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DECEMBER 2010

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## FEATURES

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Animal companions are the stars of our 11-page “Pet on Board” special section on RVing with pets. We explore RV parks with pet-friendly amenities (Page 20). We introduce you to three RVing families who travel with their pets (The Burkerts, Page 22; JJ Dippel, Page 24; and Greg Louganis, Page 26). We take a look at good pet etiquette (Page 25). Finally, we highlight some useful canine camping gear (Page 27) and offer tips for “ruffing it” (Page 28)

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**On The Cover:** Camping in style at Ventura Ranch KOA in Santa Paula, Calif., with the 2011 Fleetwood Storm (see test on page 42). Photo by Fred Pausch.

# FURRY FRIENDS

O

ne of the most memorable compliments I can recall receiving came from my former insurance agent. After getting to know our yellow Lab, Jamie, he enthusiastically said, "In my next life, I want to be your dog."

Jamie was our most recent canine family member, who after 15 glorious years went to the great dog run in the sky. And, boy, was she spoiled — but what a great RVing companion!

I have to admit that spoiling a dog is purely a product of owner encouragement — and to that I proudly plead guilty. We carefully monitored her gourmet food (our vet said her physique was perfect), made sure she got plenty of exercise and, well, allowed her to do just about anything she wanted as long as she followed proper doggy decorum. To that degree she was an expert; she knew how to work the system — and us. If Jamie had been able to talk during her prime, I'm sure she would have told everyone and anyone that being a die-hard RV dog certainly fulfilled her "bucket list." Jamie loved to travel in motorhomes, where she would sprawl out on the couch, patiently awaiting arrival in camp. Needless to say, we seldom got to see the upholstery, which was usually covered in sheets.

Traveling with a dog is a wonderful experience — but it's not without its difficulties. We've been castigated for inadvertently parking in a no-pet area of a park, and were often relegated to sites where the preponderance of "land mines" made it hard to tell the difference between the official dog run and our patio area. And we've been parked next to yapping dogs whose owners seem to be hard of hearing — or are oblivious to incessant barking.

Since motorhome enthusiasts live in fairly tight quarters in most RV parks, it's important to be considerate of our neighbors. Obviously, it's not polite to let your dog wander throughout the park,



even if it is perfectly social. And, walking your dog through other sites is certainly not acceptable. I just wish more parents would teach their children not to take shortcuts, especially when walking a dog. While our dogs were off-leash trained, they were always controlled by a 6-foot tether. Dogs being dogs, they often jumped from their resting place (normally under the rig) to greet unsuspecting visitors walking through our site. This can be frightening to trespassers, even if your animals are friendly.

The other issue is leaving dogs unattended in the motorhome. Most campgrounds don't allow this practice, but in reality, almost everyone does it. Heat is the enemy. Even though you can leave the air conditioner on, a power loss or equipment failure can be catastrophic. We always left windows open to allow for cross ventilation, even with the air on.

It's also important to leave a note on the door informing outsiders that there's a dog on board and providing contact information in case of an emergency while you're gone.

And it should go without saying that owners need to pick up after their dogs.

When we traveled with our dogs, we always searched for pet-friendly parks for reasons mentioned above. Some of our best times were spent socializing with other owners while our pets were running freely in a contained dog area. It was not uncommon to make new friends and rendezvous at specified dog-walking times each day while in the park.

We know that the majority of our readers travel with pets, primarily dogs, so we hope everyone enjoys the "Happy Tails to You," special section starting on page 19.

I'm sure our furry best friends will agree that motorhoming is a wonderful lifestyle, especially in a pet-friendly environment. ♦

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## “SHOULD MOTORHOME DRIVERS BE REQUIRED TO HAVE A COMMERCIAL LICENSE AND/OR GET MANDATORY TRAINING?”

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

### ‘IT’S ALL ABOUT FUN AND SAFETY’

I’ve operated a large motorhome for many years, and have had no problems in maneuvering it. I have had commercial driver’s licenses (CDLs) in the past. I firmly believe that anyone driving or towing larger vehicles should be required to take some sort of written and driving tests. I think that anyone would benefit greatly from some hands-on training before heading out on the road. I’d be the first to sign up for a course. It is all about fun and safety.

**JOEY L. HENDREN | SMYRNA, TENN.**

### TAKING PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

I don’t think that a CDL should be required to drive a motorhome. It is not a commercial vehicle. If we motorhome owners need to have a commercial license, what other commercial driver regulations will kick in? A maximum number of hours drivable per day? Stopping at weigh stations? Or maybe our insurance would go up dramatically.

**BRIAN ANDERSON | MONUMENT, COLO.**

### COMMON SENSE LACKING

The state of New York requires operators of RVs with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 26,001 pounds or more to take a driving test to get an “R” endorsement for their license. I teach a defensive driving course for motorhome operators. I have a friend who has an “R” endorsement, and who completed my driving course, and still I watched in horror as he pulled out in front of a tractor-trailer. How about those CDL truck drivers who tailgate; speed in the ice, snow and rain; force other vehicles off the road; etc. Common sense is frequently in short supply no matter what the license requirements are.

**BOB BENAC | WATERFORD, N.Y.**

### LET LOVED ONES BE YOUR GUIDE

Being an RVer for more than 40 years and having owned Class A’s and Class C’s, I’ve seen a lot of very humorous and sad situations, especially the lack of ability to drive and park Class A’s. I suggest that all Class A drivers possess either a CDL or a certificate of instruction from a licensed instructor. Take a look at your loved ones and ask if it’s worth it for their safety.

**BOB J. BRANDON | COLLEGE STATION, TEXAS**

### DRIVING A RIG ISN’T INTUITIVE

As someone with a CDL, I say yes, I think motorhome operators should have additional training and testing. There is nothing intuitive about driving a big RV. Turning speeds, stopping distances and emergency maneuvering are best taught rather than learned by experience, which usually ends badly and expensively. Most drivers have never experienced sitting in front of



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the front wheels. You have to learn to think ahead. If you get "behind the curve" you could be in serious trouble. Understanding overhang and its consequences can also be an expensive lesson, if learned the hard way.  
**HERB SWAIN | EAGLE POINT, ORE.**

### LOOK AT THE STATISTICS

There's more than just a license involved with a CDL, there's also a medical exam and a hearing test. The exams have to be taken each time the license comes up for renewal. Full-time RVers would have to travel back to the state that issued the original license, in order to renew the license.

If you look at the statistics for traffic accidents involving motorhomes, you'll find that there are far fewer accidents involving motorhomes than accidents involving buses, semi trucks or passenger vehicles. The reality is that anyone can have an accident regardless of which classification of license they hold or what kind of vehicle they drive.  
**HUGO GALANTE | LOMPOC, CALIF.**

### DEALERS SHOULD OFFER TRAINING

I don't think it's necessary to go so far as to require a CDL. However, I think that first-time motorhome drivers should at least be offered a training program before taking possession of their RV. My husband and I would have eagerly taken such a course. After the amount of money we spent on the motorhome, we would have been willing to pay a few more dollars to provide the peace of mind that being a confident driver provides.

Motorhome owners have a lot invested, they are generally older, experienced drivers and they will be responsible. But it still takes experience to properly judge distances, use the mirrors, figure out stopping distances and a myriad of other things.

**DOROTHY WALTON-LUGLAN  
PROSSER, WASH.**

### INCENTIVE FOR TRAINING

Rather than having another government mandate, I think it would be smart to offer voluntary training through RV groups and insurance companies. It would be an enjoyable educational experience. The incentive could be a reduced insurance rate through participating companies, much like defensive driving courses are offered for a nominal fee that lead to reduced auto insurance rates with most companies. I take the defensive

driving course every three years and it brings a 10 percent reduction in my premiums.

**JIM QUINN | LONGVIEW, TEXAS**

### A PURCHASE DETERRENT

Our answer is no. The RVers we know know how to handle their motorhomes. Also, it would deter many drivers from purchasing an RV. Winnebago has a Grand National Rally every July that offers driving classes for women. The instructors are women who have driven motorhomes for many years.

**MIKE AND SUSIE PAUL  
ST. PETER, MINN.**

### FREEDOM, NOT INTERFERENCE

Definitely, no. Motorhome drivers should not be required to have a CDL. If you've ever had a CDL, you know the hassle involved in obtaining and keeping the license — the hours of classroom instruction and over-the-road training, and the health exam, not to mention the Highway Watch program from the Department of Homeland Security.

I understand some drivers may need a little extra help when first learning to drive a motorhome, but that's no reason to require a CDL. The January 2009 MotorHome feature titled "Back to School" gives good tips on learning how to drive a motorhome.

Those of us who use our motorhome as sort of a freedom machine don't want any more government interference and control of our lives. If we are required to get a CDL, what's next — logbooks and weigh stations?  
**PHILLIP TODD | BLAIRSVILLE, GA.**

### ENDORING AN ENDORSEMENT

I don't think a CDL is needed to drive a Class A motorhome. However, I do think there should be an endorsement given by a qualified tester within the Department of Motor Vehicles for any Class C motorhome longer than 28 feet or any Class A. I've been a CDL driver for more than 40 years and I've seen people who can barely drive a large RV.

**WILLIAM HOLLIFIELD  
CENTRALIA, WASH.**

### USE 'EMERGENCY STOP' PROCEDURE

When I purchased my Class A motorhome, I was offered driving instruction by the dealership. I also know of other dealerships that offer driving/refreshers courses. A CDL requirement would probably hurt the RV industry. However, an "RV endorsement"

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to a state's driver license (similar to a "motorcycle endorsement") to show proficiency in handling an RV might be a solution.

When handling a new RV for the first couple of times, it is prudent to have a person outside to guide in maneuvering. I also use an "emergency stop" signal, which is a slap of the hand against the side of the motorhome. The sound can be heard throughout the rig and it means "Stop!" Then the driver and the outside person can talk about the problem before doing any damage. I've avoided hitting overhead tree branches while backing up by using this procedure.

**BERNARD JURGIEL**  
**WESLEY CHAPEL, FLA.**

### **CDL DOESN'T MAKE YOU SAFER**

A CDL doesn't make you a safer driver, it just costs you almost four times as much as a regular license. It's a ridiculous idea.  
**DOROTHY SITZMAN | PARK CITY, MONT.**

### **DON'T PUNISH BP EMPLOYEES**

I am a Texan, an RVer and a contributor to The Nature Conservancy. I am a believer in protecting our environment. Even so, I was dismayed to read that Camping World would terminate its relationship with BP and no longer stock Castrol oil (News Briefs, September). None of us liked the initial handling of the Gulf oil spill. However, Camping World should not punish the employees of BP for a problem caused by its executives. In these troubling financial times, jobs are important to each and every person in the U.S. and in the world. I think Camping World would be better served by continuing to sell Castrol and donating the profits to the Gulf cleanup.

**H. RAY CALVERT | IRVING, TEXAS**

### **A CONVENIENT BARGAIN**

Almost all dump sites charge at least \$10, and a \$5 dump is getting scarce. If Flying J ("Dumping Fee Instituted," P.O. Box, September) will provide a clean, convenient and functioning place to dump for \$10, it's probably a bargain in today's world, especially if I can get fuel, LP-gas and more. The key is "clean, convenient and functioning," which Flying J needs to work on, and hopefully with the new charge, will. Trying to find another fuel stop with all the advantages Flying J has would be a challenge.

**ROBERT GEERS | CEDAR KEY, FLA.**

### **A BUSINESS DECISION**

I read the letter by Ken and Kathy Nussear about Flying J charging a waste dump fee. Many campgrounds and other facilities also charge a dump fee. Businesses that provide dump stations have to pay to have the waste pumped out and carted away. I could see Flying J forgoing the waste dump fee if people fueled up their RV at the same time, but not if they just come in and dump their tanks without utilizing any paying services.

**BERNARD JURGIEL**  
**WESLEY CHAPEL, FLA.**

### **AIRING HIS BEEF WITH THE FCC**

I use a satellite system in my motorhome, with DirecTV as my service supplier. I travel nine months out of the year, stationed at some locations for up to two months. I have the local channels option and the Distance Network Service, which supplies me with the major channels (CBS, NBC, etc.) in standard format. I also have the HD option for the Distance Network Service.

I get the East and West major channels in standard format, but only the East major channels in HD because of the ZIP code where my home is (Raleigh, N.C.).

DirecTV states that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has restricted the HD broadcast in the Distance Network Service to the ZIP code. Even if I call DirecTV and tell them I am in California they can't turn on the West Coast HD channels for me because I still live in Raleigh, N.C. What does the ZIP code have to do with where I am? What happens to full-time RVers? How do they get the East and West HD channels when they travel?

I have sent this concern to the FCC and only get the runaround. I would like to know if other RVers have addressed this issue with the FCC.

**ART LLOYD | RALEIGH, N.C.**

## QUESTION:

**What is your most important concern when it comes to satellite TV service in your motorhome?**

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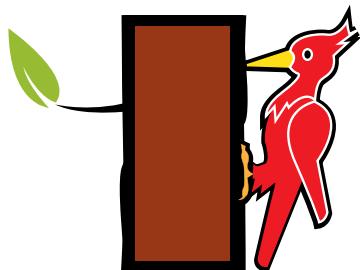
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# escapes

edited by PATRICIA MARROQUIN

EVENTS | NOTEWORTHY | NEWS BRIEFS | WHEELS & GEAR | CROSSROADS

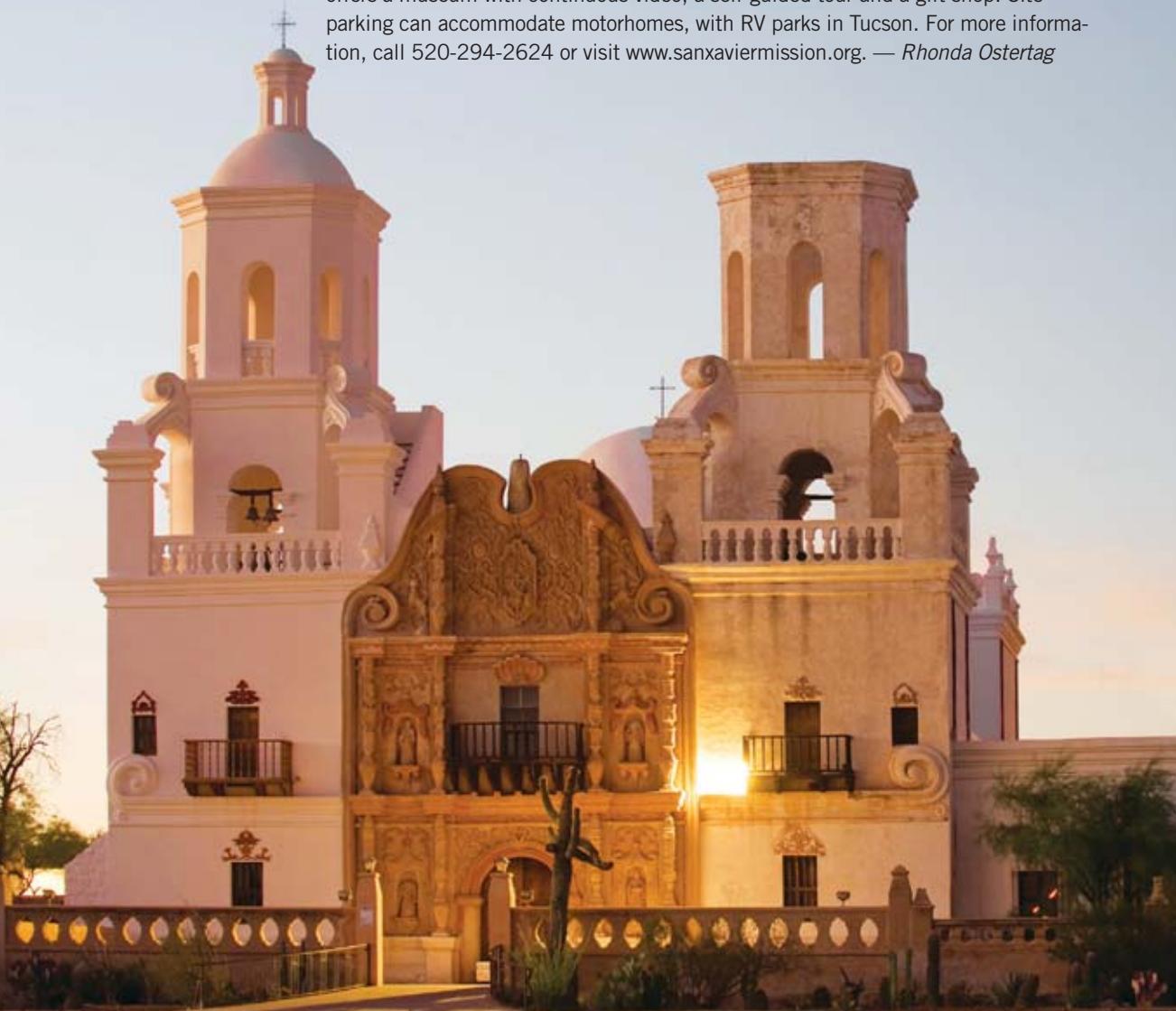
## ANGELS AND SAINTS IN RESIDENCE

SAN XAVIER DEL BAC,  
WITH ITS  
HAND-PAINTED  
FRESCOES,  
WELCOMES VISITORS

**Gleaming white on the dusky horizon south of Tucson, Ariz., this** Spanish mission, visible for miles, has welcomed its Native American parishioners, the Tohono O'odham Indians, to services for more than two centuries. Jesuit missionary Father Kino founded the mission at Bac, "the place where the water appears," in 1692.

The mission interior reveals hand-painted watercolor frescoes and gilded ornamentation. Some 82 angels and 100 saints populate the depictions. Events at the mission can add the aroma of traditional flatbread or the mystical notes of a Native American flute.

In the Santa Cruz Valley, off Interstate 19, nine miles south of Tucson, the mission is open daily and holds masses for its native population and visitors. It also offers a museum with continuous video, a self-guided tour and a gift shop. Site parking can accommodate motorhomes, with RV parks in Tucson. For more information, call 520-294-2624 or visit [www.sanxaviermission.org](http://www.sanxaviermission.org). — *Rhonda Ostertag*



**DEC. 3-24** | The Old West gets into the 1860s holiday spirit during **Christmas on the Comstock** in Virginia City, Nev. Capturing the essence of the decade in which Nevada became a state, visitors can eat roasted chestnuts, listen to holiday carolers, take a train ride and find unique gifts at the Dickens Faire, a juried show featuring handmade arts and crafts. An RV park with pull-through sites and full hookups is right in town; 800-718-7587, [www.visitvirginiacitynv.com](http://www.visitvirginiacitynv.com).

**DEC. 4** | Polish up your sweet tooth for the **Honey Festival** in Minco, Okla. More than 95 crafters, an “antique roadshow” with appraisers, a children’s tractor pull and a tour of homes attract a crowd of about 3,000 every year. More honey-focused activities include tours of the largest honey-producing plant in the state of Oklahoma, a honey bake-off, honey products and gifts and tons of free samples from local cheese and milk producers. RV parking is available; 405-352-0518, [www.minco-ok.com/minco/festival.htm](http://www.minco-ok.com/minco/festival.htm).

**DEC. 4** | Reflecting traditions from the 16th to the 18th centuries, **Christmas Through the Ages** at historic Fort Gaines in Dauphin Island, Ala., is a living history holiday celebration that encompasses more years than most. Blacksmithing, candle-dipping, cooking and ornament-making are a few of the activities that will appeal to both the young and old. Stay at the serene Dauphin Island Campground and visit the white-sand beach or Audubon Bird Sanctuary; 251-861-6992, [www.dauphinisland.org](http://www.dauphinisland.org).

**DEC. 4-5** | Songs of holiday cheer will fill Purdue University’s 6,000-plus seat Elliott Hall of Music, which hosts the 77th annual **Purdue Christmas Show** in West Lafayette, Ind. Talented students will sing their hearts out for four performances of a heartwarming holiday musical that has been entertaining audiences since 1933. Planning for the show starts during the preceding summer, when construction begins on the elaborate sets, which use nearly 1,000 yards of fabric and hundreds of gallons of paint; 800-893-3041, [www.purdue.edu/pmo/christmas.shtml](http://www.purdue.edu/pmo/christmas.shtml).

**DEC. 5** | Experience Christmas as it was two centuries ago with a delightfully modern twist at **Grand Illumination** at Colonial Williamsburg in Williamsburg, Va. Held the first Sunday of every December, fireworks such as Roman candles are shot into the sky from near the Governor’s Palace, while outdoor stages provide festive entertainment on the ground. Walking around the Historic Area is another reason to visit during the holiday season, as the decorations and candles twinkling in windows truly create a romantic ambiance; 800-447-8679, [www.history.org/christmas](http://www.history.org/christmas).



**DEC. 11-12** | Native American culture and family fun go hand-in-hand at the **Pueblo Grande Indian Market** at the Pueblo Grande Museum and Archaeological Park in Phoenix. Be entertained by traditional and contemporary musical performances while you munch on some Native American foods and shop for jewelry, paintings, pottery and more. Children can keep busy at the craft area while you tour a centuries-old platform mound and ball court or a replica of an ancient Hohokam home. If you’re feeling lucky, you can enter the raffle; 602-495-0901, [www.pgindianmarket.com](http://www.pgindianmarket.com).

