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FOR THE RV ENTHUSIAST

# MOTORHOME

DECEMBER 2009

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MOTORHOME MAGAZINE

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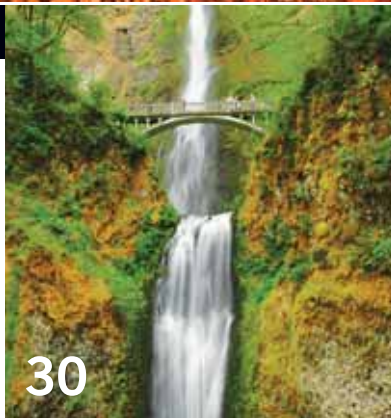
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**On The Cover:** Icefields Parkway stretches 120 miles through the heart of the Canadian Rockies (see feature, page 24). Photo courtesy of Travel Alberta Canada.

# GOOD TIMES ARE COMING

I'm no stranger to the ups-and-downs of the RV industry. I got my first taste of instability when the industry was flattened by the gas crunch in 1974. During the next 35 years, the industry went through its share of peaks and valleys on the annual sales charts, responding to more fuel shortages and economic slowdowns. In the end, people still bought motorhomes — and as a matter of fact, set sales records in 2004–05. Ah, those were good years.

Will the good times return? Absolutely. The motorhome lifestyle is just too attractive to keep down. Some might think I'm being overly optimistic by taking a positive stance in an economy that's only surpassed by the devastation of the Great Depression. But historically, bad economies always recover — and the pent-up demand for RVs is growing daily.

Granted, in the last 18 months, the motorhome industry has experienced its greatest upheaval in history. With the exception of strong companies like Winnebago and Tiffin, most of the manufacturers that primarily built motorhomes hemorrhaged financially like never before. Some closed their doors for good, and a few old-line, big players entered bankruptcy. A number of dealers shut down, unable to secure the necessary financing and attract enough buyers who could qualify for loans. By the time the smoke cleared, the fiasco the financial community created left way too many owners with orphaned coaches and arbitrarily shut out potential enthusiasts from entering the lifestyle.

The companies that survived the crunch — and it looks like we've hit bottom — did so through astute business management and unwavering commitment to the industry. Winnebago, for example, not only stayed the course, it also redesigned 50 percent of its 2010 fleet while others took a less aggressive approach. Winnebago had wisdom to add fuel-efficient coaches to the mix, but it didn't abandon its higher-end line, as



evidenced by the new 42-foot Tour. That's a pretty gutsy stance, but one that enthusiasts appreciate.

When Monaco and Fleetwood entered into bankruptcy, the RV community held its breath — but both these companies have been acquired by strong entities and are in the process of re-emerging into the industry with new names and fresh lines that should be in step with the market.

The new Monaco RV has the backing of Navistar, a big player in the transportation industry that got into the RV industry five years ago with the purchase of Workhorse Custom Chassis. Given Navistar's proven reputation with motorized products, I expect to see some impressive new product offerings in 2010 and 2011 as the company works to retain the confidence of veteran Monaco loyalists.

The new Fleetwood RV, now part of American Industrial Partners, has taken an aggressive role in dealing with owners who bought rigs from the former Fleetwood Enterprises. Monaco and Fleetwood have pared down their lines substantially and are eager to respond to changing needs of the modern motorhome enthusiast.

What will the market look like? My crystal ball shows the industry taking a few steps back in size, weight and price, but making big leaps in technology and quality. It's clear the industry will have to focus its attention on developing more Class A's in 30- to 34-foot sizes, with prices in the \$70,000 to \$80,000 range, and my discussions with industry players reveal just that. But the re-emerging market will continue to have a place for high-end coaches in 38- to 45-foot lengths.

Unlike many of the setbacks the RV industry experienced in years past, this recovery will motivate the next generation of buyers like never before — both in cost of entry and versatility of the new product lines that will show up on dealers' lots. ♦

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## MANAGING YOUR VOLTAGE

Regarding “The Shocking Truth About AC Power” (September): You offered a device that will cut off at 102 volts, however most mechanical systems (such as A/C compressors) will run much harder and wear out faster when



voltage is low. Just cutting off voltage for a couple of minutes and then restarting does nothing to fix the root problem — campgrounds with too many slots and not enough amps to support today's larger rigs. A lightning strike /massive surge is a problem you might face once or twice per season. Low voltage is something you are likely to face at some point every day you camp and is even more likely on warm days when everyone kicks on the A/C units. A much better option is a combined surge protector/voltage management system. I personally use the one from Frank's Electronics ([www.voltagebooster.com](http://www.voltagebooster.com)).

**STEVE DUDAS | OWASSO, OKLA.**

### HAILING THE HATCHERY

This summer we visited Grand Teton National Park and Craters of the Moon, profiled in your September issue. We read the articles (“Valley of the Tetons” and “Alluring Moonscape”) with interest as we were in the planning stages for

our late-summer trip. Being Idahoans, we are very familiar with both parks.

It was clear to us that “Moonscape’s” author, Karen Lee Ensley, came into Craters of the Moon from the east as she mentions available campgrounds in Arco, Idaho. No dispute there, but I would mention the free campground at the Hayspur Fish Hatchery if you come in from the west. The hatchery is located in Blaine County along U.S. Highway 20 approximately 40 miles south of Sun Valley, on Loving Creek and across the road from the world-famous Nature Conservancy Silver Creek Preserve. It's only a half-hour drive from Craters of the Moon.

The hatchery dates back to 1916, is open for tours and is noted for pioneering work in rainbow trout breeding. The campground does not have hookups or a sewer dump, but it does have potable water, picnic tables, fire pits, great fishing and plenty of open space for big rigs, all available at no charge.

Coming down out of Yellowstone and touring Teton Park in our 34-foot Fleetwood Flair, I was starting to look for a gas depot. A ranger at Teton Visitor Center directed us to Dornans, a fifth-generation, family-owned/operated resort located inside the boundaries of the park. It's a very nice complex with a host of services including two restaurants, a grocery/deli and fuel station.

Our only complaint is that egress from the gas pumps is severely limited for a motorhome and tow vehicle if a large delivery truck is unloading. We had to unhook our tow vehicle and do a two-point K turn with the coach to get out. Great facility and a good price on gas. Just be prepared to do some maneuvers.

**WALT AND CONNIE BAUMGARTNER  
BOISE, IDAHO**

### RECYCLING PROGRAM NEEDED

Regarding the September letter “More Recycling Resolutions,” we have found that most private campgrounds do not promote recycling. However, most states or municipalities have some sort of recycling program. At a minimum all campgrounds should provide information on recycling, in the arrival packet for each camper, as there are differences as to



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# “Reverse is for motor homes. Not motor home companies.”

— Bob Olson, Chairman, CEO and President, Winnebago Industries

It's full speed ahead here in Forest City, Iowa. Although some big-name RV manufacturers have recently gone bankrupt, we've invested more in research and product development for our 2010 models than at any time in our history. And it shows: with exclusive new floorplans, features and styling choices, our new models are shaping up to be the best we've ever built.

But that's only part of the story. We believe it's more important than ever to consider not just the motor home, but the company that stands behind it. Too many RVers have been left standing by the side of the road when it comes to warranty coverage and service after the sale.

So I'd like to invite you to take a look behind the scenes. See where we're headed, preview our new models, get up to speed and get “In the Know” about Winnebago Industries by visiting [www.InTheKnow2010.com](http://www.InTheKnow2010.com).



Learn more about Winnebago Industries and our 2010 models at [www.InTheKnow2010.com](http://www.InTheKnow2010.com).



Winnebago Industries, go to [www.motorhomemagazine.com/info](http://www.motorhomemagazine.com/info)



what is recycled from area to area. Even if the campground does not recycle, there is a local program; this information should be provided to all campers as to what is recyclable and where to drop it off.

We believe most campers would like to recycle if given the opportunity. We ourselves have a separate bag for recyclables and will carry it to the next campground in hope of finding a place to recycle.

**KEN AND BETTY SCHWENKE  
LEESBURG, FLA.**

**SINGLE MOMS ENJOY RVING TOO**

I am writing this letter to express my disappointment in the RV industry. I am a single mom who loves to RV, and I feel alienated by the industry.

Very rarely do you see a commercial or article reflecting a single mom with her kids. In the article about GoRVing ("New GoRVing Video Being Shot This Week," Aug. 26, [www.MotorHomeMagazine.com](http://www.MotorHomeMagazine.com)), couples and empty nesters are mentioned, but not me.

I did some research and found that

there is only one book, "Rovin Moms, RV-101 for the Single Mom," written by Paula Napper, that is directed to single moms. She even has a Facebook page for the book and single moms. I think it is time to stop ignoring us single moms.

**S.C. TATTER | CUMBERLAND, MD.**

**OLDER AND WISER**

I enjoy your magazine, but I'd enjoy it more if you highlighted older motorhomes. I own a 1997 Pace Arrow Vision, and I'd love to see articles about how to maintain and upgrade older coaches. In this economy, used, older RVs are the way to go!

**DENNIS DOUGHTY | MEMPHIS, TENN.**

**Question:**

**If you are an owner of an older motorhome, have you experienced any discrimination at private campgrounds because of the age of your rig?**

Send your comments to *MotorHome*, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001; or e-mail [letters@motorhome.com](mailto:letters@motorhome.com). ♦

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# escapes

edited by PATRICIA MARROQUIN

EVENTS | NOTEWORTHY | NEWS BRIEFS | CROSSROADS

## GARDEN OF THE GODS

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF PUBLIC BEAUTY IN COLORADO

**Imagine buying a slice of Rocky Mountain heaven to build a summer home,** and then deciding the natural setting is too precious to develop. That's exactly what the head of the Burlington Railroad did in 1879. Thanks to the vision and generosity of Charles Perkins, his children conveyed 480 acres at the foot of Pikes Peak to the city of Colorado Springs, Colo., in 1909. This year, the park celebrates the 100th anniversary of the Perkins family's generous gift.

Known for its towering sandstone formations, Garden of the Gods hosts 2 million visitors annually. The public park is open year-round, and admission is free. Fifteen miles of trails attract hikers, bicyclists, rock climbers and horseback riders. Naturalists lead 30-minute walks twice daily and the park also offers guided horseback rides.

Hiking trails range from easy to moderate, and some are wheelchair accessible. The park is dog friendly and there are designated picnic areas. RV parking is available at the center or the main parking lot. For more information, call (719) 634-6666, or go to [www.gardenofgods.com](http://www.gardenofgods.com). — *Mary Zalmanek*



**DEC. 1-31** | Get up-close and personal with wildlife on a **Sunrise Elk Viewing Tour** at Pine Mountain State Resort Park in Pineville, Ky. The tours run most weekends through February 2010 and include a dinner and “Kentucky’s Elk Herd” show on Friday evenings, and a continental breakfast, sunrise elk viewing tour and lunch on Saturdays. Sightings on these trips, where you can view the animals from inside and outside the tour van, average more than 100 elk per trip, and you also get a free souvenir item; (800) 325-1712, [www.parks.ky.gov](http://www.parks.ky.gov).



**DEC. 2-6** | Warm up your insides with a rich, comforting beverage at the **Holiday Ale Festival** in Portland, Ore. A cozy atmosphere is created outdoors by electric heaters under a large tent, surrounded by the largest decorated Christmas trees of the region. The festival features more than 40 winter ales, many of which are specially brewed for the event, and you even get to keep your mug; [www.holidayale.com](http://www.holidayale.com).

**DEC. 4-6** | Learn about the rich cultural heritage that surrounds waterfowling and fishing at the **Core Sound Waterfowl Weekend** on Harkers Island, N.C. Enjoy down-east cooking that includes seafood, chili, and the crowd favorite “sweet puppies” as you observe boat building and craftsmen’s exhibits at this annual event that draws thousands of visitors. Camping is available on the island; (252) 728-1500, [www.coresound.com](http://www.coresound.com).

**DEC. 5** | Observe hawks, sparrows and other winter migrant and resident birds on the **Winter Bird Hike** at Panola Mountain State Park in Stockbridge, Ga. This unique park shelters a 100-acre granite mountain and hosts rare plants and an interpretive center with animal exhibits for children; (770) 389-7801, [www.gastateparks.org](http://www.gastateparks.org).

**DEC. 12** | Step back in time at the **Confederate Christmas Ball** held at the Old Court House Museum in Vicksburg, Miss. The celebration is a re-enactment of the actual 1862 Balfour Ball that occurred during the Civil War. An elegant wine buffet will be served and period-appropriate dress is encouraged; (601) 636-0741, [www.oldcourthouse.org](http://www.oldcourthouse.org).



PHOTO: WINTER FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS

## DEC. 1-31

Gaze at sparkling light displays, fireworks, gorgeous flowers and more at Canada’s largest lights festival, the **Winter Festival of Lights** in Niagara Falls, Ontario. There are more than 120 animated displays and more than 3 million tree and ground lights to dazzle you, as well as concerts, a flower show and stage productions to entertain the whole family; (800) 563-2557, [www.wfol.com](http://www.wfol.com).

**DEC. 19** | Set your wagon wheels rolling over to **Lewis and Clark Celebrate Christmas** at the National Frontier Trails Museum in Independence, Mo. Listen to the stories of the Christmases that Lewis, Clark and their Corps of Discovery shared during their monumental journey across the continent. The museum is holding several frontier-themed events during December, featuring free cider and cookies, live music and even covered

wagon rides; (816) 325-7575, [www.frontiertrailsmuseum.org](http://www.frontiertrailsmuseum.org).

**DEC. 20** | Experience a blast from the past, literally, at the **Christmas Guns Celebration** at Fort Reno in El Reno, Okla. This German tradition of discharging firearms was believed to dispel the year’s evil in preparation for the upcoming holiday. There will also be food, singing, storytelling and visits with Santa, and admission is free; (405) 262-3987, [www.fortreno.org](http://www.fortreno.org).

## CLEAN MACHINE



**It's just a fact of life on the road — vehicle interiors get dirty, quickly.** Even if you're camping at a high-end RV park, you'll eventually track in dirt and debris. That's where a good cordless vacuum comes in handy, but not all of them work as promised.

The new hand-held Dyson DC31 actually does what it claims — it doesn't lose suction. The 2.9-pound vacuum cleaner is powered by a digital motor that, according to the company, is the fastest, most power-efficient motor ever developed for a hand-held, and the 104,000 RPM motor is five times faster than a Formula 1 race car engine, yet it emits zero carbon emissions.

The unit has a 22.2-volt lithium ion battery that recharges in 3½ hours when plugged into 120-volt AC power. With a full charge, the vacuum runs for at least 10 minutes on regular power, or six minutes on high.

The Dyson comes with a combination accessory tool that converts to a brush, which works well for cleaning day/night shades or carpeted areas, and a separate crevice tool. Of course, all of this cordless convenience comes at a price. The DC31 has an MSRP of \$210.99 and comes with a two-year warranty.

**Dyson Inc., (866) 693-9766, [www.dyson.com](http://www.dyson.com).** — *Eileen Hubbard*

## ATTENDANCE UP AT YELLOWSTONE



**After a slow start to the year,** Yellowstone National Park is on pace to set a new annual visitation record. Visitor numbers from July show that more than 900,000 people entered the park that borders Wyoming, Idaho and Montana. The figure is up 11.4 percent from July 2008 and tops

the previous all-time record for July of 847,000 visitors set in 1995.

Al Nash, Yellowstone's chief of public affairs, credited the rise to a decrease in gas prices. Also, the National Park Service offered free entrance for three weekends during the summer.

Of Yellowstone's five entrances, the West Entrance remained the park's busiest, with more than 385,000 visitors in July compared with 337,000 a year ago. July is typically the park's peak month for visitation, followed by August, June, September and May.

Although road work has been ongoing and will close the park's route between Madison Junction and Norris through December, Nash didn't think that has or will hurt tourism.

## News Briefs

By Jan. 1, 2010, all **Dometic RV** air conditioners and models with heat pumps will use a new refrigerant called 410A, which does not affect the ozone or contribute to global warming, according to Brad Sargent, Dometic's vice president of marketing. The current refrigerant, R22, is being phased out by U.S. government law requiring its elimination and the use of "green" gases in such products beginning Jan. 1, 2010. All DuoTherm, Brisk Air and Penguin brands will be affected. The new products using 410A will be identifiable by a green leaf label affixed to the shroud. Sargent said the new law affects only new production of HVAC products beginning Jan. 1.

**Lazydays RV Center Inc.** of Seffner, Fla., has been recognized by **Tiffin Motorhomes Inc.** as its No. 1 dealer for 2009, marking the fourth consecutive year for this distinction, according to a news release. In addition, Lazydays sales consultants received all of the Top 10 Salesperson awards from Red Bay, Ala.-based Tiffin. Dominic Calabro, general sales manager for Lazydays, said, "For the past 20 years Tiffin has played an integral role in our ability to provide quality motorhomes to our customers. This, coupled with our shared commitment to providing customers with a better RVing experience, has been the principal factor for our continued successes."

The floor of the 1,200-square-foot lobby features a mosaic of tumbled marble, travertine and granite. The reception desk has a rich walnut finish and inlaid marble. Rattan seating and bronze light sconces give a homey feeling. No, this isn't a five-star luxury resort hotel. **SunLand RV Resorts** recently completed the first phase of a three-year, multimillion-dollar improvement plan on its newly acquired 251-site **Emerald Desert RV Resort** in the Southern California community of Palm Desert. La Jolla, Calif.-based SunLand invested more than \$1 million in the improvements during the summer to prepare for the arrival of snowbirds. Other improvements include enhancing the pool area and fitness center; and installing energy-efficient laundry facilities. Plans for 2010 and 2011 call for new furnishings and décor for the resort's clubhouse and ballroom; a sports and entertainment lounge; and a new pet park and grooming center. Special event catering services and motorcoach washing and detailing services will also be added.





## ICY RETREAT

If you're in search of the chilliest place in Alaska, look no further than the cool little town of Fairbanks. Here the ice seemingly never melts.

The Fairbanks Ice Museum, open daily, claims to be "the coolest ice show in town," and is home to Freeze Frame — a large-screen, multi-image presentation that documents the World Ice Art Championships, Fairbanks' International Ice Sculpting Competition held annually in March — and the Ice Showcases. The four walk-in displays showcase 120,000 pounds of ice sculptures viewable from a comfortable auditorium through glass-fronted cases.

If that's not chilly enough for you, head over to the Aurora Ice Museum (pictured) — which claims to be the largest ice environment in the world. Although you'll have to drive a bit — the museum is at Chena Hot Springs Resort, 56 miles northeast of Fairbanks — the trip is worth it. The museum offers daily tours and includes an ice tower, polar bear bedroom, life-size jousters and the Stoli Ice Bar — where you can sip a martini from a sculpted ice glass. Once you chill out, jump in the resort's hot springs lake, where the average daily temperature is 106°F.

**For more information**, contact Fairbanks Ice Museum, (907) 451-8222, [www.ice-museum.com](http://www.ice-museum.com); Aurora Ice Museum, (907) 451-8104, [www.chenahotspings.com](http://www.chenahotspings.com).

