

TRAVEL • TECH • LIFESTYLE

FOR THE RV ENTHUSIAST

MOTORHOME

SEPTEMBER 2009

NATIONAL PARKS SPECIAL

- GRAND CANYON'S NORTH RIM
- IDAHO'S CRATERS OF THE MOON
- GRAND TETON NATIONAL PARK
- KEN BURNS' NEW DOCUMENTARY

SPRINTER GUIDE:
35 FUEL-EFFICIENT
RIGS

HOW TO PROTECT
ON-BOARD
ELECTRONICS

SUMMER FUN:
CAMPGROUNDS
WITH WATER PARKS



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On The Cover: Many of the unique features of Idaho's Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve are accessible from the seven-mile scenic loop drive that winds its way through the park (see feature, page 21). Photo by Karen Lee Ensley.

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LET THE GOOD TIMES ROLL ... LITERALLY

As the summer travel season winds down, many of us are recalling the memories of great trips and making plans for the fall and winter. Happily, the recently traveled roads were dotted with many more RVs than we've seen in a long time. It was refreshing to note that the general RV populace was less obsessed about current economic conditions and actually thinking upbeat about the future — a sure sign that consumer confidence is starting to move in the right direction.

It feels like the RV industry has hit bottom and we're on our way back to more pleasant times. While my optimistic attitude is due, in part, to spending time recently in heavily booked campgrounds and crowded popular RV destinations, my observations are reinforced by the activities of a number of manufacturers. I devoted a great amount of time this summer to visiting RV and supplier factories, and I can tell you things are looking pretty busy. Further supporting my opinion that RVs are on the rebound is the number of new manufacturing companies that have come on the scene in the last nine months. Granted, most are in the towable segment, but there's also good movement in the motorized sector — including the resurgence of popular nameplates like Monaco, Holiday Rambler, Country Coach and Fleetwood.

As for the next generation of compact — but totally livable — coaches, take a look at the buyer's guide on Sprinter-based motorhomes (see page 48). Not that long ago, our list would have included only a few Class B models. A few years back, Winnebago took the bold, and innovative, next step by introducing the first Sprinter-based Class C, moving fuel-efficient motorhomes to the next level and spearheading a burgeoning motorhome segment. Today there are 35 listings offered by 18 companies!

By the time you read this column, I will have had the exclusive opportunity to explore the inner workings of the Win-



nebago Via, the first *Class A* motorhome built on a Sprinter-based chassis. This latest iteration of compacts, the 25-foot Via, and its counterpart, the Itasca Rey, are built on a cowl chassis, which is a body-free version of the Mercedes-Benz van chassis. Look for a full test report in an upcoming issue.

While these new European-inspired coaches may be smaller in stature, they are not Spartan by any means. Just like their bigger and higher-end brethren, the Via and the growing lineup of other coaches in this class are equipped with a lot of electronic gadgetry. And, just as in those more opulent rigs, 120-volt AC electronics need to be protected from voltage spikes. Last summer the skies were filled with amazing — and sometimes violent — thunder and lightening storms. That's why we asked E. Don Smith to install and test an on-board surge protector (see page 42). There are a number of these devices available in hard-wired and portable versions.

Lightening is not our only nemesis; many campgrounds have faulty wiring and/or are susceptible to spiking caused by brownouts during high-use times of the day. And sometimes we just do dumb things, like my friend who plugged into a 220-volt AC outlet (which looks just like a 30-amp receptacle) in a mobile home park that allowed RVers to park on empty pads. He ended up frying all his 120-volt AC appliances and accessories — to the tune of thousands of dollars in damage. I want my trips to be electrifying, but without the associated damage from voltage spikes.

The only spikes I want to see in the near future are the number of new motorhomes that are introduced for 2010, and the number of new people who become part of our incredible lifestyle. The industry is responding, the people are regaining confidence and good times will continue to roll. Literally. ♦

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WHAT SAFETY PRECAUTIONS DO YOU TAKE WHEN TRAVELING IN YOUR MOTORHOME?

That's the question we asked in our June issue, and here's one of the replies we received.

FEROCIOUS SECURITY SYSTEM

I take along my German shepherd and Akita and I always feel safe in my motorhome. Dogs are a great deterrent, because they bark and announce when a stranger is coming. I'd love for someone to try to break into my rig with two big dogs sitting in the driver and passenger seats!

JANIE HANSON | CORRALES, NEW MEXICO

THE JOY IS IN THE JOURNEY

Life just got significantly easier thanks to Bob Livingston's excellent article ("Life's a Journey," June) about the Winnebago 34Y. My wife and I are considering the move from a 28-foot travel trailer to a diesel-pusher. While there may be a lot of information out there, not all of it is useful. Fortunately, Mr. Livingston wrote a great piece, giving me some valuable information, to help me make my decision. Thanks to *MotorHome* and to Bob Livingston for a very readable and useful article.

STEPHEN BLOCH | CARMEL VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

MORE RECYCLING RESOLUTIONS

About recycling in campgrounds ("Recycling Rebuttal," June), J.T. Traverse wanted a solution for recycling in campgrounds. My husband and I went to the Jackson Rancheria RV Resort in Jackson, California. They handed out yellow plastic bags for recycling, and it worked.

GINGER D'ONOFRIO | SONORA, CALIFORNIA

STIMULATING INFORMATION

June's *News Briefs* had an interesting note concerning a deduction for taxes on cars and motorhomes through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. How can I find out more?

ROBERT SLATTERY | CERESCO, MICHIGAN

Go to www.whitehouse.gov, for the full text of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

ROADMASTER CLARIFICATION

June's *Hot Line* column contains an error about the 9700 Roadmaster brake system that is discussed. It stated that "all of Roadmaster's supplemental braking systems, including the 9700, are equipped with visual and audio safeguards" I checked with Roadmaster and was told that not all of its brake systems come with both audio and visual systems. I purchased a BrakeMaster 9060 system, which does not include the audio safeguard.

KEN YOUNG | SEQUIM, WASHINGTON

Thank you, Ken. We contacted Roadmaster, Inc. for clarification:



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Young is correct, not all Roadmaster braking systems include an audible alarm. All of Roadmaster's *portable* braking systems do include both an audible and visual alarm system to notify the consumer of normal braking activity as well as breakaway or other hazardous conditions. Our portable systems are the fully enclosed "brake in a box"-type units. Our BrakeMaster series, which are *not* considered portable, include the visual but not the audio alert.

I hope this clarifies the matter. If we initially provided incorrect information to *MotorHome*, then I apologize for the confusion we have created.

**DAVID ROBINSON | DIRECTOR
ROADMASTER, INCORPORATED
VANCOUVER, WASHINGTON**

ROOF RESTORATION

I loved the rubber roof replacement article ("Fiddlin' on the Roof," June). I don't need to replace my rubber roof now, but it's nice to know how it's done and where to get supplies if needed. How about a future article on the cause and repair of delami-

nation? I see a lot of that. Thanks.

**JOHN PFALZ
OCONOMOWOC, WISCONSIN**

LIVING POSTCARD TRULY ALIVE

Having sailed the Maine coast for 25 years and now exploring the same from the vantage of a motorhome, I have to congratulate you on the most cogent, accurate and enticing description of the midcoast I've ever enjoyed ("Camden and Rockport, Maine — A Living Postcard," June), including those presented in the sailing magazines. You even included the Belted Galloway cows! Thank you for a periodical that I look forward to every month.

**POLLY MORGENSTERN
DURANGO, COLORADO**

Question:
What RV vacation spots stand out as "living postcards" for you?
Send your comments to *MotorHome*, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001; or send an e-mail to letters@motorhomemagazine.com. ♦

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escapes

by DENISE SANTOYO

EVENTS | NOTEWORTHY | NEWS BRIEFS | CROSSROADS

f you're traveling through beautiful Fairplay, Colorado, on U.S.

Highway 285, be sure to stop in for more than fuel. A visit to South Park City Museum is a must. The museum — an exacting restoration of an 1880s Colorado mining boomtown — is a mix of 34 authentic buildings. The museum boasts more than 60,000 artifacts of frontier boomtown life.

Mosey through the Dyer Memorial Chapel, the South Park Brewery built in 1879, the Assay Office, a smokehouse, a blacksmith's shop, the court house and more. Stop by the J.A. Merriam Drug Store, with its enormous collection of drugs and remedies, which the museum reports as "one of the most complete collections of patent medicines in the U.S." Simpkin's General Store, with its original post-office equipment, is a must-see for postal history buffs. During peak season, costumed historical interpreters enhance the museum's atmosphere. The museum is open from mid-May through mid-October. For more information, call (719) 836-2387, or visit www.southparkcity.org.

— Donna Ikenberry

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escapes | EVENTS

by KAITLYN VOYCE

SEPTEMBER 4-6 | Spend Labor Day weekend at Ninigret Park in Charlestown, Rhode Island, at the **Rhythm and Roots Festival**. With everything from blues to swing music, a Family Tent, parade, two dance floors, dance lessons and more, this festival has it all. Dry camping is available at the park; (888) 855-6940, www.rhythmandroots.com.

SEPTEMBER 5 | Gather with fellow RVers at Indian Creek Recreation Area in Mobridge, South Dakota, for a **Camper's Potluck**. Make your favorite camp recipe to share and enjoy music, games and getting to know your neighbors for the night; (605) 845-7112, www.sdgrp.info.

SEPTEMBER 7-12 | Experience a regatta race at the **Great Provincetown Schooner Regatta and Yacht Race** in Cape Cod, Massachusetts. Sail alongside the crew on a schooner, go to a movie screening, watch a Parade of Sails and much more; www.provincetownschoolerrace.com.

SEPTEMBER 12-13 | Head to Columbus, Ohio, for **Antiques in the Woods**. Stroll around Shaker Woods Grounds while browsing antiques and collectibles from top dealers. The weekend also includes country cooking, a Civil War encampment, music, classic car show and parade. Camping is available on the grounds; (330) 550-4190, www.antiquesinthewoods.com.

SEPTEMBER 20

Enjoy a day at the fair for a good cause. **For Paws Fair Day** in Newark, Delaware, benefits the Delaware S.P.C.A.'s Second Chance Fund, which helps provide emergency veterinary care to animals in the system's shelters. The fair has everything an animal lover could want: dog contests, crafters, agility and police K-9 demonstrations, raffles, and Ask the Vet and microchipping sessions; (302) 998-2281, www.delspca.org.



SEPTEMBER 18-20 | Embrace the world of make-believe at **STORY! Celebrating the Art of Storytelling** in Story City, Iowa. This annual storytelling festival features workshops and performances by professional storytellers, STORY!telling and popcorn by the campfire, concerts, an open mic event and more; (515) 733-4214, www.storyfestival.net.

RV SHOWS

SEPTEMBER 4-6
Southwest RV Super Show,
Dallas, Texas; (512) 327-4514
SEPTEMBER 11-13
Fall RV and Boat Sale,
Kansas City, Kan.; (816) 931-4686
SEPTEMBER 11-13
Indianapolis Fall Boat and RV Show,
Indianapolis, Ind.; (765) 641-7712
SEPTEMBER 11-13
Iowa RV and Boat Super Sale,
Des Moines, Iowa; (763) 383-4414
SEPTEMBER 11-13
North Carolina Fall
RV Show and Sale,
Greensboro, N.C.; (804) 425-6556
SEPTEMBER 11-13
RV Bargain Expo,
Cleveland, Ohio; (216) 970-7500

SEPTEMBER 14-20
Pennsylvania Recreation
Vehicle and Camping Show,
Hershey, Pa.; (888) 303-2887
SEPTEMBER 17-20
Maryland Fall RV Show,
Timonium, Md.; (410) 561-7323
SEPTEMBER 24-27
Atlanta Camping and RV Show,
Atlanta, Ga.; (770) 447-3334
SEPTEMBER 24-27
Fall RV Show,
Sacramento, Calif.; (800) 782-7469
SEPTEMBER 25-27
New York State RV Show,
Syracuse, N.Y.; (772) 225-1941
SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 4
Detroit Camper and RV Show,
Novi, Mich.; (517) 349-8881

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



CAMPING DISCOUNTS FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL

Carefree RV Resorts is offering a 50 percent discount to active and retired military personnel and their families at 35 parks in Florida, Texas, New Jersey, North Carolina and California on Sunday-through-Thursday stays.

“We think this is a great way to show appreciation for the contributions of our Armed Forces,” said David Napp, CEO of Carefree RV Resorts. “All veterans need to do to take advantage of the promotion is show their military ID or other form of ID that shows their military service,” Napp said, adding that the discounts also apply to immediate family members traveling with veterans. The discounts are subject to space availability through December 31, cannot be combined with any other discounts and cannot be used Labor Day weekend. For more information, visit www.carefreervresorts.com.



LITTLE LEATHERMAN

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The new Leatherman Freestyle five-in-one multitool is about the size of a pack of gum and weighs only 4½ ounces.

The compact Freestyle comes equipped with full-size pliers, needlenose pliers, a knife, wire cutters and hard-wire cutters and features a stainless-steel body with Zytel or carbon fiber (CX) handle inserts for weight reduction. It comes in two styles: the Freestyle (with 420 high-carbon straight/serrated combo blade) and Freestyle CX (with 154CM straight blade). Available at retailers nationwide, the Freestyle has an MSRP of \$48, and the Freestyle CX has an MSRP of \$72. Both are covered by Leatherman's 25-year warranty. **Leatherman, (800) 847-8665, www.leatherman.com.**

News Briefs

Norcold has further extended its voluntarily recall of 1200LR, 1200LRIM and 1201LRIM model gas/electric refrigerators built from 1996 through February 2001. Affected models have a cooling unit serial number (found on the solution chamber and viewed through the refrigerator vent door outside the RV) from 700000–1273700. The defect is a potential cooling unit leak caused during AC electric mode operation.

Vehicle owners with these models whose cooling units are inside the range must stop operating their refrigerator until it has been inspected and repaired. Persons owning an affected refrigerator should call Norcold at (800) 767-9101 for additional information and to obtain the location of the nearest Norcold Service Center. Information is also available at www.norcold.com.

Congress has directed the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) to spend \$170 million of **American Recovery and Reinvestment Act** funds on roads in national parks. “Roadways in national parks revolutionized tourism and provided the opportunity for Americans to visit the magnificent areas managed by the National Park Service (NPS),” said Interior Secretary Ken Salazar. “It is essential that we maintain those roads and by investing in valuable road repair projects, we not only uphold a promise to our citizens that parks will be accessible to all, but we help create jobs and stimulate our economy. This funding from the FHA will assure that visitors to their national parks can drive safely on the Going-to-the-Sun Road in Glacier National Park, enjoy the beauty of Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park and be inspired as they drive the tour routes at Antietam National Battlefield in Maryland.”

For the first time since Sept. 11, 2001, public access is being allowed to the **Statue of Liberty's** crown, closed in 2001 for safety and security reasons. It reopened July 4, though access is limited to 10 people at a time. The Statue of Liberty will be open for two years, after which time it will be closed to enact long-term solutions for improving safety and security permanently.



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escapes

CROSSROADS

A UNIQUE WORKOUT

Big Dam Bridge, spanning the Arkansas River between Little Rock and North Little Rock, is the longest bridge in the world built exclusively for pedestrians and bicyclists. The concrete and steel structure rises to 65 feet over the river and 30 feet over Murray Lock and Dam. The bridge stretches 4,226 linear feet, including 5 percent grade ramps on either side that curve into a 14-foot-wide promenade with eight observation areas.

The southern access of the bridge is near Little Rock's Murray Park, and the northern point ends at Cook's Landing Park in North Little Rock. The bridge connects approximately 15 miles of scenic riverside trails. However, its appeal is in the mix of residents and visitors who stroll, walk their dogs and embrace a sense of community.

The bridge is located close to Maumelle U.S. Corps of Engineers Park with spacious RV sites along the Arkansas River, and 10 minutes from downtown Little Rock.

