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MOTORHOME

AUGUST 2009

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KODIAK 32'



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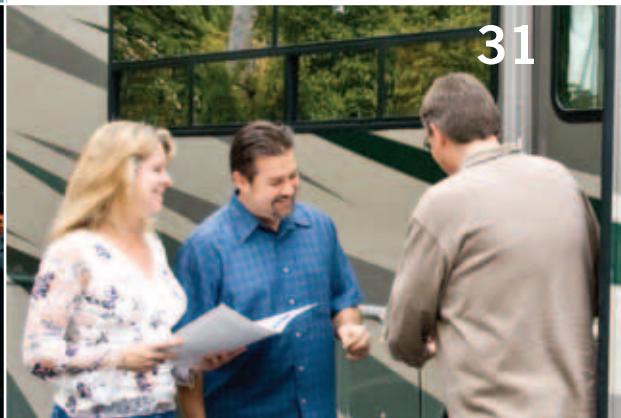
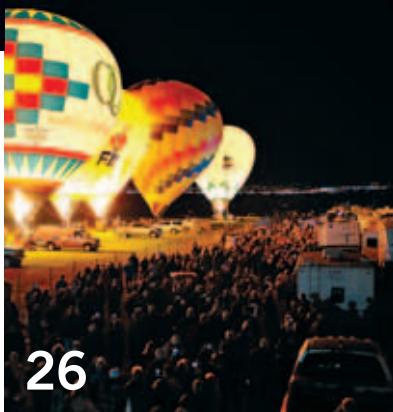
A 24-foot rig that loads big things in a compact package

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On The Cover: The Lazy Daze Kodiak 32-foot Class C crosses a bridge on Paradise Road in Southern California's Los Padres National Forest (see Walk-Through on page 32). Photo by Gary Bohinc.

TIME TO MAKE A DEAL

As we put this issue to bed, I was talking to my best friend about his decision to buy a new Class A motorhome. The angst in his voice was perfectly clear, even though we were conversing via telephone. He had a litany of reasons for not buying a motorhome, all revolving around the economy. As you expect, I've heard them all before.

But the thinking that got him backpedaling on making a deal was certainly not flawed. Being retired, my buddy relies on investment income, which is depressed, so his discretionary spending has been curtailed in step with the economy. With that in mind, he felt compelled to hold on to his aging Class A that serves as the foundation for his full-timing adventures.

However, keeping that old rig was making him crazy. He really wanted a new coach, but was feeling a little guilty about spending the money. He beat himself up looking for logical excuses to buy a new rig. With the old motorhome getting long in the tooth, he was looking forward to more room, greater amenities and a fresh engine that would help ensure travel security. Getting stuck on the road is not an option, since mechanical failures have the potential of severely cutting into his travel time. After all, retired people — especially those who fulltime — seem to be busier than when they were employed. That's a concept most of us still-employed people have a hard time comprehending. Nevertheless, all my retired motorhome-owning friends tell me it's true!

So, I put on my philosophical hat and proceeded to preach to my friend how life's too short to give up on dreams, happiness and the pursuit of the ultimate lifestyle: being on the road in a motorhome. I used all my standard lines, including the yardstick-of-life routine (in which you compare your expected lifespan to 36 inches of time, each one of them representing around two years). Everyone hates that assessment.

The reality is that all my prodding



to get him to buy a new motorhome — without feeling like I was pushing him into something he'd regret — was only second fiddle to the real reason he should be doing this: Now's the best time to buy a new motorhome, and there are some amazing deals out there — and plenty of inventory to choose from. Our encapsulation of this once-in-a-lifetime buying opportunity comes to life in the article that starts on page 31.

After perusing magazine ads and a number of Internet sites, including www.RVSearch.com (and listening to my incessant jabbing to take the plunge), my friend targeted a couple of motorhomes in the marketplace that he felt would satisfy his needs. Coincidentally, his first choice ended up being a 36-foot gasser that was looking for a new owner at a dealership close to where he was traveling in the Midwest.

The coach celebrated a birthday on the lot, but it was still brand new — and it had the exact floorplan he and his girlfriend really wanted. As the article in this issue predicted, the price was incredible, especially after a little bit of classic haggling over price and equipment. After he made the deal, he got back on the phone to continue stressing about making such a large purchase in an unstable economy. My counsel was simple: "Congratulations, you already made the deal."

Granted, my reaction was on the cavalier side, but somehow I knew he made a good choice.

By now, my buddy has racked up a number of miles on his new coach visiting the eastern seaboard of Canada and the U.S. Undoubtedly, he'll openly confess he made the right decision. Any time you can turn a bad thing (the economy) into a good thing (a new coach) and are able to stay on the road exploring new horizons, you've hit a home run. ♦

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AFTERSHOCKS

MotorHome took a bold step by naming brands in its comparison of aftermarket shock absorbers (“Shock Therapy,” May). Most people would simply replace their worn shocks with the same brand the OEM installed. Now we have more insight and can make an intelligent choice.

JIM FARLEY | WHARTON, NEW JERSEY



BILSTEINS ARE BEST

I enjoyed the article in the May issue comparing shocks. I've used Bilsteins with great success in my Camaro racing cars for years. I'd like to see more direct-comparison tech articles in the future.

ROGER MARBLE | RAVENNA, OHIO

KUDOS FOR KONIS

I replaced the shocks on my 1994 28-foot Bouncer P30 with Bilsteins, and was happy with them — they were a little firm, but better than the stock shocks. Now I've replaced the factory shocks on my 32-foot 2004 Fleetwood Storm on a Workhorse W20 with Koni FSDs. They're great! Better ride and handling. I like both brands, but for my money the Konis are the best.

BILL OVERALL | OREGON CITY, OREGON

ROADKINGS RULE

Regarding your May article on shocks, I

used RoadKings on my Tiffin Allegro Bus and I couldn't be happier. I know not everyone will pay \$400–500 per shock, but they ride like a dream and I haven't noticed any harsh-feeling ride like the article stated. The RoadKings ride the best of any I've used — and I've used all three of the brands you tested.

**STEVE & CYNTHIA ECTON
HEBER SPRINGS, ARKANSAS**

CRACKER BARREL CHATTER

I enjoy eating and shopping at Cracker Barrel restaurants as I travel in my motorhome, and I agree with Phil and Linda Rebholz (“Parking Problems,” May) that at most Cracker Barrels, the RV parking area is filled with cars.

It's a shame that drivers assume that because there isn't an RV parked there, they can park their cars there. On the other hand, most Cracker Barrels don't keep their RV-area designation signs in good condition. Also, the lines on the pavement are usually so worn and unreadable that car drivers can easily use that excuse to park there.

Cracker Barrel take notice: We RVers will avoid your restaurants. After all, we do have our own kitchen onboard, and we don't need you as much as you need us!

RUBY HOOPER | COCOA, FLORIDA

SHORT AND SWEET

I need to comment on Alan Parks' letter “Fuel-Efficient Rig Overload” in the May issue regarding too many articles about fuel-efficient rigs. I've been motorhoming since 1978 and have owned coaches from 20 to 45 feet in length, and am currently on my 15th new motorhome.

In my experience, the longer the motorhome, the shorter the fun. I prefer the pleasure and low maintenance of smaller motorhomes and I'll bet that I'm not alone in my opinion. The new crop of smaller, fuel-efficient rigs coming into the market is exciting, and I hope you continue to feature them along with the larger ones. Not everyone wants a large coach and I can honestly speak from experience: I was there and never want to go back.

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P.O. BOX

SIMPLE PLEASURES

Class B motorhomes seem to be the red-headed stepchild of the RV family (witness the May letter about “tiny” motorhomes based on the Sprinter chassis). We RV in a Class B, and we get the impression that “they’re OK for short weekend trips if you’re willing to be Spartan about it.”

Last season we put 9,500 miles on our rig (which is not a big Sprinter-based model) and were perfectly comfortable. When we visited family we declined offers to sleep in their guest room. We also had no qualms about going where the big rigs fear to tread.

We’re currently planning several extensive trips this year, so please don’t fall into the idea that only a motorized McMansion is a “real” motorhome. Keep those of us with the Thoreau philosophy in mind as well.

GENE BJERKE
WILLIAMSBURG, VIRGINIA

IT TAKES ALL KINDS

Wow! Myrtle Beach reader, Alan Parks, left no doubt where he stands on the subject of smaller rigs. I, and my circle of RV friends and loved ones, are long-time subscribers to *MotorHome* and we all commend you on your efforts to include both large motorhomes and units smaller than 25 feet in your discussions. Parks need only search *MotorHome's* back issues to discover there’s always been comprehensive discussion of all aspects of the 40-foot-plus genre to satisfy owners and would-be owners of that size.

I’m glad Parks gets such excellent mileage, but that’s not the only reason RVers consider smaller rigs. There’s also the advantage of maneuverability; Parks is missing out on the Artist’s Palette in Death Valley and the excitement of the scenic but tortuous California Highway 1 (covered in your May analysis of the Itasca Navion IQ).

Please keep up your excellent work and your philosophy of inclusivity. By the way, my wife and I are moving up this year from a 21-foot Chinook to a 30-foot Itasca Navion.

ERNIE BAJA
LADNER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

SENSATIONAL SAND DUNES

I enjoyed “Traveling the Sands of Time and Tide” in the May issue, but your list is far from complete. We in Colorado think Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve is one of the most popular dunes in the nation

— it has an excellent camping area. The article also left out other great sand dunes locations: Death Valley National Park, Golden Gate National Recreational Area, Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Padre Island National Seashore and Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, to point out just a few.

ROBERT BENCOMO
DACONO, COLORADO

You’re correct, the article showcased a sampling of sand dunes across the country. Due to space constraints, we could not include an all-encompassing list; however, the online article has additional information on some of the dune fields that you mentioned. Visit www.motorhomemagazine.com to access the expanded article. In addition, Great Sand Dunes National Park and Preserve was recently highlighted in our July issue (“Magical Journey,” page 26).

FULL-TIMERS’ RIGHTS

We’ve all heard about the new foreclosure laws and protections afforded homeowners, but what about the millions of Americans whose primary and only residence is on wheels? Because RV loans are not considered “mortgages,” the same rules, laws and protections don’t apply. Why shouldn’t full-time RVers be allowed to refinance under the same Freddie and Fannie programs available to brick-and-mortar homeowners?

And where the heck are the political watchdogs for full-time RVers? Why don’t we see regular interviews in RV magazines putting Pelosi, Reid and other politicians on record? Just because a politician spends a campaign season traveling in a bus, it doesn’t mean they understand the issues or needs of RVers, or our unique way of life.

We need to make ourselves heard! Get politically involved — contact your congressman, congresswoman or senator — and support RV-friendly candidates.

JEFFREY SABATINI
REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA

Question:

Do you think government officials do enough to support the rights of RVers?

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escapes

by DENISE SANTOYO

EVENTS | NOTEWORTHY | NEWS BRIEFS | CROSSROADS

Popularly known as a summer destination for the wealthy and well-known, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, is actually a vacation spot that everyone can enjoy. This island in the Atlantic — just off the coast of Cape Cod — holds its own brand of quaint New England charm.

With an extensive shuttle bus system, bike and moped rentals and almost 50 miles of paved bike trails, the Vineyard is easy to get around. Spend a day browsing shops and restaurants, visit the plen-

tiful beaches and harbors, or go fishing or golfing. The colorful cliffs of Aquinnah are also worth a visit.

Nestled in an oak forest is the island's only campground — Martha's Vineyard Family Campground, with 50 full-hookup sites and cabin rentals.

The island is accessible — even for motorhomes — via Steamship Authority ferry, based in the town of Woods Hole on Cape Cod. For more information, call (508) 693-3772, or visit www.campmv.com. — *Sabina Lohr*

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escapes | EVENTS

AUGUST 1-2, 8-9, 15-16, 22-23, 29-30 | Fantasy rules at the **New York Renaissance Faire** in Tuxedo, New York. Explore Renaissance England's arts, crafts, food and entertainment, including jousting, Shakespearean plays, strolling minstrels, jugglers and more. The Faire runs on weekends through September 20; (845) 351-5171, www.renfaire.com/NY.

AUGUST 1-31 | Step back in time at **Pastimes of Colonial Virginia** at Jamestown Settlement and Yorktown Victory Center in Virginia, where recreational activities from 17th- and 18th-century Virginia will be shown through hands-on activities, games, storytelling and interpretive programs; (888) 593-4682, www.historyisfun.org.

AUGUST 7-9 | All things Irish are the order of the day at the **Montana Irish Festival** in Uptown Butte, Montana. Participants are encouraged to show their Irish spirit while indulging in Irish dancing, music, entertainment, vendors and more; www.mtgaelic.org.

AUGUST 7-9 | Corn is king at the **Tall Corn Festival** in Rossville, Kansas. Join this family celebration for music, parades and fun activities that include a corn-spitting contest, corn-on-the-cob eating contest, a 5K run and more; www.rossvillekansas.us.

AUGUST 7-9 | Sun Valley Center for the Arts in Ketchum, Idaho, presents its 41st annual **Sun Valley Center Arts and Crafts Festival**. This family-friendly event features music, food, a children's activity area, artist demonstrations, a juried art exhibit and free admission; (208) 726-9491, www.sunvalleycenter.org.

AUGUST 21-23 | Get your groove on at the **Summergrass San Diego Bluegrass Festival**, an outdoor event that celebrates national, international and local bluegrass musicians in San Diego, California. Music workshops, jam sessions, vendors, food and concerts are the order of the weekend. Dry camping is available on-site with three-day festival passes; www.summergrass.net.



AUGUST 28-29

"Spud" tacular and a "peel"ing events await at the **Potato Days Festival** in Barnesville, Minnesota. Join more than 15,000 tater lovers for this free festival that features a fabulous food court, potato peeling and picking contests, mashed-potato wrestling competitions, a sculpting contest, fashion show, classic car show and more; (800) 525-4901, www.potatodays.com.

AUGUST 28-29 | Indulge your sweet tooth at Hidden Valley RV Resort and Campground's **Death by Chocolate Weekend** in Milton, Wisconsin. The fun begins with an ice cream social and continues on with chocolate-pie eating contests and candy-bar bingo for youngsters and adults. Open for all visitors; nonpark guests pay a nominal day-use fee; (800) 469-5515, www.hiddenvalleysresort.com.

RV SHOWS

August 14-15

Colorado RV Liquidation Super Sale, Denver, Colo.; (303) 892-6800

August 28-30

Annual Summer Boat and RV Super Sale, Richmond, Va.; (804) 425-6556

August 28-30

Eastern North Carolina RV Sales Event, Greenville, N.C.; (910) 423-5200

Find more events at www.motorhomemagazine.com/calendar.

NATIONAL PARKS GET \$750M STIMULUS INJECTION

In April, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced

the National Park Service (NPS) will undertake more than 750 restoration and protection projects to create jobs and preserve American history for future generations. The projects reflect a \$750 million investment in the park system under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

“America’s best ideas for protecting our national parks and open spaces have often come when our nation has faced its greatest challenges,” said Secretary Salazar. “By investing \$750 million to restore and protect America’s most special places, we are creating a new legacy of stewardship for our national park system while helping our economy stand up again.”

The list of NPS infrastructure projects includes:

- \$54.7 million to prepare for removal of the Elwha Dam and restoration of the Elwha River basin at Olympic National Park in Washington
- \$24.3 million to repair or rehabilitate roads in Great Smoky Mountains National Park, Tennessee and North Carolina
- \$13.1 million to demolish and replace condemned portions of the Quarry Visitor Center at Dinosaur National Monument, Utah
- \$11.5 million to replace more than five miles of water lines at Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado
- \$9.4 million to rehabilitate 16 historic overlooks along Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park, Virginia
- \$550,000 to rehabilitate the historic trans-canyon trail at Grand Canyon National Park, Arizona

For a complete list, go to www.interior.gov/recovery.

News Briefs

Good Sam Club has chosen Warrantech Corporation as the exclusive provider for its extended service contracts sold through participating Good Sam Authorized Dealers. Warrantech is backed by Wesco Insurance, an “A”-rated insurer and a subsidiary of AmTrust. Good Sam Authorized Dealers also offer roadside assistance, certified pre-owned RVs and other Good Sam-branded products.

Winegard Company (www.winegard.com) has formed CLUB-W, a new online club for consumers that features priority service at rallies, e-mail and technical support, special rebates and discounts, an exclusive e-newsletter, special event invitations and entry in prize drawings.

The Recreation Vehicle Safety and Education Foundation (www.rvsafety.com) will hold its inaugural RV Lifestyle, Education and Safety Clinic in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, September 13–16. Current and potential RV owners will have the opportunity to learn how to properly and safely operate RVs; better understand RV maintenance requirements; and complete the company’s RV-driving program. Reservations are required.

President Barack Obama was the runner-up in a recent survey of RV owners by the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association who were asked, “What living, famous person would you like to take with you on an RV trip?” Obama finished second in the poll to Academy Award-winning actor and comedian Robin Williams, who starred in the film *RV*. Other vote-getters included George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, Oprah Winfrey, Warren Buffet and Rachael Ray.

Active Network, Inc., has acquired ReserveAmerica — the leading camping reservation provider in North America. ReserveAmerica facilitates more than 4 million reservations per year, managing more than 350,000 sites within more than 4,000 parks and resorts.

In May, Class A RV resort Bella Terra of Gulf Shores (www.bellaterrarvresort.com), Alabama, celebrated its official grand opening. The 40-acre luxury resort offers site rentals and full ownership lots. Owner’s amenities include free WiFi, concierge service, planned resort activities, a clubhouse with fitness center and a private movie theater.



ARCON INTRODUCES NEW PIGTAIL ADAPTERS

Ever get to your campsite only to realize the location’s power hookups weren’t a match for your 50-amp onboard electrical cord? **Arcon Electrical Products** has introduced a new line of premium pigtail adapters in a variety of sizes — and the new adapters feature a unique handle that makes plug extraction effortless, while folding flat against the plug when not in use.