— Bruce Hampson



PHOTO: CHENA HOT SPRINGS RESORT



PHOTO: COURTESY OF CALLAWAY GARDENS

## GO FOR THE GLOW

**Don't be fooled by its name —**

Callaway Gardens in Pine Mountain, Ga., is much more than a garden. This 13,000-acre complex includes two golf courses, a private fishing lake, eight scenic nature trails, a one-mile-long white sand beach, a butterfly center with more than 1,000 tropical butterflies, and numerous special events throughout the year.

One of the premier events at Callaway Gardens is its annual Fantasy In Lights — an outdoor light show featuring 8 million lights that stretches for miles, creating more than a dozen larger-than-life holiday scenes

that visitors can drive through. An indoor Christmas Village, with shopping and dining, includes opportunities to visit with Santa Claus and roaming Fantasy In Lights characters. The event runs through the end of December.

Camping is available nearby at F.D. Roosevelt State Park (with 140 sites) or Pine Mountain RV Resort — a private RV park with 148 full-hookup sites (48 of which are pull-throughs).

**For more information**, call (800) 225-5292, or visit [www.callawaygardens.com](http://www.callawaygardens.com). — Eileen Hubbard

## WAR AND PEACE

**At the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers**, Harpers Ferry National Historical Park (which consists of land in West Virginia, Virginia and Maryland) sits at an epicenter for early American happenings that shaped this nation: the buds of industrial commerce, river and rail transportation, the crusade to abolish slavery, the bloody exchanges of battle and the largest surrender of federal troops during the Civil War.

In a campaign to free the slaves, noted abolitionist John Brown led the 1859 raid on the Harpers Ferry Armory. The ill-fated raid resulted in his capture; charges of treason, insurrection and murder; a guilty verdict; and hanging, but the 36-hour flash point flamed the morality debate over slavery and plunged the country into war.

Today, a tranquil scene greets visitors. The park encompasses battlefields and a historic district, its streets lined by buildings that witnessed history. Museums, exhibits, demonstrations and trails lead you back in time. The Appalachian Trail passes through the historic town. Motorhome travelers can park in pull-through spaces at the park's visitor center. From there a shuttle bus takes them to the historic Lower Town district. A KOA is conveniently located nearby.

**For more information**, call (304) 535-6029, or go to [www.nps.gov/hafe](http://www.nps.gov/hafe). — Rhonda Ostertag ♦

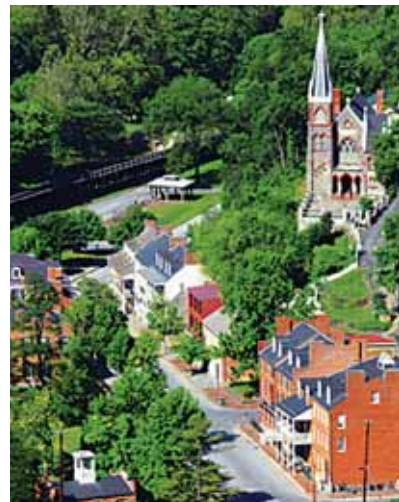


PHOTO: WEST VIRGINIA DIVISION OF TOURISM



# OLD SOUTHERN CHARM



CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA, RECALLS QUINT ELEGANCE, MILITARY SPLENDOR AND NOSTALGIC AMERICANA

could almost see him. Rhett Butler, the debonair blockade runner from “Gone With the Wind,” standing on a piazza of some elegant Charleston mansion and gazing over the Charleston Harbor’s sparkling waters.

As I strolled through Battery Park and admired the grand antebellum homes, it was easy to create such a picture. Charleston, S.C., is home to one of America’s most intact historic districts. Nestled along a narrow peninsula — where the Ashley and Cooper rivers meet and empty into the Atlantic Ocean — it exudes old South charm. With very few tall buildings, Charleston instead offers quaint

cobblestone roads, colonial structures, a unique culture and gobs of history.

Charleston’s history reveals both its good and bad sides. Known as “the Holy City,” it was one of the most religiously tolerant cities in the New World — the results of which can be seen in the many striking church steeples that rise majestically over the city’s skyline.

The city’s elegance, however, was created through the income generated by the abundant rice crops of the region’s swampy fields. Wealthy plantation owners and merchants reaped the labor of the many slaves who came

**A good way to see the historic district in Charleston, S.C., is by carriage tour, top. The leisurely horse-drawn tour takes visitors past colonial structures, formal gardens and grand antebellum homes behind iron gates. Above, a ranger gives a talk to visitors at Fort Sumter, site of the Civil War’s first battle. The 2.4-acre fort is on a man-made island and its five-sided wall, now in ruins, was at one time three stories tall.**





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**Clockwise from left: The 13,200-foot-long Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge is a distinctive sight in Charleston Harbor. With a main span of 1,546 feet, it's the longest cable-stayed bridge in the Western Hemisphere. Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum houses a huge hangar bay that displays aircraft from World War II to Desert Storm. Sweetgrass baskets created by Gullah women of West African descent are sold at Market Hall and Sheds, a *National Historic Landmark*. The 643-acre James Island County Park features marshes, tidal creeks and forests.**

through the port city of Charleston — a major port for slave trafficking.

But the world those early Charleston residents left behind is something to behold. To get a closer look at Charleston's history, it's best to start with a walk through its historic district. But before heading off, you can stop at the visitor center located at 375 Meeting St. In addition to a small museum, the center offers maps, guides and parking information.

I began my tour of the old city by touring The Battery, a landmark promenade that follows the shores of the peninsula and the Ashley and Cooper rivers. From Battery Park, also known as White Point Gardens, you can enjoy a gorgeous view of the Charleston Harbor, including the striking 13,200-foot-long Arthur Ravenel Jr. Bridge. The structure, with a main span of 1,546 feet, is the longest cable-stayed bridge in the Western Hemisphere.

Battery Park — a park since 1837, but once used for artillery during the Civil War — is shaded by grand live oak trees. It includes a bandstand and artillery pieces, including a Columbiad once used to shell Fort Sumter. While at the park, you might also see some interesting bird life. My son spotted two enormous yellow-crowned night herons in one of the live oaks. Soon, a crowd of spectators joined us in observing the incredible birds.

Leaving the park, visitors can stroll the charming streets lined with live oaks and Spanish moss, gawk at the elegant homes, and peek through the iron gates at many of the formal backyard gardens.

Several of the old Charleston homes — filled with Southern elegance on the



PHOTOS: PATRICK BORDERS; CHARLESTON AREA CVB (BASKETS, HOMES)



**Charleston is famous for its Rainbow Row — mid-18th century, pastel-hued homes that are pictured on postcards.**

inside and gardens on the outside — are open to the public and worth a visit. The Aiken-Rhett, Edmondston-Alston and Heyward-Washington houses are among Charleston's most visited and once hosted guests such as George Washington, Jefferson Davis and Gen. P.G.T. Beauregard.

Heading north, I walked the raised sidewalk that skirts between the harbor and the historic homes along East Battery Street and East Bay Street. Here, the clip-clop of horses pulling the many carriage tours is particularly prevalent. If not for the cars also cruising the road, the horses and mansions might make you think you slipped back in time to the romance of the antebellum South.

Farther along, I came to the famous Rainbow Row. This section is home to pastel-colored, mid-18th century homes that appear on many Charleston postcards. Near Rainbow Row is Waterfront Park, a beautiful eight-acre park with fountains, spacious lawns and a large pier, which provides breezy, closeup views of the harbor.

Continuing along East Bay Street, visitors will find the vast Market Hall and Sheds, a *National Historic Landmark*. The market — also known as City Market — was originally where vendors brought meat and produce in from surrounding communities and dates back to the early 1800s.

After surviving such calamities over the years as fires, earthquakes, hurricanes and of course, warfare, the market today is home to products geared to the city's visitors. You'll find the hustle and bustle of an old-fashioned market, but with vendors showcasing Lowcountry arts and crafts, clothing, jewelry and some standard souvenir fare. The most interesting products, however, are the sweetgrass baskets locally crafted by Gullah women of West African descent who speak in an old Gullah dialect of English.

If the market goods don't do it for you, more traditional shops are located along

the surrounding South Market and North Market streets. And upscale shopping can be found along King Street, which intersects Market Street in front of the impressive Greek Revival-styled City Market.

The area is also home to many of the city's fantastic restaurants. For an afternoon break, my family and I grabbed ice cream at Kaminsky's, "Charleston's favorite dessert café," and later, enjoyed a seafood feast at Charleston Crab House.

Many of Charleston's popular tours operate from the market area, including the abundant horse-drawn carriage tours, as well as walking tours of the historical or ghostly variety.

East of the market, the harbor waters provide some of the city's best sights and attractions. From the separated pedestrian lane on the massive Ravenel Bridge, visitors can catch an aerial view of Cooper River leading to the Atlantic. The constant flow of container ships, cruise ships and schooners, plus views of the USS Yorktown, Fort Sumter and the church spire-dotted skyline, will capture your attention.

Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum, where you'll find the USS Yorktown and other naval vessels, is located on the far side of the bridge. There, you'll find ample parking, and it's the perfect place to visit if you're touring directly from your motorhome. Among its attractions, Patriots Point displays four ships, 25 aircraft and the Congressional Medal of Honor Museum. However, its anchor feature — excuse the pun — is the 888-foot aircraft carrier.

The mammoth, 27,000-ton Yorktown, nicknamed the "Fighting Lady," took part in many epic World War II battles. Visitors can explore much of the famous carrier. We spent almost an entire day investigating its nooks and crannies by taking the six self-guided tour routes through the living and working spaces, engine room, flight deck and bridge, wardroom and brig, officer quarters and the naval history exhibits.

The cavernous hangar bay and the vast flight deck also display aircraft from WWII to Desert Storm. From the flight deck, you can close your eyes and imagine the daring exploits as planes launched from and landed on the windy platform.

USS Laffey, a WWII destroyer, is another must-see ship at Patriots Point. (Unfortunately, it was closed to public access

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## OLD SOUTHERN CHARM

for repairs during our visit.) It earned the nickname "The Ship That Would Not Die" after it was hit by five Kamikazes and four Japanese bombs and still managed to shoot down nine planes and remain afloat.

For motorhome sightseers, Patriots Point offers the best departure point to one of Charleston's most famous landmarks, Fort Sumter — the site of the Civil War's first battle. The fort's remains are only accessible by private boat or by ferries departing from Patriots Point and Liberty Square in downtown Charleston.

The 2.4-acre fort, which sits on a man-made island, is an example of a coastal fortification typical of the era following the War of 1812. Its five-sided wall, now largely in ruins, was once three stories high.

In December 1860, South Carolina became the first state to vote for secession. As other states seceded, the Confederates soon took control of the Federal forts within their territory — except Fort Sumter. U.S. Maj. Robert Anderson refused to surrender. On April 12, 1861, Gen. Beauregard's shore artillery bombarded the fort, and after 34 hours, Anderson finally relented and the South won its first victory. Neither side suffered a fatality during the fight, but it started a war that would kill more than 600,000 soldiers.

Later, Federal forces returned and engaged in one of the longest sieges in modern warfare. From 1863 to 1865, they fired 46,000 shells over and into Fort Sumter's crumbling walls. However, the South held the fort until they evacuated to reinforce retreating Confederate mainland forces.

The ferry ride to the fort takes visitors on a 30-minute narrated cruise of the picturesque harbor. If you're sightseeing by car, you'll want to pick up the ferry at the Visitor Education Facility at Liberty Square (next to the South Carolina Aquarium). This serves as the primary departure point and a Fort Sumter visitor center for the National Park Service.

On the island, visitors have only one hour to explore. Wayside exhibits explain the various areas, objects and harbor vistas. One of the more interesting things to see are the shells still imbedded in the remains of the wall. If you're like me and try your family's patience by reading every informational sign and absorbing every view, you'll need to pick up the pace to

see everything in your allotted hour.

After Fort Sumter, if you have more sightseeing time available, you can visit other popular attractions, such as: Charles Towne Landing, where English settlers landed in 1670; Fort Moultrie, the site of the first Revolutionary War victory over the British Navy; and the South Carolina Aquarium, the aquatic home of more than 10,000 plants and animals.

Just outside Charleston, visitors can tour some of the gorgeous plantations that once flourished and created the wealth of the antebellum era. Since 1676, the Drayton family has called Magnolia Plantation their home, and today it's open to the public and includes the oldest public garden in America. Boone Hall, Drayton Hall, Middleton Place and the Charleston Tea Plantation also attract many visitors.

For motorhomers, the campground at James Island County Park serves as an ideal home base. The 643-acre park is convenient to downtown Charleston and the South Carolina Lowcountry, and the campground provides a round-trip shuttle service to the city's visitor center.

The park itself makes a fun destination. Miles of paved trails wind through forests and Palmetto trees and skirt by marshes and tidal creeks. Bicycle rentals are available, as are pedal boat and kayak rentals for its 16 acres of lakes. For motorhomers with pets, there's a dog off-leash area where Rover can run wild without incurring the wrath of a passing ranger.

The county park system also manages three nearby beaches. Isle of Palms, Kiawah Beachwalker and Folly Beach offer a warm and gentle surf, plus lifeguard-protected (in season) swimming areas, showers and beach chair and umbrella rentals. At Folly Beach, the Folly Beach Fishing Pier provides an immense (1,000 feet long, 25 feet wide) berth for fishing, birdwatching or simply enjoying the breathtaking views. James Island County Park also runs a shuttle to Folly Beach, but there's plenty of motorhome parking available, and if you're a James Island camper, you can park for free.

Whether it's scenic beaches, bustling antebellum streets, or historic sites and naval vessels, Charleston offers many attractions for the motorhome traveler.

It's a place I'm sure Rhett Butler would be proud of. ♦

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# WHERE THEMES COME TRUE





## WASHINGTON TOWNS CENTERED ON A MOTIF LURE VISITORS WITH DUTCH FOLK DANCERS, OLD WEST COWBOYS, BAVARIAN NUTCRACKERS AND PREHISTORIC DINOSAURS

by RHONDA OSTERTAG

**T**heme parks have long been popular family draws, but in the state of Washington, theme towns carry the idea to a whole new level. Within Washington's borders, you can visit Europe without ever crossing the "Great Pond." You can roam streets of art where the town is the canvas, or time-travel back to the age of dinosaurs or the rootin'-tootin' Old West. And, for all of this, you won't need an "E" ticket, a magic bus or a time machine, just the soft comfort of your motorhome.

"I have a theme" seems to be the grace that saved many a small Washington town. When timber and agrarian businesses faltered, small towns had to struggle to find a means to drive their economies. For many that meant tourism and identity changes centered on a theme.

Here are five towns that found a hook to reel you in. As is typically the case with town travel, navigation and parking will be easier in a dinghy vehicle than the motorhome. But several of these towns have suitable lots for motorhome parking, and by design, the towns are meant for walking. In addition, most of these towns have in-town and near-town private and public campgrounds.

### LYNDEN

In Whatcom County, in northwest Washington near the Canadian border, Lynden welcomes you to Holland. The picturesque, tidy Leavenworth, Wash., left and top, brings Bavaria to life, with its architecture, music, costumes and food. In a leisurely stroll down Front Street, you'll find gables, turrets and flowers, as well as shops featuring cuckoo clocks, folk art and the ever-present nutcracker. The town loves events such as the glittery Bavarian Ice Fest. Visitors will get a feel of the Old West in Winthrop. A five-day Ride to Rendezvous, right, ends in Winthrop in time for a '49er Days celebration.







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Granger, Wash., top left, latched onto the dinosaur theme in the 1990s, when the movie “Jurassic Park” was popular. The dinos are constructed of steel, wire mesh and concrete. Near the Bavarian theme town of Leavenworth is Cashmere, home to the Pioneer Village and Museum, above, which contains a collection of fine Native American artifacts. Below left, a 72-foot working windmill is prominent in the Dutch-themed village of Lynden. Toppenish, Wash., has earned the nickname “City of Murals.” The town adds one, such as the Rodeo Mural below, every year.



village holds great charm with its 72-foot working windmill, the classic Dutch gabled architecture of Front Street and a whimsical 142-foot-long Holland-themed mural. Hanging flower baskets, tulips, shops, eateries, festivals and an indoor canal complete the package.

Did I mention tidiness? This town shines. The Dutch who settled around Lynden in the early 1900s were dairy farmers, known for their work ethic, traditional values and reputation for cleanliness. Protestant Reformed churches are well represented here, and on Sundays most shops still close. Dairy farming remains central, but berry and hazelnut farms also propel the region’s agricultural base.

Days spent in town are filled with shopping, eating and sight-seeing. Antiques, Dutch lace, Delft blue pottery, Belgian chocolate, Gouda cheese, wooden shoes and Dutch novelty items find their way into shoppers’ bags. The inevitable tea time, pastries and European-style meals are sure to strain belt lines. Rich dairy products figure prominently in Dutch cooking, as do eggs, sausage and breads.

A tour of the area’s Appel Cheese Farm further tempts sampling.

The town’s Pioneer Museum has a fine collection of carriages and horse-drawn vehicles, as well as a re-created block from early Lynden with 28 shops and great memorabilia. At Claire vg Thomas Theatre, community productions pack the house.

When you find time to send a postcard, visit the Postkantoor (U.S. Post Office). Inside, look for the Federal Arts Project mural, Three Ages of Phoebe Goodell Judson (1942). She is credited with naming the town. Hundreds of these post office murals were commissioned in the 1930s and ’40s to employ artists and promote public art.

During the Lynden Heritage Celebration in early June, a parade, a traditional street sweeping and wooden shoe dancing add to the festivities. The “klompen” dancers, from age 4 to adult, wear traditional costumes and perform folk dances brought over from Europe. The festival’s open-air market features flower sales,

a wooden-shoe carving demonstration and, of course, eats. Each December, Sinterklaas (the Dutch Santa, as you may remember from "Miracle on 34th Street") makes his way to Lynden. Threshing bees and harvest festivals honor area agricultural roots.

For journeys out and about, Lynden is well-placed between Mount Baker and Puget Sound. Mount Baker Highway (State Highway 542) ascends to breathtaking views of Mounts Baker and Shuksan, providing sights normally reserved for hikers and climbers. Given the route's climb, this one is better for the dinghy vehicle, but the journey is spectacular. The port towns of Bellingham and Blaine invite with marinas, shops, museums and gardens. Whale-watching trips depart from Bellingham to find Orca pods that feed in Georgia Strait.

During peak summer season, RV parking in Lynden is scarce and should be secured early. Usually, off-season parking can be found in the large Front Street lot next to the mural. You will find RV camping both in and near town or at Larrabee and Birch Bay state parks along shore. Six days a week, the Whatcom Transportation Authority bus serves Lynden, running hourly between Bellingham and Lynden.

### WINTHROP

On State Highway 20 in Washington's scenic Methow Valley, on the eastern front of the Cascades, the wooden sidewalks of Winthrop lead you into the Old West. The rustic weathered-wood structures, old-fashioned business shields and painted signs seal the town's late 1800s frontier spell, but an espresso is never far from reach.