For more information, call (501) 340-6800, or go to www.bigdambridge.com.

— Arline Chandler

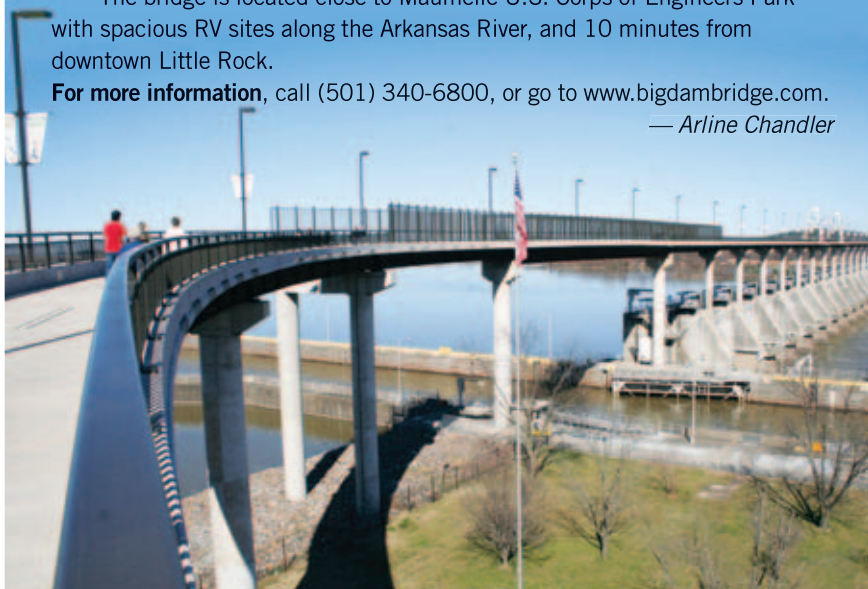


PHOTO: LEE SMITH

SWEET DESTINATION

If you want to see what happens when you cross 17th-century values with 20th-century technology, head northwest out of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for Hershey, the town and huge factory built by chocolatier Milton S. Hershey.

Although raised by Mennonite parents, Hershey embraced the machine age, building a modern factory in 1905 near a source of abundant fresh milk. He soon became known as the king of chocolate, and his town is a reflection of his passion for candy making. Hershey built an antique automobile collection, huge amusement park — Hersheypark — zoo and 23-acre rose garden. A tour of a simulated factory, complete with animated cows, is also offered.

There are numerous campgrounds and RV parks in Hershey, including Hershey Highmeadow Campground in town, with more than 225 full-hookup sites. The park, open year-round, offers seasonal shuttle service to Hersheypark.

For more information, visit www.hersheys.com. — David Hilbert



AN INTERVIEW WITH ACCLAIMED FILMMAKER KEN BURNS ABOUT HIS NEW NATIONAL PARKS DOCUMENTARY

by STUART BOURDON

AMERICA'S BEST IDEA

Arches National Park, Utah

Documentary filmmaker Ken Burns has brought to the screen a six-part series about the history of the national parks. It's not just about the magnificent places we hold as hallowed, but a brilliantly told tale of the people — young, old, famous, until now unknown, rich and poor — that spent their lives creating and protecting these national treasures for all future generations.

STUART BOURDON: In this new series, will we see the emotional intensity of some of your previous work, such as *The Civil War*? And what sort of stories can we expect?

KEN BURNS: The story of the national parks is so deeply emotional, to so many, that Dayton Duncan [co-producer and writer for the series] and I were stunned by the response from some people about what the parks meant to them.

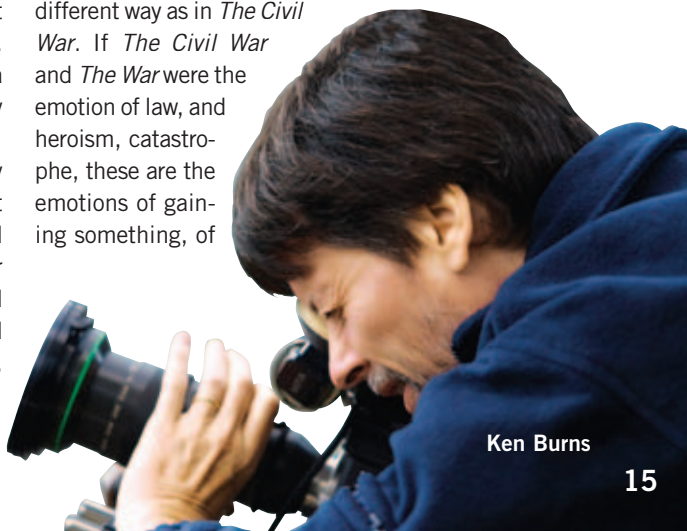
This is the story of ideas and individuals set against the backdrop of the most spectacular scenery on earth. It's a history. It's not a travelogue, or a nature film, or a recommendation of which lodge or anything. It's the story of the ideas and the individuals.

Some of them millions have heard of — Teddy Roosevelt, John Muir and John D. Rockefeller Jr. — but most of them haven't been heard of, or hadn't been heard of when we began this project. Ordinary people, or so-called ordinary. Black, white, brown, yellow, red and beige, and male and female, and rich and poor, and famous and unknown, from every region of the country, and from overseas as well, who fell in love with some particular place and spent the rest of their lives, their

fortunes and their sacred honors setting it aside.

What each of them had in common is a sense that these special places, which we have been able to save, could be not only refuges from the momentum of our lives, but reminders of a higher emotional being.

Even the people (historians and authors) we interviewed to help us understand the people (subjects) in our film also have that relationship with the parks. Those moments, the most amazing moments in their lives, took place in a national park and as they relate them the emotion comes out. So the combination of the interaction between these historical stories and the people we've interviewed to tell those stories turns out to be a potent combination, every bit as emotional but in a different way as in *The Civil War*. If *The Civil War* and *The War* were the emotion of law, and heroism, catastrophe, these are the emotions of gaining something, of



Ken Burns



The last survivor, Totuya (right), of the expulsion of the Ahwahneechees returned to her former homeland, Yosemite Valley, in 1929. George Melendez Wright (left), a young park service biologist who undertook the first scientific study of wildlife and plant-life conditions in the parks, was asked to help translate her Spanish into English.



Old Faithful, Yellowstone National Park

reconnecting with something authentic, and that's why the national parks are so important. That's why our subtitle is "America's Best Idea." We stole that from Wallace Stegner, the writer who in his story said it's the best idea we've ever had.

SB: Tell us a little bit about the scope of the production. How many years, places, people?

KB: We've been working on this for 10 years. We've been shooting for six. It's in six parts, 12 hours total. After a 15-minute overture, an introduction that sets up the beauty of the spectacular places, then we begin our hallmark historical storytelling in 1851 when the first white battalion of soldiers went into Yosemite Valley, intent on dislocating the Indians that lived there, and one of the soldiers noted that it was one of the most beautiful spots on earth. It ends essentially before a hopefully as poetic and beautiful "outro," with the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980.

We do go on to show other events, important events in the history of the parks, but we are historians and don't like to taste too much of the modern history. But the bookends of our history begin in 1851 with the Mariposa Battalion going into Yosemite and ends with the spectacular doubling of the park system's size with the addition of all the Alaska parks and wildernesses as a result of Carter signing the ANILCA.

However, many of the issues we debate today, from the number of snowmobiles in Yellowstone to power plants adjacent to national parks to species diversification to habitat to increasing and adding parks, and the resistance among local and other groups that are opposed ideologically to the concept of parks, are issues that are seen in the history of our story.

John Muir, desperate to have visitors to the national parks, wasn't quite sure whether the automobile — the "horseless carriage," as he referred to it — should mingle its gas breath with

the cool air of the pines and the waterfalls. That's history's great gift. It permits us to discuss these things in a more dispassionate and reasoned manner.

SB: What did you discover or learn about the parks during the production of this documentary that you didn't know? What will we learn that may surprise us?

KB: We never make films about things that we know about. We make films about things we want to know more about and I have spent most of my professional life out in the West and out in natural settings, but I was completely unprepared for what this project was going to deliver to us and I'm sure Dayton would say the same thing. The first thing is the idea of parks itself.

Most Americans think that the parks have always been there. They haven't. Most people think the National Park Service (NPS) has always been there. It hasn't. In fact, it doesn't show up until halfway through our third of six episodes. And most people think that the parks will always be there. But unless we're vigilant and protect them, they won't be.

You can lose a place and it's lost forever. Once you save it, it requires constant vigilance to save that place and I think I was unprepared for the way the story of the national parks and the evolution of the parks ideal evolved in much the same way as our larger American narrative, the political narrative of all men are created equal.

In fact, we've seen the national parks as the Declaration of Independence applied to the landscape. And you could have knocked me over with a feather when we began to realize that. I mean, in the beginning we saved spectacular natural scenery. We saved obvious things like the grandest canyon on earth, the tallest trees, highest waterfall and amazing geothermal features in Yellowstone, but then we expanded for historical and ethnographical reasons, for habitat and species diversification.

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We set aside battlefields and historic homes and seashores and recreation behind the dams that were built just on the edge of the parks. We've even saved places of shame with the notion that a great country can learn from their mistakes. No other country on earth does that.

A high school in Little Rock, still a working school, is also a unit of the NPS. Manzanar, where Japanese-Americans were interned during World War II, is an NPS site, as are slave cabins, and the site in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, where the heroic actions of the passengers of United 93 in 2001 took place, and so is the site in Oklahoma City and its 168 chairs.

It was the buffalo soldiers, the celebrated African-American cavalry soldiers, who were protecting Sequoia and Yosemite in a decade when more African-Americans were lynched than in any other decade of our history. That's a story few have ever heard.

We are telling a history of the United States, and the heroes that saved these places are not just John Muir and Teddy Roosevelt. They are George Melendez

Wright, a Hispanic biologist who turned the Park Service attention in the right direction in terms of how animals should be cared for in the park. They are George Masa, a Japanese-American immigrant whose photographs were instrumental in getting the Great Smoky Mountains set aside as a park. There are women involved, there are children, there are older people, there are poets, and the likes of Thomas Moran, William Henry Jackson and Ansel Adams. There are democrats; there are republicans. There is an amazing array of people who have been instrumental in the story.

SB: Of all the parks that you visited, all the parks that you were involved with, did you end up having a favorite?

KB: Well you know it's funny. Usually when people ask me what's my favorite film, I say, "Do you have any kids? You know, which is your favorite kid?" If we're good parents, we're not supposed to have favorites. So it's difficult to say which park or parks are my favorite.

In some ways my films, and by extension, the parks in the newest film, are that

way. We found that each park is special, but that some parks have created special intimate moments. That yes, they're all beautiful, but it's like baseball. In football, people will say "oh you know, I went to this game and Joe Montana threw a pass to Jerry Rice and we won," or in basketball they say "he inbound it to Michael Jordan with one second and he hit the three-pointer and we won," but in baseball all stories begin with "my dad or my mom took me to the game."

Parks are like that, too. It's whom you saw them with. But if I had to pick, for me, it's Yosemite and Shenandoah. Yosemite because it was the first major park I filmed for this project and the first time I had ever been to what is one of the most, if not *the* most, spectacular places on earth, but it also reminded me that I had actually been to a natural national park before.

I thought I hadn't. I thought I had only been to military parks, but in 1959 my dad took me, as a young boy of 6 years, to Shenandoah National Park. It was the first and only road trip we ever took together alone and it was special. Because of the tragedy of

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my mother's death that was about to befall our family, and other things, I had somehow forgotten about that trip. There in Yosemite, the first night of filming, I couldn't sleep after an exhausting day of work. And I was thrilled to realize that I had something, a connection to the parks, nearly 50 years before that was so important to me.

SB: What do you think the parks really mean to Americans? And why should they be so important to us in the future?

KB: There is a momentum to our busy lives, but these parks and the act of camping help to at least arrest or give pause to our lives. Life will be there when we get back, but the kind of spectacular psychic or physical changes that take place when we camp in our national parks are so central to our being as Americans. You know, we don't say "my country 'tis of thee" thinking of metropolitan output or skyscrapers, we think about the land and our experience with the land and that's a huge, huge wonderful thing.

We are at an existential moment right now in our country's history because the parks' attendance was headed toward 300 million, and then it leveled off, and now it's begun to dip in some places.

It's very simple — most people now live virtual lives. They spend their lives addicted to the cell phone, to their BlackBerry, to the Internet and to video games. Existentialism is a tension between being and doing, and a virtual life is neither. What's happened quite simply is it's just much, much harder to get families all together and go do that thing that we all did as kids — travel around to the parks and camp from one place to another.

I try to remind people that the virtual world will be there when they get back, but those parks won't be there tomorrow, if we don't enjoy them, and advocate and argue for their continuance. ♦

For more than 30 years, Ken Burns has been directing and producing some of the most acclaimed historical documentaries ever made, including The Civil War, The War, Jazz and Baseball. His newest documentary, The National Parks — America's Best Idea, is scheduled to premiere on PBS September 27. For more information, go to www.pbs.org/nationalparks, or check your local TV listings.

The collapsed ceiling and natural stairway of Indian Tunnel makes it a favorite with explorers.

ALLURING MOONSCAPE

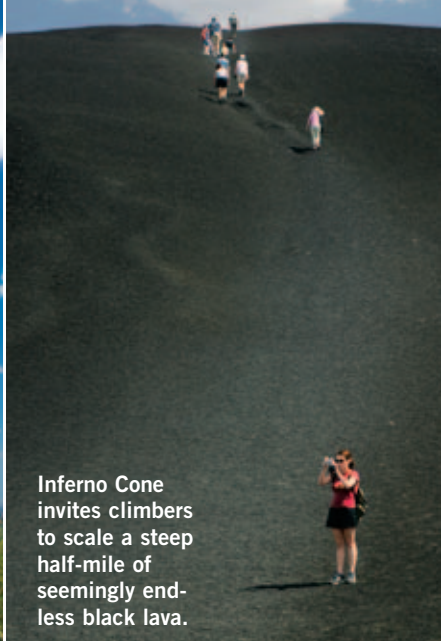
In a seemingly otherworldly area of Idaho known as Craters of the Moon, ancient volcanoes created a bizarre landscape featuring massive black cinder cones, caves formed from lava flows and a vast expanse of hardened, twisted lava sure to intrigue the motorhome traveler.

Filled with such oddities as spatter cones and lava bombs, Craters of the Moon National Monument and Preserve in southeastern Idaho was described by President Calvin Coolidge as “a weird and scenic landscape, peculiar to itself.” For the curious traveler, it offers an abundance of out-of-the-ordinary activities and scenery.

CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT AND PRESERVE IN IDAHO IS A STRANGE AND SCENIC LANDSCAPE



Misshappen juniper trees struggle to survive in the harsh landscape.



Inferno Cone invites climbers to scale a steep half-mile of seemingly endless black lava.

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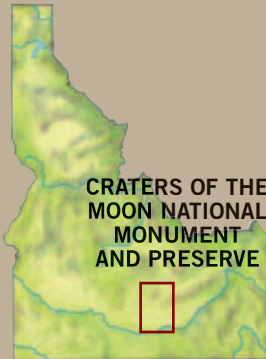
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CRATERS OF THE MOON NATIONAL MONUMENT AND PRESERVE

Aptly named for its barren moonscape appearance, this 1,100-square-mile national park features approximately 60 solidified lava flows. Roughly the size of Rhode Island, these expansive lava flows can be seen from space. Interestingly, in 1969, Apollo 14 astronauts, including Alan Shepard and Edgar Mitchell, came here to study volcanic geology in preparation for a historic trip to the moon.

But for a down-to-earth look at the park and its fascinating volcanic sculptures, you'll want to get behind the wheel and cruise to this peculiar region to see it for yourself. Located near the town of Arco — the first town in the world to receive its electricity from nuclear power — Craters of the Moon was formed by a different powerful force, magma. This molten rock pushed up through the earth's crust thousands of years ago, creating a fascinating environment for today's sightseers and adventurers.

