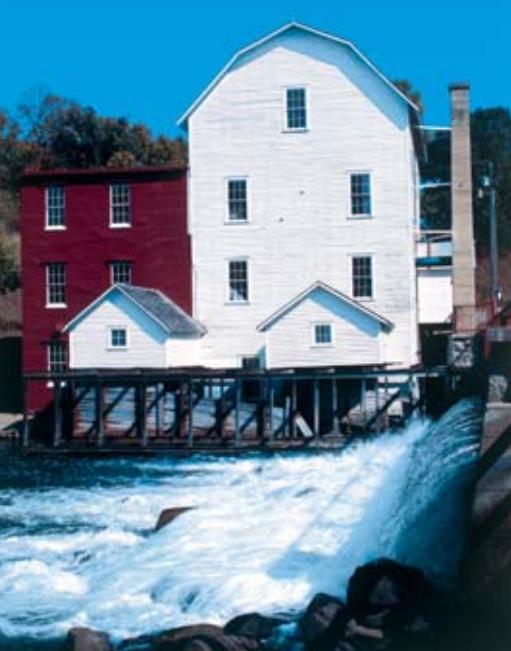
How do they know? A runestone tells them so.

In 1898, Swedish immigrant Olaf Ohman of nearby Kensington was clearing his land when he discovered a large flat stone with runic writing locked in the roots of an aspen tree. When deciphered, the runes told a bloody saga:

“Eight Goths and 22 Norwegians on exploration-journey from Vinland over the West. We had our camp by two skerries one day’s journey north from this stone we were and fished one day. After we came home found 10 men red with blood and dead. Ave Maria save us from evil! Have 10 of our party by the sea to look after our ships 14 days’ journey from this island. Year 1362.”

But is the Kensington Runestone a genuine artifact or a clever forgery? There’s only one way to find out: Set your GPS for Alexandria in west-central Minnesota and meander north 150 miles to the city of Moorhead. The picturesque countryside combined with unsolved mysteries make for an unforgettable journey.

The Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center is home to a modern-day Viking legend: Robert Asp’s replica of a Gokstad Viking ship, which was sailed to Norway in 1982.



Clockwise from left: Phelps Mill, circa 1889, is listed in the *National Register of Historic Places*. The view from Inspiration Peak is well worth the steep climb to its observation point. The shield of 28-foot-tall Big Ole the Viking declares Alexandria, Minnesota, the “Birthplace of America.” The Runestone Monument replicates the runic writing found on the Kensington Runestone.



### A MYSTERIOUS STONE

The first stop is the home of the 202-pound stone, the Runestone Museum in Alexandria. Highlights include a film chronicling the stone’s discovery, a Viking longhouse replica and locally found Viking artifacts that include battle and ceremonial axes and halberds. (The term “Viking” is used locally, but historians prefer “Norse,” explaining the Viking Age ended more than 200 years before the 1362 date on the runestone.)

Not all historians and scholars believe the runestone and artifacts are real. Some skeptics even suggest farmer Ohman chiseled the runes and planted the stone himself. But Ohman had less than a year of formal education in the Old Country. Where did he learn the runic alphabet?

“It’s a riddle that may never be solved,” says Julie Blank, executive director of the museum, about the controversy. “We present the facts and let visitors decide.”

And visitors come here each year by the thousands. Some have their photos taken with Big Ole the Viking, a 28-foot-tall statue, that seems to be having the last say. On his shield is written, “Alexandria: The Birthplace of America.”

Before leaving the museum that includes American Indian and wildlife displays and a near-replica of Fort Alexandria on adjacent grounds, ask for an area map at the Chamber of Commerce office located in the same building. Our next stops are off the beaten path.

### KENSINGTON RUNESTONE PARK

Did Olaf Ohman carve the runestone? Or did he find it as he claimed? Travel west on State Highway 27 to Kensington Runestone Park — the homestead of Olaf and Karin Ohman — for some clues.

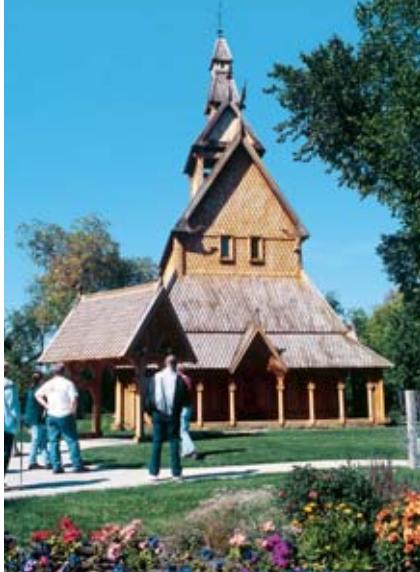
After touring the Ohman farmhouse and barn, follow the paved road up a scenic knoll to Discovery Hill, where flags of Sweden, Norway, the United States and Minnesota fly over the rolling terrain. Was this area a lake in 1362 and the hilltop an island where the Vikings camped? A few paces downhill, a monument marks the spot where Ohman reportedly found the runestone.

The mooring stones atop Discovery Hill — boulders with quarter-size, triangular-shape holes several inches deep — are another hot potato in the Viking controversy. In

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MAP ILLUSTRATION: SUE CARLSON



**The Hopperstad Stave Church Replica is a full-scale reproduction of a 12th-century church in Vik, Norway.**

the Old World, it's known that Vikings bored holes in rocks to moor their ships. Did they make these holes? If not, who did? And why are so many stones with similar holes found near this area?

**THE NEW WORLD**

From Kensington Runestone Park, head north approximately 30 miles to Inspiration

Peak (off County Highway 38 near Urbank), the second highest peak in Minnesota at 1,750 feet. It's a steep quarter-mile trek to the top, but the view is worth it. Sinclair Lewis, author of *Main Street* — a novel about small-town life that was supposedly based on Lewis' hometown of nearby Sauk Centre — described the vista of scattered lakes and pastures as "sequins fallen on an old paisley shawl." Scanning the horizon, you can't help but wonder if Norsemen scaled this lookout in 1362.

For a dose of Scandinavian humor, visit Nyberg Park in Vining (north of Urbank via County Highway 59), touted for dozens of quirky sculptures. Is that really an 11-foot-tall "Big Foot" with big toe? Looking for a cup of coffee? It's levitating in midair. A big bug is stuck in the jaws of a giant pair of pliers. There's even a statue of Leif Ericson, the Viking credited with discovering Vinland.

Local artist Ken Nyberg, a full-blooded Norwegian and great-grandson of an area homesteader, crafted the eye-stopping works from scrap metal. While many sculptures are exactly what they portray, others

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are subject to interpretation. Maybe that's why a green Martian scratching his head has tourists scratching theirs.

Brochures are available at Big Foot Gas and Grocery, or just drive around town, population 68. For more small-town fun, grab a bite to eat at the Palace (known for its "broasted" chicken) and shoot the breeze with the locals. And don't miss Watermelon Day August 15, when Vining swells to 5,000 or more.

Nothing in Vikingland is as postcard-pretty as the Phelps Mill County Park (northwest of Vining via State Highway 210 to County Highway 35). Overlooking a dam on the Otter Tail River, the 1889 mill is listed in the *National Register of Historic Places*.

During its peak, Phelps Mill — with its 7,000-pound water wheel — produced up to 75 barrels of flour daily. When steam- and electric-powered mills proved more efficient, Phelps Mill gradually lost business and closed in 1939. Today, the restored mill with its original equipment allows visitors to follow the milling process from wheat delivery by farmers to bagged flour.

The Phelps Mill historic district includes a general store and an Italianate miller's house. The Phelps Mill Festival, held this year July 11–12, features live music, a juried arts-and-crafts show and a smorgasbord of food.

Everyone will enjoy the hands-on geography lesson at Pelican Rapids northwest of Phelps Mill. Drop a leaf in the Pelican River at the downtown Mill Pond dam and watch it float north, not south, on its journey to Hudson Bay. Keeping an eye on the "Leaf Ericsons" is Pelican Pete, a 15½-foot-tall concrete statue.

Founded by Scandinavian and German immigrants, Pelican Rapids is directly on the supposed Norse travel route. According to the runestone, the explorers' camp was located one day's journey (75 miles) north on a lake with two skerries (rocky islands). Cormorant Lake nearby is about 75 miles north of Kensington and is said to have two skerries. Did the massacre take place here in 1362? Some think yes.

East of town, Maplewood State Park offers RV camping, eight major lakes and a scenic drive of hilly, lake-dotted terrain. Birders will fall head over tail feathers identifying the park's 150 species of birds, while wildflower lovers will delight in the

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yellow lady's slippers, prairie roses, showy milkweeds and native grasses.

The 9,250-acre park is known for its pristine swimming beaches and excellent fishing holes. Nature awaits hikers and horseback riders on the extensive trail system, while campers who come here in autumn "snap" at the maple forest ablaze with red and gold foliage.

### A VIKING HOMECOMING

Heading northwest to Moorhead, the landscape shifts from rolling hills to flat countryside. Moorhead, the "twin city" of Fargo, North Dakota, is our last stop and home to a modern-day Viking legend.

The story begins in 1971 when Robert Asp, a Moorhead school guidance counselor, had a dream: Build a replica of the Gokstad Viking ship, circa A.D. 800, and sail it to Norway. It took eight years and 100 oak trees to build the 16-ton, 76-foot-long vessel with 32 oars that was christened *Hjemkomst*, Norwegian for "homecoming."

Asp died before he could sail the dragon-headed ship to Norway. In the summer of 1982, three of his sons and a daughter along with other crew members made the 6,100-mile voyage in his memory. While the feat doesn't prove the Norse were in Minnesota, it suggests they could have sailed home.

The ship was returned to Minnesota and is now the centerpiece of the Heritage Hjemkomst Interpretive Center in Moorhead. The inspiring film *The Hjemkomst of Robert Asp* chronicles the building of the ship, the perils of the 72-day voyage and the jubilant homecoming in Bergen, Norway.

The Interpretive Center is home to another Viking dream: the Hopperstad Stave Church Replica, a full-scale reproduction of the 12th-century church at Vik, Norway. Guy Paulson, a Fargo woodcarver of Norwegian ancestry, erected the 72-foot-tall church supported by 18 staves (vertical log posts). Note the dragon heads said to ward off evil spirits and the leper's window through which the sick received communion.

The Viking Village takes place here, this year over the July 18-19 weekend, with guides in authentic garb reenacting life in a Viking settlement.

Riddles or runes, traveling through west-central Minnesota is a unique and relaxing way to spend a few days. Lutefisk, anyone? ♦



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# PRESIDENTIAL LEGACY

**It may come as a surprise that while we have had** 44 U.S. presidents, there are only 13 presidential libraries operated by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Less than a dozen other presidential libraries fall outside of the NARA system and include the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum (see sidebar, “200 Years Young,” on page 22); the William McKinley Presidential Library and Museum; and the Woodrow Wilson Presidential Library and Museum. All are impressive and all are worth a visit.

The presidential library system as it exists today wasn’t established until 1939. Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first president to formally donate his personal and presidential papers to the U.S. government. Prior to this, presidential papers were considered the personal property of the exiting president and it was customary for a president to take these records with him.

## A GUIDE TO THE PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARIES OF 13 IMPORTANT MEN IN U.S. HISTORY

by TERRI BLAZELL

Clockwise from top: Upon leaving office, Ronald Reagan hoped to share *Air Force One* with the American people by placing it at his presidential library in California. Veryl Goodnight’s bronze sculpture, “The Day the Wall Came Down,” is on display in the central courtyard of the George Bush Presidential Library. Exhibits at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library explore his life and hobbies. A statue of President Eisenhower marks the entrance to his library. FDR started the first federally administered presidential library.





In 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt opened his presidential library on his family estate in Hyde Park, New York, and set a precedent by donating it to the federal government. When Harry S. Truman followed suit and decided to build his presidential library in 1950, it prompted the Presidential Libraries Act of 1955. This established a system of privately erected and federally maintained libraries to preserve presidential papers and to make them available to the public.

Controversy ensued in 1974 when Richard Nixon wanted to destroy official records connected with his presidency. Up to that point, all presidential papers and records were still considered the personal property of the president. Congress and Gerald Ford quickly pushed through the Presidential Recordings and Materials Preservation Act of 1974 and, in 1978, the Presidential Records Act was established, specifying that presidential records documenting the duties of the president are the property of the U.S. government. Now, once a president leaves office, the Archivist of the United States assumes custody of these records.

The 13 presidential libraries sponsored by the NARA are each as unique and different as the president they represent. They not only serve as museums and archives for our history, but act as a type of time travel — transporting us to the times and dilemmas that faced our nation and the person that we had collectively chosen to lead us through them. Each library is open to the public, and each is a testament to democracy — allowing ordinary citizens to examine the work and decisions of our nation’s leaders.