This theme town emerged in response to the completion of Highway 20 and the need to attract and keep dollars in town. Because the town's roots trace back to gold mining and cattle ranching, the Old West was a natural fit.

Shoppers will find goodies from boutique to antique, as well as horsehair jewelry, Indian beadwork, western art and cowboy hats. Diners can enjoy four-star establishments and lip-smacking barbecue, taverns and wine cellars. Cowboy serenades sometimes accompany the sizzle on the grill.

Winthrop's Shafer Historical Village and Museum captures early-day history. Central to the historic village is the fine log house that town founder and merchant Guy



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Waring built for his wife. Locals dubbed it "The Castle." The Methow Trading Company (general store) is stocked with items from the 1890s. A print shop, schoolhouse and mining display flesh out life in the West.

The town's '49er Days, celebrated over three days in May, carries the frontier theme to its ultimate level, with horses, wagons and plenty of cowboys parading down Riverside Avenue. Each year, the Washington Outfitters and Guides Association (WOGA) leads a five-day/four-night Ride to Rendezvous, culminating in Winthrop in time for '49er Days.

For a realistic taste of the Old West, the intrepid can surrender RV comfort and sign up for the journey. Travel is by horseback or wagon and sleep is in tents under the stars. Cowboy coffee, pancakes, western omelets, and plates heaped high with savory chicken, beef and pork fortify trail hands. Good companionship salves the saddle sore.

Each year, some 100 adventurers join the WOGA guides and support teams to make this journey; many are repeat customers. For some families, the ride is multigenerational. But even if there is only time and adven-

ture enough for '49er Days, don't dismay. Country music, cowboy poetry, a packers contest, a western steak feed, an auction and some good-natured horsing around will keep you in a western frame of mind.

Motorhome parking is a block and a half west of the town core, at the community center barn off Highway 20. The Winthrop KOA provides a courtesy shuttle to town for its campers. At Pearygin Lake State Park, four miles northeast of town, you'll find lakeside camping and chance sightings of deer, wild turkeys and marmots.

Fishermen cast lines in the Chewuch and Methow rivers. Hiking and mountain biking are popular throughout the Methow Valley, and Winthrop is the eastern gateway to North Cascades National Park. The national park's regal mountain scenery screams "Road Trip!"

### LEAVENWORTH

*Willkommen* to Bavaria. In a beautiful mountain setting on U.S. Highway 2 east of Stevens Pass, Leavenworth pulls out all the stops in its transformation into a Bavarian village. In the 1960s, when the town was spiraling downward after the departure of its rail and the failure of its mill, drastic action was needed. The town committed to reinventing itself as a "Little Bavaria," and the response was community-wide. The architecture, commerce, menus, music, costumes and attitude all fell in step with the illusion.

The resulting town-hamlet is one for strolling, with its balconies, gables, turrets and window boxes. Flowers are everywhere, and when the flowers are absent, evergreen boughs decorate town. Murals, a glockenspiel and the Front Street Park gazebo — often lively with accordion music — add to the magic. The echo of the mountains and the clop and rattle of a horse-drawn carriage expand the harmony.

The town wakes to the haunting tone of an alpenhorn. A father-son duo share responsibility for sounding the long-necked horn from the Enzian Inn balcony for the amusement of guests and passers-by.

The town offers a full calendar of events and parades, and the town citizens cheerily answer the call. Maifest, Oktoberfest, the Christmas Lighting Ceremony and the Bavarian Ice Fest are premier attractions. Because the town is so small, parades run the route twice. Lederhosen, Bavarian hats, alpen-

horns, meticulously curried draft horses, beer wagons and oompah notes please crowds.

A Bavarian themed miniature golf course, more than 60 specialty stores, bakeries, confectionaries and pretzel shops coax you over their thresholds. Shops entice customers with German wood and glass Christmas ornaments, nutcrackers, Black Forest cuckoo clocks, folk art and fine art.

Leavenworth is home to the Nutcracker Museum, the only one of its kind in the U.S. Its entire inventory consists of nutcrackers, with examples dating back to the 15th century.

Nearby, Icicle Creek, Lake Wenatchee and the Enchantment Lakes area beckon with sightseeing and outdoor recreation. Rock climbers find their way to Peshastin Pinnacles State Park. At the town of Cashmere, a close neighbor to the southeast, visitors can continue their culinary tour, tasting aplets and cotlets at the candy kitchen, before touring Cashmere's Pioneer Village and Museum, with its fine Native American artifact collection. Because this is orchard country, apple stands can pull you aside.

Leavenworth has a designated lot for RV parking at the west end of town; signs in town point the way. There are also six RV parks within 12 miles of Leavenworth, as well as a state park at Lake Wenatchee in addition to numerous Forest Service campgrounds.

### TOPPENISH

In Yakima Valley off U.S. Highway 97, in the Yakama Nation Reservation, this small western agricultural town celebrates its heritage with Old West art. The Toppenish Mural Society, which formed in 1989, now counts 70 painted scenes that record a rich history from 1850 to 1920 and earn Toppenish the nickname "City of Murals."

As long as naked walls remain, the population of murals will grow. The town adds at least one a year. Maintaining the existing murals also keeps paintbrushes wet. On the first Saturday in June, the town celebrates "Mural in a Day," in which a dozen or more muralists get together to bring art to life. The town laughingly invites you to join them at their "festival based on watching paint dry."

The murals, some more than 100 feet long, record Native American and cowboy tradition and are painted by some of the Northwest's top artists. Subjects include roundups,

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rodeo tricks, skirmishes, treaties, blanket-trading, winter encampments and hops harvesting. Each mural is paired with a story.

Visitors from around the world have been attracted to the town's doorstep. Renowned Canadian muralist Dan Sawatzky once estimated that 2 million people see a mural in its lifetime. If that's the case, Toppenish is on the road to success.

Motorhome parking is available in the public parking lot at the intersection of Division and Toppenish and also near the depot. Maps, and a glimpse of the original smaller-scale mural paintings, are available at the Chamber of Commerce, and horseshoe prints on the sidewalks guide visitors to the town's art. Narrated wagon rides offer another way to see the murals, while saving shoe leather.

In town, the Yakama Nation RV Park and Resort serves overnights, while the Yakama Nation Legends Casino entertains gamers. The Nation's Cultural Heritage Center offers a museum and gift shop, while a powwow can offer a firsthand look at the culture. Additional camping options can be found in the town of Yakima, to the

north, or along the Yakima River.

The Yakima River offers fine fly-fishing and a picturesque drive through its narrow canyon between Yakima and Ellensburg. Primitive Bureau of Land Management camps sit along the canyon route (State Route 821). Sightseers in the canyon need to watch out for truckers who follow the river to avoid the interstate grade.

The Yakima Valley is inviting with its vineyards and winery tours. A fine agricultural museum is located south of Yakima, and Fort Simcoe State Historic Park tempts history buffs to journey west from Toppenish.

### GRANGER

In the Yakima Valley a few minutes east of Toppenish, Granger (on State Highway 223 and off I-82) is the town "where dinosaurs roam." This small, largely Latino town quickly stumbled on a successful theme to lure visitors to its doorstep, offering a popular hour-or-so stop for children and grandchildren. Even adults have been known to smile.

"The theme emerged in the 1990s, when 'Jurassic Park' was popular," recalled

Carl Hurlburt, past Chamber of Commerce president and dino enthusiast. Granger's history recorded Mastodon bones quarried from a clay pit in town and from there, a crooked leap led the town leaders to say, "Hey, why not dinosaurs?" The first prehistoric "resident" emerged in 1994, a Brontosaurus. There are now 27 dinosaur statues, including Tyrannosaurus rex, a Triceratops and a Plesiosaurus in the middle of the man-made pond at Hisey (Dino) Park.

The city's public works crew constructs the life-size dinosaurs of heavy steel, wire mesh and concrete. Each June, the town hosts "Dinosaur in a Day," giving a nod to Toppenish for the idea. Hurlburt said, "It's a real hoot, watching the little ones slap on the wet concrete." Once coated, the emerging dinosaur receives an enamel paint job and then it goes on display at a chosen city site. Dinosaurs reside at the City Library, Hisey Park and at entry points to town.

Like Toppenish, Granger lies within Yakima wine country and is close to Prosser, which hosts an annual hot-air balloon rally the fourth full weekend in September. ♦

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Bull elk reside in the rugged, glacier-carved Canadian Rockies in Alberta, Canada. Campground attendants warn RVers to give these huge creatures a wide berth.



A gondola system takes riders to the top of Sulphur Mountain. More than 10 million people have hopped aboard the gondolas since the system began operation in 1959.

# IDYLLIC ICE-BRAKER

Cavell Pond in Jasper National Park is at the base of Mount Edith Cavell, which is the highest in the Athabasca Valley.







After an eight-minute gondola journey to the summit of 7,500-foot Sulphur Mountain, the reward is a breathtaking, 360-degree panoramic view of Bow Valley.

Canoes are for rent in Maligne Canyon in Jasper National Park. Jasper and Banff national parks are linked by the 120-mile-long Icefields Parkway.

## THE GLACIERS AND LAKES, MOUNTAINS AND MORAINES ALONG CANADA'S ICEFIELDS PARKWAY WILL SPUR TRAVELERS TO STOP AND SAVOR 'THE MOST SPECTACULAR JOURNEY IN THE WORLD'

by BERT GILDART



**H**igh in the Canadian Rockies of Alberta, a lovesick creature of the wild raised his head and gave voice to one of the most stirring sounds in nature. It was the call of a bull elk, and here in these rugged mountains his cry was further dramatized by massive sheets of glacial ice. The call of the wild is what had lured my wife, Janie, and me to Banff and Jasper for a month of RVing.

We began our tour of the area in Banff at Tunnel Mountain Campground — an appropriate place to start, as Banff was Canada's first national park. From camp, we took a 30-minute bicycle ride to Cave and Basin National Historic Site, where we learned about the creation of Canada's park system.

In 1883 Frank McCabe and William and Tom McCardell discovered a hole in the ground that spewed steam. That led them to a huge cave and an underground stream with warm, bubbling waters laden with sulfur. The men smelled riches and sought ownership. But the Canadian government envisioned a greater good and, in 1885, it created a public reserve. Two years later, the thermal springs became Banff National Park of Canada.

In 1902 the park was expanded to include Lake Louise and a number of major rivers with intriguing names such as Bow, Red Deer, Kananaskis and Spray. Concurrent with these additions and with the passage of Canada's National Parks Act in 1930, the government created Jasper Forest Reserve, later to become a national park. Today, these two land masses are both UNESCO World Heritage Sites and are linked by the 120-mile-long Icefields Parkway, which has been dubbed "The Most

PHOTOS: BERT GILDART, TRAVEL ALBERTA (GONDOLA)





Above: Picturesque Moraine Lake, a favorite for kayakers, has earned the name “Jewel of the Rockies.” The frigid waters reflect the majestic snowcapped spires. Below: At the top of Sulphur Mountain, Banff Skywalk is an easy self-guided interpretive walkway that leads to a Canadian national historic site and a meteorological station.

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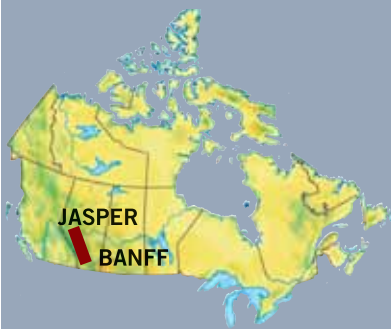
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Spectacular Journey in the World.”

As visitors began descending on Banff in droves, the park was challenged for ways to exhibit what it had created. Banff began by developing a gondola, offering rides that would whisk visitors to the top of Sulphur Mountain, elevation 7,500 feet. Since its opening in 1959, the gondola has provided a “lift” for more than 10 million riders.

To further help with mountaintop views, a boardwalk of several hundred yards opens panoramas of the Bow Valley Parkway and of hundreds of mountain peaks. Views also take in distant glaciers that backdrop Moraine Lake, one of the park’s turquoise-colored pendants.

From the town of Banff, we headed northwest 36 miles to Lake Louise Village. Even though the area often throbs with visitors, we found that the Lake Louise Trailer Campground had plenty of elbowroom. From here we could easily explore nearby Moraine Lake.

Because of the immense popularity of Moraine Lake, we knew that we would have to arrive early in the day if we wanted to beat the crowd. As the sun ascended the peaks and beamed its warm rays down on the lake’s frigid waters, we launched our kayaks and marveled at the reflections of the snowcapped spires mirrored in the beautiful water. So picturesque is Moraine that it’s called “the Jewel of the Rockies,” and the Bank of Canada once depicted it on the back of a \$20 bill.



Cascade Mountain appears to tower over Tunnel Mountain Campground in Banff.

Moraine is not a huge lake, and we allowed our picture-taking to set the pace. In less than an hour we paddled to the head of the mile-long lake. Anticipating the area's wilderness, we had prepared for a tiny adventure and had brought along a backpack stove to boil water for a spot of tea. There, as we sat in the shadow of Fay Glacier, a bull elk voiced his claim to the territory, pumping out his call.

Just as the wildlife engenders feelings of awe (and respect), so do the mountains. After kayaking the lake, we set off on a hike just a few miles from Moraine. We followed a three-mile trail to the overlook at Little Beehive Mountain, where we could peer over the Plain of Six Glaciers, the Fairmont Chateau Lake Louise and the Lake Agnes Teahouse.

Banff National Park was originally established to be a mountain climber's paradise, which is the reason for constructing the Swiss-styled chateau located at the base of Lake Louise and the lovely English teahouse, which we'd passed a mile back down the trail.

You can spend weeks in Banff, but scenery of a different type lies just to the north, and most of it is visible from the Icefields Parkway, an incredible expanse of roadway that links Banff National Park with Jasper National Park. If pressured, you could cover the 120-mile-long drive north in several hours, even in a large motorhome, but you would have scurried by some of the world's most unique and conspicuous mountain-forming features.

Specifically, this is a land of lateral moraines, terminal moraines, arêtes, cirques, tarns and polished rock, and because of this legacy, it is most appropriately designated "Glacier Country." It's a timeless landscape that some call "the reservoir of a continent," and the Icefields Parkway soon reveals why this designation is appropriate.

About midway along the drive you come to the Columbia Icefield, a huge mass of glacial ice. Scientists believe remnants of the five glaciers forming the Columbia Icefield have existed in some form for 3 million years. Here, to celebrate this vast field of ice and snow, Parks Canada has constructed a large visitor center and elaborates on what you see just outside. Inside the center, there's a replica of the Icefield and its five contiguous glaciers, to include the huge Saskatchewan and Athabasca glaciers,

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which at this lofty elevation spill over into the various drainages afforded by the nearby Continental Divide. From this consortium, melt waters ultimately flow to the Atlantic, Pacific and Arctic oceans. Obviously, this mass of ice is huge. In fact, its surface area exceeds that of Rhode Island and in places it measures more than 1,000 feet deep.

In the shadow of such immensity, often visitors are oblivious to the dangers. Parks Canada, in an attempt to keep visitors safe,

has posted numerous signs cautioning hikers to remain behind the barrier ropes paralleling the several trails. "People have lost their lives," proclaim the billboards, explaining that melt water has undercut the ice in unpredictable spots. They're not exaggerating, and from the comforts of our RV I read about a naturalist who had broken through the Athabasca Glacier and been swept away by these turgid waters. Miraculously, he was spit out at the toe, and though banged up



**At Cave and Basin National Historic Site, visitors can learn about the creation of Canada's park system in the 1880s.**

and freezing, he lived to explore again.

That night we returned late to our home away from home. The main Columbia Icefield Campground was closed for the season so we overnighted in the visitor parking lot, as is permitted. A friendly raven had settled on a huge nearby boulder, and every now and then would let us know it was still around.

The next day, we continued our journey north, completing the short drive to Jasper Townsite, quickly settling into nearby Whistlers Campground. Attendants cautioned us, saying if we saw elk to give them a wide berth and use telephoto lenses for photography. The elk were not always around, so we did other things easily accessed by short drives. We soaked in Miette Hotsprings and then we drove to Cavell Glacier, located at the base of Mount Edith Cavell, highest in the Athabasca Valley.

Another day we drove to Medicine Lake. In the fall, this huge, several-mile-long body of water almost empties. Solving the mystery required almost a century, but geologists discovered that a series of underground fissures creates some powerful "medicine" and drains the lake. Of course, the water had to go somewhere and that somewhere includes Maligne Canyon, located several miles from its source.

One evening from a clearing near our campground there came the call of a bull elk. Its call began on a low note but was punctuated by two low guttural notes. A herd of elk had moved near the RVs, and the harem was presided over by a huge bull — plagued, however, by a persistent interloper on the meadow's edge.

We watched as a ranger moved in to flag the elk back toward the forest. Nestled safe in our RV, we knew that if we returned the next evening, more than likely, so too would the elk. Which is why we were there — to hear the call of the wild, see the massive glacier-carved mountains and experience "The Most Spectacular Journey in the World." ♦

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One of the most photographed features in Columbia River Gorge is the two-tiered, 620-foot Multnomah Falls.

# OREGON'S GORGEOUS GORGE

WITH ITS  
MAGNIFICENT  
OVERLOOKS AND  
CASCADING  
WATERFALLS,  
COLUMBIA RIVER  
HIGHWAY IS ONE OF  
AMERICA'S ORIGINAL  
SCENIC BYWAYS

by BOB DIFLEY

**F**rom the pages of history, I discovered that the first modern paved road in the Pacific Northwest was not built in a metropolitan area like Seattle or Portland, but instead through the isolated, rugged Columbia Gorge. The road was the idea of lawyer and entrepreneur Sam Hill (1857–1931), an executive of the Great Northern Railway and head of the Seattle Gas and Electric Company. Hill was known for his lavish Maryhill estate mansion in Goldendale, Wash., (now an art museum) and his re-creation of Stonehenge as a monument to World War I soldiers.

The visionary Hill became known as the “father of good roads” after founding the Washington State Good Roads Association in 1899 to promote an interconnected system of hard-surfaced, all-weather roads to replace the hodgepodge of unsigned, lumpy dirt tracks. Experimenting with different road-building techniques and materials, Hill and Samuel Lancaster, an innovative engineer and landscape architect, built the first paved road in Washington, a 3.6-mile loop around his Maryhill ranch.

With this success under his belt, Hill

PHOTOS: BOB DIFLEY



Visitors can learn about the highway, the gorge, local history and more while taking in the views at Vista House.



It's a 2.1-mile round-trip hike to Latourell Falls, which is a plunge falls of 249 feet.



Some of the spectacular scenery in Columbia Gorge, including waterfalls, are visible from alongside the highway.