Craters of the Moon is located within easy distance of two private RV parks: Craters of the Moon KOA and Mountain View RV Park. Both are open May through October and feature full hookups and many amenities. There is a park campground — Lava Flow Campground — that contains 51 sites without hookups that are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

When you arrive at the park, be sure to stop at the visitor center where you can get helpful information, learn about the geology and history of the area and see samples of the various types of lava. Besides seeing the difference between jagged *aa* lava and smooth *pahoehoe* lava, you can learn about the four kinds of volcanic bombs that are found in the park. A volcanic bomb was created when molten rock was ejected into the air. Sometimes the lava twisted or cracked as it flew through the air, resulting in an assortment of unusual shapes. Did you know



To learn about volcanic bombs and different types of lava, start at the Robert Limbert Visitor Center.



Remarkable formations of *pahoehoe* and *aa* lava, seen here, are evident along seven-mile Loop Drive, which takes you through Craters of the Moon National Monument.

there are even lava forms called cow-pie bombs? It's true — and some of them are more than 10 feet long.

As you venture onto the seven-mile Loop Drive through the park, you'll want to stop at a variety of interesting spots along the way. Many of the unique features of the park are easily accessible via short walks from strategically placed parking areas. Take along plenty to drink as there is no running water along the loop.

One must-see stop is Inferno Cone. While it's appealing to see this giant cinder cone, the real challenge is to climb the steep half-mile mound. Be careful — the height of the cone is deceptive. As you climb directly on this massive natural pile of cinders, the sharp slope levels off and then a second ascent appears that was not visible from its base. It's well worth the climb when you're rewarded with a grand view of this strange landscape. Standing atop the cinder cone, you can feel the wind blowing across the seemingly endless expanse of black lava, gaze upon the vast openness and see the deformed trees showcasing their struggle to survive against the unrelenting winds. Among the mass of black cinders, you may notice pieces with unusual shapes, or that have a shimmering iridescence to them. You might even find a piece of lava shaped like a ball.

To see spatter cones, you only have a short uphill walk on a paved path directly from a parking lot. Spatter cones were formed near the end of a volcanic eruption when the hot lava was shot only a short distance into the air and fell back around the vent opening; the lava built up, creating walls resembling mini-volcanoes. Today, you can peer inside the depths of the cones and, even in the heat of summer, you might see ice.

Some of the most interesting volcanic features at Craters of the Moon are the lava tubes, or lava caves. Created by the withdrawal of molten lava after the surface hardened, the tubes are hollow spaces beneath the solidified lava flow. The caves are undeveloped, with no artificial lighting, uneven floors and contain many natural hazards, but they're fun to explore. There is a paved trail on the surface of the lava flow that leads to four distinctly different caves. The smallest, Dew Drop Cave, is mostly visible from the trail, while Boy Scout Cave requires a scramble over loose rock to enter and then greets you with a

floor made up of a sheet of ice covered by several inches of water. For the slightly less adventurous, a large lava tube named Indian Tunnel offers a stairway for easy entry and, since portions of the ceiling have collapsed, sunlight filters into the cave so you won't need a flashlight. You can opt to use the stairway to exit, or explore the 50-foot wide, 800-foot-long tube, climbing among the fallen rocks and emerging onto the lava field through a giant hole.

When you look at this harsh environment, you might be surprised to know how many plants and animals call Craters of the Moon their home. More than 660 different types of plants live in the park. Only lichens can survive on the lava flow surfaces, but as soil blows into the cracks of the lava, other plants take root. The cinder cones can showcase gorgeous spring wildflower displays. Islands of plant life that have grown on old lava flows encircled by more recent flows are called *kipukas*; here the native vegetation, including three-tip sagebrush and blue bunch wheatgrass, thrive in undisturbed habitats.

Living within the park are animals found nowhere else in the world, including lava tube beetles. Adaptations of the wildlife to the park's aridness are absolutely amazing. Pocket mice and kangaroo rats are able to get enough moisture from their food so they can live their entire lives without drinking water. Other animals actually hibernate in the summer to avoid the excessive heat. Perhaps the most astounding creature in this desert-like area is the Great Basin spadefoot toad. As temporary puddles dry, these toads burrow into the mud and most of the water leaves their bodies; the toad actually shrivels, all metabolic activity stops and the toad begins to die. Amazingly, the toad can stay in this condition for years waiting for the occasional wet spring to produce puddles again. Due to the temporary nature of the water source the toads can mature from egg to adult in just two weeks, the shortest time of any amphibian in the world.

Craters of the Moon is a fascinating place to explore, whether driving and gazing upon the intriguing landscape, or taking the time to hike and venture into a cave. This park truly is like another world filled with unusual volcanic shapes, cinder cones and pit craters, a land largely untouched yet openly inviting. ♦

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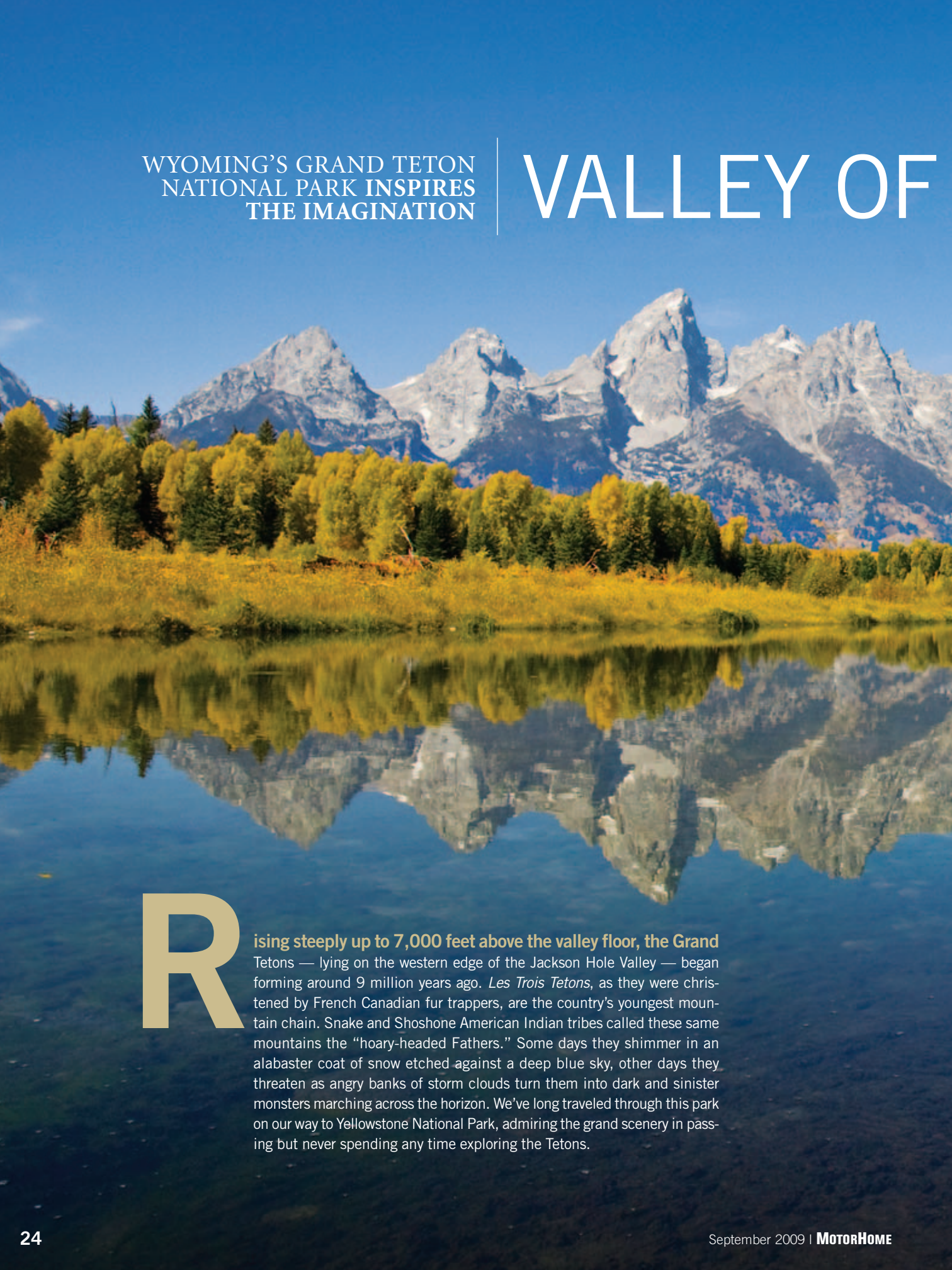
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WYOMING'S GRAND TETON
NATIONAL PARK INSPIRES
THE IMAGINATION

VALLEY OF



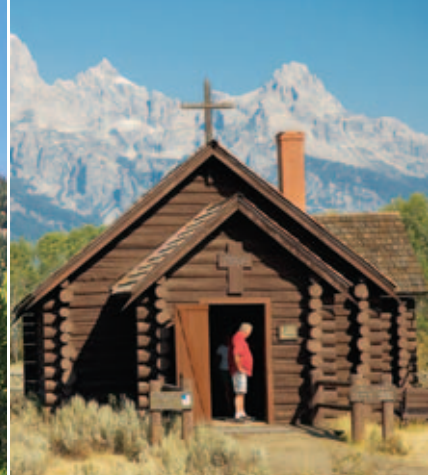
Rising steeply up to 7,000 feet above the valley floor, the Grand Tetons — lying on the western edge of the Jackson Hole Valley — began forming around 9 million years ago. *Les Trois Tetons*, as they were christened by French Canadian fur trappers, are the country's youngest mountain chain. Snake and Shoshone American Indian tribes called these same mountains the "hoary-headed Fathers." Some days they shimmer in an alabaster coat of snow etched against a deep blue sky, other days they threaten as angry banks of storm clouds turn them into dark and sinister monsters marching across the horizon. We've long traveled through this park on our way to Yellowstone National Park, admiring the grand scenery in passing but never spending any time exploring the Tetons.

THE TETONS

by RICHARD & ELLEN THANE



The Teton Range is the focal point of Wyoming's Grand Teton National Park.



Clockwise from above: Jenny Lake is a major point of interest for park visitors, with its many hiking trails, scenic boat rides and excellent fishing. The Chapel of the Transfiguration is located along the Menors Ferry Trail in the park. Bison, which once roamed freely throughout the West, are now permanent residents of the park. Mormon Row, a range of homesteads located 13 miles north of Jackson in the park's southeastern corner, is home to Moulton Ranch, whose barn is shown here.

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Not this time. This trip was just to explore Grand Teton National Park, one of the largest protected wilderness areas in the continental United States. A place of incredible beauty, it teems with a broad diversity of wildlife that once roamed freely throughout the West. It is a place where winters are long and harsh, and the few warm summer days are cherished; where ancient man found good hunting but chose not to remain year-round; and where pioneer families suffered extreme hardship trying to ranch the stark valley floor and survive the cold winters. Today it offers a treasure-trove of natural wonders for visitors to explore.

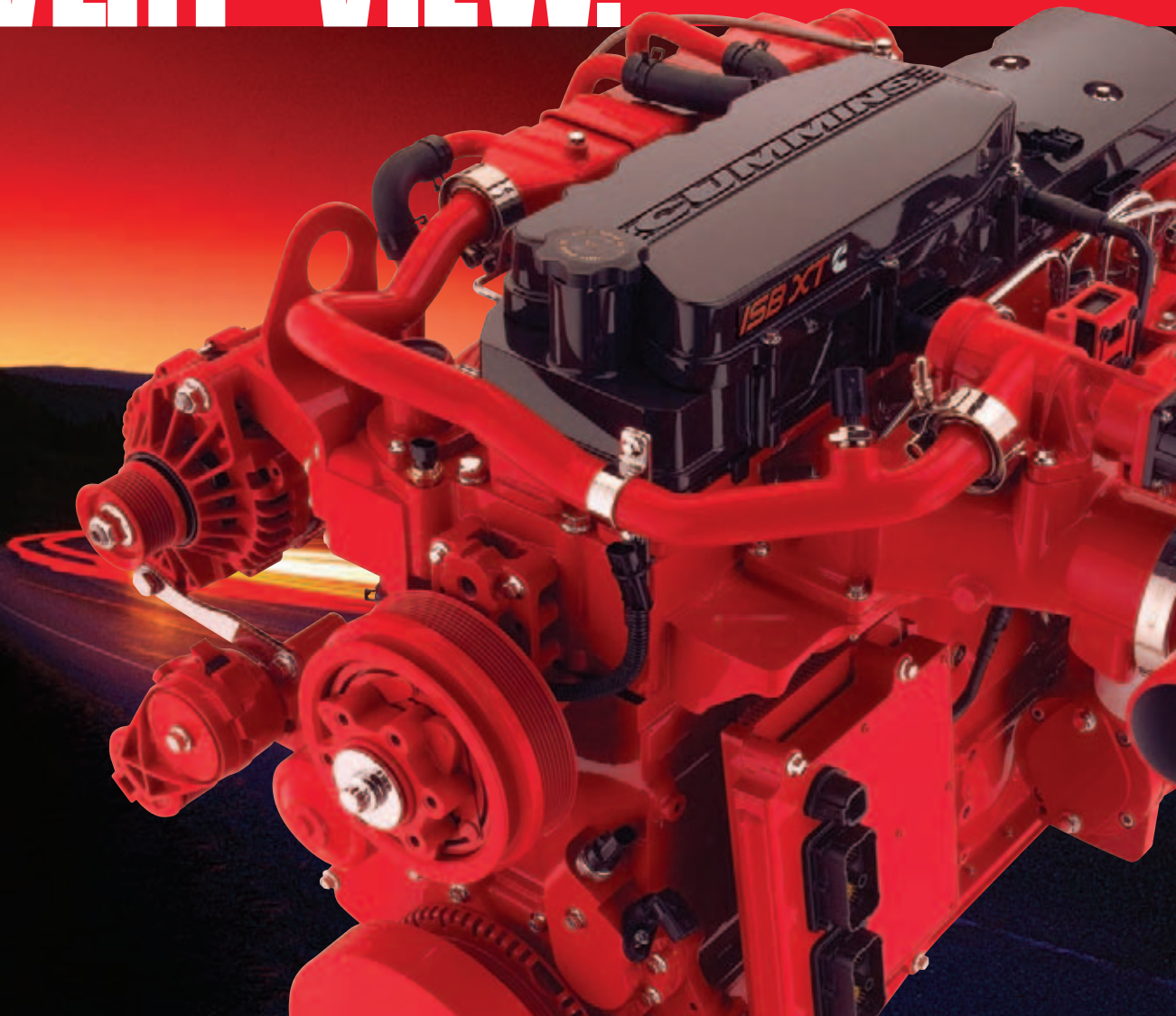
As we traveled north on U.S. Highway 26/89/191 through the spectacular Snake River Canyon, the trees

on the mountain slopes blazed with the colors of autumn. It was easy to see why the old timers waxed poetic over the grand sights of the Teton area. What would they think, we wondered, if they could see these colorful rafts floating the river, the posh ski resorts or the luxurious RVs traveling paved highways?

We chose the Gros Ventre campground — at the southern end of the park along a river of the same name — as our home base. Reservations aren't accepted, but with 350 sites and the summer crowds gone we had no problem finding a nice space. You can also find campsites for motorhomes at Lizard Creek or Signal Mountain (both with 30-foot limits), Colter Bay or Flagg Ranch.

It was late September and the daytime sun was

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warm, though once it went down, we were quickly reminded of the coming winter. Bundled up in our coats, we began our Teton adventure by exploring the town of Jackson, four miles south of the park.

With approximately 9,000 residents, Jackson is part cowboy town, part trendy tourist resort. You'll find this to be an RV-friendly town with plenty of parking for large rigs. We prowled the streets and admired beautiful paintings, pottery and glasswork in the upscale galleries. On the north end of town, the Jackson Hole and Greater Yellowstone Visitor Center — housed in a beautiful building with a distinctive sod roof — holds a fine collection of local natural history as well as a gift and bookshop.