**HERBERT HOOVER PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, WEST BRANCH, IOWA**

Herbert Hoover’s birthplace cottage and the burial site of Mr. and Mrs. Hoover are on the grounds. While here, learn about the fascinating connection between Herbert Hoover, Laura Ingalls Wilder and her daughter, Rose Wilder — Mr. Hoover’s first biographer.

**FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, HYDE PARK, NEW YORK**

The library that started it all. Tour Roosevelt’s home where he lived from birth to death. View exhibits on the Great Depression and the New Deal. Visit the rose garden where Eleanor and Franklin are buried along with two of their family dogs, Fala and Chief.

**HARRY S. TRUMAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, INDEPENDENCE, MISSOURI**

Watch films of the life and times of Harry Truman, and visit the grave sites for Bess and Harry Truman. Online, view images of the beautiful love letters that Harry wrote to Bess throughout the years. Just six blocks away, tour the home they occupied throughout their married life.

**EISENHOWER PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, ABILENE, KANSAS**

There are five buildings to tour on this 22-acre site — a separate museum and library, a visitor center and a Place of Meditation where Ike, Mamie and their 3-year-old son are buried. Also, tour



**200 YEARS YOUNG**

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln, our nation’s 16th president. Commemorating the event with an extensive calendar of events, the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum in Springfield, Illinois,

is an ideal place to delve into the president’s history.

The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum is not part of the NARA system of presidential libraries; it is owned and operated by the State of Illinois.

Museum guide Dee Hadsell explained that this state-of-the-art museum came about because of a Springfield historian’s suggestion 25 years ago that a handwritten copy of the Gettysburg Address belonged in a grander setting than a case in the basement of the Old Illinois Statehouse.

The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency (IHPA) and some 40 other organizations,



the family home, occupied by the Eisenhower family from 1898 to 1946. Because of Eisenhower's military legacy and the museum's close proximity to key military installations, active military personnel are granted free admission to the museum.

**JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS**

This unique library tour re-creates the JFK-era White House by using President Kennedy's voice to tell his story during a self-guided tour of the exhibits. Step back into the middle of the Cold War and the civil rights movement. Through a friendship with the first lady and Mary Hemingway, the library also houses the largest body of Hemingway works available. The 10-acre site includes beautiful ocean views, and during the summer Kennedy's 26-foot sailboat *Victura* is on display on the museum grounds at the edge of Boston Harbor.

**LYNDON BAINES JOHNSON LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, AUSTIN, TEXAS**

A fascinating look at the turbulent '60s. Issues of the era such as the Cuban missile crisis, the space race, the Vietnam War and the assassination of President Kennedy are front and center. Also known for his humor, visit a convincing animatronic display of LBJ telling several short, humorous stories.

**NIXON PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM**

The Nixon Presidential Library and Museum currently has two loca-

tions — one in College Park, Maryland, (where the Nixon presidential materials are housed) and the other in Yorba Linda, California, which was formerly the private Richard Nixon Library and Birthplace.

Exhibits at the California site include replicas of the Lincoln Sitting Room and the East Room of the White House, the 1967 presidential Lincoln Continental limousine and the restored presidential helicopter *Army One*, which was used by four presidents.

**GERALD R. FORD PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY, ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN, AND GERALD R. FORD MUSEUM, GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN**

Visiting these locations will take some planning. The library is located on the north campus of the University of Michigan, Gerald Ford's alma mater, and the museum is located 136 miles away in his hometown. The library includes more than 21 million pages from his years as president. The museum includes a holographic tour of the White House and a Watergate display including the actual tools used for the break-in.

**JIMMY CARTER LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

Along with his presidential papers and a replica of the Oval Office, the museum also houses a replica of a medieval "Crown of St. Stephen." The original had been given to the U.S. after World War II for safekeeping and was returned to the Hungarian government by Carter in 1978. The replica was presented to Carter and the museum in 1998. The museum is currently undergoing a \$10 million renovation; the revitalized landmark is scheduled to re-

plus scholars, historians, teachers and historical advisors, worked together to create what is considered the first major "experience museum." Here, in dozens of historical settings, interactive exhibits and dazzling special effects, history comes boldly back to life.

It and the adjacent Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library form a 200,000-square-foot facility that "redefines the possible in presidential complexes." Advanced technologies used at the museum are what you might expect at a theme park, but, Hadsell adds, every detail is historically accurate.

The library is similarly impressive, with 12 million docu-

ments and artifacts related to all eras of Illinois history, among them a signed copy of the Emancipation Proclamation, 400 of the 600 letters written by Mary Todd Lincoln, and the only photo of Lincoln shown lying in state.

Visitors to the museum enter through the 4,700-square-foot plaza, where on the floor a Lincoln penny is at the center of a huge inverted star. The museum's two journeys begin in The Plaza, the first following Lincoln's childhood through his being elected president, the other chronicling his years in the White House up to his assassination and lying in state in Illinois.

Elsewhere, hundreds of

artifacts are displayed: books, Lincoln's presidential briefcase, Mary Lincoln's jewelry and more. In the "White House Blue Room" Mary is fitted for a formal gown, surrounded by several authentic gowns of other prominent Washington women.

Other exhibits include: Lincoln's Eyes, a 15-minute special-effects theater presentation in which a portrait artist struggles to interpret all he sees in the president's eyes; a special-effects presentation that re-creates scenes from the Civil War, with lights flaring and the floor vibrating from artillery fire; Ask Mr. Lincoln, where visitors can ask the president a question and hear the answer in his own

words; and Ghosts of the Library.

By far my favorite, Ghosts of the Library consists of a spectacular Holavision show that seeks to answer the question, "What is a presidential library?" After a video introduction, the audience enters the theater. An actor comes on stage, checks his microphone — and then proceeds with the most amazing performance I ever saw. A ghostly Mr. Lincoln appears, Mrs. Lincoln's letters (many of which were burned by her only surviving son, Robert) go up in flames, a white quill pen arises from the desk to write Lincoln's words in the air and more. The whole thing seemed like magic. — *Pamela Selbert*

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## PRESIDENTIAL LEGACY

open on October 1, Carter's 85th birthday.

### RONALD REAGAN PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY, SIMI VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

The only way to describe this library is "awesome," with its flag-lined presidential drive and courtyard fountain. Reflect for a moment at Ronald Reagan's burial site overlooking the valley with an ocean view on a clear day, and then climb aboard the Boeing 707 that was *Air Force One*, Tail #27000, which flew seven U.S. presidents. Also on display is a piece of the Berlin Wall.

### GEORGE BUSH PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS

The highlight of this library is arguably a Gulf War exhibit that takes you into the action — living in a tent while four Gulf War soldiers (one from each branch of the military) narrate their real-life stories. Also, a re-creation of the White House Situation Room allows you to experience firsthand the decisions leading up to the first Gulf War. A newly built Oval Office allows visitors to sit behind the president's desk and have their picture taken.

### WILLIAM J. CLINTON PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY AND MUSEUM, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS

This library features a replica of the Cabinet Room where Clinton met with his advisors. Have a seat around the conference table and pretend to be a presidential advisor. There are also many interactive kiosks and videos. View Clinton's presidential limousine and check out the timeline featuring the major events of his presidency.

### GEORGE W. BUSH PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY

The newest addition — the George W. Bush Library — is under development, and there are plans for it to make its permanent home on the campus of Southern Methodist University in Dallas. The library will contain an extensive artifact collection and an audiovisual collection of photographs and videotapes.

Excluding the George W. Bush library, all of the libraries mentioned here have exhibits that feature presidential memorabilia from their time in office, photographs and displays from their childhood and information on their lives after leaving office. ♦

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# MAGICAL JOURNEY



# LOS CAMINOS ANTIGUOS SCENIC BYWAY WINDS AN ENCHANTING PATH THROUGH SOUTHERN COLORADO

by DAVE G. HOUSER



**A**ny romantic notion I might have had of comparing myself to Lawrence dashing among the dunes of Arabia was rapidly fading as the spongy ridge of sand leading to Star Dune (750 feet) at Great Sand Dunes

National Park and Preserve became steeper. Much steeper. You probably know how it is to walk on a soft, sandy beach. Just imagine doing it on a beach tilted up at an alarming angle — somewhat like a staircase.

My experience made it clear why park rangers harp at visitors to wear a wide-brim hat, sunscreen and to carry plenty of water. Temperatures were moderate during my early-morning hike — but the dune surface routinely reaches 140°F on summer afternoons.

Embraced by the towering, snow-capped Sangre de Cristo Mountains, which rise to nearly 14,000 feet, these 30 square miles of shifting sand comprise the country's tallest inland dunes. The views from taller dunes of the mountains and the sprawling San Luis Valley to the west shaped the most memorable moments of my three-day tour along southern Colorado's enchanting Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway.

That's Spanish for "The Ancient Roads" — a network of trails carved out by conquistadors and missionaries that marked the northernmost reach of 16th-century Spanish territorial expansion. These ancient roads live on today as modern paved highways that lead you in the footsteps of not just Spanish explorers and Mexican settlers but Apaches, Utes and Navajos; soldiers, miners and ranchers; plus a host of historical Western figures such as Zebu-

**Clockwise from top:** Southern Colorado's Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway is an RV-friendly 129-mile route with panoramic vistas of the San Juan and Sangre de Cristo mountains, Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve and the sweeping San Luis Valley, as seen here, near San Luis, Colorado. *Capilla de Todos Los Santos* stands as a crowning jewel above the Shrine of the Stations of the Cross overlooking the historic town of San Luis. Sprawling across 330 square miles in a corner of southwest Colorado's San Luis Valley, Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve protects the tallest inland sand dunes in the nation.

Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge preserves thousands of acres of wetlands within the flood plain of the Rio Grande and supports a large diversity of species, particularly migrating waterfowl.

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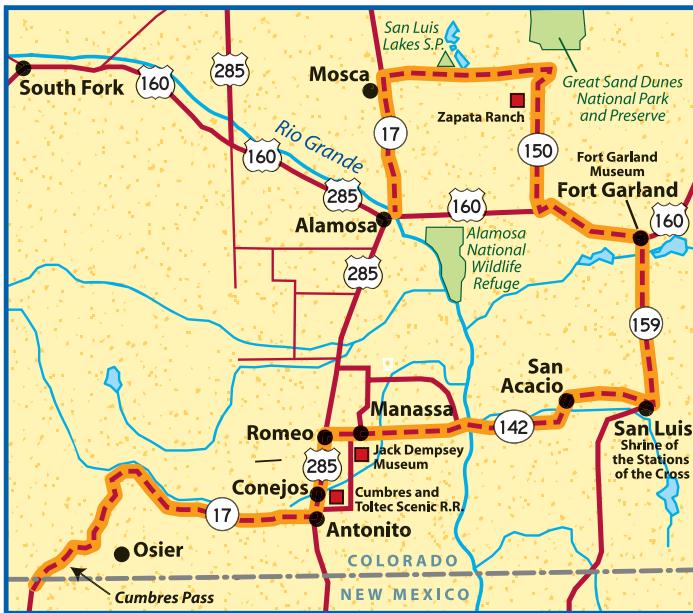
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Los Caminos Antiguos Scenic Byway



lon Pike, Kit Carson and John C. Fremont. While the scenery is spectacular, few regions of the American Southwest can top the San Luis Valley for a trip into history.

Often called the “Cradle of Colorado,” the San Luis Valley stretches roughly 150 miles through south-central Colorado, defined by the Sangre de Cristos to the east and the San Juan Mountains to the west. With base altitudes well above 7,000 feet, the valley is technically a high desert but its fertile floor is underlain by shallow aquifers that form marshlands, springs and lakes. Early American Indian and Hispanic settlers found the valley ideal for cultivation and its scattered wetlands have long been home to a wide variety of birds — waterfowl, waders and raptors prominent among them. The valley is a popular rest stop each spring and fall for thousands of migrating sandhill cranes and Canada geese.

For a sampling of Los Caminos Antiguos attractions, my wife, Jan, and I followed a 129-mile semicircle north and east from the route’s southern starting point at Cumbres Pass, on the Colorado/New Mexico border, to its terminus in Alamosa.

Our trip originated from our home in New Mexico, where we loaded up our nimble Class C Winnie Vista and headed north to the mountain village of Chama. We couldn’t help but notice the hub-bub of activity around the train station there — as the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad crew prepared the antique steam-driven tourist train for its daily 64-mile narrow gauge run, via Cumbres Pass, to Antonito, Colorado. This is one of the country’s great railroad trips, so you might consider adding an extra day to your itinerary to allow time for it. The railroad provides a motorcoach return to either Chama or Antonito for those making the day trip, or you can do a half-day/half-way run to the water station and depot at Osier, Colorado, returning on the train to your station of origin. We shadowed the train, pulled by its huffing, smoke-puffing 1880s locomotive, for a short



Clockwise from top, left: The 103,000-acre Zapata Ranch is considered a model for sustainable ranching, habitat preservation and environmental education. The Springs Resort in Pagosa Springs features a multitude of naturally hot therapeutic mineral pools overlooking the rushing San Juan River. Powered by an 1880s steam locomotive, the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad churns out of the Antonito Depot on its 64-mile run to Chama, New Mexico.

distance as we headed up State Highway 17 toward Antonito.