Manufactured in yellow cord to make the adapter more visible, Arcon pigtail adapters adapt all brands of plugs and are made of durable PVC with solid-brass contacts. Available in 15–30 amp, 30–15 amp, 30–50 amp, and 50–30 amp as well as a stripped 30-amp version and a flat-wire adapter, which is available in 30–15 amp, 20–50 amp and 50–30 amp. Arcon electrical products can be purchased at RV dealers across North America.

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**LITTLE CHAPEL,
BIG FAITH**

Once heralded as "the smallest church in the world," St. Anthony of Padua Chapel in Festina, Iowa, tells a story of tremendous faith. Nearly 200 years ago in France, a mother watched as her 16-year-old son, Johann Gaertner, was conscripted into Napoleon's army. "Return my son safely," she prayed, "and I promise to build a chapel."

Johann survived the war, but a depression prevented the chapel from going up. "Remember my promise," the dying mother begged of Johann. Though decades passed and Johann immigrated to America, he never forgot his mother's last wish. In 1885, the 92-year-old Frenchman erected a tiny stone chapel in the rolling hills near Festina.

The wayside chapel was dedicated in 1886 to St. Anthony of Padua, a relative of Johann's wife, Magdalene Bouillon. The interior measures 12 x 16 feet, seats a grand total of eight and the chapel has a 40-foot steeple. Four stained-glass windows send red, blue and yellow light dancing around the main altar and tiny side altars.

St. Anthony of Padua Chapel is always open. Follow the signs from State Route 150 in Festina. — *Marion Amberg*

THE WRITING ON THE WALL

The signs for the famous Wall Drug are everywhere — cropping up every few miles along Interstate 90 in South Dakota. On a typical summer day, 20,000 visitors follow the billboards to the store in Wall, South Dakota. But it wasn't always that way.



Ted and Dorothy Husted purchased the store in the 1930s. Struggling to get by during the Great Depression, the Hustedes decided to erect signs along the nearby highway advertising free ice water to hot and dusty travelers. The plan worked, and people have flocked to their establishment ever since.

Today, the "store" hardly resembles your typical Walgreens or corner drug. This 77,000-square-foot roadside attraction near Badlands National Park has a Western town-looking mall that sells boots, pottery and Western wear; a gallery of Western art; and a restaurant that seats 520 people. In the backyard you'll find a choreographed water park, historical photos, a gemstone mining experience and a paleontology store.

Wall Drug delivers a fun and welcome break from the monotonous trek across the plains. And you can still get that free cup of ice water.

For more information, call (605) 279-2175, or visit www.walldrug.com.

— *Patrick Borders* ♦

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BETTER SITES, **BETTER SAVINGS**

EQUITY LIFESTYLE PROPERTIES
OFFERS **NEW DISCOUNTS AND REVAMPED
POLICIES — AND CAMPGROUNDS —**
TO MEET CUSTOMERS' NEEDS

by JEFF CRIDER



New pool decking and clubhouse furniture were part of the upgrades at Royal Coachman Resort near Sarasota, Florida.

For years, Manufactured Home Communities was just that: A chain of parks with mobile and manufactured homes. Period.

But earlier this decade, the Chicago-based Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) went on a buying spree and diversified its business base. Backed with investor capital, the company acquired many of the finest RV resorts in the country, including most of the Encore and Sunburst brand resorts in Florida, Texas and Arizona. The company subsequently changed its name to Equity LifeStyle Properties (ELS), a name that more accurately reflects the lifestyle options available to its customer base.

Today, ELS owns more than 170 RV resorts, including 80 Thousand Trails membership camping properties, and it continues to invest in

them, even in a down economy.

"We continue to invest in our resorts to make sure that we are providing very highly amenitized facilities that our customers will want to visit again and again and again," Ellen Kelleher, ELS's vice president of property management, told *MotorHome*.

Last year, ELS spent more than \$13 million in improvements, which included construction of a '50s-style diner, pool improvements, a fitness center and activity bus at Paradise RV Resort in Sun City, Arizona; \$200,000 worth of new pool decking, bathrooms, clubhouse furniture improvements and signage at Royal Coachman Resort near Sarasota, Florida; more than \$1 million on renovations at Breezy Hill RV Resort near Fort Lauderdale, Florida, which included upgrades to the pool areas,

bathrooms and common areas; \$165,000 worth of upgrades to bathrooms, laundry facilities and roads at Fun-N-Sun RV Resort in San Benito, Texas; and \$100,000 on pool renovations at Goose Creek RV Resort on North Carolina's Crystal Coast.

"We expect to continue to demonstrate to our customers that we care about our properties by investing in them," Kelleher said, adding that ELS will spend millions of dollars in improvements again this year.

This year's improvements include \$2 million in upgrades to Thousand Trails campgrounds for things such as interior roadway improvements, new electrical hookups, new kayaks, paddleboats, picnic tables and barbecue grills. Other ELS projects include new fitness centers and pool-area upgrades at Sunshine Key



Clockwise, from above: A new fitness center and pool-area upgrades are some of the improvements slated for Sunshine Key RV Resort and Marina in Big Pine Key, Florida. New pool furniture and pool-area upgrades are also scheduled for Pio Pico resort in California. Paradise RV Resort in Sun City, Arizona, has completed more than \$13 million in renovations, including a '50s-style diner.

RV Resort and Marina in Big Pine Key, Florida, and clubhouse renovations at Crystal Isles RV Resort in Crystal River, Florida.

ELS is also implementing a series of policy changes and discount promotions to maintain its competitive edge and help to make the resort experience more convenient and affordable for its customers.

The changes, which apply to most ELS resorts, include more flexible reservation, deposit and cancellation policies. The company's new policy is to allow guests greater freedom in booking the days they want.

"Current economic conditions are impacting our thinking on this," Kelleher said. "But there's also an overriding sense that maybe we should have been doing this all along to be more customer friendly," she said, adding that the previous rigidity on booking stemmed from the company's past practice of reporting occupancy and revenue statistics on a month-to-month or quarterly basis to comply with investor reporting requirements.

"Changes in deposit requirements are another welcome change," Kelleher said. "For the upcoming winter season, snowbirds reserving three months at an ELS park will only need to make an initial deposit equivalent to a one-month stay, with the balance due upon arrival. If they want to stay for four or five months, a one-month deposit is required at time of reservation, with the remainder split in two payments:

half due upon the customer's arrival and the remainder due on the first of the second month of their stay with us."

New cancellation policies also offer greater flexibility.

"From October to March, for stays of one month or longer, if you cancel 60 days or more before your scheduled arrival, you get a full refund minus a \$150 administrative fee. If you cancel less than 60 days before your scheduled arrival, we apply your deposit to a future stay within one year, but there would be no refunds," Kelleher said.

In addition to these policy changes, ELS is rolling out new discount products to make it easier for customers to travel where they want and how they want. The new Ready Camp Go! card is a discount camping card providing sites starting at \$20 per night at some of the most popular vacation destinations in the country. The card, which can be purchased online at www.ReadyCampGo.com, provides access to more than 100 ELS resorts, including exclusive access to participating Thousand Trails preserves.

Ready Camp Go! card prices vary, depending on whether the card is purchased at the Plus, Silver, Gold or Platinum levels. The Plus Card sells for \$49 and enables the buyer to get 15 nights at \$25 per night. The Silver Card is \$99 and provides the buyer with 30 nights at \$20 per night, including seven consecutive nights at any

one property. The Silver Card also provides a 10-percent discount on cabin or travel-trailer rentals.

The Gold Card sells for \$199 and includes 60 nights at \$20 per night, including a 20-percent discount on cabin or travel-trailer rentals. The card also allows stays of up to 14 consecutive nights at any one property.

The Platinum Card is \$299 and includes 90 nights at \$20 per night and allows stays of up to 14 consecutive nights at any one property. The card also provides a 35-percent discount on cabin or travel-trailer rentals.

Another very attractive product being offered online by ELS this year is a one-park membership in the Thousand Trails network for \$495. "We think this is an exceptional value," Kelleher said, adding, "This is the first time that a Thousand Trails membership has been added at this price point and the first time it's been made available online." ♦

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Colonial Carriage Works in Columbus buys, restores and sells vintage horse-drawn vehicles like this doctor's carriage.



Kathy Luttrupp and William Koenig dip cheese in hot wax at the Carr Valley Cheese Factory in La Valle.



America's largest outdoor water park — Noah's Ark — helps earn Wisconsin Dells the title, Water Park Capital of the World.

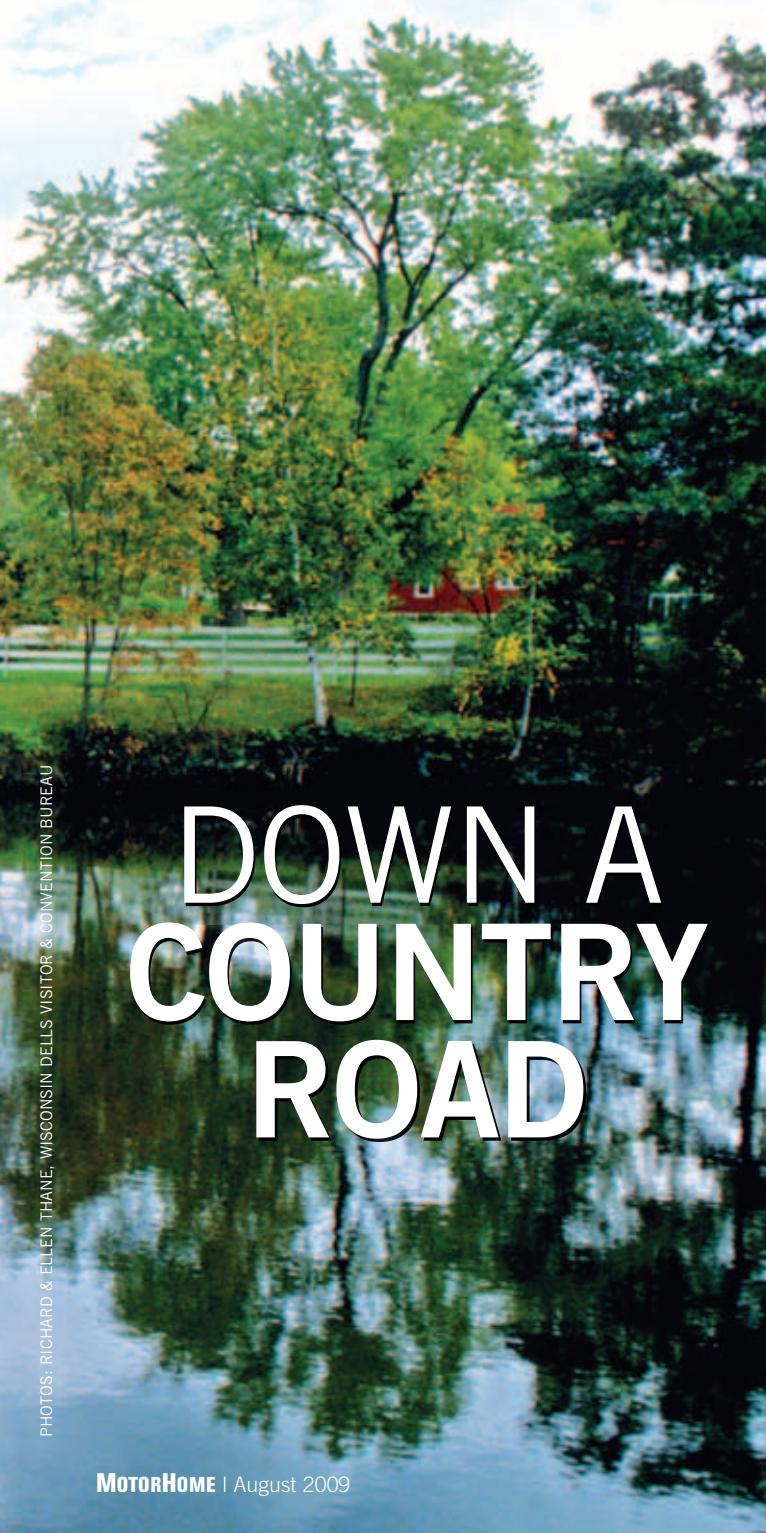


The picturesque Dells Mill, circa 1864, is made of hand-hewed timber and its gears are constructed entirely of wood.



Dells Boat Tours offers one- and two-hour tours of the Wisconsin River, winding a path through narrow canyons and sandstone cliffs. Tours can encompass either the lower or upper Dells.

Circus World Museum, in Baraboo, showcases live performances in the summer as well as good old-fashioned big-top fun.



PHOTOS: RICHARD & ELLEN THANE, WISCONSIN DELLS VISITOR & CONVENTION BUREAU

DOWN A COUNTRY ROAD

SIMPLE PLEASURES ABOUND THROUGHOUT WISCONSIN'S IDYLIC COUNTRYSIDE

by ELLEN THANE

“Down a country road” is a phrase often used to describe Wisconsin’s landscape, and I can’t think of a more apt description. Within moments of leaving almost any major highway in the state, you find yourself traveling silver ribbons of roadways that wind through picturesque farm country replete with sprawling fields of corn or soybeans. It’s not unusual to see a heavy piece of farm equipment lumbering down the road or an Amish buggy being pulled by a single prancing horse. Little towns with buildings made of brick resemble Norman Rockwell paintings, while roadsides are clean and free of trash and the local people are warm and welcoming.

It was family reunion time for me, and most of my family, having roots in Wisconsin, were arriving in an RV of one kind or another. Our plan was to first rendezvous at the Holiday Shores Campground and Resort in Wisconsin Dells, and spend a week there visiting and exploring the surrounding attractions, before moving north to our family farm near Osseo for another week.

Approaching from the east near Milwaukee, farm country lined the freeway and intriguing exits begged exploration of tiny towns. It was August and the weather was perfect.

COLUMBUS

In order to avoid traffic congestion around the Madison area, my husband, Richard, and I detoured off Interstate 94 and headed north on State Highway 73 to the historic lumber town of Columbus. We had only planned to drive through the town and rejoin I-94 north of Madison, but once we reached Columbus we knew it was one of those wonderful surprises that makes traveling by motorhome so enjoyable. More than 200 classic 19th-century buildings, virtually unchanged by modernization, line the city streets. We couldn’t resist stopping for a closer look.

Cameras in hand, we walked the streets, trying to capture the essence of the town. Friendly merchants invited us in to photograph their establishments and to share their stories about Columbus’ restoration efforts. One such business was the Colonial Carriage Works, a facility that buys, restores and sells horse-drawn vehicles to people around the world.

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The afternoon drew on and, hearing that the nearby Astico Park offered good camping, we were tempted to linger, but we had to push on to Wisconsin Dells and meet up with our family.

WISCONSIN DELLS

Wisconsin Dells is a huge tourism area — billing itself as the Water Park Capital of the World — and has a vast choice of family-oriented activities. The younger folks in our group packed bathing suits and headed for one of the area's many water parks, while the rest of us stopped by Dells Boat Tours for a tour on the beautiful Wisconsin River. As we wound through narrow canyons and dramatic sandstone cliffs, formed more than 500 million years ago, a tour guide recited historical tales of American Indian life, fur trappers and lumberjacks. At Witches Gulch we disembarked and wandered along a boardwalk through a misty green canyon while turbulent river water churned beneath our feet. For dinner that evening we chose the Paul Bunyan's Northwoods Cook Shanty in Wisconsin Dells, where the fried chicken and barbecued ribs with fresh corn on the cob was great.

Because Wisconsin is known as the Dairy State — for its milk, butter and cheese production — we wanted to tour a cheese factory. Down another country road, just a few miles west of Wisconsin Dells, we drove past farms and fields of sunflowers to the Carr Valley Cheese Company in La Valle. For more than 100 years, this small, family business has been crafting some of the country's finest specialty cheeses, using milk from nearby farms. Open Monday through Saturday except Christmas and New Year's, you'll want to get there at 8AM to see the cheese being made, then sample and make your choices.

PRAIRIE DU SAC AND BARABOO

A group of us traveled out to the scenic Wollersheim Winery located in Prairie du Sac a few miles south of Wisconsin Dells. A National Historic Site, its present buildings were constructed during the Civil War period. Hungarian Count Agoston Haraszthy, the original owner, is said to have journeyed west to California during the gold rush and eventually became known as the founder of the California wine industry. After touring the grounds, we sampled the wines, most of which were very good.

Returning to Wisconsin Dells, we traveled more lovely county roads to the old town of Baraboo, known as the birthplace of the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. Along the town square, farmers — some of them Amish — offered a wide variety of delicious vine- or tree-ripened fruits and vegetables. Across the square stands the ornate Al. Ringling Theater built in French Renaissance style. Gifted by the eldest Ringling brother to the people of Baraboo, it opened in 1915 and is still used for movies and live stage performances.

Down along the Baraboo River you enter the magical lands of the Circus World Museum. Located on the original circus winter campgrounds, this is a major draw for big-top buffs, with an amazing collection of antique circus wagons and other memorabilia. Summertime brings live performances and, if you have children with you, they are sure to delight in an elephant or camel ride.

AMISH COUNTRY AND DELLS MILL

The week passed much too quickly and

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soon it was time to say goodbye to the Wisconsin Dells and head north on I-94 to Osseo, just south of Eau Claire, where my family's Dutch ancestors first settled during the mid-1800s. Though we camped on our old family farm just outside of Osseo, you can find good camping at the Stoney Creek RV Resort in Osseo.

This is definitely Amish country and, being curious about their way of life, we arranged an Amish farm tour through The Wood Shed, a store in the nearby town of Augusta where the Amish sell much of their exquisite handmade furniture, quilts and crafts. Our tour guide was a young man — an "Englischer," as the Amish call non-members — who grew up with many of the local Amish families and knows them well. As we wound our way through the country roads passing one Amish farm after another, he pointed out one quick way to identify an Amish farm from that of an Englischer. "There are no electric wires running to the Amish farms," he said.

We passed groups of bearded men cutting wood and women in bonnets hang-

ing out the wash or working in their gardens. "Please respect their privacy," our guide asked, "and don't take any photographs." The Amish are particularly sensitive about having their faces photographed; even Amish dolls are made without faces.

