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On The Cover: The Holiday Rambler Aluma-Lite 23RB is on its way to an adventure in the coastal California mountains of Los Padres National Forest (see test on page 38). Photo by Rich Cox Photography.

COACH & POWERTRAIN

Recently, fellow RV enthusiasts Gordon and Angela White visited our editorial campus to say “hello” and talk about the RV lifestyle. The Whites publish Truck Camper Magazine, an online journal dedicated to, well, truck campers. They are diehard enthusiasts so the three of us made a point of checking out archived copies of Camper Coachman, a magazine dedicated to truck campers that was published by this company in the late '60s and early '70s.

In those days, pickup campers were extremely popular, with dozens of manufacturers scrambling for market share. As their popularity waned, Camper Coachman was eventually shuttered — but it's a little-known fact that Camper Coachman was folded into this magazine in 1975, when it was called MotorHome Life.

I still enjoy traveling in a pickup camper because, frankly, I cut my teeth on this mode of RVing writing for Camper Coachman in the early '70s. It was a great magazine with lots of nuts and bolts, products and camper tests. Interestingly, the trim size was half that of MotorHome Life — the thinking was that hard-core readers would roll it up and stick it in their back pockets. Indeed they did. It was really hard to find a copy that wasn't dog-eared.

The Whites gave me an excuse to peruse old issues and take a nostalgic journey back to the way RVing used to be. As I flipped through the pages, I reminisced over stories of how and where we used to camp, our test trips and the simplicity of the lifestyle back then.

In those days, the tech columns played key roles in readers' loyalty to the magazines. That hasn't changed. After all these years, tech columns continue to serve as powerful tools that keep readers informed and provide a format to discover solutions to difficult problems. The two tech columns in MotorHome — Coach & Chassis and Powertrain — are as popular today as they were at their inception.

As promised after longtime contributor Wes Caughlan retired as a column-



ist, we have refocused Coach & Chassis and have combined it with Powertrain — aptly naming the column Coach & Powertrain — while adding a number of new elements.

Although we're taking a new approach to this column, your questions (sent via snail or e-mail) are still the most important element. We hope you will continue to send us letters addressing coach, drivetrain and chassis issues. Your questions will be fielded by Ken Freund, the name behind the Powertrain column for more than 15 years.

What's new? Featured every month will be tips on maintenance and repairs, industry news and timely new-product information. This information will be offset graphically from the rest of the column for increased readability.

As part of the new Coach & Powertrain, a section will be devoted to back-to-basics topics, illustrated with detailed photos. Each month we'll show you how motorhome systems work and provide tips to make life on the road easier. Expect to learn about tires, electrical issues, batteries, LP-gas and many other pertinent topics.

While back-to-basics are designed to cater to neophytes, don't discount the value of the information if you're not a newbie. We're confident that even seasoned motorhome enthusiasts will glean worthwhile information from these pages.

Obviously, the motorhome crowd finds pickup campers much too confining for its tastes, but it's interesting to note how much was learned from these diminutive RVs. Space utilization and the cabover are two areas that immediately come to mind. I have to chuckle at how the little magazine that has been secretly a part of MotorHome for all these years continues to have an impact on our future direction in the technical arena. Ah, there's a little pickup camper in all of us.

I hope you enjoy the new column. ♦

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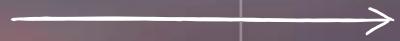
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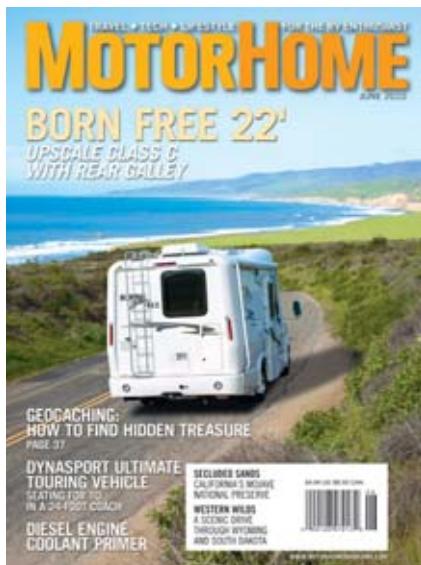
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Mercedes-Benz



“WHAT’S YOUR FAVORITE WAY TO EXERCISE WHEN YOU TRAVEL?”

That’s the question we asked in our June issue, and here are a couple of the replies we received.

BANDS ACROSS AMERICA

When I’m sitting for long periods of time as a passenger, I use resistance bands to keep my blood flowing. Exercise bands don’t take up much room and even with my seat belt on, I can still manage to work different muscle groups. Once we get to our destination, there’s usually plenty of activities to keep me moving. Oh, and then there’s the dog, who needs to be walked and walked and walked.

DANA VAN SCOY | OXNARD, CALIF.

THE COCKTAIL ‘SALUTE’

Our favorite exercise when we travel is lifting our cocktail glass in a grand “salute” for a job well done.

CHARLES L. RAMIRES | HOLLISTER, CALIF.

ALL GEOCACHERS WELCOME

I loved that you put one of my family’s favorite activities in your June issue (“Caching In on a Craze”). We take the RV and the GPS and travel all over finding places I would have never found if not for geocaching. One point that needs to be stressed is that geocaches are never buried. For some reason, many people think they are. A good resource for any new cacher are older, more experienced cachers. Many events are listed by state on www.geocaching.com, and whether you have found one cache or 1,000 caches, you’re welcomed and questions are enthusiastically answered.

And for RVers there is another great resource. A group of truckers and RVers got together and started a website to support those who drive big rigs — www.geotruckers.com. It’s a site where RVers can learn about geocaching locations where it’s easy to park a large motorhome. I really appreciated this advice after we got stuck in a small parking lot.

I hope to see more RVers out on the trails.

TERRI DOUGHTY | LEXINGTON PARK, MD.

LOCKING ADVICE FOR MATRIX OWNER

Regarding the June P.O. Box letter from Rod Mees about the inability to lock the car doors while towing (“Matrix Economical, Tows Well”), we have a 2005 Matrix and we tow it with the valet key in the ignition as per instructions in the car manual. We manually lock the back two doors and the passenger door from the inside and then, using the regular key, manually lock the driver’s door. Hope this helps.

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NEWMAR BACKS ITS PRODUCTS

In these hard times with cutbacks, layoffs and belt-tightening, it is good to know that Newmar Corp. continues to value its customers.

Our motorhome had been out of warranty for about seven months when we discovered a defective hose had been leaking. Although it may sound like a simple job to replace, it would require many hours and hundreds of dollars to accomplish the task. After several discussions with the service manager at Independence RV in Winter Garden, Fla., Newmar agreed to stand behind its product and pay for the work.

We are grateful to the people at Newmar for their willingness to do the right thing.

SALLY BLONDER | PALM COAST, FLA.

CONTROLS DIFFICULT TO ACCESS

I love my 1999 Fleetwood Discovery motorhome on a Freightliner chassis, but one thing about it doesn't seem safe — the transmission controls are located on a console down and to my left. If I want to change gears — for example, when I'm descending a hill — and want to downshift to a lower gear, I have to take my eyes off the road and look down. Also, if I want to turn on the Jake brake or exhaust brake, the controls are on the center console (but not in an easy place to locate).

I've looked at new motorhomes and they all seem to be the same. I can't believe advancements have not been made since 1999 to correct what I consider to be a safety issue.

Why can't manufacturers put these controls right on the steering wheel, or have a shifter where you can manually shift by feel? Or have paddle shifters like many of the new cars have?

It is amazing to me that more people don't complain about this issue. I can't believe I'm the only one who thinks this is a problem.

JOHN DECRISCIO | YORBA LINDA, CALIF.

A GREAT RIDE

My husband and I would like to thank you for publishing our letter in the December 2009 issue ("Vexing Vibration," Powertrain).

The article was regarding vibration in our 32-foot, 2008 Georgetown motorhome. Our coach had only 3,000 miles on

it and was well-maintained. We had followed suggestions, including Powertrain's tips, with no success until Goodyear replaced all the tires at no cost to us.

We are happy to say the problem was resolved as the vibration is gone. Ford Co. also reimbursed us for the charges we incurred for tire balance.

Our thanks also to readers who took the time to contact us with possible suggestions. We did not give up and now enjoy a great ride.

**ROGER AND SHARON KING
MOOERS, N.Y.**

DUMPING FEE INSTITUTED

Flying J (travel plazas and fuel stops) has started charging a waste dumping fee of \$10. We like Flying J for the convenience of its fuel islands — and we occasionally use the waste dump and take on fresh water — but now we'll have to find other stations to use because of this new policy on dumping.

**KEN AND KATHY NUSSEAR
ALTONA, ILL.**

CALL FOR COMMERCIAL LICENSE

After watching a couple destroy their day-old, brand-new motorhome, I have one question: Why are the owners of large RVs not made to hold a commercial driver's license (CDL)? People who drive school buses and semis must carry a CDL.

Maybe it's time that drivers of motorhomes be required to have a CDL or they must go to driving classes that are taught by licensed instructors. Make it mandatory, just like insurance.

I know that some parks have valets to help those not comfortable parking their RVs, but if you can't handle the unit, get some training before your day — and maybe someone else's — is ruined.

ALAN GRODEY | RACINE, WIS.

Question:

Should motorhome drivers be required to have a commercial license and/or get mandatory training? Briefly state your reasons why or why not.

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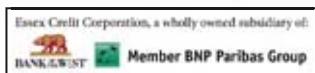
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SUBMIT A QUICK TIP: Quick Tips is our monthly forum for RVers to exchange time- and money-saving ideas and simple tips. Please send submissions to MotorHome Quick Tips, 2575 Vista Del Mar, Ventura, CA 93001, or e-mail info@motorhomemagazine.com. Include any photos, illustrations or drawings, if necessary. We'll pay \$35 for each tip we publish.

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ASK A TECHNICAL QUESTION: Questions for our Coach & Powertrain column may be sent to MotorHome, 2575 Vista Del Mar, Ventura, CA 93001 (please include your name, city and state). You may also send questions via e-mail to tech@motorhomemagazine.com. Selected letters will be answered in the magazine, but time does not permit individual replies.

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escapes

edited by PATRICIA MARROQUIN

EVENTS | NOTEWORTHY | NEWS BRIEFS | CROSSROADS

Gillette Castle, a landmark in East

Haddam, Conn., that overlooks the Connecticut River, is a bastion out of time and place. This medieval European-style field-stone fortress (circa 1919) perched atop the Seventh Sister (southernmost in a chain of hills above the river) was the vision and retreat of actor, playwright and noted Sherlock Holmes portrayal William Hooker Gillette (1853-1937).

A free-thinker, Gillette guided the construction and craftsmanship. The mansion contains 24 rooms. Of the 47 doors, no two are alike. Gillette's clever contrivances and theatrics appear in the castle design and

furnishings. Trails web the wooded 184-acre estate, revealing nearly vertical stone steps, a tunnel from the one-time narrow gauge railroad, archways and terraces. Gillette's expressed wish was to keep the property from the hands of "some blithering sap-head" who could not appreciate his surroundings. So drink in the splendor.

The castle can be admired both from the park and from the Connecticut River below; privately run boat trips depart from Essex. Park grounds are open daily; the castle is open from Memorial Day weekend through Columbus Day weekend. Although small, the site's lot can accommodate motorhomes. RV parks are nearby in East Haddam and East Lyme. For more information, call 860-526-2336. — *Rhonda Ostertag*

'SHERLOCK'S' DWELLING IS NO ELEMENTARY HOME

GILLETTE CASTLE DAZZLES WITH ITS 24 ROOMS, MEDIEVAL DÉCOR

PHOTO: GEORGE OSTERTAG



SEPT. 10-12

You might never see the sky as colorful as it will be at the **Atlantic International Balloon Fiesta** in Sussex, New Brunswick, where 30 hot air balloons of all shapes, sizes and colors will fly twice daily, with rides open to the public. Paragliding demonstrations and helicopter rides will also fill the air, while down on the ground a craft fair, antique car show, bandstand with talent shows and much more entertain crowds at this community-favorite event; 506-432-9444, www.atlanticballoonfiesta.ca.

SEPT. 4-5 | Enjoy more than 100 delicious varieties of a classic American food at the **National Buffalo Wing Festival** in the town where buffalo

wings were born, Buffalo, N.Y. Whether you like them spicy or sweet, with ranch dressing on the side or with barbecue sauce, about 560,000 wings will be served up at the festival along with other tasty foods from restaurants around the country. With celebrities in attendance, live music, eating contests, a kids zone and even a beauty pageant, this event is a can't-miss for RVers; 716-565-4141, www.buffalowing.com.

SEPT. 5-12 | Visit the largest Native American fair in the country — the **Navajo Nation Fair** in Window Rock, Ariz. Fun cultural experiences will include a powwow, traditional song and dance, and beautiful Navajo arts and crafts. There will also be many of the attractions of a typical county fair, including a rodeo, parade, exhibits, competitions and amusement rides; 928-871-6647, www.discovernavajo.com.

SEPT. 10-12 | In Japanese culture, dragonflies are associated with late summer and



early autumn, which makes September the perfect time to attend the annual **Dragonfly Festival** at Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Roswell, N.M. Dragonfly tours and tours of restricted parts of the refuge will be given throughout the weekend, and vendor and food booths, exotic animals, lectures and educational displays promise fun for the whole family; 575-625-4011, www.friendsofbitterlake.com.

SEPT. 18-19 | Remember an important time in our world's history at the **World War II History Weekend** at Eisenhower National Historic Site in Gettysburg, Pa. More than 200 living-history enthusiasts will portray military personnel from that time period, in the setting of re-created Allied and German army camps, with actual vehicles from the war. Demonstrations will include medical services, weapons, equipment

and communications. A World War II-style USO dance with big band music provides some old-fashioned fun. Park your motorhome at the Gettysburg Museum and Visitor Center and take the shuttle bus to the event; 717-338-9114, ext. 10, www.nps.gov/eise.

SEPT. 24-26 | Vermont is known for many things, from gourmet cheese and wine to maple syrup, all of which and more will be celebrated at the third annual **Vermont Life Wine and Harvest Festival** in Mount Snow Valley in Vermont. The welcome reception will be in downtown Wilmington, followed by live entertainment, chef demonstrations, food vendors, local crafters and artists, "Indigenous Vermonter" breakfasts and many wine pairing events, set against the backdrop of New England's fall foliage; 802-464-8092, www.thevermontfestival.com.

SEPT. 25-26 | The bagpipes will be playing in happy spirits for a change at the **Scottish Festival** in McPherson, Kan., which celebrates the heritage of Scotland, Ireland and other Celtic nations. Traditional music and dance will complement the ethnic food, drink, clothing and swords that will be available for purchase. Separate tents for all of the Celtic clans along with members of the local genealogical society can help visitors learn about their family history; 800-324-8022, www.macfestival.org.



RV SHOWS

SEPT. 10-12

North Carolina Fall RV Show and Sale
Charlotte, N.C.;
804-425-6556

SEPT. 15-19

42nd Annual Pennsylvania RV and Camping Show
Hershey, Pa.;
888-303-2887

SEPT. 16-19

Fall RV Show
Timonium, Md.;
410-591-4502

SEPT. 17-19

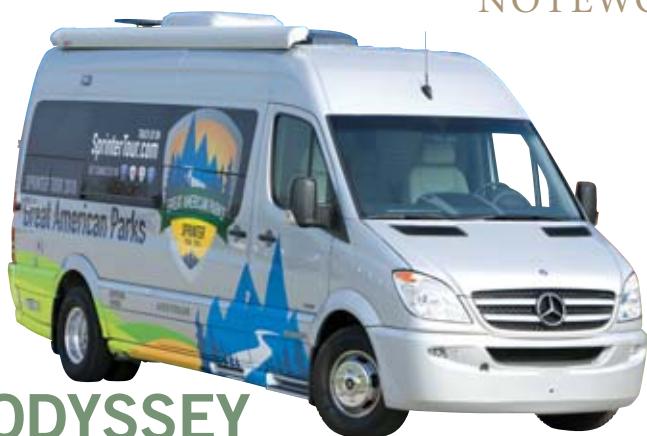
Atlanta Camping and RV Show
Atlanta; 770-447-3334

SEPT. 24-26

East Texas RV Super Show
Beaumont, Texas;
941-780-0538

SEPT. 24-26

North Carolina Fall RV Show and Sale
Greensboro, N.C.;
804-425-6556



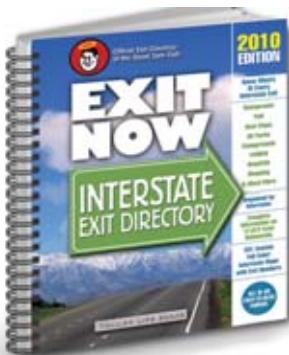
ODYSSEY ON WHEELS

In late May, Rob and Jan Wilson embarked on

“Sprinter Tour 2010: Great American Parks”: a 20,565-mile, 217-day trek in a motorhome to 50 national parks. Sponsored by Mercedes-Benz and Airstream, the tour features videos, articles, microblogging and photography documenting each park as well as everything in between.

The Wilsons’ desire to explore America’s wilderness inspired the tour. Rob Wilson is a retired marketing professional turned published photographer. Jan Wilson has owned a decorating business. Both are avid lovers of nature, traveling, hiking, camping and skiing. The couple are making the journey in a Mercedes-Benz Sprinter Interstate — a Class B motorhome with a turbodiesel engine.