There's a similarly exciting scene when the train arrives in Antonito, so make it a point to take in this nostalgic bit of Americana even if you don't climb aboard.

We strolled Antonito's main drag to admire a series of historical murals decorating the facades of some of the town's Victorian-era buildings and then enjoyed lunch at a sidewalk café before continuing our byway tour.

Following U.S. Highway 285 north to the village of Conejos, we stopped for a look at Our Lady of Guadalupe Church, a lovely old mission church that's home to the oldest Catholic parish in Colorado. Turning east on State Highway 142 at Romeo, we continued for a few miles to Manassa, home to the legendary heavyweight boxing champion, Jack Dempsey. Known as the "Manassa Mauler," Dempsey is memorialized with a bronze statue outside the modest cabin where he was born and which now houses the Jack Dempsey Museum. Sports fans will enjoy perusing the museum's collection of memorabilia relating to the slugger's illustrious career, during which he held the world heavyweight title from 1919–1926.

About a dozen miles east of Manassa we came to the Rio Grande and the scene of the so-called Vargas Crossing. As the story goes, back in 1694, Don Diego de Vargas, governor-general of New Mexico, led a band of Spanish soldiers north into the San Luis Valley to escape a Pueblo Indian uprising. The Spaniards crossed the river at a point near the current Highway 142 bridge. In pioneer times this became the site of the heavily used Costilla Ferry.

Continuing eastward, we soon found ourselves in the Hispanic heartland of southern Colorado and the state's oldest town, San Luis, founded by Mexican settlers in 1851. There's not much to the town itself — a cluster of wooden and adobe houses and stores (including Colorado's oldest grocery) around a dusty square

— but it is the site of perhaps the most important cultural attraction along the byway route. High atop a mesa overlooking San Luis is the Shrine of the Stations of the Cross.

A series of powerful bronze sculptures by Huberto Maestas are set along a half-mile path that ascends the mesa, depicting the stations of the cross from Jesus' journey up Cavalry Hill. Atop the mesa sits the exquisite little *Capilla de Todos los Santos* (All Saints Chapel) — in a setting strikingly reminiscent of Spain's Andalusia countryside. The shrine is a prime example of Christian devotional art found in Hispanic settlements throughout the southern part of the valley.

Northbound now on Highway 159, our next stop was Fort Garland, a partially re-created 1858 adobe garrison once commanded by Kit Carson. Now a museum, the fort is filled with items of the time, including firearms, uniforms and American Indian artifacts. Visitors can explore the garrison individually or join a 30-minute docent-guided tour.

Approaching the northernmost reaches of Los Caminos Antiguos on State Highway 150, we paused to watch wranglers from historic Zapata Ranch ride herd on some cattle right beside the highway. Stopping in later at ranch headquarters, we learned that this 103,000-acre spread is both in the *National Register of Historic Places* and a property of the Nature Conservancy. It remains a working ranch but offers 15 guest rooms in three buildings, including the main lodge and bunkhouse. Guests can take part in a variety of outdoor/nature programs. Hiking trails and horse-drawn wagons lead visitors out to view the bison, elk, antelope, coyote and migrating waterfowl that coexist here in what has been described as the "Rocky Mountain Serengeti."

Not far from the ranch a short but steep trail leads up along Zapata Creek to Zapata Falls, an impressive natural cataract embraced by pinyon-juniper forest. A picnic area affords panoramic views of

the valley floor and the nearby sand dunes.

Situated just five miles north of the ranch, Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve was our final stop of the day as we checked in for a two-night stay at Great Sand Dunes Oasis campground, open April to October. This is a clean, well-managed full-service commercial park — though it is a bit small with just 20 full-hookup RV sites — just outside the national park entrance. (Pinyon Flats Campground, located inside the park, has RV spaces but no hookups.)

The next morning I made my death-defying dune climb while Jan wisely stayed behind to dawdle in Medano Creek, an amazing stream made up of snow melt from surrounding mountains that flows along the base of the dunes during spring and early summer months. Dining that evening at the Oasis Campground restaurant we made our key culinary discovery of the trip. While the burgers were quite good, it was the homemade coconut cream pie of local celebrity baker Diane Vittoria (aka “Pie Lady”) that really made the meal. We were lucky to get any of it at all as the

pie rack gets picked clean every day.

We wished for another slice of Diane’s pie as we were finishing up a picnic lunch the next day at San Luis Lakes State Park, located about 15 miles west of the national park on Six Mile Lane. We drove to this network of marshy lakes for some bird-watching but spotted only a few resident ducks and waders. Summertime provides the best opportunity to observe shorebirds, and the big fly-ins — featuring sandhill cranes and Canada geese — happen in early spring and fall. Still, it was worthwhile to see the park and check out its excellent picnic and campground facilities. The park’s Mosca Campground comes with electric hookups, and rates run about \$18 per night with an additional \$6 entry fee per vehicle.

Our final day of byway touring led us back along Six Mile Lane to Mosca where we turned south on State Highway 17 for the short drive to Alamosa. With a population just shy of 10,000, Alamosa is the largest city on the byway. It’s a lively place at the center of a large ranching and farming community and home as well to Adams State

College. We did a bit of window-shopping to stretch our legs then tackled some green chiles rellenos at Cavillo’s on Main Street.

Before heading home we drove out U.S. Highway 160 a few miles southeast of town to have a look at Alamosa National Wildlife Refuge. One of three national wildlife refuges in the San Luis Valley, this one protects 11,000 acres of Rio Grande wetlands and offers easy RV access. We followed the auto tour route through a portion of the refuge, hopping out now and then for photos and wildlife spotting. We saw some ibis, egret and a variety of songbirds — plus a wily coyote, which not surprisingly turned up just as we were breaking out a snack.

Our byway tour behind us, we motored west on Highway 160, overnighing in South Fork, and continued on the next morning to Pagosa Springs. Soaking our weary bones in a hot spring is one of our favorite pastimes, so we couldn’t resist a stop at the Springs Resort, which just happens to sit atop the world’s largest and deepest hot mineral spring. It was a soothing signoff to a superlative southern Colorado getaway. ♦

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Pleasure-Way adds a new floorplan with an enclosed bath to its lineup



**A**s motorhome enthusiasts look for new ways to custom tailor a rig to their adventurous lifestyle, attention is being focused on the offerings from Class B builders. No longer simple van conversions, Class B's offer many of the amenities of larger motorhomes while being nimble and economical enough to be used as secondary vehicles that can negotiate busy city traffic and parking lots, yet deliver a quality, self-contained outdoor experience.

Veteran Class B builder Pleasure-Way in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada, has improved on one of its popular Chevy-based Lexor floorplans with a company-first enclosed bath in the standard body footprint. Used in its heavily modified wide-body Ford line, this model has been re-engineered for the standard wall Chevy Express chassis.

Pleasure-Way designers placed the new enclosed bath forward, behind the driver's seat, for space. Equipped with a Thetford china bowl toilet, sink and shower, the redesigned bath module incorporates a convex stile and rail door that provides additional interior hip and shoulder room with the door closed, and opens into the full width of the coach's main entry area for ease of use. This arrangement also provides unobstructed rear vision from the driver's seat. A clever and successful design enhanced by matching his-and-hers closets bookend the bath.

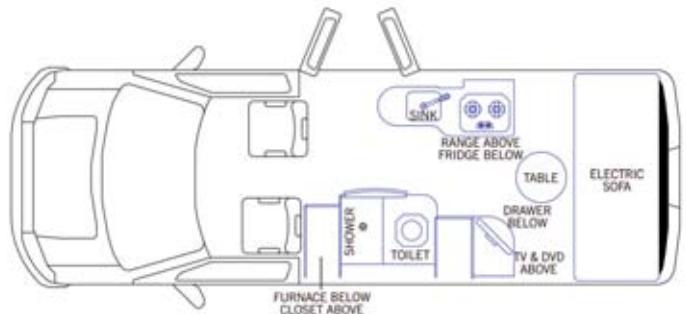
The motorhome's new Euro-look cabinetry, with a choice of three wood tones and three matching fabrics and curved Co-

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LEXOR-RD

rian countertops with rounded front edges throughout, give the Lexor a high-end residential feel with the fit and finish to match. We looked very closely at the newest Lexor model, and found excellent craftsmanship. Tight seams, well-fitted cabinetry and attention to detail should make traveling in this Class B motorhome quiet and enjoyable.

The galley offers a three-way 3-cubic-foot Dometic refrigerator, two-burner flush-mount stove with cover and microwave oven. A residential-style sink faucet with matching countertop sink cover and flip-up extension adds convenient counterspace for easy mealtime prep.

Storage is always a concern in Class B rigs and cabinets ring the galley and sleeping area providing enough storage to handle supplies for most trips with more found below the sink. Larger items can be stowed under the fold-down couch and handy and often-used drawer storage is provided below the TV shelf where the automotive style AM/FM/CD/MP3 player is mounted and easily reached from bed.

Campground connections to the Lexor are all located behind the driver's side rear wheel in a neat utility bay complete with dump hose storage. To keep tabs on those coach systems, Pleasure-Way has placed the monitors directly above the sink making eye level monitoring very convenient.

Using the Lexor as a second vehicle is possible maintaining the 8-foot, 9-inch rig height by mounting the air conditioner in a roof well over the bed and minimizing traditional RV height obstructions. This roof unit should have no trouble keeping the interior cool even on the hottest days. When running the roof unit isn't necessary, a centrally located Fan-Tastic Fan creates near-silent ventilation to keep the interior comfortable.

The fold-down Ultraleather couch and 58 x 72-inch bed combo with a new 3-inch memory-foam topper over a higher density foam base are all standard equipment with power fold optional.

Despite its true dimensions, the Lexor has a light and airy feel thanks in part to light wood tones and numerous windows, augmented by twin forward-looking tinted skylights in the raised-roof section that bathes the interior with sunlight, moonlight and scenic views. With most features standard, this Class B is a nicely appointed and very comfortable touring Class B for two. ♦



**N**o matter what your outdoor adventures are, there's a GPS navigational unit out there designed for you. We took a look at a sampling of portable navigation units that do double duty: They can be used in your motorhome and then easily swapped out for use in your dinghy or other vehicle — just plug it in and you're ready to go. These portable in-vehicle nav systems offer content-driven services — such as real-time traffic and weather information — and some of the smaller units can even be used when exploring the great outdoors.

Some of the models mentioned have sister units that vary in features and cost, so if one unit doesn't quite make it in your book, visit the companies' Web sites for a complete overview of all GPS units. Begin your navigation here.

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NAVIGON 8100T

### ALPINE PND-K3MSN

The recently released PND-K3msn (MSRP \$300) by Alpine Electronics of America has many of the features that motorhome owners look for in a portable nav system: preloaded maps of North America, a 4.3-inch high-resolution touch screen with large select buttons, turn-by-turn voice directions, more than 6 million unique points of interest (POI) and built-in Bluetooth for hands-free calls when used with Bluetooth-enabled cell phones. The PND-K3msn also comes with a free three-month subscription to MSN Direct, which delivers current traffic information, gas prices, weather, news headlines and alerts, stock quotes and local events in 134 metropolitan areas.

### COBRA NAV ONE 5000

The latest GPS offering from Cobra Electronics features the company's exclusive OptiView ultrabright 5-inch touch screen with large on-screen text and enhanced backlighting for better viewing even in extreme lighting conditions. One of the more unusual features of the NAV ONE 5000 (MSRP \$510) is its built-in database of speed and red-light cameras; the unit monitors the driver's location and provides alerts of cameras up to a mile before reaching them. Other features include more than 7 million POI, turn-by-turn voice guidance with spoken street names and an optional real-time traffic feature with a 15-month traffic service subscription (\$160).

### GARMIN NÜVI 500

This year Garmin includes outdoor recreation navigation capabilities in its new nüvi 500 (MSRP \$300), converting this in-vehicle nav unit into a portable personal navigator when needed. Preloaded with road and U.S. topographic maps, the nüvi 500 provides driving, bicycling and walking modes via a usage mode indicator located at the top of the home screen.

For the outdoors, the unit displays shaded digital elevation mapping on the 3.5-inch waterproof touchscreen, and comes standard with a compass page, track log and a removable, re-

chargeable battery for extended outdoor use.