**Left top:** An overlook offers a grand view of Bridal Veil Falls, one of many waterfalls that can be found in Columbia River Gorge. **Middle:** In the town of Hood River is the Columbia Gorge Sailpark. The area is called the windsurfing capital of the world. **Bottom:** Travelers can set up their base for visiting the gorge at Eagle Creek Campground, a U.S. Forest Service campground. It does not have hookups, but a few private RV resorts and a few state park campgrounds do.

convinced Oregon lawmakers and local businessmen that building a scenic road through the gorge — where previous travel by auto or wagon to eastern Oregon entailed climbing the old Barlow Trail over Mount Hood — would be a good idea. The Multnomah County Commission hired Lancaster to design the road, and construction began in 1913.

Lancaster's design for the Columbia River Highway would follow a nearly impossible route past steep basalt cliffs, and include the complex engineering feat of constructing grades of no more than 5 percent and curves with no less than a 200-foot turning radius. It took full advantage of the area's natural beauty, following geographical contour lines with minimum encroachment on the environment, and included tunnels, retaining walls and reinforced-concrete bridges with masonry guard rails. When the highway was complete, it was acclaimed as an engineering marvel.

Today, the old highway has two sections: The westernmost part takes travelers past many waterfalls between Crown Point and Ainsworth; the easternmost part journeys through orchard country and the wind-swept plateau between Mosier and The Dalles. In 1998, these drivable segments were designated as an All-American Road, and in 2000 it became the first U.S. scenic highway to be named a *National Historic Landmark*.

### ROLL ON COLUMBIA

The Columbia River Gorge is the only place in the length of the Cascade Range where a sea-level route cuts through to the Pacific Ocean. This geological anomaly means different things to different people, but for RVers, the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area means dazzling drives, poetic waterfalls tumbling into crystalline pools, forest-canopied campgrounds, a river full of salmon waiting to be caught, miles of hiking trails and retracing the gentle curves of the old historic highway.

To explore the Oregon side of the Columbia from Portland, follow Interstate 84 east and you will see the walls of the gorge, some rising 4,000 feet above sea level, closing in ahead of you as the highway follows the sweep of the river. Several exits staggered along the freeway permit access to the scenic spots, some of the waterfalls and campgrounds. However, you will miss most of the waterfalls and all the overlooks if you stick to the freeway. Instead, take Exit 22 (the Corbett Hill Road), and wind up on the side of the gorge to the historic former farm town of Corbett, where you pick up the original highway. Watch for interpretive signs that explain features of the old highway.

Driving the historic road, though narrow, is not a problem for large rigs, but parking is. Even the large lot at Multnomah Falls fills up early in the day, and your chances of finding a parking spot for a large rig with a tow vehicle at the smaller



Mosier Twin Tunnels, which had been filled in, were excavated as part of the restoration of the old highway.

lots along the historic road are limited.

If you plan on spending at least a couple of days in the gorge, which I highly recommend, first locate a campground that fits your requirements. There are U.S. Forest Service campgrounds at Eagle Creek and Wyeth; these do not have hookups. State park campgrounds at Viento, Ainsworth and Memaloose do have hookups, as does Marine Park in Cascades Locks. There are also a few private RV resorts.

After selecting a campground, explore the historic road, waterfalls, vista points and trail heads with a dinghy vehicle to avoid big-rig parking problems. The most popular section of the drivable part of the byway is only 21.6 miles long, ending near Ainsworth State Park at I-84's Exit 35. The road was not built for speed — and it is narrow (be aware of hikers and bicyclists) — so take it easy and enjoy the forest and the scenic views at a leisurely pace.

#### VIEWPOINTS

East of Corbett, Chanticleer is the first scenic viewpoint along the highway. Farther on, the recently renovated Vista House at Crown Point is one of the most recognized sites in the gorge, and from its 733-foot-high perch you have a 30-mile view along the river.

The next section of road illustrates the skill in Lancaster's design as the road snakes down 600 vertical feet in a series of loops to many waterfalls that define the gorge's natural beauty. Lancaster and his colleagues also complemented the landscape with masonry retaining and guard walls, and graceful reinforced-concrete bridges.

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Not one of the falls — Latourell, Sheperds Dell, Bridal Veil, Wahkeena, Multnomah, Triple or Horsetail — should be missed. Some, like Horsetail, are visible from the road, where you can stand along the barrier and feel their cool spray on your face, while others require a short walk along a forest trail to the viewpoint.

The 620-foot two-tiered Multnomah Falls (I-84, Exit 28), the second-highest year-round falls in the nation, is also the most photographed feature in the gorge. Walk the winding path up to Benson Bridge spanning Multnomah Creek for a spectacular view of both tiers. The historic Multnomah Falls Lodge, completed in the 1920s, houses an interpretive center and gift shop, a main lobby dining room, patio dining, lounge with bar and snack bar.

A trail on my top 10 list and one of the most popular in the gorge, Eagle Creek Trail out of Eagle Creek Campground, winds up the canyon high above Eagle Creek, at times no more than a 3-foot-wide ledge chiseled out of the vertical rock face of the cliff.

### THE IMPASSABLE CASCADES

Just as Lewis and Clark's Corps of Discovery had to maneuver past a series of unnavigable rapids, later pioneers and freight were transported past the cascades on train cars pulled by the Oregon Pony, which in 1864 was the first steam engine west of the Mississippi. Locks built in 1896 enabled ships to pass the rapids, replacing the engine that is now on display in Marine Park in Cascade Locks.

After the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers completed the Bonneville Dam and Locks in 1937 a couple of miles downriver, the waters of Lake Bonneville stretched upstream for 48 miles behind the dam, and inundated the rapids. The cascade locks were no longer used.

The sternwheeler Columbia Gorge, an authentic reproduction of the riverboats that steamed the river between Portland and The Dalles at the turn of the century, makes its home port in Marine Park and runs two-hour river excursions three times daily during summer months. A full-hook-up campground overlooks the river. A four-mile bicycle trail follows the old highway alignment through quiet forestland and along I-84 from beneath the Bridge of the Gods in Cascade Locks to Bonneville Dam.

Leave your fishing gear in your rig when you visit the fish hatchery next to Bonneville Dam, where enormous trout, salmon and prehistoric-looking sturgeon swim in outdoor pools, one with an underwater viewing window. Bonneville's gardens alone make this a worthwhile stop, as colorful flowers have been planted throughout the grounds. Drive across the dam and you can watch spawning salmon through the fish-ladder windows at the visitor center.

The headquarters of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area is in the bustling town of Hood River. You can watch "boardheads" at play at the Columbia Gorge Sailpark, called the windsurfing capital of the world, or by following Second Street out to the river.

### RESTORATION CREATES NEW TRAIL

Restoration of part of the old highway, which included excavating the filled-in Mosier Twin Tunnels, created an instantly popular recreational trail for bicyclists and pedestrians called the Historic Columbia River Highway State Trail, now an Oregon State Park.

The wide paved trail from the Hood River trailhead passes through a fir forest with several spectacular Gorge viewpoints for 3½ miles to the tunnels (one mile from the Mark O. Hatfield trailhead in Mosier). Follow the signs for the old highway out of town at the east end of the Hood River Bridge to the interpretive center at the trailhead (\$3 day-use fee).

After you've done the trail, you may want to relax with a cool one, and where else but Hood River's Full Sail Brewing Company, employee-owned "by a mix of beer geeks and boardheads, mountain bikers, surfers and ultimate fanatics," and whose Full Sail Amber won the Gold Medal in the 2005 World Beer Championships. ♦

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**COLUMBIA RIVER GORGE NATIONAL SCENIC AREA**  
(541) 308-1700,  
[www.fs.fed.us/r6/columbia](http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/columbia).  
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There are about 800 backlogged infrastructure projects within the 391-unit National Park Service system. Now, with \$750 million in government stimulus money, work on these projects has begun. The Park Service also stands to benefit from \$170 million earmarked for rehabilitation of national park roads. The help of volunteers such as the one above is welcomed.

**E**very time I walk along the edge of the Grand Canyon, take my kids hiking on the Mist Trail in Yosemite or drive the Going to the Sun Road in Glacier National Park, I feel thankful for the wisdom that our forefathers had in creating the National Park Service, so that these and other incomparably beautiful places could be preserved for everyone to enjoy.

The Park Service is rightly proud of its achievements. "The American system of national parks was the first of its kind in the world, and provides a living model for other nations wishing to establish and manage their own protected areas," the agency proclaims on its Web site.

Unfortunately, Congress and successive administrations have failed to provide the Park Service with the financial resources it needs, not only to protect and preserve these resources, but also to properly maintain the roads, bridges, trails, campgrounds, restrooms, visitor centers, historic buildings and employee housing throughout the 391-unit park system.

As of last summer, in fact, the Park Service had a \$9 billion backlog of infrastructure projects, punctuated by numerous examples of neglect. These include rotting and hazardous boardwalk planks along Grand Portage Trail at Grand Portage National Monument in

## PARK AVENUES

THANKS TO GOVERNMENT STIMULUS FUNDS, REPAIRS, ROADWORK AND OTHER LONG-NEEDED NATIONAL PARK SERVICE PROJECTS ARE UNDER WAY

by JEFF CRIDER





## CAMPGROUND-RELATED RECOVERY ACT PROJECTS

STATE	NATIONAL PARK	STIMULUS PROJECTS
<b>ALASKA</b>		
	Denali	Rehabilitate comfort station and campground (multiple projects).
	Klondike Gold Rush	Rehabilitate trails, campgrounds and cultural sites.
	Wrangell-St. Elias	Rehabilitate and develop Twin Lakes Campground.
<b>ARIZONA</b>		
	Chiricahua	Replace fencing at Bonita Creek Campground.
	Organ Pipe Cactus	Paint campground comfort stations.
<b>CALIFORNIA</b>		
	Joshua Tree	Maintain campsites and picnic area sites.
	Point Reyes	Rehabilitate campground and replace restrooms at Tomales Beach.
<b>COLORADO</b>		
	Great Sand Dunes National Preserve	Rehabilitate wood elements at visitor center, picnic area and campground.
	Mesa Verde	Replace failing water line at Morefield Village and campground (multiple projects). Replace inadequate electrical service in Navajo Loop of Morefield Campground.
	Rocky Mountain	Replace failing sewer lines at campground and headquarters (multiple projects). Resurface roads in Glacier Basin Campground and Timber Creek Campground.
<b>FLORIDA</b>		
	Everglades	Install solar water heaters in campgrounds.
<b>IDAHO</b>		
	Craters of the Moon	Replace path to campground, currently on road shoulder, with a safe trail to meet ADA requirements.
<b>NEW MEXICO</b>		
	Bandelier	Rehabilitate Juniper Campground.
<b>NORTH CAROLINA</b>		
	Cape Hatteras	Replace deteriorating and unsafe campground picnic tables and grills at four campgrounds.
	Great Smoky Mountains	Provide accessibility to park comfort stations and picnic campsites.
<b>OKLAHOMA</b>		
	Chickasaw	Repair trails at Buckhorn Campground to improve accessibility.
<b>TENNESSEE</b>		
	Great Smoky Mountains	Rehabilitate roads at Cosby Campground.
<b>WASHINGTON</b>		
	Mount Rainier	Repair Ipsut Creek Campground.
	Olympic	Replace the aging sewer system at the Hoh Rain Forest, which serves the needs of the campground, picnic area and visitor center. Rehabilitate the Boulder Creek trail and former automobile campground, by converting two miles of abandoned road to a trail, removing failing culverts and restoring the Boulder Creek Campground.
<b>WYOMING</b>		
	Bighorn Canyon	Increase alternative energy capacities at Trail Creek Campground (multiple projects).

Minnesota; failing sewer lines at Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado; failing septic systems in Cuyahoga Valley National Park in Ohio; leaking underground fuel storage tanks at Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming; and failing underground electrical systems at Ozark National Scenic Riverways National Park in Missouri.

Even the National Mall in Washington, D.C. — which annually draws more visitors than Yosemite, Yellowstone and the Grand Canyon combined and is within eyeshot of members of Congress — has suffered years of neglect. The reflecting pool in front of the Lincoln Memorial has become so polluted that it killed dozens of ducks last year, while the sea wall that protects the Jefferson Memorial is sinking into the Tidal Basin.

The good news is that repair work is now beginning on these and nearly 800 other backlogged infrastructure projects throughout the Park Service system, thanks to a \$750 million infusion of stimulus funding approved by Congress earlier this year. The Park Service also benefits from \$170 million of stimulus money that the Federal Highway Administration received to rehabilitate national park roads.

“A good portion of the stimulus funding will go toward transportation improvement projects, such as resurfacing roads, parking areas and scenic overlooks,” said Laura Loomis, deputy vice president of government affairs for the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), adding that these improvements will directly affect the RVer’s experience.

The Park Service has already resurfaced 11 miles of road from the South Entrance of Yellowstone National Park to the Lewis River Bridge. Other stimulus projects include reconstruction of historic stone guard walls and removal of hazardous trees and encroaching vegetation along the Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina and Virginia. Similar work will be performed along the historic Skyline Drive in Shenandoah National Park, while roadways in the Grand Canyon, Acadia National Park in Maine and Death Valley National Park in California will be among those receiving preservation treatment.

Stimulus funds will also be used to rehabilitate numerous historic buildings, visitor facilities, administrative, maintenance and employee housing facilities — to correct safety hazards, bring them into

## JOIN THE SERVICE

**Do you have a skill that you** could use to help improve our national parks? Numerous volunteer opportunities at the national parks can be found online at [www.nps.gov/volunteer](http://www.nps.gov/volunteer). Additional volunteer opportunities involving federal land management agencies, such as the Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service, can be found by checking [www.volunteer.gov/gov](http://www.volunteer.gov/gov).

And more opportunities could be on the horizon.

Rep. Raul Grijalva (D-Ariz.), chairman of the House Committee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, has introduced legislation this year to expand volunteer programs involving national parks, forests, wildlife refuges, historic sites and other public and tribal lands.

The bill, the Public Land Service Corps Act of 2009, is designed to train a new generation of public land managers and enthusiasts, but it also specifically targets older workers who may be interested in public service opportunities.

The bill would authorize volunteers to participate in numerous projects, from backlog maintenance projects involving trails, campgrounds, roads and buildings to assisting with historical and cultural research and curatorial work as well as assisting scientists in field research and helping to protect and restore watersheds, forests and other sensitive habitats.

The bill was working its way through congressional committees at the time of this writing. — J.C.

ADA compliance or to equip them with energy-efficient doors and windows and heating and cooling systems. Stimulus funds will also be used to rehabilitate buildings damaged by floods, fires, hurricanes, ice storms and other natural phenomena.

At Dinosaur National Monument, which straddles Colorado and Utah, stimulus funds will be used to tear down and rehabilitate several sections of the Quarry

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Visitor Center, which was condemned in 2006 after shifting soils warped its door frames, halls and doors, while creating serious safety hazards. Salvageable sections of the visitor center, including an exhibit hall that provides access to 1,500 dinosaur fossils, will be rehabilitated, while the remainder of the building will be demolished, with visitor center functions relocated to a new building about half a mile away that is expected to open by summer 2011.

Stimulus funds will also be used for various green initiatives, such as equipping numerous Park Service buildings with solar panels so that they can produce their own electricity. Several photovoltaic power systems are scheduled to be installed at facilities across the country, from Santa Monica Mountains National Park to Yosemite, Sequoia and Kings Canyon, while solar water heating systems will be installed in Everglades National Park in Florida. A wind turbine and associated battery system will also be installed at Gates of the Arctic National Park in Alaska.

The Park Service's fleet of alternative



A crew works on a trail in Grand Canyon National Park.

energy vehicles will also get a boost, with several new buses slated for Yosemite, the Grand Canyon, Mesa Verde National Park in Colorado and Cape Cod National Seashore in Massachusetts.

Some Park Service campgrounds are also receiving upgrades as a result of stimulus funds, including the campground at Denali National Park in Alaska, which has already received new picnic tables, barbecue grills and trash receptacles in addition to various cosmetic improvements to its restrooms. Cosby Campground at Great Smoky

Mountains National Park was also slated for repaving this fall, while restroom improvements were targeted for the Smokemont, Elkmont and Cades Cove Campgrounds. Money was also being allocated for habitat restoration and hiking trail maintenance projects.

Park Service spokesman Jeffrey Olson told *MotorHome* that several criteria were used in selecting projects for stimulus funding. "The projects had to be priorities for the National Park Service. They had to be far enough along in design, engineering and environmental permitting so that we could obligate project funding by the end of September 2010 so we could get as many people to work as soon as possible to positively impact local economies. And they had to be projects that would add lasting value to national parks for taxpayers," he said.

But while stimulus funds are in the pipeline for nearly 800 critical infrastructure projects, the question now is what Congress will do about the other sources of funding the Park Service receives for road improvements.

The national parks are slated to receive about \$240 million in funding for road improvements each year from federal gasoline taxes. Trouble is, the Park Service needs nearly three times that much money to keep its roads in good shape.

"The Park Service wants the road and bridge improvement funding increased from \$240 million to \$680 million per year," said Loomis of the National Parks Conservation Association. But that's not likely to happen anytime soon.

"In this economy," Loomis said, "nobody wants to talk about increasing the gas tax or creating new taxes." She added that the Obama administration has asked Congress to approve an 18-month extension of the gas tax and to delay reauthorization of the Highway Trust Fund for another year. ♦

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# STICKY SITUATION



**C**leaning dried bugs off a vehicle is never fun, but with something as big as a motorhome it can be a real bother. If you drive your coach in bug-infested areas, the resulting splatter could mean a wash job that takes an extra 20 to 30 minutes. These tips and products should help to lessen the burden.

As we researched the marketplace and online Internet forums for user favorites, we found everything from typical tar and bug removers for cars to home brew remedies. Some of them made sense to us, while others seemed somewhat unconventional. For example, one popular remedy is to use dryer sheets. Yes, clothes dryer sheets such as Bounce from your laundry room. In fact, we found an entire Web site devoted to alternate uses for Bounce dryer

**WE TESTED BUG REMOVERS TO SEE WHICH ONES PERFORM BEST AT WIPING OUT PESKY SPLATTERS**

by E. DON SMITH



sheets. Many of those uses are helpful for RV owners, such as cleaning showers, repelling mice and preventing odors in drawers. Another common suggestion was to use Mr. Clean Magic Erasers. While not specifically designed for this purpose, we heard many successful reports of their use so we tried them too.

When rounding up the commercially available products for bug removal we turned to the automotive market and sourced many of them from [www.auto-geek.net](http://www.auto-geek.net). Not only does it carry a wide range of products, it also has an online tutorial that gives tips for easy bug removal. Some common products came from other sources such as auto parts stores, department stores and Camping World.

In addition to using good chemistry to break down the bug-to-paint bond, applying a good sponge or brush to the surface can also make a difference. We tested foam, microfiber and soft brushes as well as sponges designed specifically for bug removal. As expected, we found that the tougher the bugs' remains, the more aggressive the sponge or brush needed to be. In general we prefer the bug sponges and the soft bristle brushes such as a boar's hair brush. Both of these prevent scratching and still do a good job of increasing the efficiency of most of the bug removers.