We weren't able to visit an occupied home, but an unoccupied farmhouse, furnished in the Amish tradition, is included on the tour and photos are allowed. From there, we went to an Amish farm where the women had just finished baking and were selling their goods. Bread, rolls, candy, it was all delicious — even more so considering the care and labor involved in making everything by hand and cooking it on wood stoves.

Smelling those wonderful baked goods got us talking about blueberry pie, and the following Saturday Aunt Mary had us drive south to the little town of Hixton, just off I-94, to Cain's Orchard — where the blueberries were ripe and available for us to pick. Owner Diane Cain greeted us warmly and gave us a tour of her orchard, set among softly rolling fields of grain. Showing us where the best blueberries were ripening, she left

us to fill our buckets and our mouths as well. Her gift shop's wide selection of attractively packaged jams, jellies and syrup offered perfect gifts for the folks back home.

Dells Mill, about five miles north of Augusta, was another highlight of our trip. Built in 1864, early farmers used the mill for milling their grain into flour and, like most mills of that era, it became a social gathering place. Today it is a marvelous museum maintained and presided over by owner Gus Clark, who greets visitors dressed in an authentic Civil War uniform, and leads them through a building constructed of hand-hewed timbers. Even the gears are a work of art, made entirely of wood. Today its 3,000 feet of belting and 175 pulleys are all powered by a water turbine, but a huge overshot water wheel still turns below the dam just outside the mill.

We left Wisconsin with a profound longing to spend more time exploring the lovely country roads; perhaps next fall when autumn colors etch the fields in red and gold. Aunt Mary promises to have blueberry pie waiting. ♦

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EXPLORING THE GILA

SOUTHWEST NEW MEXICO
SERVES UP CLIFF
DWELLINGS AND 'LIVING'
GHOST TOWNS TO SPICE UP
YOUR SCENIC DRIVE

by DAVE G. HOUSER



“There they are!”

my wife, Jan, exclaimed, pointing up from the steepest section of the mile-long loop trail leading us to the Gila Cliff Dwellings.

Set high in a sandstone canyon wall inside a series of water-carved alcoves, these dwellings are remnants of a 40-room village — an ancient condo of sorts — that served more than 700 years ago as

home to the Mogollon people. Hunters and farmers, they grew corn, beans and squash in the valley below, hunted deer in the hills, wove yucca baskets and produced distinctive pottery — but their safe and self-sufficient lifestyle lasted only a few decades, from about the late 1270s to about 1300.

Modern carbon and tree-ring-dating techniques have pinpointed their arrival in the

canyon, as well as their departure, but scientists and other experts are not certain why the Mogollon left so abruptly and after such a brief stay.

This mystery only added to the fascination of our visit last August to Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument and the surrounding 558,000-acre Gila Wilderness Area. Our visit also included spending time in the resurrected ghost towns of Hills-

boro and Kingston as well as the historic but surprisingly hip little mountain town of Silver City.

HILLSBORO AND KINGSTON

Our approach to the Gila from our home in south-central New Mexico led us from Interstate 25 just south of Truth or Consequences, west on State Highway 152 through Hillsboro and Kingston to Silver City.

We couldn't resist pulling



Opposite page, top: San Vicente Arroyo, once Silver City's Main Street, has been transformed into Big Ditch Park. Left: Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument preserves stone-and-mortar structures that were built into natural caves by the Mogollon culture and then mysteriously abandoned. This page, above: Narrow and twisting New Mexico Highway 15 leads from Silver City to Gila Cliff Dwellings National Monument; an alternate route is recommended for motorhomes longer than this 23-foot Winnebago Vista.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

GILA CLIFF DWELLINGS NATIONAL MONUMENT

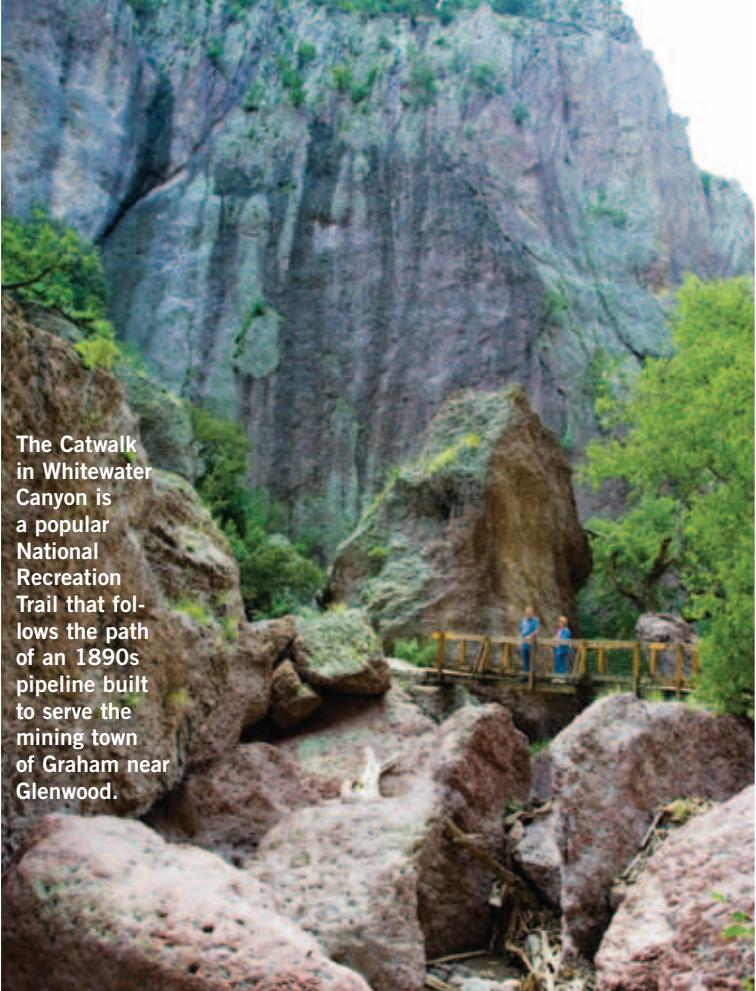
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The Catwalk in Whitewater Canyon is a popular National Recreation Trail that follows the path of an 1890s pipeline built to serve the mining town of Graham near Glenwood.

our motorhome in under a row of century-old shade trees in the center of Hillsboro, a rustic, somewhat ramshackle 1877 mining town — in its time one of New Mexico's largest cities, but now home to just 200 or so artists, writers, ranchers and miners. It is also the only place along Highway 152 between the interstate and Silver City where you can rustle up some grub. We tied into burgers and enchiladas (both excellent) at the General Store Café, which is equal parts of both, and features a sign near the entrance that reads: "If you can't find it here, we can tell you how to get along without it."

Kingston is about nine miles up the road but easy to miss because Highway 152 skirts the original town site and the turnoff to Main Street is flanked by a "dead end" sign that probably discourages the less intrepid traveler. There's an

old hotel, an assay office and a restored bank that proudly displays its original teller windows, though there's not much else left from the town's heyday in the 1880s — when the population soared to 7,000, providing a solid customer base for its 27 saloons. Minimalist campers might enjoy a stay at the Forest Service's primitive campground near the intersection of Main Street and Highway 152.

As Highway 152 winds up into the Black Mountains, the views become increasingly majestic, providing panoramic hints of why this route was made part of the Geronimo Trail National Scenic Byway. The Apache leader was native to the Gila and during his epic standoff with the U.S. Army, he and his warriors frequently took refuge in the region.

Dense forest and frequent switchbacks make for slow going. About eight miles west

of Kingston, 8,828-foot Emory Pass marks the route's apex. There's a viewpoint and parking area that can handle all but the largest rigs, and from here you can catch a glimpse of Kingston and the twisting road you just traversed before heading to Silver City.

SILVER CITY

It wasn't until a rich silver strike in 1870 that aptly named Silver City sprang to life, transformed from a tent camp to a city of fine buildings, nearly all of brick produced from local clay. By 1873 it had its own newspaper, 15 saloons, three dance halls and a block-long red-light district. Billy the Kid emerged from here (as a skinny young gunslinger by the name of William Bonney) to become a legend, adding considerable color to the town's tumultuous history.

The town took a hit during the silver crash of 1893 and was

further battered by a series of massive floods around the turn of the last century. Relying on its fine climate, Silver City held on for a time as a "paradise for consumptives," with a sanatorium for treating tuberculosis sufferers. More recently as a popular tourist destination and home to Western New Mexico University, Silver City has evolved as a vibrant, congenial community that reflects a comfortable balance between historic and hip.

We poked around the historic business district along Bullard, Broadway and Market streets, where nicely restored facades of 19th-century buildings — now housing smart galleries, boutiques and cafés — re-create the ambience of a century ago. We checked out the colorful Yankie Street galleries, plopped down for a snack at the Javalina Coffee Shop and Internet Café and later perused exhibits at the Silver City Museum. Housed in

MAP ILLUSTRATION: SUE CARLSON



Above: Along with neighboring Kingston, Hillsboro is a popular “living ghost town” and sports the remains of a number of historic structures, such as the 1882 county jail. Below: Relics of a long-past mining boom litter the Main (and only) Street of Mogollon, one of New Mexico’s most picturesque old mining towns.



an impressive old 1881 red brick Italiante-Victorian, the museum preserves many local memories and a particularly outstanding collection of photos of the city’s dramatic floods.

Another visual reminder of the floods, and a stark one at that, is the so-called Big Ditch Park — a gaping arroyo right in the heart of the business district — that was Silver City’s Main Street until the flood of 1895. Only one structure, the well-kept 1885 Warren House, survived that and subsequent deluges. The ditch is now nicely landscaped and lined with walkways and picnic tables.

GILA CLIFF DWELLINGS NATIONAL MONUMENT

An early morning departure from Silver City for the Gila Cliff Dwellings found us steering north on Highway 15, soon coming upon Pinos Altos, the area’s original ghost town. Gold

was being mined here as early as the 1850s and surviving buildings include an 1870s opera house, a rough-looking museum and the Buckhorn Saloon, which is said to be among the region’s best eateries.

Beyond Pinos Altos, the highway becomes rather challenging, with steep grades and hairpin turns. It’s a beautiful two-hour drive and was quite fun in our nimble 23-foot Winnebago Vista. Still, we don’t recommend the route for large rigs — especially when there’s an easier, though longer, alternative for reaching the monument from Silver City via State Highway 35. At long last we arrived at Gila, and were eager to explore a place we had heard so much about.

Gila Cliff Dwellings is the nation’s first officially designated wilderness area and it in turn is enveloped by the vast 3.3-million acre Gila National Forest, which covers a great swath

of southwest New Mexico.

Climbing a set of steep stairs, we entered the first cave, which revealed evidence of once being used as a communal kitchen. A National Park Service (NPS) volunteer guide pointed out the excavated foundations of three small food storage rooms, a hearth and a pair of circular depressions believed to have supported large, round-bottomed pots.

Cave Two was much more revealing of Mogollon architectural skills. Here the cliff dwellers built eight rooms on two levels, with the second-floor balcony supported by original wood beams, or vigas. The workmanship is clearly remarkable. Nearly 80 percent of the original structures have survived through the centuries, though a closer look points to some fine modern-day restoration and preservation on the part of the NPS.

The Gila Cliff Dwellings had been looted and seriously damaged by the time Adolph Bandelier published the first archaeological report on the Mogollon complex in 1884. When the government finally stepped in to protect the site in 1907, the Park Service had a sizeable rescue mission on its hands.

Cave Three proved the most enchanting with its narrow, clamshell opening that protects against weather extremes and extends to a large natural amphitheater, where scientists suggest the magic and mysteries of the world were likely celebrated. Remnants of reed cigarettes, sea shells and exotic bird feathers found in the cave lend credence to the theory this was a ceremonial site.

Moving at a leisurely pace, we spent two hours exploring the dwellings. The trail is fairly level except for the steep section (including 180 stairs) leading up to the caves. That

section could present problems for folks with heart or respiratory conditions or mobility issues. Visitors are advised to wear shoes with good traction and support and to bring sun protection and plenty of water.

Following our visit to the cliff dwellings and a relaxing overnight at nearby Campbell’s Gila Hot Springs Ranch/RV Park, we retraced twisty Highway 15 back to Silver City and then headed north on U.S. Highway 180 toward Glenwood and Reserve.

Leaving the Gila was not that quick, however, as we were sidetracked by two more of the region’s top attractions. Near Glenwood we hiked The Catwalk, a popular National Recreation Trail that follows a winding path up through Whitewater Canyon, tracing an 1890s water pipeline built to serve the mining town of Graham. More than a half-mile of The Catwalk is made up of a grated metal walkway bolted to the canyon wall. The sensation of seeing and hearing the river rush below qualified this as one of our most unique hiking experiences.

Our final distraction was yet another ghost town just north of Glenwood, this one with the promising name of Mogollon and a gold mining history that lasted into the 1920s. It’s a steep, twisting climb up State Highway 78 past the abandoned Little Fanny Mine to Mogollon, where relics from mining booms past litter the Main (and only) Street. The town is surprisingly intact and it’s clearly the most picturesque of the region’s old mining towns. It’s kept alive by a handful of dedicated residents who operate a café and a small museum. The locals are understandably quirky, but kind and inviting, save the rattlesnake that Jan nearly stepped on by the museum entrance. ♦



RVERS FOLLOWED ROUTE 66 TO ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO, FOR THE WORLD'S GREATEST RALLY

by MARLEEN CANNIFF

IT WAS A KICK

This wasn't just any rally. It was the 10th anniversary of the Greatest RV Rally in the World. Yes, we got our kicks on Route 66, but what made The Rally so special this year was its eco-friendly message, along with the many wonderful RVers who gathered together to experience and celebrate the RVing lifestyle.

Sponsored by *MotorHome*, *Trailer Life* and *Camping Life* magazines, *Trailer Life* Directory, Woodall's Publications, the Good Sam Club, Coast to Coast Resorts and the Camping World President's Club, this year's Affinity event was held at the Expo New Mexico in Albuquerque, and it was the biggest and best RV event of the year. It attracted 3,112 registered RVs, about 400 suppliers and 30 manufacturers and dealers with around 500 units on display.

The main attraction at the fairgrounds was full-time RVer

and outdoor adventure and survival expert Brian Brawdy and his eco-friendly Lance camper. Brian was center stage for the entire event with his message to "live life like you mean it!" He showed rally-goers how he catches and filters rainwater and utilizes solar panels and a wind turbine for alternative energy in his RV. He connected with those who enjoy the open road while demonstrating how anyone can practice conservation through exploration.

This Rally showed that the "Go Green" theme isn't just for hard-core nature lovers anymore, and anyone would agree after checking out the packed room at Bob Difley's seminar, "Camping and Boondocking on Our Public Lands." Difley discussed how boondocking forces conservation and is a way to be more responsible and conscientious in the use of natural resources.

Above: Saturday night's balloon glow spotlighted one of Albuquerque's favorite pastimes — hot-air ballooning. Below, right: Hundreds of the newest models of RVs from top manufacturers were on-site at The Rally's outdoor exhibit area. Below, left: The exhibitors' hall gave rally-goers the opportunity to explore the latest products and services for RV enthusiasts.





The stellar entertainment lineup included The Osmond Brothers, Neil Sedaka and Rita Coolidge.

Gary Shapiro and Rally Dog Show winners Dash and Lily.



Carol Fabritius, center, won Publication Day's grand prize raffle — presented by Bob Livingston and Marleen Canniff — a Tracks to Adventure RV tour to Branson, Missouri.



Sue Bray, left, executive director of the Good Sam Club, presented the Club's inaugural RVer of the Year award to Richard Daniels in recognition of his animal-rights work.

After scoping the hundreds of other RV-related seminars, checking out the exhibit halls packed with the latest RV products and participating in the numerous fundraising activities for Good Sam's official charity, Hole in the Wall Camps, the nightly musical entertainment rocked with names like Rita Coolidge, The Osmond Brothers and headliner Neil Sedaka.

Before the evening entertainment on Friday, Sue Bray, executive director of the Good Sam Club, introduced Richard Daniels, the Good Sam Club's 2008 RVer of the Year, who was recognized with a standing ovation for the animal-rescue shelter he founded. Other RVers made a difference by rescuing a pet themselves during the two pet adoption days, and all were invited to show off their pets at the sixth annual Dog Show. Winning Best in Show was Gary Shapiro of Evergreen,

Colorado, and his two talented dogs, Dash and Lily.

Our favorite affair at The Rally is always RV Publications Day, a great event for RVers to connect with staffers from their favorite RV publications and learn what's new in the RV industry by receiving free magazines as well as some of the newest products on the market. Carl Ackerman from Amarillo, Texas, has been to "every Pub Day since 2002 in Pomona, California," and he was excited to get his free embroidered ball cap along with 3,000 other attendees. Rally-goers received lots of other giveaways, including ice cream by local vendor The Cruisin' Cow and awesome raffle prizes — all valued at more than \$20,000.

Three lucky winners got their hands on a new Spot tracking unit, so they can stay connected with their families via satellite

Below, left: RV Publications Day was a big hit with rally-goers as staffers raffled off more than \$20,000 worth of prizes. Below, right: Free temporary tattoos by Dancing Dolphins Face and Body Art were also given away during Publications Day.



PHOTOS: W. SCOTT MITCHELL

GPS messenger no matter where their RV travels take them. Another lucky winner went back to her RV with a Roadmaster Sterling All-Terrain Tow Bar and another with an EnGenius wireless network adapter from TengaInternet. Hundreds of others won prizes such as portable power supplies from Xantrex, RV care products from Protect All, In-Line Filters from SHURflo, Sensor DTV upgrade antennas from Winegard, straw doormats from Patio Mats, Motion-Proof Putty from Ready America, a variety of must-have cleaning wipes from Thetford and more.

But winning the coveted Tracks to Adventure grand prize RV tour to Branson, Missouri, is what everyone in the crowd

eagerly anticipated, and Good Sam Member Carol Fabritius of Tucson, Arizona, had the winning ticket. She had never been to an RV rally before, so she was speechless at first, and then she began chatting about whom she will decide to bring with her on the tour.