Driving navigation features include a preloaded Historic Route 66 map guide, turn-by-turn directions that speak street names to your destination and millions of POI. If you get lost, use the Where Am I? emergency locator to view your exact latitude and longitude coordinates, the nearest address and intersection, and the closest hospitals, police stations and fuel stations.

RVers might also want to check out Garmin's most recent offering, the nüvi 465T (MSRP \$500) — the first portable GPS unit for long-haul navigation. While the device is designed for use by truckers, RVers will appreciate its road restriction guidance for height, weight, width and length of vehicle; warning information for upcoming conditions such as sharp curves, steep grades and road narrows; and a database of more than 30,000 repair and heavy-duty towing service POI.

### LOWRANCE XOG CROSS-NAVIGATION

Not new this year, but still a good contender in the portable nav category is the XOG Road-Trail-Water Crossover Navigator GPS (MSRP \$160), which marries turn-by-turn guidance with rugged, weatherproof outdoor travel functionality. It's preloaded with NAVTEQ street map detail with voice and visual guidance and offers more than 3 million POI. In Outdoor mode, the unit offers support for affordable field and on-water mapping options. Users have plug-and-play options, such as preloaded SD memory cards for different driving maps and fishing cartography. The XOG features a 3.5-inch touch screen, MP3 player and JPEG picture viewer.

### MAGELLAN MAESTRO 4350

The new Maestro 4350 (MSRP \$400) is gaining rave reviews for its OneTouch feature and navigation choices. With a 4.3-inch touchscreen display, OneTouch makes it quick and easy to create shortcuts on a dedicated screen to favorite destinations and POI. Before driving, the display shows an overview of a calculated route



Pioneer AVIC-F500BT



TomTom GO 740 LIVE

along with possible alternate routes. Touch an icon and the 4350 displays the estimated time of travel and distance for three different possible routes. For entertainment, OneTouch lets users set a shortcut to the 4350's music player for instant launching. Other features include hands-free calling with Bluetooth-compatible cell phones, FM transmission to hear directions via the car stereo, and sending/receiving text messages. The unit comes with a traffic receiver and three months of traffic service. After that time, the service costs \$60 for an annual subscription.

### NAVIGON 8100T

Late last year, NAVIGON launched its top-of-the-line 8100T (MSRP \$600) GPS navigator with 4.8-inch screen and Panorama View 3D, which uses NASA terrain height data to display the road ahead with rolling hills and digital elevations. Features of this portable nav unit include an exit guide that enables users to search upcoming exits for food, gas, lodging, rest areas, auto service or shopping; DirectHelp, which provides instant driving directions to and contact information for nearby hospitals, police stations, roadside assistance and pharmacies; Zagat ratings and reviews of restaurants, attractions and golf courses; 3-D views of actual road signs and lane guidance for highway interchanges and exits; voice destination entry; integrated Bluetooth and free real-time traffic updates for life.

### PIONEER AVIC-F500BT

The recently introduced AVIC-F500BT (MSRP \$600) is Pioneer's only portable on-dash GPS. One of the perks of this unit is its large, easy-to-read 5.8-inch touch screen with 800 x 480 pixels and antiglare coating for a sharper and more defined display. The AVIC-F500BT includes an MSN Direct receiver and three months of free service from MSN Direct data subscription for traffic reports, gas prices, movie times and three-day weather forecasts for more than 100 cities in North America. Other features include approximately 12 million POI, voice recognition for making hands-free

## OUTDOOR NAVIGATING WITH HANDHELDS

The GPS handheld segment is gaining more sophistication in the way of signal acquisition and retention, internal memory and preloaded topographic maps. Interestingly, some handhelds are going a little more practical, but with improved technology and ease of use.

### BUSHNELL BACKTRACK

One new entry in the GPS category is keeping it simple and to the point: to get you from point A to point B and back. Bushnell's BackTrack (MSRP \$70) pairs a digital compass with a high-sensitivity GPS receiver. It actually resembles a compass, and features a blue backlight and a lanyard. The unit does not include maps or turn-by-turn directions; it offers a simple two-button operation and three location modes that guide you back to a marked spot, with directional arrows and distance estimations guiding you along the way. The weather-resistant BackTrack runs on two AAA batteries and is ideal for finding your way back to your campsite.



### DELORME EARTHMATE PN-40

Designed for serious outdoors enthusiasts, geocachers and active families, the company's new waterproof 6.7-ounce PN-40 (MSRP \$400) offers a dual-core processor and distinctive capabilities that are tied to the included standard Topo USA 7.0 software. The software features the most up-to-date topographic maps and enables users to view current terrain and land-cover detail, plus updated DeLorme street and road data, which includes everything from interstate highways to remote backroads. Other features include a 1 GB internal memory, a three-axis electronic compass and a barometric altimeter.



### MAGELLAN TRITON 400 ADVENTUREPACK

Magellan's new AdventurePack includes National Geographic TOPO! Explorer Deluxe map software to accompany five Triton handheld GPS models, including the 400 (MSRP \$250). The software offers topographic maps on two DVDs, and 25 map credits for downloading. There's also access to National Geographic's online database of trails, U.S. Forest Service roads and other recreational information. The 6.6-ounce waterproof Triton 400 has a 2.2-inch screen and offers 10 hours of battery life from two AA batteries (included). — Sylvia Alarid





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## GUIDING THE WAY

calls via connected Bluetooth-enabled cell phones and playback of video or compressed audio files stored on external devices such as USB memory or SD cards.

### **TOMTOM GO 740 LIVE**

One of the latest connected portable navigation devices on the market is the TomTom GO 740 LIVE (MSRP \$500). This unit features wireless real-time traffic reports, advanced lane guidance, spoken instruction and street names, voice recognition and hands-free calling for Bluetooth-enabled cell phones. The GPS also comes with one free year of TomTom's LIVE Services, which are delivered over the air via a built-in SIM card and GPRS modem. By using the unit's 4.3-inch touch screen, users have access to countless POI with Local Search powered by Google, Fuel Price Search for 120,000 fuel stations across the country and five-day weather reports. ♦

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# REXHALL AIRBUS T-REX 375 SS

INNOVATIVE  
DESIGN DOUBLES  
THE FUN WITH TWIN  
FULL-WALL SLIDES

by FRED PAUSCH



## 2009 REXHALL AERBUS T-REX 375 SS

### WHAT'S HOT

Innovative use of twin full-wall slides; pull-out-drawer dishwasher; tankless water heater; full-wall rear bath with residential-style appointments; slide room seals at any extension

### WHAT'S NOT

Rearview camera display would benefit from better camera aiming and/or sun shielding; raggedly cut heater duct hose on the driver's side floor in cockpit

**T**here's certainly nothing prehistoric about the 2009 Rexhall Airbus T-Rex, and judging by the positive responses and appreciative glances cast our way during our test, Bill Rex and his design team have developed a unique coach that turns heads. Based on a streamlined 37-foot, 6-inch body design that rides on the equally innovative Workhorse UFO gas-pusher chassis, the T-Rex incorporates the first use of twin full-wall fiberglass slide rooms.

### THE TOUR

As one of seven possible floorplan choices in this length, the 375 SS rear one-bath plan caters to the couple that doesn't require the more traditional amidships bath floorplan. Entering up the curved stairway into the coach, passing through the cockpit, you should linger a moment to experience the panoramic one-piece windshield,

which should please even the fussiest landscape photographer. A pair of very comfortable Leather-X covered driving chairs will erase the hours and miles of a day's journey and then swivel on their pedestals to provide additional in-camp seating.

The clean wraparound dash is noticeably devoid of complication, something less experienced drivers will particularly appreciate. All controls are easy to read and are logically arranged and intuitively positioned to allow immediate use without fumbling. The center pillar houses the usual radio/CD/MP3 functions as well as a place for an owner-supplied CB radio to connect to the optional (\$248) coaxial connection and antenna.

The fixed rearview color camera display is another welcome addition to any dash arsenal, although better camera aiming and/or sun shielding would be appreci-

ated. A tilt-and-telescoping steering wheel is standard and automotive style stalk-mounted controls keep wiper, headlight, cruise control and turn-signal functions right at hand. The test unit's raggedly cut heater duct hose, which was screwed to the floor on the driver's side, marred an otherwise first-class dash presentation.

Take a step beyond the cockpit and you've entered the heart of the T-Rex. The benefits of dual slides are obvious, but the benefits of dual *full-wall* slides that are each more than 15 feet long and 27½ inches deep, add a new dimension to motorhome living.

Using a fiberglass vacuum bonding process, a slide room frame has been engineered to require no mechanical fasteners. It is formed by nine welded steel support arms and fitted with 1½–2 inches of insulating polystyrene foam sheets



Opposite page: Twin full-wall slides open up the T-Rex's main living area. This page, clockwise from far left: The spacious galley offers ample food prep space. What looks like an oven below the stove is actually a drawer-style dishwasher. The wraparound dash offers clean and simple lines and includes amenities such as a fixed rearview color camera display and a tilt-and-telescoping steering wheel. The master suite with rear-wall bath is a luxurious retreat with plenty of space.



## SPECIFICATIONS

### PERFORMANCE

**FUEL ECONOMY:** 8.7 MPG

**ACCELERATION:**

**0-60 MPH:** 28.9 SEC

**40-60 MPH:** 16.0 SEC

### CHASSIS

**MANUFACTURER:** WORKHORSE

**MODEL:** UFO (REAR GAS)

**ENGINE:** GM VORTEC 8100 8.1-L V-8

**SAE HP:** 340 @ 4,200 RPM

**TORQUE:** 455 LB-FT @ 3,200 RPM

**TRANSMISSION:** ALLISON 2000, 6-SPEED

**AXLE RATIO:** 6.17:1

**TIRES:** (4) LT255/80R22.5G

**WHEELBASE:** 228"

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

**SUSPENSION, F/R:** HENDRICKSON SYSTEM, FRONT PARABOLIC-LEAF WITH SWAY/REAR COIL WITH TORQUEBOX

**FUEL CAP:** 100 GAL

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

### COACH

**EXT LENGTH:** 37' 6"

**EXT WIDTH:** 8' 6"

**EXT HEIGHT:** 12' 8"

**INT WIDTH:** 8' 1"

**INT HEIGHT:** 7' 3"

**CONSTRUCTION:** STEEL FRAMING, FIBERGLASS SKIN AND ROOF, POLYSTYRENE INSULATION

**FRESHWATER CAP:** 86 GAL

**BLACK-WATER CAP:** 60 GAL

**GRAY-WATER CAP:** 54 GAL

**WATER-HEATER CAP:** INSTANTANEOUS TANKLESS

**LP-GAS CAP:** 29 GAL

**FURNACE (2):** 25,000 BTU

**AIR CONDITIONER (2):** 15,000 BTU

**REFRIGERATOR:** 12 CU-FT

**CONVERTER:** 50 AMPS

**BATTERY:** (1) 12-VOLT CHASSIS,

(2) 12-VOLT COACH

**AC GENERATOR:** 6.5 KW

**MSRP:** \$237,248

**MSRP AS TESTED:** \$256,310

**WARRANTY:** 1 YR/12,000 MILES

### WET WEIGHT

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

**FRONT AXLE:** 7,600 LBS

**REAR AXLE:** 14,840 LBS

**TOTAL:** 22,440 LBS

### CHASSIS RATINGS

**GAWR, F/R:** 9,500/17,500 LBS

**GVWR/GCWR:** 26,000/30,000 LBS

**OCWC:** 4,277 LBS

(DEDUCT WEIGHT OF PASSENGERS AND WATER FOR NET CARGO CARRYING CAPACITY)

**GAWR:** GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING

**GVWR:** GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING

**GCWR:** GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING

**OCWC:** OCCUPANT AND CARGO CARRYING CAPACITY RATING

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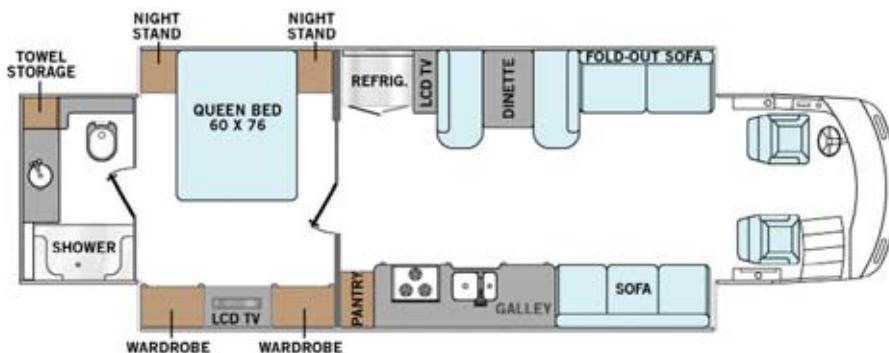
The ingenious design that gives the T-Rex its distinctive external appearance is due to the fact that both slide room "roofs" share the same radius shape and purpose as the fixed portion of the coach roof. Those roof sections partially telescope under it when in travel mode, eliminating the need for protective slide awnings, not to mention some additional fixed-roof weight savings. For the skeptics, slide room sealing is handled by a pair of continuous bulb-type weather seals, using a third "wiper" seal to squeegee dust, dirt and road debris before it can become trapped in the bulb seals. One obvious advantage to this design is a constant seal at any stage of slide deployment. This is particularly helpful in campground spaces that don't allow

enough room for a slide to fully extend.