For this article we tested 13 different bug removers as well as the Mr. Clean Eraser and Bounce dryer sheets. Plus we used one product that claims to keep bug splatter from sticking after application. This product is called Rejex, and we tested it along with an automotive product from Wolfgang just to see if Rejex is better than a high-end car paint sealant.

Lovebugs are often regarded as the most problematic because there are more of them, and they tend to be more difficult to remove. Our testing was not conducted during lovebug season so we were not able to evaluate any of these products against them, but we did test all of these products on a variety of motorhomes, cars and trucks.

Also, where noted, some products were labeled as not compatible with California Proposition 65. The proposition, in effect since 1986, aims to promote clean drinking water and to keep toxic substances that cause cancer and birth defects out of consumer products.



**CAMCO FULL-TIMER'S CHOICE BLACK STREAK REMOVER**

**DISPENSER TYPE:** PUMP  
**SIZE:** 32 OUNCES  
**COST:** \$7.99

*Notes:* Alkali liquid, phosphate free. Worked well but rinse quickly to avoid permanent streaks. Works great on black streaks too but is not California Proposition 65 compatible.



**DURAGLOSS 471 BUG REMOVER**

**DISPENSER TYPE:** PUMP  
**SIZE:** 22 OUNCES  
**COST:** \$6.99

*Notes:* Worked great on wet surface after 1–2 minute soak time. Claims not to remove wax, which is a major plus. One of our favorites.



**GUNK TAR-N-BUG REMOVER**

**DISPENSER TYPE:** AEROSOL  
**SIZE:** 12 OUNCES  
**COST:** \$2.48

*Notes:* Strong odor, contains petroleum distillates and is not California Proposition 65 compliant. Clear coat safe but does remove wax. Good spray pattern but did not clean as well as others tested. Rinse well.



**LIFTER-1 BUG AND TAR REMOVER**

**DISPENSER TYPE:** AEROSOL  
**SIZE:** 16 OUNCES  
**COST:** \$6.99

*Notes:* Citrus-based material that is clear coat safe but does remove wax. Effectiveness was fair but not as good as other products tested. Rinse well.



**MEGUIAR'S GOLD CLASS BUG AND TAR REMOVER**

**DISPENSER TYPE:** PUMP (THICK, CREAMY LOTION)  
**SIZE:** 16 OUNCES  
**COST:** \$7.99

*Notes:* Unlike the other products that are used on wet surfaces or require rinsing afterward, this one is applied and removed dry. This allows you to use it in campgrounds that don't allow wash water to be used. It worked well but still not a top performer, mainly because of difficulty of removing the spray without streaking. But the convenience of a dry application may be worth it in some cases. Meguiar's suggests waxing after use.



**POORBOY'S WORLD BUG SQUASH**

**DISPENSER TYPE:** LIQUID  
**SIZE:** 16 OUNCES  
**COST:** \$10.99

*Notes:* This product is a pre-wash and can be diluted or used as is. We first tried it diluted 3–1, allowed it to stand 30–60 seconds and it worked fairly well, but when we used it at 100 percent strength as a spray it devoured bugs after a brief soaking. Does not remove wax when used as directed but does not include a spray nozzle.



**RAIN-X BUG AND TAR PRE-WASH GEL**

**DISPENSER TYPE:** PUMP  
**SIZE:** 23 OUNCES  
**COST:** \$5.99

*Notes:* Contains petroleum distillates, clear coat safe. The thick gel clings well to the surface but only does a fair job of removing bugs. The chemistry suggests that wax removal is likely.



**STONER BUG AND TARMINATOR**  
**DISPENSER TYPE:**

AEROSOL  
**SIZE:** 14 OUNCES  
**COST:** \$5.99

**Notes:** Contains petroleum distillates. Clear coat safe but removes wax or silicone on surface so re-waxing is required. Works very well at removing bugs and other road grime. Rinse completely before and after application.



**STONER NATURAL XENIT CLEANER AND REMOVER**  
**DISPENSER TYPE:**

AEROSOL  
**SIZE:** 10 OUNCES  
**COST:** \$5.99

**Notes:** Contains citrus distillates and isopropyl alcohol. This product is not labeled specifically as a bug remover but was recommended by [www.autogeek.net](http://www.autogeek.net). It can damage some plastics, so be careful and test a small area first and rinse well. This was one of the most effective products tested at removing bugs and other road grime but it is also expensive at \$5.99 for 10 ounces. However, it can also clean other RV interior surfaces, which is a plus. Because of the chemistry, it removes wax.



**THETFORD ULTRAFOAM RV BLACK STREAK AND BUG REMOVER**  
**DISPENSER TYPE:**

PUMP  
**SIZE:** 32 OUNCES  
**COST:** \$10.99

**Notes:** Biodegradable, non-toxic and nonflammable. This product has the best sprayer tip of the group because it foams the liquid onto the surface, allowing it to cling and begin working faster. Simply spray on dry surface and wipe off or scrub if needed and then

rinse with water. It has a fresh, clean smell and works very well. This is one of our favorites in terms of performance, and it is environmentally friendly too.



**TURTLE WAX BUG AND TAR REMOVER**  
**DISPENSER TYPE:**

PUMP  
**SIZE:** 16 OUNCES  
**COST:** \$5.99

**Notes:** This product is applied dry after washing the vehicle but we found it slightly easier to use than the Meguiar's formula, with less streaking on removal. Turtle also claims that it cleans and protects, therefore no additional waxing. Contains petroleum distillates. This was our favorite dry application product, but be careful or overspray can get into areas you cannot get to easily. An alternate application method is to spray onto a cloth or sponge and wipe on the surface.



**TURTLE WAX BUG AND TAR (AND TREE SAP) REMOVER**  
**DISPENSER TYPE:**

LIQUID-CREAM  
**SIZE:** 16 OUNCES  
**COST:** \$5.99

**Notes:** Contains petroleum distillates. This thick cream is poured onto a cloth and then polished on the surface, and wiped clean with another cloth. The pour-on application makes it difficult to dispense evenly, but it does a good job of removing bugs. Do not use on a hot surface or in the sun. Chemistry suggests that wax is removed.



**ZEPHYR PRO 50 ELIMINATOR**  
**DISPENSER TYPE:**

SPRAY  
**SIZE:** 16 OUNCES  
**COST:** \$11.61

**Notes:** This product is labeled as a noncorrosive, non-abrasive descaler that can also be used on aluminum and fiberglass as well as bumpers. It has a clean smell and did a good job of removing bugs and other road grime. It can also be used in your shower or on your aluminum wheels.

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[www.thetford.com](http://www.thetford.com).

**TURTLE WAX**  
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[www.turtlex.com](http://www.turtlex.com).

**ZEPHYR**  
(800) 763-8883,  
[www.zephyrpro40.com](http://www.zephyrpro40.com).





**OTHER PRODUCTS**

**Mr. Clean Magic Erasers** were also in our grab bag of products and although they have a place in the motorhome, they were not our favorite bug removal method. The foam sponge is rather fragile and breaks apart easily while scrubbing. This requires several to be used, making it an expensive method, but they do a great job on black streaks and other stains on hard surfaces.

As mentioned earlier, we tried using

the **Bounce** dryer sheets, and they do a good job of removing bugs.

One of our goals in this article was to formulate a cocktail of products that really made a difference and by the end of our testing we came up with a pretty good combination of products and techniques to help you with this arduous task.

Successful bug removal includes good surface preparation upfront based on our tests. To confirm this we tried the **Rejex** ([www.corrosionx.com](http://www.corrosionx.com)) product, which claims to ease bug removal. Rejex is a high-gloss sealant that goes on like a typical car polish and requires some time for curing to develop its slick finish. The good news is that it works. We tried it on half of a vehicle and later while cleaning we noted the side treated with Rejex was substantially easier to clean. We also tried Wolfgang car sealant and it, too, seemed to ease bug removal. But because it is more expensive than Rejex (12 ounces for \$14.95), why bother.

Our suggestion is to treat the front of your motorhome with Rejex first, then use one of the bug products previously

mentioned that is specifically labeled as not removing wax (such as Duragloss 471, Turtle Wax Bug and Tar Remover spray or Poorboy's Bug Squash). It is also very important to use these products in the shade and in cooler temperatures. This allows you to leave the product on long enough for the chemistry to start working and prevents extra effort. Follow the manufacturer's suggestions closely to prevent problems with drying or improper rinsing. Then for an extra boost use Bounce dryer sheets as the wiping sponge and watch as the bugs easily come off the surface like never before.

As you will see, some of the products that worked well are not labeled as wax safe though they were very effective in our tests. If you choose to use one of them just remember that you may need to apply another coat of Rejex or other paint sealant afterward to ensure the process is not difficult next time.

Stick to these methods and see if you don't agree that removing bugs from the front of your coach doesn't have to be a dreaded chore anymore. ♦

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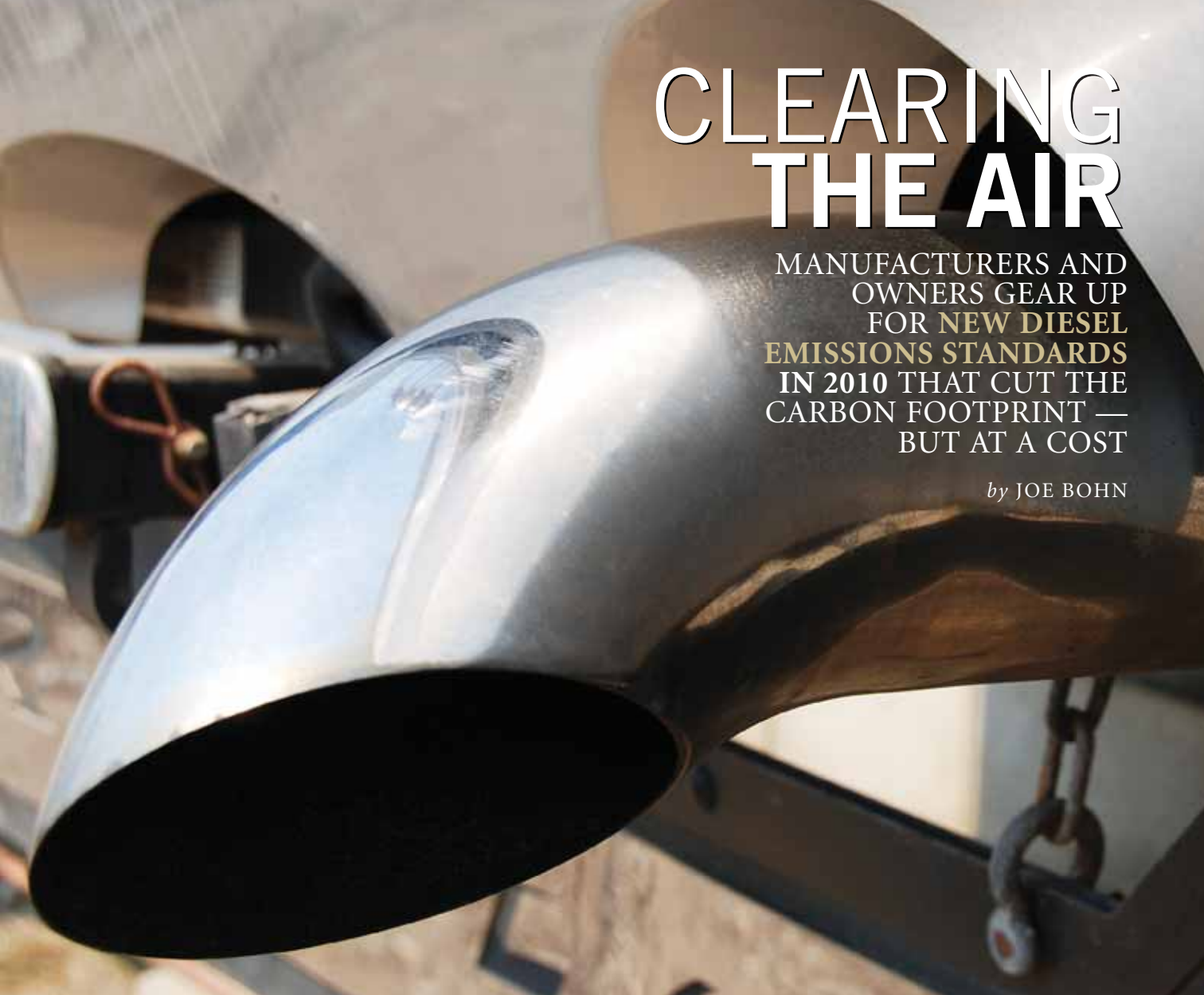


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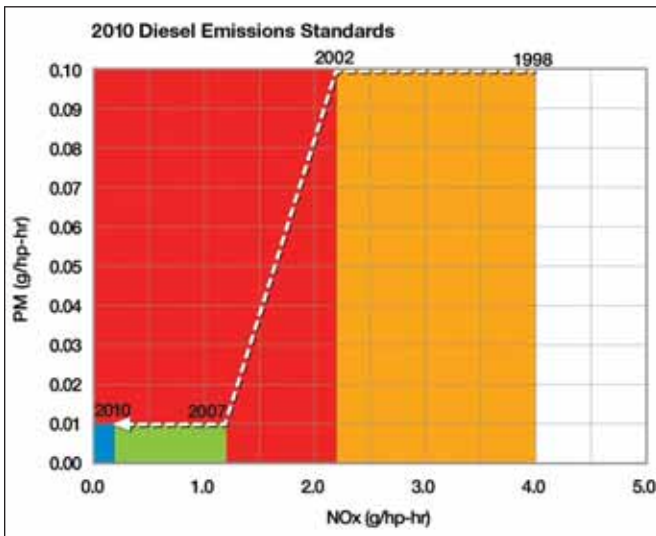
# CLEARING THE AIR

MANUFACTURERS AND OWNERS GEAR UP FOR **NEW DIESEL EMISSIONS STANDARDS** IN 2010 THAT CUT THE CARBON FOOTPRINT — BUT AT A COST

by JOE BOHN



PHOTOS: GARY BOHINC (LEAD); CHARTS USED WITH PERMISSION OF CUMMINS INC.



EPA Diesel Emissions Standards

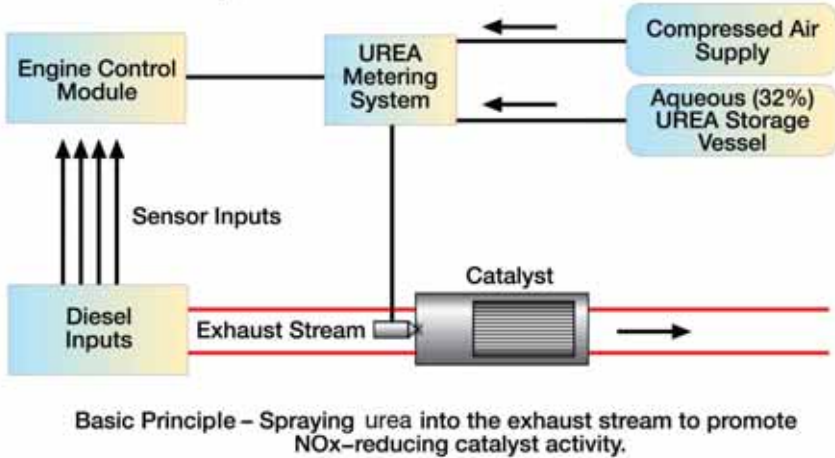
**N**ew 2010 diesel emissions standards, going into effect in January, will drive motorhome emissions to near zero. In some instances, the exhaust coming from the new diesel units may be almost cleaner than the air they take in.

But the benefit is not without its costs. Class A diesel retail chassis prices, for example, will increase by about \$10,000 to \$15,000, depending on the model. And, depending on the after-treatment technology, customers will also have to get used to periodically filling a new diesel exhaust fluid tank, in addition to their regular fuel tank.

Overall, engine/chassis manufacturers have taken two divergent approaches to meeting the 2010 U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and California Air Resources Board (CARB) standards for on-highway diesel engines.



### Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR)

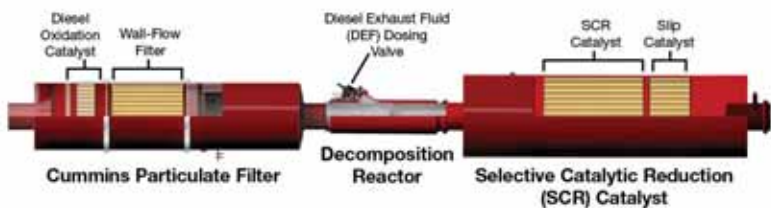


Cummins ISB 6.7 engine for EPA 2010



Cummins After-Treatment System

### Cummins After-Treatment System



Diesel chassis/engine manufacturers, with the exception of Navistar and its Workhorse Custom Chassis and Monaco Coach affiliates, have opted to use Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) technology, with its significant after-treatment equipment, to meet the standards. That includes Freightliner Custom Chassis Corp., Cummins Engine and Spartan Chassis. SCR treats NOx emissions with a non-hazardous diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) — a chemical

called urea — to reduce the NOx into nitrogen and water as it passes through the after-treatment catalyst system.

Navistar, in what it calls a less “customer-dependent” solution, is opting to use so-called Advanced EGR (exhaust gas recirculation) technology to meet the standards. Officials cite “proven” technologies such as advanced fuel injection, air management, electronic controls and proprietary combustion technology.

### SCR BENEFITS AND COSTS

SCR is a readily available, proven technology, already in wide use in European diesel engine cars and more than 200,000 European trucks. It's also had 25 million miles of testing in North America, according to Martin Daum, president and CEO, Daimler Trucks North America. That made it more attractive than trying to create a new system for the U.S.

The technology also enables more power, better economy and reduced maintenance on the Freightliner Class A chassis, for example. Freightliner will offer the Cummins 8.3-L ISC, 6.7-L ISB, 8.9-L ISL, 11.9- and 15-L ISX engines in its Class A chassis in 2010. The ISB chassis will get more peak horsepower in a new 200 to 360-HP range; the ISC, a higher 330 to 380-HP range; and the ISL will offer a 370 to 450-HP range, according to Jonathan Randall, Freightliner Custom Chassis sales and marketing director. Economy improvements range up to 5 percent; and, because the engines burn cleaner, they'll require fewer oil changes, reducing maintenance costs.

Sprinter vans also get a new peak 185-HP rating, 30-HP more than currently, and 325 LB-FT of torque, 45 LB-FT more, with their 3.0-L V-6. Fuel economy remains the same, though with the increased torque, customers could order a lower axle ratio to increase on-highway economy. Recommended oil change intervals continue to be 10,000 miles for at least the first year, though the company does plan to lengthen them at a future time, said Walther Bloch, Sprinter engineering support manager for the U.S. and Canada.

Given that a diesel-pusher like an ISB-equipped coach normally retails for about \$175,000 to \$225,000 and ISC models for about \$225,000 to \$250,000, company officials don't think the price increases will have much of an impact on sales.

Randall said, “Diesels still outpace gas models from an aspiration standpoint. And that won't change going forward.”