Their journey will end in late November at the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association’s National RV Show in Louisville, Ky. You can follow them at these social networks and websites: www.sprintertour.com, www.facebook.com/sprintertour, www.twitter.com/sprintertour, www.youtube.com/sprintertour and www.picasaweb.google.com/sprintertour.



EASY EXIT

The new 2010 edition of

Exit Now — Interstate Exit Directory, a spiral-bound, easy-to-use copilot from Trailer Life Books, will tell you exactly what’s at every exit on every U.S. interstate.

Exit Now includes more than 600 pages of color-coded listings

and information to help road warriors locate service amenities among familiar and unfamiliar highway territory. Travel centers, stores, restaurants, fuel stations and lodging are listed for each exit off the U.S. interstate system. Hospitals, pharmacies, veterinarians and emergency services are also clearly identified. It also includes critical driver alerts telling you about steep grades, highways converging together, sections of interstate where there’s a long distance between fuel stations and sometimes-dangerous left exits. Exit Now arranges each offramp by interstate, not by state, so there’s no need to flip pages when crossing state lines.

Trailer Life Books, 888-557-3743, www.trailerlifedirectory.com.

News Briefs

The **National Park Service (NPS)** is waiving entrance fees at all national parks on Sept. 25 and Nov. 11. The NPS also waived fees on June 5 and 6; and Aug. 14 and 15. Fees for activities such as camping, reservations, tours and concessions are not affected by the fee waiver. There are 147 parks that normally charge entrance fees ranging from \$3 to \$25. The remaining 245 national parks do not charge entrance fees, so visitors can plan inexpensive trips year-round.

Camping World, America’s largest RV retailer and RV maintenance and repair provider, has terminated its long-standing relationship with **BP’s Castrol Oil**. The decision was based on BP’s oil spill that resulted in the catastrophe off the Gulf Coast. “We at Camping World are saddened by the impact the disaster has had on the communities we serve,” said Marcus Lemonis, Camping World’s chairman and CEO. “We consider BP’s behavior irresponsible and wish to sever our relationship. BP’s Castrol Oil will no longer be offered at any Camping World location nationwide.” Camping World will deplete its remaining inventory of BP’s Castrol Oil products and donate the proceeds to helping in the disaster relief efforts.

The **Good Sam Club**, the world’s largest RV owners’ organization with nearly 1 million member families, has named recipients of its 2010 **Welcome Mat Awards**, aimed at recognizing RV-friendly businesses for their customer service and commitment to the RV lifestyle. Good Sam Club members chose businesses they see providing RVers with superior customer service and meeting their needs. The honorees are: Fuel/Gas Station: **Flying J**; Propane Outlet: **Flying J**; Outlet Mall: **Tanger**; Casino: **Hard Rock**; Fast Food Restaurant: **Wendy’s**; Ice Cream Parlor: **Dairy Queen**; Sandwich Shop: **Subway**; Sit-Down Restaurant: **Cracker Barrel**; Shopping Center: **Mall of America**, Bloomington, Minn.; Dinghy Vehicle: **Saturn**; Tourist Attractions/Amusement Parks/Museums: **Disney World**, Orlando, Fla.; Golf Course: **Pebble Beach**, Carmel, Calif.; NASCAR Event: **Daytona 500**; RV Show: **Tampa RV Super Show**; State/Province to Fish: **Florida**; Good Sam Park: **America’s Best Campground**, Branson, Mo.; Motor Oil: **Shell Rotella**; Pet Supply Store: **PetSmart**; RV Accessory Store: **Camping World**; State to Visit: **Florida**; Province to Visit: **British Columbia**.



SCOTTS BLUFF: 'HARD TO GO AROUND,' EASY TO VISIT

Prehistoric Native Americans called it "Me-a-pa-te," the massive sandstone bluff near the North Platte River in western Nebraska. The name, which means "hill that is hard to go around," stuck for more than 10,000 years, into the early 1800s when white hunters and trappers began coming for the beaver and other fur-bearing animals that lived in the area and traders came with supplies to exchange for the pelts.

Then in 1828, Hiram Scott, a young clerk with the American Fur Company, was found dead at the base of the bluff — and the name was changed to Scotts Bluff.

The traders' route later became the Oregon Trail, though the terrain around the bluff was so rugged most early immigrants traveled several miles south to avoid it.

In 1919, Scotts Bluff was made a national monument. Today the 400-foot-high bluff and fine visitor center at the base attract more than 100,000 visitors a year.

A paved 1.6-mile road spirals to the top, passing through three tunnels. Half-mile North Overlook Trail at the top winds among boulders and dwarf ponderosa pines, providing stunning views to the horizon, 25 miles distant, in all directions, and popular 1.6-mile Saddle Rock Trail (a hiking trail) arcs down the steep bluff to the visitor center. **For more information**, call 308-436-9700 or visit www.nps.gov/scbl. — *Pamela Selbert*



DUTCH TREATS

In Lancaster, Pa., you can learn about the Amish lifestyle firsthand at the Amish Farm and House, the oldest Amish home open to the public in the immediate area. Established in 1955, Amish Farm and House aims to provide an educational experience that reflects — in a way that is both accurate and respectful — the historical and contemporary Amish way of life. The farm also offers covered-bridge and countryside tours.

Two miles north of Lancaster, visitors can experience life on a 1700s to 1900s Pennsylvania Dutch farm at Landis Valley Village and Farm Museum. Costumed guides demonstrate open-hearth cooking, weaving and horse-drawn plowing in a preserved traditional farm where visitors can also purchase heirloom seeds and handcrafts.

For more information, go to www.amishfarmandhouse.com or www.landisvalley-museum.org. — *David Hilbert*



PHOTO: GUY SELBERT

WOOLEN WONDER

Watkins Woolen Mill State Park and State Historic Site in northwest Missouri takes you 150 years back in time to a busy agricultural-industrial woolen mill farm.

Waltus Watkins was the heart and mind behind the farm, which was 50 years in the making. The enterprise, for the most part, was self-sustaining — raising crops, wool and livestock and producing bricks, flour and lumber, in addition to woolen goods. A church, a school and housing for the Watkins family, the trained mill workers and the farm tenants completed the settlement. The three-story 1860 wool factory is both a national historic and a national mechanical engineering landmark. Although it has not operated since the early 1900s, it is the only fully equipped mill of its kind in the nation.

Self-guided tours, fee tours of the Watkins House and Mill, a summer living history program, and era livestock and heirloom plants flesh out this American chapter. Besides delving into the past, park visitors can camp, picnic, fish and swim. The park, open daily, offers year-round camping (self-contained only, November to March).

For more information, call 816-580-3387 or visit www.mostatoparks.com/wwmill. — *Rhonda Ostertag* ♦



PHOTO: GEORGE OSTERTAG



Banks

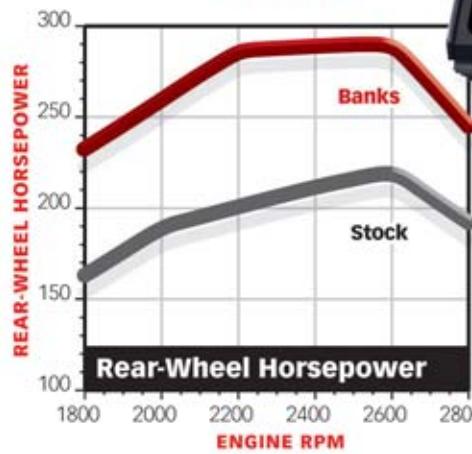
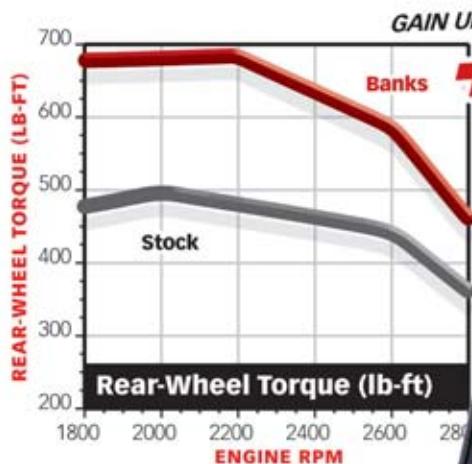
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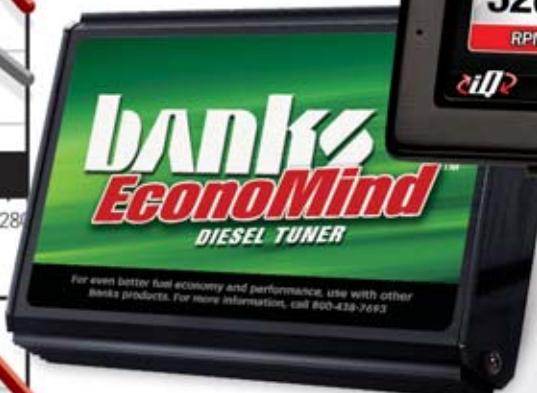
'03-07 CUMMINS 5.9L — **NEW** '07-10 CUMMINS 6.7L

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Data Summary	STOCK MOTORHOME	BANKS POWERPACK	POWERPACK GAIN	
Rear-Wheel Horsepower: Best gain	201 hp @2200 rpm	286 hp @2200 rpm	+85 hp	42% more
Rear-Wheel Torque: Best gain	480 lb-ft @2200 rpm	683 lb-ft @2200 rpm	+203 lb-ft	42% more
Rear-Wheel Horsepower: Peak-to-peak	220 hp @2600 rpm	290 hp @2600 rpm	+70 hp	32% more
Rear-Wheel Torque: Peak-to-peak	496 lb-ft @2000 rpm	683 lb-ft @2200 rpm	+187 lb-ft	38% more

THE TEST VEHICLE WAS A 2005 MONACO CAYMAN MOTORHOME EQUIPPED WITH AN ISB 5.9L COMMONRAIL ENGINE. WHILE THE ENGINE IS RATED BY THE FACTORY AT 300 HP, ON THE DYNO THE STOCK HP WAS ACTUALLY 201 HP.

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From Katahdin Stream Campground in Maine's Baxter State Park to the summit of Mount Katahdin, it is 5.2 miles. Not too far, you might say, but these miles are considered to be the roughest of the entire Appalachian Trail, in part because of the immense boulder fields and several steep pitches. Nevertheless, my wife, Janie, and I are proud to say that despite our graying heads we made it, though our trek was not without mishap.

We began our hike early one September morning driving first from Katahdin Shadows Campground and Cabins, which is located about 20 miles from this much-revered state park. Because vehicles longer than 22 feet, higher than 9 feet or wider than 7 feet are not

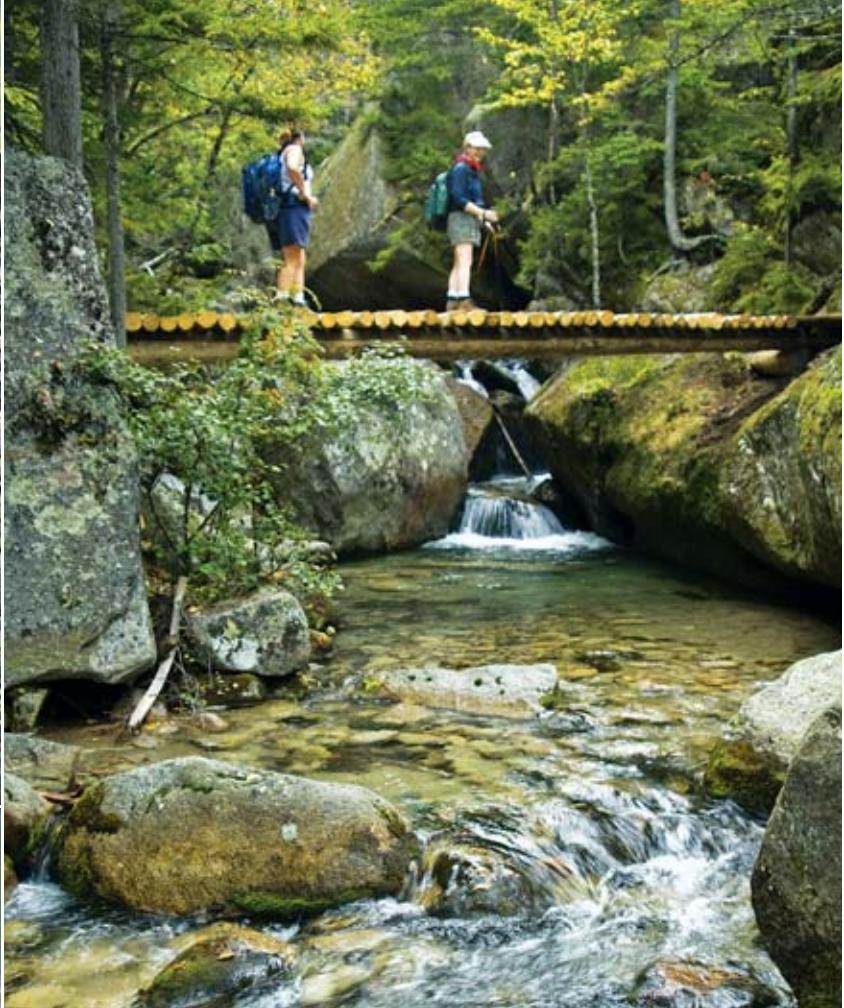


SPLENDOR, ONE SECTION AT A TIME

APPALACHIAN TRAIL 'SECTION HIKERS'
ATTAIN THEIR GOAL OF REACHING
THE SUMMIT OF MOUNT KATAHDIN, MAINE

The author, Bert Gildart, and his wife, Janie, proudly stand atop the summit of 5,267-foot-high Mount Katahdin in Maine. Challenges of the 10.4-mile round-trip hike included huge boulders and steep pitches.

PHOTOS: BERT GILDART



Clockwise from top left: This section of the Appalachian Trail, about two miles from the summit of Mount Katahdin, is steep and rocky. Baxter State Park has more than 200 miles of scenic hiking trails, most of which are very primitive, so visitors should wear sturdy footwear and be prepared for obstacles such as boulders and stream crossings. Moose are among the plentiful animal life to be found in the 209,501-acre state park.

permitted past the park's entrance, many RVers explore this unspoiled land in their dinghies. That's also the way many access trailheads for this portion of the trail.

Most consider the slight inconvenience of camping just outside the park to be an acceptable tradeoff, for this 209,501-acre park remains a land for moose and hundreds of species of birds. Understandably, some say it is the most spectacular portion of the Appalachian Trail, and is where so many either begin or end a four- to eight-month hike that has taken them 2,200 miles from Springer Mountain in Georgia to 5,267-foot-high Mount Katahdin, or vice versa.

If their hike has been continuous, they're called "thru hikers." Janie and I are called "section hikers," meaning we chip away at sections as time and logistics permit. To date, we've hiked all of the trail as it passes through Shenandoah National Park, as well as other lengthy sections of the trail. Eventually, we want to hike every bit of this icon of all-American trail systems.

So there we were, striking out on a round-trip hike of 10.4 miles, keeping our eyes peeled as we progressed, looking for peo-



ple who might embody a certain trail-wise countenance. Generally, you can differentiate Appalachian Trail hikers from others by their extraordinarily lean appearances. Regardless of age, none bulge with even an ounce of fat. All tote packs are worn with dust and bleached by the sun; the same is true for their cracked boots.

We saw three such men, and if their appearance had not given them away, their vernacular would have, for they addressed one another with symbolic names. "Pipe Man," for instance, used to smoke a pipe but had given it up while hiking the Appalachian. "Professor" took his name from the fact that he had once been a professor at a university. And then there was "Ol' Man," and his name was the most symbolic.

Ol' Man took his name from the fact that he'd endured much, had survived, and now brought the wisdom acquired from pain and fortitude to the trail. In fact, of the three Appalachian hikers we met on what was for them a terminus, Ol' Man's accomplishments were the most memorable. Pipe Man and Professor allowed as much.

In 1971 Paul (Ol' Man) stepped on a land mine while serving



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SPLENDOR, ONE SECTION AT A TIME

as a Marine in Vietnam. The blast fragmented the lower portion of one leg, requiring years of reconstructive surgery and many sessions of therapy. But little by little his strength began to return and though never completely restored, his ability to walk improved.

"At first I didn't even want to try walking," said Ol' Man. "I had nightmares about it, and so years passed before I did anything positive. Finally, I went to a physical therapist, and gradually learned to use old muscles in a new way. Before long I began to imagine that maybe I could overcome my limitation — maybe even in a big way. That's when my wife, Jamie, and I began talking about the Appalachian Trail."

That was several years ago and was about the time Ol' Man began wondering if maybe he couldn't hike the whole darn thing. And, so, with Jamie providing logistical support from their small motorhome, Paul began hiking the Appalachian Trail. Because going for him was slow, he broke the trip into several summer and fall seasons.

"It's something to see," Professor said. "When Ol' Man steps, his thigh does the work and the lower part of his leg just kind of flops into position. I can't imagine the pain and the struggle he must endure."

Using conservative calculations, we figured Ol' Man had taken more than 4 million steps to complete his three-year journey. And now he was at Baxter to hike what many say is the most difficult part of the entire trail. Would he make it? Without a doubt. The question was: Would we make it? Sure we would. How could we not make it with the inspiration provided by such stalwarts?

Two miles into our climb, we reached timberline and this is where the going got rough. The boulders here were gigantic; in some places, they were house-sized. In one stretch, those who maintain the trail had inserted metal hand-holds. Without them, it would have been difficult for any but a technical climber to thread his or her way up.