With world-class fishing available in the Tetons, you'll want to spend some time with your line in the water, so pick up your Wyoming fishing license while you're at the Visitor Center. Several RVing couples volunteer as docents at this facility and they were happy to spend some time helping us plan loop drives for our Teton trip. From the lower level of the building we found access to a short boardwalk over vast marshland, where trumpeter swans and other birds glided through the water running along the edges of the adjoining National Elk Refuge. Here, as many as 5,000 elk are fed during the long winters.

As we left the Visitor Center and approached the town square — with its four grand entry arches made entirely from elk antlers — it was 6PM and the evening gunfight was beginning. Minutes later, a cloud of gun smoke lay heavy in the air and several "bad guys" sprawled in the dust. Across the street we found the famous Million Dollar Cowboy Bar where, perched on barstools made from real saddles, we sampled hand-crafted beers made in the region by the Grand Teton Brewing Company. After dinner, lively country-and-western music had us trying out our swing dancing steps. One of this bar's claims to fame is that parts of the Clint Eastwood movie *Any Which Way You Can* was filmed here. Other movies filmed in and around Jackson include *Shane*, *Spencer's Mountain* and *Rocky IV*.

The next day, morning light glowed on the Teton peaks as we drove to the Craig Thomas Discovery and Visitor Center at the southern end of the park. Here, at the only visitor center located in Grand Teton Na-



Located in the heart of Jackson, the Million Dollar Cowboy Bar features beer from the Grand Teton Brewing Company and live country-and-western music.

tional Park that is open year-round, we found a good introductory film about the park and some endangered species exhibits. Walking the half-mile-long Menors Ferry Trail, we saw a replica of the ferry where, in the 1890s, you could take a team and wagon across the Snake River for 50 cents. Also along this trail is the lovely little Chapel of the Transfiguration, built in 1925. From inside, the chapel's window frames a perfect view of the Tetons.

Continuing north on Teton Park Road, we stopped at each turnout to enjoy the changing views of the mountains. At the North Jenny Lake Junction we turned off Teton Park Road to take the one-way Jenny Lake Scenic Drive, with its spectacular views of the Cathedral group of the Tetons. Stopping at the rustic but elegant Jenny Lake Lodge, we poked around the gift shop and checked out the menu for the dining room, known for its excellent meals. Then, after enjoying the geological exhibits at the Jenny Lake Visitor Center, we caught the 10-minute shuttle boat across the lake to the mouth of Cascade Canyon and made the short hike to Hidden Falls and Inspiration Point.

The next morning, after fishing in the Gros Ventre River landed us trout for dinner that evening, we set out again, passing the Moose Junction park entrance and up Teton Park road to Signal Mountain Road. There we traveled five miles to the vista point 800 feet above the valley floor. The entire Teton Range and Jackson Hole Valley spread out before us in a splendid panoramic view. Though we didn't see any elk from there, we could hear their shrill whistles echoing among the

trees. After lunch, we stopped at the log-cabin Chapel of the Sacred Heart with its exquisite, round stained-glass window.

At Colter Bay, we found the Visitor Center and Indian Arts Museum a good place to learn about the American Indian tribes who used Jackson Hole as their hunting grounds. Often you will find artists of various mediums demonstrating their skills here.

Driving farther north along the shores of Jackson Lake we drove up to the Yellowstone entrance, enjoying the fall colors before turning back and returning to camp by way of Highway 26/89/191, taking note of the many things we wanted to return to the next day.

Sunrise found us at Oxbow Bend photographing the Snake River, where golden trees and Mount Moran reflected on the water's surface. We were rewarded for our early morning efforts by spotting a large bull moose grazing the willows along the riverbank.

Meandering back on the highway, our next stop was the Cunningham Cabin, one of the best remaining homestead cabins in Jackson Hole. Established in the 1880s as the Bar Flying U Ranch by J. Pierce Cunningham, his family barely eked out a living on the property before selling it in 1928.

A bit farther south at Blacktail Ponds Overlook we saw a crowd watching moose moving through a stream. Turning east on Antelope Flats Road we found old farm buildings from the early 1900s along what is known as Mormon Row. This is a particularly picturesque area and photographers will find it a great spot for nature photos.

On the last day of our trip, we visited the National Museum of Wildlife Art, a building of stone on the flank of East Gros Ventre Butte. The structure itself is a work of art, and with 51,000 square feet, it houses one of the finest collections of Western paintings, photographs and sculpture in the world. Next, we continued to Teton Village on the western side of Jackson Hole. Built in the 1960s, the ski resorts here are what finally brought prosperity to Jackson after years of struggle and hardship. A ride on the aerial tram took us to the summit of Rendezvous Mountain with its spectacular views of the valley. From here, a savvy adventurer can spot moose on the slopes below the tram.

We ended our trip agreeing that our Grand Teton adventure was filled with great scenery, history and wildlife, and we loved every minute of it. ♦

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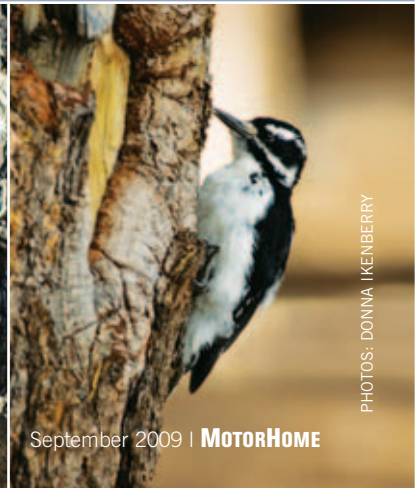
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NORTH RIM WONDER



Below: The Grand Canyon's North Rim is alive with wildlife, some of which are pictured here, left to right: a mule deer, Uinta chipmunk and a hairy woodpecker.



PHOTOS: DONNA IKENBERRY



Point Imperial overlooks the eastern end of the Grand Canyon and offers panoramic views of the Painted Desert and Mount Hayden.

Below: Just south of the North Rim's Grand Canyon Lodge is an easy, self-guided nature trail that leads to Bright Angel Point and spectacular views.



THE GRAND CANYON'S **SOFTER SIDE** OFFERS HIKING OPPORTUNITIES, LUSH FORESTS AND SWEEPING VISTAS

by DONNA IKENBERRY

The 1,000-foot-higher North Rim of Arizona's Grand Canyon seems worlds apart from the canyon's more popular South Rim. I've been to both rims many times, and while I always enjoy the South Rim and its free shuttles from one trailhead to another, I will forever thrill to the beauty and less crowded feel of the North Rim.

This place is amazing when you think about it. It's only 10 miles as the California condor flies from one rim to the other, but if you drive from the South Rim to the North it'll take you all day. The drive is more than 200 miles and they are not always fast miles. Rather hike? You can do that, but it'll take you a few days and about two dozen miles of strenuous foot travel.

I've enjoyed both methods for getting from one rim to the other. Twice I hiked rim-to-rim, but I only spent one night on the North Rim. Recently my husband, Mike, and I made the trip to the North Rim with plans to spend several days exploring this fascinating place.

We arrived on a chilly summer day and were excited by the sight of fresh snow along the roadway. It was raining as we pulled into the North Rim Campground, but the rain soon diminished and we had plenty of sunshine to enjoy hiking the trails and exploring much of the area's beauty.

The North Rim and the South Rim are very different. The North Rim rests on the edge of the Kaibab Plateau, a place blessed with lush, green meadows; wonderful forests of spruce, fir, pine and aspen; and the



Clockwise from left: A hiker takes in the view from atop Cape Final. Native American Heritage Days are held annually late summer, and honors all native groups with cultural ties to the canyon. Tansy bush, or desert sweet, is indigenous to the North Rim. The Grand Canyon Lodge, a *National Historic Landmark*, and its rustic dining room with huge ponderosa beams are well worth a visit.



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rare and endemic Kaibab squirrel. The Kaibab squirrel is a gorgeous, furry mammal with a dark body, a long, white tail, and tufts on its ears. It's found only on the Kaibab Plateau, while its close relative, another tassel-eared squirrel, the Abert's squirrel, resides on the South Rim and other areas of the Southwest.

In addition to squirrels and chipmunks, visitors may see deer, mountain lions, coyotes, turkeys and birds ranging in size from tiny hummingbirds to giant California condors. There are more than 70 birds that live in or around the park.

While at the North Rim, be sure to admire the Grand Canyon Lodge. Built in 1937, the lodge — designated a *National Historic Landmark* in 1987 — replaces the original one built in 1928, which unfortunately burned down. The lodge is a special place, with its enormous ponderosa pine beams and massive limestone facade. When you visit, walk through the front entrance and keep right on moving down the stairs to the Sun Room for a gorgeous view of the canyon. While you're at the lodge, you'll want to eat at least one meal in the dining room. Breakfast and lunch are served daily (and both include a buffet) and dinner is awesome. Be sure to make reservations well ahead of time; they are required, and the dining room books up quickly.

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Near the lodge, travelers will find a visitor center, gift shop, deli, saloon/coffee shop, lodging facilities and a number of short walks leading to more views of the Grand Canyon.

There are several trails that offer wonderful views of the canyon. One of the most spectacular begins at the Grand Canyon Lodge and leads to Bright Angel Point, a terrific place to enjoy sunrise and sunset. Just half-a-mile round trip, there's plenty to see along the knife-edge ridge, including a couple of old, twisted, gnarled trees. Look for a 600-year-old juniper and an equally ancient-looking pinyon pine. Expect a couple of steep areas as the trail isn't perfectly flat.

While the view from Bright Angel Point is extraordinary, there are more views to be had. Paved roads lead to two not-to-be-missed viewpoints. Located north of the campground, the road to Point Imperial and Cape Royal is not recommended for vehicles longer than 30 feet. It's a narrow, winding road, better left to smaller motorhomes and dinghy vehicles. To get there, drive north from the campground on the main road that you came in on, but turn right or northeast at the junction. A sign points the way. From here it is three miles to Point Imperial and 15 miles to Cape Royal. Along the way, you'll pass meadows and forests of aspen and evergreens.

At 8,803 feet, Point Imperial is the highest canyon overlook on the North Rim. It's a short walk to the viewpoint at Point Imperial and a magnificent view of Mount Hayden and a distant view to the Painted Desert. If it's a very clear day, you might see the Henry Mountains in Utah.

The road to Cape Royal is interesting because it allows parking and walking to a number of viewpoints. En route we stopped at Greenland Lake, a sinkhole that now holds water. A sign pointed the way to Salt Cabin, so off we went to investigate. One visitor we encountered said that the cabin looked like a Lincoln Log cabin to him.

One of our favorite hikes was the four-mile-long trail to Cape Final where we saw five Kaibab squirrels. Seeing the squirrels, and managing to get a picture of one, made our day. The views of the canyon were magnificent from Cape Final. We even found a treasure growing on the edge of the rim — a fern bush called tansy bush or desert sweet.

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NORTH RIM WONDER

En route to the end of the road at Cape Royal, we walked up an unmaintained trail for a view of Angels Window, a "window" eroded into the Kaibab limestone. We also explored and learned about the amazing ruins and prehistoric life at Walhalla Glades.

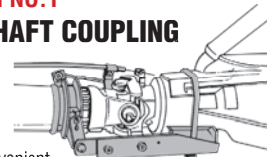
Walhalla Plateau is a "peninsula" bounded on three sides by the Grand Canyon. Nine hundred years ago, prehistoric Indians — the Kayenta Ancestral Puebloans — lived on the plateau in the summer months, growing beans, corn and squash. They hunted in the forests, but spent winters below the rim on Unkar Delta along the Colorado River. They also farmed on the delta, which you can see from the viewpoint and parking area for Walhalla Glades. Fifty-two Ancestral Puebloan sites have been discovered on the delta; 10 were completely excavated. Findings included tools for hunting, woodworking and agriculture. The plateau ruins seen on the plateau today are only a fraction of the more than 100 farm sites that archaeologists have discovered here. The sites were occupied between 1050 and 1150. Researchers believe the Ancestral Puebloans left the area in about 1150, possibly due to a decline in rain which reduced crop yields.

We grilled some burgers at the picnic area at Cape Royal and marveled at the quiet spot where couples often marry. On the short walk to Cape Royal we took a side trail to a point above Angels Window. The area was fenced in and perfectly safe and allowed for magnificent views. We continued our walk on the flat, paved trail, to the edge of the Walhalla Plateau. From trail's end we watched the sunset, along with a turkey vulture who was soaring about, over the Grand Canyon and the Colorado River.

Unlike the South Rim, facilities for the North Rim are only open during the summer season (mid-May through mid-October). You can dry-camp on the North Rim at the North Rim Campground, but with 83 sites, it's a little small. The campground does have a dump station, potable water, showers, restrooms and a laundry facility. If the North Rim Campground is full, another option is the U.S. Forest Service's DeMotte Campground, which is 16 miles north. If you want a full hookup site, you'll have to travel about 45 miles north to Kaibab Camper Village — the closest full-hookup RV park to the North Rim. ♦

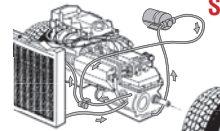
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Jellystone Park, Austin, Minnesota

For many of us, there's nothing better than a peaceful campground by a lake, a place to escape the stresses of life while taking in the beauty of nature.

But these days, campground owners are becoming increasingly more aware that it's not enough to offer quiet lakefront camping.

To entice families with children or grandchildren, park operators are investing in unique water toys and attractions — from spraygrounds to floating water slides, floating trampolines and floating rock-climbing walls. Some parks are even offering “Water Wars” games, in which opposing teams, housed in clubhouse-like battle stations, use catapults to hurl water balloons at their fellow campers.

“Not everyone fishes,” said Don Robinson, owner of Lake Chippewa Campground in Hayward, Wisconsin, as he explained why he was adding a Water Wars game to his park, which is located along a scenic lake in Wisconsin's North Woods.

Lake Chippewa Campground already offers canoe, kayak, power paddle, rowboat and pontoon boat rentals, plus an 18-hole miniature golf course. “But Water Wars gives families another [entertainment] option,” Robinson said.

MAKING A SPLASH

FROM SPRAYGROUNDS
TO WATER SLIDES,
MORE AND MORE
RV PARKS ARE
FEATURING AQUATIC
ATTRACTIONS FOR
FAMILY-FRIENDLY FUN

by JEFF CRIDER



Jellystone Park, Fremont, Indiana



Jellystone Park, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin



Water Wars Depth Charge game



Ocean Lakes Family Campground, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Such is the competitive nature of today's campground business. But parks are finding that their investments in unique water attractions not only give them a competitive edge over their peers, but entice their guests to stay for longer periods of time.

This is exactly what happened at the Mount Rushmore KOA in Hill City, South Dakota. The park's water attractions include two swimming pools, a 150-foot-long waterslide and a splash park with interactive water features that it installed two years ago. "Families often come here and let their kids decompress for a day. Then they go out and see the attractions we have in the area," said Josh Daiss, general manager of the 500-site park.

Daiss, in fact, said water-related activities are particularly appealing to families and grandparents, who are always on the lookout for fun places to camp that can keep the kids entertained.

Campgrounds in resort locations in the Sunbelt are also investing in more and more water attractions. "I think that any of your successful parks in warm climates

know that [unique water attractions] are an important feature," said Barb Krum, director of marketing and public relations for Ocean Lakes Family Campground in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

In addition to having five freshwater lakes and eight-tenths of a mile of oceanfront shoreline, Ocean Lakes has a splashground with interactive water features designed for children 12 and younger, including giant buckets that fill up and dump their water, supersoaker water guns and a waterfall that children can play in. The splashground also has an area for young children with water spritzers. "They look like gum drops," Krum said. "It's just enough to play and splash in."