Sprinter uses the same principle for reducing emissions — for example, the urea tank — but its emissions system is different than that of the Class A's. Daimler hasn't yet finalized 2010 pricing on Sprinters, but increases are not expected to be anywhere near those of the larger Class A's.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 60

PHOTOS AND CHARTS: USED WITH PERMISSION OF CUMMINS INC.

# COACH CARE

PROPER STORAGE, OPERATION AND MAINTENANCE  
WILL **EXTEND THE LIFE OF YOUR MOTORHOME**

by KEN FREUND



To minimize the effects of oxidation, humidity, salty ocean air and other weathering, clean and wax your motorhome on a regular basis. Also, check the roof frequently for evidence of damage.

**A**fter a house, a new motorhome is probably the largest investment most of us will ever make, and it can take many years to pay off. But the good news is the lifetime of a coach is determined mainly by how it is operated, stored and maintained — all things you can control.

When operating your motorhome, it's important to drive defensively and keep in mind the weight and dimensions of the coach. Always leave more room ahead for reaction time and stopping distance. Place a placard on your dash with the overall height of your coach and be wary of overhead obstructions. When turning, watch out for tail swing from long rear overhangs, especially when pulling

out of campgrounds and fuel stations. If you are towing a dinghy or trailer, keep the additional length, weight and stopping distance in mind. Be especially careful when backing; use a backup monitor and when getting through tight spots it's worth having someone outside the rig to help.

Over time, the effects of wear and tear and weathering can deteriorate a motorhome until it's unsafe or unable to be driven. When it gets to this stage it's often overwhelming and expensive to repair — and perhaps no longer worth fixing. But it doesn't have to be that way. By expending a little money and extra effort now, you can make your coach last longer, which is far less expensive than buying a new one and letting it degrade until it is almost worthless.





When not in use, protect the coach in a structure or with an RV cover.



Shield the air conditioner with a cover. Also, leave a screened vent cracked open.



Reflective window shades protect the inside of the rig from heat and sun.



Check your tires' sidewalls for the "DOT" date code.



When cracks are visible on a tire, it's time for a replacement.



Sunguard Tire-Savers can minimize damage to tires from ultraviolet rays.

**COACH STORAGE**

Incorrect storage is one of the main causes of damage. Typically, coaches are stored outdoors and exposed to the unrelenting elements of nature — including harsh sunlight with its damaging ultraviolet rays, precipitation, freezing, humidity, salty ocean air and oxidation — in addition to rodents, insects and other critters.

Since most motorhomes sit idle more than they are used, it's important to protect the exterior during storage. If you can't keep your coach inside a building, obtain a quality RV cover for it, and use it every chance you get. Keep the outside clean and waxed and inspect the roof frequently for damage, signs of leaks around vents and air conditioners, and repair immediately. It really does pay to deal with damage before it causes further problems.

When parked for extended periods, park so the tires are on something solid that keeps them out of standing water and shield them with tire covers for added protection from the sun's ultraviolet rays.

During storage there needs to be some ventilation to prevent mold or mildew from forming, especially in damp climates. Leave a roof vent (that has a built-in screen) cracked open slightly. If the coach is covered you may need a dehumidifier. Protect your dash and interior from the sun's harsh rays by using reflective window coverings

when the coach is parked. Close off openings that rodents and insects can use to gain entry with metal screening and mesh.

Refrigerators should be shut off and thoroughly cleaned out when not in use, with the door(s) propped open for ventilation to prevent mold from forming. LP-gas valves should be closed for safety. Water heaters should be drained and flushed, and the sacrificial anode (if equipped) replaced if needed. Holding tanks should be flushed out and fresh chemicals added. Microbes can grow in water tanks and systems during storage and plumbing can burst in freezing temperatures. Therefore, the system should be drained and either blown out or antifreeze designed for potable water systems should be introduced. Follow the storage instructions that come with your coach, or the "RV Repair & Maintenance Manual" by Bob Livingston.

**CHASSIS CARE**

Be sure to check the service schedule and note the intervals for fluid changes. It's best to change the oil just before storage so the oil won't leave acid and sludge in the engine. Many owners postpone oil changes, and others who change the oil and filter themselves may overlook other service items such as air filters and fuel filters, on the factory-recommended list. AC generators should also be serviced, with regular

oil and filter changes, tuneups, fuel and air filter maintenance according to the owner's manual. Missed maintenance can lead to other problems, including breakdowns and warranty denial if damage occurs and you can't prove necessary services were done on time.

Transmissions need to have the level checked and the fluid and filter changed according to the maintenance schedule. The power steering fluid and differential oil should also be changed every five years or so. We recommend inspecting (and repacking and adjusting as needed) serviceable-type wheel bearings at least once a year. Wheel bearings are seldom checked until they fail, and a failure can cause serious damage or even an accident. High-quality synthetic lubricants can reduce wear significantly and are recommended by many experts. They are available for engines, transmissions, drive axles, wheel bearings, suspension and U-joints.

Batteries are often in difficult-to-reach locations — and out of sight is often out of mind until there's no power. Make sure the terminals are clean and snug. Batteries with removable caps need regular service to replenish electrolyte with distilled water as needed. Batteries must have their charge and electrolyte levels maintained during storage or they will lose capacity or be ruined. Unless your coach has a converter



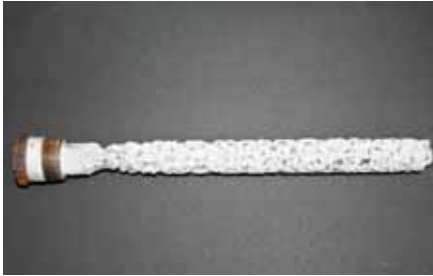
Products such as Sun Block prevent harmful sun and ozone damage to tires.



Clean battery terminals and make sure they are snug.



Generators should get regular oil and filter changes as well as tuneups.



The anode rod is replaced when 25 percent of material remains. This one is OK.



Drain and flush the water heater using a water hose attachment.



Flushing brake fluid regularly will result in long life and reliability of components.

that has multistage battery charging with a “float” mode, disconnect the batteries and use a maintenance charger on them.

### BRAKES

Brake fluid absorbs moisture from the air. This corrodes critical internal components, including expensive calipers, master and wheel cylinders, and ABS pumps and valves (if equipped) and lowers the fluid’s boiling point, which can cause complete brake failure. Brake fluid flushing may not be listed on the maintenance schedule, but changing it regularly is essential for the long life and reliability of hydraulic brake components. Brake fluid should typically be changed and the system bled about every two years. Be sure to use fresh fluid of the DOT specification (DOT 3 or 4) recommended by the manufacturer.

All coaches should have regular brake inspections, including checking for worn linings, stuck calipers, sliders and leaks. Special grease is available for sliding parts; this must be used sparingly so it won’t get on friction surfaces. Larger coaches with air brakes require additional maintenance, including checking the compressor, tank drain, air drier, slack adjusters and spring brake units.

Suspension parts and U-joints with grease fittings need to be lubricated regularly. Shock absorbers degrade slowly, so most drivers don’t notice, but worn-out shocks

can damage other chassis components.

### VALVE ADJUSTMENTS

Virtually all gasoline-powered motorhomes don’t require valve adjustments, but diesels generally do need this service. Intervals vary widely, so check the maintenance schedule. Failure to perform valve adjustments can result in everything from excess noise and reduced performance to engine failure.

### COOLANT

Ethylene-glycol coolant degrades with time even if the engine isn’t being used. After several years, the additives deteriorate and become more acidic, causing rust and corrosion. Dissimilar-metal electrolysis can also occur, eroding metals in the engine and cooling system. All this can lead to overheating, water pump failures and expensive repairs. Follow the manufacturer’s drain, flush and coolant replacement intervals. Special long-life coolants may be changed less often, if approved by the manufacturer. Diesels may require special silicate-free coolants; again, follow the manufacturer’s specifications.

### TIRES

Motorhomes are demanding of their tires, which are often very close to maximum load ratings. Carry a quality air-pressure gauge that can access inner duals. Before each day’s drive check the tires when

they are still cold, and inflate them to the recommended pressure in the owner’s manual or a load/inflation table.

Old, worn-out or improperly inflated tires are dangerous and can cause expensive damage when they fail and, at worst, a serious accident. The tires on many motorhomes that don’t get driven much still deteriorate over time, even though the tread may still look good. Aging factors include sunlight and ozone concentrations, so when visible cracks start to appear in the sidewalls, it’s time for replacement.

Check the sidewalls for a date code that begins with “DOT.” Tires made since 2000 have a four-digit date code following the DOT marking. Of the last four numbers, the first pair of digits indicates the week (1 through 52), and the final two indicate the last two digits of the year. For example, a DOT number ending in 0509 means the tire was produced the fifth week of 2009. Many experts consider the life of a tire to be seven years.

### PARTING THOUGHTS

Take care of your coach and it will take care of you. Make lists of items that need service or repair, and keep a logbook with cost, date and mileage, along with a folder for parts and repair receipts. Not only will this ensure it serves you well, it will also be a great help if you sell your coach. As the saying goes, “You can pay me now or pay me later.” ♦



# DIPLOMAT 42SKQ

MONACO'S 42-FOOT CLASS A COACH IS CLASSY WITHOUT THE CLUTTER



**L**uxury motorhomes at the “midrange” price point provide all of the features and amenities a buyer could want in a more affordable package. The 2010 Monaco Diplomat 42SKQ adds extra features and a tag-axle-equipped 42-foot floorplan to the Diplomat line, which occupies a midrange price point in the Monaco hierarchy.

Monaco builds the Diplomat on its Roadmaster RR10R chassis with a 43,000-pound gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR). It's fitted with a Cummins ISL 425-HP engine backed by an Allison 3000MH six-speed automatic and cranks out enough power to handily scoot the coach along and handle the motorhome's factory-rated 10,000-pound potential towed load. A brace of 10 air bags makes up the rig's Cushion Air Glide suspension system, and automatic traction control plus anti-lock brakes are standard features.

On the outside the Diplomat features smooth fiberglass skin; trim, non-intrusive component details; well-applied brightwork; and a multi-hued color scheme that decorates the coach with light and dark color regions should meet any buyer's cosmetic needs.

Large side-opening storage compartment doors with easy-lift handles make cargo storage chores easier. Polyethylene-fabricated storage compartments are tough and weather-resistant.

Inside, Monaco designers have assembled a pleasing array of colors and textures. From the light tile flooring with darker accent squares to the rich-looking Newport Cherry woodwork with tasteful and subdued hardware, the interior presents class without clutter. We especially liked the wood-and-fabric valances that blend well with the rest of the interior trim.

Considering the motorhome's complexity, the driver's



area is amazingly clean, with just enough controls and monitors to handle the coach functions, minus any extra distractions. It looks like a fun place to spend travel time.

This new 42-foot floorplan includes four slideout rooms. Up front, the opposing large slides house the galley and a sofa-bed curbside, and a dinette (a booth is optional) and a larger sofa bed streetside. A streetside aisle leads past the enclosed bath — an effect reminiscent of a railroad passenger car hallway — to the master bedroom out back, with the bed and dresser unit in opposing slideouts.

The forward kitchen setup is more commonly seen these days, and it's an arrangement that works like an entry hall in a house where guests come in, then move back to the living room area.

Color-coordinated solid-surface countertops and back-splash tile create classy visual harmony in the kitchen. From the residential-style faucet to the large dual-door 12-cubic-foot refrigerator, the kitchen components are well-selected for good looks and real-world use.

Opposing sofas make good use of the space and encourage face-to-face interaction, and there are several seated spots with convenient viewing of the 37-inch flat-screen TV that's mounted in the living area's aft divider wall. An optional HD cinema package with surround sound (\$1,393) rounds out the entertainment center.

The self-contained bath is well-designed but essentially a one-person work space. The large corner shower with curved





## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>CHASSIS:</b> ROADMASTER RR10R	<b>FRESHWATER CAP:</b> 100 GAL
<b>ENGINE:</b> CUMMINS ISL 425 HP	<b>BLACK-WATER CAP:</b> 40 GAL
<b>FUEL:</b> 100 GAL	<b>GRAY-WATER CAP:</b> 62 GAL
<b>GVWR:</b> 43,000 LBS	<b>LP-GAS CAP:</b> 39 GAL
<b>LENGTH:</b> 43' 3"	<b>BASE MSRP:</b> \$277,032
<b>WIDTH:</b> 8' 4½"	<b>MSRP AS REVIEWED:</b>
<b>HEIGHT:</b> 12' 7"	\$293,244, NEARLY
<b>WHEELBASE:</b> 261"	FULLY OPTIONED

MONACO RV LLC, (574) 266-1111,  
[WWW.MONACO-ONLINE.COM](http://WWW.MONACO-ONLINE.COM).

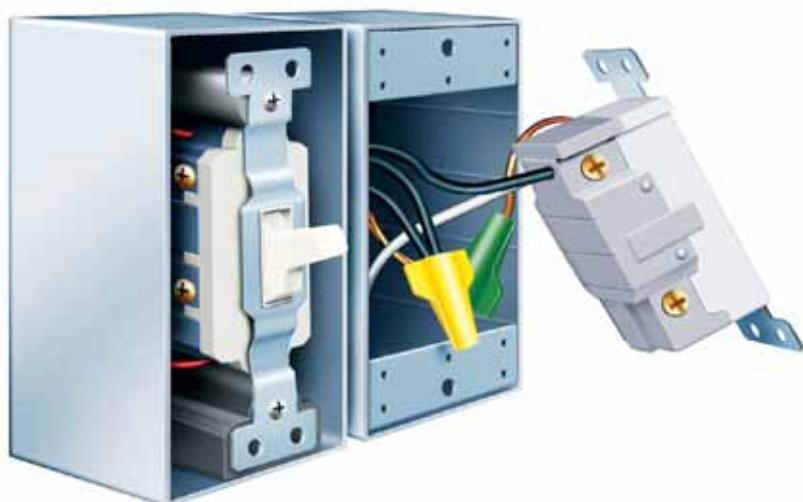
enclosure and the vanity counter are both sized right and there's elbowroom/floor space for drying and dressing. A huge linen closet fills one corner of the room, but it was occupied by the optional stacked washer/dryer in this coach (\$2,103), which leaves the only close-by storage under the vanity or in the bedroom. That's no big deal as the slideout-mounted dresser and storage unit, which also includes the 26-inch LCD TV, is a short hike aft from the bathroom.

Wall-to-wall mirrored wardrobe doors seem to expand the bedroom space, although it's already a wide-open area. The use of two slideouts opens up plentiful floor space at the foot of the bed and there's just one modest step up, onto the engine housing cover, when accessing the curbside end of the wardrobe. Convenient catch-all nightstands and a padded headboard are standard issue for this motorhome, but the Select Comfort adjustable mattress (\$1,343) is an option.

The list of standard-issue amenities and accessories in the Diplomat is as long as your arm and designed to provide users with every possible convenience. Combined with the well-planned interior, the 42SKQ adds up to a competitive package. ♦







## WARM ENGINE ▲ AT FLIP OF A SWITCH

Most, if not all, diesel motorhome engines have a plug-in 120-volt AC heater for cold-winter starting. These 1,500-watt heaters (different size/wattage heaters may require larger wires) are very convenient but can become inconvenient if you have to plug them in and remove them frequently when storing the coach at home. Leaving them plugged in 24/7 consumes a lot of electricity and is not necessary. In addition, it is not always possible to open the access door fully when plugging it in and out.

I decided to leave it plugged in and to put a switch in the circuit to take the place of installing and removing the plug. An outside electrical box is best with 12-gauge wire and a 20-amp light switch (all easily obtained at a hardware store). First, turn off all power and make sure the inverter is switched off and shorepower unplugged. Remove the black (hot) wire from the current outlet and splice the switch. Cover both with outside-type covers due to being in an outside bay. (If the AC box is metal, be sure to ground the box voltage.)

Now, when I'm leaving the next morning, I just flip the switch the night before to ensure the engine is nice and warm for starting.

**ROBERT FAULKES | APPLE VALLEY, CALIF.**

## ▼ SANTA'S SOLUTION



We had been looking for a convenient way to store our freshwater hose and had tried everything from a large bucket to a hose hanger to a flat under-the-bed plastic box. Then, while Christmas shopping at Target we found a great solution for only \$10. A plastic

wreath storage box with a hinged lid keeps the hose clean and avoids tangles.

**WOODY AND JANE WEBSTER | DAVENPORT, FLA. ♦**



## EASY ▶ WINTERIZING

After buying antifreeze to winterize my RV, I began to look for ways to make it less expensive. Years ago, I used air to blow out the lines and it worked fine. Now I have an air compressor that allows me to set the pressure at 45 PSI. Leaving the compressor hooked up to a piece of water hose, which is hooked up to the freshwater supply, I can go inside the RV and open the valves and drain the lines without help from others.

It took me only 10 minutes to make the attachment and it cost me about \$3.50. I've seen similar items at RV supply stores for almost \$14. Note: If you use an inline water filter (like the kind from Wal-Mart), it comes with a short piece of connecting hose, which I used to make my air connector.

Caution: Air pressure must be controlled in order not to damage the water system. Use bypass for the water heater and the usual steps for properly winterizing the RV.

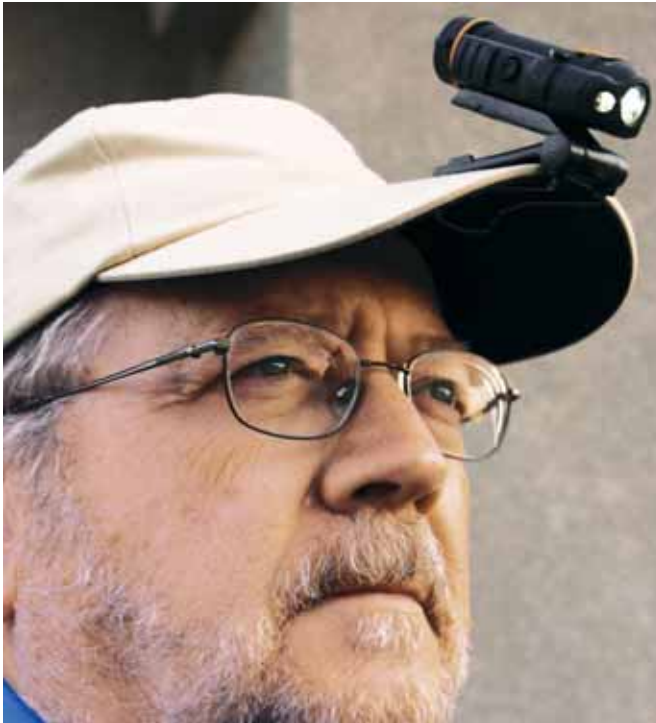
**DON DAVIS | BRISTOL, TENN.**

### WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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

# techsavvy

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



HANDS-ON | by DAVE RIGGS

## RUGGED LED FLASHLIGHTS

The Energizer Bunny adds muscle and versatility to its new Night Strike line

It's probably safe to say that just about every motor-home owner carries some sort of flashlight on board. The use of portable lighting is limitless, and there are countless flashlights on the market, represented in just about every configuration imaginable. So when Energizer dangled its new line of Night Strike LED flashlights in front of our faces, we initially imagined that the company, well-known for its batteries, had invented just another new mousetrap.