In this manner our ascent continued for about half a mile, though not always with hand-holds. Instead, we found ourselves squeezing between huge rocks or clamoring over boulders that gravity had forced into tortuous angles. Finally, the trail ascended above this rock garden, placing us at what most refer to as a "false summit."

From here it was still a one-mile hike

until we reached the summit, but finally the boulder field was behind us and we had reached an area known as the "Table Land."

We reached the summit at about 2 p.m., having spent too much time gazing over the vastness that characterizes this part of Maine. The day was clear, almost brilliant, and to the south, we were looking over an area called "100-Mile Wilderness," a particularly remote expanse also traversed by the Appalachian Trail. Through this section you must carry everything you need for about a week, and I thought of Ol' Man.

To the north, we could see more of Baxter State Park, which also has the distinction of being one of the nation's largest state parks. Baxter is different from many national and state parks. Donated by Percival Proctor Baxter, governor of Maine from 1921 to 1924, by design the land is administered separate and distinct from any other state agency. Years ago Baxter stipulated that here preservation of natural resources was to take priority over recreational use. To ensure his goals were met, he established a trust fund that enables park officials to maintain the standards he set. For those reasons, the view from the summit of Mount Katahdin remains pristine. However, such beauty can lure you into complacency, making you believe all is OK.

Weather in this mountainous region can deteriorate unexpectedly, and sadly dozens of people have paid the ultimate price by not checking and staying alert. That wasn't one of our errors, for we had checked and rechecked weather conditions. Of greater concern was the fact that quite often the going down can be more difficult than the going up.

"No eyes on your boots," said Janie, voicing concern about the foot- and hand-holds. "Going up it's easy finding them, but I'm not so sure about going down."

Another couple who had reached the summit concurred, and suggested that we join them and follow another route back down, one that would not require using hand-holds with exposures that seemed so sheer. They said they'd driven two vehicles and that when we all reached Roaring Brook Campground, some 18 miles from our vehicle, they'd give us a lift.

And so we joined, but quickly learned this route also had its challenges, though not for our three favorite Appalachian Trail



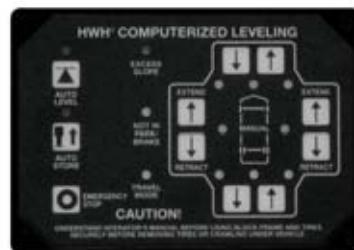
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SPLENDOR, ONE SECTION AT A TIME

hikers. They had also chosen this return route and these trail-hardened men were already well along their way and now about to re-enter the forest. For them their epic journey was over.

Midway down on our return, the Saddle Trail plummeted steeply. In places large boulders blocked the route, and it was here that Janie exacerbated an old knee injury. To alleviate pain I wrapped her knee with an Ace bandage, but the injury diminished her ability to keep up with the couple who'd offered us a ride.

Two hours later we descended onto Chimney Pond, where the couple had been waiting for almost 30 minutes. Night was fast approaching, and fortunately, Chimney Pond is the site of a backcountry ranger station, and the ranger was there. He suggested the other couple proceed but that Janie and I spend the night in one of the bunkhouses. He said we could hobble out in the morning, and that he could line up a ride.

Next day Janie's knee had improved, and though she was a little slow, she was not so slow that we could not now enjoy more of the beauty of Baxter State Park. Flowers were everywhere, and we saw evidence of the park's many moose. With only a few miles of hiking remaining, we took our time, stopping at several lakes.

Then, all too soon our adventure was over, leaving us wondering if maybe we could tackle more. The Professor, a man nearing 70, had made it, and so had Ol' Man. True, his wife was always there to offer assistance from their motorhome, for with his bum leg he was unable to carry all of his supplies on his back. But that takes nothing away from his accomplishment. It does, however, suggest something else: If we rely on a little logistical support, we might undertake an immense trek.

That night back at camp we dug out our map and highlighted what Pipe Man, Professor and Ol' Man thought might be one of the most beautiful segments — the section that ascends Mount Katahdin, and that had been our route. They also said it was one of the most challenging, meaning that other sections of the Appalachian Trail, though not a cakewalk, might be a little less challenging. Now isn't that a compelling fact?

Mercy, but wouldn't it be something now to complete all 2,200 miles of the Appalachian Trail. ♦

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GO WITH THE FLOW

H₂O TAKES CENTER STAGE IN **MICHIGAN'S UPPER PENINSULA**

by PATRICIA MARROQUIN



“Locking through” the Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie is an amazing sight to see. Guests can learn all about the process at a visitors center, then go outside to watch the ships from viewing platforms.

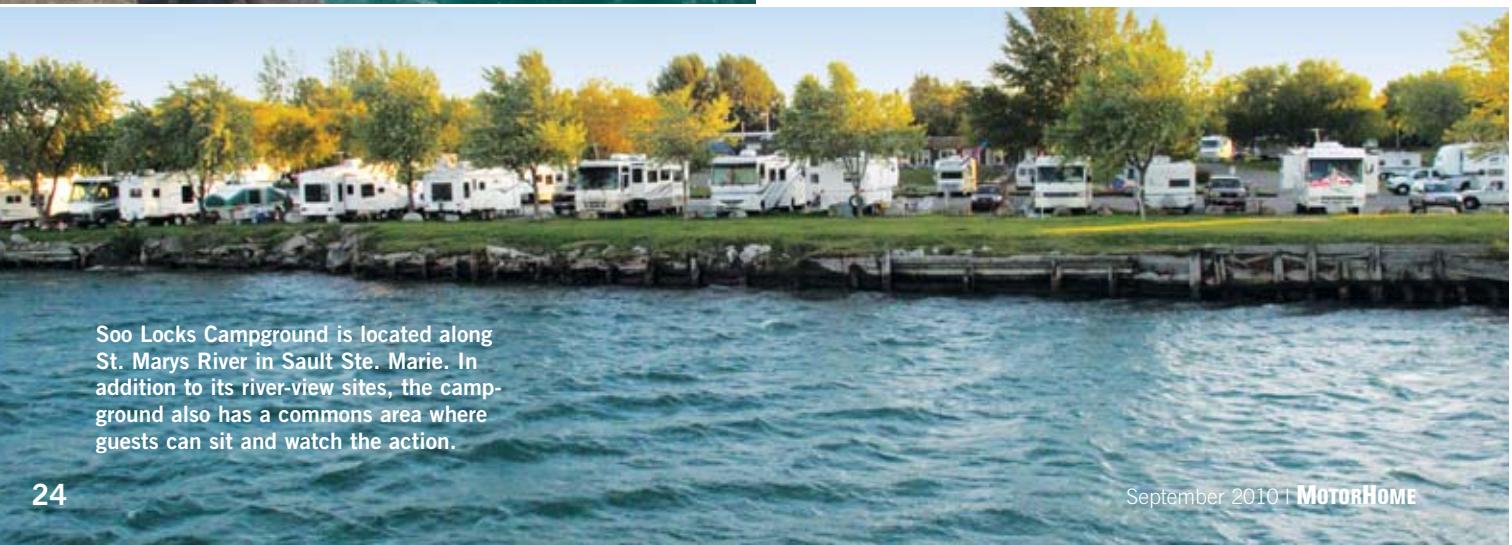
You might say water flows through the veins of “Yoopers” — proud residents of Michigan’s Upper Peninsula near the Canadian border. From lighthouses and waterfalls to lakes and locks, water plays an integral role in their lives and the lives of those who pass through.

Fishermen in the Great Lakes angle for walleye, salmon, trout — and a favorite you’ll find on many Upper Peninsula restaurant menus, whitefish. Sailors draw an audience as they skillfully maneuver their huge freighters through the narrow Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie. RVers, after staking their spots at one of the peninsula’s numerous campgrounds, hike up to marvel at the magnificent Tahquamenon Falls.

The Upper Peninsula has been referred to as “The Great Waters” — where Lakes Huron, Michigan and Superior meet. The region is also known as the land “above the Bridge” — the Mackinac Bridge, which links the Lower and Upper peninsulas. The three lakes form the boundary of the Upper Peninsula, which is large in land mass (roughly 16,500 square miles, or about 25 percent of Michigan’s total) but sparse in population (only 3 percent of the state’s total). Just three cities have populations greater than 13,000: Marquette, Sault (pronounced “sue”) Ste. Marie and Escanaba.

Residents take great pride in the history and culture of the “U.P.,” as it’s affectionately called. History books indicate that in the early 1600s French explorers arrived to an area inhabited by Chippewa (Ojibwa) Indians on the eastern end and Menominee Indians on the western end of the peninsula. Early immigrants also include those from Britain, Finland, Sweden and northern Italy.

Water courses through this melting pot of cultural influences. Here, in no particular order, we present four places in the U.P. where water figures prominently.



Soo Locks Campground is located along St. Marys River in Sault Ste. Marie. In addition to its river-view sites, the campground also has a commons area where guests can sit and watch the action.



PHOTOS: PATRICIA MARROQUIN

Water cascades nearly 50 feet at Upper Tahquamenon Falls, the second-largest falls by volume east of the Mississippi. An observation deck is so close to these falls that visitors can feel the mist from the thundering water.



Clockwise from top: The best views of Lower Falls in Tahquamenon Falls State Park are from an island that's accessible by rented rowboats and canoes. Tahquamenon River was made famous by the Longfellow poem, "Hiawatha." The 47,000-acre state park is the second-largest state park in Michigan. The Edmund Fitzgerald is among the shipwrecks featured at the Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum just north of Paradise at Whitefish Point. The Fitzgerald went down in 1975 about 17 miles from Whitefish Point. It spawned the 1976 folk ballad "Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald" by Gordon Lightfoot. Visitors to the museum can view the 200-pound bronze bell that was recovered in 1995. British Redcoat re-enactors prepare to fire a cannon at Colonial Michilimackinac, part of Mackinac State Historic Parks and adjacent to the Mackinac Bridge, also known as Big Mac.

COLONIAL MICHILIMACKINAC, MACKINAC STATE HISTORIC PARKS

"Living history" permeates Colonial Michilimackinac, a 1770s fort and fur trading village located near the base of the 199-foot-tall, five-mile-long Mackinac Bridge, also known as Big Mac.

In 1715 French soldiers built Fort St. Philippe de Michilimackinac. The fortified community, known as Michilimackinac, became a major fur trade center of the Northwest. After their conquest of French Canada in 1761, the British took control of the fort. The Native Americans and British co-existed in the area, although not always peacefully. In 1780, the fort was relocated to nearby Mackinac Island.

Since 1959, archaeologists have been conducting ongoing excavations on the

site of the fort and trading village, which is being reconstructed in its exact location.

A myriad of activities at Colonial Michilimackinac re-create life in that period. Visitors can explore 13 authentically rebuilt structures, as well as the fort's watchtower. Costumed interpreters conduct demonstrations throughout the day.

You might see historic interpreter and colonial chef Cara Haapapuro baking bread by the hearth, or watch as interpreter John Anderson demonstrates drop spinning. Or perhaps you'll see assistant lead interpreter Jim Evans firing a cannon in British Redcoat attire, fiddling or performing crafts.

For children, there's a new Kids' Rendezvous Interpretive Playground, in which they can explore the routes of the fur traders. It features climbing structures and a giant

map of the Great Lakes. A Native American program educates visitors about the Odawa and Ojibway and how they interacted with British and French residents of the fort.

Entrance to the fort and fur trading village is at the Colonial Michilimackinac Visitor's Center, situated beneath the south approach to the Mackinac Bridge. Here you will also find souvenirs and gift items representing military and colonial history. A glass wall offers a panoramic view of Big Mac and the Straits of Mackinac. There is a small admission fee to the village. A spacious parking lot accommodates motorhomes.

In Mackinaw City is the Mackinaw City/Mackinac Island KOA. The 50-acre campground has 63 large, pull-through sites. Features include a heated pool; LP-gas for a charge; modern dataport and Wi-

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TAHQUAMENON FALLS

South of Paradise, the Tahquamenon (rhymes with “phenomenon”) River, made famous in the Longfellow poem “Hiawatha,” flows amid cedar and pine forests in Tahquamenon Falls State Park. The park, encompassing 47,000 acres, is Michigan’s second-largest state park. However, only about 20 acres are seen and used most often.

Park interpreter Theresa Neal explained that the distinctive amber color of the water is a result of the tannic acid of decaying hemlocks and cedars lining the river’s banks.

The park features two falls: Upper Falls and Lower Falls. With as much as 50,000 gallons of water per second rushing over the Upper Tahquamenon, it is the second-largest falls (by volume) east of the Mississippi, topped by Niagara. The nearly 50-foot drop creates a fountain of root-beer-colored water 200 feet wide, with bright white foam from the high level of organic material.

Four miles downstream is the Lower Falls. Here the river cascades and surrounds an island, which offers the best viewing area of these falls. The island is accessible by canoes and rowboats that can be rented by a state park concessionaire for the short crossing.

The state park has marked trails and

boardwalks with stops at prime viewing areas. An observation deck at the Upper Falls brings you so close you’ll get wet from the mist of the thundering water.

You can fish for walleye and muskie in the pools below the Lower Falls; and find brown and rainbow trout between the Lower and Upper falls. Black bear, whitetail deer, beaver and moose are among the wildlife inhabiting the park.

After an invigorating hike, stop for lunch at Tahquamenon Falls Brewery and Pub, located in Upper Tahquamenon Falls. The eatery resembles a large, rustic lodge, complete with a stone fireplace and animal heads on the walls. The menu features such specialties as pasties (pronounced “pass tees,” meat and vegetables baked in puff pastry) and Lake Superior whitefish.

Large parking lots that can accommodate motorhomes are at both the Upper and Lower falls, but camping is only available at the state park’s Lower Falls Campground. Some of the sites have electricity, and the campground features a picnic area, playground and concession stand. Sanitation stations are available at the Lower Falls and Rivermouth Unit. The campground at the Lower Falls is open year-round.

SOO LOCKS

Some people buy bird-watching guidebooks, in order to identify the winged creatures by their size, shape, color and habitat. In Sault

YOOPER SPEAK, EH

Did ya know true “Yoopers” have their very own language? So that you don’t end up scratching your head when an Upper Peninsula resident speaks to you, here are a few terms and their definitions, courtesy of “Da Yoopers Glossary, a tourist’s guide to a better understanding of the Yoopenese language,” by Joe Potila and Jim DeClaire:

BIG MAC: A large burger or the Mackinac Bridge.

COOLIES: Cold beer.

DA SOO: Sault St. Marie, otherwise known as Yooperland.

EH: A word that ends practically every sentence in the U.P.

FUDGIE: Affectionate word for tourists who buy large amounts of homemade fudge while visiting Mackinac Island or Da Soo.

MUD: Camp coffee.

MUD HOLE: The hole left by the spoon when you take it out of the camp coffee.

PARTLY CLOUDY: Six-foot snow drifts.

PASTY: Yooper soul food (a meat pie thought to have originated in Cornwall, England).

PLAID: The national color of Yooperland.

YOOPER CADILLAC: A Chevy Impala without rust holes.

Ste. Marie, ship aficionados who want to identify the boats navigating the locks reach for the boat-watchers bible, Know Your Ships (www.knowyourships.com).

The field guide offers data such as color, name and size of hundreds of U.S., Canadian and international-flag vessels, from freighters to tugs to passenger ships. All pass through the famous Soo Locks in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan's oldest city.

Construction of the canal and locks began in 1853. Nearly two years later, the waterway opened, providing a gateway to the country's rich resources and helping to meet the demands of a growing economy. Over the years, the Soo Locks have been repaired, expanded, upgraded and replaced.

Each year, more than 10,000 ships pass through the locks, an engineering marvel and the largest waterway traffic system in the world. As the ships navigate through the system, they put on quite a show.

There are several ways to enjoy the locks — stopping in at a visitors center, watching from a viewing platform, or being in the middle of all the action on a boat tour.

The beautifully manicured Brady Park, in downtown Sault Ste. Marie along the river, is home to a visitors center managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, which also manages the locks. The park grounds include flower gardens, and a walkway along Water Street is dotted with plaques chronicling the city's history.

Inside the visitors center — which is open mid-May to mid-October — numerous exhibits detail the construction of the locks and the people who made them possible. Four movies about the Locks and the surrounding area are shown, offering a historical perspective. Here you can also get a look at a working model of the system, which shows how the locks raise and lower the ships by opening and shutting lock chamber gates, allowing water to flow in and out.

After you know how it all works, listen for a staff member announcing over a P.A. system the approach of a vessel. You can then hurry out onto one of three raised viewing platforms and join others cheering on the arrivals. The scene is a bit like Oscar night, in which fans in the stands shout and cheer as their favorite movie stars arrive to stroll the red carpet.

If you really want to get your feet

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wet, so to speak, hop aboard a boat for an up-close Soo Locks tour. A cruise will allow you to see the four U.S. locks, experience “locking through” from Lake Huron and Lake Superior; travel alongside giant freighters; and go underneath International Bridge, which spans St. Marys River and links the twin cities of Sault St. Marie, Mich., and Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. The climate-controlled boats are equipped with restrooms and snack bars. Dinner, lunch

and sunset cruises are available.

The locks and observation platforms are open during the Great Lakes shipping season, which is March 25 to Jan. 15.

For river-side accommodations, try Soo Locks Campground. Located along St. Marys River, it offers 100 sites, 31 with views of the river and the freighters heading into the Soo Locks. The campground also has a commons area on the waterfront so RVers without river-view sites can bring

their chairs and watch the action. All sites include water and electricity. Other amenities include a general store; gift shop; game room; high-speed Wi-Fi; dump station; pull-through sites; and boat docks available for free. The campground is open from May 1 to Oct. 20.