Pub Day also offered free temporary tattoos by local vendor Dancing Dolphins Face and Body Art. Shop owner and artist Cindy Farslow along with Jim Freese airbrushed hundreds of arms, chests, backs, faces and, er, other body parts (like ankles) for all of those daring enough to sport a new look. This was a big hit with rally-goers, who declared, "My kids have them, why can't I?"

Yes, living life like you mean it is what

it's all about. Linda Hankins and her husband George of Middle River, Maryland, attend The Rally each year to "see this great country, meet new friends and support our organizations" by volunteering at many of the events. And rally-goers Deana and Thomas Emineth of Pensacola, Florida, are full-timers who claim that home is where their RV is. Last year their home was in Perry, Georgia, and this year in Albuquerque. Chances are their home will be in Louisville, Kentucky, on July 22-25, 2010, for the 11th annual Rally next year. We'll be looking for you all!

Check out www.therally.com or call (877) 749-7122 to make your early-bird reservations. ♦

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STAYING CONNECTED

BETTER AND FASTER WIFI IS THE LATEST
TREND AT RV PARKS AND CAMPGROUNDS

by JEFF CRIDER

If you consistently have trouble getting a quality wireless Internet or WiFi signal in your travels, there's a good chance you need to purchase a WiFi adapter.

"People have this perception that problems are always on the park's end. But that's not always the case," said Kelly Hogan, president and CEO of Boise, Idaho-based NomadISP.

While laptop computers come with their own embedded wireless antennas, WiFi service providers tell *MotorHome* that these antennas are not always sufficient to work effectively in campground environments.

"These embedded wireless antennas are made for indoor environments, where the transmitting device is only 50 feet away from the laptop," Hogan explained. "They're not designed for use inside an RV at a campground," he said, noting that the wireless access point or "hot spot" may be much more than 50 feet away.

Hogan said campers can often solve this problem by purchasing a \$50 wireless adapter from an electronics store. If that doesn't improve the quality of the signal, he said,

chances are there are issues with the WiFi signal at the park. And, more often than not, the park operators are aware of it.

"Because it's still a somewhat new technology, a lot of parks are ironing out the wrinkles in their WiFi systems, finding out where the dead spots are and finding out if they have enough bandwidth," said Bob MacKinnon, a former Disney Company executive who developed the Guest Rated online survey program for the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds (ARVC), adding that campers are sensitive to the quality of WiFi service they experience wherever they camp.

"Campers are looking for it, and they appreciate it," MacKinnon said. "But if it's not working, they will let campground operators know about it."

And if they don't do it in person, they do so via the campground industry's online survey program (www.gocampingamerica.com/GuestReviews). Participants assign letter grades for each survey category, and have the option of including detailed explanations, which can help campgrounds and RV parks prioritize their improvements.



WIFI IN MOTION

STAYING CONNECTED

Technical problems often result if the bandwidth demand is greater than the signal capabilities at the resort. In many cases, RV park WiFi systems are overwhelmed by camper demand.

In the old days, parks installed WiFi so that guests could access their e-mail or check on stock values as they traveled. These days, however, many campers are using Internet-based telephone systems, such as Skype, to make phone calls or they're downloading Netflix movies, watching videos on YouTube or playing Internet-based games, all of which require much more bandwidth than the park originally required to satisfy its guests' Internet needs.

"From a quality of service and network standpoint, WiFi network capabilities are being taxed," said Eric Stumberg, president and CEO of Austin, Texas-based TengelInternet.

TengelInternet has tracked this jump in WiFi demand on a national basis and documented a 118-percent increase in bandwidth demand per user on its WiFi system from January 2008 to January of this year. At the same time, the company saw a 124-percent increase in WiFi users at the same parks, year over year.

All of this rocketing demand means one thing for park operators: If they don't have a strong network, they're not going to be able to support either the growing number of guests using WiFi or their growing bandwidth requirements.

Fortunately, many parks are getting the message and are working to upgrade their systems.

Both TengelInternet and NomadISP, the nation's largest WiFi service providers for campgrounds, tell *MotorHome* that roughly 80 percent of their workload is replacing older WiFi systems with newer, more powerful systems. Both companies also offer 24/7 customer service help, so that guests can get technical help when they need it rather than having to find someone at the front desk.

Of course, the availability and quality of WiFi varies by park. Some campgrounds don't offer it at all. Some charge a separate fee for it, while others offer it and build the cost of providing it into their rate structure. But survey data indicates that campers are increasingly wanting and expecting WiFi service as a guest amenity, MacKinnon said.

As a result, many park operators believe it's worthwhile to upgrade their systems. "People are very vocal about WiFi," said Reza Paydar, president and CEO of La Jolla, California-based SunLand RV Resorts, which has seven locations in Southern California, adding, "We are in the process of updating all of our wireless services so that we can accommodate the higher demand."

Some RVers, however, are bypassing land-based WiFi systems altogether and are instead connecting to the Internet using the wireless services provided by their cell-phone provider.

Frank Schweighardt, a full-time RVer and freelance photographer from Portland, Oregon, told *MotorHome* that he and his wife, Connie, have been able to run six computers using the wireless service provided by Sprint, which also provides their cell-phone service.

Hogan of NomadISP and Stumberg of TengelInternet caution, however, that wireless Internet service offered by cell-phone companies may not always cover the remote locations where some campgrounds are located. They also assert that the wireless Internet signals provided by cell-phone companies are not fast enough to enable campers to easily download movies or engage in other Internet activities that require a high-speed connection, an observation confirmed by campground operators.

The quality and speed of WiFi service provided by cell-phone carriers varies, however, as Schweighardt said he had no difficulty watching movies using the WiFi service provided by Sprint.

Regardless of which WiFi options campers opt to choose, growing numbers of campground managers believe that WiFi is an increasingly important amenity for today's camping enthusiasts.

"My opinion is that, whereas there once was stratification between parks with WiFi and without WiFi, the next element of status will be who has the fastest download speeds, the fastest connection and the best bandwidth," said Randall Hendrickson, president of The Intrepid Group LLC, a Scottsdale, Arizona-based campground management firm. "I truly believe that this will be part of [campground and RV park] marketing materials before long. WiFi alone isn't enough now. It has to be 'fast WiFi' to meet the demands of the consumer." ♦

An Oregon company has recently

started marketing equipment to RV enthusiasts that amplifies the wireless Internet signals provided by cell-phone carriers.

The equipment can produce a tenfold magnification of the WiFi signal provided by cell-phone carriers, said Rob Taylo, owner and founder of Portland-based WiFi In Motion, which markets its equipment through its Web site (www.wifiinmotion.com) as well as a national dealership network.

The system, which retails for \$895, gives RVers the ability to use their cell-phone carrier for WiFi service so that they no longer have to rely on whatever WiFi system a park or campground has installed. "What we found in doing our research is that a lot of people are fed up with spotty campground WiFi access," Taylo said, adding that his company provides a viable solution by giving RVers the ability to amplify existing cell-phone signals for their WiFi needs.

Many cell-phone carriers offer WiFi service for about \$50–\$60 per month, and no amplification equipment is needed to use this service. However, by purchasing equipment that amplifies the power of the cell-phone signal, the RVer can have a better WiFi experience using that signal.

Mary Ebacher Estridge, a full-time RVer, said she purchased a WiFi In Motion kit last year, telling *MotorHome* the system helps to strengthen her cell-phone signal, thereby reducing her chances of being disconnected from the Internet while she is using her computer.

Taylo, who worked in business development for Verizon and Sprint before founding his company two years ago, said the amplification system provided by his company includes a wireless router, which can be used as a hub for multiple laptop computers. The system can be operated on either 12-volt DC or 120-volt AC power systems, so RVers can use the system at home and on the road. The system is compatible with 90 cellular cards and cellular phones.



RELAUNCHING THE AMERICAN DREAM, FOR LESS



WHY NOW IS **THE RIGHT TIME TO BUY** A MOTORHOME

by JEFF DUSING

Sparked by soaring fuel prices and a less-than-stellar year on the stock market, many motorhomers opted to hold off on new purchases and leave their existing coaches curbside while the collective country buckled down to weather the financial storm. Now, with a glimmer of light at the end of the tunnel, the time is right to consider buying that motorhome that was always in your dreams.

"No one is going to take away the vacation and family time of America, and RVs are at the center of those valuable memories," said one salesperson

with Guaranty RV of Junction City, Oregon. It is for that very reason that dealers across the country are anticipating that the American spirit will once again drive customers onto their overflowing lots.

"There is no wrong time to buy an RV, but there are certainly many reasons to do so today," says Tiffin Motorhomes National Sales Manager Jerry Williamson. "Fuel prices are half what they were just months ago, and forecasts indicate they will remain level."

All things considered, RVing is still among the



most affordable vacation options for families. And enjoying your motorhome means getting the right rig for all of your planned and unplanned adventures, and having enough left over for added expenses like food, fuel and fun. Now is the right time to consider buying for all of these reasons.

Simply put, the past year left dealer lots overstocked with inventory in every category that must be sold quickly to make room for incoming new models. That means an increased willingness to deal by the dealer, and lower prices for you as the buyer.

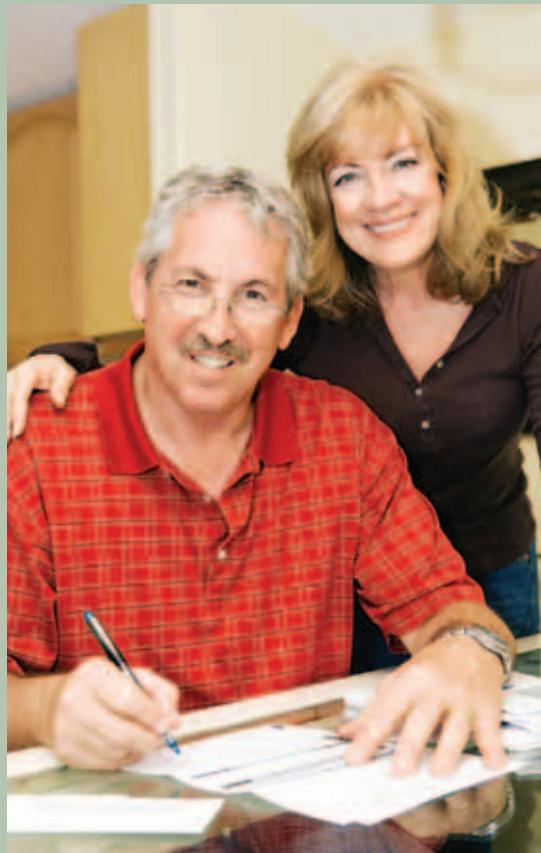
After years of continued growth and fierce competition, motorhomes from every manufacturer are better than ever, with improved build quality and durability, and loads of ingenious innovations and amenities that make life on the road more comfortable. From large flat-screen TVs with in-motion satellite programming and WiFi connectivity to increased fuel efficiency that saves you money on the road, motorhomes continue to get better and better.

And, of course, virtually all motorhomes sold in the United States are made right here, so investing in them means investing in America at a time when the country needs it most.



BACK-TO-BASICS FINANCING

Some buyers remain fearful of a seemingly sketchy market and limited financing options. But amid all this doom and gloom something truly great happened for buyers: many lenders returned to the bargaining table, offering solid, attainable financing options in hopes of bringing valued business back through the door. That means more bang or, more accurately, more motorhome for your buck.



Contrary to what many may believe, there is still plenty of money out there for lending, and plenty of lenders ready to make a deal, according to Jazz Sooch, vice president of marketing for Essex Credit, a 28-year veteran of RV lending and subsidiary of Bank of the West. Interest rates are down, meaning buyers can save even more on an already great deal. But be prepared for the process to take a little longer than you've become accustomed to during the last few years.



How has the credit crunch affected motorhome financing?

“Financing has changed substantially over the last six to 12 months, but also over the last two years,” said Sooch. The RV finance professional says lenders are going back to the basics, returning to the models they used in the old days. Most lenders are requiring more proof of income, higher credit ratings and supporting documentation before making loans. Buyers should be prepared to complete a full application package up front.

Once approved, down payments start at 10 percent, with 20 percent being standard for many loans. Advances for upgrades like exterior entertainment systems and in-motion satellite are still possible, but definitely more conservative than in years past.

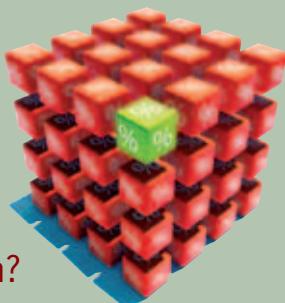


PLAYING THE INSURANCE GAME

How does buying a **used** motorhome differ from a **new** purchase?

Financing a used coach is very similar to financing a new one. The key difference is in verifying the value of the used unit. Most lenders will begin by consulting the NADA Guide or Kelly Blue Book. They then add in the mileage, and, most important, an official inspection by a third-party company to verify the Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) and overall condition of the coach before the financing papers can be processed.

What kind of **interest rate** can I expect on my RV loan?



Interest on loans ranges dramatically, just as it does with home or auto loans. At the time this article was written, loans for motorhomes had interest rates well below 7 percent — or higher than 18 percent, depending on the buyer's individual qualifications. As a general measure, buyers seeking prime interest rates should have a debt ratio not exceeding 40 percent, and a credit score higher than 700. Credit scores lower than 700 can still get good interest rates, but the best rates are reserved solely for the most qualified buyers, unlike in the last few years.

Also, consider the source of your loan, suggests Sooch, who cites Essex Credit as a loan originator and broker. Some lenders will write finance policies for 180 months, while others may only consider 144-month terms. Either way, the length of the loan can dramatically affect the monthly payment.

Insuring your motorhome is another area where you can save big over the long run, by limiting a buyer's financial exposure in the event of a partial or total loss. Blue Sky Insurance Chief Operating Officer Eric Raudins notes there are many different policies out there and buyers should shop carefully for one that includes all the elements that are important to them.



Can I **add my motorhome** to my auto policy?



Adding your motorhome to your auto policy is a convenient way to insure your investment, but that's where the benefits end. A specialized RV insurance company has specific knowledge about motorhomes and the needs of their owners that most mainstream insurance companies overlook.

"We offer education, rock-solid understanding of policies, coverage of your motorhome and a comprehensive set of services to optimize your insurance require-

ments," says Miller Insurance President Cheryl Howarth. The differences between a traditional auto policy and specialty RV insurance are significant. Just a few of these differences may include unlimited mileage towing, hotel reimbursement for full-timers when their coach becomes unlivable and even coverage in Mexico. Whether you're an avid weekender or passionate full-timer, a specialized RV agency will best match your specific motorhome and usage to your insurance policy, adds Howarth.

Keep in mind while shopping ...

It's best to talk to at least three different insurers before buying, says PoliSeek RV Insurance Vice President of Sales Mark Casas. The RV insurance professional says a 100,000/300,000/100,000 limit policy is sufficient for most people, but everyone should ask for a quote on the next-level-higher insurance. Often people will be surprised at how little it costs to get dramatically more coverage. At the same time, buyers can increase their deductibles to balance higher coverage and keep rates low. If looking to replace an existing RV policy, it's good to have your current policy in hand to make sure the quote you are receiving offers comparable coverage.

Do I need motorhome liability coverage?

Many policies are similar to auto insurance, covering bodily injury to anyone inside the coach. Some policies will include clauses to cover mishaps in and around the campsite, similar to the coverage you would find in home owners' policies.



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PLAYING THE INSURANCE GAME



Know your valuation

The key here is to differentiate from a total loss or a partial loss, meaning the vehicle is still usable, but in need of repair. Many policies offer coverage for both but the coverage terms may vary widely.

In the event of a total loss, many policies will pay the replacement cost for a coach less than five years old. With Good Sam VIP Insurance, you don't have to be the original owner and have up to five model years to purchase coverage (others may require purchase within two model years or new only). After five years, insurance adjusters will refer to the used vehicle purchase price or resale value of the coach at the time of the claim.

In the event of a partial loss, having the right policy in place can yield a savings in the thousands of dollars. Many insurance companies will use the terms "replacement cost" and "actual cash value." Replacement cost means that partial loss claims are insured for the cost of the repair, or replacement of the damaged components. Actual cash value, on the other hand, takes into account the depreciated value of the item lost.

For example: If an awning that may last seven to 10 years is destroyed by a wind storm after five years, actual cash value policies will pay approximately 50 percent of the replacement cost, but a policy that includes replacement cost would pay for a new awning comparable to the original. If your deductible is high, it may not even be worth filing a claim under an actual cash value policy.

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PLAYING THE INSURANCE GAME

What **inclusions** should owners look for in coverage?

Most powertrain failures are covered by manufacturer and extended warranties, so don't expect much help there. But other high-value items, such as fixed entertainment systems, are usually covered under RV policies. Special policies can also be written to cover unique costs, such as computer equipment or outdoor entertainment centers. Good Sam VIP is one such company that covers up to \$3,000 of personal effects at no extra charge

What are **diminishing deductibles**?

Something very unique about motorhome insurance policies is diminishing deductibles. Many reduce the deductible by 25 percent for every claim-free year. So if your deductible is \$1,000, and you go four years without a claim, then your deductible is zero. That's savings. ♦

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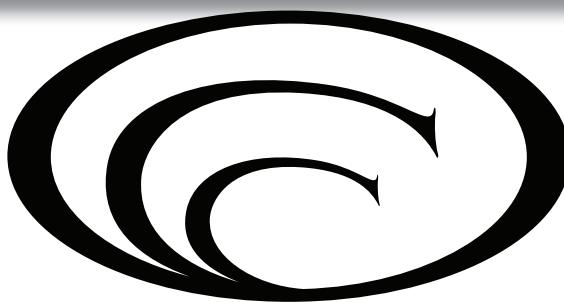
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CAN THERE BE LIFE WITHOUT SLIDES?

Absolutely. For the past 53 years, Montclair, California-based Lazy Daze Inc. has focused on doing one thing — making Class C motorhomes — and doing it well. In fact, the family-owned and -operated company has the reputation of being one of the best Class C manufacturers in the business. It's also part of a small group of Class C manufacturers that doesn't offer slideouts in any of its units.