But the Night Strikes are different. First of all, they're designed with the outdoors person in mind, shrouded in magnesium alloy or a dual-polymer casing for insane ruggedness. And most of all, they're rich in features, especially if you're into fishing and hunting.

Three models are available: the Handheld, which has the magnesium alloy case and an output of up to 150 lumens of light; the Handheld Swivel, rated for 100 lumens and featuring a head that moves 130 degrees and a clip to mount on a pocket; and the Multifunction Compact, which is a nifty pocket flashlight (40 lumens) that can also be mounted on a cap or other surface using a unique mounting clip.

Like all the models, the Handheld has multiple lighting modes, including white, spot, flood, spot/flood combo and two levels of red. It's powered by three AA lithium batteries (provided with the flashlight), which are designed to provide a three-hour run time on the maximum setting. Energizer says

the flashlight will survive a 15-foot drop test, so we aggressively threw it around, inducing no failures. It's also waterproof.

The Swivel has 13 modes, so users who love gadgets can be easily entertained. White, green, red and blue lights are integrated into the housing using a variety of dedicated switches and a lockout lever to prevent accidental activation. Green lights are good for map reading and tracking, red is easier on your eyes when moving around in darkness, and blue makes the color red pop, so you can pretend you're a crime scene investigator if you're not a hunter following blood trails. There's even a UV light for tracking fishing lines at night.

The Swivel model allows the flashlight to be used at various angles (remember our Boy Scout flashlights?) and it too survived the drop test; it's also waterproof. Two provided lithium batteries can be used as a pair for maximum brightness or one battery can be turned around and saved as a spare.

Energizer's Compact version (one battery) has seven lighting modes (white, red, blue and green) and dedicated switches. The green flashes so you can find this diminutive flashlight in the dark. It's also waterproof and is designed to withstand a drop of 20 feet.

Beam versatility and ergonomics are high points for Energizer's new Night Strike flashlights. Pricing is in the \$79-\$99 range, but we found the Swivel model from an online seller for \$60.

**For more information**, visit [www.energizerlightingproducts.com](http://www.energizerlightingproducts.com). ♦





## Warranty Warning

AFTER A LENGTHY DELAY IN RECEIVING REIMBURSEMENT FOR AN AUTHORIZED REPAIR FROM AN EXTENDED WARRANTY SERVICE COMPANY, A READER TURNED TO *HOT LINE* FOR HELP.

When I purchased my 2003 Beaver coach in January 2004, I also bought an extended warranty from Heritage Administration Services Inc. This February, I took the rig to a Cummins dealer for service and was told that the motorhome's radiator and surge tank needed to be replaced.

I found my paperwork from Heritage, called the company and received authorization for the work to be done. I was told that Heritage would cover \$4,417 of the needed repairs. The work was done as authorized and I paid Cummins. I then forwarded the proper paperwork to Heritage and followed up with a call to make sure they received it and that the reimbursement check would be sent to me.

I have called four more times and still haven't received a check. After reading about *Hot Line's* success in solving a similar problem with Heritage in the May issue ("Service Contract Conflicts"), I hope you can also intervene on my behalf.

**M. HUEGELE | VIA E-MAIL**

*Hot Line sent a copy of Huegele's letter to Heritage with a request that the company review her case and respond to us. After more than 30 days with no response, we sent a second request letter to Heritage. To date, we still have not heard back from the company regarding Huegele.*

*Huegele's situation echoed similar complaints about Heritage Administration Services that Hot Line has recently received from readers. In an attempt to find out what was going on, we placed phone calls to the numbers listed on Heritage service contracts that readers had sent to us. Two of the local numbers had been disconnected, and two toll-free numbers routed to an automated answering system for Dimension Service Corp. and Administrative Services. Repeated attempts to reach an operator were not successful and our voice mail messages were not returned. We did not receive a substantive response to our*

**WE STRONGLY SUGGEST THAT CONSUMERS BE CAREFUL WHEN CHOOSING A SERVICE AGREEMENT. THESE CONTRACTS ARE ONLY LEGAL AGREEMENTS FOR A PROMISE TO PAY, AND OFTEN ARE NOT TRUE INSURANCE DOCUMENTS.**

*written correspondence sent via FedEx to the company's Dublin, Ohio, address; all we received was a proof of delivery signature by S. Lavaughn at Heritage.*

*At a dead-end with the company, we contacted the complainants to see if they had heard from Heritage. Huegele was the only one with new information, and filled us in on the details with the following:*

After not hearing from Heritage, I wrote to the insurance commission of Ohio. The commission found it was out of their jurisdiction so it turned the matter over to the Ohio Attorney General's Office, which then wrote to Heritage. After a month, I received a check for the proper amount.

**M.H.**

*An Internet search of customer complaints at [www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov](http://www.ohioattorneygeneral.gov) revealed a total of 192 registered complaints against Heritage Warranty from January 2008 through August 2009. Of these complaints, the business took action to resolve the complaints on only 23; the business did not respond in 74 cases; and 95 were listed as "Other" or "Action is needed from the consumer."*

*Ted Hart, spokesman for the Ohio Attorney General's office, told MotorHome that many of these cases involve warranty issues — from all over the country, not just Ohio — in which the customer received authorization for repair work under warranty and then was not paid.*

*Hart said, "A number of them are closed cases. What that typically means is that our folks have done as much as*

*they could. We encourage your readers to contact our office (800-282-0515). We have call takers who take in the information and then we have staff who contact the company and work an informal investigation on our part. The next step would be a formal investigation on our part."*

*In addition to the information from the state of Ohio, the Central Ohio Better Business Bureau's Web site ([www.centralohio.bbb.org](http://www.centralohio.bbb.org)) gives Heritage Administration Services Inc. an "F" rating. The Web site states "reasons for this rating include: failure to respond to 103 complaints; 20 complaints filed against business that were not resolved; 136 serious complaints filed against business; overall complaint history with BBB; and length of time business has taken to resolve complaints."*

*The BBB site also states that most of the complaints reported and now closed concerning Heritage Administration Services were originally opened and pursued with Dimension Service Corp. According to information in BBB files, both companies (as well as National Administration Services) share the same mailing address in Dublin, Ohio, and are owned by Haytham ElZayn. The BBB's Web site states that Dimension Service Corp.'s BBB accreditation was revoked Oct. 21, 2008, by BBB's Board of Directors because principals of this firm are principals of another firm that failed to support the purposes of the BBB.*

*Hot Line does not know whether these cases are of merit, but we do strongly suggest that consumers be careful when choosing a service agreement. Because service contracts are only legal agreements between a buyer and a company or administrator for a promise to pay, in many cases the coverage is not a true insurance document and is not regulated by a state's insurance department.*

*The worn phrase, Buyer Beware, certainly applies when it comes to service agreements. While there are reputable firms that sell service contract policies, there are also unscrupulous salespeople in the field. Before purchasing a policy, check with the Better Business Bureau or state consumer affairs office to find out how many unresolved complaints your prospective dealer or contract administrator has on file. It is*

# advertisersindex

important to choose a well-established, reputable company that has a good history of consumer fairness and support.

## HYDRAULIC HEADACHE

Of the opinion that ongoing problems with their motorhome's hydraulic system were a result of faulty repair work, two readers turned to Hot Line for assistance. They explained:

In September 2006, we purchased a new Winnebago Adventurer from McClain's RV Superstore in Oklahoma City, Okla. While the coach was under warranty, we had it repaired three times at McClain's for a leak with the hydraulic system on the slideouts and leveling jacks. The last time it was at McClain's for service was in November 2007, at which time a leaking hydraulic line for one of the slides (which hung loosely between the frame and right rear inside dual tire) was replaced. Mileage on the rig at that time was 11,191.

This June, we found the same line that was replaced only 414 miles ago (the odometer reading was 11,605) was chaffed and leaked fluid again. I called McClain's service department and spoke with Jim Galley. He refused to take responsibility for the problem because the work had been done more than a year ago. So, I took the coach to another RV service center and had the damaged line replaced at a cost of \$343.22.

We think McClain's should reimburse us for the repair work because it failed to adequately secure the hydraulic line when it replaced it. Your help would be appreciated.

**MICHAEL AND SHARON LANE  
MUSTANG, OKLA.**

McClain's RV Superstore was contacted with Hot Line's request for further consideration. We received the following update from the Lanes:

This is to advise *Hot Line* of our complete satisfaction in resolving the problem we had with McClain's RV Superstore. The company has reimbursed us in full for the repair work it did to the hydraulic hose for the bedroom slide. Without *Hot Line's* help, we don't think this issue would have been resolved in our favor. Thank you!

**M.L. AND S.L. ♦**

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

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## Cooked House Batteries

Last fall, I parked my 2001 Dutch Star in the barn, connected it to 50-amp shorepower, and switched the house battery disconnect panel to store. Then in March of this year, I started checking the motorhome out for an April trip.

I checked the battery fluid levels, and whoa — what happened to the electrolyte level? I had to add about 2½ gallons of distilled water to four six-volt batteries, and will probably have to get new batteries. The battery levels

**EVEN NEW BATTERIES SHOULD BE CHECKED AT LEAST ONCE A MONTH WHEN A MOTORHOME IS PLUGGED IN AND THE BATTERIES ARE BEING HELD AT THE FLOAT LEVEL WITH A THREE-STAGE CHARGER.**



must have boiled down because the charger on the Xantrex Freedom Combi inverter/charger was on.

The Freedom manual states that after charging the batteries, it enters Float Charge, which is Stage 3. “The float charge holds the battery voltage constant at a preset lower level, where it is safe for long-term battery maintenance.” So, what went wrong? I had checked the settings for proper type of battery (lead-acid) before storing.

I have read about installing a timer on the charge circuit to prevent overcharging the batteries, thus losing fluid level. But that implies that the charging circuit is not designed correctly if it will overcharge (if that is the right word) the batteries.

Is there some sort of unwritten process for a battery system: Check water levels monthly, keep charger off for a period, etc.? Any help would be appreciated.

**RODNEY NELSON  
EUREKA, CALIF.**

*There is a bit of confusion here, Rodney. If you switched the house battery disconnect panel to store, the house batteries should have been completely disconnected. Obviously, they weren't.*

*Since the inverter/charger was on, it kept a head on your batteries at around 13.5 volts, which is the float level, and it may have turned on periodically to fully charge the batteries. If the batteries are new, they will consume very little water at the float level. If the batteries are old and/or have become sulfated from not being fully charged in the past, they will consume a lot of water at the float level.*

*You parked the motorhome in the barn in September or October, and didn't check the batteries until sometime in March, about six months later. Even new batteries should be checked at least once a month when a motorhome is plugged in and the batteries are being held at the float level with a three-stage charger. Motorhomes in campgrounds are a good example.*

*Some chargers have a storage mode that fully charges the batteries*

*every three or four weeks, and then shuts off. That is the same as driving the motorhome once a month for the same reason. If your battery disconnect had in fact disconnected your fully charged batteries, they would not have lost water, and would probably be ready for your trip once reconnected to the plugged-in inverter/charger. You need to find out why the store setting didn't completely disconnect the batteries.*

### INFLATION PRESSURE

My Class A motorhome is well within the weight limits per axle. The original Michelins were recently replaced with Bridgestones. The inflation guide on the door calls for 85 PSI front and 95 PSI on the rear duals. The maximum pressure on the new tires is 110 PSI. Is it OK to inflate to that level in hopes of improving mileage?

**DAVE DEHYRE | COLUMBIA CITY, IND.**

*As explained in my October column (“Minimum or Maximum?”), Dave, the inflation pressure on the new tires is the minimum required for the tires to carry their maximum load. I have long recommended inflating tires 10 PSI more than the minimum required to carry the actual load so there will always be adequate inflation pressure as long as the pressure stamped on the rim is not exceeded.*

*You did not supply any individual wheel load information to determine the minimum inflation pressures required to carry the loads as you typically use your motorhome. Since most motorhomes are loaded to their gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) and often more, inflating the tires to 110 PSI may make them last longer, and give you an inflation pressure cushion that will always keep the tires adequately inflated to carry their individual wheel loads.*

### PULSATING WATER

I recently had a new SHURflo water pump installed in my motorhome. It works great, but the water pulsates badly from the faucet at the forward kitchen sink. I have no issues with

the toilet, rear sink faucet or shower. Any suggestions?

**DEAN TATE | DOTHAN, ALA.**

*Normally, I would tell you to install an accumulator, Dean. Pulsating water is a common complaint, and an accumulator will eliminate it.*

*Your case is a bit different. An accumulator may correct the problem, but I suspect you have a restricted water line leading to the forward kitchen sink. The sink is probably much farther away from the water pump than the fixtures that don't have a problem.*

*I'd look for a kink or other restriction in the water line leading to the kitchen sink. A plugged aerator on the faucet could contribute to the problem. I'd also install an accumulator. They not only eliminate normal pulsation, they also significantly reduce water pump cycling.*

#### **WEAR VS. FATIGUE**

For the past 17 years, I have used two different Roadmaster tow bars to pull vehicles behind my motorhome, and have been very happy with both units. The first one towed a Jeep Cherokee about 40,000 miles before I sold the vehicle with the tow bar still attached. The one I have now has towed my Dodge Dakota close to 100,000 miles.

I have started to notice some wear in the holes the connection pins go through, which has led me to wonder about the integrity of the entire tow bar system. The little knowledge I have of metallurgy indicates that at some point metal items experience metal fatigue, especially when the item frequently undergoes various types of jars and stresses.

Is metal fatigue something I should take into consideration in terms of the length of time I use a tow bar? And, if so, is there some guideline as to how long?

**RAY LARSON  
STEVENSVILLE, MONT.**

*Wear and fatigue are two different phenomena, Ray. Hole wear that you are observing is just that. Fatigue is failure when something is bent back and forth repeatedly and finally cracks and breaks.*

*I have never heard of a tow bar wearing out, but few motorhome owners put*

*miles on them like you do. The wear you are observing will simply make things a bit sloppy. If you ever observe a crack anywhere in the assembly, that would be the making of a fatigue failure.*

*If you are concerned, contact Roadmaster. The company may be able to give you some estimate on the life of its product.*

#### **CEILING GLUE**

I have a question regarding vinyl sheet materials glued to the ceiling panels on some motorhomes. Since I've finally retired our old motorhome and have been looking around for something used but newer, I've come across more than a few where the vinyl material has separated from the ceiling panels, and there are large air bubbles and loose edges. Some are so bad the entire length of the roof is involved.

Is there a way to fix this so it doesn't happen again, or should I avoid buying a motorhome with this problem?

**FRANK MCNIE  
LONDON, ONTARIO**

*This is a common motorhome problem, Frank. The ceiling panels as well as the glue are usually the cause. Some ceiling panels are nothing but cardboard, others are thin lauan plywood. Neither of these accepts glue well, and the vinyl separates with age and normal heating and cooling inside the motorhome.*

*For some time, we have been using Masonite hardboard for ceiling panels. We lightly scuff the smooth side with sandpaper and glue the selected material to it with 3M Trim Adhesive, which is available in large and small quantities. Some auto parts stores carry it in spray cans, but the best source is a store that sells paint and other body-shop materials to the trade.*

*If everything else in the used motorhome meets your approval, I wouldn't let a sagging ceiling concern you unless it is obvious water damage, which should be investigated. Try to get a reduction in price to cover the cost of replacing the ceiling panels as well as the vinyl material.*

#### **DISSIMILAR HOUSE BATTERIES**

My coach originally came with only one Group 31, 12-volt, deep-cycle battery

for the house battery. I have since installed two additional six-volt, 220 amp-hour batteries. They are wired in series, and in parallel with the 12-volt battery. Even though they are all flooded cells, is this counterproductive because they are different types?

**BEN FABER  
CEDAREDGE, COLO.**

*As wired, the answer is yes, Ben. You basically have two dissimilar 12-volt batteries. In addition, one is older than the other one.*

*Such a condition will cause one battery to prey on the other. Ideally, batteries should be all the same kind and purchased all at the same time to minimize this activity.*

*Alternatively, you can install a Perko switch, and use one of them at a time. That is commonly done in the marine industry, and in some motorhomes. When you are traveling, simply turn the Perko switch to ALL, and all of the batteries will be charged as you go down the road.*

#### **OLD TIRES**

The tires on my motorhome are 10 years old and in good shape. They have about 40,000 miles on them and still have a lot of tread. Should I think about replacing them before heading south this winter?

**REMI DUCHARME  
LITTLE CANADA, MINN.**

*Since most motorhomes are stored outside, Remi, we recommend replacing the tires every seven years, regardless of tread. When a motorhome is stored inside on a dry floor, you can stretch replacement to 10 years, but no more.*

*Please replace your tires with all-steel radial tires before heading south this winter. You will sleep better at night and so will your motorhome. ♦*

TO CONTRIBUTE TO COACH & CHASSIS, please refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 8.

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## Shiftless Near Seattle

We have a 2001 Gulf Stream 34-foot Conquest Class A motorhome with a Workhorse Custom Chassis and Chevrolet 7.4-L gas engine with automatic transmission. We have only 33,000 miles on the unit. Recently it's had a problem with the transmission shifting. When running on the road at 55 to 65 MPH with the transmission in automatic OVERDRIVE, all is OK until we start up a hill and the transmission shifts down a gear to pull the hill. After leveling off, it will not shift back into overdrive; it stays in the lower gear mode.

Even if I move the shift lever to the lower gear position and then shift it back to OVERDRIVE, it stays in the lower gear. Once this occurs it will only go away if I stop, turn off the ignition, wait a few moments and start up again. Then it's OK until the next hill.

I suspect it's a computer or solenoid problem, because the transmission otherwise functions normally. I had it at a transmission shop for five days and they accomplished nothing except to tell me their scan equipment didn't locate a problem. Yet the problem happened again on the way home from the shop.

I talked to two GM dealers in my area and have not been given any kind of indication that they know what might be causing the problem. I am reluctant to take it to a shop again without having some idea of what is wrong.

I surely couldn't have the only one of these transmissions that's had a problem like this. I'd appreciate any help you might be able to give that would lead to a solution and proper repair.

**FLOY ANN AND EARL MONTEE  
ANACORTES, WASH.**

*I believe that what is happening is the transmission fluid is getting hot and the computer is going into "Limp*

*Home" mode, which holds it in a lower gear. When it cools off and is restarted it resets and works normally. Rather than test it in the shop, they need to take it out on the road with a Tech 2 scan tool connected and monitor operation and temperatures. Have the cooling system and fan clutch operation checked. You may need to add an auxiliary cooler.*

### VEXING VIBRATION

I have a 2008 Georgetown 32-foot motorhome on a Ford chassis with a V-10 engine that has been having a vibration problem. I took the rig to a Goodyear tire dealer, but they couldn't spin the tires to check them so they put an equal D powder in the front wheels to balance them. This didn't make a difference in the vibration; it vibrates at all speeds.