GREAT LAKES SHIPWRECK MUSEUM
Shipwrecks in Paradise? Yes, a museum that chronicles the area’s maritime tragedies is located just north of Paradise, at Whitefish Point.

Deceivably beautiful Lake Superior is the largest and fiercest of the Great Lakes. Powerful and deadly Northwest storms along the 80-mile stretch of water from Grand Marais to Whitefish Point have earned the region the moniker “Graveyard of the Great Lakes.”

Great Lakes Shipwreck Museum, about 70 miles northwest of Sault Ste. Marie, pays tribute to Superior’s sunken ships. The atmosphere within the unassuming white building befits the stories that are told from watery graves: haunting music amid low lighting. Maritime legends come alive in the compact museum, through artifacts, drawings, photographs and scale models. Descriptions detail the circumstances of each tragedy and tell about the rescuers, the survivors and those who perished. Among the wrecks highlighted are those of the John B. Cowle, Samuel Mather, Cyprus and Steamer Vienna.

But the “star” of this ghostly lineup of ships is the Edmund Fitzgerald. Of the 6,000 ships lost on the Great Lakes, the “Fitz,” which went down 17 miles from Whitefish Point at a depth of 535 feet on Nov. 10, 1975, remains the most famous. It spawned the 1976 ballad by Canadian folk singer Gordon Lightfoot, “Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald.”

The ship’s bell had been left underwater, but in 1995, the Great Lakes Shipwreck Historical Society along with families of the Fitzgerald’s crew, the Canadian Navy and the National Geographic Society recovered the bell. The 200-pound bronze bell is on display in the museum gallery as a memorial to the 29 men lost in the tragedy. The Shipwreck Museum is open May 1 to Oct. 31 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. ♦



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DURING A 3-DAY TOUR IN
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5 ARKANSAS WINEMAKERS
SHARE THEIR PASSION

by RICHARD AND ELLEN THANE

A VINE TIME

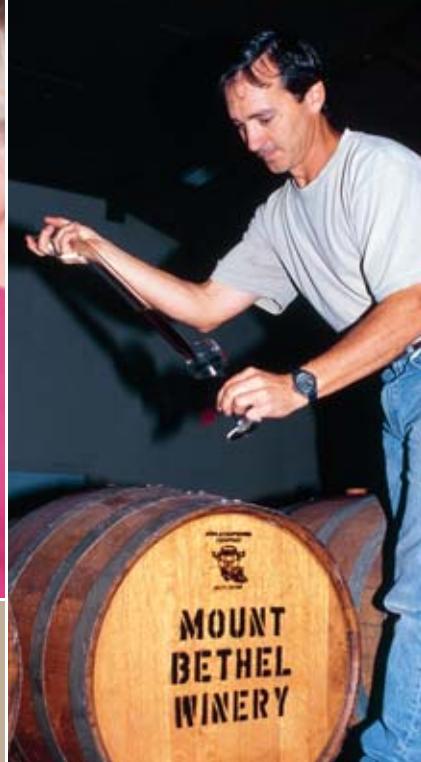
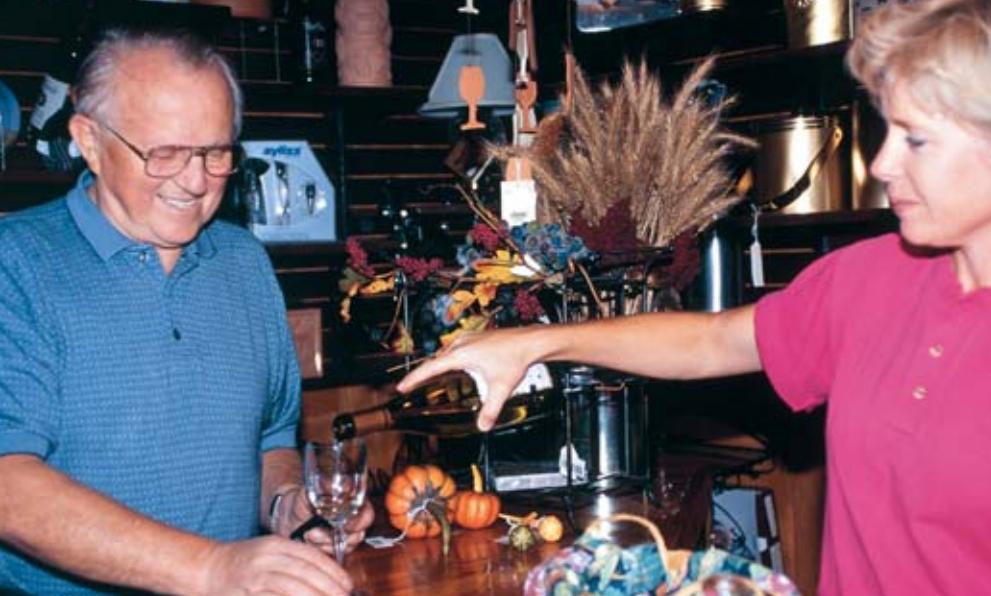
The Ozarks are known for many things, including moonshine, but we never would have imagined the fine art of winemaking. Yet along the southern slopes of the Ozarks, just a few miles southeast of Fort Smith, Ark., lies the oldest and largest wine-producing region in the southern United States.

We didn't know this wine country existed until we stopped at the visitor center in Fort Smith and picked up an inviting brochure describing the wineries. Always eager for a new adventure, we immediately adjusted our plans to

include a winery tour. Fall color was just beginning to touch the higher peaks of the Ozarks and most of the grapes had already been picked when we arrived in Altus, a tiny town tucked away in the heart of the wine country, a few miles east of Fort Smith and about six miles south of Interstate 40. Though we were too late in the season for the annual Grape Fest that is held there each year on the last weekend in July, we did discover Altus Heritage House Museum, which gave us a wonderful snapshot of what we were about to see on our wine tour.



PHOTOS: RICHARD AND ELLEN THANE



Clockwise from above: Tina Post McAlister, a member of the fifth generation of Posts, pours wine for a guest at Post Familie Winery. Vintner Michael Post samples wine at Mount Bethel Winery. The Arkansas Historic Wine Museum is filled with winemaking paraphernalia such as antique wine presses, bottles from defunct wineries and whimsical hand-painted wine barrels. Wiederkehr Wine Cellars tour guide Natalie Wilcox holds a photo of founder Johann Andreas Wiederkehr. Many of the wine families worship at St. Mary's Catholic Church, which features paintings and stained-glass windows.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

With its picturesque mountain setting, fertile, sandy soil and many different microclimates along the slopes and ridges lining the beautiful Arkansas River Valley, this part of the Ozarks is not unlike the major grape-growing areas of Europe. It is said that any type of grape can be grown here. A number of small wineries have come and gone over the decades but today there are five in existence — two of them still owned by descendants of the original founding families from the 1880s. All five are open daily for tours and tasting and are located within a few miles of Altus. While you could probably do a whirlwind tour and see them all in a day, we found that spreading the tour over three days gave us a broader perspective on this industry that always seems to entail such fascinating aspects of our nation's history.

You won't find any grand chateaux or fancy gates at these wineries — just small family operations where you will likely be greeted by the winemakers, who will share their

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The wine industry got its start in Arkansas in 1880 during the turbulent years before World War I when Europe was in turmoil and many Swiss and German families fled to the United States to escape economic depression and a growing intolerance of Roman Catholicism. The climate and the lush, rolling farmland of this remote part of Arkansas reminded these people of their homeland. So many settled there, bringing with them their love of good wines, their Catholic faith and their hard-working, industrious lifestyle. Many found work in the coal mines or for the Iron Mountain Railroad. Others brought a deep love of working the land and knowledge of winemaking.

POST FAMILIE VINEYARDS AND WINERY

One of those passionate winemakers was Jacob Post, a devout Catholic and hard-working Bavarian refugee who arrived in the Arkansas River Valley in 1880 with his wife, Marie. Finding many Swiss, German and Polish families — who were accustomed to drinking wine with their meals — already settled in the area, he knew he would have a ready market for the wines he wanted to make. It didn't take him long to purchase a piece of hillside land and get his fruit planted. Until his first vines started producing he made wine from wild grapes and other native fruits and berries, establishing the Post Familie Winery.

Today it is the fifth generation of Posts who are running Post Familie Vineyards and Winery and producing a number of gold medal-winning wines. Its current location along Highway 186 is actually about a mile west of its original site and, from its simple beginnings as a small farm, it is now one of the larger wineries in the area. A lovely gift shop filled with wine-related items, as well as a tasting room, is open daily. Who are we to say whether the wines are good or bad? We aren't experts, but one thing's for sure — we liked just about everything we tasted there. After tasting and comparing, we purchased several bottles of chardonnay and a delicious sherry that had been aging for the past 18 years in 10-foot-tall oak casks.

CHATEAU AUX ARC

Just down the road we found the newest winery of the region, Chateau Aux Arc, named for the original French spelling of

“Ozark.” Owner and winemaker Audrey Brand House may very well be the nation's youngest winemaker and several of her competitors describe her as “a real getter.” She has been around grape growing all her life with both of her grandmothers raising grapes for Welch's grape juice company. House says she loves to experiment with wine recipes and made her first wine at the age of 12 from one of her grandmother's recipes. Open since 2001, her business is steadily growing and she continues to expand her Dragonfly Ranch Vineyard. Just last year she passed a bill making Cynthia — the grape she has become known for — the Arkansas State Grape, also known as the “Cabernet of the Ozarks.”

Her pleasant tasting room features several talented local artists as well as a number of wine-related products for sale. While many of her wines were a bit dry for our unsophisticated palate, we did like her Altage and added several bottles to our collection.

Returning to our home base at Pine Ridge RV Park (exit 41 off I-40, just east of Fort Smith), we made a dinner of sautéed prawns with mushrooms and garlic along with a sampling of our wine purchases. Can life get any better than this?

WIEDERKEHR WINE CELLARS AND VINEYARD

A bit of morning fog lingered over the vineyards as we began our tour of the Wiederkehr Wine Cellars and Vineyard. With a well-informed and enthusiastic tour guide we learned that, with its Swiss Alpine theme, this is the largest of the Arkansas wineries and also one of the oldest. The founder, Johann Andreas Wiederkehr, emigrated with his family from Switzerland in 1880 after hearing of its potential for being a good wine-producing region from a relative who was a priest at the beautiful Subiaco Abbey, located there in the Arkansas River Valley. Be sure to see the abbey while in the area.

As we strolled past 100-year-old oval-shaped oak barrels that Johann brought with him from Europe, we were told they were shaped that way to keep them from rolling off the deck of the ship they traveled on. In the tasting room we met Dennis Wiederkehr, vice president and national sales manager for the winery. A descendant of the original founder, he gave us great tips on how to taste properly as we sampled wines with names

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A VINE TIME

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For lunch we enjoyed traditional Swiss cuisine in the Weinkeller Restaurant, built into the wine cellar that was hand dug in the 1880s by Johann. Too bad we missed the annual Weinfest, held at Wiederkehr the last weekend in September. It sounds like great fun with music, polka lessons, a grape stomp and, of course, good food and wine. We also discovered a small RV park with utilities located at this winery and realized it would have been a more convenient campsite for touring the wineries. Wiederkehr has recently opened a new store and bistro on I-40 at exit 41.

MOUNT BETHEL WINERY

After lunch we moved on to Mount Bethel Winery. It was established in 1956 by Eugene Post in the historic hand-dug cellar of the original winery of Mrs. Joseph (Katherine) Post, his grandmother and daughter-in-law of Jacob Post. As we entered the cool darkness of the tasting room, descendant Michael Post greeted us. Trained as a dentist, he, too, found the lure of winemaking too strong to resist and is now the vintner for Mount Bethel Winery. Together with his siblings he runs the winery and makes a number of classic wines such as merlot, cabernet and chardonnay as well as several native Arkansas varieties, but it was his wonderful fruit wines that caught our fancy. Blackberry, raspberry, blueberry and more — they were all good. Our favorite was wild plum and we are saving a bottle for a special occasion.

ST. MARY'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

Very enthusiastic about the culture of his beautiful homeland, Post offered to take us over to see the spectacular little St. Mary's Catholic Church where many of the wine families worship. Built in 1901 and listed in the National Register of Historical Places, the Roman Basilica structure of native sandstone with its bell tower and white crosses sits high on a hill overlooking the wine country. Inside sunlight is filtered through exquisite stained-glass windows and the walls are lined with enormous original paintings by German artist Fridollin Fuchs. Post told us the very touching story of the artist finding himself stranded in America during World War I and, in an effort to survive, painted these wonderful pictures for the people of Altus in exchange for food and shelter. Many

of the faces of the religious figures depicted in the paintings are those of local residents.

For dinner that evening we grilled burgers and opened a delicious bottle of cabernet from Wiederkehr Cellars. Some may think it a waste to drink such a nice wine with such a simple meal but we thought it was just perfect — especially in light of a new term we learned while on the wine tour. “French Paradox” is a phrase that became known in 1991 when the “60 Minutes” TV show ran a program describing the diet and lifestyle of people in southern France. It seems their diet is rich in high-fat dairy products and yet their rate of heart disease is much lower than that in America — just the opposite of what you would expect. Research has led scientists to the conclusion that it is the moderate consumption of red wine in this French wine country that not only reduces heart disease but also may help balance cholesterol, boost the immune system and even block cancer formation. Some also think that it helps to preserve cognitive function and may even prevent Alzheimer's. So who are we to argue with such findings? We drank the wine and enjoyed every sip.

COWIE WINE CELLARS

This was the last of the wineries on our tour. Located outside the nearby town of Paris, this is a family operation opened in 1967 by Robert and Betty Kay Cowie. It is difficult to say which is their greater passion — making wine or running the Arkansas Historic Wine Museum next to their tasting room. Have a question about Arkansas wine? Just ask them; they're sure to have the answer. Filled with antique wine presses, bottles from defunct wineries, old photos, whimsical hand-painted wine barrels, and various other winemaking paraphernalia, their business spreads the entire history of the Arkansas wine industry before you. Robert Cowie, too, came to this area because of family ties to the Subiaco Abbey. His first winemaking efforts came as a child using elderberries he picked along the railroad tracks. We bought a couple of bottles of Cynthiana, one of the more popular wines at Cowie.

What a wonderful few days we spent in Arkansas wine country and though the wine we bought there is nearly gone, the history we learned about this little-known region adds a rich and lasting dimension to our knowledge of America's history. ♦

ON THE MENU: CAMPGROUND CUISINE



Kamp Klamath offers all-you-can-eat salmon and chicken.

RV PARKS ARE SERVING UP A FULL BUFFET FOR GUESTS — FROM SALMON AND SHAKES TO BEER AND BARBECUE

by JEFF CRIDER

The KOA campground in Hagerstown, Md., features a restaurant that's best known for its breakfasts.



Saturday night is a great time to be surrounded by the redwoods at Kamp Klamath RV Park and Campground in Northern California, particularly between Memorial Day and the end of September.

"That's when we have our all-you-can-eat bonfire dinners," said park owner Aaron Funk. "For \$10.50 per person, we serve a full buffet featuring barbecued chicken breast or local salmon fresh caught that morning."

This is no ordinary salmon.

Kamp Klamath has won seven regional cooking competitions in the past five years, including smoked salmon tasting contests in the annual Yurok Tribe Salmon Festival in Klamath as well as smoked salmon tasting competitions held at the Humboldt County Fair in Ferndale, Calif., and the Jackson County Fair in Central Point, Ore., some 100 miles to the northwest.

"Travelers from all over the world visit us just to taste our salmon," said Funk, who slow-smokes his salmon over red alder chips.



Clockwise from above: The restaurant at John and Judi Durham’s Hagerstown KOA campground is a 1950s-style diner with “I Love Lucy” memorabilia. “Our signature dessert is a brownie topped with hot fudge and whipped cream,” John says. Kamp Klamath RV Park and Campground in Northern California holds \$10.50 bonfire dinners featuring local salmon freshly caught that morning. A tropical food display takes center stage at Sundermeier RV Park’s Beef Eaters Restaurant in St. Charles, Mo.



Kamp Klamath is one of several campgrounds across the country that offers their guests food that is so good it’s worth the drive just to eat there.

Consider Northern Outdoors in The Forks, Maine. The park, which caters to white-water rafting enthusiasts, hikers, fishermen and snowmobile enthusiasts, complements its cabins and campsites with its own brew pub that is open for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Breakfast is made from scratch and includes dishes such as eggs Benedict

and steak and eggs, while lunch includes burgers, chicken sandwiches, salads and soups. “At night, we serve steak as well as lobster, including whole lobsters and lobster with macaroni and cheese,” said Kevin Foss, the restaurant’s food and beverage director, adding that the restaurant also serves six of its own handcrafted beers, which are brewed on the premises.

Farther to the east, Sagadahoc Bay Campground in Georgetown, Maine, offers its guests a chance to pair freshly cooked lobster with clams that the campers have

dug up during the day. “Our campers go clamming on some of the most beautiful hard-packed sand in Maine,” said park owner Patricia S. Kosalka. “I’m talking Maine steamers, not quahogs that are found in Massachusetts and points south. The town allows us to sell clam licenses for \$21 that are good for seven days. You can dig enough clams on the first day to pay for the license — a great deal. And the clams go well with the lobsters that are provided to our campers by a local lobsterman and his wife, who cook them and deliver them hot.”