Because Lazy Daze sells factory-direct, and each motorhome is built to order, the company's staff has the opportunity to talk to every customer, gaining valuable information through their client's feedback. Lazy Daze employees specialize in thinking about how RVers really live inside a coach's interior space, and they build in the maximum amount of livability without the use of any slides. It's this attention to their customers' needs and wants that led the company to its latest innovation — the Kodiak 32'.

A departure from the company's Ford E-450 Super Duty chassis lineup, this brand-new offering on the Kodiak chassis is a more robust coach and is designed for long-term travel or full-time RVing. It's built on the Chevrolet C5500 Kodiak chassis with a 213.5-inch wheelbase and a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 19,500 pounds. Under the hood is a 320-hp GM Vortec 8.1-L V-8 gas engine mated with a six-speed Allison 1000MH automatic transmission.

Looking at the outside of the motorhome, it has the easily recognizable and unique exterior of a Lazy Daze; a signature look that's not only a nostalgic nod to the company's roots, but also helps to maintain the motorhome's resale value, which is one of the highest in the business. The exterior features full-body paint and smooth exterior polyurethane-laminated aluminum side panels — which are lightweight and replaceable for easy repair work — and a one-piece, painted aluminum roof with a nonskid surface. The roof is also home to a 300-watt solar system (three panels) with a current boosting, digital readout charge controller that regulates the charge cycles for the house and chassis batteries. While this coach is comfortable in any RV park, the stout solar system is effective for boondocking.

A quick look underneath the coach reveals none of the more commonly found ground-clearance problems — everything is concealed, leaving nothing hanging out under the rig. Exterior storage is plentiful with six compartments that con-



nect in pairs to create three large pass-through bays. Thoughtful touches outside include hinged fenders that cover the rear wheel wells, providing easy access, and a sliding tray to service the four T-145 6-volt deep-cycle Trojan batteries; there's even a water-fill system to reach the back cells. The 2 kW Xantrex inverter/multistage charger can maintain (and equalize) the house batteries for superior longevity, and offers enough capability to operate virtually everything in the coach, except the air conditioner, while boondocking.

Stepping into the motorhome through the midentry door, the first thing I noticed was the liberal use of tinted, antiglare thermal-pane glass windows, which help to maintain interior privacy and comfort while creating a feeling of spaciousness. Cherry wood-veneer cabinets and solid-wood drawer fronts, not pressed wood, are found throughout the coach and all show impeccable fit and finish inside and out.

On the streetside, the galley features a solid-surface countertop, with hinged drop-leaf extension, and a recessed three-burner glass cooktop above the Apollo Half Time



SPECIFICATIONS

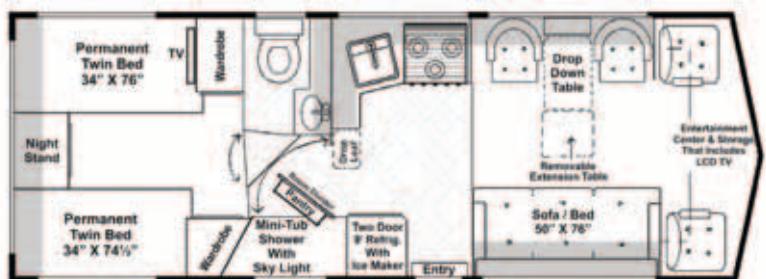
CHASSIS: CHEVROLET KODIAK C5500	HEIGHT WITH A/C: 11' 4"
ENGINE: GM VORTEC 8.1-L GASOLINE V-8, 320 HP	INTERIOR HEIGHT: 6' 7"
FUEL: 80 GAL	WHEELBASE: 213.5"
GVWR: 19,500 LBS	FRESHWATER CAP: 60 GAL
LENGTH: 32'	GRAY-WATER CAP: 48 GAL
WIDTH: 8' 3"	BLACK-WATER CAP: 40 GAL
	LP-GAS CAP: 25 GAL
	PRICE AS TESTED: \$138,000

LAZY DAZE, (909) 627-1103, WWW.LAZYDAZE.COM.

microwave/convection oven. On the curbside resides a 9-cubic-foot Dometic two-door refrigerator and to its right, a very clever pantry that's hidden behind a mirrored door.

This door serves three functions: Pull the mirrored handle to access the pantry, unlatch the door to enter the shower stall, or pull the door all the way forward to close off the back of the coach and enclose the master suite. Opposing the shower is the toilet room with lots of storage, a fold-down shelf and a porcelain toilet. The bedroom offers even more storage and features a huge rear window and your choice of a fixed island bed or twin-bed configuration.

There's additional sleeping available up front in the living area: the buttery-soft Ultraleather couch converts into a comfortable 50 × 76-inch sofa bed, and even when the couch is extended there's still enough room to easily move about the living room. Opposing the couch, on the streetside, are two freestanding barrel chairs with seat belts. The chairs look good and work well for utilitarian purposes such as eating, though they're not the most comfortable for lounging. A custom-built





display and one-way speaker; and even a front-view camera for maneuvering in tight spaces. The cab also picks up on some old-school features that are still popular with motorhomers today, such as a wood-grain-looking dash and a Cobra 40-channel CB radio with a concealed control box.

Overall, this motorhome is a great two-person coach for just about any type of RV travel. It offers a tremendous amount of storage, top-of-the-line appliances and generous appointments, such as three Fantastic ceiling fans — normally unheard of in a Class C. The only thing we found missing are leveling jacks, which are not offered as an option due to customer preference. The company's "no negotiation" pricing means there's only one base price on any ordered coach: for this fully loaded Kodiak 32', it's \$138,000.

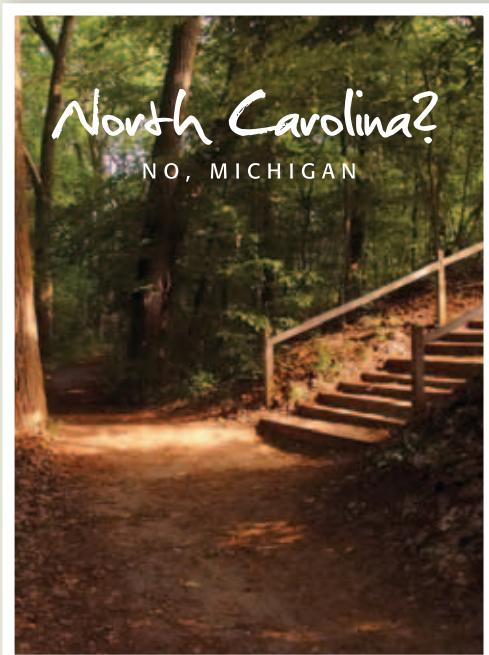
After taking a tour through this motorhome — and experiencing the excellent fit and finish throughout — it's easy to see why Lazy Daze has built a cult following with RVers who appreciate quality over quantity. ♦

dining table reveals hidden storage and the ability to extend it all the way to the couch when the removable leaf is used.

The dining chair directly behind the driver's seat is the only seat in the house that doesn't have a complete view of the built-in overhead entertainment center in the cab-over area, which is highlighted by a high-definition 26-inch LCD Sharp TV, which flips up to access a storage area behind it. When I looked at the wiring behind the TV, I noticed that the high-quality audio/visual Monster cables, just like the rest of the

connections in this coach, were all neatly bundled — more evidence of the attention to detail throughout this motorhome.

Up front, this larger, more commercial cab is designed for people who spend a lot of time behind the wheel — everything just feels right. Sitting in the comfortable Ultra-leather driver's seat, I found the visibility and mirror placement to be excellent. Some of the cockpit's high-tech appointments include a Pioneer in-dash nav system with iPod interface and Bluetooth capability; a Voyager backup camera with 5.6-inch LCD



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CHECK ENGINE LIGHT

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW TO AVOID PROBLEMS WITH YOUR EMISSIONS SYSTEMS

by KEN FREUND

Over the years emission controls have become more and more complex, and the ubiquitous (and infamous) CHECK ENGINE light coming on has become one of the most common vehicular problems today. Now that diesels have these dreaded warning lamps too, nearly everyone can join in the fun and frustration of chasing down problems brought to light by these silent sentinels.

The CHECK ENGINE or SERVICE ENGINE SOON lights are officially known as malfunction indicator lamps, or MILs. These come on to warn the driver that an emissions-related problem has been detected by the on-board computer (also known as the electronic control module, or ECM). Starting with 1996 and newer models (and a few earlier ones), a more sophisticated and complex system known as On-Board Diagnostics, generation 2, or OBDII, was introduced. These systems, which are found on many motorhomes and also dinghy vehicles, constantly perform checks on monitored systems. Depending on the type of self-test or monitored component, they set a trouble code in memory after an emissions-related failure is detected a certain number of times.

This system also triggers illumination of the MIL.

When a MIL illuminates steadily, it indicates a problem that may increase emissions, but is not considered immediately damaging to the vehicle or urgent. If the MIL begins blinking, or the vehicle begins to run rough or poorly, this is an indication that driving should be limited and the vehicle needs to be checked and the problem corrected right away or damage may occur. The MIL should not be confused with a routine maintenance reminder light, and the MIL also does not warn of low oil pressure, overheating, or other similar problems, so you still need to watch your gauges. The OBDII system can also miss certain drivability conditions; these are called “no-code” problems and can be tough to troubleshoot.

Having a MIL illuminated will also cause your vehicle to fail an emissions or “smog” test, which are used in many areas. Even if your coach is not required to undergo testing, you still need to know about this subject because problems that cause emission failures also result in drivability, mileage and performance concerns.

If your coach has a MIL on, or fails a smog test,



CHECK ENGINE LIGHT

repairs may be covered by a separate emission control system warranty. These vary by state and year, but often provide coverage for a longer period than the chassis warranty and may save you a lot of money. Check the documents that came with the coach or check with the chassis dealer or manufacturer for details. Once out of warranty, the burden for emission repairs becomes your responsibility.

Some smog test programs include waiver provisions that limit how much money owners must spend on emission repairs. If an emissions failure cannot be fixed within the specified cost limit, the vehicle may pass even though it is still above limits. Check with the test facility or state for specifics.

EMISSIONS TESTING

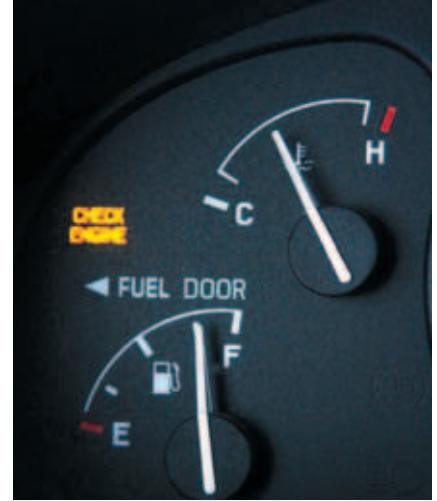
Most smog programs perform a tailpipe test for unburned hydrocarbons (HC) and carbon monoxide (CO), and may also measure carbon dioxide (CO₂) for diagnostic purposes. Areas that have adopted the inspection and maintenance (I/M) 240 test program check for emissions, including nitrogen oxides (NO_x) emissions, in grams per mile (GPM) at various speeds under load on a dynamometer (vehicular treadmill) run for 240 seconds.

Many inspection programs also perform visual checks of emissions hardware for evidence of damage or tampering. These include:

- Checking if the MIL is illuminated.
- Inspecting the fuel filler cap to make sure it is the correct type and seals tightly.
- Looking underneath to determine if the catalytic converter (if required) is there.
- Checking that the engine has all required emission-control components.
- Checking any non-stock (aftermarket) parts on the engine to make sure they are emissions certified. If an aftermarket part has a California Air Resources Board Executive Order (E.O.) number, it should be smog-legal in all states.

The I/M 240 programs may also check the fuel system for air leaks (evaporative emissions) and test the charcoal canister purge valve.

Emission regulations for new vehicles have become more stringent over the years, so older vehicles have more lenient emission test standards than newer ones. Generally, the allowable tailpipe test limits are also somewhat higher than the standards the engines were designed to meet, to allow for wear.



TIPS ON PASSING A TEST

Most engines in good running condition and properly maintained should pass an emissions test. However, sometimes minor problems can cause a failure. If a vehicle is only driven a short distance before the test, it may not be warmed up to the normal operating temperature of the engine and catalytic converter. This may cause it to fail. Excessive idling while waiting for a test may also cause the catalyst and/or oxygen sensor to cool enough to cause higher emissions.

If the idle speed is too high or low it can make the difference between passing and failing. A dirty air filter or restricted air intake can cause higher-than-normal CO readings. Oil can be contaminated with gasoline

HOW TO READ AND REMOVE CHECK-ENGINE CODES YOUR



Snap-on Diagnostics Scanner MT2500

Scan tools were developed to read trouble codes and related stored information from the ECM. These are plugged into the diagnostic port, usually under the dash on the driver's side, and can also be used to delete the code and reset the MIL.

Code readers and scan tools come with a wide range of prices and features. Some cost thousands of dollars and are designed for professionals. However, it's possible to buy an inexpensive tool for about the same price as it costs to have a shop do a

diagnosis. Scan tools and code readers are available at auto parts stores and online. Before you invest in a tool, make sure it is compatible with your vehicle and has the features you reasonably expect to use. If you just want to know what codes are present and then delete them, you need a basic code-reader unit. Some of the popular scan tools used by do-it-yourselfers are sold by Actron, AutoXRay, Equus and Harbor Freight Tools.

If you intend to do repairs yourself, you may need a more complex scan tool. Some of the features these tools come with include the ability to retrieve generic (P0 and U0) and manufacturer-specific (P1, P3, and U1) codes, as well as enhanced and pending codes. Some also display emissions readiness (monitor) status and retain the most recently scanned vehicle's data and configuration. Higher priced units may also diagnose ABS, air bags, transmission, radio, climate control and more. Many of the newest models support CAN-BUS (controller area network).

Advanced models can read the data stream to aid diagnosis and some also allow you to play back freeze-frame data to scrutinize stored information. Some can monitor vehicle sensors such as the oxygen sensors, ignition timing, engine and transmission temperatures and more while the engine runs, to pinpoint a problem. With live data and freeze-frame capability you can view

if the engine has been used for a lot of short-trip driving, especially in cold weather. Fuel vapors can then be sucked in through the PCV system and cause higher CO readings. Some engines also tend to run dirtier because of their design, or engine controls. Sometimes special repairs can be found in factory technical service bulletins (TSBs).

If your area does plug-in OBDII emissions testing on 1996 and newer vehicles, a vehicle can fail if all of the required OBDII readiness monitors (internal tests) have not run. This occurs if the battery has been disconnected, and may require driving for several hours until all monitors have run.

A vehicle will also fail the test if the MIL is on, or there are fault codes stored in the PCM. If the OBDII system is working properly, the MIL is not on and there are no codes, the vehicle should pass the test. Even if you pass, keep a record of the readings from year to year. This information can be used to spot trends such as emission system degradation, or an engine becoming worn.

Make sure the engine, battery and charging system are in optimum condition. If the battery is weak, it can affect the outcome of an emissions test. If the oil is dirty, change the oil before an emissions test.

The oil, coolant and catalytic converter need to be warm. Drive at least 20 minutes at highway speed before the test to give your engine time to warm up.

WHAT IF IT FAILS?

When your motorhome undergoes an emissions test, you should receive a printout of test results, along with the applicable limits. Using this, you can determine which specific portions of the test were failed, if any. If you are mechanically inclined, you may be able to correct some problems, or at least understand the situation and determine if a service facility is on the right track to fix it.

EXCESS HYDROCARBONS

A failure due to excess hydrocarbons (measured in parts per million or PPM), means unburned gas is going through the engine. The most common causes are ignition misfiring, lean air-fuel mixture misfiring and low compression. Faulty spark plugs, cables, cap, rotor or coil usually cause ignition misfire. A lean misfire occurs if there is too much air and not enough fuel, so look for vacuum leaks, faulty injectors (or carburetion) or a fuel delivery problem such as low pressure from a faulty fuel

pump or clogged filter. HC failures may also be caused by oil burning from worn valve guides, seals and/or piston rings.

EXCESS CARBON MONOXIDE

Excess carbon monoxide indicates a rich fuel mixture. On older carbureted engines look for a rich idle mixture, clogged air filter or intake, stuck choke, or a fuel-soaked or misadjusted float. Vehicles with electronic controls may also have a restricted air filter or intake, or are not going into closed loop because of a faulty thermostat or oxygen sensor. Fuel-diluted oil can also cause high CO readings, as can incorrect ignition timing. Worn rings and valve guides may contribute also, especially on very worn engines.

CARBON DIOXIDE

CO₂, measured as a percentage, indicates how complete an engine's combustion is; the ideal is 14 percent. Valve and ignition timing, compression, fuel mixture, engine condition and temperature affect CO₂ output. Everything must be right to get near the ideal.

EXCESS CO AND HC

If the HC and CO are high, you may have both an ignition and compression problem.

SELF USING SCAN TOOLS



real-time engine data for even better diagnosis. These features are very useful when there are intermittent problems. Combine this with Internet connectivity and the ability to interface with a PC and you have a pro-quality tool.

There are generic trouble codes that apply to all brands, and specific codes that only apply to certain brands and models. Typical powertrain-related codes will start with the letter P followed by four digits. For example, P0301 is Cylinder 1 misfire detected.

CODES CAN BE READ USING THE FOLLOWING LEGEND:

1st digit	3rd digit
P = Powertrain	1 = Emission management
B = Body	2 = Injector circuit
C = Chassis	3 = Ignition
	4 = Auxiliary emission
2nd digit	5 = Vehicle speed and idle control
0 = Standard	6 = Computer and output circuit
1 = Manufacturer specific	7 = Transmission

You can learn more about codes in service manuals and also online by entering the trouble code into a search engine.

WARNING LIGHTS FOR DIESELS

Workhorse Custom Chassis (WCC) recently advised owners of motorhome chassis of the need to respond to new warning lights related to emissions control. Most of this information applies to all motorhome diesel engines built since Jan. 1, 2007, and/or designed to require ULSD fuel, so owners of other diesel chassis brands should read this too.