**DEC. 11** | From the New River east to the Intracoastal Waterway and north to Lake Santa Barbara in Pompano Beach, the waters will come alive during the **Winterfest Boat Parade** in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Named one of the “Top 20 Parades in the World” by USA Today, the event includes literally thousands of twinkling boats, decked out in lights that will brighten up the water, while the nearby banks are adorned with stunning, colorful decorations. With a theme of “That’s Entertainment,” music will fill the air as the boats go gliding by; 954-767-0686, [www.winterfestparade.com](http://www.winterfestparade.com).



## DEC. 31

If you’re snowbirding in the Southeast, the **Peach Drop** in Atlanta is the place to be to ring in the new year. Family-friendly events begin at noon, with musical entertainment going on through midnight, when the 800-pound “Peach” will make its 58-second descent and a fireworks display will follow. It’s probably best to take your dinghy vehicle to this one; 404-523-2311, [www.peachdrop.com](http://www.peachdrop.com).



## RV BUSINESS NAMES TOP 50 NORTH AMERICAN DEALERS

### MotorHome's industry-oriented

sister publication, RV Business, announced its selections in August for the 3rd Annual RV Business Top 50 Dealer Awards. The awards were to be presented at a dinner Oct. 6 at the Rio All-Suite Hotel & Casino in Las Vegas during the Recreation Vehicle Dealer Association's (RVDA) annual RV Dealers International Convention/Expo.

A volunteer panel of industry veterans concluded its review of dealer applications, based on the nominations of North American RV manufacturers, on Aug. 5 after meeting for two days at the RV/MH Hall of Fame in Elkhart, Ind.

And while this year's selections rep-

resent a relatively wide array of dealerships in terms of size and style, RV Business Publisher Sherman Goldenberg reports that the panel's mission once again was to keep a keen eye on dealers' overall professionalism, best practices, consumer care, association activities, civic involvement and the general spirit and specific recommendations of the Go RVing Coalition's Committee on Excellence.

Again this year, the RV Business Top 50 selection process was overseen by Osceola, Ind.-based BJ Thompson Associates Inc. Consistent with the previous two years, the Top 50 dealers are not ranked, although five Blue Ribbon retailers were to be singled out on Oct. 6 for special

recognition. In addition, the Dave Altman Lifetime Achievement Award in RV retailing was to be presented to one of the Top 50 dealers at this year's dinner. Political columnist and author Ann Coulter was scheduled to be the keynote speaker.

Underwriting this year's RV Business Top 50 Dealer Awards program were "Leadership Alliance" members ADP Lightspeed, Bank of the West, Blue Ox, Cummins Onan RV Generators, Freightliner Custom Chassis Corp., RV America Insurance, RV Trader Online and Protective.

The following U.S. and Canadian retailers are the recipients of the 2010 RV Business Top 50 Dealer Awards (in unranked, alphabetical order):

**Aberdeen RV Center,**  
Aberdeen, Miss.

**Aloha RV,** Albuquerque, N.M.

**Alpin Haus,** Amsterdam, N.Y.

**Altmans Winnebago,** Carson, Calif.

**American RV,**

Grand Rapids, Mich.

**Apache Village RV Center,**

Hazelwood, Mo.

**ArrKann RV,** Edmonton, Canada

**Beckley's Camping Center,**

Thurmont, Md.

**Big Country RV,** Bend, Ore.

**Bill Plemmons RV World,**

Rural Hall, N.C.

**Boat N RV,** West Coxsackie, N.Y.

**Bucars RV Centre,**

Balzac, Canada

**Campers Inn,** Kingston, N.H.

**Capital RV Center,** Bismarck, N.D.

**Carolina Coach & Camper,**  
Claremont, N.C.

**Coachlight RV Sales,**

Carthage, Mo.

**Coates RV Center,**

Columbus, Minn.

**Colonial Airstream and Itasca,**

Lakewood, N.J.

**Curtis Trailers,** Portland, Ore.

**Dixie RV Superstore,**

Newport News, Va.

**Dodd RV,** Portsmouth, Va.

**Driftwood RV Centers,**

Clermont, N.J.

**Dusty's Camper World,**

Bartow, Fla.

**ExploreUSA RV Supercenter,**

Plano, Texas

**Greenway RV Sales and Service,**

Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.

**Guaranty RV Supercenters,**  
Junction City, Ore.

**Hilltop Trailer Sales,** Fridley, Minn.

**Kings Campers,** Wausau, Wis.

**Lazydays,** Seffner, Fla.

**Little Dealer Little Prices,** Phoenix

**Mike Thompson's RV Super**

**Stores,** Santa Fe Springs, Calif.

**Modern Trailer Sales,**

Anderson, Ind.

**Mount Comfort RV,**

Greenfield, Ind.

**Parkview RV Center,** Smyrna, Del.

**PleasureLand RV Center,**

St. Cloud, Minn.

**Pontiac RV,** Pontiac, Ill.

**Poulsbo RV,** Kent, Wash.

**Richardson's RV Centers,**

Riverside, Calif.

**Rick's RV Center,** Joliet, Ill.

**Roy Robinson Motorhome & RV Center,** Marysville, Wash.

**Safford RV,** Thornburg, Va.

**Steinbring Motorcoach,**

Garfield, Minn.

**Tennessee RV Sales & Service,**

Knoxville, Tenn.

**Terrell Camping Center,**

Terrell, N.C.

**Tom Johnson Camping Center,**

Marion, N.C.

**Topper's Camping Center,**

Waller, Texas

**Veurinks' RV Center,**

Grand Rapids, Mich.

**Wilkins RV,** Bath, N.Y.

**Windish RV Center,**

Lakewood, Colo.

**Woody's RV World,**

Red Deer, Canada

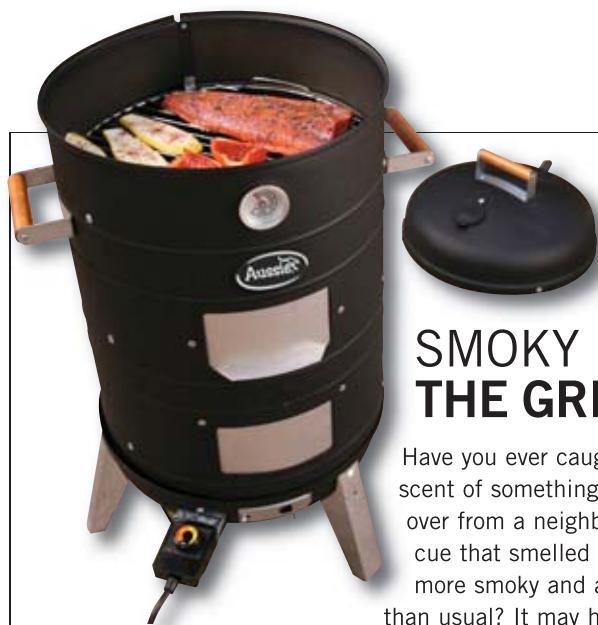
## News Briefs

After seven months' production of its EPA 2010 certified and compliant engines, **Cummins Inc.** announced this summer that it has built and shipped more than 20,000 heavy-duty and midrange engines with Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) exhaust aftertreatment, and at the end of August, this number was expected to crest at 26,000. These engines are delivering on the company's promises of better fuel economy, better reliability and better performance,

according to a news release. "Our 2010 products are delivering up to 6 percent better fuel economy and lower CO2 emissions, and they are meeting the near-zero emissions levels required by EPA 2010 standards," said Rich Freeland, president of Cummins' **Engine Business.**

**Camping World** has selected **ExxonMobil** as its exclusive lubricants supplier. Under the agreement, Exxon Mobil will supply Mobil Delvac 1300 Super and Mobil

Delvac 1 ESP for diesel engines, as well as Mobil 1 and Mobil Clean products for gasoline engines, to Camping World's more than 75 locations nationwide. The company will also supply Camping World with Mobil-branded coolants, greases and automatic transmission fluids for gasoline and diesel engines. "We are committed to bringing our customers new and efficient ways to enhance their RV and outdoor experience," said Marcus Lemonis, Camping World chairman and CEO.



## SMOKY THE GRILL

Have you ever caught a scent of something wafting over from a neighbor's barbecue that smelled just a little more smoky and appetizing than usual? It may have originated

from a smoker, a special type of outdoor grill that smokes the food for a long period of time and produces great flavor, but usually requires a significant amount of effort. With the electric **Aussie Smoker** from Meco, RVers can simply set it up, plug it in, and let the smoker work its magic.

To start, add whatever flavor wood chips you would like, water, and, of course, the food. The smoker will infuse the food with the smokehouse flavor of the wood chips. The 1,500-watt heating element and removable thermostat control allow you to set the smoker to your desired temperature and leave the food relatively unmonitored while you socialize with your fellow campers — think of it as the Crock-Pot version of a grill.

The Aussie Smoker has a retail price starting at \$99 and is also available in a stainless-steel model.

**Aussie Grills/Meco Corp., 800-251-7558, [www.aussiegrills.com](http://www.aussiegrills.com).**

## DETAIL LIKE A PRO

Getting your motorhome's exterior professionally cleaned isn't cheap, and it's not easy to achieve that same level of polish using products at home. Shurhold Industries has introduced a new **Dual Action Polisher** that delivers the buffing power of professional polishers with a six-speed 2,500-6,500 OPM motor, but without the worry of leaving behind burns or swirls.

The 6-inch oscillating head utilizes a revolutionary random action orbit to quickly create a sparkling finish using only half the amount of product that would be used with other polishers, according to the company. With an adjustable D-shaped handle and weighing only 4.8 pounds, it's easy to maneuver on fiberglass, gel coat, stainless steel, metalwork or even your motorhome's windshield — using one of the appropriate pads, which are sold separately. Shurhold's Dual Action Polisher retails for \$149.98.

**Shurhold Industries, 800-962-6241, [www.shurhold.com/rv](http://www.shurhold.com/rv).**



## SPILL-FREE SIPPING

Motorhome drivers have to be skilled at multitasking. Checking mirrors and gauges, tinkering with the controls for the radio and other electronics, munching on a snack — such distractions are common when driving, but with the **Contigo Autoseal** line of water bottles, you can easily take a drink using just one hand.

Since the cap never comes off the bottle (except when you're washing it), there's no opportunity for fumbling or spilling your beverage. The push-button open-and-close mechanism creates an automatic tight seal when you're not drinking, so if you throw it into a bag, you won't have to worry about leaks. Perfect for RVers on the go, the bottle has a carabiner clip integrated into the handle, and the large bottleneck opening is convenient for filling the container with ice cubes or mixing powdered drinks.

The Contigo Autoseal Water Bottles are BPA-free and dishwasher safe, and have a retail price starting at \$9.99.

**Contigo, 888-262-0622, [www.gocontigo.com](http://www.gocontigo.com).**

## CULTURAL CATWALK

**Catwalk National Recreation Trail** in southwest New Mexico weaves a memory basket of cultural and natural history. The one-mile-long trail leads into a volcanic slot canyon threaded by Whitewater Creek, the elevated catwalk (or hanging trail), and the telltale signs of the historic pipeline that carried the creek's reliable water down canyon to the 1893 stamp mill at Graham (now gone).

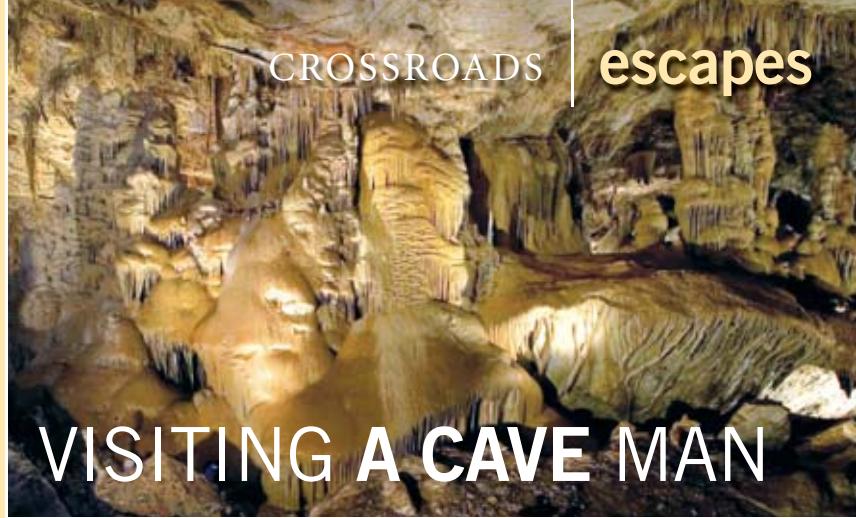
While picturesque, the canyon required daredevil skills both of the miners maintaining the life water of the mill and the Civilian Conservation Corps, who followed, building the original catwalk.



PHOTO: GEORGE OSTERTAG

Find the trailhead and picnic area (fee parking) about five miles northeast of Glenwood, at the end of paved State Route 174. Rangers caution that in the wet season, July and August, visitors may have to drive through water to reach parking. Since Whitewater Canyon is very narrow, it has a high potential for flash floods and flooding. Catwalk visitors are advised to check weather conditions before entering the canyon, especially during the rainy season. RV parks are in Glenwood.

**For more information**, visit [www.fs.usda.gov/gila](http://www.fs.usda.gov/gila). — *Rhonda Ostertag*



## VISITING A CAVE MAN

### The next time southeast

Arizona beckons, be sure to visit the exquisite limestone cave known as Kartchner Caverns State Park. Boasting world-class features, the cave was first discovered in 1974.

Kept a secret for years, the cave is now open to the public. Only guided tours are offered and provide views of orange “bacon” calcite formations and “fried egg” formations. One of the world's longest soda straw stalactites, stretching 21 feet 3 inches, is located in the Throne Room, and a replica is on display in the visitor center. Also in the Throne Room is Kubla Khan — at 58 feet tall, the tallest and most massive column in Arizona. Visit the Big Room and you might see the world's most extensive formation of brushite moonmilk — which forms only during certain weather conditions and usually in remote areas — and the first reported occurrence of “turnip” shields.

In addition to cave tours (which are available from mid-October to mid-April), visitors will find hiking trails, RV parking and a nice campground with electric sites.

**For more information**, call 520-586-4100 or 800-285-3703 or visit <http://azstateparks.com/Parks/KACA/index.html>. — *Donna Ikenberry*



## REMOTE RANGER STATION IS A PORTAL TO THE PAST



PHOTO: IDAHO TOURISM

**On the Northwest Passage Scenic Byway in Idaho (U.S. Highway 12)** — which spans the routes of Lewis and Clark and the Nez Perce Indians — Lochsa Historical Ranger Station (open seasonally at milepost 121.6) provides a portal to the 1920s and 1930s heyday of this U.S. Forest Service outpost.

Remote, even by today's standards, the ranger station was key to fighting fires and managing the forest. It was a time when blackberries were eaten, twitter and tweets were songs of birds, and an unreliable crackling radio was the link to the outside world. The kitchen was a noisy hub of activity, fueling each day's hard work. Horses were the means of travel and pack saddles, axes and shovels were the tools. A self-guided tour introduces the station. Generally, unless crowded, the visitor lot can fit a motorhome.

The winding 175-mile byway follows U.S. 12 between Lewiston and Lolo Pass, paralleling a magnificent river duo, the broad, satiny Clearwater and the restless Lochsa. The waters are prized for fishing and spring/summer rafting. At Kooskia, a 27-mile southern spur pursues State Highway 13. Campgrounds, including Wilderness Gateway east of the historical ranger station, dot the corridor.

**For more information**, call the station at 208-926-4274 or North Central Idaho Travel Association at 877-364-3246; or visit [www.visitnorthcentralidaho.org](http://www.visitnorthcentralidaho.org). — *Rhonda Ostertag* ♦

# Found! The Last Morgan Silver Dollars

## Amazing Discovery Hidden in Midwest Farm Cellar

**Indiana.** A farmer in America's heartland recently cashed in his long-forgotten savings, hidden away for decades in a dusty crate in his cellar—a hoard of the last Morgan Silver dollars minted by the U.S. Treasury before they ceased production for good, in 1921.

Originally purchased from a local bank for face value, the farmer had tucked them away for his retirement. Now these glittering chunks of nearly uncirculated silver history, are being released to the public by GovMint.com. While they last, you can acquire these brilliant, lustrous silver coins for as low as \$29.50 apiece. Twenty-coin Bankers rolls and 10-coin Half Rolls are available.

### Survival Against All Odds

By all rights these silver dollars should have been destroyed decades ago. Government silver melt-downs, including the 1918 Pittman Act, which alone destroyed 270 million Morgans, have decimated supplies. Millions more were called in by the government and melted for their silver content between 1921 and 1965. Today private hoards account for virtually all the surviving coins. And of those, only a fraction survive in the Virtually Uncirculated condition so coveted by collectors.

### Prized Last Year Coins

These last year 90% pure silver beauties still dazzle with their Mint luster and heft. Weighing in at 26.73 grams and a diameter of 38.1 mm, they are the largest American silver coins ever to circulate. Struck from silver mined from the western Mother Lode, they are the legendary coins that built the West. Master engraver George T. Morgan fashioned a radiant profile of Lady Liberty and a majestic eagle as symbols of our nation's strength and prosperity. Today, the long-gone Morgan silver dollars are among the most sought-after coins in America.

### Hot Silver Market, Hot Silver Value

Silver prices have jumped over 140% in the last two years fueling the frenzy among avid collectors, investors, and the 130 million new collectors created by the U.S. Mint's highly successful state quarters program.

Today, the market is hot for Silver coins in any condition. This same 1921 Morgan Silver Dollar currently sells elsewhere in the same grade condition for \$55 apiece. But while supplies last you can get this original Virtually Uncirculated 1921 Silver Morgan for as little as \$29.50 each, in quantity!

### Money-Back Satisfaction Guarantee

You must be 100% satisfied with your order, simply return it within 30 days via insured mail for a prompt refund of the complete purchase price.



Originally U.S. Silver Dollars were minted and stored in 1,000-coin canvas bags by the Mint.

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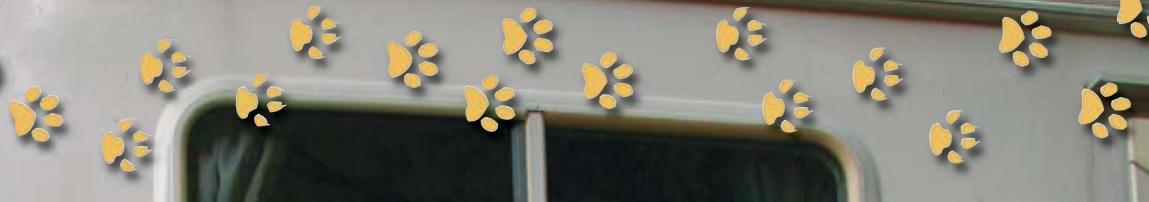
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# HAPPY TAILS TO YOU

## WHEN PETS ARE RVERS TOO

by PATRICIA MARROQUIN



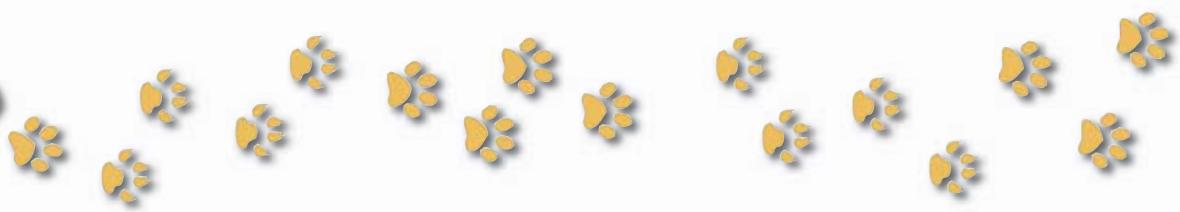
**I**n the P.O. Box column of our August issue, we asked the question: “Do you travel with your pets?” We were surprised at the outpouring of responses — we received so many letters we didn’t have space to run them all.

Our readers told us they travel with their Chihuahuas, Australian shepherds, golden retrievers, Yorkies, Irish setters, Siberian huskies, boxers and Rottweilers. One couple told us they take their dog and cat, while another couple described their adventures RVing

with the “ideal traveling companions” — their miniature schnauzer and Quaker parrot.

It was evident to us that RVer are passionate about their pets and many wouldn’t go on the road without them as they are important members of the family.

In this special section, we offer tips and advice for RVing with your pets; feature some doggone-friendly RV parks; spotlight a few RVers who travel with their animal companions; present useful pet products; and hear from one RVer about pet etiquette.



# FETCHING



The 40-site Four Paws Kingdom, above and below, is set on 34 acres in Rutherfordton, N.C. It truly is a kingdom for dogs, with eight dog parks, including one for pooches that “don’t play well” with other dogs. The canine attractions include an agility field, a pond and creek for taking a dip, and “dog days” every May with special events.