Carolyn Strong, co-owner of Sundermeier RV Park and its Beef Eaters Restaurant, says, "We are famous for our prime rib and our steaks and clam chowder."

In Louisiana, Sweetwater Campground and Riding Stables in Loranger, about 70 miles north of New Orleans, has an on-site eatery called Ponderosa Restaurant, which has all-you-can-eat catfish on Friday nights in addition to Saturday night steak specials. "People just rave about our steaks and fried catfish," said park owner Rita Robichaud, adding that the park also provides catering services.

Bill and Carolyn Strong, owners of Sundermeier RV Park and Conference Center in the historic city of St. Charles, Mo., have developed a similar following. While travelers often stay at their park because it is located near the starting point of the Lewis and Clark Trail and numerous St. Louis attractions, many also camp there so that they can eat at the park's restaurant, the 92-seat Beef Eaters Restaurant.

"We are famous for our prime rib and our steaks and clam chowder," Carolyn Strong said, adding that the restaurant has had the same chef for the past eight years. "We've even had people from the East Coast taste our clam chowder and say, 'This is better than what we have at home,'" Bill Strong said.

Sundermeier RV Park also has the Banquet Center of the Little Hills, which caters wedding receptions, corporate and social events, and has the ability to host RV rallies, caravans, clubs and visiting bus tours.

John and Judi Durham, who have owned the KOA campground in Hagerstown, Md., for 22 years, owned and operated their own restaurant in Rhode Island for eight years before they bought their campground, which features a 1950s-style diner that they've decorated with "I Love Lucy" memorabilia. Their menu includes old-fashioned hamburgers, shakes and malts as well as Maryland-style crab cakes. "I also smoke pork butt and barbecue it for sandwiches," John Durham

said, adding, "Our signature dessert is a brownie topped with hot fudge and whipped cream."

But while lunch and dinner are enticing, the Durhams say their restaurant is best known for its breakfasts. "We do omelets, corned beef hash and home fries," John said of the restaurant, which is open for Friday dinner through Sunday breakfast. "In July, when the park is full, we're open every day."

Many park operators find that if they can provide tasty food, they can keep their restaurants busy — at least during their peak seasons.

In addition to offering his Saturday night bonfire dinners, Funk of Kamp Klamath has opened a 32-seat outdoor restaurant, the Big Foot Grill, which serves breakfast and lunch every day from Memorial Day until the end of September. Tuesdays feature a Tex-Mex dinner while on Fridays Funk invites his guests to barbecue their own cheeseburgers.

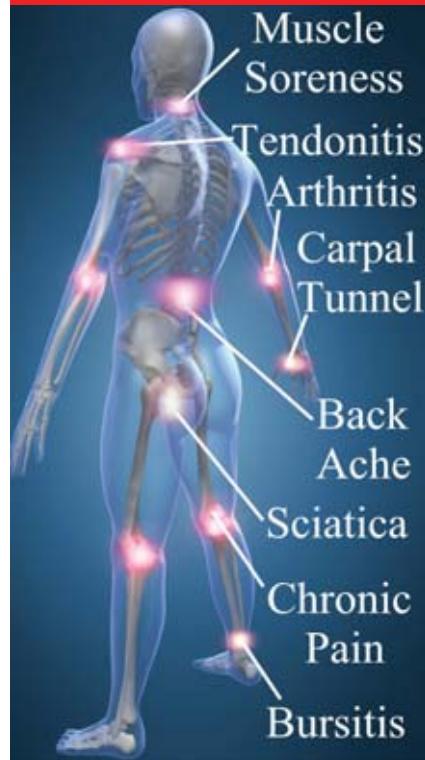
"Our breakfast menu includes Big Foot-shaped pancakes loaded with fresh-picked wild blackberries," Funk said. "We also offer unique omelets and Tex-Mex breakfast selections."

Looking to the future, Funk sees his menu getting bigger — and healthier.

Earlier this year, he built a thermostatically controlled greenhouse so that he can grow his own tomatoes. He also has another greenhouse for vegetable seedlings, which he says will help sustain his RV park's organic garden.

"We will be virtually self-sufficient for our restaurant," he said. "We'll have our own broccoli, lettuce, green onions, yellow onions, potatoes, string beans, black beans, peppers, chilies and melons. We'll also grow our own garnish and herbs, including savory and thyme, basil, rosemary, cilantro and oregano." ♦

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HOLIDAY RAMBLER



All new from Holiday Rambler for 2011 is a Class C motorhome that would be perfect for a young family with small children just starting out or a couple of empty-nesters beginning the next chapter in the story of their lives. Either way, the Aluma-Lite 23RB can fill the bill.

A few of the notable highlights of this small, easy-to-manuever motorhome begin to reveal its character. There's the whopping 61 gallons of freshwater capacity, the distinctive Newport cherry wood cabinetry, a galley filled with top-notch appliances, the extra-large rear storage bay with side and rear exterior access, and for those who like to bring along motorized recreational toys, a 5,000-pound-capacity hitch receiver for towing. The 23RB would be great for weekend getaways or for getting away for weeks at a time.

This little wonder is wrapped up in a nice package, too. We found laminated fiberglass side walls and roof structures with aluminum frames, and the motorhome is topped with a seamless rubber roof. Its molded fiberglass front cap looks good and helps deliver superior aerodynamics for improved fuel mileage. Aluminum running boards, ABS wheel fenders, breakaway exterior mirrors, an electric Carefree of Colorado awning, a 4-inch rear tube bumper with end caps and storage capabilities, and a rear ladder offering access to the roof round out the key exterior standards.

There are five more floorplans in the works for the Aluma-Lite Class C line, and the 23RB is just the start, but what a beginning. From bumper to bumper, you can tell the designers at Holiday Rambler put some time into this one.



Let's start with the shower that a 6-foot-2-inch guy can stand up in without hunching over. When was the last time you saw that in a 24-foot motorhome? The bath features a stainless steel sink and single-lever satin-nickel faucet — all very classy looking. The handle-flush toilet also helps it look and feel like a nice, little home rather than like a little camper. And generous storage space is provided in the sink cabinet.

A queen-size bed with a cushy 54- by 74-inch foam mattress fills the curbside rear corner of the coach, and there is a sizable storage cabinet above it on the rear wall and an-

PHOTOS: RICH COX PHOTOGRAPHY

ALUMA-LITE 23RB

SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: FORD E-350
ENGINE: TRITON 6.8-L V-10 GAS
FUEL: 40 GAL
GVWR: 11,500 LBS
LENGTH: 23' 11"
WIDTH: 8'
HEIGHT (W/AC): 10' 8"
INTERIOR HEIGHT: 6' 10"
WHEELBASE: 160"
FRESHWATER CAP: 61 GAL
GRAY-WATER CAP: 33 GAL
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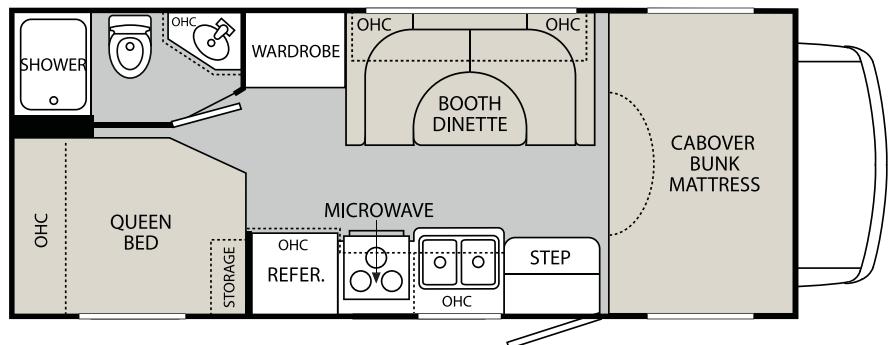


other storage cabinet above it on the wall at the foot of the bed. Although there is space underneath the bed, it's not wasted — it's incorporated into the cavernous rear storage area previously mentioned, and it can be reached through exterior bay doors. One notable omission from the bedroom area is a TV. There is a TV over the entry door, but it can't be seen from the bed.

Just forward of the bathroom and across the aisle from the queen-size bed is

a wardrobe that measures 43 inches tall and 25 inches wide. There are a couple of drawers underneath the wardrobe as well. There's enough room to store the clothing for the queen and king, and a couple of their princes and princesses, too, if necessary.

The galley leads off with a standard Norcold double-door 6-cubic-foot, two-way-power refrigerator/freezer that can take on enough food to last a weekend or a week, depending on the size of your crew. A light-



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ed and vented range hood hovers over the Wedgewood three-burner cooktop, and a built-in 900-watt Hamilton Beach microwave is stacked atop both. The stainless steel double-bowl sink features a high-arched faucet, and while the sinks aren't huge, there's enough room to wash a decent-size load of dishes. The appliances are high quality, storage space above and below is good, and all is laid out well. Our only gripe about the galley is that without the flip-up countertop that blocks the entryway when in use, there is not much food prep space other than the table at the booth dinette directly across the aisle from the galley.

A huge window offers great views from the booth dinette, and it was immediately obvious to us that the dinette area would be an ideal location for a slideout — though this floorplan doesn't currently offer that option. The dinette features fat, comfy cushions and converts easily into a sleeper that can take a couple of kids for the night. Here, too, we ran into a real estate issue with table space. The dinette seat could comfortably fit four for dining, if they are two adults and two kids, but the diminutive half-moon tabletop would only comfortably fit three plates. Storage abounds above the dinette, but was surprisingly lacking below the seat cushions. A 26-inch flat-screen TV is mounted above the doorway on a swivel-extension arm that allows it to be pulled out and viewed from the dinette.

The cabover sleeper echoes with cavernous room above the cockpit and is floored with a 57- by 80-inch split mattress. There's plenty of room for a couple of guests; and there is a storage cabinet at the end, with storage cubbies on both sides.

The cockpit in the Ultra-Lite 23RB is comfortable and well-organized. The plush captain's chairs are inviting and will make hours on the road seem like minutes. This particular unit was built on the Ford E-350 chassis, with a powerful V-10 engine, durable and sure-shifting automatic transmission, and familiar instruments and controls that are easy to read and operate.

If you need any more help imagining just how easily maneuverable this Class C motorhome is, picture this: A Ford Crew Cab pickup truck has about the same wheelbase length as the all-new 2011 Holiday Rambler Aluma-Lite 23RB. ♦

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NEWMAR VENTANA 4335

A BIG COACH WITH BIG FEATURES HIGHLIGHTS THE COMPANY'S ENTRY-LEVEL DIESEL LINEUP

So much for the naysayers who predicted the RV industry would collapse under the weight of the recession. While it's true that America — indeed the world — still stands on financially shaky ground, there are many motorhome manufacturers that haven't forgotten what their customers want: plenty of room, luxury features and quality workmanship.

Newmar Corp. of Nappanee, Ind., is one of those companies. Having weathered the worst of the recession's storms, the company began redesigning its entry-level Ventana diesel-pusher lineup before the government's ink on Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) legislation had even dried. In fact, the 2011 model year is one of significant change for Ventana: The front and rear caps are all new, and the door-side baggage doors are now full height, thanks to minor changes to the slideout rooms. Inside, Ventana sports all new soft goods and fabrics, and Ultralux leather replaces fabric on the sofas.

But Newmar's biggest news (literally and figuratively speak-

ing) is the introduction of the model 4335, the flagship of the Ventana lineup. Measuring almost 43 feet on a Freightliner tag axle chassis and sporting four slideouts, the 4335 marks the first time Newmar has offered a 1½-bath floorplan on a tag axle plat-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 57

SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: FREIGHTLINER XCR

ENGINE: 8.3-L

CUMMINS ISC, 360 HP

GVWR: 44,000 LBS

LENGTH: 42' 10"

WIDTH: 8' 5.5"

HEIGHT: 12' 6"

WHEELBASE: 269"

FRESHWATER CAP: 105 GAL

GRAY-WATER CAP: 65 GAL

BLACK-WATER CAP: 45 GAL

LP-GAS CAP: 32 GAL

BASE MSRP: \$272,727

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SMOOTH OPERATORS

SUMOSPRINGS
'AIRLESS AIR BAGS'
TAKE THE RATTLE
AND ROLL OUT
OF YOUR RIDE

by KEN FREUND

Bang, clang, shake, rattle and roll! If your motorhome has a jarring ride or sounds like a barrel full of bolts when it's going down the road, read on. We recently installed SumoSprings, an interesting concept dubbed the "world's first airless air bags." Designed to reduce banging and rocking, smooth out the ride and provide additional load support, SumoSprings basically take the place of air bags and mount on similar brackets. However, they don't require any air lines, compressors, gauges or maintenance. In fact, the company's motto is "fit it and forget it."

SumoSprings are cylindrically shaped suspension aids made from dense micro-cellular polyurethane, with exclusive additives that provide a graduated spring-rate curve. They're manufactured in a high-tech proprietary multistage hot-casting process, producing a unique closed-cell micro-cellular urethane. This results in progressive compression under load; they become firmer the more you compress them, which

helps eliminate harsh bottoming out. According to the manufacturer (SuperSprings International Inc.), they are compressible by up to 70 percent of their original height, making them ideal for high-dynamic loading compared with the typical 20 percent compression for material used by other manufacturers. They're also extendable to 30 percent of their unloaded height with full memory rebound, which lets them act as a shock absorber on the upstroke too.

SuperSprings engineers designed and tested SumoSprings for excellent abrasion resistance, and the company says the product is highly resilient to oils, salts and UV rays. The ribbed profile provides minimal transverse expansion, so unlike an air-inflated bag that expands laterally when compressed, SumoSprings compress without bulging when under load. That allows them to work in confined spaces where air bags might rub other suspension parts.

SumoSprings are significantly larger than a larger bump stop and act as variable-rate springs

FORD F53 CHASSIS



The front Ford F53 kit comes with brackets and hardware and sells for \$655. Labor time is about one hour.



The rear Ford F53 kit requires more brackets and takes longer to install. It sells for \$695 and labor time is 1.5 hours.



The front SumoSpring installed on a Ford F53 front axle.



The rear SumoSpring installed on a Ford F53 chassis.

that can help maintain the original factory ride and improve it. The products underwent testing in extreme conditions ranging from a blistering 200 degrees Fahrenheit to a frigid minus 40 degrees F., combining heavy loads with rugged terrain in more than 18 months of trials. There's no possibility of a system failure because of leaking air, and the closed-cell urethane won't rupture; in fact, it can be punctured without loss of performance.

INSTALLATION

The company's principals joined us for an installation session on two Class A motorhomes — one with a Ford F53 chassis and the other a Workhorse W22 series chassis. These are the most popular chassis on the market. The W22 carried a 2006 National RV 34-foot Dolphin coach, while the F53 had a 2007 Winnebago 30-foot

Sightseer mounted atop.

Kits — which were installed at both the front and rear of each coach — come complete with all mounting hardware required for installation. Existing frame holes are used as much as possible; only one $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch hole had to be drilled per corner. The front kits are easier to install since they are out in the open. Brackets bolt to the frame and top of the SumoSprings and U-bolts attach them to the leaf springs.

The rear units mount in a similar fashion, but are more difficult to fit because of their cramped locations above the leaf springs just forward of the rear axle. Drilling in the tight confines consumed much of the time; removing the tires would make it easier.

Kits are generally installed by shops that do chassis work, although installation is simple enough that an agile, experienced

do-it-yourselfer should be able to tackle the task with a few hand tools and a drill, plus some heavy blocks, a hydraulic bottle jack and safety jackstands. The coach needs to be lifted high enough to just get the tires off the pavement, one end at a time.

RESULTS

We drove both coaches on a test route before the installations and then we drove them after the kits were installed for comparison. We also tried out the Workhorse with just the rear kit installed, and then with both front and rears in place. On the F53, ride height increased by $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches at the rear, and 1 inch at the front. (Stock front suspension travel, measured with the weight on the wheels, was only $2\frac{5}{16}$ inches.) On the Workhorse, ride height increased marginally (only $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch at the rear and $\frac{1}{8}$ -inch at the front).

The result with both coaches was a

WORKHORSE W22 SERIES



SuperSprings International offers a complete SumoSprings kit for the Workhorse W22 series chassis. The front system costs \$195 and the rear system is \$695. Labor time is half an hour for the front and 1.5 hours for the rear. Prices don't include labor and tax.



A SumoSpring (black) replaces the stock Workhorse front jounce bumper (beige) on the W22 installation.



Units are pre-assembled before installation in the rear of the W22 chassis.

more stable, plusher ride with less jarring and banging over bumps and highway expansion joints. We also noticed considerably less racket from the rear, as the pots and pans were much quieter. The coaches dived less under hard braking, rocked side-to-side less, and generally felt more controlled.

Later we interviewed the owners after they had returned from a trip on a route they have traveled many times, and compared notes. Both owners said the changes were very palpable and a definite improvement. The Ford seemed to have a harsher ride originally and thus yielded the greater improvement, with the owner noting "in the front, the up-and-down hammering, brake dive and rocking side-to-side reduced dramatically." Their wives also rode in the back for a while and reported that there was a very noticeable change for the better there too.

Everyone agreed that SumoSprings

made a significant, positive change in ride quality. About the only thing you give up, compared with air bags, is the ability to adjust air pressure to vary the ride altitude. This is usually only an issue if you vary the load that you carry in the coach considerably.