WCC notes that there is one set of new warning lights for particulate buildup that it is especially important for those driving new diesel Class A's to monitor, or risk damaging their engine. WCC has noticed instances of driver failure in this regard. Unfortunately, when this happens there is no warranty coverage for repairs and towing, not to mention the potential hazards. So it pays for drivers to read the manual, pay attention and know what all gauges and warning lights mean.

All diesel engines produced after Jan. 1, 2007, must comply with the new regulations requiring the reduction of nitrogen oxide (NOx) and hydrocarbons (HC) by 50 percent

and particulate matter (PM) by 90-plus percent more than the previous 2004 emission standards. To reduce particulate matter, a diesel particulate filter (DPF) is used on all WCC Class A diesel motorhomes and many others.

The DPF captures soot and larger sulfate particles in a series of ceramic honeycomb channels as gas passes through the porous material, and the particulates are trapped and accumulate on the channel walls. After thousands of miles, the DPF will eventually become clogged if nothing is done.

To prevent the DPF from clogging, the trapped particulates are burned off, and the filter is cleaned using a high temperature (around 1,700°F in the particulate filter) regeneration process that leaves a harmless ash and residue. There are different regeneration processes for different diesel platforms, including automatic regeneration, manual regeneration and DPF removal for an exchange or off-vehicle regeneration.

You may also have a bad catalytic converter, or an air pump problem. Using the above explanations and some logic, you should be able to solve many emissions failures.

NITROGEN OXIDES

Since the exhaust gas recirculation (EGR) system is mainly responsible for controlling NOx emissions, an inoperative EGR valve or over-advanced timing are the usual culprits, but a faulty three-way catalytic converter, hot-running engine, exhaust leaks or an ECM that remains in open loop can also cause an NOx failure.

RESETTING THE MIL

After you've properly diagnosed and repaired a problem that set an OBDII trouble code, you can reset the MIL and clear the ECM's memory by these methods. The code and MIL will usually go away after a certain number of driving cycles, perhaps a few days. Most scan tools can also clear codes and this is the preferred method; consult the tool's instructions for how to do it.

It's possible to disconnect the engine's battery negative terminal, wait about 10 minutes and reconnect the battery. Then the coach must be driven until all monitors have again run before a smog test can be run. You may lose clock and radio presets that rely on the battery and the engine and transmission may not run as smoothly until they relearn a few settings. Caution: if the

dash radio is code-protected, it may be locked after disconnecting the battery.

DIESELS

Until recently, diesel engines had relatively few emission controls and there was little that owners had to do regarding these components and systems. Engines with EGR valves need to have those checked and cleaned periodically, as do air filters. Crankcase ventilation systems also need to be inspected regularly.

Some areas perform smoke opacity tests, which measure the amount of soot present in the exhaust. Since the introduction of the latest generation of clean diesels, operating procedures have changed and certain steps may be needed by drivers to keep their emissions systems working properly.

Besides using ultra-low-sulfur diesel (ULSD) fuel, the proper engine oil is also important to ensure that your engine and after-treatment system perform well. Starting with 2007 models, engines should use a new oil formulation (CJ-4) that has a low sulfated-ash content to help extend the maintenance cycles for the diesel particulate filter.

Specific operating and maintenance information varies by brand, year and model and is included in the owner's manuals and on manufacturer's Web sites. Caterpillar, Cummins, Detroit Diesel and Workhorse provide information on their Web sites and via customer service numbers. ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION

ACTRON

(800) 228-7667,
www.actron.com.

AUTOXRAY

(800) 228-7667,
www.autoxray.com.

CATERPILLAR

(309) 675-1000,
www.cat.com.

CUMMINS

(800) 343-7357,
www.cummins.com.

DETROIT DIESEL

(313) 592-5000,
www.detroitdiesel.com.

DODGE SPRINTER

(800) 992-1997,
www.dodge.com.

EQUUS PRODUCTS

(714) 433-0121,
www.iequus.com.

FORD POWER STROKE DIESEL

(800) 392-3673,
www.powerstrokediesel.com.

HARBOR FREIGHT TOOLS

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www.harborfreight.com.

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(877) 294-6773,
www.workhorse.com.



PHOENIX CRUISER 2350

THIS 24-FOOT CLASS C CAN HANDLE EVEN THE TRICKIEST OF TIGHT SPOTS WITH EASE

Among the things you're most likely to notice when stepping into the 24-foot Phoenix Cruiser 2350 is that you won't have to fiddle with converting a sofa or dinette into a bed before turning in at night. The floorplan's permanent full-size bed, tucked into the rear corner on the passenger side of Phoenix USA's Class C motorhome, means that the bed is always made and ready for use.

Like all Phoenix Cruisers, the 2350 is a fiberglass-and-aluminum B-plus-style motorhome that is actually a Class C, built without a cabover. This provides easier handling, a more aerodynamic ride and a more modern appearance than most Class C's.

The vacuum-bonded Phoenix Cruiser 2350 sports molded front and rear caps and is equipped with a 6-cubic-foot double-door refrigerator, two-burner recessed range, 30,000 BTU furnace, booth dinette, solid-surface countertops with solid-wood extensions, oversize galley sink, choice of maple or cherry raised-cabinet doors, ball-bearing drawer guides, day/night shades with decorative valances and carpeting. For that early morning pick-me-up, the 2350 even has a coffeemaker mounted in the kitchen.

Popular options on the 2350 — featuring rubber pucks installed between the floor and the frame for a smoother ride — include a surround-sound DVD player, backup monitor, leveling jacks, insulated windows and six-way power seats.

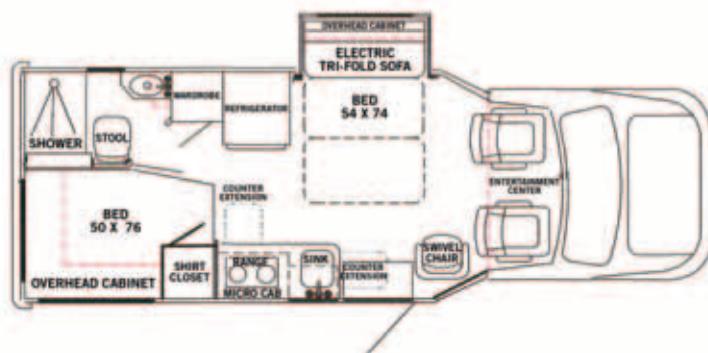
For privacy, a folding door the width of the coach separates the living area from the bedroom and full dry bath with shower.

With four exterior color options and matching interior décors, the 2350 floorplan is also available with a single slideout that eliminates the dinette in favor of an electric tri-fold sofa to provide extra sleep-

ing capacity. In place of the dinette is a removable table that sits in front of the sofa and stores behind a barrel chair, located behind the passenger's cockpit seat.

For storage, the coach is equipped with overhead cabinets above the dinette, a large closet in the bedroom and a slide-out exterior compartment curbside.

While the 12,500-pound GVWR Ford E-350 cutaway chassis powered by a Triton V-10 gas engine is standard, the Phoenix Cruiser 2350 is available on the high-mileage, 11,030-pound GVWR imported Sprinter 3500 cab chassis powered by a 6-cylinder 3.0-L 154-HP turbocharged Mercedes-Benz diesel engine. ♦



SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: FORD E-350 SUPER DUTY

ENGINE: TRITON 6.8-L

GASOLINE V-10, 305 HP

FUEL: 55 GAL

GVWR: 12,500 LBS

LENGTH: 23' 8"

WIDTH: 7' 9"

HEIGHT WITH A/C: 9' 10"

WHEELBASE: 158"

FRESHWATER CAP: 38 GAL

GRAY-WATER CAP: 23 GAL

BLACK-WATER CAP: 35 GAL

LP-GAS CAP: 10 GAL

BASE PRICE: \$75,866

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Common pitfalls to avoid when camping

by JEFF JOHNSTON

It was with some degree of skepticism that I took on the assignment of writing about the top 10 mistakes made by RVers. I had to ask myself, why did the editors ask *me* to do this one? Something about personal history, perhaps? Nonetheless, I soldiered on with the project.

Of course, I immediately started grilling RVing friends and business associates for their stories about common mistakes — they in turn said, “Gosh, why are you asking *me* about this?” — but they gamely passed along their stories of misbegotten adventures.

Much of the RVing process involves learning by trial and error. When you’re lucky you remember the trials and don’t commit the errors again, but it seems there’s always some nagging little something that you forgot, or that you remember about the same time you hear an awful sound that shouldn’t be there. Or as your campground neighbors, or other drivers on the highway, shout and wave and point at different parts of your motorhome with a look on their faces like they just found something they forgot in the refrigerator several weeks back.

We hope the following top 10 list will help you avoid some of these common mistakes.

10 FAILING TO LOCK THE REFRIGERATOR DOOR BEFORE DRIVING AWAY

Most of us have listened to the sound of cascading soda cans, tumbling plastic containers and galumphing fluids after taking a

TOP 10 MISTAKES YOU DON'T WANT TO MAKE WHILE RVING

corner with the refrigerator travel lock unfortunately ignored.

Furthermore, if you store a lawn chair in the aisle below the fridge with a sharp aluminum tubing corner positioned just right, a can of carbonated beverage can topple from the fridge and be punctured by the chair structure. Then, as you apply the brakes and look for a spot to pull over, the can merrily issues broad arcing sprays of agitated and sticky-drying liquid refreshment throughout the coach as it rolls down the aisle. Or so I’ve been told.

9 OPERATING THE DUMP VALVES IN THE WRONG SEQUENCE

OK, this isn’t the end of the world, but dumping the black tank first/gray tank second order is a great way to partially purge your hose of sewage. Dumping in the opposite sequence can leave unwanted debris in the tube and make the job unnecessarily unpleasant.

8 FORGETTING TO PERFORM REGULAR DUMP-TUBE MAINTENANCE

There are many potential pitfalls involved with the waste dumping procedure. One of the most surprising events happens when the hose clamp that secures the tube to the coupling has worked loose, and as you pull the knife valve open and the black water pressure surges into the hose, it parts company with the coupling in mid-spew. If your dump fitting is inside a service compartment it not only splashes on you, it also lines the compartment floor. If

Is your RV insurance still with you when you stop?



When you are enjoying your RV adventures, a standard auto policy won't be able to keep up with you. For example, coverage through a standard auto policy won't fully cover you while you're relaxing in your campsite or offer total replacement if your RV is totaled.

A specialty RV policy can provide much more protection for your RV, and surprisingly, many times it even costs less. Combining our decades of RV insurance expertise with the advantage of being part of one of the nation's largest personal lines agencies, PoliSeek RV Insurance has the resources to find you the best combination of price and coverage. So before you protect your RV with a standard auto policy, hit the brakes and call us today!

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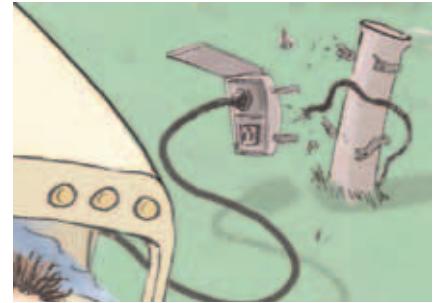
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TOP 10 MISTAKES YOU DON'T WANT TO MAKE WHILE RVING

it's wintertime and the ground is frozen and the dump station rinse water supply is shut off and drained for the season, you have nothing close by to clean up with. Or that's what I hear happens.

The moral is to check the hose clamp now and then and snug it down as needed.

7 LEAVING THE RIG PLUGGED IN TO SHOREPOWER AS YOU DRIVE AWAY



The results of this can range from moderately embarrassing to somewhat costly. At best, the suddenly taut shorepower cord yanks the plug from the post and drags along next to your coach until it's noticed, and you tuck the semishredded remains back into the cord storage compartment. Worse yet is when the cord is semitangled and it gives the post a good yank that bends it over and possibly shorts out the circuit so your park neighbors are plunged into 120-volt AC darkness just as they're about to learn on TV if the price is truly right.

Unplugging the shorepower cord should be part of your regular predeparture walk-around checklist.

6 NOT COMPLETING YOUR DINGHY-HITCHING PROCEDURE

This can be disastrous, but fortunately, it's not all that common an occurrence. It's not often we hear about a motorhome driver who observes his or her dinghy car passing the coach on a steep downgrade, for example. Between the tow bar, safety cables, taillight wiring, auxiliary braking device, and setting the dinghy's transmission and steering correctly, there are a lot of possibilities for errors. Diligence is the key to safe dinghy towing.

In short, develop a checklist and make sure every detail is covered every time. Chase away any helpful but distracting children or neighbors as you follow through your checklist and you can help avoid such unhitching disasters.

5 NOT USING A WATER-PRESSURE REGULATOR WHEN HOOKED UP

It's late when you hook up at camp. In the wee hours you slosh through the wet carpet and head outside to shut off the city water supply after realizing you forgot to use the pressure regulator. A burst water line or damaged plumbing component are the potential side effects of this mechanical slip-up.

Even if you intentionally don't use a regulator and set the supply faucet to deliver very little flow, it still builds up pressure, and may cause damage in your RV's plumbing system. Always use the regulator and you can avoid this problem.

4 FORGETTING TO RETRACT THE STEP BEFORE DRIVING OFF



RVers with motorized steps and auto-retract features that suck in the steps when the engine is fired up needn't worry about this one. The rest of us with strictly manual models often realize the step is out when we notice a screeching, horrific noise coming from the right side of the rig. If you don't have a copilot to thusly warn you, the sound of the step contacting a curb or other obstruction is your first clue.

A quick once-over prior to departure — such as a glance down in the corner of the right-side wide-angle mirror spot — can eliminate this situation.

3 CATCHING SOMETHING WITH YOUR TAIL

This falls in the “pay attention while driving” category. Many motorhomes have a long overhang behind the rear axle, and when making a sharp turn, it's easy for the driver to forget how that overhang swings wide and plays all over the place. Many a driver has had an “oops” moment after the coach tail catches a post, tree, another vehicle or structure corner.

It's like the “measure twice, cut once” carpenter creed. “Look twice, turn once” might help keep your rig in good shape in tight quarters.

2 NOT RETRACTING THE LEVELING JACKS BEFORE DRIVING AWAY

Most powered leveling jacks have audible warnings to alert the driver when they're still deployed and the RV is readied for the road. Less-complex jacks, lacking the warning system, are a great way to draw your campground neighbors' attention when you start to drive away. There's nothing like the sound of stubborn steel on rough pavement to wake up the neighborhood.

Many jacks are tucked underneath and easier to miss during your pre-drive walk-around. It's a lot better to get down on your knees and take a good look underneath the motorhome before heading out. You may deprive your neighbors of some amusement but you'll save yourself some embarrassment and semi-expensive repairs.

1 LEAVING THE TV ANTENNA UP WHEN DRIVING AWAY FROM CAMP



When you pull away from the campsite and a neighbor waves an arm in the air and points up, it's not a way of saying “Look! My deodorant is still working!” More likely he or she is doing what thousands have done before, which is warning someone that the TV antenna or satellite dish is still cranked up.

Few RV devices are so cleverly designed for multiple purposes. When you're parked close to a powerful transmitter the antenna brings in a broadcast signal plus coverage of the latest blizzard in Frostbite Falls, Minnesota, and when driving, the antenna wing is shaped to catch and hold any tree limb or power line that hangs a bit low, per campground zoning code.

It's really easy to forget the antenna, given its out-of-the-way location, and unless you look up during your walk-around you'll be visiting the parts department for a replacement wing, arm or lift mechanism. Make the antenna check part of your checklist and you can avoid joining the crash-and-bang club when everyone is watching. ♦

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▼ REMOVABLE AWNING EXTENSIONS



When deployed, the window awnings for my motorhome come down so low that the bottom of the awning is below my eye level and blocks most of the view to the outside. To solve this problem, I added removable extensions to the awning straps by taking a 12- to 18-inch piece of 1/8-inch-diameter cord, making a loop and threading it through the end of the awning strap, and then attaching it to the awning retainer clip on the side of my coach. The extension raises the bottom of the awning several critical inches to a more normal eye-level position, and it does so without compromising the awning's shade and rain protection.

DONALD WHITESELL
NORFOLK, VIRGINIA

THERE'S A TIME AND A PLACE

The TV in my motorhome is mounted above the dashboard. There wasn't a good place to hang a clock that was easily visible when watching TV. I bought a battery-operated quartz clock and a set of numbers from Klockit (www.klockit.com) for \$3.75. I drilled a hole in the center of a cabinet next to the TV and installed the clock. Now it's easy to see what time it is while watching TV or from anywhere in the coach.

JOSEPH VOLK | PAHRUMP, NEVADA



SLIDEOUT SEAL SPREADER

After parking my motorhome and putting out all three slides, I like to walk around and check out the slide seals. Sometimes I find that they are not all completely sealed. To remedy this problem I made a simple tool. I bought a plastic putty spreader, cut off the handle and inserted it in a broom handle in which I cut a slot, and then fastened it with two screws. Now I have a tool that seats the seals.

NEIL BROWN | ANAHEIM, CALIFORNIA ♦

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* DENISE SANTOYO

NEVER LOSE YOUR WAY

Microsoft Streets & Trips 2009 with GPS Locator is much more than just a mapping program

Whether driving across country, or heading out for a weekend jaunt close to home, it's easy to get turned around, and before you know it, you're wondering, "Where am I? Did I miss that turn?" Microsoft Streets & Trips 2009 with GPS Locator — a travel and mapping program that can plan trips, track mileage and locate more than 1.5 million points of interest — can help you with this familiar traveler's dilemma.

Streets & Trips has long been a favorite with RVers for its easy-to-use functionality and reasonable price point, but its new, detachable GPS allows you to add real-time GPS to any laptop, Windows Mobile-based Pocket PC or smart phone.

I loaded the program on my laptop, which operates on Windows Vista and has an Intel Pentium processor. Installing the software is easy: Simply insert the DVD and follow the steps as they pop up on the computer screen. One important thing to remember is not to insert the GPS locator until after the software has been installed. I overlooked this instruction, and had to reinstall the program for it to recognize and connect to the GPS.