Fiberglass motorhome construction allows designers almost unlimited opportunities to use specialized molds with custom features that are sometimes difficult to economically replicate in metal. An example of such a custom touch offered by Rexhall on the T-Rex is the recessed well in which the electronic awning with wind sensor is mounted. When retracted, the awning is protected from the elements, while maintaining the coach's streamlined appearance without the cluttered add-on look of awning frames and rollers that often detract from a coach's body lines.

Back inside the coach, rows of raised-panel overhead storage cabinets, in the handsome dark wood "Splendid" cabinetry scheme, above the dual-pane windows line the slides, presenting a sophisticated look and coordinating with the "Earth" interior décor. A second décor package is offered with the option to mix and match on ordered units. Opposing couches create plenty of seating for entertaining and the streetside couch folds out for sleeping. Our test coach was not equipped with the optional (\$745) dual recliner-sofa unit on the curbside, but it would get our vote for watching the 37-inch flat-screen TV with surround sound, mounted next to the lounge dinette.

Entertaining is this coach's strong suit, and, with comfortable seating for nearly 16, the hosts won't have much food prep difficulty by utilizing the spacious, open galley that boasts more than 7 feet of countertop space. A double-basin stainless-steel sink with residential-style faucet is set in solid-surface countertops with an optional (\$750) matching 17-cubic-foot Norcold stainless refrigerator opposite. A 1.7-cubic-foot stainless GE Speedcook microwave/grill oven augments the three-burner cooktop, efficiently



turning out party treats or a full meal. Galley amenities are rounded out by what appears to be a matching stainless oven, but is actually a very useful drawer-style dishwasher.

Opposite the galley is the lounge dinette with oversize cushions and storage below, capable of seating another four to six people at mealtimes, or just a couple, relaxing with the paper over coffee.

A dividing wall with leaded glass entry door separates the living area from the owner's suite and rear-wall bath. The bedroom suite uses the remaining length of both slides, anchoring the optional (\$1,139) Select Comfort Sleep Number queen bed streetside, and his-and-hers wardrobes with drawer storage across. A countertop window and raised 32-inch flat-screen TV above it completes this luxurious suite and provides comfortable bedtime viewing.

The flat floor, which benefits from the lowered powerplant of the UFO chassis, really shines in this motorhome by creating a full 8-foot-wide bath with spacious shower and furniture-style storage vanity with a contemporary raised-glass basin. After a full day of driving, we looked forward to a hot shower supplied from the tankless instantaneous water heater as the perfect ending to an exceptional day in the T-Rex.

#### ON THE ROAD

The Workhorse UFO gas-pushing chassis is a pleasure to drive, period. The smooth idling V-8 coupled with excellent sound-proofing required a glance at the tachometer to ensure it was actually running, and allowed normal conversation levels and hands-free cell phone use. Unfortunately, at freeway speeds we discovered a poorly adjusted entry-door weatherseal that could not be consoled and whistled loudly. Because of the radical design of the door, adjustment is critical. The factory is well aware of our findings and is able to make the necessary correction on a routine basis.

To test the mettle of this about-face V-8, we decided on a loop trip that included flat sea-level freeway, rolling hills and a mountain grade, meandering back to the coast. Regardless of terrain, the Vortec performed flawlessly and, combined with the Allison transmission and responsive Quadraulic anti-lock brakes, had little trouble overcoming the challenges we threw at it.

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cooling system developed specifically for this gas application maintained even operating temperatures — even on a long 5-percent grade, where speed was reduced to 40 MPH in second gear at 4,000 RPM, cutting into our fuel mileage. Seven-percent downhill grade speeds were kept solidly in control with the Allison transmission in third gear and modest applications of the service brakes to keep speeds slower than 50 MPH.

Along the way we chose a serpentine section of road and the Hendrickson suspension and Bilstein shocks confidently absorbed the twists and turns while smartly minimizing body roll. We appreciated the tight responsive steering and 55-degree wheel cut that made parking lot and campground navigation an unexpected treat. Our only criticism was some front-end pogo-sticking on sections of uneven road surface. Discussions with Workhorse and Rexhall resulted in the replacement of the coach's front shocks with new Koni FSD counterparts, which feature bidirectional damping controlled by a new proprietary valving system. Koni's extra fluid valve allows additional fluid movement through the shock piston when encountering high frequency, rough road surfaces such as expansion joints and truck-worn slow lanes. When encountering low frequency events, such as large bumps or mismatched overpass approaches that typically cause annoying "porpoising," that same valve closes to increase damping ability until the rebound is controlled and the valve reopens. The net result is the effective reduction of road-transmitted ride harshness while controlling suspension rebound. This is done internally without the need for any manual or external shock adjustments or other "tuning" hardware.

A follow-up drive of the same coach with the Koni FSD shocks resulted in a dramatic improvement in ride quality, significantly reducing suspension rebound and unacceptable porpoising over similar road irregularities, providing a more comfortable and reliable ride quality regardless of cargo loading or road condition.

The Rexhall T-Rex represents an excellent example of cutting-edge body design, chassis selection and construction methods, creating innovative floorplans with a long list of standard equipment tailor-made to a wide variety of motorhome lifestyles. ♦

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# BREATHE EASY

FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED —  
DETECTORS DETER DISASTER

by LEE BOYT

**W**e won't flinch when it's time for new tires, or drink expired milk for that matter — the safety factor is obvious — but many RV owners overlook the necessity of adequately protecting themselves and their loved ones from potential tragedy by not having up-to-date, functioning smoke, carbon monoxide (CO) and LP-gas detectors on board otherwise first-class motorhomes.

## SMOKE ALARMS

This is a matter of common sense. We all have smoke alarms throughout our homes; we should have them — and are required by code to have them — in our traveling homes, too.

Smoke detectors/alarms use ionization or photoelectric sensors to “smell” smoke. Ionization sensors excel at detecting small particles from hot, blazing fires — grease and paper — that have the potential to expand fast. On the other hand, photoelectric alarms are adept at picking up on the larger airborne particulates from slowly developing smoldering fires.

To cover both types of conflagrations, you may consider installing one of each — an ionization and a photoelectric — smoke alarm in your motorhome.

If your smoke detector smells the makings of a fire, a high-decibel alarm sounds; in addition, some units are equipped with an auxiliary light to help you find your way through a smoke-filled cabin.

Install the smoke detector(s) in your RV on the ceiling, especially in closed-off sleeping areas. We suggest using short screws to prevent drilling up through the exterior roof.

Other than changing the battery annually, or sooner, if the alarm fails a self-test, smoke detectors are easy to maintain, only requiring an occasional dusting off to remove surface debris. Nothing lasts forever, so replace your smoke alarm if it's 10 years old, even if it still seems to work OK.



# SYMPTOMS OF CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING

## ■ MILD EXPOSURE:

“Flu-like” symptoms (headache, runny nose, sore eyes, nausea, vomiting and fatigue)

## ■ MEDIUM EXPOSURE:

Rapid heart rate, excruciating headache, drowsiness, dizziness and confusion

## ■ EXTREME EXPOSURE:

Unconsciousness, convulsions, brain damage, cardio respiratory failure and death



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First Alert Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm with Voice SCO7



Quantum COSTAR Carbon Monoxide Alarm 9-volt DC



Universal Security Smoke and Fire Alarm SS-770



Safe-T-Alert RV Carbon Monoxide / LP-Gas Alarm Model 35-742

## CO ALARMS

If you'd take issue with someone poisoning you and your passengers, then you need a CO alarm. CO, a byproduct of combustion from furnaces, stoves or internal-combustion engines, is a tasteless, odorless gas that displaces oxygen.

The way CO detectors work is neat, with each manufacturer using a tiny sensor, often developed using proprietary micro-technology and a microprocessor to sniff out the carbon monoxide. Atwood Mobile's Fuel Cell and Quantum's Solid-State Infrared sensor (SIR) are good examples of this technology. Many have an internal memory to record peak CO levels to let first responders know just how much bad air you may have been exposed to, because by the time help arrives the carbon monoxide levels may have returned to normal via open doors and windows.

CO alarms should be hardwired into the motorhome's 12-volt DC circuitry. All contain exceptionally loud alarms to warn of unsafe conditions, and some even feature voice alerts to remind you to evacuate immediately, just in case you didn't get the klaxon horn message.

Because CO isn't heavier or lighter than air, and mixes readily with the ambient atmosphere, you'll probably want to mount the CO alarm in a sleeping area, away from doors and windows, about 3 to 5 feet from the floor or on the ceiling, depending on the unit. Refer to the manufacturer's instructions for particulars.

Keeping your CO alarm in tiptop shape isn't difficult. Vacuum the housing with a brush attachment, and if it has a battery, replace it annually, or more often if the alarm doesn't work during a routine test.

CO detectors have a life expectancy of about five years. If the CO alarm in your motorhome has had five or more birthdays, throw it out and get a new one.

## LP-GAS ALARMS

Liquefied petroleum gas is commonly called LP-gas or propane. LP-gas is odorless, but the refinery adds a stinky odorant (like

a vile sulfuric perfume) to the gas so you can smell it.

LP-gas is wonderful stuff for fueling furnaces, stoves, refrigerators and other appliances. With proper maintenance, an LP-gas system can give years of dedicated service.

However, over time, fittings can work loose, gas lines chafe through, and appliances wear out, resulting in LP-gas leaks. With sufficient LP-gas in the air (roughly 20,000 parts per million), a tiny spark can violently ignite the mixture and turn your pleasure palace into an instant fireball.

Ideally, we want to avoid the fireball scenario. That's why RVs are required to have an LP-gas detector/alarm permanently installed inside the coach, about 4 to 5 inches from the floor,

## THE NUMBERS — RVS THAT NEED NEW ALARMS

Based on industry data, there are an astounding number of RVs that either don't have smoke/CO/LP-gas alarms or the detectors are outdated and need to be replaced:

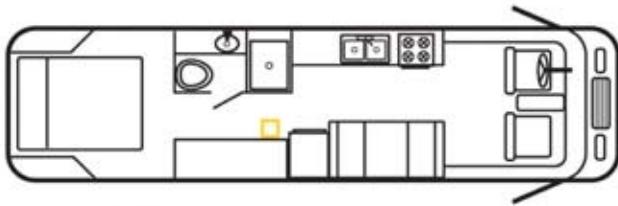
- RVs built between 1985 and October 1996 without an LP-gas detector installed — **2.5 million**
- RVs with LP-gas detectors more than five years old — **2 million**
- RVs made between 1985 and September 1993 without CO alarms installed — **3.9 million**
- RVs with CO alarms more than five years old — **675,000**
- RVs built between 1985 and April 1996 without smoke alarms installed — **2.2 million**
- RVs with smoke alarms more than 10 years old — **700,000**

These numbers are approximate, but you get the picture: There are a lot of RVs that need new smoke, CO and LP-gas alarms. Is yours one of them?

SOURCE: MTI INDUSTRIES/SAFE-T-ALERT

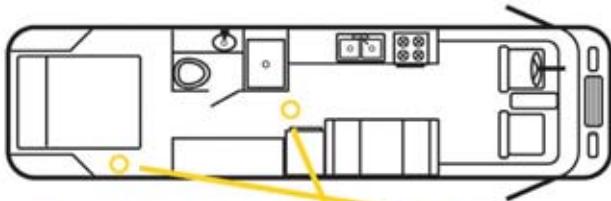
## SUGGESTED LOCATIONS

### RV CARBON MONOXIDE ALARM LOCATION



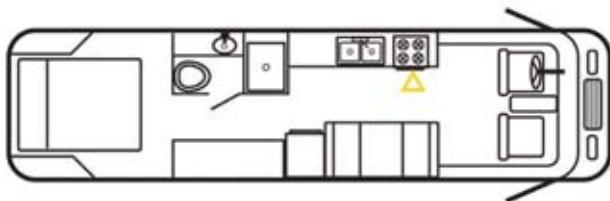
□ = Carbon Monoxide Alarm

### RV SMOKE ALARM LOCATION



○ = Smoke Alarm - Primary Alarm - Secondary Alarm

### RV PROPANE/LP-GAS DETECTOR LOCATION



△ = Propane Gas Detector

DIAGRAM COURTESY OF MTJ/SAFE-T-ALERT

because LP-gas is heavier than air and tends to settle close to the floor in enclosed areas.