Of course, some campgrounds, such as those in the Wisconsin Dells, have had major water park attractions for years. But the concept of blending major water attractions with campgrounds is spreading across the country. Several campgrounds in the KOA and Jellystone Park chains now have major water attractions, including the KOAs at Big Timber, Montana, and Hayward, Wisconsin; the Jellystone Park in Quarryville,

Pennsylvania, which built a \$2 million water park last year; and the Jellystone Park in Williamsport, Maryland, which added two 400-foot water slides two years ago.

"Our reservations are up 40 percent from last year," said Bob Ryan, owner of the 160-site Jellystone Park in Quarryville, who attributed the gains to his campground's new water park.

"The campground owner who has the most toys wins," said Bud Styer, who owns four family campgrounds in Wisconsin, three of which — Merry Mac's Campground in Merrimac, River Bend RV Resort in Watertown and Smokey Hollow Campground in Lodi — contain water park features.

Styer has gone so far as to build his own ponds in an effort to accommodate some of the campground industry's latest water toys, including floating log roll games; "The Summit," a 15-foot inflatable waterslide; and 6 x 20-foot mats that float, he said, "like magic carpets."

"Over the years, we've looked at how people use things. If it's 90°F outside and you've got fun stuff, you're keeping the

kids busy," he said.

Parks also find that if they offer enough water-related attractions, they can lure more guests, even if their parks are in relatively remote locations, like Cherrystone Family RV Resort in Cheriton, Virginia, which is located in the middle of farmland on Virginia's Eastern Shore, roughly two hours from Williamsburg.

The park added a splashground this year, which complements its mini-boats, paddleboats and Water Wars attraction. "We're excited to see how (the splash park) is going to be. But I know people are going to love it," said Mable Harrison, welcome center manager of the 700-site resort.

Even relatively small attractions, like floating trampolines, have become "extremely popular" with families, said Carol Higgins, a crew leader with the 377-site Odetah Campground in Bozrah, Connecticut.

Higgins recalled one time when the park's floating trampoline briefly had to be taken out of the water for repairs. "Oh, my goodness," she said. "People were so upset. Some said they came to the park specifically to use it."

Needless to say, Odetah and other parks across the country are keeping their floating trampolines and other water toys readily available for guest use.

"As long as kids love water, [unique water attractions] will be popular and help families make a decision on where they're going to spend their vacation," said Rebecca Baumgardner, recreation director for Billings, Montana-based KOA.

Recognizing the growing allure of water features, the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds is improving the search capabilities of its www.GoCampingAmerica.com Web site to help consumers identify parks with unique water features and other unusual amenities that are referenced in the parks' online profiles.

RV enthusiasts can also find campgrounds with unique water features by checking the Web sites of major campground chains, such as Kampgrounds of America (www.koa.com) and Jellystone Park Camp Resorts (www.campjellystone.com) and by running Google searches pairing words like sprayground, splash park, waterslide, floating trampoline and Water Wars with "campground" and the state you plan to visit. ♦

PROTECTION AGAINST THE SUN

When you and your family are at a water park, playing in the pool or simply enjoying the great outdoors, it's important to remember to use sunscreen. A recent survey by the Consumer Reports National Research Center found that one-third of Americans don't use any sunscreen, and those who do aren't using it properly.

"People get a false sense of security from applying sunscreen because they're either not applying enough or forgot to reapply," says Dr. Nancy Samolitis, a dermatologist based in Long Beach, California.

It can take only a handful of misjudgments to contribute to one of the three forms of skin cancer: basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma. Basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas are the two most common forms of skin cancer and are easily treated if detected early. Melanoma is the most serious form and makes up more than 75 percent of skin cancer deaths, according to the American Academy of Dermatology. Studies show that Caucasian men over the age of 50 are at greatest risk for skin cancer, especially melanoma.

"We are detecting skin cancers earlier than ever before," says Dr. Sonia Badreshia-Bansal, a dermatologist based in Danville, California. "However, we still have a problem getting the public to develop safe sun habits."

SUNSCREEN 101

Most people think of using sunscreen during the summer, but skin experts say it should be part of everyone's daily routine.

Most sunscreens offer protection from UVA and UVB rays by using either physical or chemical ingredients. Zinc oxide and titanium dioxide are physical, mineral-based ingredients, and are considered true sunblockers because they sit on top of the skin, forming a barrier against the sun's rays. Chemical ingredients such as Parsol and Helioplex are absorbed through the skin and cause a chemical reaction when they interact with the sun to prevent UV light from affecting the skin.

While both types of ingredients work, Dr. Badreshia-Bansal and Dr. Samolitis recommend using sunscreen with physi-



cal ingredients. "They aren't as irritating, and don't taste bad if it gets on your lips," Dr. Samolitis says. However, if you choose a chemical-based sunscreen look for one that's PABA-free.

Make sure your sunscreen product protects against UVA/UVB rays — or offers "broad-spectrum protection," which implies coverage for both — and has an SPF of 30. Dermatologists say the minimum should be SPF 15, but they recommend 30 for those with fair skin or people who are outside for a period of time. Even if you're outside for an hour, go with SPF 30.

It's important to know that the higher the SPF number, the more protection you get, but it's not that simple. An SPF 30 does not provide twice the protection of an SPF 15-rated product. Instead, an SPF 15 will block about 93 percent of the sun rays, an SPF 30 offers 97–98 percent protection, and an SPF 45 about 99 percent protection.

For full-body protection, adults need to apply 2–3 tablespoons of sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before sun exposure to allow for absorption. Adults and children need to reapply every one to two hours, or after swimming or sweating.

Though some sunscreens offer expiration dates, most are made to provide the original strength of protection for up to three years. "If people use SPF correctly, the same bottle should not last them the next year," says Dr. Badreshia-Bansal. "Getting one sunburn in your lifetime doubles the risk of skin cancer."

Remember that sunscreen is only your first line of defense. Seek shade when possible, especially between 10AM and 4PM, and wear sun-protective clothing, wide-brimmed hats and long-sleeve shirts when possible. — *Sylvia Alarid*

ROADTREK SS-AGILE

A Class B that's ready to take on the road



The newest member of the Roadtrek family of Class B motorhomes is the SS-Agile, designed as a multipurpose travel adventure vehicle that's as comfortable and convenient exploring the natural wonders of the U.S. as it is tailgating at sports venues.

Built on the short wheelbase Dodge Sprinter 2500 chassis, Roadtrek has transformed the now highly recognizable Tradesman body into a comfortable and well-appointed coach. Its diminutive size and ease of operation give it second-vehicle status, along with the associated economies. The Sprinter's Mercedes-Benz diesel has set the bar for diesel power with mileage in the low 20s, while providing spirited motoring using its 280 LB-FT of torque to its advantage, con-

trolled by the dash-mounted paddle shifter.

Outside, the Agile is ringed in panoramic and tinted windows, giving everyone an excellent view of passing landscapes without the feeling of being cramped or confined. The large windshield and fall-away hood create excellent visibility that enhances driving safety. The 48-foot turning radius allows the nimble Agile to negotiate even the tightest parking situations. Two optional full-body paint schemes are available that include matching paint for the 9-foot, 10-inch Fiamma awning cover and Dometic roof A/C housing, creating a strikingly upscale appearance.

Exterior compartments neatly arrange the various coach's electrical, potable water, cable TV and sanitary outlets. Features include a marine-style black-tank macerator pump-out system that allows for clean and reliable discharge at the touch of a button — even to a discharge connection point higher than the tank — and a 2.5 kW LP-gas-powered generator as an available option when boondocking is on the itinerary. The standard 5,000-pound Class-III hitch receiver is handy for mounting bike racks, cargo baskets or a storage trunk, which helps offset the lack of rooftop storage. Rear doors are equipped with a clever articulated hinge, allowing the door to either open to a conventional position or, by releasing the door stop, open entirely, swinging nearly 270 degrees against the side body magnetic stops — a handy feature in windy conditions while loading or unloading cargo.

The cockpit offers several storage locations for personal





SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: DODGE SPRINTER 2500	HEIGHT WITH A/C: 9' 7"
ENGINE: MERCEDES-BENZ 3.0-L V-6 TURBODIESEL	WHEELBASE: 144"
FUEL: 26 GAL	FRESHWATER CAP: 36 GAL
GVWR: 8,550 LBS	BLACK-WATER CAP: 10 GAL
LENGTH: 19' 4"	GRAY-WATER CAP: 20 GAL
WIDTH: 6' 8"	LP-GAS CAP: 10 GAL
	BASE MSRP: \$89,440
	MSRP AS TESTED: \$101,227

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trip necessities, and the easy-to-read gauges, with a handy driver's information panel, keep track of the numerous engine, mileage and chassis functions that make driving the Agile an effortless experience. Very comfortable faux leather captain's chairs swivel when in camp to provide additional seating.

The interiors of these Class B coaches are marvels of engineering ingenuity, assigning every square inch to a specific purpose. The Agile is no exception. Looking at the Euro-style cabinetry, granite countertops and residential-quality fixtures, you'll be hard pressed to find nicer accommodations in this segment.

The cabin is surrounded by an assortment of generous storage cabinetry with additional cooking-utensil storage in the galley module. A recessed two-burner cooktop with glass cover creates additional countertop space when not in use. The single-basin sink, covered with matching granite, also helps create more than 4 feet of valuable open countertop space. The 4-cubic-foot, three-way-power fridge and built-in convection-microwave fill out a kitchen appliance list that can create on-the-go snacks or a full sit-down menu.

The rear power sofa provides dinette-style seating, belted travel seating for three and folds down into a comfortable king-size or "twin-like" sleeping arrangement, with a front-row view of the optional home theater system and 19-inch flat-screen TV.

The Agile is equipped with a full wet bath that includes a sit or stand shower and pull-out basin above the toilet. Innovative door design creates additional privacy space to temporarily enlarge this complete but compact bath, while still allowing aisle passage.

With only a 144-inch wheelbase, the SS-Agile combines the best in features, workmanship and materials found in larger coaches, while offering a singular ability to use this Class B as a second family vehicle. This concept continues to gain in popularity as buyers see the advantages offered by these fuel-efficient and well-engineered motorhomes — they can provide a high-caliber camping experience or a simple weekend getaway, yet always fit in the driveway. ♦

If you spend enough time in your motorhome you'll eventually encounter a problem with the AC power supplying your coach. Even if you don't plug into a bad AC circuit, chances are good that you might experience electrical problems due to lightning (even nearby strikes can cause problems) or other types of electrical irregularities that can find their way into your motorhome.

Recently, we heard about a motorhome that was damaged to the tune of \$2,400 due to a nearby lightning strike. When these events occur, every electrical device in your coach is a candidate for

damage, including your microwave, TV, DVD player, stereo, air conditioners, converter and/or inverter. So, protecting them should be a high priority. In addition to lightning, other common issues that can cause damage include voltage on ground, open neutral, high or low voltage, and reverse-polarity conditions. Another important point is that your motorhome is at risk while parked at home or in storage. Any time your coach is plugged in to 120-volt AC current, it should be protected.

While these problems are more common than you may expect, they are also very easy to protect against. So rather than

THE SHOCKING TRUTH ABOUT AC POWER

INSTALLING A SURGE PROTECTOR CAN HELP KEEP THE ELECTRONICS ON BOARD YOUR COACH SAFE

by E. DON SMITH





into an AC receptacle, it automatically checks for faults such as an open neutral, voltage on the ground wire and reverse polarity, and prevents the power from even being passed through to the coach until corrected. During its use the Surge Guard also senses voltage irregularities continuously and if the voltage drops below 102 volts or goes above 132 volts for more than eight seconds, power will be removed.

Once proper conditions are present the device has a built-in 135-second delay before it allows power to pass through to the motorhome. This allows the AC compressor to bleed off the high pressure before attempting to restart after a surge. The unit also has four LED lights on the display that allow you to inspect conditions and see at a glance the current state. If a fault exists, the lights allow you to determine the exact type that has occurred. Considering the cost versus benefits, it is

taking chances with a coach full of electronics, our suggestion is to simply install a UL-listed surge protector. There are several units available on the market, including portable models that can be plugged in between your shorepower lead and the AC pedestal, as well as hard-wired units that mount inside the electrical cabinet of your motorhome. There are disadvantages to the portable units, such as the possibility of theft and the exposure to weather, so we opted for the hard-wired version.

The model we selected is the TRC Surge Guard model 50-Amp Hardwire #34560, which is available through Camping World and other RV retailers. It is a UL-listed device and offers 1750 joules of surge suppression and handles a spike current of up to 6500 amps. It is a 50-amp device and, if needed, will work with 30-amp adapters. At the time this article was written, the unit was available at Camping World for \$355.55 (\$319.99 for President's Club members).

Installing the unit is fairly straightforward if you are familiar with basic wiring. Assuming you have room in your electrical bay, you should be able to install your own. If not, Camping World can install it for about \$158. Once in place, the Surge Guard acts as a filter to continuously protect your coach from a variety of threats.

As soon as you plug your motorhome

PORTABLE PROTECTORS



**Progressive
SS-30**

In addition to the

hard-wired Surge Guard we tested, there are other choices on the market. Technology Research Corporation (TRC) — the supplier we used — makes 30-amp and 50-amp portable units. The portable units do not require that they be wired to the coach — simply plug it into the power pedestal and then plug your shorepower cord into it. The disadvantage is that, in

some parks, the length of the device or shape of the pedestal can make connection difficult. Of course, theft is a concern too, and many manufacturers offer a lock hasp to protect the device.

Another producer of surge protectors is Progressive Industries (www.progressiveindustries.net), which also offers a full line of hard-wired and portable units that are UL approved.

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THE SHOCKING TRUTH ABOUT AC POWER

clear that a quality surge protector is one of the very first accessories that should be added to any motorhome.

If you decide to install your own, these tips — along with the manual for your specific surge protector — should allow you to install the unit in a safe and effective manner. Before beginning any installation of this type, be sure the coach is completely disconnected from shorepower and that the AC generator is manually turned off (check any auto-start function as well) and that the inverter is off. If you are not competent and comfortable with 120-volt AC electrical wiring, have this done by a professional.

INSTALLING THE SURGE GUARD

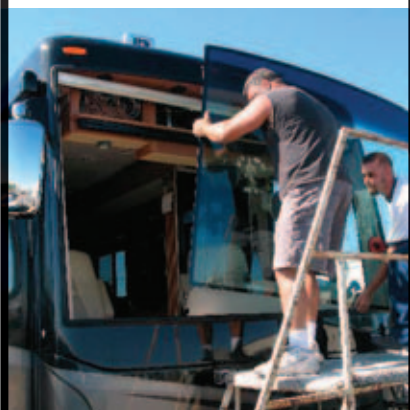
A Surge Guard can be installed before or after the transfer switch; after talking to the manufacturer we opted to install our model before the transfer switch. Not only is this an easier install due to the wiring involved, it is also the most common location. However, this does allow the generator power to remain unprotected. Generators are generally very stable these days and rarely cause problems; thus the manufacturer advised it is perfectly safe.

First, locate your electrical bay and identify the shorepower line that feeds it. Shown here is the wire in question.



Next, determine a suitable location to mount the Surge Guard. The only caution from the manufacturer is that it should not be mounted horizontally with the face point up toward the sky. Any other orientation is fine, but remember you will want it located so that it can be easily viewed. We mounted ours vertically beside the transfer switch using sheet metal screws. It is also a good idea to look behind the mounting wall and make sure your screws are not going to cause any problems on the back side of the mounting location.

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You will then need to cut the large 50-amp power cord in the location you selected for proper mounting. Be sure to leave enough slack on the transfer switch side to allow the wires to attach to the Surge Guard. The shorepower line will now be loose so its length is not an issue.



Next, strip the four wires (½-inch) and mount them to the Surge Guard as shown in the installation manual of your device. Tighten the screws according to the manufacturer's instructions; in our case 16 inch-lbs. The stripped portion of the wires should be completely contained in the terminal block housing.