Once the program is installed, the GPS can be plugged into any one of your computer's USB ports. The GPS comes

with a 32-inch cable that's designed to improve reception in fringe areas. I tested the unit with and without the cable, on flat highway and low mountain terrain, and never had a problem with the satellite signal.

The program's GPS pane allows you to input your starting and ending points, and any destination along the way, then maps your route as you drive. The spoken, turn-by-turn directions are a feature I found invaluable, especially on narrow roads and areas of heavy congestion. It can easily be turned off if you find the audio directions distracting. While the system is not without its quirks — I was amused to hear U.S. Highway 101 pronounced "us highway one hundred and one" — they are minor and do not affect the accuracy of the directions. Even when I intentionally drove off course, the GPS told me I was "off route" before recalculating a new one and directing me back.

Streets & Trips 2009 with GPS Locator has many other features that are sure to please: it calculates fuel economy, fuel cost per trip and average driving speed; searches for a location by description; includes a free trial membership to Entertainment Online, which includes a valuable coupon finder function for special savings at restaurants and special events; and sends information to a handheld device, like your cell phone (standard text messaging rates may apply).

Microsoft Streets & Trips 2009 with GPS Locator retails for \$69.95. You can try out the software (without GPS) yourself by downloading a free 60-day trial version of the program from www.microsoft.com/streets. ♦

Working Out the Warranty

CERTAIN THAT THE REPAIR WORK HIS MOTORHOME REQUIRED SHOULD BE COVERED BY HIS CONTINUED SERVICE PLAN, A READER APPEALED TO *HOT LINE* FOR ASSISTANCE WHEN HIS CLAIM WAS DENIED. HE EXPLAINED:

Last September, I took my 2002 Newmar Dutch Star Class A coach to Del-Val International Trucks in Montgomeryville, Pennsylvania, for service because of an exhaust leak. My motorhome is powered by a 330-HP turbo Caterpillar diesel motor, which had been exhausting black smoke and seemed down on power.

Del-Val service technicians determined that the exhaust manifold gasket had failed and a manifold bolt had broken. They also determined that the waste gate on the turbo was frozen and the turbo blades had a large amount of play on the shaft. The technicians said that there should not be any play and the turbo would probably fail in the near future.

One of the Del-Val techs contacted my continued service plan provider, Good Sam Club CSP, for authorization of the repairs. The claims department representative denied the work, stating that my policy didn't cover gaskets on a model older than five years, and the waste gate failure was due to rust and corrosion.

I believe the cost for the repair of the broken bolt on the exhaust manifold should be covered. I think that the failure of the bolt caused the failure of the gasket; the gasket did not fail on its own.

Del-Val techs told me the waste gate failure was from normal use from the heat of the exhaust (there was no rust or corrosion on the unit) and the turbo showed excessive wear and was about to fail.

I contacted the continued service plan provider myself and was also denied coverage for the work.

The cost to replace the broken bolt and gasket was \$1,427.58. The cost to replace the turbo and waste gate was \$1,906.26 — total, \$3,333.84. *Hot Line's* help would be most appreciated.

KENNETH FINGER
LANSDALE, PENNSYLVANIA



“IT’S NOT UNUSUAL FOR RV PARKS TO CHARGE A PERCENTAGE OF THE RESERVATION COST AS A CANCELLATION FEE, REGARDLESS OF WHEN A CANCELLATION IS MADE.”

It seems from our investigation, Kenneth Finger may not have been fully aware of the terms of his warranty contract. We have stressed continually that owners take the time to read carefully the entire contract, especially the exceptions and/or exclusions. We contacted Good Sam Club CSP on Finger's behalf, and even though there was a coverage issue based on the conditions stated in the policy, CSP and Finger reached a resolution, which included goodwill consideration.

Finger:

After exchanging e-mails with the CSP claims department, I received a partial reimbursement for \$2,464.67. I then appealed the decision to decline payment for some of the labor hours to the Good Sam Club CSP Review Board, and received a letter from Trish Beale with CSP authorizing a gesture of goodwill payment for \$588.79.

Thank you, *Hot Line*. Overall, I am satisfied with the reimbursement.

K.F.

Good Sam Club CSP:

In reference to your letter from Mr. Kenneth Finger, we at Good Sam take the satisfaction of our customers very seriously and strive to provide our customers with one of the most comprehensive breakdown programs in the industry. The Continued Service Plan is the only program that is a true insurance product underwritten by an A-plus-rated carrier. Since we do offer an insurance product, not a warranty, we are bound by the terms and conditions of the policy.

After a thorough review of the claim

that Finger submitted to Good Sam CSP, it has been determined that the waste gate portion of the claim was [initially] denied because there was no failure. The terms and conditions of the policy are very specific regarding what is not covered. It is stated in the policy under “What is Not Covered” that “any covered part which is not broken down but which a repair facility recommends or requires be repaired or replaced [is not covered]. Suggested or necessary upgrades or replacements are also not covered.”

In addition, it has been determined that the manifold gasket portion of his claim was denied because, due to the age of the vehicle, it no longer qualifies for seals and gasket coverage. It is stated in the policy under “Chassis Coverage,” and reiterated under “Coach Coverage” that “seals and gaskets are covered for all components listed as covered in the evidence of insurance — for units with less than 50,000 miles and are five model years old or less when the claim is filed.”

We at Good Sam do understand the strain an unforeseen breakdown can cause, and with this in mind we would like to issue Finger a one-time payment in the amount of \$588.79 as a gesture of goodwill. This is half the cost of the gasket repair less the policy deductible.

Thank you for contacting us; we appreciate Finger's business and look forward to servicing him in the future.

TRISH BEALE
OPERATIONS MANAGER
GOOD SAM CLUB CSP
ENGLEWOOD, COLORADO

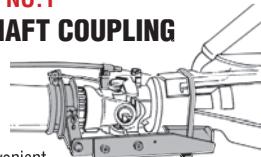
RESERVATION REGRETS

Unhappy with the cancellation policy at a Massachusetts campground, a reader asked Hot Line to get involved. She wrote:

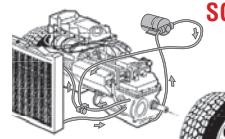
On March 25, 2008, I booked a reservation at Cape Cod Campresort for a July 19 arrival. On June 16, I called and cancelled the reservation, and wrote a letter to the main office. I realize I signed an agreement that I would have to pay \$165 of my \$549 reservation cost (30 percent) if I cancelled within seven days [of my scheduled arrival date]. I cancelled 28 days in advance because my mother passed away.

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After months of waiting, I called my credit card company and was informed that I still had to pay \$165. The campground's agreement does state that it only allows seven-day cancellation refunds of 70 percent, but I think this is an unfair policy. I paid the entire amount, \$549, and gave 28 days' notice, and was charged \$165 for nothing. In my 24 years of camping, I have never been expected to pay the full amount with no understanding of my problems — especially the passing of my mother in May.

JOAN MYER
NEWFOUNDLAND, NEW JERSEY

Circumstances required that Myer cancel her reservation at Cape Cod Campresort, and she hoped the campground would issue her a full refund of her reservation payment. Unfortunately, examination of Myer's paperwork clearly indicates the campground's cancellation policy, which states that cancellations received more than seven days prior to an arrival date allow for a 70 percent refund — and there-

fore a 30 percent cancellation fee.

It's not unusual for RV parks and campgrounds to charge a percentage of the reservation cost, or the first night's stay, as a cancellation fee — regardless of when a cancellation is made.

Based on Myer's own admission that she was aware of the campground's cancellation policy when she made her reservation, there did not seem to be anything Hot Line could do in this case. However, we contacted Cape Cod Campresort on her behalf for any possible consideration. A company representative wrote as follows:

From what I can understand of Mrs. Myer's letter, her complaint is that we would only refund her 70 percent of her initial \$549 payment, which she made for a reservation arriving July 19 and subsequently cancelled. Our written reservation policy clearly states that all reservations are subject to a minimum 30 percent cancellation fee. When cancellation is made seven days or less prior to a scheduled arrival date, there

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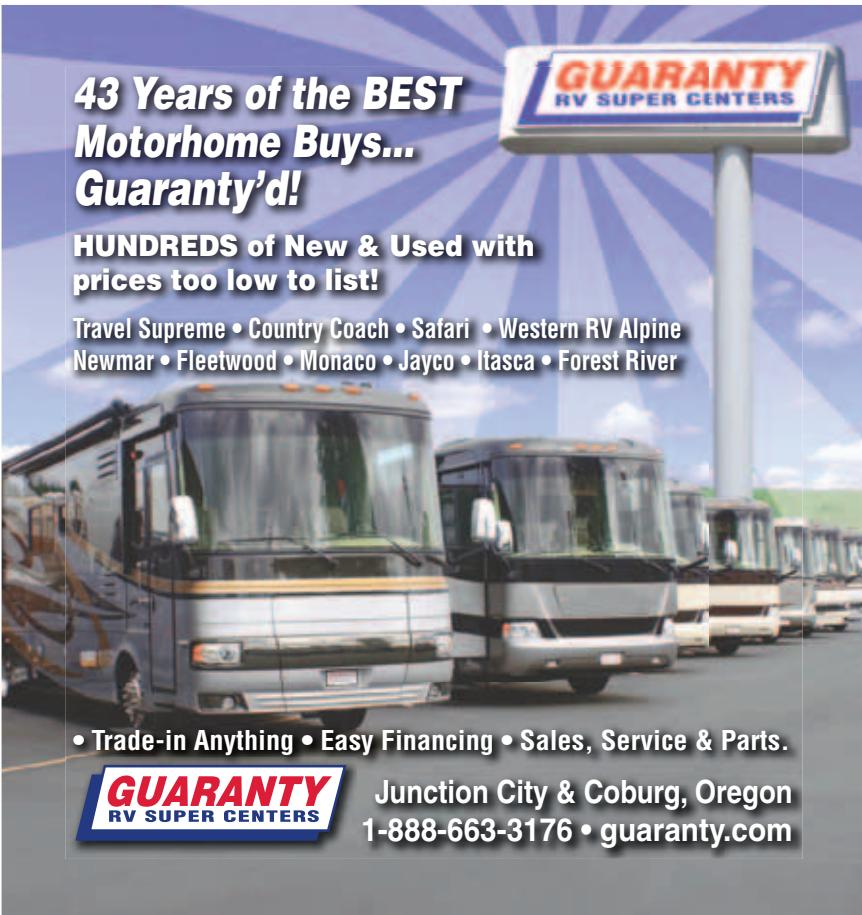


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HOT LINE

is no refund. This is clearly posted on our Web site and reservations cannot be made without the customer acknowledging this.

Myer does not deny that she understood the policy; her complaint is that she does not agree with our cancellation policy. She went ahead and made the reservation, which she should not have done if she did not agree with the policy. In making the reservation, she accepted the terms.

As a gesture of goodwill, we are willing to offer her a rain check for another time to use the money she has forfeited.

ANTHONY E. NEWMAN
SENIOR PRESIDENT
CAPE COD CAMPRESORT
EAST FALMOUTH, MASSACHUSETTS

COOL RESOLUTION

Having experienced problems with his refrigerator from the time he initially purchased the unit, a reader asked for Hot Line's intervention with the manufacturer. He wrote:

I purchased a new Dometic refrigerator in August 2005 for \$1,951.78, and it has given me trouble from the start. I've had to take the refrigerator in for service more than five times, while under warranty, due to ongoing problems with its cooling system. These repairs have cost me time and money. Counting the initial cost of the refrigerator, special trips and overnight stays, I believe I have put in almost \$4,000 on this unit. Any help that *Hot Line* can give me would be greatly appreciated.

PERRY PHELPS
GREENSBORO, GEORGIA

We contacted Dometic to see if it could be of any assistance to Phelps in resolving his refrigerator issues, and heard back from both Dometic and Phelps. Phelps reported the following resolution:

Dometic's warranty department contacted me and authorized a replacement of this refrigerator. The new refrigerator is giving service as it should, and I now consider this matter resolved. I appreciate Dometic doing the right thing, and I want to thank *Hot Line* for its assistance in this matter.

P.P. ♦

TO CONTRIBUTE TO *HOT LINE*, please refer to *Contact MotorHome*, on page 8.

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Fan Wiring

Regarding “No Cool” (May), I had the same problem with my Norcold refrigerator in my 2005 Class A motorhome. I talked to a Norcold technician who suggested the chimney fan might be wired backward. I reversed the wires, and that solved the problem.

JERRY TRAPP | PINEVILLE, OREGON

Twelve-volt DC refrigerator chimney fans must blow up and out, not down and out, Jerry. They will rotate clockwise or counterclockwise depending on their wiring.

While red is usually positive, and black is usually negative, fans are not necessarily color coded to rotate in the desired direction. Either fan terminal or wire can be positive or negative. Rotation direction simply depends on which fan terminal or wire you designate positive, and which fan terminal or wire you designate negative.

VALVE STEMS

I have LT225/75R16 tires on my 26½-foot-long Class C motorhome. On a recent trip I experienced tire failures in the dual tire setup on the driver's side rear. First, the outside tire went flat for reasons no tire technician can discern — there were no punctures and the tire was reinflated after its removal.

After the brand-new spare was installed, I drove off only to have the inside tire blow its entire valve assembly just a few miles down the road. A new high-pressure valve was installed, but when I resumed my trip, the valve assembly blew on that new spare that was now the outside tire.

Other than the spare, these tires had about 22,000 miles on them and had recently been rotated to the driver's side rear from the front. I may have been riding on the flat for many miles. Do you have any idea why this happened?

DAVE JOHNSON | CLEVELAND, OHIO

Your wheels had low-pressure valve stems, Dave. If the valve stems blew

out, they are the same valve stems that are used on passenger cars, because truck tire valve stems can't blow out.

Because no one could find anything wrong with the first tire, its valve stem more than likely caused it to suddenly deflate. Your tires require at least 65 PSI minimum inflation pressure and may require 80 PSI, depending on their load range and your individual wheel loads. Snap-in rubber valve stems should not be used in tire and wheel assemblies that are designed for pressures exceeding 40 PSI.

For your own safety, inspect all of your valve stems. If they aren't metal, go to a tire shop and have metal valve stems installed. Insist that the tire shop install valve stems that are accessible when the wheels are installed as inner dual wheels.

Lastly, I wouldn't continue to use the first tire that failed, because you don't know how long it ran flat. Such a run flat condition usually permanently damages the tire. Such run-flat damage will ultimately cause the tire to fail prematurely.

12-PLY RATED TIRES

I've read your column for many years, and believe you are the foremost expert on motorhome tires around. Everything I know about tires, I learned from you. Sadly, I did not follow your advice when I replaced all six of my Michelin 8R19.5 tires on my 30-foot motorhome. I let the salesman sell me Bridgestone 8R19.5, 12-ply tires. How bad is my error, and what should I do to fix it? Thank you.

CHUCK DANIELS | MESA, ARIZONA

As long as you don't inflate the tires in excess of the maximum inflation pressure stamped on the rims, Chuck, the only error is in your checkbook. Load Range F (12-ply rated) tires generally cost more than Load Range D (8-ply rated) tires, which were probably on your motorhome.

Nowadays, most tire manufacturers, including Michelin, only make Load Range F (LRF) tires in the 8R19.5 size. An LRF tire can become a Load Range E or Load Range D tire by only inflating it

to the pressures required in those load ranges. Starting with Load Range F tires gives motorhome owners considerable flexibility to deal with bad weight distribution and overloaded conditions that cause individual wheel positions to become overloaded with the original tires.

Now is the time to get your individual wheel positions weighed. Then, refer to Bridgestone's load/inflation table and inflate your tires to the minimum required pressures for the loads shown in the table plus 10 PSI for reserve as long as the maximum inflation pressure stamped on the rims is not exceeded. Always keep the cold inflation pressure above the minimum required for each wheel position.

While an LRF tire can become an LRE or LRD tire by simply inflating it to pressures required in those load ranges, it does not work the other way. An LRD tire cannot become an LRE or an LRF tire by over inflating it, and an LRE tire cannot become an LRF tire for the same reason.

“YOU CAN'T JUST PICK ANY 19.5-INCH TIRE AND MOUNT IT ON ANY 19.5-INCH WHEEL.

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TIRE ROTATION AND AGE

I own a 2001 Itasca Class A motorhome built on a Workhorse chassis. The tires are Michelin 245/70R19.5 LRF XRV on steel wheels, and their pressures are maintained at 85 PSI rear, 95 PSI front per Itasca/Workhorse/Michelin specifications. Weight is 6,940 pounds on the front axle, 12,940 pounds on the rear; the total weight is 19,880 pounds.

My mileage is approaching 15,000 miles, and the tires are wearing very well with no evidence of abnormality. I believe I read a paragraph in your column some time ago about tire rotation wherein you recommended against any rotation and suggested running the tires as originally installed, replacing them when they begin to exhibit sidewall cracks or excessive wear.

I maintain my coach by the book, checking my tire pressures often. I'm a firm believer in "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Please refresh my memory. What do you recommend? Thanks for a great column!

BILL DONALDSON | WICHITA, KANSAS

You have a good memory, Bill. The reference to tire rotation appeared in my February 2001 column. In that column I stated, "In my opinion, rotation is not cost effective on motorhomes because the tires get too old before they ever wear out. In short, I do not recommend spending money to have motorhome tires rotated. Michelin's "Recreational Vehicle Tire Guide" advises the following: "If correct air pressure and proper alignment are both continually maintained, tire rotation may never be needed." Nothing has changed my opinion or Michelin's advice, because almost all motorhome tires age out before they wear out. Seven years is as old as a motorhome tire should get.

A tire's age can be determined by its birth week and year. They are the last four digits in the DOT number that is molded in the sidewall of every tire. If the last four digits of a DOT number are 3201, that means the tire was manufactured in the 32nd week of 2001. Tires manufactured prior to the year 2000 only had one digit to indicate their birth year. A DOT number ending with 359 means the tire was manufactured in the 35th week of 1999.