FINAL THOUGHTS

SumoSprings engineers designed their units to fit most competitors' existing air-bag bracket systems, with very little or no modification required. Therefore, if you need to replace damaged or leaking air bags, contact SuperSprings for retrofit kits. SuperSprings International also manufactures SuperSprings and SuperCoils — heavy-duty replacement front-end coil springs. Check the company's website for details.

All SumoSprings kits are manufactured and assembled in the United States and have a two-year warranty. We found the

product to be well-made, the kits and brackets well-engineered, and the results significant. While we recommend installing the units at both ends, if money is tight, you'll probably get the most noticeable improvement per dollar by adding the front units. If you're skeptical, that's also a way to try them out.

Suggested retail prices for the Ford F53 chassis are \$695 for the rear system with a labor time of 1.5 hours; the front system is \$655 with a labor time of one hour. For the Workhorse chassis, the rear system is \$695 and labor time is 1.5 hours; the front system is \$195 and labor time is half an hour. Labor and tax are additional. ♦

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2010 MERIDIAN V CLASS 39N

FEATURING A MULTIPURPOSE FLOORPLAN, THIS ITASCA CATERS TO FAMILIES AND THOSE WHO LOVE TO ENTERTAIN



Itasca, long known for being the upscale cousin of iconic Winnebago, offers a brand-new family-friendly floorplan for 2010 in the Meridian V line. Taking many of the design and appointment cues from the Meridian full-timer stable, Itasca offers a dual-purpose bunk feature for enthusiasts who need additional space for family and friends.

The coach is built on the Freightliner XCS straight-rail chassis rather than the Freightliner Maxum dropped-rail chassis found on the standard Meridian line. That hardware change reduces the price point yet the motorhome still offers the expected features in this size, including a 55-degree wheel cut and 10,000-pound hitch receiver. The turbocharged 340-hp Cummins 6.7-L ISB and matched Allison six-speed transmission are supported on NeWay air suspension and stopped by ABS disc/drum air brakes supplemented by an engine brake for precise control.

Outside, full-body paint in a palette of five distinctive





SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: FREIGHTLINER XCS	INTERIOR HEIGHT: 7' 2"
ENGINE: CUMMINS ISB 6.7-L 340-HP TURBODIESEL	WHEELBASE: 267"
FUEL: 90 GAL	FRESHWATER CAP: 92 GAL
GVWR: 27,910 LBS	GRAY-WATER CAP: 79 GAL
LENGTH: 39' 11"	BLACK-WATER CAP: 52 GAL
WIDTH: 8' 5"	LP-GAS CAP: 28 GAL
HEIGHT WITH A/C: 12' 4"	BASE MSRP: \$210,837
	MSRP AS SHOWN: \$223,521

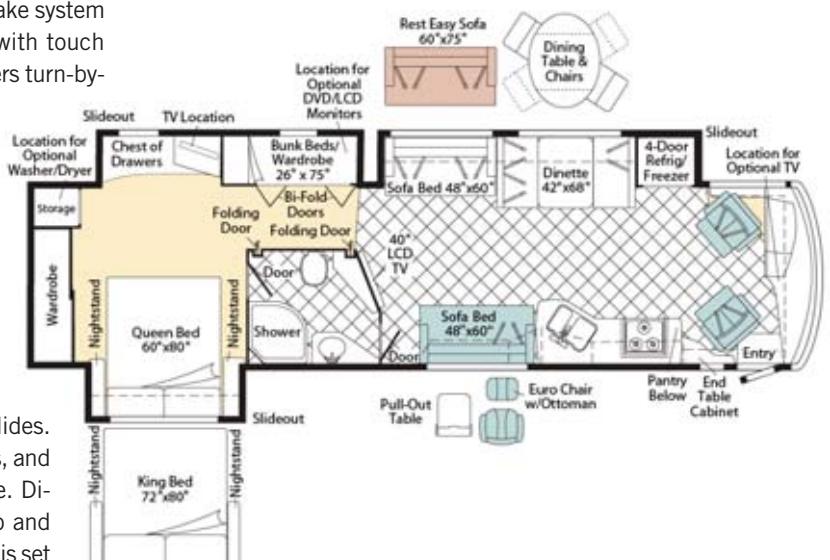
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colors disguises the multitude of RotoCast compartments totaling more than 140 cubic feet of available storage. There is also an optional (\$1,610) exterior entertainment center with a 32-inch TV, AM/FM stereo, speakers, DVD player and radio antenna. The front-mounted 6,000-watt Cummins Onan generator with optional (\$273) Auto-Start sits ready to keep things humming when isolated from shorepower and/or it senses excess battery drain.

Inside, the optional Ultraleather six-way power driver seat (\$336) and copilot seat with footrest (\$175) offer long-distance comfort. Dash controls are clearly labeled with three large gauges that give the status of engine and brake system functions. The optional (\$1,225) Garmin GPS with touch screen is easy to read and the nav system also offers turn-by-turn voice directions. Another available option is the (\$1,050) color video camera system with rear and side cameras. Hardwood storage cabinetry above the dash holds the distribution controls for the multi-TV connections, antenna and optional (\$1,253) satellite receiver plus one of the three DVD players available in this floorplan.

The forward galley design of this 39N plan, borrowed from the Winnebago Adventurer coach line, places the large, four-door refrigerator with icemaker behind the driver in the first of three slides. The facing dinette, available in three fabric choices, and push-button Rest Easy lounge complete the slide. Directly opposite, a three-burner stove/oven combo and optional (\$392) microwave/convection oven above is set in Coffee-Glazed Sierra Maple cabinetry, which is found throughout the coach. A curved base cabinet holds the twin-



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bowl sink, defining the galley space. Additional cabinet and drawer storage is available for galley needs, plus there's a handy counter-high, pullout pantry unit. A second sofa sleeper completes the curbside wall of the main cabin, all providing generous seating for visitors. Rather than having a smaller TV above the cockpit, Itasca utilizes the cabin wall of the amidships bath for a 40-inch LCD TV with media storage below and the coach's systems monitor panels nicely hidden in the shallow cabinet above.

Unique to this floorplan is the "bunk room" located in the rear streetside slide. Perfect for the kids, this dual-purpose area will comfortably sleep most anyone in the 26-inch by 75-inch bunks and can entertain as well with the optional (\$1,050) DVD/monitors. But access to the bunks is only possible when the slide is extended. Bifold doors with frosted glass offer privacy and when extra sleeping capacity is not needed, the upper bunk hinges out of the way, creating more than 6 feet of hanging closet space with shoe or flat-item storage under the lower bunk frame.

To access the coach's rear bedroom while in travel mode, you'll need to walk through the bathroom. The master bedroom offers an optional (\$1,484) king-size electric folding bed in the third slide, creating sit-up viewing of the TV and optional (\$448) entertainment system. Thanks to Freightliner's lowered engine placement, no step-up is needed to access the rear wall closet and linen (or washer/dryer-plumbed) cabinet.

The multipurpose floorplan on this Itasca Meridian V model creates a practical layout and is well-suited for a family or empty nest couple looking for a quality-built, well-appointed motor coach at an attractive price point. ♦

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ADDING A LOW OIL PRESSURE WARNING LIGHT TO YOUR MOTORHOME

RUNNING AN ENGINE WITH NO OR LOW OIL PRESSURE CAN CAUSE **SEVERE ENGINE DAMAGE** IN A MATTER OF MINUTES OR LESS

by ROGER HUNSICKER

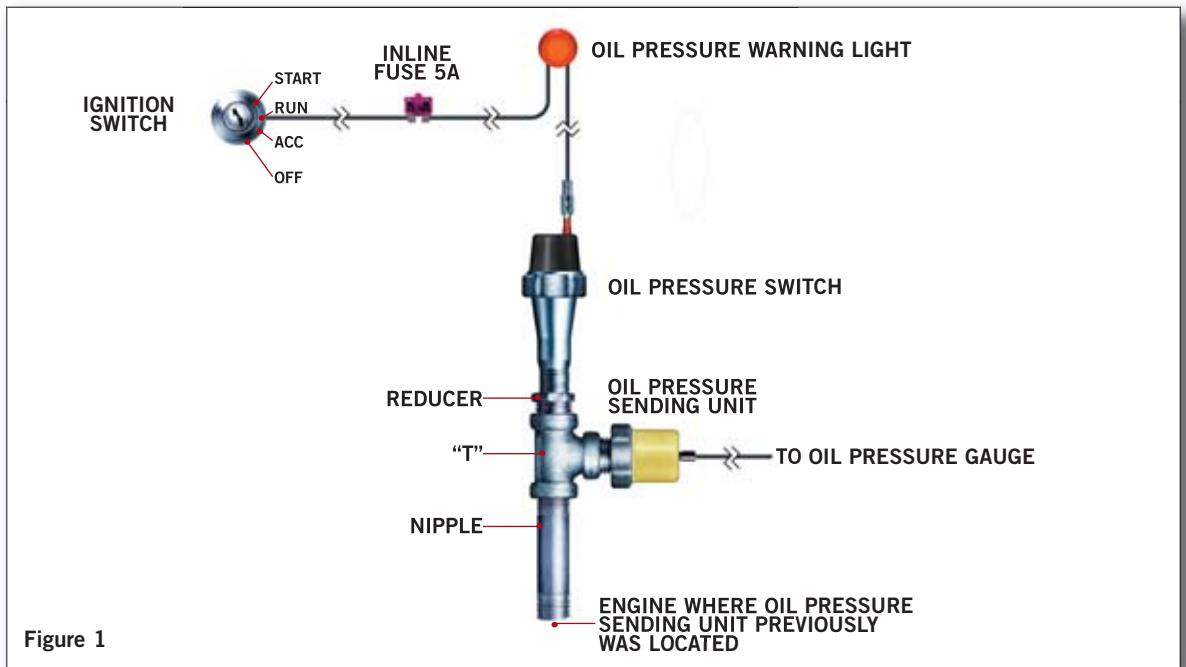


ILLUSTRATION: BILL TIPTON

An oil pressure gauge is a great thing to have and most motorhomes are equipped with one. However, stop and think about how often you actually look at it. The loss of oil pressure doesn't take long to do serious damage to your engine, or even seize it, so why not add an "idiot" light to your coach? A large red light warning you to shut

down your engine immediately could save you from a very expensive repair bill.

I've owned two Winnebago motorhomes, one with a Chevrolet 454 and the current one, a 1997 Winnebago Brave with a Ford 460 engine. Neither motorhome came equipped with an oil pressure warning light. Adding one to your coach is a straightforward procedure that can be accom-

PHOTOS: ROGER HUNSICKER

plished by any person who has at least some mechanical skill and basic tools.

Although your motorhome may be a Class B or C, and have a different chassis and engine than the one in this article, the basic installation is the same.

You should be able to complete the installation in less than a day, provided you have the proper tools and parts on hand (see "Tools and Parts Needed," Page 51). It is important to know where the oil pressure gauge sending unit is located on your engine before you start. Otherwise, with very complicated engines, you could spend a day looking for it. Here are the locations of the oil pressure gauge sending units for the most popular V-8 engines:

Chevrolet 454: The oil pressure switch and oil pressure sender for older 454s are mounted on the lower left front of the engine block just above the oil pan.

Chevrolet 8.1-L: It is on the back of the block just below the intake manifold. It can be difficult to see and even more difficult to remove. If you have a Class A motorhome with an inside engine cover, you should be able to get at it easily.

Ford 460: It is located on the back of the block on top of the bell-housing mount. (My motorhome has this engine.)

Ford V-10 6.8-L: It is located as you sit in the driver's seat low on the left side of the engine near the front. Above the oil filter is an oil cooler, and it mounts to an adapter that mounts directly to the engine block. At the front of the adapter is the oil pressure sender.

OK, let's start this project, using my 1997 Winnebago Brave Class A with the Ford 460 (7.5-L) engine as an example. Remove the doghouse that's located inside the motorhome. It can be unlocked with a blade screwdriver and pulled back out of the way. Now the oil pressure sending unit can be seen (**Photo 1**). Unhook the attached wire and use the Autocraft Oil Pressure Sending Unit Socket (Part #AC829) with a 3/8-inch drive ratchet wrench and extension to remove the sending unit. It's best to work on a cold engine. These oil pressure sending units and switches require a special socket to remove them, and a regular socket will not work. I had to loosen a shield attached to the bell housing, using a 3/8-inch socket, to make it easier to remove the sending unit (**Photo 2**). It was bent for clearance when the new oil pressure switch was installed (**Photo 6**). The sending unit on my engine has 1/4-inch pipe threads, but the new warning light switch has 3/8-inch pipe threads, so I had to use a reducer. The "T" with both the oil pressure sending unit and the oil pressure switch looks like **Photos 3 and 6**.

Screw a 2-inch-long, 1/4-inch nipple into the hole where the sending unit resided. You may need to adjust that length to fit your space, either closer to or farther from the engine block as needed. Next is the 1/4-inch "T," which had the reducer screwed into it, and then the new BWD S397Z Oil Pressure Switch screwed into the reducer. Lastly, screw the original sending unit into the "T" (**Photo 3**). Use Teflon pipe tape on all threaded joints. The new switch is normally closed, which completes a ground when the ignition switch is turned on. This turns on the warning light. After the engine is started, normal oil pressure opens the switch, which removes the ground and the light turns off. This is not rocket science.

The oil pressure sending unit that's used with the oil pressure gauge is not interchangeable with the oil pressure switch that's

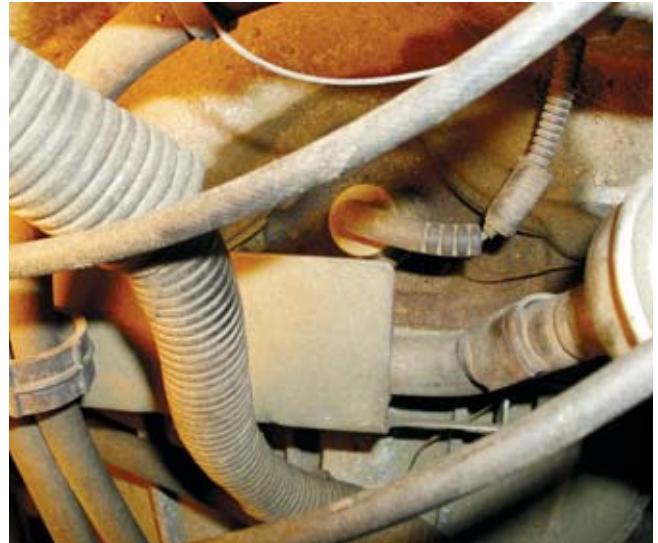


Photo 1



Photo 2



Photo 3



Photo 4

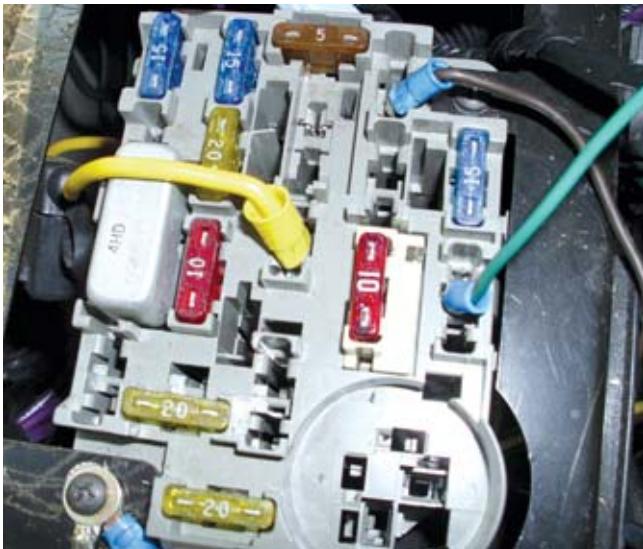


Photo 5



Photo 6

used with the warning light. The oil pressure switch is just that — an on/off switch. However, the oil pressure sending unit, working with the oil pressure gauge, reads your actual oil pressure.

Next, find a place where you want the warning light located. It should be somewhere on the dash that can easily be seen when you are sitting in the normal driving position. Be sure to measure twice and drill once (**Photo 4**). A useless hole in the dash is a real eyesore. If drilling a hole in the dash is not feasible, auto parts stores or RadioShack carry a bracket to mount lights under the dash. If you do it this way, be sure that you can clearly see the light when in your normal driving position.

Find a location where you can tap into a wire or terminal that is hot only when the ignition is on (**See Photo 5**). Run a wire from that location to one terminal of an inline fuse and the other terminal of the fuse to the indicator light. Then run a wire from the other terminal of the bulb to the new oil pressure switch (**See Figure 1**). That's all there is to it.

It might be overkill, but I soldered all connections and used heat-shrink tubing over all exposed terminals or any place where a short might occur. ♦

TOOLS AND PARTS NEEDED

- Oil pressure light switch, BWD, Part #S397Z, from Advance Auto Parts, about \$9.50.
- Autocraft oil pressure sending unit socket, Part #AC829, from Advance Auto Parts for about \$9. This is a must-have tool.
- Wire, 18 gauge, from any auto parts store, about \$5.50 for 40 feet.
- Terminals: Each installation will be different, but make sure you have the type you need for your installation to connect to the oil pressure light switch and your source of 12-volt DC power. Match them up at the auto parts store.
- Heat-shrink tubing to cover any exposed wire or connection.
- Inline fuse holder and fuse. A 5-amp fuse should be more than enough.
- Solder and soldering iron.
- On my installation, I used one ¼-inch "T," a ¼-inch nipple 2 inches long, and a ¼-inch to ⅜-inch reducer, about \$5 from Home Depot. See Photo 3, but your installation could be all ⅜-inch. If you ask the auto parts clerk to show you an oil pressure gauge sending unit for your engine, you can see if it is ¼- or ⅜-inch and go from there.
- Lamp assembly, 12-volt DC, Part #272-0336, from RadioShack, \$3.49 for a pack of two. This is a large, bright light, but you can use any 12-volt DC lamp.
- An electric drill, drill bits.
- A file to enlarge the hole in the dash for the light assembly, if necessary.
- A ⅜-inch socket wrench set with sockets and extensions.
- A terminal crimper.
- Electrical tape.