LP-gas detectors are designed to sound an alarm when LP-gas levels near 2,000 parts per million (PPM), or about 10 to 20 percent of the lowest explosive limit of the gas. When LP-gas flows through an alarm's semiconductor sensor, a reaction occurs, causing the internal circuitry to increase voltage, activating the alarm if the sensor detects dangerous levels of LP-gas in the air.

An LP-gas alarm is pretty low maintenance. Dust it off once

## CO SENSING TECHNOLOGY

The Quantum Group combines biotechnology with infrared engineering to create the carbon monoxide-sensing elements in its Solid-State Infrared (SIR) sensor. It is comprised of two elements made from a pair of porous transparent disks coated with a supramolecular complex, which is a catalyst. When exposed to CO, one or both of the sensing elements changes its spectral character and absorbs photons at a rate depending on the CO level. Electronics monitor the sensors to produce a linear response, based on the amount of light transmitted through the sensing elements, and triggering the alarm system when the amount of carbon monoxide in the atmosphere exceeds predetermined levels.

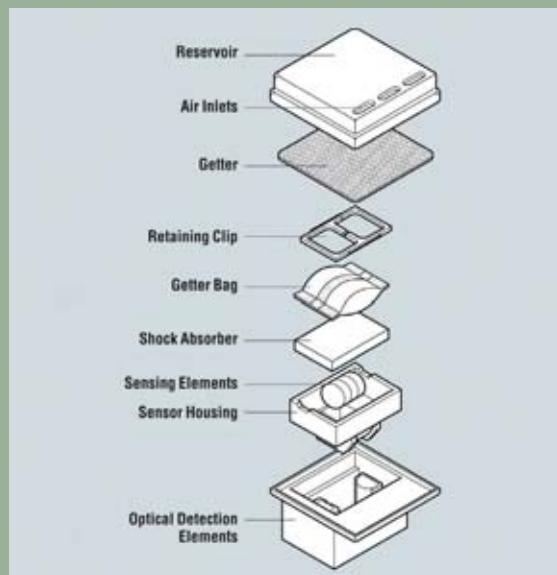


DIAGRAM: COURTESY OF QUANTUM GROUP

### Atwood Mobile uses Fuel Cell Technology in

its CO detectors. As explained by Atwood Mobile's engineering team, "When gas passes through the electrochemical sensor, the fuel cell will create a small electrical output to a program that reacts like the human body does when in the presence of CO. Because CO effects are different over time ... the unit must be able to detect ... levels of CO over a given period of time. Once the system has determined that 400 PPM of CO has been in the system, either due to a high amount or a small amount over time, the unit will go into alarm."

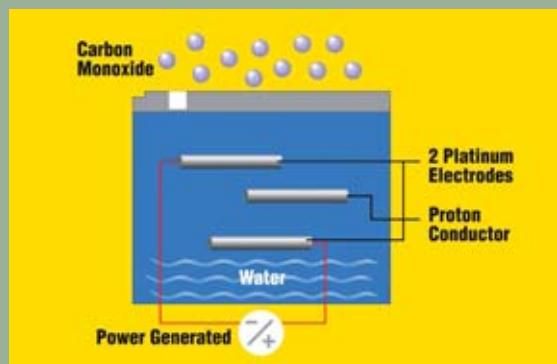


DIAGRAM: COURTESY OF ATWOOD MOBILE PRODUCTS

## RVIA

### The Recreation Vehicle Industry

Association (RVIA) is a trade organization comprised of the manufacturers and component suppliers that make most of the RVs in the United States.

RVIA has established standards, developed in conjunction with the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), regarding various aspects of how an RV should be made, including electrical, fire, heating, plumbing and other safety-related areas. It conducts an inspection program to ensure members are complying not only with RVIA rules, but with federal regulations as well.

in a while and make sure that nothing is covering the unit. Replace LP-gas detectors every five years — no exceptions — and change out an alarm that doesn't pass a manual test; your life depends on it.

### LOOSE ENDS

The bottom line is that we need to protect ourselves with smoke, CO and LP-gas alarms in our motorhomes, and there is no reason not to. They're inexpensive, easy to install and work 'round the clock to keep us safe.

Make sure you buy detectors specifically designed for use in an RV. Look for the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) sticker and other recreation vehicle certifications on the unit. RV alarms undergo a grueling regimen of vibration and temperature testing that isn't required for residential detectors.

Test each alarm weekly or more frequently as part of your pretrip checklist, and don't hesitate to change a weak battery or a dead detector before you hit the road.

Replace smoke detectors every 10 years; CO and LP-gas detectors must be replaced when they're five years old. Even if these alarms seem to work fine, the sensors are actually quite delicate and wear out.

When in doubt, toss 'em out. ♦

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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#### MTI INDUSTRIES

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FRONT

BACK

## ▲ SAVE ENERGY — GO GREEN

I like to turn off the water heater in my motorhome when I'm through using it, but I needed a reminder that it was on. I bought a small, green 12-volt DC LED pilot light at RadioShack and drilled a 1/4-inch hole between the ON switch and the RESET lamp to mount it. I removed the assembly and connected the red lead from the LED to the positive switched side of the ON switch and the black lead to the negative side of the RESET lamp. Because the leads are small, I simply removed the terminal from the lug, slipped the lead into the terminal and replaced it on the lug so it made a connection without having to solder it. Now the LED lights up whenever the heater is on to remind me.

**JAMES KOHLS | BELMONT, MICHIGAN**

## BETTER HEAT DISTRIBUTION

One of the heat registers in my motorhome made a rustling noise when the furnace was on. Upon investigation, I found a large "loop" in its flexible ductwork. When I removed the slack, the duct was then 14 inches shorter. The noise disappeared and more air was sent through the grille. Another heat run suffered from the same problem and I shortened it as well. I now have much more heat after less than an hour of modification.

**FRANK WOYTHAL | ANDOVER, NEW YORK**



## FOAM-BOARD SHELVING ▲

I needed more storage for folded clothes, so I designed lightweight shelves for T-shirts, towels and everyday items. I made three shelves out of 2-inch-thick foam board, which is available in 4 x 8-foot sheets at lumber stores (one sheet is enough material for a closet 24 x 24 inches or less).

To make these shelves, I cut the foam board into two 4 x 4-foot sections with a serrated knife. Then I measured the width and depth of the closet and used these measurements to draw and cut three shelves out of one of the pieces of foam board. I had one extra square left and from that piece of board I cut two 10-inch-wide strips.

With the remaining 4 x 4-foot foam board I cut four 10-inch wide strips. Next, I checked the depth of the closet and cut three 4-inch-long strips into six pieces. Then, I checked the width of the closet and subtracted 4 inches from this number. That was the length of my next strips — I cut three at this length.

When I was finished cutting, I had three shelves, three strips the width of the closet minus 4 inches, and six strips the depth of the closet. For my cabinet, each shelf included one shelf, one short 10-inch wide strip and two longer 10-inch wide strips.

To install the shelves, I placed the strips on the floor of the closet: One of the longer 10-inch strips was put on edge against the right wall of the closet, and one was put against the left wall. Then I pushed a shorter strip against the back of the closet between the other two and slid the shelf piece on top of the three strips. I repeated this procedure two times to complete the shelving.

Foam board comes in pink, blue or white, but you can make the shelves more decorative by using a stapler to cover them with fabric.

**SUZANNE VITTONI | HURLEY, WISCONSIN ♦**

### 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, Calif., 93001. Be sure to include any photos, illustrations or drawings, if necessary. If your tip is selected for publication, you'll receive \$35.

# techsavvy

HANDS-ON | HOT LINE | COACH & CHASSIS | POWERTRAIN



HANDS-ON | *by* BOB LIVINGSTON

## BEAM ME UP

Spot Satellite Personal Tracker lets friends and relatives know your whereabouts, and can call for help when needed

**You know the drill:** “Hey Mom and Dad, make sure you call when you get there.” So you drive all day, set up in the RV park, and the last thing you want to do is get on the phone. The Spot Satellite Personal Tracker can make sure your kids know you made it to your destination safely — and it can do much more.

Although such a device might be construed as standard issue for extreme adventurers, it's actually more versatile for RVers.

The compact orange unit looks like a two-way radio, but it's basically a waterproof housing with four buttons. Using satellite technology — not cell-phone support, which can be unreliable in certain locales — the Spot Tracker works hand-in-hand with a powerful Web site that allows anyone you choose to know where you're at, within around 30 feet. It can also call for assistance should a breakdown occur (linked up with emergency road service) and, in personal emergency situations, send help and/or pluck you out by helicopter.

While the benefits from such a device are robust, simplicity is the theme here, with clearly marked buttons for activating the various functions. It takes only minutes to become familiar with the Spot's features.

When you sign up for the service, you'll get access to your own personal space on the Web site. From here, you can designate friends and relatives as recipients to your whereabouts, and contacts in the event of a breakdown or emergency. Once you get to your destination — or whenever you feel like letting everyone know where you're at — you simply push the OK-CHECK button.

The Spot unit sends the signal to the satellite and your designees are informed via e-mail or text message on their cell phone. From there, they can link to a site that shows your location.

The device retails for \$150 and basic service for one year is \$100, which allows you to check in with your contacts manually and call for help; for an additional \$50, you can upgrade service so your contacts can track your progress every 10 minutes. The aforementioned GEOS search-and-rescue feature (underwritten by Lloyd's of London) can be added for the amazingly low price of \$7.95, but only at the time of registration. Regular cost is \$150 a year. This service provides up to \$100,000 of coverage (two incidents a year at \$50,000 of expenses per emergency).

The Spot device runs on two AA lithium batteries and can operate for about one year on stand-by. These same batteries will give you up to 1,900 manual location/help messages, signal an emergency for up to seven consecutive days, or be in tracking mode for 14 days. LEDs inform the user of the operational modes, and indicate the need to replace the batteries.

It's fun to use when the trip is going well — and your kids will appreciate the consideration — but its ability to send help when mechanical or human body parts break down make it a very inexpensive investment for peace of mind.

And you don't have to climb Mount Everest to use it! **For more information**, call (866) 651-7768, or go to [www.findmespot.com](http://www.findmespot.com).

## Incendiary Ignition

AS THE COST OF MAINTAINING A CRITICAL COMPONENT IN HIS MOTORHOME CONTINUED TO RISE, A READER ASKED *HOT LINE* TO HELP HIM DEFRAY HIS EXPENSES. HE WROTE:

In 2001, I bought a new Class A motorhome built on a Workhorse chassis. In 2006, with only 30,532 miles on the unit, my ignition switch burned up. I had the switch replaced at a cost of \$309.10. In June 2008, the ignition switch again went up in smoke. This time it cost me \$270.40 to have it replaced.

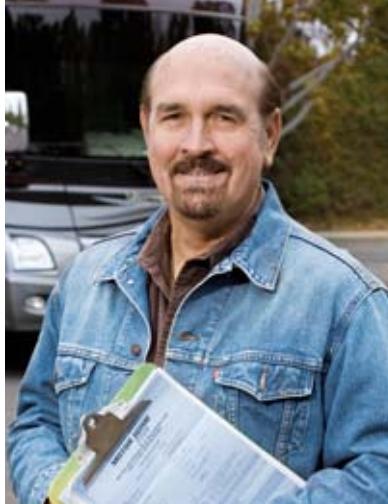
At the time I had the second switch replaced, the service manager of the shop that did the work recommended that I purchase and install a Workhorse ignition kit (W8002085) when I got back to my home state. He said this would prevent any further failures of the switch assembly. I subsequently had the kit installed at a cost of \$534.47.

When I called Workhorse directly to inquire about my previous ignition failures, its representative claimed that the problem was more than likely attributable to the motorhome's manufacturer. He said the manufacturer had not engineered my unit's wiring circuitry correctly. When I called the coachbuilder, its representative put the blame back on Workhorse.

I expect the dashboard accessories on a new motorhome to be correctly wired to prevent ignition switch overload and failure. Further, I think if there are problems with overloading the ignition circuit by not turning off all other dashboard accessories first, there should be a warning of some sort in the owner's manual. There was none.

To date, my ignition problems have cost me \$1,113.97. I would at least like Workhorse to reimburse me for the cost of parts and labor for its kit (\$534.47). Can *Hot Line* help in this matter?