# FEATURES



Newport Dunes Waterfront RV Resort and Marina in Newport Beach, Calif., installed a large dog-wash station earlier this year, top. At Edgewater Resort and RV Park in Kelseyville, Calif., dogs are allowed to accompany their owners on boating and fishing expeditions.

## RV PARKS' PET-FRIENDLY AMENITIES — FROM AGILITY COURSES TO DOGGIE MESSAGES TO COSTUME CONTESTS — ARE NOTHING TO BARK AT

by JEFF CRIDER

**N**ewport Dunes Waterfront RV Resort and Marina offers everything an RVer would expect to find in one of Southern California's most luxurious destinations, including bayfront RV sites, sailing and kayaking lessons, family activities such as movies on the beach Friday and Saturday nights and live entertainment.

It also offers the unexpected, including a dog-friendly restaurant called the Back Bay Bistro.

"If you want to have a Saturday or Sunday brunch at the bistro, you can bring your dog along," Andrew Theodorou, the resort's general manager, said of the restaurant, which makes its first floor available for guests to enjoy meals with their pets.

RVers are also pleasantly surprised when they discover the resort has a large dog-wash station, which was installed earlier this year. "People love it," Theodorou said.

And while these kinds of dog-friendly amenities may sound a little out of the ordinary, privately owned campgrounds, RV parks and resorts across the country are increasingly investing in a variety of amenities to cater to people who travel with pets, particularly dogs.

Statistics show merit in taking this approach. A survey this year by Billings, Mont.-based Kampgrounds of America Inc. (KOA) found that 40 percent of its campers said they were traveling with pets, according to company spokesman Mike Gast, citing a survey by Phoenix-based Precision Data.

RVers themselves are also requesting more pet-friendly features, prompting campgrounds to invest in amenities such as dog-walking areas and pet-wash stations.

Kit Fox RV Park in Patterson, Calif., recently added a 25-foot by 30-foot fenced dog run area that includes seating for pet owners, while the San Diego Metro KOA in Chula Vista recently completed a 7,200-square-foot dog park, complete with agility obstacle courses and ball play areas. Campland on the Bay in San Diego completed an off-leash dog park last year. "It's a big hit," said Michael Gelfand, president of Terra Vista Management, which operates the park. "It's right on the waterfront."

Independent campgrounds as well as parks affiliated with KOA and Jellystone Park chains are also increasingly offering special event weekends with pet-related activities, including pet costume contests and pet parades. The KOA in Harpers Ferry, W.V., planned a "Pet Olympics," complete with a variety of pet agility competitions.

Some parks, of course, have not only been pet friendly, but have offered

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23



## FORMER CPAS AND THEIR POOCHES TAKE TIME TO ‘SNIFF THE ROSES’

by PATRICIA MARROQUIN



**A**my and Rod Burkert are on a mission — to help change the way people travel with their animal companions by making it easy for them to find places where they and their pets are welcome.

They are taking this mission so seriously, in fact, that they are having a lot of fun accomplishing it. Since 2009, the Burkerts have been running a free website called GoPetFriendly.com ([www.gopetfriendly.com](http://www.gopetfriendly.com)), where travelers can find pet-friendly campgrounds and other accommodations, restaurants, beaches, off-leash dog parks, wineries and many other places the whole family can enjoy together.

In February of this year, these “recovering accountants,” as they call themselves, set out in their 2010 Winnebago View to explore the country with their two dogs, 3-year-old German shepherd Buster and 6-year-old Shar-Pei Ty. During their travels, the couple, who hail from Pennsylvania, have been investigating places to add to their website.

As of press time, the foursome had traveled nearly 10,000 miles, and had been as far north as Niagara Falls, N.Y., and as far south as Savannah, Ga. Their plans were to visit Yellowstone and Glacier national parks, New England in the fall, then head south for the winter, blogging

([www.gopetfriendlyblog.com](http://www.gopetfriendlyblog.com)) about their adventures with the dogs along the way.

“The boys are not the perfectly behaved canine ambassadors you might expect,” Amy says of Ty and Buster. “As they are adapting to our new way of life, we spend a lot of time training and exercising them.”

Since they were CPAs in their “previous life,” Amy says, initially “we traveled the way accountants would” — obsessing with details, shunning spontaneity and getting upset when things didn’t go according to plan, such as weather ruining their outdoor activities.

“The dogs picked up on the negative energy and were anxious,” Amy says. “Buster was barking a lot, Ty was taking the task of disciplining Buster into his own hands, and neither dog would walk without pulling on the leash.” The Burkerts decided their attitude had to change. They no longer plan in advance; when they wake up, they decide what they’ll do that day.

“There is a lot less tension,” says Amy, “because there is no schedule and this allows us to take our time with the dogs and really enjoy ourselves. They say it’s about the journey, and if you can adopt that perspective it makes traveling with your dogs so much more enjoyable.”

Among the items and products that enhance the Burkerts’ RVing experience with their dogs are: the FURminator de-shedding tool, which “cuts down on the amount of time we have to spend cleaning the Winnebago,” says Amy; harnesses (“The dogs rarely pull on the leash when they have their harnesses on,” she says); and Honest Kitchen dehydrated dog food. “Because it’s

dehydrated, it's perfect for traveling — each 10-pound box makes 43 pounds of food once you add water," Amy says.

Rod lists the couple's three top tips for RVing with your pets.

**Invest time in training.** "You can avoid a lot of issues when you travel by teaching your dog a few basic commands," he says. "Come" is vital if the leash breaks or the dog gets loose in unfamiliar territory. "Heel" is important because in most places dogs must be leashed and "having him/her walk nicely beside you will make all your activities much more enjoyable," Rod says. "'Quiet' is invaluable during quiet hours, and 'Settle' is great when you want him/her to relax while you grab a bite at a pet-friendly restaurant."

**Prepare for emergencies.** Rod says it's important to bring your pet's veterinary records. Rather than carrying the whole file, he suggests taking a copy of the current vaccination records and scanning the rest of the data for storage on a USB drive. The drive "is easy to pack, you don't run the risk of losing the originals, and if you should need it, the information is easy to retrieve."

**Be flexible.** Expect the unexpected, Rod says. Your dog could have "one of those days," for example, where he's not following those commands you worked so hard on. "Anticipating these speed bumps will allow you to maneuver around them with ease — by rearranging your schedule or recognizing that some activities may have to wait for your next visit," Rod says.

Amy says RVers who are considering traveling with their pets should know that it will take more time to do what needs to be done and to get where you want to go when you take your pets along. But the rewards are great.

"Keeping them on their schedule is important," says Amy, "so if they are used to a 45-minute walk in the morning and evening, you need to stick with it even when you're traveling. Allowing time to care for their needs means you may have to adjust your expectations as to the number of miles you can travel or activities you can accomplish in a day. That's a good thing — it helps us remember to slow down and 'sniff the roses.'" ♦



Among the dog areas at Four Paws Kingdom is one specifically for small dogs.

unique pet amenities for many years, which they continue to build upon.

Consider Four Paws Kingdom in Rutherfordton, N.C. The 40-site park, which sits on 34 acres, has eight separate dog parks, including a private dog park for people with dogs that "don't play well" with other dogs.

"It's one of the best additions we've ever made," said Meik Bartoschek, who co-owns the park with his wife, Birgit. Other dog areas at Four Paws are designed specifically for big dogs or small dogs. They can also take a dip in the pond or creek and play in a dedicated agility field.

Four Paws does have restrictions on pit bulls, pit bull mixes and Rottweilers, due to "insurance company restrictions," Bartoschek said.

However, MotorHome magazine found that parks' restrictions are not uniform. Some parks, in fact, promote their willingness to accept any breed.

"We've had some of the sweetest pit bulls you'd ever want to meet in your life," said Sandra West, co-owner of Edgewater Resort and RV Park in Kelseyville, Calif., adding that the only dog bite that ever took place involved a small poodle. They do ask that their customers' pets be socialized, friendly and have no history of aggressive behavior.

Barbara DiPierre, co-owner of Crazy Horse Campground in Littleton, N.H., feels that pets are a part of the family and also accepts pets of any breed, as long as the owners bring proof that the pets have rabies vaccinations. "We feel that if they don't give their dog a rabies vaccination, they're not taking very good care of their pet," she said.

DiPierre is also happy to report that she's never had problems with big dogs. "In the 16 years we've been here, we'd

had one person bitten and that was by a little dog," she said.

But aside from the restrictions, it's the amenities that keep pet owners coming back. Four Paws has a 90 percent return visitor rate, Bartoschek said.

West, of Edgewater Resort, said people love using her park's beach area, which is open to dogs. They also come for special events, which include a "pet weekend" with a "hot doggie barbecue for people and pets," as well as a dog trainer and a dog groomer.

Four Paws Kingdom has "dog days" every May, which feature training, lectures and seminars. "This year, we had a dog massage therapist and we did free Canine Good Citizen certifications with our campers," said Bartoschek, whose wife, Birgit, is a dog trainer. "She gives free agility instructions on a regular basis," he said.

But while parks are doing their part to accommodate RVers with pets, they also say it's important for RVers to keep their pets on a leash, obey all rules and look after their pets.

"If you want to bring pets, you have to read the pet rules, and we ask people to pick up after their pets and not leave them unattended," said West of Edgewater Resort. "We consider pets like children. If you don't want to be with your pets, don't bring them." ♦

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

- [www.FidoFriendly.com](http://www.FidoFriendly.com)
- [www.GoPetFriendly.com](http://www.GoPetFriendly.com)
- [www.PetFinder.com](http://www.PetFinder.com)
- [www.PetTravel.com](http://www.PetTravel.com)
- [www.TrailerLifeDirectory.com](http://www.TrailerLifeDirectory.com)
- [www.Woodalls.com](http://www.Woodalls.com)



## A MOTORHOME, HER CAT AND THE OPEN ROAD: **THE PURR-FECT COMBINATION FOR RETIRED AUDITOR**

by PATRICIA MARROQUIN



**T**raveling in a motorhome may not exactly be the cat's meow for JJ Dippel's 12-year-old feline companion, CP, but Dippel wouldn't want to hit the road without him.

Dippel, a retired federal auditor who lives in Washington state when not RVing, has been traveling with her part-Siamese male cat, CP, for six years.

"When I was a child, my family didn't take our pets with us on camping trips. At the time, I wasn't aware of anyone who actually did that," says Dippel, who as of this writing was on a "workamping" assignment at Alta Lake State Park near Brewster, Wash.

In 2004, feeling stressed out from her job, Dippel saw RVers on the road and decided that's what she wanted to do. While still employed, her motorhome trips were mainly three-day weekends or week-long vacations. But now that she's retired, she spends 75 percent of her time RVing in her 2011 Forest River Sunseeker 3120 Class C motorhome and blogging about her adventures at [www.rvingtoadless.blogspot.com](http://www.rvingtoadless.blogspot.com). Places the pair have traveled to include Arches National Park in Utah, the Flight 93 National Memorial in Pennsylvania and Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery in Kentucky, where she did volunteer work.

The road was a bit bumpy for Dippel when she first started RVing with CP. "Cats do not like change, especially when they don't start RVing until they are 6 years old, as is the case with my cat," says Dippel. "Before we took our first RV trip, I let CP walk around the RV and 'sniff it out.' However, I still had to put up with 'MEOW,

MEOW, MEOW' constantly on the first trip."

There are fewer meows these days, thanks to several things Dippel does to make her cat more comfortable and to reduce his stress.

She owns two cat carriers — one she uses only for trips to the vet and the other for traveling in the motorhome. Dippel insists "my cat knows the difference!" CP will reluctantly go into the RV carrier, but Dippel will hear "meows of protest when the vet carrier is shown."

Dippel emphasizes that "good communication" — talking to your cat — is important. "Yes, you will feel stupid, but hearing your voice sometimes helps the cat."

She brings along CP's "comforts of home," which include his favorite toys and an "arch of bristles" that he likes to scratch and rub up against. And she tries to keep CP's routines (such as feeding and playtimes) the same in the RV as they are at home.

Besides the usual cat food; litter pan and litter; and leash and collar, other must-bring items Dippel takes for her cat are water (in 5-gallon jugs from home, since CP is used to that water) and flea protection, depending on where they're traveling and what time of year.

She also purchased a canvas pet crate, with screens on the side and a zippered top. The item, meant for a large dog, folds up for storage. "I use this cage to give CP 'outside time' when we are traveling. The screens allow fresh air in, and it's covered, so kitty cannot 'escape.'"

A splurge item for CP is a cat condo

with a scratching post and sitting perch. The condo is placed so that the perch is against the rear window of the Sunseeker. "CP loves this," says Dippel, "especially when we are in state parks with lots of trees."

A unique challenge when RVing with a cat is deciding where to put the litter box, she says. Some put it in the motorhome's shower, but because she uses it, that wasn't an option. With a previous RV, Dippel placed it in front between the passenger and driver seat. But her current motorhome has controls for leveling jacks in that area, so she had to find another spot. Dippel admits it isn't an ideal location, but she puts the enclosed box in the bedroom area.

Dippel has some tips and advice for those who travel with a cat. Make sure you are up to date with your cat's vaccinations and if you are crossing borders (such as Canada or Mexico), find out ahead of time what documents are required, she says. If headed to a specific area with plans to stay a while, find out the location of the nearest veterinarian.

"Before extending or retracting slides, make sure you know where your cat is," says Dippel. When the slide is retracted, the cat could be underneath it. Keep in mind, says Dippel, that the sudden noise of retracting or opening a slide could frighten the cat. Know all your cat's hiding places, says Dippel; CP's spots include under the driver or passenger seat or underneath the couch.

In the six years of RVing with CP, Dippel has had to pay a park pet fee only once. Usually RV parks don't charge a fee for cats, Dippel says, but she advises being honest and disclosing it upfront.

Traveling with her cat has made Dippel a better person, she feels. "When one travels solo, it's very easy to be selfish and have it be 'all about me.' My cat has needs, too," she says. Accommodating those needs, such as stopping every couple of hours to let him out of his carrier and walk around the motorhome, "keeps me from being selfish."

She adds: "The best advice I read ... about interacting with cats is that you do not 'train' a cat. Instead, you 'convince kitty that it's in its best interest to go along with the situation.' This approach has worked on my very finicky cat." ♦



## PRACTICING GOOD PET ETIQUETTE

by BERT GILDART

**It was a quiet, peaceful evening and my wife, Janie, and I had gathered** around a small campfire in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in Arizona when suddenly our reverie was broken by the frantic sound of barking dogs. Thinking the high-pitched yipping from inside the motorhome would soon abate, we waved as the owners departed in their dinghy vehicle. We added more wood to the fire and settled in to enjoy the evening. But the noise inside the RV continued, creating such a ruckus that eventually another camper reported the incident.

People go RVing to enjoy the great outdoors and to commune with nature, and some to enjoy the peace, quiet and tranquility of the outdoors. But there are a few RVers who are not being courteous to their "neighbors," usually because they are not following the pet rules. This past year, I've seen dogs on posted trails, and I've watched RVers set up outdoor fencing to house four to five dogs as they head out to explore their surroundings. I've also heard dogs left unattended for long periods of time.

To enhance everyone's enjoyment in our national lands, there are a number of things we pet lovers can do to minimize conflict. First, we simply need to appreciate the rules that are in place, which include the stipulation that dogs must not be left unattended. Certainly the rule is intended to maintain peace and quiet, but it is also intended to safeguard pets. In national parks such as Montana's Glacier, mountain lions and coyotes have taken dogs and cats left unattended outside.

We also need to understand that barking frightens deer and elk, species most people enjoy seeing. If owners have a dog they cannot control, they should probably obtain a kennel list, which is offered by most parks. Veterinarians can also recommend ways to discourage barking.

Regarding dogs and trails, all national parks I'm familiar with exclude dogs, and for a good reason. Imagine what would happen if you encountered a bear and your poodle began to bark. There are documented cases of dogs that have broken free from their owners, returning with a bear in hot pursuit. Imagine, too, the reaction of a bison in Yellowstone National Park to the sight of an excited dog barking, the very reason signs are posted in North Dakota's Theodore Roosevelt National Park saying "Dogs and Bison Don't Mix."

Nevertheless, there is a place for pets. As many of us know they can deter intruders, help make new acquaintances and return our affection. Still, many RVers do not travel with pets, and for all to enjoy the great outdoors we need to remember that there are rules — and that the noises our pets make may often carry farther than we realize. ♦



## FOR OLYMPIC GOLD MEDALIST GREG LOUGANIS, RVING WITH 4 DOGS REQUIRES AGILITY

by PATRICIA MARROQUIN



**L**egendary Olympic diving champion Greg Louganis says at times his life on the road with a quartet of four-legged companions and one two-legged one can be a bit like the Robin Williams comedy, “RV” — misadventures sprinkled with fun. However, he says traveling in his 2009 Gulf Stream SuperNova International motorhome with his four “kids,” as he calls them, and his partner Daniel McSwiney is the only way to go.

“My dogs are my family,” Southern California resident Louganis, the four-time gold medalist in the 1984 and 1988 Olympic Games, tells MotorHome. These days, Louganis spends little time in the pool and a lot of time training his pooches — Jack Russell terriers Nipper and Dobby, border collie Gryff and Hungarian Pumi puppy Hedwig (the latter three named after “Harry Potter” characters) — for agility competitions.

When it’s time to get to a competition, Louganis (the driver), McSwiney and the four dogs pile into the SuperNova and hit the

road, sometimes traveling across the country and often staying overnight at Flying J’s.

The motorhome is a comfortable and convenient way for the brood to travel. It’s also their preferred mode, after an incident that prompted Louganis to abandon flying with the dogs.

On one flight, Louganis’ dog Gryff traveled in his crate in the baggage compartment. Apparently the baggage handlers had broken the crate, because when the plane landed and the compartment was opened, “Gryffie came bounding out and he was terrified,” Louganis said. Zip ties had been used to hold the crate together and Louganis discovered Gryff had a chipped tooth. That was it — no more flights for Louganis’ “kids.”

In the SuperNova, the dogs travel in their crates, says Louganis, though he admits “sometimes the Jacks sit in our laps.” The two-bath motorhome sleeps 10 and when the slides are out, the dogs sleep in the bunk beds and the dinette area bed.

Like every RVer, Louganis has had his share of mishaps. In Tucson, a hotel had

allowed them to spend the night in the parking lot. As Louganis was maneuvering the 40-foot SuperNova into the spot, he failed to take into account a live power pole and he ripped the front air-conditioning unit off the roof. With temperatures topping 100 degrees, Louganis was allowed to keep his dogs in the hotel’s offices while he and McSwiney got the motorhome repaired.

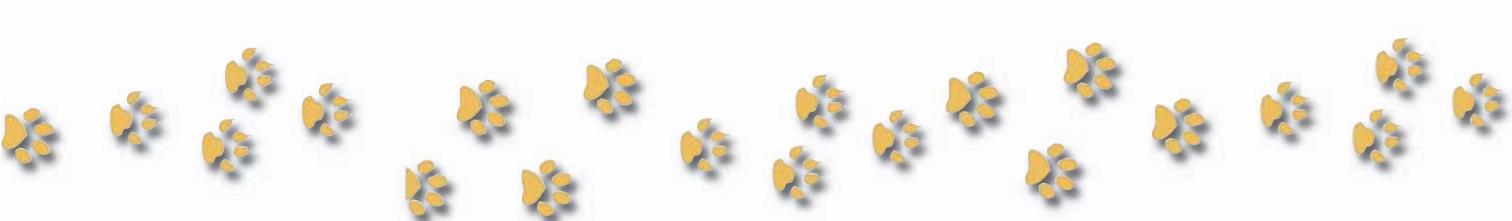
One of the challenges of traveling in a motorhome with agility competitors is making sure they get enough exercise, says Louganis, author of “For the Life of Your Dog, A Complete Guide to Having a Dog In Your Life, From Adoption and Birth Through Sickness and Health.” A walk in the morning and another in the afternoon just isn’t going to cut it for these athletic dogs. “Agility is a timed sport so it’s all about speed and fitness and conditioning,” he says.

Besides the agility competitions, other activities are keeping Louganis and family on the road these days. He was asked to be a mentor to the U.S. diving athletes and drove to Texas for the U.S. diving nationals. He went to Charlotte, N.C., to kick off a pet charity organization and has hit the highway for book tours and East Coast family visits.

Throughout his life, Louganis has traveled extensively, and he notes a difference in how the French view canines.

“We were going into 5-star restaurants with this little Jack Russell,” he says of a trip to Paris. “They’ll forgive you for being American if you have a dog,” Louganis jokes. “They just love their dogs.”

