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MOTORHOME

JULY 2010

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19

FEATURES

19 | Flocking to Kearney

The annual arrival of more than 600,000 sandhill cranes may draw the crowds, but plenty of pioneer history is another reason to visit this Nebraska town

25 | Gaited Community

Wild horses on the beach, oceanfront campgrounds and an annual Pony Swim make Assateague Island on the Maryland/Virginia border a unique RV destination

30 | 'America's Loneliest Highway'

There are lots of things to see and do on Nevada's Highway 50 — with wide-open spaces, easy driving and access to historical hidden gems

37 | The Pampered Camper

With opportunities for spiritual and physical renewal, these wellness-centered RV parks and resorts provide much more than a place to park your rig

40 | Discovery 40X

A 40-footer with top-notch components and more than enough room to spread out — this luxurious coach proves that Fleetwood is back with a bang

45 | More Power!

Gale Banks aftermarket products — such as the PowerPack System — can boost fuel economy and improve performance

48 | Itasca Reyo 25R

This is not your average Class A. Built on the fuel-efficient Sprinter chassis, the Reyo offers superb ride and handling and features a contemporary, open floorplan

DEPARTMENTS

- 4 | On Ramp
- 6 | P.O. Box
- 8 | Contact MotorHome
- 11 | Escapes
- 12 | Events
- 14 | Noteworthy
- 16 | Crossroads
- 52 | Quick Tips
- 53 | Hands-On
- 54 | Hot Line
- 55 | Coach & Chassis
- 58 | Powertrain
- 61 | Advertisers Index
- 65 | Free Travel Information
- 66 | Off Ramp



25



48



45

On The Cover: The Fleetwood Discovery 40X passes by one of the Santa Ynez Valley's vineyards in central California, against the backdrop of a stunning pastel sunset (see test on page 40). Photo by Rich Cox Photography.

A CURE FOR SLEEPLESS NIGHTS

was laying in bed, wide awake in the wee hours of the morning, listening to the sleepwalker in the room above me, the slamming doors of late-night party animals and the roar of the inefficient heating/cooling system. I won't even mention the hard-as-a-brick pillow. Yep, that's hotel life while on a business trip. Sans a sleeping pill or uncomfortable earplugs, I was wide-awake — with plenty of time to dream about getting back in a motorhome.

How I was longing to be back in this issue's Fleetwood Discovery test coach (see page 40) at the Wine Country RV Resort in Paso Robles, Calif., but at the time I was in Elkhart, Ind., visiting RV manufacturers, scoping out the state of the industry, and putting the final touches on my historical/technical tour of the area in July. Response for the tour has been fantastic and I look forward to spending time with fellow RV enthusiasts.

With summer right around the corner — and feeling like I was in a caffeine-induced state of sleeplessness — I decided to map out my travel plans. Most of July will be devoted to the aforementioned tour of Elkhart, and right on its heels, The Rally in Louisville, Ky. The Rally, now in its 11th year, promises to be the biggest event of the summer. It's the ultimate place to shop for RVs and accessories, learn about the lifestyle and, of course, visit with old friends and build new relationships with fellow RVers. Everyone finishes off the day enjoying top-notch entertainment and a little more socializing before retiring for the evening. This year, the final evening's entertainment will feature talented attendees. If you can sing, dance or even juggle, be sure to audition; in previous years we've sponsored Rally Idol contests, which were wildly successful.

Check out how soon the fun starts by logging on to www.motorhomemagazine.com and viewing the countdown timer to when The Rally officially begins. If attend-



ing The Rally is in your travel plans this summer, be sure to stop by and say hello on Publications Day. It's a great opportunity to meet some of the magazine staffers and let us know what's on your minds.

From the looks of things, this summer will be a very active travel season. As economic woes subside, the roads are filling up with RVs heading for popular destinations. During our last few trips, we've noticed strings of RVs on the highway, a sight that's been sorely missed of late. Campgrounds are reporting good reservation activity and many are seeing occupancy rates approaching pre-recession levels.