**GERALD DOWGIN**  
WHITING, NEW JERSEY



**“HOT LINE IS INTENDED TO BE A ROAD SIGN OR GUIDEPOST IN HELPING GUIDE READERS IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, AND IN GENERAL, DOES NOT DELVE TOO DEEPLY INTO THE SPECIFICS OF STATES’ LAWS AS THEY’RE FREQUENTLY UPDATED.”**

*Hot Line contacted Workhorse Custom Chassis on Dowgin’s behalf. The company responded as follows:*

Thank you for contacting Workhorse regarding Mr. Gerald Dowgin’s motorhome. We appreciate the opportunity to review his situation.

We have studied Dowgin’s information. Upon further consideration and as a goodwill gesture, we have decided to reimburse him for the cost of the [Workhorse] ignition kit he had installed in his motorhome. Dowgin can expect a payment of \$385.23 within four to six weeks.

We appreciate you contacting Workhorse Custom Chassis, and allowing us the opportunity to provide our position and information regarding this claim.

**DEBRA ANDERSON**  
**WORKHORSE CUSTOM CHASSIS**  
**TROY, MICHIGAN**

### **GAUGE GLITCH**

*When they were unsuccessful in negotiating a warranty claim with the manufacturer of their motorhome’s chassis, two readers appealed to Hot Line for assistance. They wrote:*

We have been experiencing a continual

problem with the gas gauge in our 2006 Georgie Boy motorhome, built on a Ford chassis. We tried to work the problem out with Ford while the chassis was still under warranty, but they referred us instead to the Better Business Bureau (BBB) Auto Line for a resolution.

We filled out the BBB’s forms as instructed, and sent them in. Approximately one week later, we received a call from the BBB, advising us that they had received our documents, and would forward them to the correct source. Finally, we received a letter stating that our vehicle [chassis] exceeded the gross vehicle weight rating criteria set forth in the BBB’s complaint process, which disqualified us for this line of appeal.

The interesting thing about our original gas gauge problem is that it ended up being a problem not with the gauge, but with the fuel tank.

We are sending *Hot Line* this information in hope that it can plead our warranty case to Ford.

**LARRY & NORMA RUSS | DOVER, OHIO**

*Hot Line forwarded the Russes’ complaint to Ford Motor Company with our request for further review of their circumstances. Ford did not reply to us directly, but we did hear further from Larry and Norma Russ. They explained:*

Thank you for *Hot Line’s* assistance in attracting Ford’s attention to our fuel gauge problem. Based on the information we provided and *Hot Line’s* intervention, we received a nice letter from Ford: After “carefully reviewing” our information, they approved a refund of \$604.20.

**L. & N. R.**

### **TAX LAW UPDATE**

*Following the publication of “Sales-Tax Turmoil” in the January Hot Line column, dealing with sales/use tax issues and warranty service, we received the following update from California’s State Board of Equalization, advising of a recent tax law change. We are sharing this information with our readers to avoid any future confusion with interpreting California sales tax laws regarding the out-of-state purchase of motorhomes.*



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The letter "Sales Tax Turmoil" in your January column contained information regarding the application of sales and use tax on a vehicle [motorhome] purchased for use in California. The case regarded a situation involving [California residents] Charles and Mary May's difficulty in obtaining warranty service [on their vehicle in Arizona].

Due to a recent tax law change, the information provided in your column regarding the application of [sales/use] tax in California may be incorrect.

California's Revenue and Taxation Code, Chapter 763, Statutes of 2008, Section 6248, has been amended by replacing the 90-day rule with a 12-month rule as of Oct. 1, 2008. The purchase date of a vehicle generally determines whether the 90-day rule or 12-month rule is applicable.

As you correctly indicated, under provisions of the 90-day rule, the purchaser must take possession of a vehicle outside of California. In addition, the vehicle must be first functionally used outside of California, and may not enter California within 90 days of purchase. If the vehicle enters

California within 90 days of purchase, the vehicle is presumed to be purchased for use in California, and the purchaser is liable for use tax (rather than sales tax).

The new 12-month rule that became operative Oct. 1, 2008, provides that *any* vehicle purchased outside of California and brought into the state within 12 months from the date of its purchase is presumed to be acquired for storage, use, or other consumption in California. It is thus subject to use tax if any of the following occur:

1. The vehicle was purchased by a California resident, or
2. The vehicle was subject to vehicle registration in California during the first 12 months of ownership, or
3. The vehicle is used or stored in this state by a nonresident for more than one-half of the time during the first 12 months of ownership.

Understanding that there are situations where a purchaser requires warranty service to be performed on the vehicle, thus requiring the vehicle to enter California during the the first 12 months of ownership,

the law contains a provision allowing the vehicle to enter California for the purposes of warranty or repair service without resulting in a use tax liability on the purchase of the vehicle.

Specifically, the law provides that a vehicle is not presumed to have been purchased for use in California, and is therefore not presumed to be subject to use tax, if the vehicle is brought into this state within the first 12 months of ownership for the exclusive purpose of warranty or repair service, provided the vehicle is not used or stored in this state for that purpose for more than 30 days.

The 30-day period begins when the vehicle enters this state, includes any travel time to and from the warranty or repair facility, and ends when the vehicle is returned to a point outside this state. The vehicle owner must obtain documentary evidence including a work order stating the dates that the vehicle is in the possession of the warranty or repair facility and sign a statement specifying dates of travel to and from the warranty or repair facility.

I hope this information is helpful.  
**JAMES C. KUHL, SR., SUPERVISOR  
 AUDIT AND INFORMATION SECTION  
 STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION  
 SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA**

*As a general rule, Hot Line does not delve too deeply into the specifics of a state's laws when editing a Hot Line case for the reason that these laws are amended/updated frequently. Unfortunately, an amendment to the law cited in "Sales-Tax Turmoil," coupled with the standard press lead time, resulted in outdated tax information being cited in January's Hot Line.*

*In almost every column where tax laws are referenced, Hot Line will indicate a statute's title, and occasionally a brief overview of its primary elements and intent. It is the responsibility of the reader to research the law in more detail, and determine its relevance, timeliness and accuracy as it pertains to his or her specific circumstances. Hot Line is not intended to be a stand-alone legal source, but rather a road sign or guidepost in helping to guide readers in the right direction. ♦*

TO CONTRIBUTE TO *HOT LINE*, please refer to *Contact MotorHome*, on page 62.

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## Rubber Age

It's been pounded into my head that we need to replace our tires every seven years. I understand that tires age if not worked, but why seven years? Can you tell me why, or where this advice originated from?

I have four good-looking Bridgestones on my motorhome; they are steel belted, including the sidewalls, and are more than seven years old. How can I identify a bad tire by looking at it? What happens to a bad tire with rot in it? Does it just go flat, or does it blow out? What does tire rot look like? Tires are expensive to replace and I, like many other Americans, am counting my pennies.

**JOHN MILLER | CLYDE, OHIO**

*While working for major tire companies for more than 25 years as a forensic engineer, John, I pretty much set the seven-year limit after discussing it with my clients. There is nothing sacred about it, though; it's an average thing. Some will last longer, and a few will fail sooner. It largely depends on storage.*

*Tires will last longer on motorhomes that are stored inside, and have their tires shielded from ultraviolet exposure and atmospheric chemicals that degrade rubber. If your motorhome is stored inside when not in use, and there are no visible cracks in the tire sidewalls, the tires may be good for 10 years, but no more.*

*We recommend changing all rubber parts every 10 years. That includes fuel lines, brake lines, cooling hoses, vacuum hoses, window weatherstripping, body mounts and any other critical rubber parts. Rubber lasts just so long, and it's better to be safe than sorry.*

*An old tire usually blows out and does a lot of collateral damage to the motorhome. That's why I don't believe in being penny wise and pound foolish.*

### VIBRATION

I'd like to offer my personal experience and recommendation to Ford motorhome chassis owners who are experiencing a

problem with the steering column vibrating wildly after hitting small potholes. I had a large Ford service truck that had that problem, and sometimes the steering wheel and column shook badly.

The answer may seem far-fetched to many, but replacing the front universal joint on the driveshaft solved the problem. Apparently, a sudden jolt will cause the driveshaft to rotate in an elliptical pattern, and the vibration is concentrated in the steering column.

**OWEN NEAL | COUNCIL BLUFFS, IOWA**

*Steering dampers usually solve steering wheel shimmy and vibration problems, Owen, but that assumes nothing else is wrong. Driveshaft vibration problems have been a motorhome chassis nemesis for years, and we appreciate you taking time to tell us about another possible solution.*

### SELF-STARTING GENERATOR

I own a 1999 Tradewinds motorhome that has an Onan 7.5 kW AC generator. This generator has self-started on two occasions; I was plugged into shore-power at the time. The first time it self-started while I was in the motorhome, and the second time I wasn't.

I confirmed that this generator does not have a self-starter. I also consulted with my dealer, and he hasn't heard of this problem. Can you offer any suggestions?

**WENDELL JONES  
GOODWIN, ARKANSAS**

*I've heard of the problem, Wendell, but it is usually the other way around. Most people complain about not being able to start or stop their generator from inside the motorhome.*

*There are generally three wires coming out of the generator that connect to a motorhome wiring harness that serves the generator panel(s) inside the motorhome. The male/female connection is not usually weatherproof, and often shorts out. This will either start the generator, or cause it not to start.*

*Your generator will have thick wires coming out of it for 120 volts AC, and it will have smaller wires coming out of it for starting and stopping the generator from inside the motorhome. Find the*

*smaller wires, and then find their connection to the motorhome wiring harness.*

*The connection is usually the culprit. Either wire around it, or replace it with a weather-resistant pigtail that is usually used to wire trailer lights. These pigtails are available at most RV parts stores.*

### NO AIR PRESSURE II

I read Ira Holtzman's "No Air Pressure" letter in your May column with interest. I have a 1999 Overland also built on a Freightliner chassis. Holtzman didn't mention which engine was in his coach. Mine is a Caterpillar 3126, and I had the same problem he described.

My repair technician suggested I first replace the regulator, which is a common problem with a relatively inexpensive part. This did not solve the problem, however, so he suggested I change the filter for the air drier. I got a new filter from Freightliner. Problem solved. I thought your readers might want to

## "WE RECOMMEND CHANGING ALL RUBBER PARTS EVERY 10 YEARS.

THAT INCLUDES FUEL LINES, BRAKE LINES, VACUUM HOSES, COOLING HOSES, WINDOW WEATHERSTRIPPING, BODY MOUNTS AND OTHER RUBBER PARTS."



know this information.

**CHUCK CAVOLO**  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

*I'm sure they will, Chuck. Air driers keep most of the moisture out of the air-brake system so the suspected freezing I speculated won't become an issue. However, if the air drier's filter needs replacing, airflow is significantly reduced. This could easily explain why the air pressure didn't come up as expected, but winter ice still could be a contributor to the problem.*

**BAD POWER**

Several times I've stayed at a campground where something is wrong with the power. Typically, neither TV will stay on, but everything else in the coach seems to work fine.

I have a 2005 Winnebago Vectra, and can't get an answer from the TV manufacturer or the dealer about this problem. Do you have any idea what would cause it? How can I test the shore station before I plug in?

**MARCIA VADERWALL**  
WINCHESTER, VIRGINIA

*I suspect you are the victim of low voltage, Marcia. I have long encouraged motorhome owners to carry a digital voltmeter with them for just such situations. Power should be between 114 and 126 volts AC, but it often is much lower, particularly in older campgrounds.*

*Your TV sets could have latching relays or switches in them that will not latch when the voltage is low. Get a voltmeter from RadioShack, Sears or another tool supply store and start checking the voltage before you plug in and expose you appliances to potentially damaging low voltage.*

**LOOSE SCREWS**

I recently encountered a problem with my running lights blowing the marker fuse, but only while towing. The culprit was the custom coiled wiring loom that came with my tow bar accessories. After getting "funny" continuity checks, I discovered that one screw at each end had backed out, and was floating around among the contact pins.

My continuity checks showed multiple pins on one end connected to one at

the other. My advice: Eliminate the little gremlins by routinely opening each connector and retightening those screws.

**RON BAUER**  
THOUSAND OAKS, CALIFORNIA

*That's good advice, Ron. Screws come loose even in home connectors that don't move around. Motorhome connectors do a lot of moving around, which loosens fasteners of all kinds. A periodic tightening is good preventive medicine.*

**WORKHORSE WIRING DIAGRAMS**

I obtained a wiring diagram and service manual online from Workhorse. I keep it in the motorhome for mechanics to use should an electrical problem occur with the coach.

**DAVID MULCAHY**  
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA

*The wiring diagrams, service manuals and other publications are available at [www.workhorse.com](http://www.workhorse.com), David. The wiring diagrams and service manuals are on a CD*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 62

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## Fryin' Frontier Flyer

The motor in my 1992 Damon Frontier Flyer Class A motorhome on a Chevrolet chassis runs hot most of the time. I've had the radiator flushed twice, replaced all the belts and hoses, and installed a new thermostat and cap and it still runs hot. Your help would be greatly appreciated.