Whether it’s a 5-star French restaurant or a Flying J’s, you may just run into Louganis and his four-legged kids. ♦



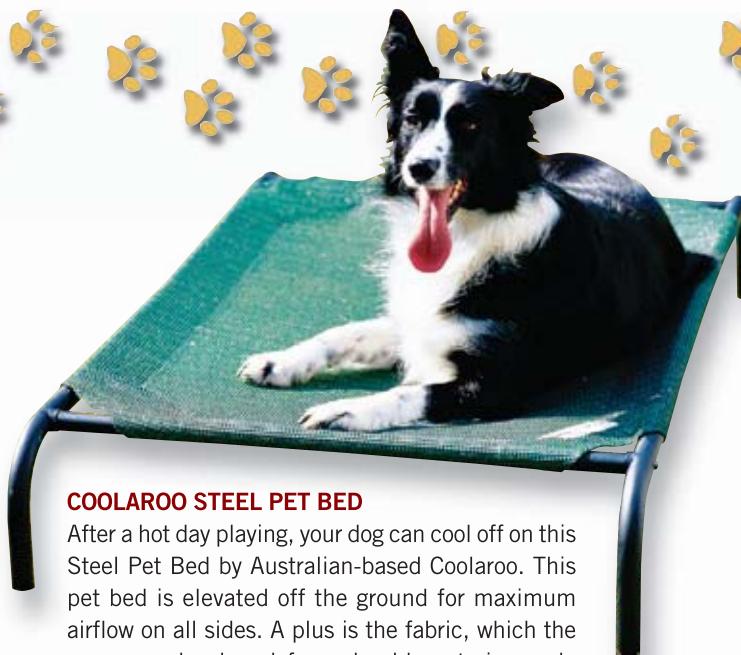
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by SYLVIA ALARID



PHOTO: GARY BOHINC



#### COOLAROO STEEL PET BED

After a hot day playing, your dog can cool off on this Steel Pet Bed by Australian-based Coolaroo. This pet bed is elevated off the ground for maximum airflow on all sides. A plus is the fabric, which the company developed from durable exterior-grade materials to withstand extreme weather conditions. It is also resistant to fleas, mites, mold and mildew and the effects of UV rays, according to the company. The pet bed is available in Small (27 × 20 inches, \$30), Medium (43.5 × 25.6 inches, \$34) and Large (51.1 × 31.5 inches, \$44) and in two colors. **Coolaroo, 800-560-4667, [www.coolaroousa.com](http://www.coolaroousa.com).**



#### ALITE DESIGNS BOA LITE LEASH

This company makes outdoor products using unique designs with an urban style. For pets, it offers this leash (\$30) with a handle loop to tether your dog while you run to your motorhome for extra supplies. Attached to the leash is a waste bag dispensary and an extra pocket for your keys or a doggie treat. The leash measures 59 inches and is available in two colors. **Alite Designs, 415-626-1526, [www.alitedesigns.com](http://www.alitedesigns.com).**

#### EGEAR GUARDIAN SAFETY LIGHT

Keep your dog safe and more easily seen with this attachable light (\$15) that you can clip to a collar or thread through slots. The tough, lightweight LED is waterproof down to 300 feet and features a lens specially designed to be seen from all angles and visible for up to two miles. Twist the LED to turn it on and switch between a steady-on mode (100-hour run time) and flashing mode (250-hour run time) by flipping the batteries. According to the company, the light is virtually indestructible. **Essential Gear, 800-582-3861, [www.essentialgear.com](http://www.essentialgear.com).**



## RUFFING IT BETTER WITH YOUR DOG

**Here are some tips for taking your dog RVing for the first time, or if you want to improve your travels with your dog:**

- Call the campground before you go to confirm the RV park's policy regarding dogs. Some campgrounds may say they're "pet-friendly," but will only accept dogs of certain sizes, weights and/or breeds.
- Know your dog. Once at the camp-

ground, does your dog chase squirrels and other animals? If so, you need to be strong enough to restrain your pet. Train your dog to come when called, or keep it on a leash at all times. In fact, some state parks mandate that dogs be on a leash at all times.

- Does your dog feel comfortable in unfamiliar situations? Sometimes in these cases, a dog will bark or whine after quiet

hours, disturbing your RV neighbors. Bring your pet's bed from home or some familiar toys to help it feel better.

- ID your dog. Make sure your dog has an ID tag that includes your cell phone number and the date of its last rabies vaccination. For a more permanent ID, consider a microchip and be sure to register your pet with the microchip company and keep the information up to date.

### GUYOT DESIGNS SQUISHY PET BOWLS

This pet bowl offers the same functionality as the company's Squishy Bowls for humans. It can easily collapse to fit any small space, and then regain its shape. The bowls are made of BPA- and polycarbonate-free food-grade silicone and offer a wider base and opening so pets can quickly enjoy a drink or kibble anywhere. Available in Tahoe Blue, Tangerine and Lime Green and in three sizes: Trail (24 ounces, \$13), Park (36 ounces, \$15) and Base Camp (48 ounces, \$20). **Guyot Designs, 207-348-1030, www.guyotdesigns.com.**



### LUNABRITE BE SEEN

Sherpa Pet Group, which invented the soft-sided airline-compliant pet carrier, comes to market with a new patent-pending illumination line powered by a light technology by LunaBrite that absorbs sunlight during the day and emits light once it's dark. Called "Be Seen" technology, it is available in pet collars, leads, safety walking vests, and even floatation devices and retrieving toys by different brands under the Sherpa Pet Group. The Be Seen light

doesn't require batteries; according to the company it charges in five to 30 minutes, and then lasts from dusk to dawn. It's nontoxic and weather-resistant. **Sherpa Pet Group, 800-743-7723, www.sherpapetgroup.com.**

### RUFF WEAR HIGHLANDS BED

Great in camp or anywhere else, the new Highlands Bed (\$75) is an ultralight, compressible dog bed that helps minimize weight and space when those two things are at a minimum.

It's made with synthetic high-loft Thermore insulation, with 50 percent recycled content, and is a comfortable place for a dog to rest and call his own. **Ruff Wear, 888-783-3923, www.ruffwear.com.** ♦



■ Clean up after your dog. When you pick up after your dog, you help other dog owners, won't give non-dog owners something to grumble about and help encourage a dog-friendly camping environment. Keep your dog's food inside your motorhome.

■ Learn how to provide first aid to your dog. There are usually ways to get help while on the road or in a campground,

but it almost always takes more time. Being able to provide competent first aid yourself could save your dog's life.

■ Involve your dog in everything you do. Dogs usually have a better time if you involve them in your activities. Take them with you on walks, let them play in the water or throw them a ball. They'll be more than happy the next time you want to take them out for a trip in the motorhome.

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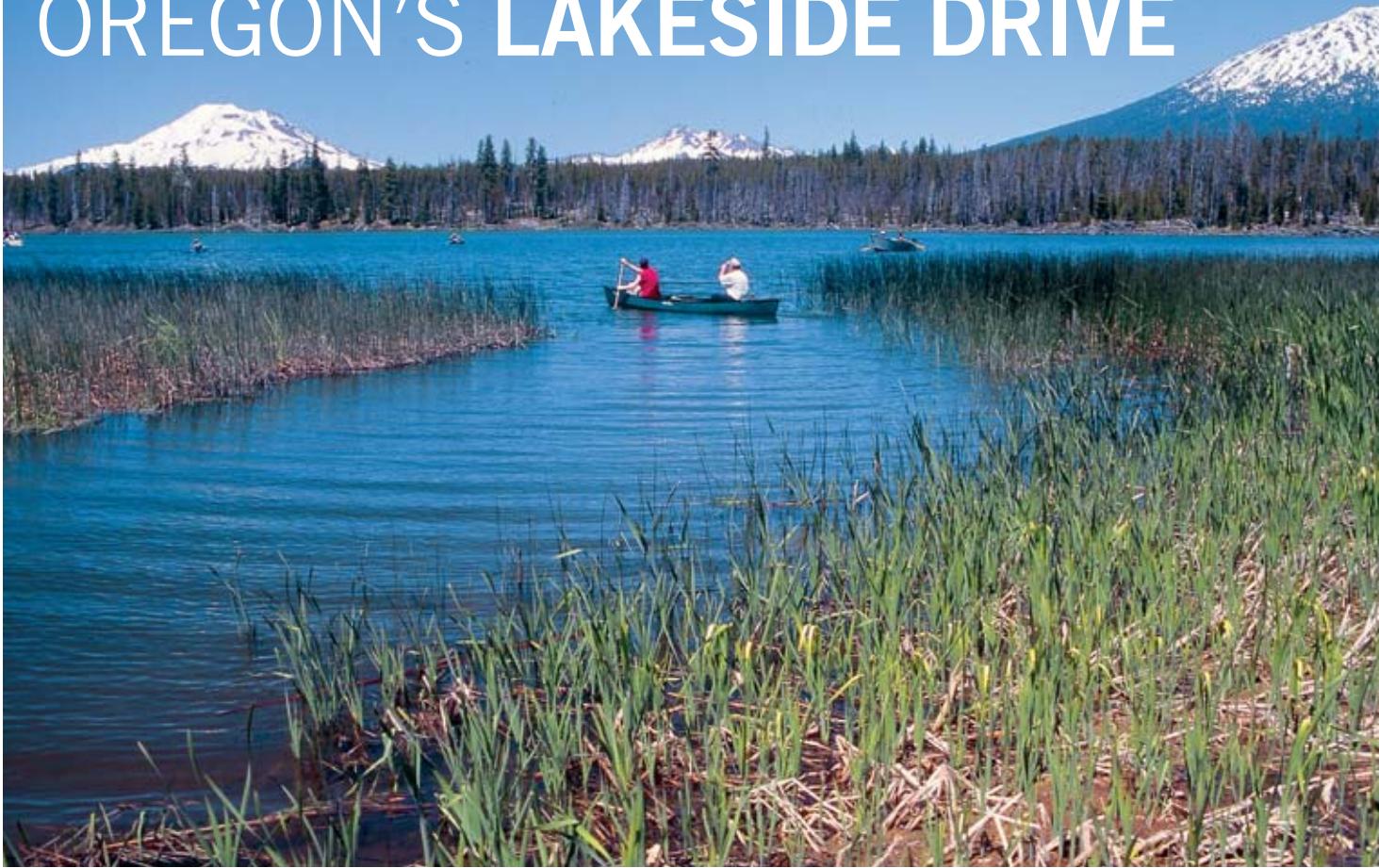
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# OREGON'S LAKESIDE DRIVE



RIVERS AND MEADOWS, VISTAS AND VOLCANIC PEAKS CREATE A HIGH DESERT WONDERLAND ALONG **CASCADES LAKES SCENIC BYWAY**

*by* BOB AND LYNN DIFLEY

**S**hapeless wisps of mist lingered just above the mirror-smooth surface of Hosmer Lake in central Oregon, waiting for the sun to crest the surrounding mountains to the east and warm the chill morning air. A rainbow trout, flashing its vivid iridescence, broke the lake's stillness with a twisting leap, deftly snatching an unsuspecting bug from the air.

Like mini-submarines, giant rainbow and brook trout and huge Atlantic salmon (the only Western lake stocked with them) swam lazily in the clear water below us, unfazed by the repetitious dipping of our paddles or the easy movement of the kayak through the water. Causing anglers to drool, these trophy-sized fish grow to maturity and splendid girth because of the catch-and-release, no-barb-hook, fly-fishing-only rule that applies to the lake.

Hosmer Lake is but one of several lakes scattered like jewels in a necklace along Cas-



**Top:** A couple navigate Little Lava Lake, whose underground springs flow to the Deschutes River. **Above:** Green Lakes Trail follows Fall Creek.



**Clockwise from below:** Shallow Devils Lake is one of the highest lakes along Cascades Lake Drive. Rainbow and brook trout are among the fish inhabiting the mountain streams. The campground at Big Lava Lake offers hookups and has a small grocery store as well as a dump station and boat rentals. Elk Lake is a popular spot for sailboats.



MAP: SUE CARLSON

### THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

**ROADS:** Cascades Lakes Highway is a paved two-lane road. Most campgrounds are accessed by gravel roads. Elk Lake Loop is gravel/dirt. Most roads inside the area's campgrounds are gravel. Not all Forest Service campgrounds will fit large motorhomes, nor will all campsites within campgrounds. If in doubt, go to one of the campgrounds with hookups that can accommodate larger RVs.

**CAMPING:** Forest Service campsites are available at most of the lakes and sites with hookups are available at Lava Lake Lodge, Crane Prairie Resort and Twin Lakes Resort. Water is available at most campgrounds, but not at walk-in sites or at Soda Creek.

**SUPPLIES:** Basic supplies are available at the small campground stores at Lava Lake and Elk Lake, and at larger stores at Sunriver and La Pine. But for a larger variety and fresh fruits and vegetables, Bend's supermarkets are the clear choice. A dump station, gasoline, LP-gas and some supplies are available at Elk Lake Lodge, Lava Lake Lodge, Crane Prairie Resort and Twin Lakes Resort.

**WEATHER:** High-mountain weather can change rapidly. If hiking, be prepared for wind, showers and cooling temperatures, but also use sunblock, wear a sun hat and carry a water bottle. If afternoon thunderstorms threaten, come in off the lakes.

Remember that you are at a high altitude. Allow your body to acclimate to the altitude before attempting strenuous activities. — *B.D. and L.D.*

ades Lakes Drive, a designated National Scenic Byway that passes through Oregon's Deschutes National Forest. Take your pick of activities in this high country outdoor wonderland: fishing, boating, sailing or paddling on the many lakes; road touring along the scenic two-lane byway; hiking along the miles of trails to Alpine meadows, spectacular vistas or into primeval wilderness; camping in one of the many National Forest Service campgrounds; or just enjoying the clear air and

snowcapped volcanic peaks.

We joined the byway at its southern entry point just above Crescent and Odell lakes on Oregon Route 58. As if welcoming us to the forest, a coyote scurried across the road, paused to look us over at the side of the road, then ducked into the thick stand of lodgepole pines and disappeared.

Our first stop was Davis Lake, which was devastated by a forest fire that started on June 28, 2003, near East Davis Lake campground and not contained until July

6 of that year after consuming more than 21,000 acres of forest. The area shows the effects. The fire left only a scorched earth, a frosting of gray ash and the blackened pillars of charred trees.

Although most of the campground looked like a disaster area, the view from our campsite — out across the marsh and lake — was filled with green grass and a stand of trees along the river. We were cheered by the presence of lots of birds — swallows, waterfowl, flycatchers — including a bald eagle perched on a log, its gaze intent on the water's surface.

The next day, we followed the byway north past a two-mile-long lava flow, then drove by Wickiup Reservoir (named for the brush or skin covered pole lodges called wickiups by the Native Americans who hunted and fished in the area) and Twin Lakes (Forest Road 42 branches off to the byway's eastern entry point here at La Pine on U.S. Highway 97) to Osprey Point at Crane Prairie Reservoir.

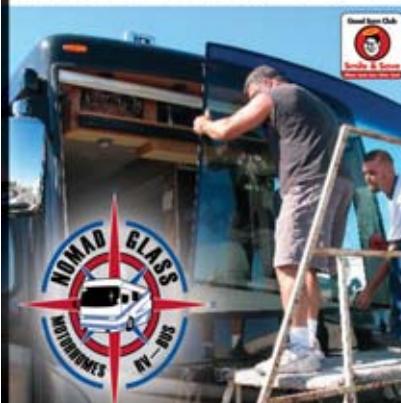
Early morning and early evening are the best times to spot the osprey here at

the observation point. These large fish hawks hover over the lake before plunging feet first into the water, sometimes completely submerging, to grasp a fish with their powerful talons. Declared endangered in 1969, osprey have recovered and are no longer threatened. You can also find nesting cormorants and bald eagles.

We passed by Cultus Lake to head for one of our favorite Forest Service campgrounds beside Little Lava Lake, whose underground springs give birth to the headwaters of the Deschutes River that flows from here to its confluence with the mighty Columbia River in the Columbia Gorge. We found a campsite beside the river just steps from the lake, where we launched our kayak. An osprey hovered overhead and a great blue heron stepped smartly along the shoreline, both searching for food, and a mallard paddled along, followed closely by six ducklings.

The lodge at Big Lava Lake, a half-mile away, carries fishing lures and gear, has a small grocery and convenience store, gas, RV sites with hookups, a dump sta-

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OREGON'S LAKESIDE DRIVE

tion, LP-gas and boat rentals.

Hosmer Lake with its varied shoreline, boat-in campsites, and the narrow neck that connects a hidden section of the lake, is a favorite of not only anglers but also small-boat paddlers. The fly-fishing is excellent and challenging, but spotting wildlife and waterfowl is also popular, as are the snowcapped mountain views. Two Forest Service campgrounds provide lakeside camping and lake access.

Nearby Elk Lake is the lake of choice for sailors, who can be seen tacking back and forth in their boats in the reliable afternoon winds. Windsurfers prefer Sunset Cove in the east end of the lake. There is a Forest Service campground here adjacent to Elk Lake Lodge where you can find gas, a small store, boat rentals and a marina.

Just over the rise in the road but before dropping down to Sparks Lake, the seeping springs, grassy meadow and surrounding lava formations make Devils Garden and tiny Devils Lake worth a short exploration.

Sparks Lake, another favorite with paddlers, once filled a much larger area but now shares the former basin with a meadow, the natural progression of mountain lakes as they fill with sediment and slowly change from lake to marsh to meadow. Watch for grazing deer in the early evening in the meadow and along Soda Creek, where a primitive campground of the same name lies adjacent to the meadow.

Three snowcapped peaks — 9,065-foot Mount Bachelor, 9,173-foot Broken Top and 10,358-foot South Sister — give Soda Creek one of the most spectacular campground backgrounds in the nation. It's a short drive from the campground to the boat and kayak launch. There is no creek outlet from the lake, other than the water percolating underground (listen for the gurgling along the shoreline) through the porous lava flows that formed the lake.

Take the 2½-mile Ray Atkeson Loop Trail (trailhead parking near the launch ramp), named for Oregon's photographer-laureate, for views of lava tubes and jumbles, and lots of great views of the lake and South Sister.

When we returned to our Soda Creek campsite, we were astounded to find the meadow inundated with water — as if suddenly reversing its natural progression. It was reverting to a marsh right before our

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eyes. The snowmelt on this particularly warm day had inundated Soda Creek, overflowed its banks, and spread out helter-skelter in all directions, passing through gopher holes and seeping through ground squirrel tunnels. A pair of mountain bluebirds sat by the edge of one rushing stream, like two fishermen about to cast their lines.

By the next morning it had all receded, but in places left puddles where the early-morning chill had left a thin layer of ice covering the water like plastic wrap.

The next day we tackled Green Lakes Trail, one of the most popular trails in the Cascades and whose trailhead is only a mile away from the campground. This is one of the easiest access trails into the 242,000-acre Three Sisters Wilderness, with miles of trails, more than 100 lakes, and Collier Glacier — the largest glacier in Oregon. The trail follows tumbling Fall Creek for 4.4 miles to the lakes that appear green (hence the name) from the glacial silt in the water. Sometimes snow remains on or along the trail even into July (along with pesky mosquitoes; bring your repellent spray).

Todd Lake is the last remaining lake before the byway skirts the base of Mount Bachelor, an awesome sight and captivating draw for winter skiers, summer mountain bikers and hikers, and those who just want to ride the Pine Martin Lift to mid-mountain. The road usually stays closed to the byway west of Mount Bachelor from the end of October to the end of May because of snowpack.

The byway dives downhill on the long descent into Bend, 20 miles away. Because of its popularity as a year-round recreation center and agreeable mountain foothill/high desert climate, Bend has seen its population expand rapidly. And with its friendly, outdoor-oriented (and athletic) residents, grassy Drake Park along the Deschutes River (that runs right through the center of town), the attractive downtown, Old Mill shopping districts and lots of open-air restaurants, Bend is not only your best resupply point, but also a fun place to visit. Plus, it's the location next year for The Rally, "The Greatest RV Rally in the World," which will be held July 14-17. ♦

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PHOTO: DNC PARKS & RESORTS AT YOSEMITE INC.



# WINTERY INSPIRATION

ENJOYING THE QUIET SIDE OF AN AMERICAN TREASURE —  
YOSEMITE NATIONAL PARK

by GARY WESCOTT

**P**erhaps John Muir said it best: “It is by far the grandest of all the special temples of Nature I was ever permitted to enter.”

Every year, close to 4 million people stream into Yosemite National Park in California to share his wonder. They come in cars, campers, motorcycles and motorhomes. Whether it’s for hiking, fishing or simply marveling at the cascading waterfalls and sheer granite cliffs carved by glaciers more than 30,000 years ago, Yosemite is surely one of the most visited parks in the U.S. Tourists from all over the world make the journey to see and explore and be amazed.

The park itself encompasses some 1,189 square miles of deep valleys, lush meadows and groves of ancient giant sequoias, much of it designated wilderness. Yosemite Valley is the main draw, shadowed by the 3,042-foot face of El Capitan and the awe-inspiring Half Dome, rising nearly 5,000 feet from the valley floor. The Merced River wanders through its forests and campgrounds after cascading over the edge of the 2,425-foot Yosemite Falls, the highest in North America and sixth-highest in the world. Of course, there are museums, art galleries, clothing and equipment stores, souvenir shops and restaurants — enough to keep you busy for a week without ever leaving the valley floor. And that’s exactly the problem: people.