I then took it to a Ford truck dealer, where they rotated the front tires to the back. I road-tested the coach and it made

no difference. The vibration is worst at 40 to 50 MPH; a little better going up to 70.

In the shop they took rotor and caliper temperatures, but it showed no brake problem. The emergency brake was checked and seems to be operating OK. All tires were visually checked and showed no signs of flat spots or out-of-round.

It has a three-piece driveline that was pulled out and checked. Both carrier bearings and U-joints were OK.

I am at a loss as to the reason for the vibration. The motorhome has only 3,000 miles on it. I appreciate any help.

**SHARON KING | MOOERS, N.Y.**

*Since you are feeling vibration in the steering wheel, it's likely in the front end. It could be bent, defective or out-of-round front wheels. You can try a set of known-good wheels and tires from another coach to check this. We've also seen problems with Ford chassis of the wheels not centering on their mounting points.*

*There are shops that can spin balance large tire and wheel combinations like those on your motorhome. Your Goodyear shop was not so equipped, but a check with a heavy truck service center will likely find someone who can balance your tires. It's the first step I'd try.*

*The driveline can be checked quickly without any special equipment by supporting the rear axle on heavy truck jack stands (this keeps the suspension angles the same). With the wheels spinning in the air, run it at various speeds up to 70 MPH. (Be sure the wheels stop before shifting to PARK.) If the vibration still occurs, it's not in the front end, it's the driveline (or rear tires/wheels).*

**IF YOU CHANGE THE OIL REGULARLY BETWEEN 3,000 AND 5,000 MILES AND MOST OF THAT IS HIGHWAY MILEAGE, YOU SHOULD BE OK WITH CONVENTIONAL OIL. BOTH REGULAR AND SYNTHETIC OILS CAN BE MIXED.**



### CHANGING FROM SYNTHETIC OIL

I am the second owner of a 1992 Fleetwood Jamboree Class C motorhome. I purchased the vehicle when the mileage was about 52,000. Today the mileage is approaching 80,000. The unit is on a Ford 350 chassis with a 460 engine. I am trying to determine the appropriate preventative maintenance actions that will help to keep the coach in service for many years.

When I purchased the coach, the previous owner told me that he had used

Castrol Synthetic motor oil since the vehicle was new. I decided to continue using the same product. Regular oil and filter changes have been accomplished between 3,000 and 5,000 miles.

My question deals with the pros and cons of switching from synthetic oil to regular multigrade oil, especially considering that the engine has used synthetic oil for 80,000 miles. Cost of synthetic oil is the major incentive for considering a change. Thank you in advance for your response.

**TERRY MATTER | RENO, NEV.**

*If you change the oil regularly between 3,000 and 5,000 miles and most of that is highway mileage, you should be OK with conventional oil. Both types of oil can be mixed (note the "synthetic blends" for sale in stores), so there should be no worries about changing over or switching back later if you change your mind, although it's probably better to use one type.*

*A lot of the Ford E-series cutaway chassis are used for hotel and airport shuttles, and many of them run up high mileage before needing overhauls. Cold starts and warm-ups are much tougher on the engine than mostly highway mileage, which is typical for motorhomes.*

*If you do a lot of stops and starts, shorten the oil change intervals to severe duty intervals or have your oil tested.*

*Some people feel that today's SM-rated oils are not designed for engines without roller lifters and that synthetic oils still retain the zinc dithiophosphate additive necessary to lubricate older engines that don't have roller lifters.*

*The API, which represents most of the world's major oil manufacturers, states API SM oil is fully backward compatible, and it is noted that one of the engine tests required for API SM, the Sequence IVA, is a sliding tappet design to test specifically for cam wear protection. However, not everyone is in agreement with backward compatibility. The jury is still out, so you'll have to keep that in mind and decide for yourself. I use SM oils in some of my older engines.*

#### **FIX THAT FUEL GAUGE**

I own a 2005 40-foot Beaver Monterey, by Monaco, with 27,300 miles and a 400-HP C-9 Caterpillar engine. There have been no

major operational issues with the coach since I purchased it new in August 2005. I keep the coach stored in an enclosed building when not in use.

During a trip last October, I refueled at a truck stop between Memphis and Nashville, Tenn. About 200 miles into this new tank of fuel the motorhome was purring along at 62 MPH, on cruise control with all gauges operating properly.

On my next overview of the gauges, I noticed the fuel gauge pegged beyond the full mark. Fortunately I track each tank of new fuel in a log book. Since this problem, I continue to track my mileage and fuel usage by the coach's Aladdin trip program as well as my log book.

I took the coach to several Monaco dealers and had the dash-mounted fuel gauge and the fuel sending unit replaced, and an additional grounding wire from the tank to the chassis added, all with no results.

The Caterpillar engine, Onan generator and the Hydro-Hot units all use diesel fuel, and have operated without any problems. All servicing for the Caterpillar engine has been completed by a certified Caterpillar service center.

After replacing the fuel gauge and sending unit with no success, the local Monaco RV dealer called the sending-unit manufacturer and discussed the problem with one of its technicians. After numerous conversations with the technician, he suggested there was probably algae in the fuel tank (a problem that they are seeing more frequently since biodiesel fuel).

Following his suggestions, I started adding Biobor JF to the fuel at each refueling, but have seen no results, and the fuel gauge remains pegged beyond full. I would appreciate your comments.

**PAUL BRODDICK | LITTLE ROCK, ARK.**

*Paul, if the fuel gauge pegs it's usually an indication that the positive wire that runs from the gauge to the sending unit is open (such as a cut or broken wire, not shorted to ground). This appears to be the only thing that nobody tried.*

*You can verify this by temporarily running a new wire from the gauge to the tank sending unit. Just use a spool of wire and tape it in place externally to do the test. I'm confident that will get it working. Then,*

*you'll either need to run a new permanent wire (and disconnect the old one) or trace and repair the old one.*

#### **INTERMITTENT STARTING**

My wife and I have a 1998 Beaver Monterey with a Caterpillar 3126 turbocharged computerized electronic diesel engine and six-speed Allison transmission with two overdrives. After arriving home from a long trip, I parked the coach for two days then drove a short distance to empty the tanks. While emptying the tanks my wife went in and out of the coach several times. The step went in and out a few times then stopped.

When I went to start the engine, it would not start and there was no power to anything. After trying for an hour to start it, we noticed the wind blew the door shut and the step went in. I tried to start it, and it started up. After driving home, while stopped and the engine idling we opened the door, the step came out and the engine died. Several attempts to start and nothing.

A few days later after checking batteries and connections, which all seemed fine, I pushed the switch to bring the awning out and as it came out the step went in. I then tried to start the engine and it started up.

We had a mechanic check the batteries and electrical system, and he said everything checked out OK. I am worried it will happen again and we will be stranded somewhere.

Any suggestions for the problem or what we could check that we haven't already?

**STEVE BURJA | PACIFIC GROVE, CALIF.**

*The steps have a safety interlock switch that prevents you from driving off with the steps extended. Since Pacific Grove is near the ocean, the coach may have some corrosion. If anything is preventing the steps from going in (such as rust or bent parts) or if the electrical contacts in the switches are corroded or out of adjustment, it could cause this problem.*

*This is the area that should be carefully inspected, cleaned and the mechanism lubricated. ♦*

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



In today's environment, costs have obviously become a more sensitive issue. Gulf Stream, for example, plans to drop its Sprinter diesel-based models. "I think it's overpriced now," said Claude Donati, vice president of its Motorized Division. "The category is not as strong as when we introduced it."

Airstream, on the other hand, which produces the Sprinter-based Interstate model, still sees it playing a role in its overall "B-van" strategy. Although Class B motorhomes are a niche market, "It's one we have a lot of confidence will grow more strongly than other segments," said Bob Wheeler, company president. But, still, he noted, "If the gap between diesel and gas widens, it will drive more people to buy gas-powered Class B vans."

There are currently 15 RV manufacturers that build or have applied to build on the Sprinter, according to Bloch. Along with Class B and C models, Winnebago also offers a Sprinter-based Class A, introduced earlier this year.

Gulf Stream will continue producing Class A Freightliner models — the Tour Master, Caribbean and Crescendo — as well as a Navistar chassis-based Class C Super Nova diesel. It sells more of the diesel Class C cutaway chassis models than the Class A's, according to Donati.

He thinks the emissions changes and costs associated with them "will no doubt put the diesel category a little further out of reach of a lot of RVers. Ultimately, customers will get used to that. The category will remain viable. But, I do believe in tough times people are thinking smaller, less costly, more fuel-efficient."

"The full-time RVers will still want a diesel. If you're a believer, there are a lot of reasons to go up to that price point. But people driving a Class C and looking at a diesel-pusher are most likely going to think harder or wait a little to save up, due to price increase, the economic conditions and the political climate of making a smaller carbon footprint. It's not a good time for a \$10,000 hit," Donati concluded, noting it comes on top of a previous big emissions-related price hike a few years ago.

At that time, motorhome manufacturers "pre-bought" a lot of chassis to avoid the price increases and complexities of the then-new systems. But this year, officials



**2010 Freightliner FRED chassis with urea tank and DPF filter**

such as Donati and Jayco's Sid Johnson, director of marketing, don't anticipate much "pre-buying," even with the low level of Class A diesel inventories, given market conditions and manufacturer concerns about maintaining good cash flow.

The newly required diesel exhaust fluid poses additional customer expense. The per-gallon cost of this fluid isn't available yet, according to Bloch. But owners will be able to fill up with DEF at truck stops and also buy two-gallon jugs carried at various service centers, like Freightliner, Caterpillar, Cummins and Detroit Diesels.

Based on the load being put on the engine, fuel quality and other variables, the advanced electronic engine controls will regulate the percentage of DEF injected into the after-treatment system, according to Scott Larson, Freightliner Custom Chassis senior manager of engineering. Freightliner officials estimate that the Class A diesels will consume, on average, one tank-full of DEF for every three tanks of diesel fuel.

The Sprinter tank, with 7.4 gallons of capacity, is large enough to allow drivers to go about 11,000 to 12,000 miles between DEF fill-ups. It was designed that way because, "in the beginning, we feel DEF is not going to be available everywhere. The tank's size will allow drivers to continue operating until they take the vehicle in for service," said Bloch. "Once DEF is readily available, we could diminish the size of the tank."

Drivers will get three levels of warning for maintaining the fluid. First, they get an alert that they need to add fluid. If they ignore that, the next warning tells them they have so many miles to go and about 20 engine starts. If they continue to ignore that, on the 21st attempt, the motorhome will not start.

"We have to ensure by law that nobody can run the (DEF) tank dry because then the motorhome is out of compliance emis-

sions-wise," said Bloch. "It's no different than maintaining your regular diesel fuel. If you ignore your diesel gauge, sooner or later the motorhome will also stop running." Once a customer refills the DEF, the motorhome will start immediately.

The size of the new urea fluid tank/emissions-related hardware being added to the underbody will also require varying degrees of modification by motorhome manufacturers. It's not likely to have much impact on the large Class A chassis, but will require a fair degree of creative reconfiguring by Sprinter motorhome builders.

Said Freightliner's Randall, "There's more complexity on the (Class A) chassis, but it's all packaged within the same dimensions as today. The chassis hasn't gotten any bigger or smaller. We're working closely with manufacturers to make room for the extra technology."

Airstream's Wheeler thinks that, for motorhome manufacturers building on the Sprinter, "It's going to cause heartaches. It's a tight vehicle from a packaging standpoint. To make an RV you have to use every square inch. And we'll have to work around this sizable tank being added to the underbody."

Said Bloch, "It's a big tank. They will have to look carefully when they package the vehicle and also look carefully at the weight. They can't relocate or modify the tank in any way." Sprinters less than 10,000 pounds have an unloaded vehicle weight limit of 7,400 pounds. With the SCR adding 144 pounds to the Sprinter van curb weight, it will lose about 144 pounds of payload, reducing that much worth of body/equipment that can be added to it. The curb weight for the Sprinter chassis with a 11,030-pound GVWR will increase by 155 pounds, basically reducing its payload by that amount.

"So far," Bloch added, "the response

CONTINUED ON PAGE 65

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we're getting is positive. The motorhome people know the emissions need to be met. And we do have an event where the upfitters will be able to see the vehicles live and check out the tank size and filler neck."

### NAVISTAR SYSTEM

Navistar is still in the final stages of testing and validating its MaxxForce engines to the new 2010 requirements. Because of that, key details of its 2010 program, such as pricing and power ratings, are yet to be announced.

As Ramin Younessi, the company's group vice president of product development and business strategy, said, "As with any new engine program, up until the day we build that first truck, we will continue to fine-tune our engines, make necessary adjustments, test and validate to ensure our customers have the performance and reliability they expect."

Even though price increases to cover its 2010 emissions equipment for Class A diesel chassis aren't yet available, the company has provided some preview of them with the \$6,000 increase it announced on its on-highway commercial and school buses.

"While our engines will not have the addition of extra after-treatment equipment like competitors choosing SCR, we've invested heavily into the development of a non-urea solution and meeting the stricter emissions levels carries a price," said John McKinney, president of the company's IC Bus subsidiary.

Company officials have been making a big issue of the fact that their engines won't require any extra customer effort, like filling a urea tank. As McKinney noted, "We strongly believe the accountability for emissions compliance should rest on the manufacturer, not the action of the driver or service technician, the reliability of new technologies or the impact of harsh weather conditions."

Still, heavy reliance on an EGR system typically also has its drawbacks. It is apt to put more heat on an engine, and reduce horsepower, requiring a larger displacement engine to compensate, for example. How Navistar deals with these issues remains to be seen.

But, clearly, motorhome manufacturers and buyers will have a choice of two very different motorhome emissions systems, beginning in 2010. ♦

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## IN WITH THE NEW

**C**harles Kuralt, for decades CBS News' beloved correspondent for his weekly series "On the Road," once described Magnolia Plantation on the outskirts of Charleston, S.C., as one of his favorite places in the entire world. He was a regular visitor and a favorite of all who worked on the grounds.

Kuralt is gone now, but Magnolia Plantation still welcomes guests on al-

most any day of the year. Originally a rice plantation, it was turned into a beautiful and bountiful garden after the Civil War. For more than 140 years, visitors have been walking the paths and crossing the footbridges of the plantation to marvel at the flowers — there's something blooming at almost any time of the year — and to catch glimpses of local wildlife.

The footbridge shown here is one of many on the property, all part of a trail system that allows visitors to spend hours meandering through a veritable

paradise. Though tours are available, visitors will probably best remember the time they spend ambling through these beautiful gardens on their own.

This image was captured in early February when the camellias were in bloom and the first hint of spring, which comes early in these latitudes, touched the air. The magnolias would bloom a few weeks later.

Of the thousands of photographs I have taken throughout North America, this remains one of my favorites ... which leads to a farewell of sorts.

For two wonderful years *MotorHome* has allowed me to put words and pictures on this page — telling you where I've been, who I've met, and sharing some of the fun discovered along the way. But all good things must end.

It's almost a pleasure, however, to sign off now because of the exciting way this page is going to be used in the months ahead.

Starting with the January 2010 issue, this becomes your page. Share with other *MotorHome* readers your adventures from the road. All it takes is a photograph and a short "postcard" describing your image.

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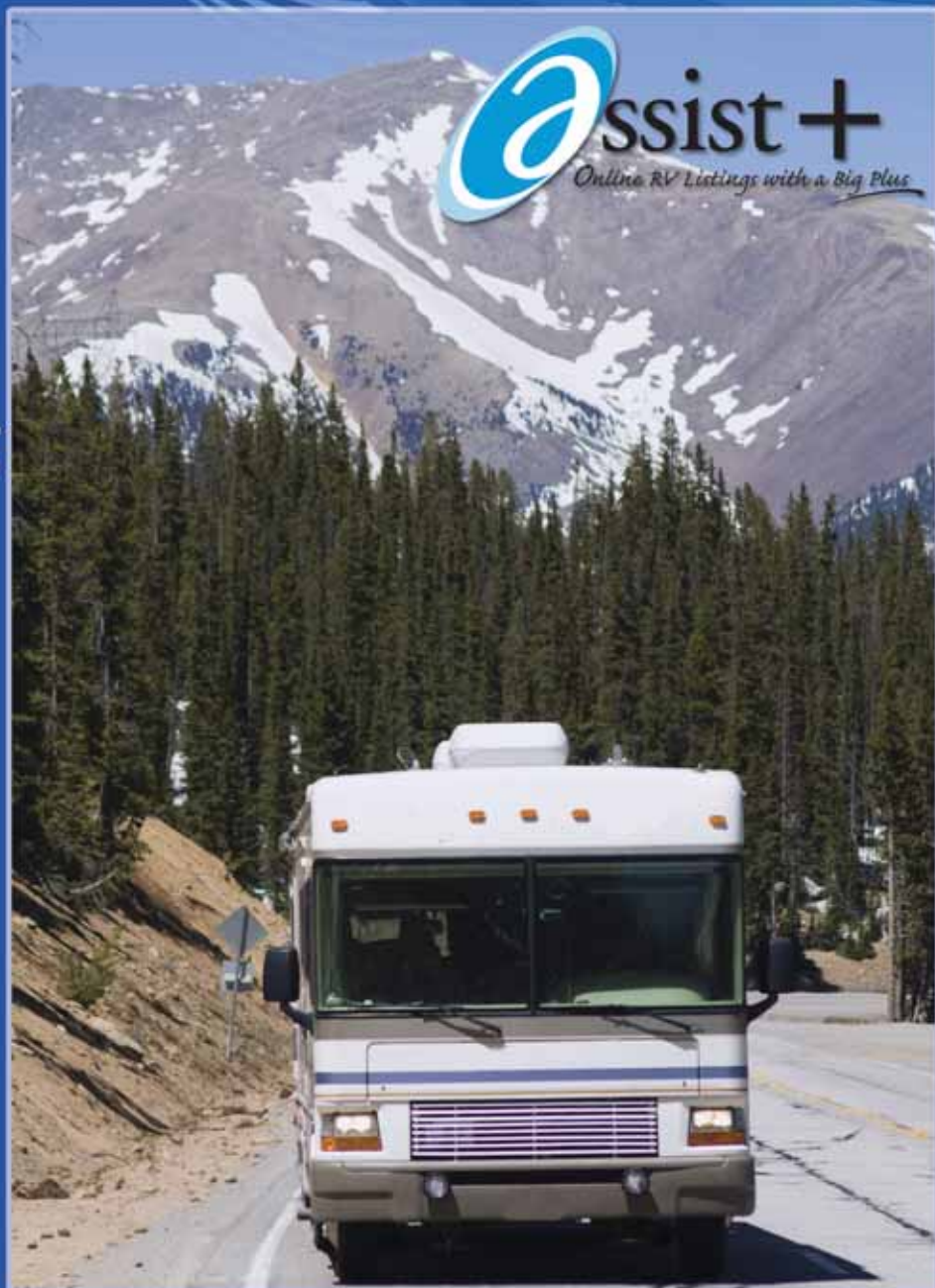
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