TIRE SIZE

In the past few weeks I've talked to at least

CONTINUED ON PAGE 58

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Allison Transmission Questions

I have a relic, but I love it. It's a 1993 Rockwood Embassy 34-foot diesel-pusher with 105,000 miles on it. It has a Cummins 5.9-L diesel engine and it had an Allison AT 542 transmission. The older it got, the more the transmission overheated going up hills or even idling in gear. It finally died completely at about 80,000 miles. I had a new Allison AT 545 transmission with a lockup converter put in and added a separate transmission cooler behind the radiator. It still overheats, although not as badly.

I've been advised to change the transmission fluid to SAE 15-40 engine oil and the temperature should drop about 20 degrees. Is this true? I'm also considering adding a Banks PowerPack to the engine, but I'm getting mixed advice on whether that would make the transmission problem better or worse. What's your advice? Thanks.

BILL RUGG
SAN LEANDRO, CALIFORNIA

Allison no longer recommends the use of C4 engine oils, such as 15W-40. Rather than use motor oil in the transmission, it recommends that you use Dexron III or better yet, switch to TranSynd synthetic fluid. TranSynd is made by Castrol to Allison's specifications and sold by Allison dealers. Some owners report drops in operating temperatures, although that is not guaranteed.

Having a lockup converter would help because you don't get the slippage at highway speeds that creates a lot of heat. However, I checked with Allison and a lockup converter was never offered for this transmission, so you have been given some misinformation. If you have further questions, Allison provides a toll-free tech line at (800) 252-5283.

Factory guidelines for this transmission call for a normal running tempera-

ture of 160–200°F. Short-term peak temperatures, such as during hill climbs, should not exceed about 220°F. It should not overheat when idling, unless airflow from the fan is poor. The fact that it got worse over time tells me it's more of a deterioration problem. Very often the cooling system becomes less efficient because the fins become clogged with bugs or coated with oil mist and dirt. Sometimes the radiators need to be carefully steam cleaned. Internal radiator tubes become clogged with mineral deposits and other crud and require rodding out. Also, check the fan drive.

If the cooling system checks out OK, I'd add a thermostatically operated electric cooling fan to the transmission cooler, or install a unit that has one built in. Be sure you have a good fluid temperature gauge, too.

Regarding the PowerPack (or Stinger), I checked with Banks and it does not offer a product for these engines with four-speed automatics. For motorhome use, the AT 545 is rated for

a maximum net input power of 235 HP and a net input torque of 445 LB-FT, and a vehicle weight up to 30,000 pounds gross combined weight rating (GCWR).

AUTOMATIC PARKING BRAKE BLUES

In 2006 I purchased a 1994 Fleetwood Pace Arrow that has a Chevrolet powertrain with only 27,000 miles on it. It runs beautifully and I put 4,000 trouble-free miles on it the first year. About 1,000 miles into my second year, I was preparing the unit for a trip; when I got ready to pull out, it would not move forward or backward. I checked everything: emergency brakes, jacks, etc. I thought my transmission was gone, although the fluid was fine. I went inside and turned the engine off; a half-hour later I tried it again and the unit pulled away like nothing was wrong. A 1,500-mile trip went by without incident. The only thing that was different was in the driveway the coach was idling for about 30 minutes, something I don't normally do.

In the middle of another trip several thousand miles later, I forgot and left it running while in a restaurant, and it did it again — it would not move. After shutting it off for about 30 minutes I was able to take off, and made a grueling trip through the Rockies without incident. As long as I don't keep it running while stopped this doesn't happen. Can you explain what's going on here?

PAT DUGGAN
ST. CHARLES, MISSOURI

The problem is likely caused by the automatic parking brake system, not the transmission itself. The most probable culprit is the transmission shift selector indicator switch, which may be affected by heat, as it is down on the transmission shift linkage. To check it out, a specialized scan tool, such as the GM Tech 2 scanner, is needed. If you can't find a Chevrolet dealer that will work on motorhomes, try a Workhorse dealer: www.workhorse.com; (877) 294-6773.

EMISSION COMPONENT WARRANTY

I have a 2003 Class A on a Workhorse chassis with an 8.1-L engine and about 25,000 miles. The right-rear bolt on the

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exhaust manifold is broken. I understand that GM has a 70,000 mile/seven-year warranty that covers this problem, but I can't find any definitive information. Can you help?

WARREN HOLMES
LONG BEACH, INDIANA

The good news is I have an answer for you. General Motors has an emissions component warranty to seven years/70,000 miles on light-duty vehicles with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) less than 9,600 pounds. The bad news is that Workhorse Custom Chassis (WCC) sells no motorhome chassis with a GVWR of 9,600 pounds or less and its warranty on the exhaust manifolds on this unit is for five years or 50,000 miles, whichever occurs first. Therefore you'll have to pay for the repair. I suggest you consider switching to aftermarket headers, or at least replace all the exhaust manifold hardware.

HONDA TOWING

Can I tow my 2007 Honda Accord, four-cylinder, automatic transmission behind my motorhome if I leave the engine running and the transmission in neutral?

TONY JACOBSON
ATASCADERO, CALIFORNIA

I never recommend leaving an engine running in a vehicle while it is being towed. It wastes fuel, causes unnecessary pollution, and prolonged, excessive idling is bad for an engine. It causes carbon formation and other internal problems; plus, if there is a problem such as a leak, a piece of paper getting blown onto and blocking the radiator or a drop in oil pressure, you could have major engine damage and even a fire.

Honda does not currently approve of towing this model. However, it is widely done and several companies manufacture baseplates and other towing equipment for these Hondas. According to the company, Honda owners are not having a statistically significant number of transmission problems, and the ones that occur seem to be caused by operator error. Honda's recommended procedure before towing an automatic has been to start the engine, shift from PARK to DRIVE, then to NEUTRAL, then shut off the engine and put the ignition switch to the ACCESSORY position. Avoid shifting to REVERSE during towing prepara-

tion, as this has been found to cause failures. Honda's customer service number is (800) 999-1009.

AIR BRAKE PROBLEM

I recently purchased a 2001 Fleetwood Discovery on a Freightliner chassis with 300-HP Cummins and air brakes. My problem is that on my last trip, my rear air-pressure gauge dropped to zero and the low air buzzer

sounded. Knowing the results of no air in the system, I headed for the side of the road. Before I stopped, the gauge jumped back to 125 PSI and the buzzer stopped. After I stopped, the gauge went through this up and down several times. I sent my son outside to listen for air and he didn't hear anything. I also figured that the air could not empty and fill this rapidly. I now

CONTINUED ON PAGE 61

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COACH & CHASSIS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 55

five RV mechanics who told me the way to correct wandering in my 1992 33-foot Winnebago Elante is to get rid of the 8R19.5 tires I have on the front. I said, "What tire size do I go to?" They said, "the size that you want."

Can you tell me what tire matches the 8R19.5s in the back, and is 2-3 inches wider? Thanks very much.

JOHN MILLER | ORLANDO, FLORIDA

There is no such tire, John. If there were, you wouldn't be able to put it on your motorhome, because your wheels aren't wide enough. You can't just pick any 19.5-inch tire and mount it on any 19.5-inch wheel. Wheels and tires must be matched for diameter, width, dual spacing, load and inflation pressure.

A tire size that will fit on your wheels and will improve your handling is the 225/70R19.5 all-steel. Michelin makes it in the XRV configuration. Other tire manufacturers make it, too.

The 225/70R19.5 all-steel is about 1 inch smaller in diameter than the 8R19.5, which will lower your motorhome by about 1/2 inch, and it is almost 3/4 of an inch wider, which is about as much extra width as you can get on your wheels that are only 6 inches wide and provide only 10 inches of dual spacing. The 225/70R19.5 all-steel can be mounted on 6-inch wheels and requires a minimum of 9.9 inches of dual spacing. Any wider tires and wheels will adversely change steering geometry and front end loading.

OZONE

I've heard that you should avoid storing a motorhome near electric generators, transformers, mercury vapor lamps or where welding is done. I'd like to know the reasons why.

PETE ADAMS | BOISE, IDAHO

The reason is ozone or O₃, Pete. There's ozone around these items. It's a gaseous form of oxygen with three oxygen atoms per molecule. It's formed by an electrical discharge in oxygen. Air is 21 percent oxygen, which is O₂. Ozone is a strong oxidizing agent. It can deteriorate rubber rapidly, as anyone having experience with Los Angeles smog can tell you. While Los Angeles air contains less ozone today than it did years ago, it still isn't as pure as the air in Boise, Idaho. ♦

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think this was a warning system failure.

I then cautiously finished my trip home and have since swapped the front gauge with the rear gauge to see if it could be a gauge failure. The problem stayed on the same circuit. I have found that the pressure sensors are in an electrical control module that is in the rear of the unit. Being in the electrical business I am aware of the need for wire diagrams when tracing problems. Do you know where I can get a diagram for this unit? I think the problem could be a sensor that appears to be inside the control module. Can you help me with this problem?

PHILIP OSGOOD
CLAREMONT, NEW HAMPSHIRE

If this is a 2001 chassis then you have described a failure in the vehicle data control (VDC) unit that is located in the rear of the chassis. Fleetwood either put it in the left or right side box, or under the bed box. You will need to locate the red and green 1/4-inch air line going into a black box that's approximately 8 by 10 inches, with two electrical harnesses going to it: a 10-pin connector and a 24-pin connector. That whole unit will need to be replaced. Sign on to www.freightliner.com so you can find schematics and info on your coach. The part number for this VDC is KYS 1539 10104 01; however, please check with a local Freightliner dealer so they can match the part number with the Freightliner VIN number (this part has gone through several updates).

SOLVING BATTERY DRAINS

I have a 2003 Winnebago Journey DL motorhome. The batteries keep draining and it ruins the batteries. I have had the coach in two Winnebago service centers and they were unable to determine the reason why. Winnebago stated the coach is out of warranty and offered no assistance, though the problem started before it was out of warranty. Dealers blamed it on the batteries and replaced them four times. Do you have any suggestions or solutions for this electrical problem?

GEORGE SMITH | OLATHE, KANSAS

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asitic draws lose a small amount of charge every day; the rule of thumb is 1 percent.

Parasitic draw from the electrical system with everything "off" should not exceed about 0.050 amperes (50 milliamps). You can measure this by removing one battery cable and using a digital volt-ammeter to measure the current between the battery post and removed cable end. If it is excessive, remove coach fuses one at a time until it drops to an acceptable range. This will be the circuit with the high draw that needs to be corrected.

You didn't mention how long it takes to discharge the batteries, or whether you are doing anything to charge them while in storage. I recommend a battery disconnect switch to isolate the batteries. This can also prevent an electrical fire if a rodent chews through a power cable's insulation during storage, for example. I also recommend using a maintenance charger. If your storage area doesn't have power available, consider a solar battery maintainer.

SHIMMY AND SHAKE II

I experienced a problem similar to that described by Conrad and Sandy Kopec ("Shimmy and Shake," May) with my 1999 Tioga 23B built on a Ford chassis. On a backroad in Ohio, the shaking was so severe that I could not go more than 40 MPH. When I got to my destination I checked in at an RV dealer in central Ohio. Belt separation was severe on one front tire and just beginning on the other. I won't mention the brand, but it was one with a reputation of belt separation. Needless to say, I changed brands on all six wheels. The Kopecs might want to check their front tires for belt separation, particularly the one that hit the pot hole.

**JOHN THOMPSON
CARSON, CALIFORNIA**

Thanks for writing, John. Sometimes it's easy to focus on one source of the problem, and overlook another, especially when a certain vehicle series has a history of a known problem. These rigs are often fixed with steering dampers. Owners should also check for belt separation any time the ride deteriorates and vibration or shimmying becomes a problem. ♦

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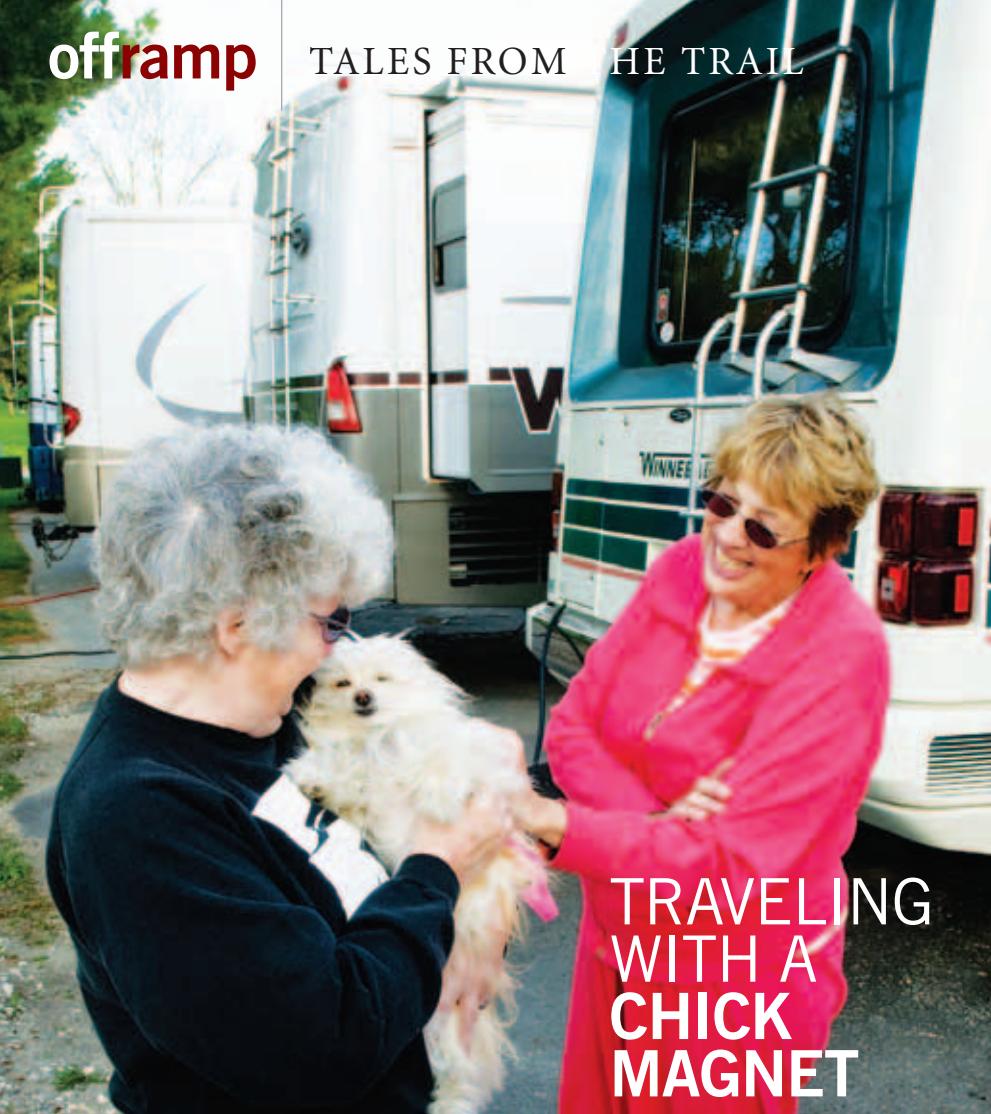
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TRAVELING WITH A CHICK MAGNET

ing in Alaska as we did, we couldn't allow her outside alone. Alone in the wild, this dog would simply be eagle bait. Thus she is escorted on all her outdoor excursions, much to my advantage now that we're full-timers. Little Bit has introduced me to more women than I can count.

Once, though, she appeared headed for failure.

We were at a parking area overlooking Mono Lake in eastern California, when an attractive woman of about 40 climbed out of a car followed by a male friend. Little Bit put on her best "here-I-am-come-love-me" face and pranced over for the expected attention. The woman strode past. The dog was stunned.

After a moment's hesitation, Little Bit summoned a few feminine wives and trotted up to the woman's friend, figuring jealousy would turn the tide.

It worked. The man began petting and stroking the dog, and a few minutes later the women returned to get in on the action. Basking in the attention, Little Bit just looked up at me and smirked. ♦



As I stroll through campgrounds these days I am constantly pursued by women of all ages, yelling things like, "You are soooo cute!"

Unfortunately, none of them are referring to me.

Instead they zero in on Little Bit, our half Shih Tzu, half Pomeranian ball of fluff. The dog gets petted, stroked and cuddled while I stand there holding the other end of her leash, speaking only when spoken to. As an adult, I can only lament that I didn't know about the power of a cute little dog when I was a tongue-tied teenager trying to summon up the nerve to talk to a girl. Now, long married and with only dim memories of when girls were so important, females of every age seek me out.

This is also our first froufrou dog. Before, we always had "real" dogs — Labradors, Irish setters, golden retriev-

ers, malamutes and the dumbest husky ever born. Our former house with its large, fenced backyard was the local pet orphanage. Everybody we knew who couldn't keep a dog for some reason or other had only to give my wife a sob story and the dog had a new home.

So it was with Little Bit. Our son-in-law's daughter from a prior marriage used her own money to buy Little Bit as a puppy. But the dog wasn't a good fit with the family, and her mother told her she couldn't keep it. So the phone rang and we heard the tearful plea, "Grandpa, Grandma, can you take my dog?" Try saying no to that.

The ugliest puppy I'd ever seen showed up the next day, weighing all of 2.1 pounds. This dog knew a sweet deal when she saw it.

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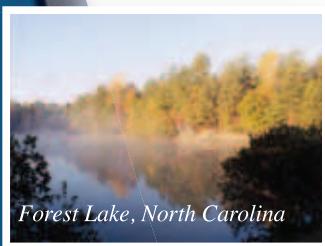


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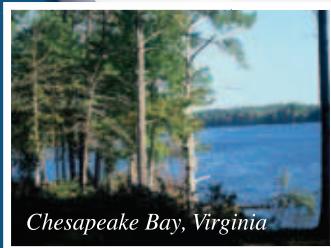
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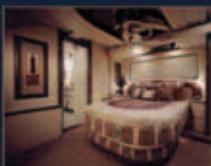
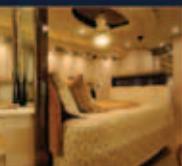
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