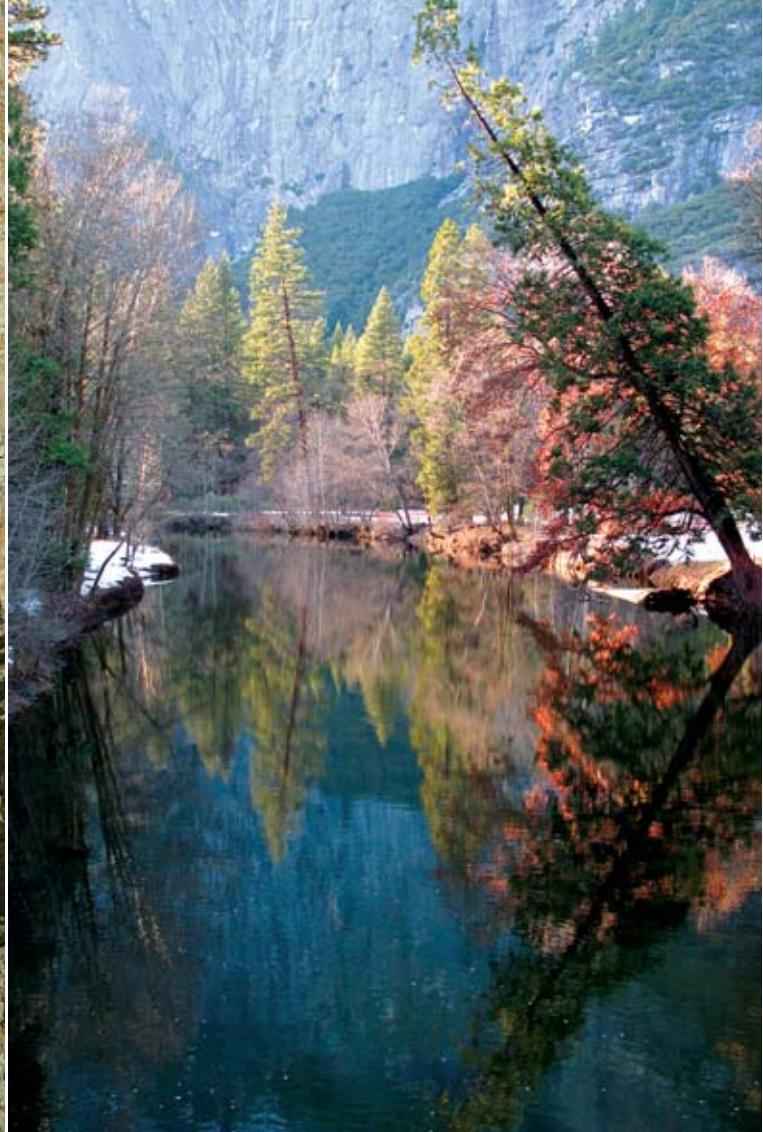
Along with all of the above, during peak season, you will be standing and hiking in lines that — at their most extreme

**Clockwise from opposite page:** There’s a quiet stillness in winter as fog rolls past the 3,042-foot face of El Capitan. There are restaurants and cafés scattered around Yosemite Village and nearby lodges. Upper Pines Campground is one of two open year-round. From Dec. 1 to March 15, it’s first-come first-served, with motorhomes up to 45 feet allowed. Snow-covered trees tower over Yosemite Lodge.



PHOTOS: GARY AND MONIKA WESCOTT

PHOTO: DNC PARKS & RESORTS AT YOSEMITE INC.



— resemble leaf-cutter ants in the Amazon jungle. Despite rules and regulations, if you're camping, there could be generators, loud music, barking dogs and wild munchkins on mountain bikes. There are no hookups in the park, and the lines at the public restrooms can try your patience. An army of summer help works to keep them clean.

No worries, though. If you didn't make reservations back in February or March, chances are everything is full, especially if you're driving a large motorhome.

It does bring to mind a famous quote by American ecologist Aldo Leopold. He warned, "All conservation of wilderness is self-defeating, for to cherish we must see and fondle, and when enough have seen and fondled, there is no wilderness left to cherish."

I am happy to report that the essence of Yosemite has survived considerable fondling since it was first established in 1864 by President Abraham Lincoln, and later, in 1906, when President Theodore Roosevelt signed the bill for the creation of a unified Yosemite National Park. The lines have been getting longer ever since.

We stood in the crisp morning air and watched the early fog slowly unveil El Capitan's Wall of the Early Morning Light. There was a sense that we were inside one of the grandest cathedrals

on Earth, and the main service was just about to begin. We were alone except for a couple of jet-black ravens preening each other on a mound of snow. It was January, and all that was missing from Yosemite Valley were the crowds and the bumper-to-bumper traffic. Everything else was open.

We spent the day at Yosemite Village. The visitors center/museum is always our first stop to find out what's happening, and, of course, to watch the spectacular film, "Spirit of Yosemite." This 55-minute big-screen presentation, winner of Best Non-Broadcast Program at the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival, is an absolute must. We were fortunate to see Julia Parker, the world-famous Native American and renowned basket weaver. Now in her 80s, she is often at the museum demonstrating her weaving skills and showing folks how her people process acorns. Hopping on a shuttle bus, we headed for lunch at the magnificent Ahwahnee Hotel, a favorite of presidents and royalty.

We had arrived the previous evening. Both Upper and Lower Pines campgrounds are open year-round. No reservations are needed in the winter, Dec. 1 through March 14. Motorhomes up to 45 feet in length are allowed. Last year's restrictions on Highway 140 have been lifted. Despite its elevation of about 4,000 feet, the valley floor does not receive that much snow. All roads are kept open and sanded, so 4x4 vehicles or chains are not need-



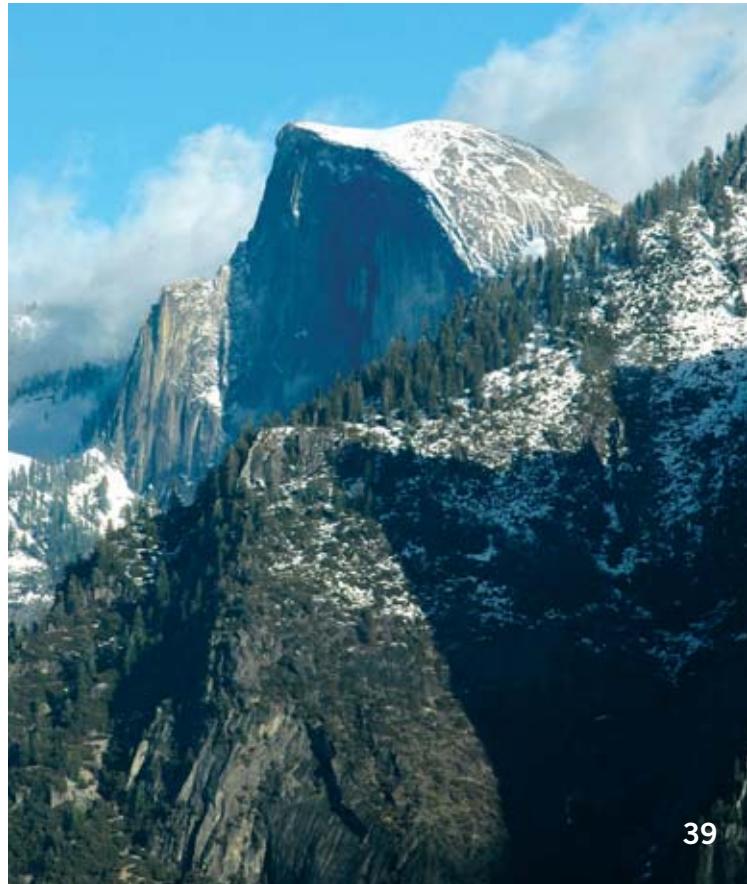
Opposite left to right: Even in winter, it is a thrill to stand at the base of the 2,425-foot Yosemite Falls, the highest in North America and sixth-highest in the world. Mirror Lake, at the eastern end of Yosemite Valley, is famous for its beautiful reflections of surrounding cliffs. The park's easy trails, groomed in the winter for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, are available at no charge at Badger Pass Ski Area. This full-service ski resort also offers downhill skiing, snowboarding, equipment rental, a ski school, child care and a cafeteria. During the last two weeks of February, the setting sun shines a golden spotlight down the center of Yosemite Valley, which gives the appearance of Horsetail Falls being transformed into fire. This phenomenon is best seen from just east of El Capitan. Bottom: The awe-inspiring face of Half Dome towers nearly 5,000 feet above the valley floor.



ed, unless you are lucky enough to arrive during a snowstorm. After a great dinner at Yosemite Lodge, the free shuttle delivered us back to Upper Pines, where our Tortuga Expedition motorhome was warm and waiting. (Be sure to carry a flashlight.)

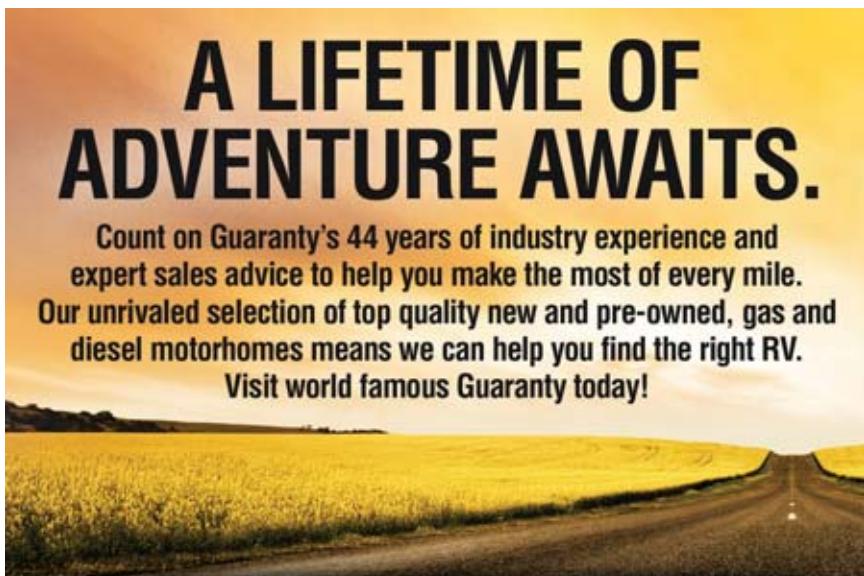
The next morning we drove up Northside Drive, crossed over to Wawona Road and after a stop at the Tunnel View Overlook (a great place for photos), we turned east on Glacier Point Road and continued through snow-laden trees to Badger Pass. This is California's original ski area and has been a favorite for generations of families. Unpretentious, friendly and affordable, it may be the best place in the West to learn to ski or snowboard, with 85 percent of its slopes devoted to beginner and intermediate levels.

For those who prefer a slower pace, free cross-country skiing and snowshoeing are available on a network of groomed trails. For the more adventurous, there are backcountry ski tours led by Yosemite Mountaineering School ski guides. You can stay overnight in a warm, cozy ski hut and enjoy food prepared for you by your guides. Sitting around a crackling fire, you may even get a few tips on skiing while learning about Yosemite ecology and wildlife. Badger Pass is a full-service ski resort offering ski and snowboard instruction, rental equipment, a ski shop, child care, and a cafeteria and lounge. It's open mid-December through mid-March, conditions permitting.



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We opted for some cross-country skiing on the easy intermediate trails, groomed for both classic and skating techniques. After lunch, we unpacked our downhill skis and hit the slopes for a couple of hours. The fresh powder was excellent. We wanted more, but our fuel gauge was bumping empty. There is no fuel in the valley, and no overnight camping at Badger Pass, so we backtracked down to Highway 140 and El Portal.

After fueling up at the Shell station, we made ourselves at home in the clean Indian Flat Campground. If you are driving a big coach and just want to dip into Yosemite Valley for the day in your dinghy, Indian Flat Campground is a great place to stage from. Unlike others, it is open all winter.

After another day of skiing, we couldn't resist one more visit into the valley. Evening was just coming on, so we strolled out to Mirror Lake to catch the last light on Half Dome. Instead of the elbow-to-elbow summer crowds, we shared the view and reflections with only two other couples. Winter was magic.

Later in February, we might have headed for a meadow viewpoint slightly east of El Capitan near the base of the mountain to witness the phenomenal fire-fall. Firefalls were once created with fire in Yosemite National Park. A large fire was started atop Glacier Point and red-hot embers were pushed off a sheer granite wall in the evening. It was Yosemite's version of fireworks. Park officials realized it was a fire hazard in the 1960s and the practice was stopped.

These days you can see and photograph a natural firefall, but the conditions have to be just right. Photographers gather during the last two weeks of February when the sun shines a golden spotlight down the center of Yosemite Valley. With perfect conditions, the light catches Horsetail Falls off the side of El Capitan as the sun sets in the west. Sunlight shining through the waterfall creates the most brilliant colors, setting the falls on fire.

The easiest way to find that meadow (1.7 miles west of Yosemite Lodge) is to look for a lot of cars parked along North-side Drive for no apparent reason. You have gone too far if you get to the large parking area directly in front of El Capitan. Winter-

time can bring clouds and storms that block the sunlight, so timing is everything.

Another way to see some of the best Yosemite has to offer is to take a guided bus tour. These depart from Yosemite Lodge, and the driver knows where to stop for the best photos. With little traffic and plenty of time, you can snap memories or set up your tripod and try for an Ansel Adams masterpiece. For certain, with the light always changing, it is difficult to take a bad picture.

Patches of snow littered the ground as we walked across Sentinel Bridge. The crisp air was invigorating. A light mist rose off the meadow and the ripples in the river. It was quiet. We were all alone. We could almost hear the words of Galen Clark, the first guardian of the Yosemite Grant:

"I have seen persons of emotional temperament stand with tearful eyes, spellbound and dumb with awe, as they got their first view of the valley from Inspiration Point, overwhelmed in the sudden presence of the unspeakable, stupendous grandeur."

It was winter in Yosemite, and we had seen the quiet side of this national treasure. ♦

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# FLEETWOOD STORM 32BH

A REVITALIZED FLEETWOOD OFFERS AN ALL-NEW CROSSOVER COACH FOR 2011 THAT COMBINES THE BEST OF CLASS C FEATURES WITH CLASS A AMENITIES

by FRED PAUSCH



The main cabin of the Fleetwood Storm 32BH is spacious, accommodating six people for sleeping when the dinette and sofa as well as the optional Hide-A-Loft bed are set up. The optional Bunk Bed-n-Breakfast, above right, provides another innovative sleeping arrangement. By day it's a cozy dinette for two and by night it's a pair of 6-foot bunks. Right opposite: The Hide-A-Loft bed is concealed against the full-height cockpit ceiling. The upholstered platform drops down into the area where the cockpit chairs sit. The queen-size pneumatic mattress is inflated by a hand-held air pump. A 26-inch LCD TV makes in-bed viewing possible. Opposite top right: All cockpit controls are within easy reach of the driver, including the combo stereo/rear-camera display.

PHOTOS: FRED PAUSCH

## 2011 FLEETWOOD STORM 32BH

### WHAT'S HOT

Sleeping capacity for 10; optional Hide-A-Loft; 50-degree wheel cut; optional Bunk Bed-N-Breakfast; large windshield with driver's seat view of 93 inches by 47 inches.

### WHAT'S NOT

Cabinetry for the fan-equipped refrigerator fails to reduce noise; inadequate engine compartment noise control.



**A**s a coachbuilder that is continuously expanding its product lineup, Fleetwood has introduced the Storm “crossover” — a motorhome that will certainly attract a lot of attention.

The Storm combines Class C functionality and sleeping capacity with Class A amenities to create a fully featured motorhome with a base price that starts at less than six figures. It's capable of satisfying cost-conscious first-time families, move-up buyers or active empty nesters, looking to offer the lifestyle to the next generation of RV enthusiasts. The Storm is available in three floorplans and two lengths, and we chose the 32BH bunkhouse plan for its multipurpose function. We headed for Ventura Ranch KOA in nearby Santa Paula, Calif., a beautiful full-service riverside campground and picturesque destination, to evaluate a first-day drive of a new coach.

### INSIDE

Once parked and the optional (\$2,513) hydraulic auto levelers were deployed, we were ready to enjoy the Storm. The main cabin is split by a large 42-inch by 72-inch dinette on the curbside and directly opposite a 42-inch by 60-inch sofa bed in the streetside slide, both equipped with seat belts and situated directly behind the cockpit for easy conversation on the road or in camp.

The main cabin can also transform itself into a family-size dormitory with sleeping for six by making up the dinette and sofa, then lowering Fleetwood's optional (\$2,520) Hide-A-Loft bed that is cleverly concealed against the full-height cockpit ceiling. Using four enclosed chain-drive units, the upholstered bed platform with attached above-windshield storage cabinetry drops right into the laps of the cockpit chairs, revealing a queen-size pneumatic mattress that's inflated by

a hand-held 120-volt AC air pump.

Interlocked with the Loft control switch is the powered mounting bracket holding the 26-inch LCD TV that must be swung out into the cabin-viewing position to permit the Loft's travel. Nylon safety netting surrounds the platform on three sides with a ladder providing easy, safe access. Also interconnected to the Loft's mechanical functions are two overhead incandescent light fixtures that automatically extinguish as the bed is raised into the travel position.

We couldn't resist trying out the Loft's inflatable mattress the first night of our trip and were pleasantly surprised by just how comfortable this type of mattress can be once you've mastered the inflation process. Having the air-fill inlet centered on the end of the mattress is a bit inconvenient. But with some practice inflating and manual capping a comfortable air pressure, it should become a simpler task. With the TV returned to its stowed position, and the perfect inflation for the Loft, we were ready to enjoy a movie and drift off after a busy day.

Refreshed and looking forward to a leisurely drive to the full-service Pacific Dunes RV Resort in Oceano, Calif., we headed for the L-shaped galley. It shares the streetside slide with the sofa bed, creating a wonderful open cabin space for family meals and fun. The range and upper microwave oven and cabinetry move out with the slide, creating added floor space for the chef. Pot and pan storage is found below the three-burner range-and-oven combo with additional drawer and cabinet storage in the stainless double-basin sink base and in raised-panel overhead cabinets that ring the cabin. Whole-coach water filtration from the generous 60-gallon freshwater tank and laminate countertops throughout come standard.

The lighter cherry wood and interior décor package called





The master bedroom features a comfortable queen platform bed with nightstand shelves on either side illuminated by reading lamps; and pleated nightshades.

Antique Sand and Butterscotch Spice is a handsome combination with a high-end look, yet easy to maintain and clean. Excellent cabinet fit and finish was the norm throughout the Storm and proof of Fleetwood's attention to detail. Complementary low-maintenance vinyl flooring in a busy hardwood pattern is provided throughout the cabin, extending through the entryway, bath and hall. Plush carpeting makes its sole appearance around the master bed.

Forming the end of the cabin and completing the galley is the curbside 6-cubic-foot refrigerator with matching raised-wood door panels that is capable of handling a large family's cold storage needs. We heard a repeating fan hum resonating from the refrigerator cabinet that made sleeping in the master bed a challenge and ended up requiring us to shut off the fridge. In a call to Fleetwood we learned that a new fan-equipped fridge has replaced the old model and cabinet sound-deadening improvements are being explored.

Another innovative feature found in the Storm is the optional (\$742) Bunk Bed-n-Breakfast that should appeal to kids from ages 6 to 60. By day, it's a cozy facing dinette built for two, complete with seat belts, and by night it transforms into a fold-down pair of 6-foot bunks. The optional (\$644) dual-glazed windows throughout the Storm gave us wonderful views of the resort's panoramic sand dunes and sunset.

The bunk bed can also be outfitted with a recessed and articulated wall-mount 19-inch LCD TV (\$497) for smiles and miles of personal entertainment complete with adequate storage for video games and related media above and below the TV.

For others, it can be the perfect place to read a good book or write an e-mail. Animal lovers will appreciate the ability to stow show crates in place of the lower bunk cushions or just let their four-legged companions lounge on the bunks. Our Class A "crossover" sleeping count is now up to eight with more coach yet to explore.

The bath sports a 24-inch by 34-inch shower with a bowed-out curtain rod offering additional shoulder and hip room. Along with a domed skylight and a roof vent with power exhaust fan, there's a practical and useful shampoo and soap shelf. Cabinetry throughout the Storm is Ozite-lined, including the bath — a nice feature that will save wear and tear on otherwise slip-and-slide cargo when traveling. It's also needed in the Storm's exterior cargo compartments to prevent damaging cargo shift.

Despite less expensive choices available, Fleetwood has chosen to provide a china bowl toilet with hand sprayer along with heated holding tanks. Storage cabinetry with open shelf space for extra towels and a lighted medicine cabinet complete the bath.

The large rear slide is also shared between the bunks and the bedroom's floor-to-ceiling wardrobe unit that provides generous hanging and drawer storage and allows access to the bed and its use even when the slide cannot be extended. A privacy door can separate the bedroom from the bunks. Wall space with connections for the optional (\$504) 19-inch LCD TV are next to the wardrobe. The long window above the headboard provides both natural illumination and cross ventilation with the large rear wall combo window/emergency

exit equipped with pleated nightshades. Nightstand shelves on each side of the comfortable queen platform bed will accommodate small bedside items illuminated by a pair of reading lamps while additional overhead and exterior-connected under-bed storage should handle the rest.