Because there are only four wires and they are color coded, it should be easy to find the proper location for each one. Pay attention to the direction of the wiring and make sure you connect the load/output side of the Surge Guard wires to the transfer switch side, and the line/input side of the Surge Guard to your shorepower wire that connects to the AC pedestal.

After establishing all the connections for the Surge Guard, use strain relief clamps to hold the wires in place to prevent them from pulling out of the terminal connections.



Once connected, double check all the wires as well as the mounting of the Surge Guard and the strain relief clamps. If everything checks out, first turn off all AC devices in the coach, then connect the shorepower cord to an approved AC receptacle. Next, verify the "line" lights are illuminated and that the danger light is off. At this point the delay light will flash for two minutes and 15 seconds, then the power connection will be made, allowing AC power to flow to the motorhome. If there are problems with the wiring, the lights will help you troubleshoot and make corrections.

Now you will be able to enjoy your coach and have one less thing to worry about when plugging into a campground receptacle, or when the weather gets rough. ♦

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FOREST RIVER GEORGETOWN 379TS

SECOND BEDROOM,
WALK-IN CLOSET,
OR PRIVATE OFFICE?
THE CHOICE IS
YOURS WITH THIS
NEW FLOORPLAN

Need another bedroom for the family or the visiting grandkids? Maybe a walk-in closet? How about a private office or a laundry room? All these choices are available options in the new Georgetown 379TS Class A. In response to the growing popularity of Class A bunk-bed floorplans, Forest River has introduced its second Georgetown line offering — the new 379 model — a true multipurpose floorplan coach easily tailored and customized to suit your needs.

The Georgetown rides on a front-gas powered Ford F53 chassis that uses V-10 power tied to a five-speed TorqShift transmission with a tow/haul feature. This chassis provides a flat floor nearly the entire length of the 38-foot three-slider, on which Forest River designers have created a livable, upscale and innovative floorplan.

In the cockpit, Ford provides a clear and easy-to-read dash pod with tachometer and engine information. The Georgetown's dash center section houses automotive controls and switches, the generator controls, a satellite radio/CD and the monitor for the rear and optional sideview cameras.

The living area's streetside slide features a 68-inch jackknife sofa, which



provides additional sleeping accommodations, and a drop-table dinette with under-cushion storage. An optional swivel lounge chair and ottoman are opposite and provide a perfect seat for viewing the 32-inch flat-screen TV above the dash.

Handsome glazed cherry cabinets ring the cabin, providing generous storage and surround the curbside galley, which is housed in the second slide and provides complete kitchen functionality. Solid-surface countertops with mirrored backsplash, rich floor coverings and a residential-style sink and faucet create a roomy, upscale and inviting look to the galley and dining area. An optional convection/microwave oven and cooktop combo is also available.

An offset master bedroom hallway,

which runs along the curbside wall and features residential-style tall windows with full-length draperies, announces something different about this coach and creates the necessary enclosed footprint for the second bedroom in this "two-bedroom" floorplan. Privacy for the master bedroom is maintained by placing the bath between the bedrooms.

The second bedroom option offers a pair of 6-foot bunks with windows, a dresser and a wall-mounted flat-screen TV. For those who don't need the extra sleeping accommodations, the space comes standard as a spacious walk-in closet for a full-timer's larger wardrobe and storage needs. Consider the laundry-room option that uses a stacked appliance set with laundry folding table or,





SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: FORD F53	INTERIOR HEIGHT: 6' 8"
ENGINE: TRITON 6.8-L V-10	WHEELBASE: 242"
FUEL: 75 GAL	FRESHWATER CAP: 65 GAL
GVWR: 22,000 LBS	BLACK-WATER CAP: 41 GAL
LENGTH: 38' 4"	GRAY-WATER CAP: 41 GAL
WIDTH: 8' 3"	LP-GAS CAP: 23 GAL
HEIGHT WITH A/C: 12' 3"	MSRP: \$123,859 (NICELY EQUIPPED)

FOREST RIVER, Inc., (574) 296-7700, WWW.FORESTRIVERINC.COM.

for the traveling worker, the private-office option providing a wraparound desktop, large window and storage cabinetry to create a rolling work suite.

The nicely appointed bath, with matching cabin floor covering, offers a beautiful raised-glass vessel sink with contemporary high-rise faucet set on the corner lav. Additional storage is available above the lav, opposite the roomy sky-lit shower stall with opaque sliding doors.

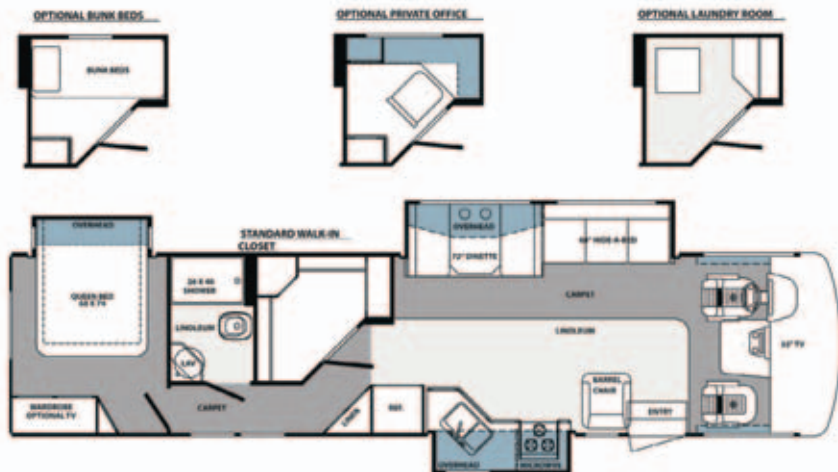
The master bedroom is a stylish mix of wall coverings and faux ledge stone columns on either side of the rear window with full-length drapery that complements the cherry his-and-hers wardrobe cabinetry that also houses an optional 19-inch flat-screen TV. An upholstered headboard anchors the pedestal queen bed in the streetside slideout with overhead storage trimmed in the same beautiful cherry molding. The entry-door wall is completely blank and unbroken — rare in most rigs — and would make the perfect gallery wall for photographs and mementos.

Outside, the Georgetown offers a one-piece fiberglass roof and gelcoat body side walls with two full-body paint options and cavernous storage — much of it full width access now with re-

designed, solid full-size cargo doors.

Forest River has hit a home run with the Georgetown 379 concept and we thank Vacation Station RV in Corona, California, for providing access to one of

the first units available to the public. With its innovative multiuse floorplan, this motorhome can accommodate a wide variety of needs and is wrapped in a stylish contemporary package. ♦





Four Winds Chateau Citation



Winnebago ERA



3500 Superstructure

SPRINTER ROUNDUP

A SAMPLING OF
FUEL-EFFICIENT
MOTORHOMES
RIDING ON
THE POPULAR
DODGE/
FREIGHTLINER
CHASSIS

by BOB ASHLEY

S

ince its introduction in North America, the Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis, imported from Germany by Daimler AG, has had a certain cache due to its high-mileage diesel engine and distinctive look.

In 2002, the Sprinter chassis was first introduced in limited numbers as a platform for Class B motorhomes after long service as a delivery van in Europe. Three years later, the Sprinter became available as a chassis for Class C motorhomes, and since 2008 it has become widely available as a platform for Class B and Class C motorhomes.

Currently, nearly a dozen-and-a-half manufacturers build motorhomes on the Sprinter, a number that has increased substantially during the last two years as Daimler increased distribution through Chrysler LLC's Dodge division and through truck-builder Freightliner LLC, a Daimler subsidiary. For an extra charge, RV manufacturers can add a Mercedes-Benz nameplate to the coach rather than Dodge or Freightliner.

The facts aren't clear, but several manufacturers claim to have originated the Class B motorhome

on the Sprinter chassis with an 8,050-pound gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) early in the decade.

What is clear is that Winnebago Industries was the first company to build a Class C motorhome on a somewhat heavier Sprinter platform with an 11,030-pound GVWR — the Winnebago View/Itasca Navion.

And that took some convincing. "When we first started dealing with Daimler, the company wasn't totally convinced that it wanted to build a Class C body in the U.S.," said Roger Martin, vice president of sales and marketing for Winnebago.

Since Winnebago's successful launch for the 2005 model year, however, Daimler's Class C commitment has been ever increasing with companies that include Coach House, Coachmen, Fleetwood, Forest River, Four Winds, Jayco, Monaco Coach, Phoenix USA RV, Pleasure-Way and Roadtrek all having added Sprinter-based motorhomes to their lineup.

Subsequently, retail sales of Sprinter-based units increased from 3.3 percent of the Class C market in 2005 to 13.8 percent in 2008. In the Class B category, the 8,050-pound GVWR Sprinter



Coach House Platinum II



Coachmen Prism

SPRINTER COMPARISON CHART

COMPANY	MODEL	TYPE	CHASSIS	WHEELBASE (INCHES)	GVWR (LBS.)	GCWR (LBS.)	TOWING ALLOWANCE (LBS.)	BASE MSRP
AIRSTREAM	Interstate	Class B	3500	170	11,030	15,250	5,000	\$110,000
COACH HOUSE	Platinum II 240/241XL	Class C	3500	170	11,030	18,530	3,500	\$137,980
COACHMEN INDUSTRIES	Freelander 2100CB/2200TB	Class C	3500	170	11,030	14,530	3,500	\$90,000
COACHMEN INDUSTRIES	Prism	Class C	3500	170	11,030	14,530	3,500	\$110,000
CREATIVE MOBILE INTERIORS	Custom	Class B	2500/3500	144/170	8,550	13,550/15,250	5,000	\$84,000
FLEETWOOD	Icon/Pulse	Class C	3500	170	11,030	14,530	3,500	\$97,566
FOREST RIVER	Solera	Class C	3500	170	11,030	14,530	3,500	\$90,000
FOUR WINDS INTERNATIONAL	Chateau Citation/ Dutchmen Durado/ Four Winds Siesta/	Class C	3500	170	11,030	14,530	5,000	\$97,300
FOUR WINDS INTERNATIONAL	Ventura	Class B	2500/3500	170	8,550/9,990	14,990	5,000	\$95,893
GREAT WEST VAN CONVERSIONS	Legend	Class B	2500	170	8,550	13,500	5,000	\$98,000
JAYCO INC.	Precept	Class C	3500	170	11,030	14,530	3,500	\$104,990
KRYSTAL ENTERPRISES	Krystal	Class B	2500	144/170	11,030	15,250	5,000	\$101,000
LEISURE TRAVEL VANS	Free Spirit	Class B	2500	170	8,550	13,500	5,000	\$97,500
LEISURE TRAVEL VANS	Freedom II Serenity	Class B	3500	170	11,030	15,250	5,000	\$120,640
MIDWEST AUTOMOTIVE DESIGNS CORP.	Weekender	Class B	2500/3500	170	8,550/11,030	Not Available	5,000	\$84,495

accounted for 37.1 percent of retail sales in 2008.

While continuing to get relatively high fuel mileage compared to competing Class B and Class C chassis, the Sprinter underwent a transition in 2007. Initially introduced with a five-cylinder, 154-hp turbocharged Mercedes-Benz diesel engine rated at more than 20 MPG, Daimler updated the coach in 2007 with a six-

cylinder powerplant that dropped the mileage into the 16–19 MPG range while still providing the same horsepower.

Limitations on the Sprinter chassis faced by all Class B and Class C builders alike are Daimler's strict guidelines regarding length — no more than 24 feet long — and the number and location of slideouts and body cuts. Thus, the challenge for man-



Airstream Interstate



Monaco Coach Covina

SPRINTER COMPARISON CHART

COMPANY	MODEL	TYPE	CHASSIS	WHEELBASE (INCHES)	GVWR (LBS.)	GCWR (LBS.)	TOWING ALLOWANCE (LBS.)	BASE MSRP
MONACO COACH	Monaco Covena	Class C	3500	170	11,030	15,250	3,500	\$103,992
MONACO COACH/ HOLIDAY RAMBLER	Traveler	Class C	3500	170	11,030	15,250	3,500	\$95,119
PHOENIX USA	Phoenix Cruiser	Class C	3500	170	11,030	15,250	5,000	\$91,120
PLEASURE-WAY INDUSTRIES	Ascent	Class B	2500	144	8,550	13,550	5,000	\$89,570
PLEASURE-WAY INDUSTRIES	Plateau	Class B	3500	170	11,030	13,550	5,000	\$94,770
ROADTREK MOTORHOMES	RS-Adventurous	Class B	2500	170	8,550	13,550	5,000	\$95,810
ROADTREK MOTORHOMES	SS-Agile	Class B	2500	144	8,550	13,550	5,000	\$89,440
SPORTSMOBILE	Sportsmobile EB	Class B	2500	170	11,030	13,500	5,000	\$74,000
SPORTSMOBILE	Sportsmobile LB	Class B	2500	170	11,030	13,500	5,000	\$77,000
SPORTSMOBILE	Sportsmobile RB	Class B	2500	144	11,030	13,500	5,000	\$64,000
WINNEBAGO INDUSTRIES	ERA	Class B	2500	170	8,550	13,550	5,000	\$91,445
WINNEBAGO INDUSTRIES	View	Class C	3500	170	11,030	15,250	5,000	\$94,781
WINNEBAGO INDUSTRIES	View Profile	Class C	3500	170	11,030	15,250	5,000	\$105,791
WINNEBAGO INDUSTRIES/ ITASCA	Navion	Class C	3500	170	11,030	15,250	5,000	\$95,162
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ufacturers has been to differentiate their products given Daimler's restrictions on how Class B and Class C chassis can be modified.

Typically, North American manufacturers have taken cues from European companies that for years have built motorhomes on the Sprinter and other small, lightweight chassis by making maximum use of interior space with innovative dinettes and sleep-

ing layouts, along with curved cabinets to increase horizontal and vertical clearance while turning empty spaces into storage compartments.

Couple this with the fuel efficiency and superior handling Sprinter chassis is known for, and the market for fuel-efficient motorhomes continues to grow at a fast pace. ♦

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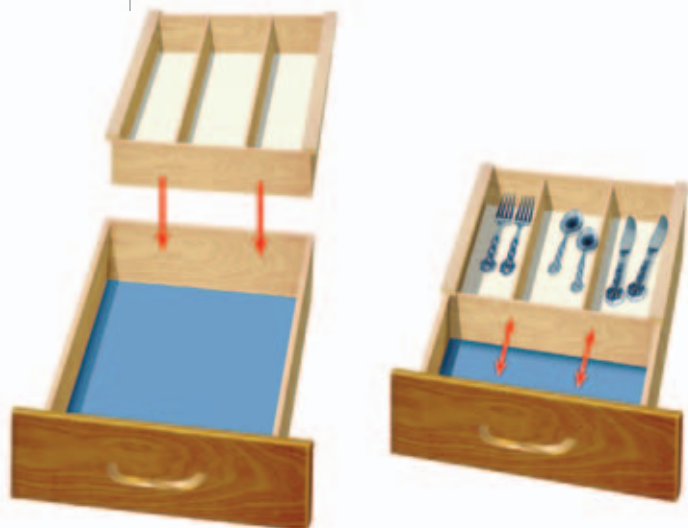
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DOUBLE-DUTY DRAWER ▲

My motorhome came with a silverware drawer that had a wooden divider to separate the forks, spoons and knives. The divider was tacked to the bottom of the drawer. I gently pulled up the divider, added a piece of scrap wood to make a bottom for it and added two pieces of wood on each edge lengthwise along the top of the silverware divider. I added felt under the side pieces so that it slides along the top of the drawer. Now I can place other items under the divider, which doubles the capacity of the drawer. What an easy fix!

JOSEPH VOLK | PAHRUMP, NEVADA

NO MORE REFRIGERATOR SPILLS

After taking yet another turn a little too fast and watching (actually, hearing) the refrigerator doors swing open and deposit much of the food on the floor, I came up with an easy fix. I made a loop with wide hook-and-loop fastener tape by cutting two equal pieces of the tape, overlapping them a little and sticking them together using the adhesive on the back. I then put the loop through the refrigerator handles, secured it and — *voilà* — no more spills.