**TOM LARIBE**  
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

*These models have a viscous fan clutch, which tends to fail with time and mileage. If you don't hear a roar when the fan kicks in as the engine gets hot, this may be the culprit. You should also check the operation of the electric auxiliary fan in front of the radiator to see if it comes on when the engine is very hot.*

*It's also possible that the radiator has some hard mineral deposits in the tubes, which reduce heat transfer and don't come out when the radiator is flushed. This can sometimes be determined immediately after the engine is shut off. With the key removed for safety, run your hand just over the surface of the radiator core (don't touch it or you can be burned). If any cool spots are detected, these are blocked tubes. If the original core is in bad shape, the radiator will need to be removed and "rodded out" by a radiator shop, or recored.*

### INTERMITTENT STARTING PROBLEM

I have a couple of problems with my 2006 Tiffin Allegro Bus built on a Freightliner XC chassis with a Cummins ISL 400 engine. Occasionally, the engine won't start unless I fiddle around with it. I called Freightliner and one of its representatives said they couldn't do anything unless the problem occurred while the rig was in their shop. I then called Tiffin, and the person I spoke with thought it was a flat spot in the starter that was causing the problem, and they agreed to replace the starter.

The other problem I'm having is that when I start the coach in the morning, I hear a clicking sound but the engine takes several tries before it will

start. Again, I called Freightliner and was told that the problem must occur in the shop for them to check it out.

What do I do if I get it started and get it to Freightliner, and the problem doesn't reoccur? Do you have any ideas?

**SAM STRATTON**  
DENVER, COLORADO

*Intermittent problems can be frustrating for everyone involved. The clicking noise when you turn the ignition switch to start will likely be from a relay or from the starter solenoid. It's generally the result of insufficient voltage reaching components, or an incomplete circuit. This can be caused by several things; the likely culprits are loose or corroded connections, one or more weak batteries, or a faulty relay, solenoid or starter. (I've seen a lot of defective rebuilt starters over the years.)*

*Have someone operate the starter while you stand near the engine with the engine cover open. Listen for the clicking and determine where it's coming from. Using a handheld digital voltmeter with a 20-volt DC scale, attach the alligator clip of its positive wire to the large*

*cable terminal on the starter. Connect the other test probe alligator clip to a clean, good ground point. Have an assistant attempt to crank the engine and read the voltage during cranking. Voltage must remain above about 9.6 volts on a 12-volt system during cranking (or attempted cranking). If the voltage drops below that, inspect and clean all battery cables and terminals. Many times the ground cables and connections are overlooked by technicians and owners, but these are just as important to starter operation.*

*If that doesn't solve the problem, work back through the starting circuit from the starter to solenoid to relays, neutral safety switch and ignition switch. This may be more complicated than most do-it-yourselfers want to tackle, in which case a professional should be consulted.*

### INTERMITTENT OVERHEATING

My 1999 American Eagle coach, with a Cummins 8.3-L ISL, has a driver's-side radiator. The problem I'm having is that sometimes when I'm traveling on the highway or climbing a hill (pulling a 20-foot enclosed trailer), the high temperature alarm in my motorhome sounds. I took it to the shop for a new thermostat and cleaning of the exterior of the radiator. The two-stage fan and thermostat checked out OK, and the computer does not show any overheating or fault codes.

The fluid in the overflow jar fluctuates, which is why I think it might be thermostat related. I'm concerned that I'm going to damage the engine because I can't always find a safe place to pull over once the engine starts heating up.  
**JOHN RYAN | KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI**

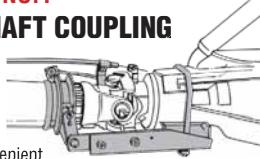
**"THE CHECK-ENGINE LIGHT (NOW CALLED A MALFUNCTION INDICATOR LAMP) CAN COME ON FOR MANY REASONS AND THE COMPUTER WILL SET A SPECIFIC TROUBLE CODE, DEPENDING ON THE PROBLEM IT DETECTS."**



*It appears that most of the usual culprits have been checked. There's a good chance that the radiator is partially clogged internally with mineral deposits, etc. This allows the coach to operate normally under light to moderate loads, but overheats on grades when towing. This can be checked by using a handheld digital infrared spot thermometer. Aim it at each tube in the radiator and note if any are significantly cooler than others. These will be the clogged tubes. It's also possible that you are "lugging"*

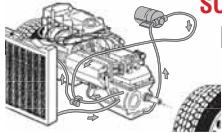
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## POWERTRAIN

the engine and not revving it up enough on grades. Try downshifting it one gear and let it rev higher, while carefully noting the temperature. In a pinch, you can reduce temperature somewhat by running the heater at maximum while you look for a place to safely pull over.

### WORKHORSE LOSES POWER

We had a problem with our coach similar to the one described in "Shotgun Approach to Repair" from your April column. On a hot day, going uphill towing a GMC Jimmy, we lost power and had to pull over. After waiting an hour or so, we were able to continue. This only happened when we were below a half tank of fuel. After the fuel pump was replaced three times, the mechanic determined the hot fuel returning from the engine (via the pressure regulator and return line) was dumping on the fuel pump. To correct this, the hot fuel return was changed to the end of the fuel tank, away from the fuel pump. The result has been no more problems.

**JIM & SHIRLEY DELAINI**  
LANCASTER, CALIFORNIA

It can get very hot in the summer where you live and the heat radiating up from the roads adds even more heat to the fuel returning to the tank. That's a very creative solution that should help some readers.

### CHECK-ENGINE LIGHT CONSTERNATION

The CHECK ENGINE light in my 2006 Class C Four Winds rig on a Ford chassis keeps coming on. I've had it worked on by a Ford dealer four times. After they work on it, the light will stay off for a couple of months, and then it comes back on. The factory warranty has run out, but I have an extended warranty.

**ROBERT MILLER**  
SHAWNEE, OKLAHOMA

The CHECK ENGINE light (now called a malfunction indicator lamp: MIL) can come on for many reasons and the computer will set a specific trouble code, depending on what problem it has detected. You didn't mention if it was always the same code, or what the dealer did to fix it. You should refer to your repair orders or call the dealer for clarification of what was done. If the same code keeps occurring it's likely that the problem hasn't been properly corrected and it would be considered a comeback that should be covered free due to the original repair.

Some auto parts stores will connect a scan tool to your vehicle for free so you can read the codes and determine the problem area. Read the emission control warranty, which is longer than the regular warranty and should cover most items that cause the MIL to come on.

### DISCONNECT YOUR DINGHY

"Mountain Driving Concerns," in your April column, made me wonder why more people, when starting to cross the mountains, don't disconnect their dinghy vehicle and drive both over separately at the same time? This would put a lot less strain on the brakes and transmission in the motorhome.

**BOB PHELPS | FORT MYERS, FLORIDA**

I suspect that many folks don't think of it, and the ones who do generally don't have any problems, so we don't hear from them. I recommend doing this rather than risk brake failure on motorhomes with marginal brake capacity, and for those who don't have a device to remotely actuate their dinghy's

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Remco, Circle 135 on Reader Service Card

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that costs \$97. A Workhorse Gas Chassis Guide is available for free download. It covers a variety of technical and service subjects, including all safety campaigns. It is reminiscent of the Chevrolet Motorhome Chassis Service Guide that was published for many years.

**HOT BATTERY**

I have a 1992 Fleetwood Flair Class A motorhome. My coach battery gets super hot when I use the converter/battery charger. Do you have any suggestions on what the problem is? Thanks.

**RICHARD MEIXNER  
HACKENSACK, MINNESOTA**

*Your converter isn't a battery charger, Richard. It has caused your battery to become badly sulfated. In short, your battery needs to be replaced, and you need to drive the motorhome or run the motorhome engine slightly above idle for at least an hour once a month to keep the battery fully charged. This will eliminate the sulfate and eliminate your problem.*

*On the other hand, your battery may just be too old. At best batteries only last about seven years, and you should be at least on your third coach battery by now.*

**BOONDOCK CHARGING**

Another recommendation I read about many years ago for charging the coach batteries is to use a standard, home-style battery charger, utilizing the generator and a 120-volt AC outlet, as opposed to the engine alternator.

This strikes me as a better way to go. Do you see a benefit either way, i.e., the engine alternator vs. the generator?

**KEN DALTON  
VANCOUVER, WASHINGTON**

*I sure do, Ken, and that's why I recommend the engine alternator. Most motorhome alternators put out more than 100 amps, and their voltage is regulated.*

*In contrast, most home-style battery chargers put out 20 or maybe 40 amps, and their voltage is not regulated. They will often cook a battery without finishing the charge. ♦*

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*brakes. For those holdouts, I strongly suggest investing in a dinghy brake actuating system.*

*Each motorhome chassis is rated to tow a certain amount of weight (just as tow vehicles, such as pickups and SUVs, are rated to handle maximum trailer weight). In many motorhome chassis examples, that rating is predicated on the use of brakes on the towed load. Check your owner's manual to be sure.*

**STICKING AIR BRAKES SEQUEL**

I also had the sticking brake condition noted by Robert Williams in "Sticking Air Brakes" (February). It always occurred after driving in the rain and then storing the rig. While I could free the brakes by adding a bunch of power, I found that backing the motorhome up frees them with almost no added power.

**DEAN SINGER  
BREMERTON, WASHINGTON**

*Thanks for writing. When this works, it's a nice, easy solution to a sticky problem. ♦*

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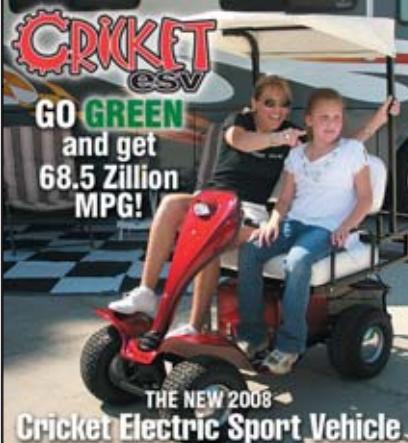
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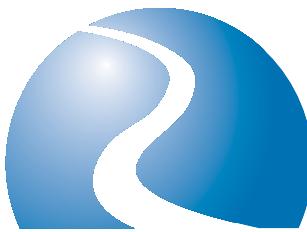
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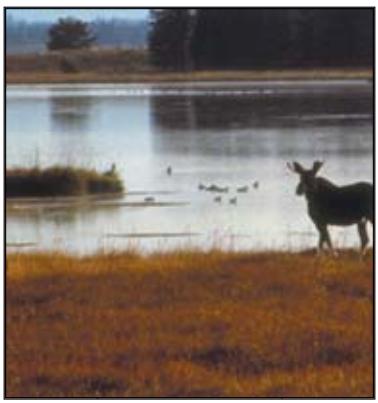


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- You fret about the people changing the oil in your house.
- You sincerely appreciate the value of costly bumper-to-bumper extended warranties.
- You get upset when you learn that awnings aren't covered by costly bumper-to-bumper extended warranties.
- You know full well that the next part that breaks will be absolutely the hardest thing to get to in the entire coach, like the icemaker feed line, which requires removing the refrigerator to replace a \$2 part, or the hydraulic actuator for the bedroom slideout, which requires two days to dismantle the bedroom from the inside and the outside.
- You hang garish lights from your coach's awning, lights that you wouldn't consider buying for a house built on a foundation.
- You put so much stuff in a small refrigerator that the cold air can't circulate properly, which means the soda on the top shelf freezes while the vegetables in the bottom drawer spoil.
- You inform your spouse that he/she will have to back off the rock-collecting hobby on extended trips. (You don't do this while said spouse is holding one or more of the rocks.)
- You can cook a four-course formal dinner for six in a single pan, and then, without embarrassment, hand out paper plates and plastic utensils while telling everyone to serve themselves.
- You shop for household furnishings at Camping World.
- You own four road atlases (one of which is a large-print version), a current *Trailer Life Directory* and 49 state tourism maps.
- You possess three different kinds of bug remover, not one of which cleans your windshield worth a darn.
- And, most of all, you might be an RVer if you love the lifestyle, the freedom of the open road, the people you meet along the way and the great North American outdoors. ♦

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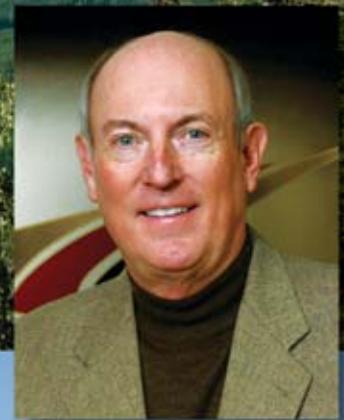
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Lyle Reed, President  
Foretravel Motorcoach  
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