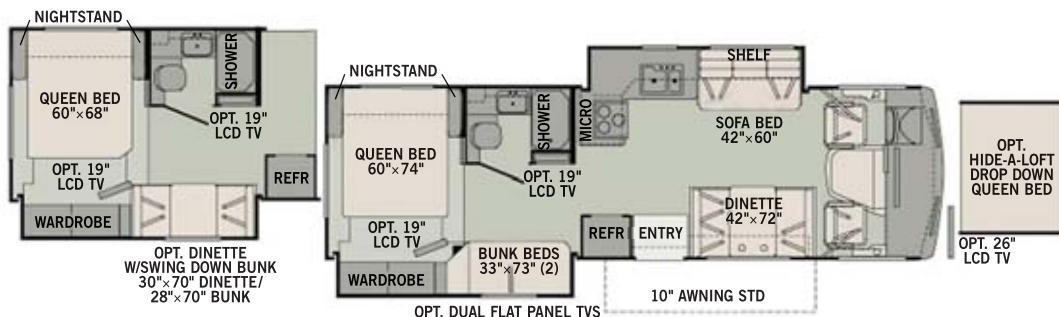
Dual 20,000-Btu furnaces supply ducted heating in all spaces and cooling is also ducted throughout the Storm from a single 15,000-Btu roof unit, which refreshed us after shooting photos on a 90-plus-degree day. Coach capacities and generator functions are monitored from a panel conveniently mounted by the entry door.

### OUTSIDE

Rotomolded polyethylene storage compartments ring the coach with two sets interconnected by over-the-frame pass-throughs, perfect for storing a 4-foot step-ladder or folding chairs. The service bay is easy to use with controls and valves ergonomically positioned. Bottom-hinged storage compartment doors eliminate the uncomfortable head prop while looking for an item and provide full access to the interior. Generous access to the 4 kW Onan MicroQuiet generator should make any owner servicing quick and easy.

Dropping the front cap's twin lock hood section on its pantograph hinges provides service access to the front of Ford's Triton engine and cooling system. The Storm's large open grille should have no problem keeping the cooling system well-fed.

There's also room behind the grille to mount a telescoping squeegee, which you'll need to maintain the Storm's expansive one-piece windshield. Fleetwood's designers want you to see the landscape up close through this windshield with an effective driver's seat view of 93 inches by 47 inches. The visibility combined with the large power and heated side mirrors



## SPECIFICATIONS

### PERFORMANCE

**FUEL ECONOMY:** 7.3 MPG

**ACCELERATION:**

**0-60 MPH:** 24 SEC

**40-60 MPH:** 9 SEC

### CHASSIS

**MANUFACTURER:** FORD

**MODEL:** F53

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

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

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

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

**AXLE RATIO:** 4.88:1

**TIRES:** LT255/70R19.5G

**WHEELBASE:** 190"

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

**SUSPENSION, F/R:** MONOBEAM FRONT AXLE W/TAPERED LEAF SPRING AND STABILIZER BAR, FULL FLOATING REAR AXLE W/TAPERED LEAF SPRINGS AND STABILIZER BAR

**FUEL CAP:** 75 GAL

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

### COACH

**EXT LENGTH:** 31' 0"

**EXT WIDTH:** 8' 6"

**EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C:** 12' 0"

**INT WIDTH:** 8' 0"

**INT HEIGHT:** 6' 10"

**CONSTRUCTION:** ALUMINUM FRAMING, FIBERGLASS SKIN, TPO ROOF, POLYSTYRENE SHEET INSULATION

**FRESHWATER CAP:** 60 GAL

**BLACK-WATER CAP:** 35 GAL

**GRAY-WATER CAP:** 35 GAL

**WATER-HEATER CAP:** 6 GAL

**LP-GAS CAP:** 14 GAL

**FURNACE (2):** 20,000 BTU

**AIR CONDITIONER (1):** 15,000 BTU

**REFRIGERATOR:** 6 CU-FT

**CONVERTER:** 50 AMP

**BATTERIES:** (1) 12-VOLT CHASSIS, (2) 6-VOLT COACH

**AC GENERATOR:** 4KW

**MSRP:** \$90,300

**MSRP AS TESTED:** \$98,217

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

### WET WEIGHT

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

**FRONT AXLE:** 6,000 LBS

**REAR AXLE:** 9,640 LBS

**TOTAL:** 15,640 LBS

### CHASSIS RATINGS

**GAWR, F/R:** 7,000/12,000 LBS

**GVWR/GCWR:** 18,000/23,000 LBS

**ROCC:** 2,360 LBS

(DEDUCT WEIGHT OF PASSENGERS FOR NET CARGO CAPACITY)

**GAWR:** GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING

**GVWR:** GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING

**GCWR:** GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING

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

and rear camera make the Storm's actual 31-foot length seem diminished.

The cockpit features comfortable swiveling armrest-style captain's chairs with manual adjustments overlooking Ford's twin-gauge dash pod. All cockpit controls are within easy reach of the driver, including the combo stereo/rear camera display, and satellite radio function when ordered.

### BEHIND THE WHEEL

Driving the Storm is a pleasure with the Triton V-10. Developing peak horsepower at nearly 4,800 RPM, it thrives on RPM that may be a little disconcerting for first-timers pulling out to pass and allowing this engine to wind up. With the low doghouse centered in the cockpit, the high-revving V-10 will also let you know just how happy it is entering the on-ramp or grade, momentarily interrupting a conversation or phone call. Fleetwood indicates it's looking into improving doghouse and insulation design for future Storms.

Ford's smooth TorqShift five-speed OD transmission handled everything we threw at it, making the trip a relaxed journey allowing its shift-adjusting Tow-Haul setting to minimize braking on steep descents. Assisted by the speed-sensing auto-downshifting feature, engine braking has never been easier. Finally, the 50-degree steering cut made campground maneuvering a non-event assisted by the excellent visibility.

Whether there's two or 10 in your family, the Storm with its unique crossover Class C sleeping capacity combined with Class A amenities and a base price that's less than six figures is an entry-level "Gas-A" coach high on our list for fun, form and function. ♦

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**FLEETWOOD RV INC.**

800-322-8216,

www.fleetwoodrv.com.

**PACIFIC DUNES RV RESORT AND RIDING STABLES**

805-489-8100,

www.pacificdunesranch.info.

**VENTURA RANCH KOA**

805-933-3200,

www.koa.com/where/ca/05459.

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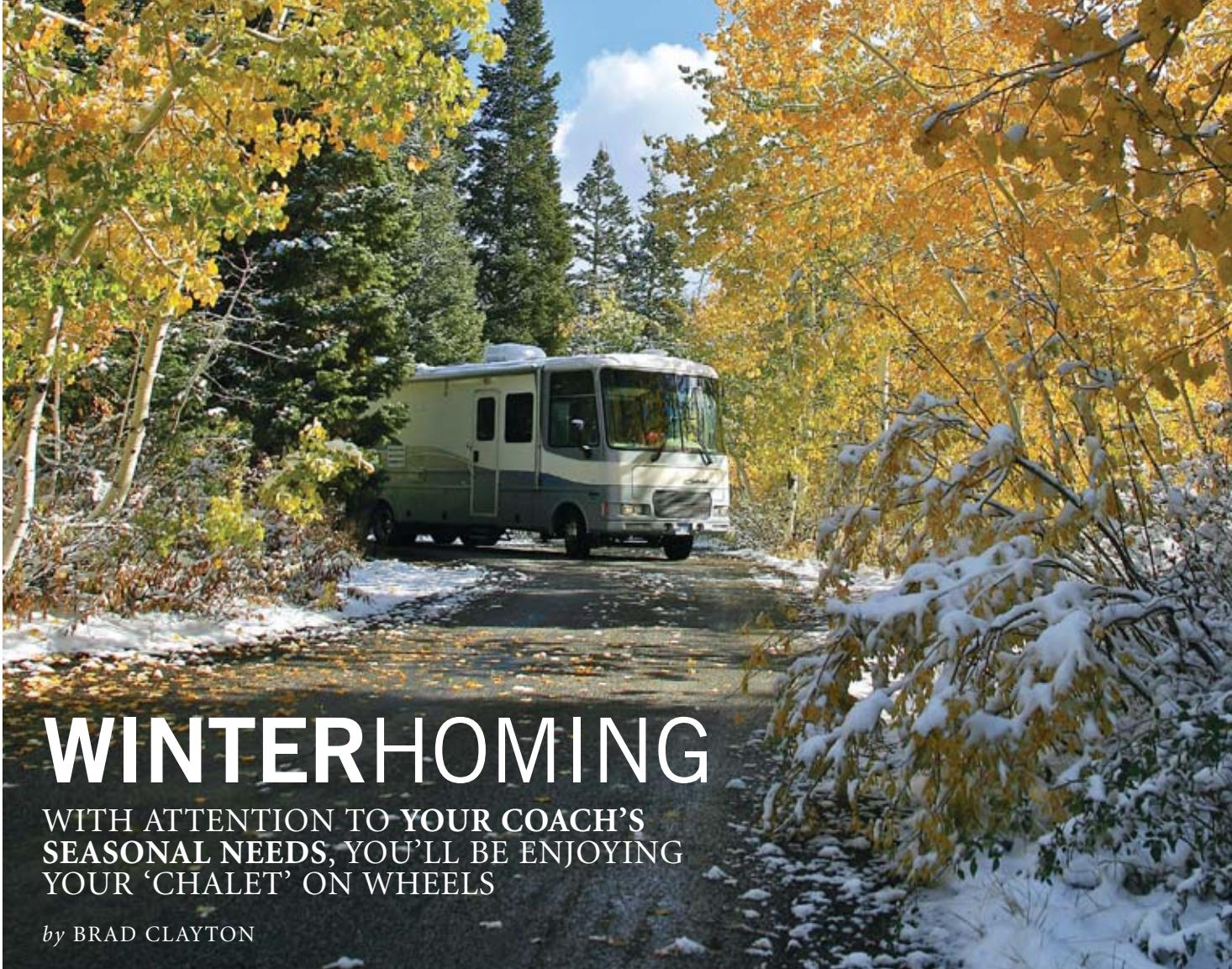
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# WINTERHOMING

WITH ATTENTION TO YOUR COACH'S SEASONAL NEEDS, YOU'LL BE ENJOYING YOUR 'CHALET' ON WHEELS

by BRAD CLAYTON

**F**or many motorhome owners, winter is a time of hibernation — too cold, too slippery, too difficult. For others, it's the “other” travel season — one that offers many different and exciting opportunities and adventures.

The possibilities are obvious for winter sports enthusiasts, but for others the winter season can be very special in terms of touring. A new snowfall creates an especially beautiful scene in a motorhome because it comes with the enjoyment of using one's own coach in a contest with nature — which, of course, we like to win. That requires a motorhome that allows us to be comfortable even in a blizzard.

Destinations may be a bit different from our normal fare, including RV parks that cater to winter visitors, but also could include dry camping in parking lots at snowmobiling or cross-country skiing trail heads, or in the parking lot of an RV-friendly ski resort. This kind of travel is for the motorhome enthusiast who enjoys stretching the limits.

## BATTERY RESERVE POWER

Absent the convenience of outside power hookups, the most immediate challenge in cold weather may be battery reserve power

— keeping appliances, especially the furnace, going overnight without the need to run a generator. Demand on batteries is higher in winter because of low ambient temperatures and fewer daylight hours. Power requirements can be handled by relying on an AC generator, a good electrical converter/charger and a good set

**There are many types of insulation used to prepare a motorhome for winter travel.**





Polyurethane foam can be used to spot-insulate drafty areas.



Wrapping hoses with heat tape and insulation is a good way to keep water from freezing inside them.



Reflective insulation can be attached to the motorhome's compartments with spray adhesive.



Holding-tank valves and hoses in the compartment can be freeze-protected with a 60- or 100-watt light bulb.

of house batteries with a total of at least 210 amp-hours (350 minutes of reserve capacity at the 25-amp rate).

The converter is critical (transforming 120 volts AC to 12 volts DC). Winter motorhomers need one with aggressive multi-stage battery charging. Check specs on your brand and model; it should have a bulk charging phase rated for at least 40 amps. The goal is rapid battery recharging and less generator running time.

### WATER, HOLDING TANKS

For winter travel, it's essential to prevent water lines, holding tanks and valves from freezing. Unfortunately, freezing can occur in some motorhomes even when the interior is well-heated, as exterior fresh-water connections and tank valves may be located in utility bays that have uninsulated plastic floors, and are not well-heated.

Check all water lines and tank valve areas (to the extent possible) to see if the lines and pump are not adequately exposed to the heated interior, or to heat ducts in subfloor areas. It's not necessary to keep the lines warm — just warmer than 32 degrees Fahrenheit. When it's difficult to judge, insert the wire probes of electronic thermometers (inexpensive, available in hardware stores) into the questionable areas and record low temps on a cool night with the furnace set at 60 degrees.

Additional insulation may be needed to reduce the rate of heat loss. Among many insulation choices, foil-backed bubble wrap (Reflectix or other brands, available in hardware stores) is useful for lining compartments and for many other applications.

For areas that cannot be adequately protected by heat from

the furnace, strategically placed 120-volt AC lights (60- or 100-watt bulbs) often can provide enough heat. Power must come from an outside electrical hookup, or from the motorhome's inverter, if battery capacity and recharge capability are adequate. (It's best not to run an AC generator while sleeping because of the possibility of carbon monoxide poisoning from a faulty exhaust system.)

RV nontoxic antifreeze can be used overnight to protect P-traps in drains. It can also be used in holding tanks to protect valves. The amount used in holding tanks will vary with ambient temperature and the anticipated amount of fluid in the tank. Even when tank valves are protected with antifreeze, the compartment must be heated if it contains fresh-water lines. If you have an icemaker, the water line should be disconnected and drained.

For the more challenging freeze-protection situations, electric heating cables and pads are available for dump valves, pipes, water lines and tanks. The heaters, available from Ultra Heat Inc. ([www.ultraheat.com](http://www.ultraheat.com)) in a variety of types and sizes, are thermostatically controlled and are offered for 12-volt DC or 120-volt AC power sources.

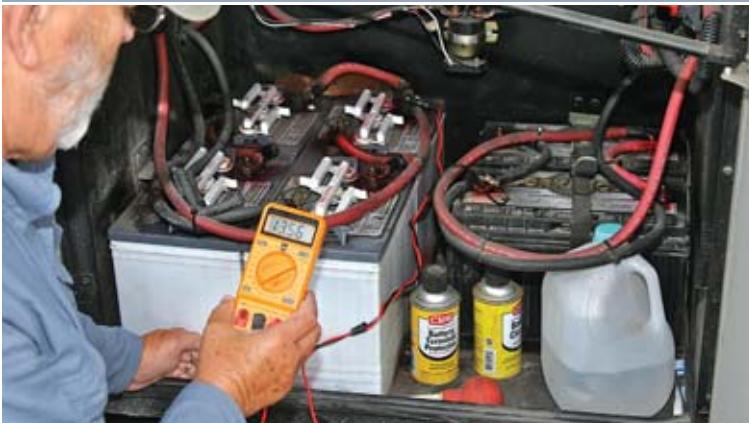
### WINDOWS, SLIDEOUTS

Many late-model motorhomes have double-pane windows, but those with single-pane windows are subject to more heat loss. In those situations, some windows may be covered, or storm-window kits can be used that employ clear plastic stretched over window frames; the plastic is made taut by heating with a hair dryer. Check hardware stores for these kits.

Most motorhomes have slideouts, and it's necessary to clear



A digital voltmeter mounted inside the motorhome makes it easy to check battery condition.



If you don't have a way to monitor voltage from inside the coach, check the batteries in their compartment with a voltmeter.

them of snow or ice that may have collected while they were extended. Slideout seals should be checked for air leakage.

### CATALYTIC HEATERS

A portable catalytic heater can greatly improve comfort when the temperature drops. On a cold day these heaters feel like sitting in front of a stove, leveling the temperature inside the RV and reducing cycling of the forced-air furnace. The heater most commonly used in motorhomes is the Olympian ([www.uscatalytic.com](http://www.uscatalytic.com)), offered in sizes ranging up to 8,000 Btu.

Catalytic heaters require a connection to the LP-gas system, but not to a 12-volt DC electrical source, which reduces battery drain in no-hookups situations. They're flameless, producing radiant heat, and are highly efficient in terms of fuel usage because they're not vented to the outside. They produce very small amounts of carbon monoxide (CO), resulting in a recommendation by the manufacturer that a window or vent should be left partially open. During winter, adequate ventilation is necessary anyway to combat condensation, the potential for which is increased by a catalytic heater. All motorhomes are equipped with CO detectors, and they should be tested regularly.

### PARKS, DUMP STATIONS

Many RV parks that might offer hookups will close for the winter if they're located in cold areas, so it's necessary to research destinations and sources of water and dump stations to learn if they're available when the snow flies. The Trailer Life RV Parks and Campgrounds Directory is an essential source, and myriad useful online sources also are available.



Catalytic heaters can greatly improve comfort when the temperature drops; however they do produce a very small amount of carbon monoxide, so open a window or vent during use.

### ON THE ROAD

For anyone who has lived in snow country, the essentials of winter driving are well-known, but not necessarily the essentials of driving a motorhome. It's necessary to review the transition that must occur when we go from dry pavement to winter roads and from a car or light truck to a motorhome.

Motorhomes have relatively good winter traction because of heavily loaded tires, especially on rear-drive axles. Nevertheless, it's important to address the most common winter-driving problem: excessive speed. Anticipate the need for braking far in advance. With anti-lock brakes (ABS), use steady pressure on the pedal (no pumping) and the system will prevent wheel lockup. However, remember that ABS does not assure that you'll be able to stop in time on a slippery road.

Tires with good tread are important, as are tire chains to be held in reserve for icy roads (and gloves for their installation). Apply these to outside dual wheels. If you use an auxiliary braking system for your dinghy vehicle, take care to adjust it so wheel lock-up does not occur.

Make sure the windshield washer system contains freeze-protected fluid. For diesel engine and generators, ensure that your latest fuel purchase is winterized fuel, and/or use an anti-gel fuel additive. Follow manufacturers' cold-weather recommendations for oil viscosity in the engine and AC generator. And, of course, a snow shovel is essential.

Winter motorhoming sometimes presents a challenge because weather can be fierce. But stretching the travel season can be well worth it, leading to unique and exciting motorhome adventures. ♦



This is the electronics cabinet before we started work. A DirecTV receiver sits below the Panasonic all-in-one unit. Although this type of unit is compact and easy to operate, its audio/video quality is lacking compared with true separate components.

The new Samsung receiver features an iPod cradle as well as a microphone that uses a built-in program to optimize the audio settings once everything is connected. This helps balance any room acoustical issues that are common due to the many compromises that are naturally part of a motorhome-based system.

# BIG-SCREEN ATTRACTION

## TRANSFORM YOUR COACH'S ENTERTAINMENT CENTER INTO A TRUE HOME THEATER SYSTEM

by E. DON SMITH

If you are one of those RVer's who enjoys watching movies in high definition and listening to high-fidelity music, maybe it's time to install a full-fledged home theater system in your motorhome. Of course, most Class A motorhomes come with a factory-installed audio/video (AV) system capable of playing DVDs and CDs as well as a traditional TV for video, but calling this system a "home theater" is like putting a FEMA trailer in the same category as a luxury Class A motor coach.

I recently upgraded the system in my motorhome so that I could enjoy Blu-ray DVDs and high-quality audio. My coach is a 2008 Tiffin Phaeton that came from the factory with a Panasonic "home theater in a box" system and a pair of Panasonic LCD TVs capable of displaying 720p resolution video. Most TVs sold today are capable of 1080p resolution, also known as Full HD or Blu-ray.

The audio/video receiver that comes with most motorhomes today is a major compromise and includes a built-in DVD/CD player as well as an AM/FM receiver, and some even offer a cradle for an iPod connection. These all-in-one systems in general are low quality and retail in the \$200 to \$400 range including speakers. They are, however, well-integrated into the motorhome so they are easy to use.

We began our home theater project with three goals: upgrading the TV in the main living area to a larger LED model capable of displaying 1080p; installing a separate Blu-ray player and an AV receiver (separate components of this type are a huge upgrade in quality over the home-theater-in-a-box designs and offer a lot more power and flexibility); and upgrading the speakers throughout the motorhome, which was probably the most difficult part of the whole project. The tiny built-in speakers originally installed in this coach had to be upgraded if we expected to recreate a true home theater experience on the road.

In order to maintain the integrated system approach we had before, we chose a Samsung TV and components. Using all Samsung components allowed us more flexibility with regard to using the remote controls, plus Samsung's BD Wise technology allows compatible components to communicate with each other via the High-Definition Multimedia Interface (HDMI) cable and optimize their settings. It also allows the viewer to control the AV receiver volume while watching a DVD with the standard TV remote control. Unless you are a tech junkie who enjoys fooling with two or three remotes, make sure you select components of this type to reduce the hassle.