SPRAYING AWAY PAIN

THERAPAIN PLUS USES HIGH CONCENTRATIONS OF GLUCOSAMINE AND MSM TO RELIEVE ACHES AND PAINS NATURALLY

by BOB LIVINGSTON

The day-to-day tasks necessary to pursue the RV lifestyle will undoubtedly result in a few aches and pains at some time. Most of us typically pop a few over-the-counter pills to relieve the pain sufficiently enough to handle our daily routines — including fun things like bending over to reach inside storage areas and pulling the valve handle to dump holding tanks.

Recently, Dr. Rick Swartzburg, a chiropractor from Southern California, visited our editorial offices to introduce a topical pain reliever that he's been marketing in the pages of this magazine. My first reaction to Swartzburg's presentation was clearly driven by skepticism. He's a respectable guy, so I listened to what he had to say, although notions of snake oil kept popping in and out my mind.

Swartzburg left me a number of bottles of Therapain Plus so I could test its effectiveness. Admittedly, I'm more comfortable with nuts and bolts, so testing a topical pain reliever seemed a little outside my area of expertise. But what the heck, even a technical guy can tell if he has pain — and relief from it.

A little research on my part revealed that the liquid in the 4-ounce pump spray bottle has no artificial ingredients, such as preservatives, dyes or chemical binders/fillers. The product relies on glucosamine and MSM (methylsulfonylmethane) — more than 14,000 milligrams worth — along with peppermint, eucalyptus and natural menthol. I take glucosamine tablets every day with no side effects, so I thought: What can be bad about this stuff?

I distributed six bottles of the Therapain Plus to people who I discovered had minor to chronic aches and pains (some from arthritis), and kept a bottle for myself. I made sure there were no identical ailments. There were backs, wrists,

feet, arms, necks, shoulders and elbows covered in my testing. I wasn't looking to do a scientific study; I simply wanted to know if strategically spraying Therapain Plus would temporarily eliminate pain.

My first subject was complaining of a very sore elbow for days. He could hardly move his arm without serious pain. Following the directions, I sprayed a liberal dose on the affected area, had my "patient" rub the liquid into his skin using the tips of his fingers and, under the advice of Swartzburg, repeated the process when the first treatment dried. Within minutes my tester was out of pain. The double-dose routine was a good tip; it really works much better.

Once I witnessed the relief experienced by my first tester, I solicited responses from the others to whom I provided samples. Everyone reported positive results. How long the treatment lasted was different for each tester. But in all cases, even though some of the pain returned — sometimes rather quickly — there was still a high enough level of relief to make the pain tolerable.

Just to make sure, I tested it on myself and verified that this topical treatment does indeed eliminate pain — and very quickly. You can use Therapain Plus up to four times a day; it leaves no greasy feeling and won't stain clothing. It has a pleasant menthol smell that doesn't linger for long. A 4-ounce bottle sells for \$19.97 (promotional pricing) and even better deals can be had with orders of four or more bottles. You can get hundreds of treatments from each bottle.

While testing Therapain Plus was an unconventional assignment, the results have prompted me to make this pain reliever a staple in my RV medicine cabinet.

For more information, call 800-667-1969 or go to www.therapainplusMH.com. ♦

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FANCY FOOTWORK ▲

I made a footrest for my wife so she would be more comfortable while sitting in the passenger seat of our motorhome. I bought two shoe storage boxes from a discount store, drilled small holes in the side of each box and inserted screws to hold the boxes together. I then cut a piece of carpet to fit the top and screwed it to the connected boxes. To make it a little fancy, I used screw covers (found in RV supply stores) to cover the screw heads. You could also use double-sided tape instead of screws.

In addition to being a great footstool, the shoe box has drawers that can be pulled out, making it an additional storage place for small items.

H. RAY CALVERT | IRVING, TEXAS

SPRAY AWAY

I've tried many methods to clean and maintain the shower in our motorhome. I have discovered a very simple and easy solution. Mix 2 ounces of automatic dishwasher liquid with 20 ounces of water in a spray bottle. Just spray the mixture on shower doors and walls and wipe with a clean cloth. It makes cleaning easy with fantastic results.

CECILY HART | CHARLESTON, S.C.

GOT IT COVERED ▼



attached it to each of the four grommet holes with a nylon wire tie. Now all I have to do is drop the wheel cover over the tire, shake the cover and it falls to the ground. This eliminates the need for bungee cords. The covers have never blown away and the removal is simple — just pull them off.

WAYNE BRADLEY | ATWATER, CALIF. ♦



MOBILE WARMING ▲

There's nothing cozier than sitting in front of a warm fireplace on a cool evening — even in a motorhome. That's why we gave each other a fireplace a couple of years ago. It's electric, but looks very realistic; some people have asked if it uses LP-gas. Ours is a Dimplex Compact, but other brands are available.

It sits on the engine cover in our Class A motorhome, but because of the slope of the engine cover, it needed some leg extensions ($\frac{3}{4}$ -inch aluminum angle iron). The fireplace sits on four bolts, with acorn nuts, that are permanently installed in the engine cover. Once we hit the road, we store it on its back under our dinette.

The fireplace weighs only 40 pounds, so it's not difficult to handle. Plus, it's very practical. The 1,500-watt heater under the fireplace (controlled by a thermostat on the back of the unit) safely keeps the living area of our motorhome toasty warm quietly and without using up our LP-gas. Of course it needs shorepower, but it runs on a standard 120-volt AC wall plug.

PHIL AND MARY JOHNSON | DANVILLE, CALIF.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Quick Tips, MotorHome's monthly column of useful, handy and simple tips by fellow RVers, is looking for submissions. Please send your favorite do-it-yourself ideas to: MotorHome Quick Tips, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001. 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 & POWERTRAIN



storage. As a bonus, it comes with three outside pockets and a hidden inside pocket.

What sets this chair apart from all the others is the microfiber heating system that sends soothing heat to one's tush, allowing the user to stay out longer in cold weather, even without a roaring fire. The radiant heat is powered by a rechargeable lithium-ion battery that is stashed in a pocket on the side of the chair. Once the battery is fully charged, which takes two hours, it's rated to provide enough power to keep the heat going for 2½ hours on the high setting and up to four hours on low.

To test the effectiveness, I set the chair up on a rainy day, under the awning. Ambient temperatures hovered in the low 50s and the damp climate made conditions generally miserable for outside lounging. I lasted about two hours before retiring inside the motorhome, and surprisingly found it necessary to reduce the temperature setting to low after about a half-hour since, for me, it was getting too hot down below. The low heat made an amazing difference in the comfort level in lousy weather.

If I could be granted a wish to improve the function of the TempaChair, I would ask that a heated seat-back be offered as an option.

The chair is as comfortable as any director's chair I've tried, and the durable 600D fabric with PVC backing that's attached to the aluminum tubing will hold up to years of outdoor use. Padded armrests and the 20-inch height and 21-inch width of the seat enhance comfort.

The chair comes in green, navy or burgundy — with khaki trim — and sells for \$99.95 each or \$174.90 for two. AC and car chargers are provided with the chair; the battery is said to handle up to 300 recharging sessions.

Once you try radiant heat in an outside chair, it's hard to go back inside.

For more information, call 615-884-0973 or go to www.tempachair.com. ♦

HANDS-ON | by DAVE RIGGS

TEMPACHAIR

A folding director's chair with a new twist: **radiant seat heat** that soothes the body while lounging in colder weather

To the casual onlooker, an outdoor chair is something that one parks his or her posterior in while lounging under the awning. Other than using different materials and shapes, there's no new mousetrap here — or at least not until the TempaChair entered the market. The company that sells the TempaChair dubs it "the world's first — and only — heated folding director's chair." While the concept seemed a little silly at first, I came away from this evaluation with a "don't-knock-it-until-you've-tried-it" mentality. This chair really works.

The TempaChair is a quintessential director's chair with a flip-up tray and cup-holder. It can support up to 275 pounds, weighs about 9 pounds and folds flat easily for convenient



Film Flop

UNHAPPY WITH THE APPEARANCE OF THE PROTECTIVE COVERING ON THE FRONT OF THEIR MOTORHOME, TWO READERS ASKED HOT LINE TO GET INVOLVED. THEY WROTE:

We purchased a new Country Coach Inspire Class A in 2004. It was delivered with a factory-installed 3M-manufactured paint protection film. The only information we were given concerning this material was a mention in the owner's manual that it required the same care as the rest of the vehicle's full-body paint. About three years later the film began to crack and by the fourth year there was mold growing between the cracks and crazing was visible throughout the material.

I called 3M (800-643-0955) and found out that the warranty was for five years. I was also told that I would need to produce a warranty card in order to obtain any service for warranty repair. I tried calling Country Coach to see if I could get a copy of the 3M warranty card, but numerous phone calls resulted in nothing.

Just before the warranty expired, I found a local 3M installer/dealer who told me that he could help me as long as I had a copy of the Country Coach production order for my RV, which I gave to him. I have not heard back from him since.

Our otherwise beautiful motorhome looks terrible from the front. Anything Hot Line can do to assist us in this matter would be greatly appreciated.

**BOB AND CHERYL HANDREN
LEESBURG, FLA.**

HOT LINE HAS RECEIVED MANY LETTERS FROM READERS ABOUT THE WORKHORSE SAFETY RECALL INTERIM NOTICE 50901-C.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT THE RECALL IS ONLY FOR CERTAIN WORKHORSE W20, W21 AND W22 MOTORHOME CHASSIS, NOT ALL OF THEM.

Hot Line passed the Handrens' concerns on to 3M Automotive Division, with a request for further evaluation. A company representative responded as follows:

We are responding to your recent inquiry regarding a letter from Mr. Bob Handren. 3M sympathizes with any confusion he may have experienced. We are happy Hot Line brought this to our attention and we are able to address the situation.

We have reviewed the documents and our records, and have found no record of Handren contacting 3M directly at the phone number he provided in his letter. 3M has a strict policy to track all calls that come into the number he cited in his letter. Without direct contact with 3M, we were unable to ease the stress of the situation on Handren.

The installer Handren contacted is 3M-certified, but not employed by 3M and therefore is not legally required to assist on every warranty claim, which might be the issue Handren encountered.

3M is aware that RV manufacturers do not always provide a warranty card; in lieu of a warranty card 3M does allow documentation to be provided in the form of a 1-inch by 1-inch sample of the film and a copy of the purchase

papers that note the date of purchase.

Handren was within our warranty timeframe and policy. If the above documentation is provided and the film tests (prove) to be 3M, we will allow for a warranty claim to be made. The warranty customer care representatives have been advised of the situation and we invite Handren to contact our warranty hot line (800-643-0955). They will collect the paperwork and help him find an installer to assist with the warranty claim.

Thank you for following up with 3M and advising us of this unfortunate situation.

**GINA MAHAN
SCOTCHGARD PAINT PROTECTION
FILM WARRANTY ADMINISTRATOR
3M AUTOMOTIVE DIVISION
ST. PAUL, MINN.**

WORKHORSE WORRIES

When a brake caliper recall repair spawned a host of related problems with their motorhome's wheels, two readers asked for Hot Line's help. They explained:

Last year we were driving through Wichita, Kan., in our 2004 Class A motorhome (built on a Workhorse chassis) when the left front Bosch caliper failed as described in the Workhorse Safety Recall Interim Notice 50901-C. Subsequently, we called Workhorse to identify an authorized Workhorse chassis service center, make an appointment and direct us to the facility. This was Adventure RV and Truck Center in Wichita.

The service department found the caliper was hanging up and replaced it, as well as the brake pads, and they turned the rotors. The cost was \$645. Unfortunately, their workmanship led to a left front inner seal failure 10 weeks later, which required repair by another authorized Workhorse facility. Fortunately, that repair was covered under my extended warranty.

A few weeks later, on my way to Arizona, I found that the right front inner seal was leaking. Again, I called Workhorse and asked to be directed to

a Workhorse service center and that an appointment be made for me. I was sent to Fisher Chevrolet in Yuma, Ariz. A service technician at Fisher disassembled the right front wheel for repair and discovered that the nut that holds the wheel on the spindle was improperly installed, damaging the threads and causing the wheel to become loose and the inner seal to leak. This repair cost \$1,834.56.

All of this began with a flaw in the Bosch caliper brake system. Subsequent failure of the inner seals resulted from poor or incompetent work at Workhorse-authorized service facilities. I sent a letter to Workhorse that outlined what happened and I have spoken to staff in its technical assistance and PR departments requesting financial reimbursement. To date, I haven't received any return phone calls or letters.

I have subscribed to MotorHome for many years and have been amazed at what Hot Line accomplishes for RV owners who have been unfairly treated by companies. I now seek your assistance and would appreciate your help in this matter.

In cases like mine, where I have done nothing to bring about these product and workmanship problems, we RV owners are truly at the mercy of the manufacturers and the repair facilities, which when traveling we must depend upon. Thank you for being there!

**ALBERT AND PEGGY WILLIAMS
SNOHOMISH, WASH.**

Hot Line has received a flood of letters from readers about the Workhorse Custom Chassis Safety Recall Interim Notice 50901-C, which was released last May.

It's important to note that this brake recall is only for certain Workhorse W20, W21 and W22 motorhome chassis, built from July 24, 2000, through Dec. 19, 2007, not all of them. Workhorse has notified affected owners, based on the VIN and the build date, that the company is working with Bosch and the NHTSA to identify and correct the problem.

If you have not been contacted by Workhorse, and think your motorhome might be part of the recall, go online to www.workhorse.com/Default.aspx?tabid=185 and then go to "Click Here to Access

Brake Recall Resource Center." On the right side of the page is a box where you can enter your motorhome's 17-digit VIN. This will let you know whether your coach is part of the voluntary Workhorse recall.

The Williamses' motorhome was included in the recall, so we sent a letter to Workhorse Custom Chassis in our attempt to assist the Williamses. Workhorse did not reply directly to our inquiry, but we did receive the following statement from the company with updated information about the recall, which should be good news to many of our readers:

"Workhorse has been working diligently with Bosch brakes to achieve an effective, permanent solution to the recall of Bosch brake calipers. It is pleased to announce that a remedy has been approved and Workhorse expects to announce a production start date for the replacement parts on its website. Production of parts for all the affected units could take several months, but Workhorse is looking at ways to initiate fixes as soon as possible."

Hot Line also received the following letter from the Williamses letting us know the conclusion to their case. They wrote:

Thank you for your efforts in helping us receive some reimbursement regarding the Bosch caliper issue. We are happy to report that Workhorse Custom Chassis sent us a check in the amount of \$306.78, which was intended to cover the cost of the repair of the failed caliper. I feel certain that Hot Line's efforts helped put pressure on Workhorse to acknowledge its need to act responsibly toward customers regarding these caliper failures.

A. AND P.W. ♦

TO CONTRIBUTE TO HOT LINE, please refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 10.

Be sure to visit
MOTORHOME'S website:
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form in the Ventana line. According to Newmar, its best-selling floorplans have been 1½-bath models, which is no surprise, considering the convenience and privacy they provide.

A half bath off the living area means the bedroom and master bathroom won't be on view to visiting guests, and children sleeping in the living area will have their own restroom to use at night.

A roomy, tiled living area features large opposing slideouts, each with its own Easybed convertible sofa/sleeper. The streetside slide also houses a four-place hide-a-leaf dinette, as well as the refrigerator and pantry to open up the galley space. On the curbside, the galley features solid surface countertops, tiled backsplash, convection microwave oven, a three-burner stove and copious counter space. Instead of the traditional TV at the front of the coach (which is also available as an option), the 4335 features a standard 40-inch Sony LCD TV in a dry bar at the rear of the living area, complemented by Sony surround sound and DVD player.

The half bath is located amidships, directly across from a large wardrobe or optional washer/dryer cabinet. Take a step through this short hallway and you'll see a horizontally opposed full-size 72-by-80-inch king bed in its own small slideout. At the foot of the bed is another small slideout, which accommodates a dresser, overhead cabinet and a standard Sony 32-inch LCD TV with DVD player.

And finally, what this floorplan is all about: the rear master bath. Suitable for a luxury hotel, this area features a tiled floor, radius shower with glass door, toilet, lav and a large wardrobe with sliding, mirrored doors.

Moreover, the Ventana 4335 offers an abundance of standard features, including hydronic zone heating with continuous hot water, full-body paint and an HWH leveling system. Options include a 32-inch Sony LCD TV over the cockpit; high definition prep; exterior entertainment system with a 40-inch Sony LCD TV in a locking exterior compartment; stainless steel residential refrigerator (option comes with 2,000-watt sine wave inverter and two auxiliary batteries); bedroom tile; and Select Comfort mattress. ♦

Intermittent Rear Clearance and Taillights

We own a 1997 Glendale RV Class C motorhome on a Ford E-350 chassis. Sometimes when I pull on the light switch the clearance lights around the top of the unit (along with the taillights) don't work. Then they'll work again just fine. Can you suggest what might be the trouble? If you think it might be in the wiring, is there some sort of wiring diagram that I can use to check it out?