**STEVEN M. COOPER
FORT COLLINS, COLORADO**



QUICK CABLE DISCONNECT ▲

Some vehicles, like my new Jeep, require the negative battery cable to be disconnected when being towed to prevent the dash lights from draining the battery. There are electronic devices and switches available to prevent this problem, but they are costly and have their own potential problems.

My quick fix was to replace the battery cable bolt with a quick-release seat binder bolt from a bicycle shop. They generally come in two lengths; the shorter one will work the best and mine only cost \$7. Now, the disconnect and reconnect that used to take minutes has been reduced to seconds.

TOM DUKE | ATLANTIS, FLORIDA ◆

CONCEALED CAT SCRATCHER ▼

In order to make our new full-time home more comfortable for our cat Bud — and to not take up valuable space — I made a scratching post out of the leg of the table in our motorhome.

First, I attached one end of a roll of sisal rope to the bottom of the table leg using heavy-duty masking tape (you could also screw it in place). Next, I wrapped the rope over the tape (or screw) very tightly and continued snugly wrapping the sisal up the table leg, being sure not to leave any gaps. When I reached the top of the leg, I cut the rope 6–8 inches longer to leave a tail to tuck under the last couple of turns, which helps to hold the end in place. Finally, I used more masking tape (or another screw) to secure the end.

It works like a charm. Bud loves it and it will last for years!

**EVE BURTON
LAKE HAVASU CITY, ARIZONA**



WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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

techsavvy

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



HANDS-ON | by DAVE RIGGS

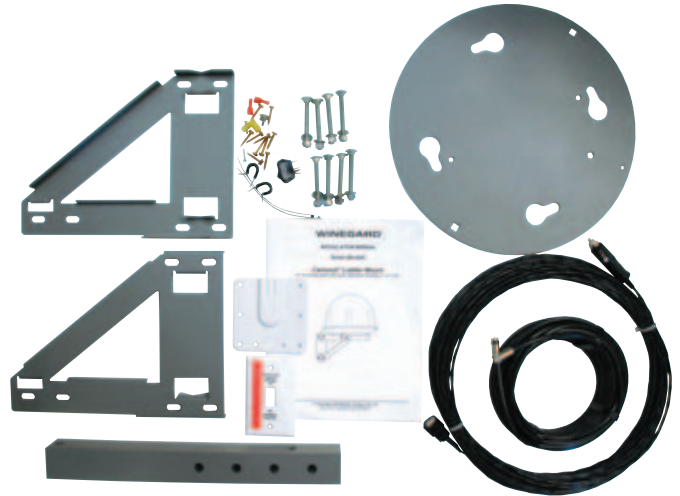
DOME 'N GO

Winegard's Carryout portable satellite antenna makes it easier to find the southern sky

Those of us who have satellite dishes planted on our roofs know the drill: Jockey the rig so that there are no trees or obstructions that can block the view of the southern sky. For me, that means the roof-mounted dome is blocked from receiving a signal about 30 percent of the time. While Winegard probably didn't design and market the Carryout portable dome specifically as a supplement to an existing permanently mounted system, it fits the bill perfectly in this capacity.

The main intent obviously is to offer a portable dome that is easy to transport and handle, providing satellite reception for just about any occasion. In that respect, the Carryout is only 20 inches in diameter and 15½ inches tall — and it's very lightweight and stowable.

The dome has a handle, making it comfortable to position on a small table, picnic table or the ground, as long as it has a clear view of the southern sky and is not in an area where water can puddle. Fifty feet of coax and power cable are provided with the dome. Once the dome is in position, you simply connect the coax and the power cord and route the other ends to the satellite receiver and 12-volt DC auxiliary port, respective-



ly. Although the set-up is simple, you need to make sure the coax is connected before plugging in the power cord and turning on the receiver. Once operating, it took a minute-and-a-half for the dome to find the signal, and maybe 30 seconds longer to lock it in. The picture quality was excellent.

Programming is set for DirecTV, with the capability to reset switches to make the dome receive Dish signals. Clearly written instructions take the user through the procedures for reprogramming and operation with certain Dish receivers. The MSRP is \$899, but Camping World President's Club members can get it for \$799.

An optional Ladder Mount kit allows the dome to be mounted on a typical RV ladder (1 to 1½ inches in diameter). The kit, which sells for the club price of \$230 at Camping World, is made of metal and installs in minutes. The dome is relatively stable on the platform, but not designed to stay there while the RV is on the road. The bracket, though, can remain in place while traveling. This option (which includes additional cabling and a switch) makes it practical to use the Carryout as your primary satellite antenna, while providing portable versatility when parking under trees.

The Carryout is pretty easy to store and use, but it's also easy to steal. You can cable/lock the handle to the table or bench (though that's not very secure). I'll take that risk if it allows me to win the battle over the trees.

For more information, contact Winegard at (800) 288-8094, or www.winegard.com.





Refrigerator Recall

BELIEVING THE PROBLEMS WITH HIS RV'S REFRIGERATOR SHOULD HAVE BEEN COVERED UNDER A RECALL BY ITS MANUFACTURER, A READER CONTACTED *HOT LINE* FOR HELP. HE WROTE:

My 2003 RV has a Dometic refrigerator. I was notified by Dometic that my unit was on the company's recall list, so in April 2007 I took it to Camping World in Mission, Texas, to have a recall kit installed.

This past February, the refrigerator stopped working due to a crack in the boiler tube. I talked with several Dometic representatives who told me that I would not be compensated for a replacement. I went ahead and had a new Dometic refrigerator installed at a cost to me of \$1,565.29.

As I understand it, the cracked boiler tubes were due to an improper welding procedure in the manufacturing process. The welds were not long enough to distribute the stress all along the boiler tube. I was told by a Dometic representative that the heat sensor that comes with the recall kit was supposed to shut the unit down so it wouldn't crack the boiler tube. I think the heat sensor must have been defective because it did not stop the boiler tube from cracking and leaking.

I will be very disappointed if Dometic does not reimburse me for the cost of my new refrigerator.

GLEN JOHNSON | ALAMO, TEXAS

Hot Line has received many letters similar to Johnson's with regard to recalls. It is important to remember that inclusion in a recall does not guarantee reimbursement for other repairs or replacement of the unit being recalled. Johnson's refrigerator was past Dometic's limited three-year warranty for its units, and because his RV's boiler-tube issue was not part of Dometic's recall, the manufacturer declined to reimburse Johnson for the cost of replacing his refrigerator.

Though there was nothing Hot Line could do for Johnson in this case, we hope the following information will

“IT IS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT INCLUSION IN A RECALL DOES NOT GUARANTEE

REIMBURSEMENT FOR OTHER REPAIRS OR REPLACEMENT OF THE UNIT BEING RECALLED.”

be helpful to other owners of Dometic refrigerators. Dometic wrote:

We are in receipt of your letter regarding Glen Johnson and his questions about the Dometic refrigerator recall program.

Dometic provides refrigerators using what is called “absorption technology” for RVs. These refrigerators differ from standard home refrigerators in that they cool by using either an LP-gas flame or electric heating element in conjunction with a coolant solution to extract heat from the refrigerator's food storage compartment. Throughout its history, Dometic has provided the highest quality products and, in the small fraction of production that has experienced a problem, has met its warranty obligations to consumers.

In response to a possible safety-related problem, Dometic has initiated a recall in compliance with applicable federal regulations. A secondary burner housing, when retrofitted to affected refrigerators at Dometic's expense, resolves the identified safety problem. Dometic developed and placed secondary burner housing kits into the field through service centers throughout the United States and Canada. The secondary burner housing created by Dometic has resolved the safety issue with respect to any affected refrigerators.

Dometic is not replacing cooling units or refrigerators under the recall program. If a unit fails and is within Dometic's original manufacturer's warranty, it is covered as part of the normal warranty repair. However, no product lasts forever,

and if the unit is beyond the standard warranty and a customer has elected not to purchase an extended warranty or the extended warranty has expired, then all repairs for any failures would be the responsibility of the consumer.

We appreciate the opportunity to address Johnson's concerns and hope all his future travels are trouble free. If he has any further questions, he can contact the Dometic Recall Hot Line at (888) 446-5157.

**ERRIK LEMLER
DOMETIC CORPORATION
ELKHART, INDIANA**

RADIATOR RUNAROUND

When a service center refused to reimburse him for work that was under warranty on his motorhome's radiator, a reader turned to Hot Line for help. He explained:

I had Ziegler Cat replace the radiator in my motorhome when it failed in October 2008, while traveling in the Minneapolis, Minnesota, area. Ziegler's service manager, Ron Kinneman, assured me they would warrant the repairs (parts and labor) for at least 90 days. When I arrived in southern Florida two weeks later, I found a leak coming from the area of the new radiator. I could not determine where it was coming from, and called Kinneman to ask his advice. He suggested I call a local Caterpillar dealer and have it taken care of. The local Caterpillar dealer only worked on trucks, and referred me to a nearby Allison dealer. The Allison dealer found that the connections on two of the new hoses that Ziegler had replaced were loose and leaking inside of a protective sheath. The technician was very thorough and I have had no further problems.

I forwarded the receipts to Ziegler Cat and have spoken and corresponded with Kinneman on several occasions since. His position is that they would expect another facility to make the necessary minor repairs at no cost, because that's what they would do if the situation were reversed.

The last contact I had with Mr. Kinneman's supervisor was about a month ago, in which he stated he would consider paying some of the costs, and

wanted to know what I thought was fair. I told him that in my opinion, the entire amount would be fair. I have not heard anything from anyone at Ziegler Cat since.

I would appreciate any help *Hot Line* can offer in getting me reimbursed for the cost of my warranty repair.

BRENT ROULIER | LIVINGSTON, TEXAS

Hot Line contacted Ziegler Cat on Roulrier's behalf, and heard back from both Ziegler Cat and Roulrier. Roulrier provided us with the following update:

Thank you, *Hot Line*, for all your help. I received full reimbursement — in the amount of \$225 — from Ziegler Cat. I am glad they came through in the end.

B.R.

DEAD CELL DILEMMA

Unsuccessful in his attempts at trying to work out warranty compensation for the replacement of his motorhome's chassis batteries, a reader sought the intervention of Hot Line. He wrote:

I own a 2009 Monaco Holiday Rambler Endeavor, which I purchased new in September 2008. I started having trouble with the batteries so I took the rig to a local repair shop, Risco RV. I was told by one of the service technicians at Risco that the chassis batteries had a dead cell and were no longer holding a charge and needed to be replaced.

The 12-month battery warranty for my coach is through Interstate Batteries. The terms of the warranty state that dealers must contact Interstate Batteries directly and submit eligible batteries for testing and warranty validation.

I have found that the batteries, when charged, will discharge in less than four days and I was told by a Risco tech that both batteries are defective. I tried placing the batteries back in the coach; when I tried to start the coach, a low-battery voltage signal came on even though I had the AC generator running for two hours prior to starting the coach. This clearly indicates a battery fault.

While awaiting the test results by Interstate, I went ahead and purchased two new chassis batteries. Once the new batteries were installed, the light and warning turned off and has remained off.

I am asking you to please reach out to Interstate Batteries. I simply want it to honor its warranty as written. I am seeking a refund of the \$381 it cost to replace the batteries.

**STUART DENNING
BERKELEY HEIGHTS, NEW JERSEY**

Hot Line contacted Interstate Batteries on Denning's behalf. We did not hear back from Interstate, but did receive the fol-

lowing update from Denning, who wrote:

I wanted to let you know that I heard from Interstate Batteries. It has honored its warranty and reimbursed me for the batteries and labor. I thank you for your assistance.

S.D. ♦

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High Water Pressure

At the risk of connecting to a freshwater supply with pressures that exceed the limitations of my motorhome's plumbing, I purchased and installed a pressure-limiting device between my water hose and the city water-pressure inlet when I hook up. It is supposed to limit incoming water pressure to 45 PSI.

Being curious, I wondered how much pressure was available inside the coach. I installed a zero-to-60 PSI pressure gauge on my bathroom sink counter and connected it with a T under the

“STOP-FILL DEVICES WERE NOT REQUIRED TO BE INSTALLED ON MOTORHOME LP-GAS TANKS UNTIL 1983.

WHEN WORKING PROPERLY, THEY WON'T ALLOW AN LP-GAS TANK TO BE FILLED TO MORE THAN 80 PERCENT.”



counter. I picked the hot water line thinking that the water would expand as it heated and generate greater pressure.

I was right. My gauge went way beyond 60 PSI and broke. I then installed a zero-to-200 PSI gauge. When the water heater is heating, the pressure reaches 105 PSI.

Is this normal? Do we waste money on external pressure regulators when our own water heaters pressurize our water systems far more than any campground water supply?

Incidentally, after the water heater reaches temperature and shuts off, I can draw the pressure down and it will stay there until the water heater kicks on and heats more water.

BRAD LUTZ | COLUMBUS, OHIO

Your water-heater tank is waterlogged, Brad. If your water-heater tank has room for the water to expand when it is heated, there will be very little pressure rise in the system. Drain the tank and refill it to re-create air space for expansion.

Water is an incompressible fluid, and it expands when it is heated. Most motorhome hot-water systems have an incoming check valve at the water heater to prevent hot water from backing up into the cold-water system. There is no room for expansion when the tank is waterlogged and the pressure goes up. This occurs in a water system with an accumulator tank as well, because the tank must be near the water pump, which is before the check valve.

Nevertheless, you are confusing static pressure with dynamic pressure. The regulator you purchased controls dynamic pressure. In other words, it will not allow water to flow into your motorhome at a pressure greater than 45 PSI. This keeps the faucets from gushing.

When the water-heater tank is waterlogged and pressure rises to 105 PSI, that is static pressure. By your own admission, the pressure quickly returns to normal when a faucet is turned on. There may be an initial surge, but the faucet won't gush or splash.

Don't worry about the plumbing system's ability to hold 105 PSI when the water-heater tank is waterlogged.

The freshwater systems in all motorhomes are built to hold at least 100 PSI, and they must pass a factory test at that pressure.

TOILET RISER

My mother can get around in my motorhome with the use of a cane, however, she cannot use the toilet without some sort of an extension to raise it. Can you point me in the right direction to find a solution to this problem?

**RON VAN HORN
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS**

Most motorhome toilets are around 17 inches above the floor, Ron. For people with other needs, Thetford makes a toilet riser that raises just about any Thetford toilet and a few other brands 2½ inches. It is available from Camping World and other RV parts stores.

If 2½ inches isn't enough, a higher platform can be constructed for the toilet and covered with plastic laminate. The existing 3-inch pipe that connects the holding tank to the toilet flange can be replaced with a new section that is longer.

REGULATOR FREEZE-UP

I have a 1993 31-foot Bouncer on a Chevrolet P-chassis. I have experienced problems with the furnace operation when the outside temperature is near freezing.

The furnace will cycle on and warm the coach to the temperature set on the thermostat. It then shuts off and when it recycles on the furnace just blows cold air. At the same time the water heater will malfunction, apparently from lack of LP-gas. When the outside temperature rises to more than 40°F, the water heater and furnace will function normally after they are turned back on.

I replaced the LP-gas regulator but this did not solve the problem. I asked my LP-gas supplier whether they have had any complaints about contaminated LP-gas and they said that they have not. Since this problem seems to be temperature driven and seems to be affecting the LP-gas regulator (perhaps freezing up), is it possible to apply heat to the regulator with a hair dryer to “thaw” the valve?

Is it possible that the replacement regulator is defective and should be replaced? I would appreciate your comments.

DOUG SCHROEDER
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

It sounds like you have classic LP-gas regulator freeze-up, Doug. When motorhome furnaces and water heaters operate, they consume a lot of LP-gas. That gas flows through a very small orifice in the regulator, much like refrigerant gas flows through an expansion valve in an air conditioner. The expansion of the gas from the high-pressure side to the low-pressure side cools in both cases.