For the AV receiver we bought a Samsung HW-C500 (\$250). Not only does it manage the HDMI switching we needed to handle both an HDMI DVD player and a satellite receiver, it also comes with an iPod cable. Another great feature of the C500 is that it includes a built-in subwoofer amp to power the subwoofer that we decided to keep from the original system. Most AV receivers do not include a speaker level output for subwoofers. The receiver also includes a microphone that is used to calibrate the equalization of the speakers once everything is installed. This feature alone is worth the price of admission because of the improved sound quality.

For the Blu-ray DVD/CD player we chose the Samsung BD-C5500 at \$162. It has all the features we wanted in a Blu-ray player and it is moderately priced as well. If you want to add an optional USB Wi-Fi adapter you can use it to listen to Pandora music streams or download movies from Netflix or Blockbuster. This gives you access to movies on the road without leaving the comfort of your motorhome.

The next big decision for the upgrade was the TV itself. The coach had a 32-inch LCD TV originally installed, but we wanted

PHOTOS: E. DON SMITH



In the new setup everything connects using HDMI cables so despite the complicated back panel of the receiver most of these inputs are not used. We will input the DVD and the DirecTV receiver into the HDMI inputs along the top. The HDMI out goes to the TV, then we attach the existing speaker wires to the proper terminal on the receiver and we are done.



The left-front speaker is mounted under the kitchen cabinets behind a louvered grille. We removed the stock speaker then used small brackets to directly mount the speaker in place. This will prevent any rattles while on the road.



Crutchfield offers these handy cable labels, which make keeping track of all the various cables a snap. As we disconnected each wire from the original receiver we labeled it to prevent any mixup.



Before mounting each speaker we insulated between it and the mounting surface. We used foam insulation tape to prevent the speaker from rattling or buzzing when in use or on the road. Each location required its own version of this prep.



The Blu-ray player connects to the receiver using the HDMI out jack shown here.



After we removed the frame we replaced the original louvered grille with black speaker cloth. It looks factory original and allows the speaker a more direct route to project sound into the room.



The Polk speakers are much larger than the tiny Panasonic speakers that came in the coach originally. The bass output as well as the midrange and high frequencies were much better after these speakers were installed. Finding a suitable location was the challenge.



The original Panasonic speaker was mounted under the kitchen cabinet. Our new Polk bookshelf will fill up the mounting space and the room with sound.



Each speaker presented its own challenge. Instead of trying to hide this one behind the original grille, which also houses the speaker for the in-dash radio, we instead decided to use one of the overhead cabinets. First we removed the original cabinet door and installed the speaker as shown using brackets.



After removing the divider inside the cabinet the Polk bookshelf speaker was mounted inside using L-brackets.

After building the frame and covering it with speaker grille cloth we attached it to the cabinet. It looks good enough that the change likely won't be noticeable. Of course we did lose one small cabinet for each of the two speakers we had to mount in this way.



After reinstalling the divider the cabinet didn't lose any space and looks just as it did from the factory.



The right-rear speaker was the other unit we had to mount in a modified location and we followed the same procedure for it as we did on the left rear. We used L-brackets to mount the speaker in place and then built a frame and grille to cover the area that used to be a cabinet.



The original 32-inch LCD TV was only capable of 720p video, plus there was a lot of room around it for a larger TV to be mounted. Our goal was to install the largest TV we could find that fit the space and of course get a newer model that supported 1080p.



After installation of the grille the speaker is safely hidden from view and it looks good too. The method we used allows us to remove the speaker and reinstall the cabinet door if necessary, but after hearing the system we can't imagine ever doing so.



After unbolting the old TV from the bracket we could see the original mounting location of the center channel speaker. Since we wanted to improve the sound we decided not to hide the new speaker behind the TV. Tiffin already wired the coach with an HDMI cable as well as component level video cables from the AV cabinet to the TV. Therefore we did not have to pull any new wires from the mid-coach mounted TV to the front of the coach where the components reside. If you do not already have an HDMI cable it will be necessary to buy one long enough and install it, which may be quite a job depending on your setup.



To install the right-front speaker we opened up the factory location and prepared it for the new Polk.



Due to the increased size of our new 40-inch LED Samsung TV, the bolt pattern was different for the bracket so we had to buy a new bracket and bolt it to the wall. Tiffin uses heavy  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch plywood behind this wall so we could bolt the bracket directly to the wall and it was strong enough to support the new TV. We also took this opportunity to label all the cables for future reference.



After hanging the TV on the new bracket we placed the new Polk center channel speaker on the cabinet directly in front of the TV. Since we didn't want to drill the solid surface countertop, we used a piece of industrial hook-and-loop fastener that works perfectly. The new TV fills the area much better than before and now we have a 40-inch TV that supports 1080p.



In order to connect the satellite receiver and the DVD player to the new receiver we used two 3-foot-long HDMI cables. They can be ordered from Crutchfield or can be picked up at most any store that sells TVs and accessories.



All the components fit perfectly inside the existing cabinet with no modifications required. We also utilized the Tiffin-supplied remote control repeater to control the DTV receiver while pointing the remote at the TV. You may opt for a Harmony RF-style universal remote for even easier operation.

to increase the size to a 37- to 40-inch set with a 1080p display. Since overall size was a major concern, to ensure it fit in the allotted space we decided to source it locally from a big box electronics store so we could do all the measurements before we attempted the installation. It did require a new wall-mount bracket as part of the upgrade.

After a lot of searching, we chose a 40-inch Samsung LED/LCD model UN40CG300SF for \$1,050. This model has a 120Hz refresh rate and features a thin bezel, which is a big part of why we were able to fit a 40-inch model in place of the old 32-inch unit.

The final purchase we had to make were the speakers. Since all of the speakers in this motorhome were built into various cabinets, size was critical. Knowing this was going to require a lot of custom fabrication we had to first select the location we planned to use, and determine what size speakers would fit. Then we set out to find a high-quality set of four speakers plus the center channel that would not only fit but also sound great. Most anything would be a big upgrade in sound over the tiny speakers that came with the coach but, of course, we also wanted a nice, balanced sound, so we settled on four Polk Audio M10 bookshelf speakers. They feature a two-way design with a  $5\frac{1}{4}$ -inch woofer and a  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch silk dome tweeter inside a ported cabinet. Because the speakers would be hidden in the location, we picked black ash instead of the upgraded cherry finish. We found these locally for \$200 for all four.

For the center channel speaker we picked a Polk Audio RM8, from Crutchfield, for \$125. The wedge shape fit perfectly in front of the TV without interfering with the screen or the remote control sensor.

While this was not an easy project that can be finished in a few hours, it is something that most anyone could do in his or her driveway just as I did in mine. Depending on your skill level and the amount of tools you have access to, expect to spend a full weekend getting everything perfectly installed and set up. By far the most difficult part of the project was the speakers. Finding the proper location, modifying the cabinets and fabricating custom grilles was tricky.

Once everything was installed there was a learning curve to become familiar with the new remote controls and their operation, but within a few minutes we had beautiful audio and video. The Samsung BD Wise technology makes changing sources and volume as well as operating the DVD a snap even though the components are located behind the viewer in the coach. If you don't get units so equipped you may need a remote control repeater or a radio frequency universal remote control.

The difference between this setup and the original is striking. The video quality of the new LCD TV and the incredible audio that comes from the Polk speakers and the Samsung receiver are really something to behold. The small space of the motorhome combined with the power available at the push of the remote means you will have to be careful in RV parks or you will run the risk of your neighbor also "enjoying" your audio experience.

The total cost of the project was pricey, at around \$1,800, but as soon as you sit down and enjoy your first Blu-ray movie in 1080p resolution you will forget all about the price and enjoy the movie just as if you were at the theater. When you buy good quality products you only cry once. Pass the popcorn! ♦



## JUST ADD WATER ▲

We take several extended dry camping trips each year and always end up running out of fresh water. We do not have a gravity water fill access on our motorhome, so I came up with a simple solution to solve our problem of adding water.

I bought an inexpensive 12-volt DC utility water pump from Harbor Freight, added a cigarette lighter plug for a power source and an inline switch near the pump for turning it on and off during the filling process. Two short lengths of potable water hose completed the system.

To transport water, I bought collapsible 5-gallon water containers that take up little room in our RV when empty. At 5 gallons per minute, filling our freshwater tank takes very little time. With a bleach and water solution, this same setup can be used to sanitize the freshwater system and tank; just be sure to flush the pump with fresh water after this process.

**ED AND BARB ZAVADLOV | BREMERTON, WASH.**



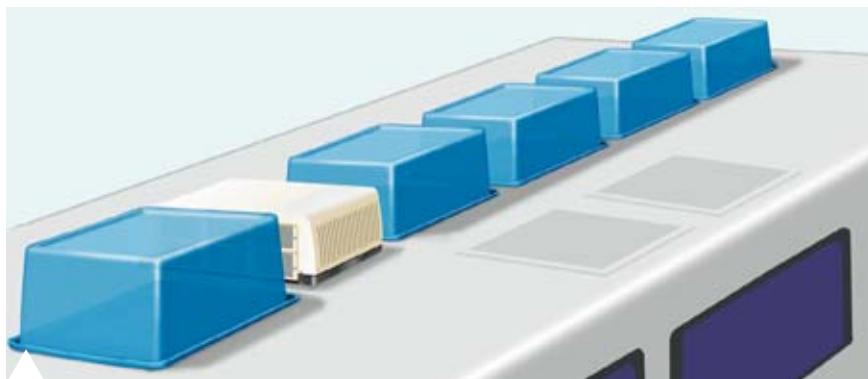
## A HOT BUTTON ISSUE

When the day/night shades in a motorhome fall down and won't retract, the problem is usually caused by a broken cord retainer, not a broken cord. When the cord retainer breaks, it allows the cord to retract into the bottom rail, making it impossible to raise the shade.

To prevent the cord from retracting into the bottom rail, I tie small, clear buttons to the cords just above the cord retainer using dental floss (be sure to leave a 2-inch to 3-inch tail on the floss).

Then, when the cord retainer breaks, just replace it and gently pull on the button while raising the blind to the uppermost position. Holding the blind in the uppermost position, loop the cord around the new retainer. I have prevented costly repairs on two of our RV's blinds using this method.

**LOYCE SWEDBERG | SAN DIEGO**



## BIN THERE, DONE THAT

Before you cover your motorhome for the winter, you might want to first put several storage bins down the centerline of the roof. The bins help hold the weight of the winter weather and the cover. This keeps a lot of the weight off the roof vents, roof A/C and skylights. It also allows rain to run off much faster.

Choose bins with rounded edges and corners so they don't tear the cover or mar the roof. If you turn the bins upside-down on the roof, it gives them a larger footprint on the roof.

**DAVID DORSEY | NEWARK, DEL. ♦**

### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

**Quick Tips**, MotorHome's monthly column of useful, handy and simple tips by fellow RVers, is looking for submissions. Please send your favorite do-it-yourself ideas to: MotorHome Quick Tips, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001, or e-mail [info@motorhomemagazine.com](mailto:info@motorhomemagazine.com). 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



HANDS-ON | by KEVIN LIVINGSTON

## WASHING AWAY SPOTS

Ionic Clean deionizes hard water, minimizing streaking and water spotting

### Washing your motorhome takes a lot of physical

energy, especially if you have to contend with hard water. Unless you can find a place where the sun doesn't dry the surface before you get a chance to wipe it down, spotting can be an endless battle. That's why professional detailers bring their own deionized water rather than chance the hardness of the water at the nearest faucet.

HomeRight, a company that markets a number of home and automotive maintenance products, has introduced the Ionic Clean, a portable device that deionizes the water using a special filter. According to the company, the process of removing minerals and impurities is achieved through a positive and negative ionic exchange process. Basically, this is a scientific way of saying it's supposed to remove water spotting.

Ionic Clean consists of a relatively compact filtration unit contained in a serviceable plastic housing, connected to 20 feet of hose and ready for toting around the motorhome. Also included in the washing system is a telescoping brush pole capable of reaching up to 64 inches, a brush, all the necessary valves and fittings, plus a filter-life tester.

Using Ionic Clean is almost as simple as using an average garden hose. The first step involves assembling the telescoping

pole with the brush and ON/OFF water valve. From here it's a matter of removing the factory-installed plug from the filter housing and replacing it with the quick-connect fitting. Then, just attach the pole and water hose and it's ready to go. Once hooked up to the water source, simply choose the DI, BYPASS or OFF via the selector knob. In order for the filter to do its job correctly, at least 10 seconds of flow should be allowed after choosing a setting.

Beyond these few steps, it is a good idea to periodically check the condition of the water using the included filter-life tester, validating the filter quality.

The Ionic Clean is an ideal filtration system for those who may be traveling from city to city and wish to keep up the good looks of their motorhome without worrying about water hardness.

It does a good job of eliminating water spotting but there's a financial downside to having this convenience. The replaceable filter, which retails for \$49, has a short lifespan when used with very hard water. For example, you'll exhaust the filter's ability to deionize water after 23 gallons are filtered or only 35 minutes if the water is exceptionally hard (400 PPM on the grain scale). Figure on about twice the gallonage and output time in areas with moderately hard water (200 PPM) although that still severely limits the life of the filter if you're washing a big coach.

So you'll have to use this system very judiciously, making sure to prewash and soap the motorhome using the system on BYPASS — leaving the deionized water for final rinsing.

The kit retails for \$249, but I was able to find it online for \$199. While it's not the least expensive way to fight hard water and water spotting, it does improve the result of washing your motorhome.

**HomeRight, 800-264-5442, [www.homeright.com](http://www.homeright.com).** ♦



## Lost in the Gap

HAVING TROUBLE COLLECTING A REFUND ON GAP COVERAGE AFTER HE PAID OFF HIS MOTORHOME, A READER ASKED HOT LINE FOR ASSISTANCE. HE WROTE:

I need help securing a refund for a gap insurance policy that I bought when I purchased my 2006 Gulf Stream B Touring Cruiser from Dan Gamel's RV Center in Rocklin, Calif. The original amount of the gap insurance was \$1,500 for a six-year term through Safe-Guard Products International LLC.

I paid off the installment loan on the motorhome on July 29, 2009. Then I contacted Safe-Guard to cancel the gap coverage and request a refund. A couple of months later I called to follow up on the refund and was told that Safe-Guard had sent its portion of the refund (\$145.25) to Dan Gamel's RV in Fresno, Calif., and that Gamel would send me a refund in the amount of \$737.32.

In December, I received an e-mail from Dan Gamel Inc. stating that someone was going to get back to me about the refund, but they never did. I can't get any information from the company as it has filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection.

I don't understand why Safe-Guard didn't refund the entire amount to me, rather than sending it to Dan Gamel. Is there anything Hot Line can do?

**CHARLES WOOD**  
VACAVILLE, CALIF.

*We sent Wood's request to Safe-Guard Products International LLC for consideration. Though the following reply may not help Wood, we are publishing his case as a reminder to others that "gap insurance" is not an actual insurance product, it's a*

**SO-CALLED  
'GAP INSURANCE'  
IS NOT AN ACTUAL  
INSURANCE PRODUCT,  
IT'S A DEBT-  
CANCELLATION  
AGREEMENT.**

*debt-cancellation agreement.*  
*Safe-Guard's response:*

Mr. Wood incorrectly refers to the Gap Agreement as "Gap Insurance." Safe-Guard is not an insurance company and therefore does not issue or administer insurance policies. The contract that Wood purchased is a Deficiency Waiver Addendum administered by Safe-Guard. Under the Gap Agreement, the lien holder of Wood's loan contract agreed to waive some or all of the remaining unpaid net balance of the loan upon the total loss of the vehicle pursuant to the terms of the Gap Agreement, thus this is a two-party waiver.

The terms of Wood's Gap Agreement allow for cancellation of the agreement for a full refund of the purchase price if cancelled within 30 days of purchase, or a pro rata refund if cancelled after 30 days. Cancellation requests are typically initiated through the dealer where the agreement was purchased. Upon notification of a cancellation request the Gap Agreement is cancelled in our contract management system and Safe-Guard's portion of the customer refund is forwarded to the selling dealer. The dealer then adds its portion of the cancellation refund to Safe-Guard's and disburses the refund to the customer.

On Sept. 1, 2009, Wood contacted Safe-Guard to initiate the cancellation of the Gap Agreement. Safe-Guard calculated Wood's refund amount to be \$737.32, \$145.25 of which is Safe-Guard's portion of the refund. On Oct. 16, 2009, Safe-Guard forward-

ed \$145.25 to the dealer for its portion of Wood's cancellation refund. Safe-Guard's check was cashed on Nov. 19, 2009.

In his letter, Wood contends that Safe-Guard is responsible for the full amount of his cancellation refund, including the dealer's portion of the refund. As the administrator of the Gap Agreement, Safe-Guard receives only a portion of the purchase price of the Gap Agreement from the selling dealer to perform administrative services. As a result, Safe-Guard is responsible for refunding only the portion of the purchase price that it received; the remaining refund remains the responsibility of the selling dealer.

It is our recommendation that if the dealer has filed for bankruptcy Wood should file a claim with the Bankruptcy Court as a creditor seeking the cancellation refund of his Gap Agreement.

While we apologize for the inconvenience, Safe-Guard has fully satisfied its obligations to refund its portion of Wood's Gap Agreement.

**KENYETTA MASSIAH,**  
**LEGAL AND COMPLIANCE**  
**SAFE-GUARD PRODUCTS**  
**INTERNATIONAL LLC**  
**ATLANTA**

### **IRKSOME INVERTER**

*Unhappy with service that he received at a repair shop, a reader asked for Hot Line's help. He explained:*

While vacationing in Florida in January, I experienced trouble with the inverter in my Holiday Rambler motorhome. I went to Suncoast RV in Cocoa, Fla., to have it checked out. I asked the service personnel to check that the fuse was OK. The service technician told me the fuse was OK, but the unit was fried. I did not have the time to wait for repairs so I agreed to have the shop replace the unit at a cost of more than \$1,400. I kept the old inverter.

When I got back home I took the old inverter to another shop for repair and found out that the problem was, indeed, the fuse. After the fuse was replaced I was told the unit works as it should.

I contacted Suncoast RV via e-mail with my concerns and got a call from Jim Prevatt, general manager of Suncoast. He said that Suncoast does not repair inverters, and because the unit was sealed, they could not check the fuse. I told him that the tech had said he had checked the fuse.

I think I was sold a new inverter under false pretenses. I am not willing to remove the new unit and replace it with the old one at my cost, nor am I willing to return to Florida to have Suncoast do it. I appreciate any help Hot Line can get me.

**LEONARD HANSEN | GREEN BAY, WIS.**  
*Hot Line contacted Suncoast RV and advised its management of Hansen's complaint. The company's general manager replied as follows:*

According to Mr. Hansen's letter, he brought his inverter here with a request to check the fuse, at which time we advised him that we do not open inverter cases here, but send them to a licensed Xantrex repair facility and that there's usually a two-week lead time for repairs. The reason we don't open inverter cases is that irreparable damage can be done to the control board if not handled properly.

Hansen advised us that he was unwilling to wait the two weeks for repairs and requested the inverter be replaced. He also requested to have the problem inverter returned to him, which we did.

We are willing to issue a refund for the total bill of \$1,469.32 on return of the newly installed inverter, to inspect it to be sure it is in working order. We do not think this is an unreasonable request given the circumstances and the amount of time lapsed (six months) since the installation of the new inverter.

We pride ourselves in dealing with customers in a fair and professional manner and know the importance of customer satisfaction. We are more than willing to allow Hansen to send the inverter back to us via UPS at our cost.

**JIM PREVATT, GENERAL MANAGER  
SUNCOAST RV  
COCOA, FLA. ♦**

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

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## Oversize Oil Filters

I read about the larger oil filter for the Workhorse chassis with the GM Vortec engine ("Extra Oil Tip," Tech News, Coach & Powertrain, September). I have a 2006 Ford F53 chassis with the Triton 6.8-L V-10 gas engine. Is there a larger oil filter for this engine?

**WILLARD WRIGHT | DAYTON, OHIO**

*Owners of Ford chassis with V-10 gas engines can increase their engine's oil and filtering capacity simply by using a larger oil filter. Part numbers include Motorcraft FL299, WIX 51773, NAPA 1773, Fleetguard LF697, Purolator L40017 and Fram PH977A. These have a higher flow rate than the stock filters and fit the stock filter mount.*

### FORD COIL TIP

I've read about frequent coil failures in V-10-powered Ford motorhomes. I have a used 2001 Southwind that started missing. A friend told me that he had the same problem with his 2000 Pace Arrow; it was burned-out coils, Nos. 5, 7 and 9. I noticed that the Nos. 5, 7 and 9 spark plug recesses on my coach had coolant in them. I also saw that the heater hose had been leaking. Leaking coolant under pressure would run down the right top of the head and into the spark plug recesses, causing the coils to short out. In addition, the clamp's worm drive screw was resting against a piece of metal, preventing it from being tightened.