**DON AND JEAN SCHWARTZ
TIMBERLEA, NOVA SCOTIA**

The running lights are switched on by the same switch as the headlights, but they're on a separate circuit with a separate fuse. When they don't work, check to see if the front parking lights are on. These are on the same circuit as the taillights, so if they are still on, the problem lies in the wiring after the switch. You live in a damp region. It's very likely you'll find dirty or corroded connections at the fuse, in the switch or connectors. Wiggle the fuse and switch while a helper watches. Clean all sockets, connections and the switch with electrical contact cleaner spray and especially check all associated ground connections. I think that will cure it.

BAH, HUM (DIESEL) BUG!

In your answer to the May Powertrain letter "Fuel Gauge Problem and Microbes," you recommended Biobor to control microbial growth in diesel fuel when put in storage. I have been unable to find the product in my area (I live in Southern California). Your help in locating Biobor would be appreciated.

BOB REIS | WOODLAND HILLS, CALIF.

Biobor is manufactured by Hammonds Industries Inc. in Houston. Biobor JF is used in diesel fuel to kill the "bugs" and maintain fungi-free fuel. Consumers can buy these products from an RV shop, or try marine supply stores such

as West Marine; www.westmarine.com. Biobor JF may be poured in while the tank is being filled, which ensures faster and more complete dispersion. Biobor JF is available in 8-ounce and 16-ounce containers, 1-quart cans, 1-gallon containers and 5-gallon pails.

There is also a Biobor Hum-Bug Kit, which is a low-cost, easy-to-use early warning system that will effectively identify microorganism contamination in hydrocarbon fuels. These organisms cause fungal growth in fuels and the Hum-Bug Detector Kit will detect microbial contamination in its earliest stages if used regularly.

ETHANOL AGGRAVATION

We own a 2002 Pace Arrow with a Workhorse 8.1-L Chevrolet Vortec engine. In the past three years we have had a problem with backfiring through the intake into the air cleaner when it calls for increased power. After it misfires, it proceeds along until the power require-

ments change. We have checked with Workhorse, Fleetwood and our dealer. According to Workhorse, the problem is that the motor isn't designed to burn ethanol-enhanced fuel and it was suggested that we either fill it with non-ethanol (which is impossible to get here in the Eastern U.S.) or park the RV. When we traveled out into Wyoming, Utah and Arizona, where we could get non-ethanol, it worked fine. Any suggestions?

EUGENE COTE | PUNTA GORDA, FLA.

Backfiring into the intake is often a sign of a lean fuel mixture, and ethanol alcohol makes the fuel mixture leaner. However, not all similar coaches have this problem. It's likely that your fuel pressure is marginally low. Replace the fuel filter and check the fuel pressure at the fuel rail's Schrader valve under full load; it should be 55 to 62 PSI. You also may have phase separation, which can be helped with additives such as Biobor EB (www.hammondscos.com).

MYSTERIOUS MIST

Last year we bought a 2001 Monaco Knight coach with a 260-HP ISB 5.9-L Cummins diesel engine. On two trips, while we were towing a vehicle, what appeared to be diesel fuel dripped down from the engine area onto the rear framework of the coach, including the hitch area. The wind then blew it onto the towed vehicle and tow dolly, thoroughly covering both with an oily film.

Neither I nor a diesel mechanic have been able to locate the source of the leak, which only seems to occur a portion of the time when the vehicle is being towed. The engine oil level has remained high over 5,000 miles of use. Overfilling the fuel tank (one suggested cause) does not appear to be a factor. Do you know what the source of the leak might be?

**DAVE AND BETTIE BRECHWALD
STILLWATER, OKLA.**

It is very likely caused by venting crankcase fumes, which occurs more often under a heavier load towing a vehicle. Reroute the road draft tube so it doesn't blow out at the dinghy and put a catch can on it (or buy one from Fleetguard).

WHEN DRIVING ON MOUNTAIN ROADS, YOU GENERALLY CAN ALLOW THE TRANSMISSION TO DECIDE WHEN TO UPSHIFT AUTOMATICALLY DURING ACCELERATION. IF THE TRANSMISSION STARTS TO 'HUNT' UP AND DOWN BETWEEN GEARS DURING A CLIMB, LOCK OUT OVERDRIVE.



BACK TO BASICS How To Stretch Battery Power

Many motorhome owners occasionally want to boondock, or live “off the grid,” but may be apprehensive about running out of 12-volt DC power. One of the more common problems is having the auxiliary batteries (also known as “house” batteries) depleted soon after running the AC generator for several hours. This is usually a result of inadequate recharge capability — often combined with worn-out or damaged batteries. Here’s how you can make life without hookups easier.

THREE ESSENTIALS FOR LIVING OFF THE GRID

- House batteries of adequate size, in good condition.
- Good recharge methods and adequate wire size.
- Clean wiring connections with no corrosion.

TYPES OF BATTERIES



House batteries are known as “deep-cycle,” which means they are designed to withstand



the rigors of repeated discharging and recharging. There are two primary types: conventional (flooded) and valve-regulated (gel and absorbed glass mat or AGM).

CHECKING VOLTAGE



Check the voltage of the house batteries after recharge has occurred — after driving for at least a couple of hours, or after running

the AC generator for the same amount of time — or after solar panels have been in full sun for several hours. Voltage should be around 14.2, which is a generally effective recharge level for most deep-cycle batteries whether they are 12-volt or a set of 6-volt batteries wired in series for 12-volt output. (The variations: Flooded batteries are capable of handling higher voltage levels, while valve-regulated types require slightly lower levels.)

With the engine running, your voltage check may range from 13.8 to 14.5 because alternator output varies with ambient temperature. Despite the variations, alternators usually are effective battery chargers — assuming wiring is adequate.

If the voltage reading is around 14.2 at the batteries, the alternator is doing its job.

CHARGING BATTERIES

Check voltage with the motorhome connected to an AC power source (AC generator or shorepower). Again, to be effective, voltage should be about 14.2 unless the RV is equipped with a multistage inverter/converter unit (check your owner’s manual). This sophisticated unit will automatically set voltage to different levels depending on the situation. With conventional converters, output may be 13.8 or less, resulting in endless hours of AC generator operation that will not adequately recharge batteries.



If voltage output is about 14.2 and your batteries still tend to sag, the batteries probably are at fault. They might be sulfated (unable to store power) and should be replaced. Batteries that are old and/or are allowed to sit in a discharged state for more than a couple of weeks tend to become sulfated.

USING SOLAR PANELS

After solar panels have been in full sun for several hours, the voltage should be around 14.2 unless the charge cycle has been completed and the solar panel voltage regulator has reduced voltage to a maintenance stage.



If all charging results are good and your batteries still seem to fade prematurely, have them load tested. A single Group 27 12-volt battery should be able to sustain a 5-amp load (three 12-volt bulbs) for about 15 hours before dropping to 10.5 volts. If the battery sags in 10 hours or less, it should be replaced.

The following is a rough indicator of how to use your voltmeter or hydrometer as a “gas gauge” for battery reserve power (measure voltage under no load). Recharge at the 50 percent discharge level for best battery longevity.

VOLTAGE	STATE OF CHARGE	SPECIFIC GRAVITY
12.6 or higher	100%	1.265
12.4	70%	1.225
12.1	50%	1.190
12.0	25%	1.155
11.5	10%	1.120

'SANITIZING QUANDARY' QUESTION

I read with interest your reply in Coach & Chassis to the freshwater sanitation question ("Sanitizing Quandary") in the July issue. I'd like to know the amount of bleach to water and baking soda to water.

HAROLD BARNARD
WHITEWRIGHT, TEXAS

We recommend a solution of ¼ cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water. Pour 1 gallon of the solution into the water tank for each 15 gallons of tank capacity. The amount of baking soda is less critical. The rule of thumb is ½ cup mixed with water and dumped into the tank. Of course, both are flushed and the tank refilled afterward.

**FRESHWATER TANK CLEANING TIP**

Also in regard to "Sanitizing Quandary," we heard the following from William Quesenberry of Sedona, Ariz., who noted that sanitizing a freshwater tank when there is just a single water hose inlet seems to be a common problem. He wrote:

For years I tried the bleach-poured-into-the-hose routine, and the garden sprayer technique, to try to add bleach to my tank. Neither was usually successful, and I ended up with a lot of bleach-stained shirts and pants. I never could truly trust the water from my freshwater tank.

He came across a product that solves this problem — AquaSaver, sold by PJB Co. (www.aquasaverbyjbcompany.com; 570-435-5412). It can be installed by DIYers but you have to be able to cut into the top of the freshwater tank to install it. Once installed, you'll have an 8-inch opening into the tank so you can scrub the inside of the tank, rinse and add chemicals such as bleach or freshener. When closed it creates a watertight seal.

SHIFTING GUIDELINES

I own a 2005 Jayco Greyhawk 26SS with a Ford E-450 and V-10. I'm new to RVing and wonder what is the correct usage of the transmission on mountain roads? Do you downshift to a lower gear on descent? When do you take it out of overdrive?

DAN LOPEZ | **CENTRAL ISLIP, N.Y.**

Generally, you can allow the transmission to decide when to upshift automatically during acceleration. If the transmission starts to frequently "hunt" up and down between gears during a climb, lock out overdrive. The general rule of thumb is that you use the same gear to descend the grade as you did to climb it. So if you went up in second or third, manually select that gear at the summit before descending. You can also lock out overdrive on a long, moderate descent where just that change helps control speed without excessive braking.

'REDUCED POWER' WARNING

One week into a five-month-long trip, our Winnebago Brave 34D lost power. The engine message showed REDUCED POWER and we were unable to move. The engine had a rough idle and we called for a tow. We were towed to a Workhorse dealership and the technicians found that a wire on the TAC connector had come out. They replaced the wire and secured it with tie wraps.

One month later the coach lost power again with the same REDUCED POWER message. When the tow driver got there, he thought that the coach would run if we tried it again. It did, not at total full power, but enough to get us to a Workhorse dealership. This time they replaced the TAC connector.

Three months later, we had the same problem. We drove to the nearest Workhorse dealership, and after a quick inspection the technician found two loose ground wires under the engine. He said that loose ground wires could cause this same problem. The code was cleared and we were on our way.

How can we make sure this problem doesn't happen again? Thank you.

KEITH AND LINDA FULLER | **HOMER, N.Y.**

The engine is controlled by "throttle by wire" and the "reduced power" condition is set any time the engine powertrain control module (PCM) senses a wrong/improper signal for the throttle controls, for safety.

There are four components that can cause the reduced power situation. The controls are: the TAC module near the steering column (about the size of a pack of cigarettes wrapped in aluminum foil); the PCM under the hood; the wiring harness and connectors; and the throttle-control actuator. More than likely there is a harness problem such as a loose connection or rubbed wire. The code will also set when there is low battery voltage; that will make the PCM shut down temporarily. This usually will happen on startup. It's likely the technicians already solved the problem.

FORD V-10 REDLINE

I was glad to see your response in the June issue about the maximum engine speed on an 8.1-L GM V-8 on a Workhorse chassis ("Safe RPM for GM Gas Engines"). I have a 1999 Aerbus with a V-10 Triton engine on a 1998 Ford F53 chassis. Living in Southern California, I travel a lot of steep grades. I've tried to find the redline on my engine, but there's no information in the manual.

I've used 4,500 RPM as my "personal redline." Coming down steep hills I downshift to second gear to keep the speed and revs to a reasonable level in my comfort zone. Needless to say, I still have to use the brake on some of these hills. I only have 42,000 miles on the motorhome and have just had to put new brakes on it. Three of the rotors were resurfaced, but the left rear rotor had to be replaced. The shop that did the brake job said heavy motorhomes such as mine do wear out brakes fast. What do you suggest as a redline on the Ford V-10 Triton engine that is a reasonable compromise between engine/transmission and brake wear?

NICK PHILIPS | **HOMELAND, CALIF.**

Personally, I'd try to stay around 4,500 RPM, but according to Ford, the maximum recommended RPM (or redline) for this engine is 5,250 RPM. The V-10 is a shorter-stroke engine than the GM V-8 and therefore has lower internal forces at a given speed.

WACKY WARNING LIGHT AND BUZZER

My 1999 Bounder has a problem with the red warning light and buzzer associated with the stabilizers. Even when they are safely in the UP position, the buzzer beeps and flashes continuously. After the light and buzzer turn off they come back

on when I step on the brake. I tried to disconnect the two yellow leads from their connections under the stabilizer buttons, but to no avail. Any ideas?

MICHAEL WALDMAN | VIA E-MAIL

Not knowing the leveling product installed on your coach, I'll give you possible scenarios for the Power Gear and HWH systems — equipment that was offered by Fleetwood at the time of manufacture.

If it's a Power Gear, check the fluid level. Sensors are mounted on the side of the reservoir and when the jacks retract, the fluid level rises, engulfing the sensors and sending the signal that the jacks are retracted. If the fluid is too low to reach the sensors, the warning light and buzzer will alert the driver. The possible culprit in the HWH system is a faulty emergency brake switch. When the emergency brake is released, the switch disconnects the ground to the warning light and buzzer, and the warning light and buzzer turn off.

You shouldn't be messing with the wiring behind the control panel; leave that to the experts. The last thing you want to do is alter the warning system and render it nonfunctional. That can lead to serious damage if you drive off with the jacks extended.

MORE WORKHORSE TIPS

Regarding "Engine Misfire and Stalling" (June), burned spark plug wires on the rear two cylinders of either side are a common problem. The OEM grille area doesn't get proper airflow to the engine and usually the Workhorse engine vent kit will help cure it.

DALE OLSON | JARRELL, TEXAS

Yes, these big-block engines have always had a problem with melting spark plug cables and boots and shorting out the voltage to the plugs. But the misfire doesn't go away right after restarting. Plug cables and low fuel pressure seem to be the most common running problems with these models. Owners should check to see if their engine has panels in place beside the exhaust manifolds and if not, check with their Workhorse dealer.

TO CONTRIBUTE TO COACH & POWER-TRAIN, refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 10.

TECH NEWS



KEEPING FUEL SYSTEMS CLEAN

Diesel fuel degrades in quality over time, even during short-term storage. This can lead to diminished performance, decreased service life and potential engine failure. It's especially likely on motorhomes that sit idle for extended periods. Through regular temperature swings, water condenses and builds up in the fuel system. This accumulation of moisture in the fuel system can lead to growth of microbial contaminants that can quickly overwhelm the fuel system's filter/water separator, leading to costly problems.

New diesel fuel "polishing" systems continuously clean stored fuel during engine downtime, preventing the accumulation of water and organic contaminants. This makes the process of maintaining a clean fuel supply much easier. Water collected inside the tank fosters bacteria growth by providing a microbial breeding

ground that can lead to clogged filters, as well as oxidation, resulting in damage to expensive fuel system components. The best solution to maintain a clean fuel system is to address the root of the problem and continuously remove water and other contaminants before damage results. Parker Energy Systems' FPM-050 Fuel Polishing Module promotes a microbe-free environment while consuming minimal power and working with an installed pre-filter. The FPM-050 cleans and polishes fuel while the engine is off. Operating daily, it maximizes fuel system reliability and minimizes maintenance. The FPM-050 retails for \$587. Parker Energy Systems, 877-217-4501; www.parkerfuelpolishing.com.

EXTRA OIL TIP

Owners of Workhorse chassis with GM Vortec engines can add about 1.5 quarts of oil capacity simply by changing to a larger oil filter. More oil helps keep the engine cooler, protects it better and also keeps it cleaner longer, as contaminants will be diluted more. Here are some equivalent numbers for the two-quart filters: PF932F ACDelco; 51794 WIX; and 1794 NAPA.



EPA DELAYS RULING ON INCREASED ETHANOL IN GASOLINE

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced it intends to delay its ruling on whether to allow the ethanol portion of blended gasoline to be increased from the current 10 percent to 15 percent. Back in March 2009 Growth Energy, an ethanol lobbying group, had asked the EPA to allow gasoline to contain up to 15 percent ethanol. The EPA had planned to issue a decision by December 2009 but then said a decision would come in mid-2010. The EPA recently said a decision won't be made until at least the fall of 2010 because more tests need to be completed. Currently, pump gasoline in the United States can contain up to 10 percent ethanol, which is used to increase octane, reduce carbon-monoxide emissions and provide an alternative to petroleum-based fuels. Manufacturers currently only certify their engines to run on fuels that have a blend containing 10 percent, or less. Increasing the amount of ethanol could have a negative impact on motorhome engines, since burning ethanol makes engines run leaner and thus creates more heat in combustion chambers and exhaust than conventional gasoline. Ethanol blends are particularly a problem with older carbureted engines that don't have oxygen sensors in the exhaust to allow the engines to self-adjust the fuel mixtures. Also, fuel systems may be susceptible to corrosive effects of higher concentrations of ethanol. And while ethanol helps reduce carbon monoxide levels in engine exhaust, it can also increase the levels of oxides of nitrogen, one of the components of smog. Increased ethanol use may degrade performance, fuel economy and drivability. ♦

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Welcome to our 1986 Airstream 32S. Since we bought the motorhome in 1988, we have put about 150,000 miles on it traveling through the U.S. and Canada. We decorated the interior in a fishing theme, and I made most of the décor myself: Much of it is authentic but some pieces are reproductions. It's definitely a work in progress. My wife calls it the "other woman" because it's become an obsession for me!

Will and Kitty Grosse
Fox Lake, Illinois



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