If there is any moisture in the LP-gas, it can turn to ice and plug the regulator. This is very common in colder climates.

Starting in 1978, two-stage regulators were installed in all motorhomes to reduce regulator freeze-up problems and provide more stable LP-gas pressures in motorhomes. However, a regulator cannot eliminate the source of the classic problem, which is moisture.

Almost all LP-gas contains a little moisture, and it can accumulate through condensation in an LP-gas tank. The best way to eliminate it is to have a commercial LP-gas refilling station inject some alcohol into your LP-gas tank. The alcohol will absorb the moisture and your problem should disappear.

OVERFILLED

We recently had a scare with the LP-gas tank in our 1980 motorhome. We were headed to a football game, and stopped at a service station to get fuel and have the LP-gas tank filled. The attendant filled both tanks, and we were on our way.

It was very hot that day, so I stayed in the motorhome. The auxiliary generator ran all day so I could run the air conditioners and stay cool. About halfway through the game there was a loud noise and a swooshing sound. I ran outside and there was gas spewing out of the LP-gas tank.

In a few minutes it stopped. Several football spectators came over to see what was wrong, and there were a few theories as to what happened. One was that the guy at the service station had overfilled the tank and the pop-off valve blew. Another was that the daytime heat was so extreme, the gas got hot

and expanded and that's what made it blow.

A couple of days later I went by the service station where we had gotten the LP-gas. I didn't talk with the guy who filled it, but with the owner. He seemed to think it was unlikely that the guy overfilled it. He thought it might have a weak pop-off valve.

I've noticed that when I pass the back of the motorhome where the LP-gas tank is located, I smell gas. The motorhome is plugged in, so there is no LP-gas turned on. Is this normal, or does this indicate a leak somewhere?

What should I do? I certainly don't want to be sleeping over a faulty LP-gas tank!

HELEN SCOTT | TULSA, OKLAHOMA

Your football-fan friends are both correct, Helen. The service-station attendant may not have filled your LP-gas tank completely full, but he filled it more than 80 percent full. Eighty percent full is the maximum amount an LP-gas tank should be filled, because room must be left for the liquid gas to expand in hot weather.

While the service-station owner might want to overlook the error and blame the pressure relief valve on your LP-gas tank, the numbers do not support him. The pressure-relief valve will not relieve LP-gas vapor until it reaches 312 psi. LP-gas vapor at 110°F is only 220 psi. However, liquid LP-gas pressure rises dramatically with temperature when there is no room left in the tank for the liquid to expand. This is the same phenomenon that causes the temperature/pressure valve on a water heater to leak when the water-heater tank gets waterlogged.

Your situation is one of many that have caused me to endure the wrath of service stations and campgrounds that do not train personnel who fill LP-gas tanks. I suspect the attendant who filled your LP-gas tank did not know that your tank does not have a stop-fill device because of the age of your motorhome. He probably filled your tank until it stopped filling instead of opening the small outage valve and watching for the vapor to turn to liquid. That's what tells the attendant that your LP-gas tank is 80 percent full. Stop-fill devices were not required to be installed on motorhome LP-gas tanks until 1983. When working properly, they will not allow an LP-gas tank to be filled to more than 80 percent

of its liquid capacity.

The gas odor that you continue to smell is residual "perfume" that gives LP-gas its odor. LP-gas by itself does not smell, so a perfume is added to give it an odor. When a large amount of gas escapes inside an LP-gas compartment, the perfume can linger for a long time. However, it would not hurt to drool a soap solution over the pressure-relief valve to make sure it has properly reseated. If you don't get any bubbles, you will be sleeping over a smelly, but not faulty, LP-gas tank. The odor will dissipate in time.

STUCK GAS GAUGE

The gas gauge on my Winnebago motorhome always shows over full by about one-eighth inch. Is there an easy way to determine whether the gauge or the sending unit is malfunctioning? Winnebago has told me that its motorhomes don't have an access hatch over the Chevrolet P-chassis gas tank. The gas tank has to be dropped to get at the sender, but that sounds like a serious operation.

ART MINER | OMAHA, NEBRASKA

There is a very easy way, Art. All GM gas-tank senders have a variable resistor that ranges from zero to 90 ohms. There is one wire to the sender. The other side of the circuit is ground.

When the gas tank is empty, the resistance to ground is zero ohms. When the tank is full, the resistance to ground is 90 ohms. If your sender is stuck at full or above, the resistance will be 90 ohms or more.

The sender wire can be found in a number of places. The Chevrolet P-chassis wiring diagram for your particular chassis can help identify it. Once found, a multimeter can be used to measure the resistance to ground. If you know your tank is only about half full, the resistance to ground should be around 45 ohms. If it always measures 90 ohms, the sender is bad.

If the resistance goes down with the consumption of gasoline, the gauge is bad or you have an open circuit to the gauge. An open circuit has infinite resistance, and such a resistance will peg the gauge over full. ♦

TO CONTRIBUTE TO COACH & CHASSIS, please refer to *Contact MotorHome*, on page 9.

Loses Power Intermittently

I have a 2004 Itasca SunCruiser with an 8.1-L engine and Allison 1000MH transmission on a Workhorse W22 chassis. During a trip in the mountains going 55 MPH, the engine lost all power; however, it kept running at idle speed only. I pulled over and checked all fluids and the temperature of the engine was OK. When I started up the engine everything was fine. This happened again three days later. I took it to the dealer and he said it had no stored trouble codes and couldn't find anything wrong.

I have also taken it to the dealer for a reoccurring problem: the instrument cluster beeps and all gauges go to zero, but the engine keeps running and about 20 seconds later the gauges return to normal. The dealer also checked this and can't find anything wrong, however he said that GM knows of the problem but doesn't have a fix. Can you please help?

TOM WILLIAMS
ORANGE PARK, FLORIDA

There's a good chance that the instrument cluster problem is due to an intermittent loss of electrical ground. I'd begin by checking the ground connections and plugs going to the cluster and wiggling the wires.

The fact that the engine keeps running at idle indicates that the ignition is working and it is a fuel-supply problem, in which fuel flow can't keep up with demand. Workhorse issued a Technical Service Bulletin No. 60301-T dated September 2003, that may apply to your problem, and the company gave me permission to share it with our readers. It applies to all gasoline models:

"Examination of returned gasoline engine fuel pump/sender units has revealed that clogging of the fuel pump

inlet filter sock is the major cause for replacement. The filter sock is attached to the pump inlet inside the sender plastic housing. A clogged sock filter results in lack of fuel flow that causes loss of pressure and possible engine shutdown. A partially clogged sock filter can result in a fuel-pressure drop and vapor lock at the pump inlet as a result of a partial vacuum created from the clogged filter sock. Vapor lock normally occurs at very high temperatures (95°F and higher) and a tank fuel level of less than one half tank. Vapor lock will shut the engine down, but it will normally restart after about 20 minutes of cooling.

A pressure test and flow test can determine if the pump pickup sock filter or the frame-mounted inline filter is plugged. The fuel pump should draw about 10 amps and provide about 60 PSI pressure. Pressure below 60 PSI will indicate a partially plugged filter or pump problem. The frame-mounted inline filter

should be checked or replaced before condemning the pump inlet sock filter. A flow check can confirm a partially plugged filter. Unrestricted minimum flow from the pump is 0.5 gallons per minute.

Verification of a plugged sock filter involves removing the fuel pump/sender and examining the filter sock that is attached to the bottom of the pump motor assembly. It is recommended that units with a plugged inlet filter sock be replaced, as there is no procedure to clean the sock filter. Note: Plugged fuel filter socks are not normal Workhorse warranty, as Workhorse cannot control installation of contaminated fuel."

BRAKE PROBLEM

I have a problem with my 28-foot 1994 Winnebago Brave, built on a Chevy chassis. When I start to brake, I have to double pump the pedal to get good braking action. I've had the complete brake system checked twice: The rotors aren't warped, shoes and pads are good, there are no fluid leaks, and the lines have been flushed and new fluid has been installed. Do you have any ideas or suggestions?

LARRY IRVIN
OAK HARBOR, WASHINGTON

Sometimes, there's enough side-to-side runout in the brake rotors to push back the caliper pistons slightly, without a noticeable pulsing in the pedal during braking. This can cause the symptom you describe, as extra fluid has to be pumped to the calipers to bring them back into contact with the rotors before effective braking can occur.

I've also seen systems that have a small amount of air trapped in them do this. It may be necessary to do a very careful brake bleeding procedure to eliminate this problem. I'd also check that the caliper pistons and all sliding components are working freely and not sticking. Another possibility is that the master cylinder is starting to fail, although you should also be able to feel the pedal sink if you keep steady pressure on it when stopped. If the pedal effort feels the same for the first and second application (and you do not have ABS) then it may be the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 61

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combination valve. If the first application is harder than the next, then it may also be the hydro-boost. Be sure to get this solved so you don't have an accident.

BREAK-IN BLUES

I have a 2008 Gulf Stream motorhome on a Workhorse chassis with a six-speed Allison transmission. From day one it seemed to be shifting at different times, whether I was going uphill or downhill, but I didn't see any change in the RPM and couldn't feel any change in speed. It just got noisy like it was going into another gear. After about 2,000 miles it stopped doing that and seems to be working fine and has been for the last 2,000 miles. Do you think there is a break-in period, or is it something else like a cooling fan and should I be concerned about it now that it's running OK?

BILL STIGER

DIAMONDHEAD, MISSISSIPPI

It would have been good if you could have had a dealer technician test drive it with you when it was "acting up" originally. From your description this is likely the engine-cooling fan cycling, and not a malfunction. It is quite possible that the weather and temperatures were somewhat different, or that the engine ran slightly hotter during break-in, or both. Since there are no indications of a problem now, I wouldn't be too concerned, but do keep an eye on fluid levels and operating temperatures.

EXHAUST BRAKE OPERATION

Is there a way to check the function of the exhaust brake on a Cummins engine? I have a Monaco with a 5.9-L engine and Allison transmission. At lower speeds, the system does provide braking, which includes downshifting. The problem is at higher speed when the transmission can't downshift. I don't feel any marked deceleration. The unit has a muffler, so I don't hear anything, either.

ROBERT CLANEY | BONHAM, TEXAS

You should be able to feel the exhaust brake operating, even at higher road speeds, although it does feel stronger in lower gears. One way to monitor operation is to install an exhaust backpressure gauge, either a temporary one or a permanent unit mounted under the dash. This needs to be tapped in upstream of the exhaust

brake. Then you can compare the pressure generated at all speeds.

FRONT-END SHUDDER TIP

This is in regard to "Shimmy and Shake" (May). Years ago, I had a new Titan Class A on a Chevy chassis that had a severe shudder or shimmy when braking while descending a steep grade. The problem was a plastic king-pin bushing that had deformed due to the motorhome's weight. Bronze bushings were installed and the problem vanished.

GARY BUSSELMAN

RICHLAND, WASHINGTON

Thanks for writing. There are quite a few solutions to this common problem, but I have not heard of this one before, as I am sure many of our readers haven't.

CAN'T COOL THE COACH

My family and I love to go to the river during the summer when temperatures soar. We own a camping membership on the water that provides only a 30-amp hook up — and it's a weak 30 amps. We've owned four Class A's since joining and all but the last two have been able to stay reasonably cool.

My current coach is a 2008 42-foot Monaco with a 10 kW genset and three roof airs. When plugged into shorepower at the peak of the day (115–120°F) with one air conditioner running, the circuit breaker for it will occasionally trip. When I fire up the generator for relief, it will only operate two of the three air conditioners and after a short time the breaker on the genset will trip as well.

To help solve the problem, I bought outside window covers and use the awnings. I also bought a Hughes 50-amp Autoformer, which did increase the amps, which *do* drop in the afternoon when power is at its peak. This appears to have solved the circuit breaker popping most of the time. I cleaned the 50-amp plug with a wire brush for good connections and put a fan on the fuse panel to help keep it cool. I tried swapping the 20-amp fuse for a 30-amp on the A/C, which works, but has me concerned about safety. I also pulled in two of the slides to reduce the square footage. I switched the refrigerator to LP to reduce power draw, as well as turning off the charger portion of the inverter.

I've found that the heat causes the head temperature in the A/Cs to rise, and creates

CONTINUED ON PAGE 65

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a higher power demand. More than likely, this is the cause of the circuit breakers popping. I found the same basic effect on the generator. The extreme heat causes a significant drop in power, causing its breaker to trip.

I'm considering wiring a switch that would allow my generator to run one A/C unit and the shorepower to continue powering the rest of the coach.

With my other coaches, I was able to leave both A/Cs on high and they would almost never trip the park's breaker, let alone trip their own breakers. The new ones with their high-tech power management systems seem very temperamental compared to the older rigs. Perhaps they have built them with the power demands right to the limit for both shore- and genset power that leave no margin for the loss caused by the heat.

TOM GORIS | ACTON, CALIFORNIA

You are operating right at the limit of these components, and I think that you're experiencing low voltage from the high demand, which further exacerbates the problem by making the units run hotter and draw more power. You should never put in heavier fuses as this is dangerous. Check the voltages at each air conditioner when you are having these problems, looking for a minimum of 108 volts. I think the most expeditious method is to have an electrician rig up a switch so that you can run one air conditioner off the genset and two on shorepower. You might also consider installing a swamp cooler, which draws relatively little current and works quite well in hot, dry climates. If there is any way to rig up a sunshade, that would help, too. ♦

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One of the ageless gags circulating about Alaska is that there are only three seasons: June, July and winter. There is, however, a brief, vibrant fall bursting with red and gold.

And if you time it just right, it's possible to use your motorhome to chase the fall colors all the way south to the Lower 48.

Start your quest for fall foliage in the high country. The tundra and forests in and around Denali National Park and Preserve begin to turn color in mid-August, with the peak of color a veritable explosion of reds and yellows during the last days of the month and the first few days of September.

From Denali, work your way to either Fairbanks or Anchorage. Fall colors tend to peak in Fairbanks in the first 10 days of September and in Anchorage a week or so later.

After overdosing on fall colors in either Anchorage or Fairbanks, start your trek south, but don't be in too big of a hurry.

For the first couple of days on the Alaska Highway to Whitehorse, you should be in fall foliage all the way. However, from Whitehorse south you may have to juggle your schedule a bit depending on the weather and other

factors. An early frost will speed the onset of color, but some years are frost free until fairly late in September.

Headed down the Alaska Highway, you have a choice near Watson Lake. You can continue southeast down the Alaska Highway or you can head straight south on the Cassiar Highway. The latter is a shorter, more rugged road, but the scenery can be more spectacular, not to mention the colors. Either option, though, should provide plenty of oohs and aahs. If it looks like rain, stay on the Alaska Highway; the Cassiar has some pretty muddy stretches.

Once you've come off either the Alaska or Cassiar highway, things get a little more tricky. While splotches of fall color will appear here and there almost any time in late September, colors don't really peak in central British Columbia until October. If your schedule permits, linger awhile and wait out the colors. The views are worth it. Of particular note would be the Fraser River Gorge along Canada 1 in south-central British Columbia.

The final joy in all this is that you will have the road and the views pretty much to yourself. Most who visit Alaska are gone by Labor Day, so they miss some of the best the north has to offer



when the seasons turn. True, some of the campgrounds will be closed, but normally there is at least one open campground with hookups in all of the larger towns along the way through early October. And while snow is possible in September, it's relatively rare. If it does snow, just wait a few hours for the snow on the roads to melt before proceeding.

Your friends back home will never believe the pictures. ♦

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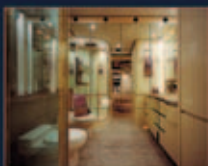
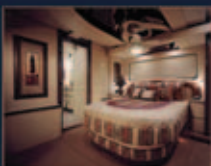
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