I removed and cut off 1 inch of hose, put on a new clamp and rotated the clamp about 20 degrees. I notified Ford and it responded by telling me the motorhome manufacturer attaches the heater hoses when it puts the coach onto the chassis. I suggest Fleetwood

owners check the heater hose connection at the front of the block for leakage.

**SID BROWN | CANBY, ORE.**

*Thanks for the tip, Sid. Coil failures are common on these engines and this may save some folks a lot of time and money.*

### BATTERY BINGO

I have a 1988 Pace Arrow Class A motorhome on a Chevrolet P-chassis with what I have been told by the mechanic is a 454-CID (7.4-L) V-8. I have had it in to the shop twice because the batteries would not charge. I had the batteries replaced at one repair shop and then went to another shop to have the charger/converter replaced. This shop checked the charger/converter and the alternator and told me it was the charger/converter and that the batteries were wired incorrectly.

After that it seemed that when I used the house batteries it was draining the starting battery and I had to use the

**A PRODUCT SUCH AS XANTREX ECHO-CHARGE IS DESIGNED TO CHARGE BOTH COACH AND STARTING BATTERIES FROM AN INVERTER/CHARGER OR OTHER CHARGING SOURCE WITH LIMITED VOLTAGE DROP.**



auxiliary starter button. The shop told me it was fine after they replaced the charger/converter, but if I put a meter on the starter battery it read low and the two house batteries read full. If I turn off the house batteries and leave on the starting battery nothing in the RV works, which I know is how it should be. And if I turn off the starting battery and leave the house batteries on, the engine will not start as I assume it shouldn't.

Is there a way to check to make sure they are hooked up right? There seems to be three positive (red) wires on the batteries. Since I bought the RV used there were no books or diagrams with it.

**SCOT ANTRIM | ESCONDIDO, CALIF.**

*From your description it seems like the batteries are hooked up properly. The engine-starting battery does not normally get charged by the converter, it only gets charged by the alternator when the engine is running. Therefore, any parasitic loads will draw it down, especially if the coach is not driven frequently. You can install a product such as Xantrex Echo-Charge, which is designed to charge both coach and starting batteries from an inverter/charger or other charging source with limited voltage drop. The Echo-Charge detects when the coach battery bank is being charged and directs a portion of the charging current to starting batteries. Maximum charging current is limited to 15 amps.*

*It automatically switches on/off without affecting the in-house battery bank or overcharging and has an easy three-wire installation.*

### DRIVEN TO DISTRACTION

We recently purchased a 2008 Lexington GTS 300SS Class C motorhome on a Ford E-450 chassis with only 3,800 miles. I have had to drive this RV with both hands and I can't look off for a second before I have to correct the steering. When turning a corner on an interstate highway, it seems that I turn the steering wheel and nothing happens. As I turn the steering wheel some more, I find that I have overcorrected.

We had problems with the tires, so we had new Michelin LTX MS 10-ply

# BACK TO BASICS LP-Gas Furnace

In winter, one of the most important creature comforts inside a motorhome is heat. Thankfully, other than having to occasionally refill the LP-gas tank, all a motorhome owner usually has to do is dial up the thermostat to the desired temperature.

Aside from the more elaborate perimeter heating systems in some luxury motor coaches, most motorhomes have forced-air furnaces, which use LP-gas to fuel the burner and 12-volt DC power for the controls and the blower.

The most common malfunctions that cause furnace operation failure are generally related to one of two items: DC voltage and gas pressure, neither of which is difficult to check.

If the motorhome's furnace is inoperative (the blower does not run), first check the fuse panel. If the fuse is OK, use a 12-volt DC test probe to check for power in the wires leading into the furnace, so you can be assured of an uninterrupted power circuit.



If power is present, check voltage to make sure it's adequate — voltage must be at least 10.5 volts to keep the gas valve open. If it is, and the furnace will not operate, the problem may

relate to the furnace circuit board, a relay, a faulty blower motor or other component such as the thermostat. If its internal parts can be accessed, check that the thermostat contacts close and will conduct power (check resistance using a multimeter).

If the furnace produces heat while the RV is connected to shorepower or while batteries are fully charged — yet fails to produce heat after several hours of use on batteries — the batteries may be depleted.

If battery voltage is 11 volts or higher, compare voltage at the batteries and at the furnace. In weak circuits, voltage may drop as much as 1 volt between the batteries and the furnace, suggesting heavier wiring is needed. Or, batteries may not be capable of holding a charge.



Another possible problem is low gas pressure. When this problem occurs, other appliances may be affected as well, including the refrigerator. If the blower runs and no heat is produced, check gas pressure. Adequate gas pressure is essential; it should be set to 11 inches water column (measuring on a manometer).



If 12-volt DC power and gas pressure are OK and the burner does not ignite, the gas valve or the circuit board may be bad (your local RV service center can test the circuit board using specialized equipment).



Also, periodically check the intake and exhaust vents outside the motorhome for insect nests and other debris. Mice sometimes chew their way into interior heat ducts and may create nests in blowers. Never tape off or use a screen cover on the exhaust and intake vents.

## HOW A FURNACE WORKS

- A thermostat summons heat, via a circuit board inside the furnace.
- After a short delay, the board activates a dual-purpose blower, injecting air into the combustion chamber while simultaneously moving air through the ducts.
- A sail switch closes, signaling that the blower is providing enough air for combustion to occur.
- A gas valve is opened, admitting gas into the burner inside the combustion chamber, where an electrode assembly produces a spark. Combustion occurs, and gases are vented outside — sealed from the inside air circulation system.
- A limit switch halts gas flow if temperature is too high, or if the blower becomes inoperative, and the thermostat controls furnace running time.

tires installed at 5,000 miles, which didn't seem to make a difference in handling. We got the alignment checked and found that it didn't make any difference in the handling. We have maintained the manufacturer's suggested tire pressures. The next purchase would be some kind of stabilizer system, which is definitely a step up in cost.

I am confused about which system to buy. Some are for the rear and some are for the front. Can you recommend a strategy for us to determine which is best for our RV? Is it lazy steering or suspension issues? Is it a Ford problem or a motorhome problem? Every time I talked with a motorhome dealer, I tried to compare my previous RV, which was 27 feet long, with my new RV, which is 32 feet long. They blame more overhang. I would think that both vehicles should be comparable to one another.

**BETH RODDA | ORANGE, TEXAS**

*That longer rear overhang acts like a pendulum and the yawing requires a lot more chassis and suspension control than the Ford chassis comes with. Install stiffer aftermarket front and rear sway bars and a*



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*steering stabilizer. These are available from Roadmaster and others. A panhard rod, or track bar, installed on the rear axle can likewise make a big difference in handling stability and is highly recommended. These changes will make a huge improvement in handling and driving. If you can afford it, I also suggest upgrading to premium aftermarket shock absorbers such as Bilsteins.*

#### COLD TIRE PRESSURES

I've read many articles on tire pressure including the recent one by Doug Jones ("Keeping Rubber on the Road") in the August issue, but I have a question. When I leave home in Michigan in January the outside temperature can be near zero. Inside my garage, where I keep the motorhome, the tire pressure is always about 10 PSI lower than required. The garage is not heated, but is well-insulated. Should I add the 10 or so pounds of pressure to each tire to bring them up to required levels and then let some out as I travel to the warmer climates, or leave them underinflated and as I travel south, they heat up and return to normal tire pressure? I have always leaned on the side of caution and added the air and then let it out as I move south. Any thoughts on this?

**J. SWIERENGAN | HOLLAND, MICH.**

*It's important to always inflate tires to the proper level when cold, before starting out, so you are doing the right thing. You don't ever want to be driving with underinflated tires, as it may cause hidden damage to the tires, or even result in a blowout. When you reach warmer climes, again adjust pressures in the morning before starting out.*

#### JAKE BRAKES

I have a 2005 Country Coach with a 400-HP Cat engine that only has an engine exhaust brake. In my previous motorhome I had a Jake Brake, which gives considerably more deceleration and help in slowing down. Is it possible to have a Jake Brake installed? What would it do to the engine warranty, life, etc.?

**STANLEY HARDWICK | CLOVIS, N.M.**

*Jake Brakes are commonly and successfully used for billions of miles on heavy trucks using Cat engines, so there shouldn't be any problem with durability or warranty. They do provide more braking than an exhaust brake, are available for your engine,*

*and you can find more information at [www.jakebrake.com](http://www.jakebrake.com).*

#### FOGGY FLAIR HEADLIGHTS

We have a 2003 Fleetwood Flair Class A. The headlights don't seem to be very good. We can't see very far in the distance at all, perhaps a car length. Is there any fix for this?

**MARILYN FREITAS | PHOENIX**

*The intense sunlight in your area causes the plastic headlight lenses to become oxidized and cloudy. If the plastic is discolored, get a headlight restoration kit, such as Quixx brand, from an auto parts store. Additionally, consider upgrading to HID headlights or brighter bulbs. You can find bulbs and conversions on eBay or elsewhere. Having the headlights professionally aligned will also help.*

#### FUEL GAUGE FOLLIES FOLLOW-UP

This is in response to the letter "Fuel Gauge Follies" (Coach & Powertrain, October). I own a Class A diesel-pusher that has a lot of electrical components energized by the ignition switch. There's a solenoid relay powered by the ignition switch that carries these loads. My coach would be running and then suddenly lose all dash indicators. I figured out that the solenoid relay was defective. I replaced the relay and the instrumentation has been rock solid ever since.

**FRITZ JOHNSON | CHEWELAH, WASH.**

*Thanks for writing. I'm glad your electrical system isn't on the "Fritz" anymore.*

#### TIRE INFLATION TIP

I own a 2001 Hurricane 29-foot motorhome. I had six new Bridgestone tires installed and on the way home the coach was very bouncy. I went back to ask how much air they put in and they said it calls for 90 PSI. Can I lower the air pressure to get a better ride, and if so, how much can I lower them?

**DALE LOFLAND | VIA E-MAIL**

*Proper inflation pressure is determined based on how much weight each tire carries. The first step is to take the motorhome to a truck scale and measure each corner, if possible, and record the weights. If it's not possible due to the scale configuration, weigh each axle and divide the weight by*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 64

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#### WONDER WHERE THE WHITE WENT

I have a 1996 Fleetwood Jamboree motorhome that I bought new and always stored indoors. Over the years the bathroom sink and shower base with wall surround have turned yellow. What can I use to make the plastic white again? This discoloration makes the bathroom look old.

**WILLIAM DICK | MANTUA, OHIO**

*First try a paste of baking soda and warm water on a sponge. White vinegar is also useful for removing yellow stains from white plastic and is natural and gentle, but it gives off an odor. If that doesn't work, get a can of Bar Keepers Friend cleanser. It has oxalic acid in it and should get the discoloration out.*

#### PESKY PINGING

I have a 2002 Southwind Class A motorhome with a Ford V-10 engine. I bought it recently and it runs well, but I have noticed that it pings under moderate load between 2,000 and 3,000 RPM. I am using Regular gasoline and this occurs at lower and higher altitudes. Would replacement of the knock sensor or temperature sensors help?

**KENT BOSCH | ESTES PARK, COLO.**

*An engine can ping for many reasons. In your region I've seen a lot of 85-octane Regular gasoline, which is often too low, especially when climbing mountain grades in hot weather. Oxygenated fuels also run lean and burn hot, which exacerbates the problem. A faulty oxygen sensor can also affect fuel mixture. Try running middle-grade gas and see what happens. Make sure the EGR passages aren't clogged with carbon. Also check if the engine is running hot for any reason, or if there's a lot of carbon buildup in the combustion chambers. Usually if sensors are bad, the ECM will set a trouble code, but they could be tested as a last resort.*

#### HOT SOLENOID RELAY

I have a 2006 36-foot Western RV Alpine coach that is solar equipped with three 120-watt panels controlled through a Solar Boost 2000E control panel. There are eight

6-volt 232-amp-hour batteries on the house side and two 12-volt batteries for the chassis. The solenoid relay (Trombetta 114-1211-020) installed between the house and chassis batteries heats up to more than 130 degrees Fahrenheit whenever there is a charge going to the batteries.

The relay seems to control the emergency boost to start the engine if the chassis batteries fail, and possibly to keep the two banks on an equal charge. The only time it's not hot is if there is no charge being fed to the batteries, or I disconnect one bank of batteries. I've tried disconnecting the solar system while running the engine or the genset but this didn't help. Any suggestions?  
**DAN RODWILL | LIVINGSTON, TEXAS**

*This make relay is widely used and has a good reputation. Another popular brand is Cole-Hersee. You didn't mention what the ambient temperature was when you measured it. Heavy current flowing through the relay will generate some heat, and your relay is rated for up to 185 degrees operating temperature, so you are well within limits. You need to measure the amperage going through the relay and determine if it exceeds the amperage rating, which is 225 amp continuous. An inductive ammeter can be used to get a ballpark reading. I doubt you are exceeding the rating.*

#### TIRE AGE

I have a 2003 Gulf Stream coach with 28,000 miles on it. The tires are Michelin 235/80R22.5. Do I need to worry about the age of the tires? They were made in 2003 and my motorhome is in a garage and covered when not in use. The tires still look new.  
**A. FALCON | ST. LOUIS, MO.**

*Tires deteriorate much faster if they are subjected to constant sunlight and weather than if they are stored indoors in cool shade. Other factors like high ozone concentrations can also speed deterioration. I would inspect them for sidewall cracking on a frequent basis. A tire failure can be catastrophic. The general industry guideline is to replace tires every seven to 10 years, depending on condition.◆*

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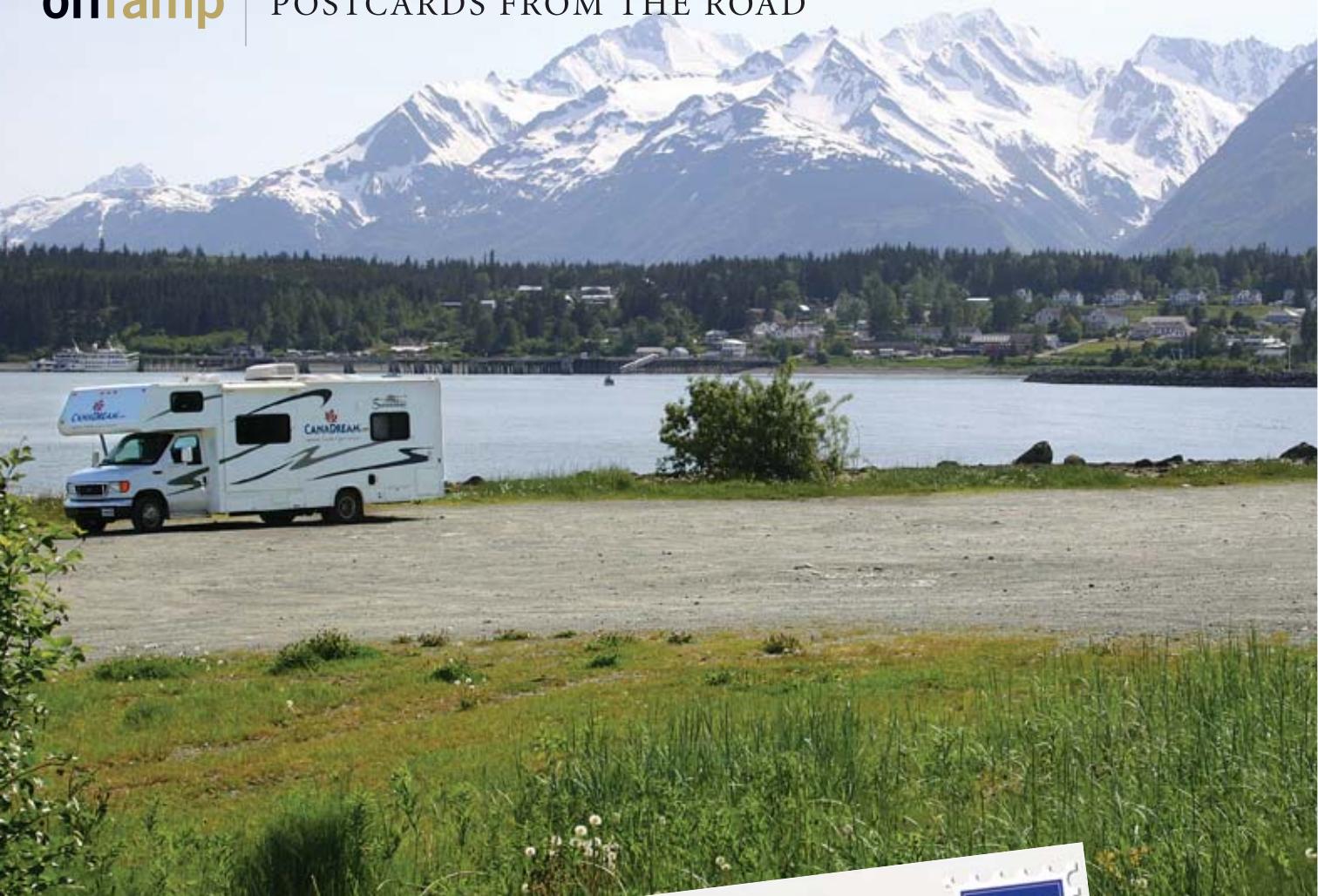
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Lee and Arline Chandler Smith  
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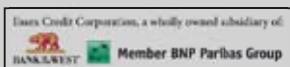
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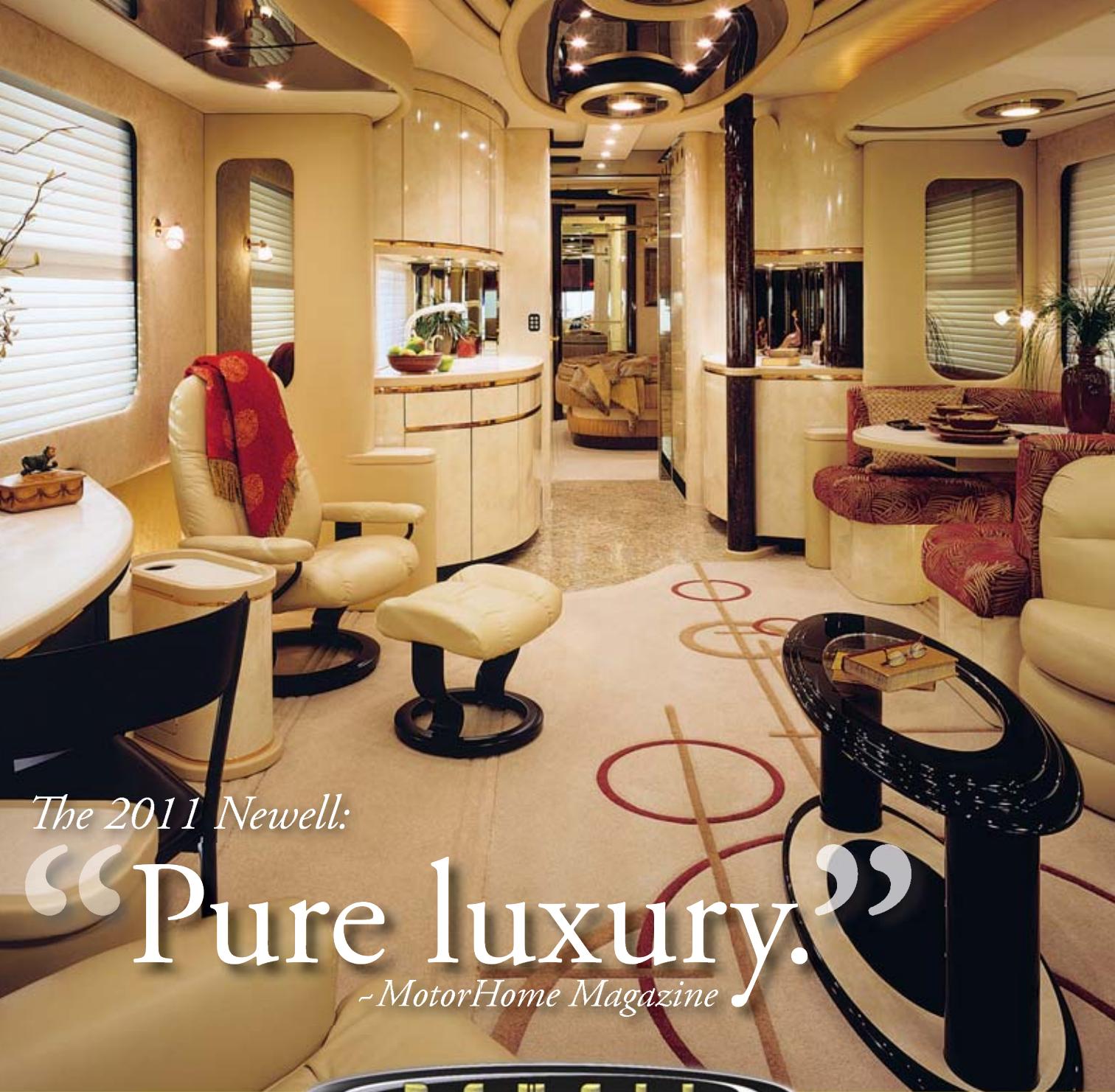


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