Enticing visitors to their campgrounds with special activities and events — like the parks that specialize in wellness programs, featured in this issue (see page 37) — is all part of a very aggressive marketing strategy. Finding ways to keep RVers in parks for longer periods of time benefits both park and RV owners. Offering compelling activities keeps the revenue flowing so park owners can maintain vibrant facilities, and motorhome enthusiasts may move around less, saving a few bucks on fuel.

As we climb out of the recession, it's nice to see renewed interest in RVs. Recent RV shows throughout the nation have been packed with people eager to get into the lifestyle, and the media have been picking up stories on how economical an RV vacation can be when compared with conventional travel. The convenience factor alone makes RV travel more desirable.

The good news, as I learned in Elkhart, is that the RV industry is re-energizing, with many manufacturers reporting improved sales over last year. The bad news: I was still stuck in that hotel room.

The best news? I plan on spending much of the summer in an RV — with my own pillow. ♦

MOTORHOME

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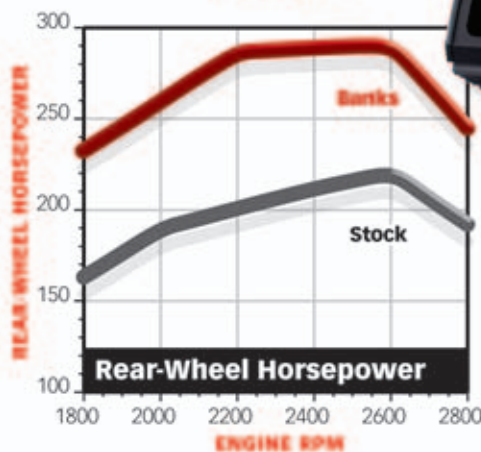
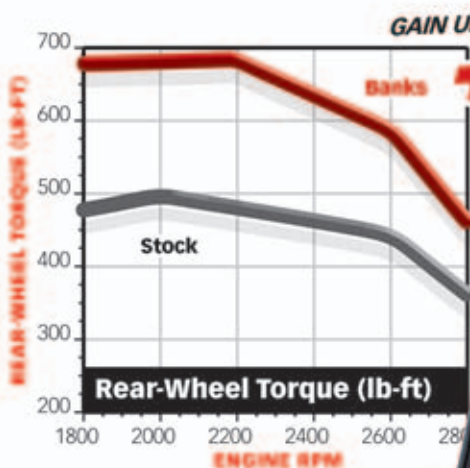
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Banks Power and Cummins Diesel-Pusher motorhomes: The perfect combination. For nearly two decades, Banks has been the turn-to-performance company for Pusher owners wanting more of that most valuable of qualities – **POWER!** And when it comes to technology, Banks has led the way to innovation that even the OE's eventually follow. From enhanced turbo-tuning to expanded air-inlet manifolds to ground-breaking electronic firsts, the Banks PowerPack® continues to set the pace.

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

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

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“WHICH STATES DO YOU THINK NEED MORE RV RESORT COMMUNITIES AND WHY?”

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

NO OCEAN REQUIRED

We live in Arkansas and would love to have a place in an RV resort community in which to retire. Hot Springs, Ark., offers several retirement villages but no spots for motorhomes. Many people flock to northern Arkansas to enjoy the Ozarks and the area’s beautiful lakes — for example, Bella Vista Resort City. Of course, Branson, Mo., is within easy driving distance from the Arkansas border. We hope developers soon get the idea that not every location has to have an ocean in its backyard.

JAMES AND RUTH ANN HAIRSTON | HOPE, ARK.

BIG ON BUCKHORN

Regarding “Resort Living Isn’t Big in Texas” in April’s P.O. Box column: Please have the Smiths from San Antonio check out the Buckhorn Lake RV Resort in Kerrville, Texas. It’s about 75 miles north of them and halfway between California and Florida. I believe they will find all of the amenities they are looking for at this resort. See www.buckhornlake.com for more information.

GARY SEAY | MIDLAND, TEXAS

CRAVING THE COUNTRY LIFE

In my opinion, as a native Texan for 70-plus years and the owner of a 41-foot Newmar Mountain Aire, I don’t want to see more of anything in my state. I’d like to keep Texas as rural as it was when I was growing up. I know that’s not possible because most people don’t want a rural environment as I do. I even enjoy this environment when I’m traveling. When I travel, I go to see the beauty God has made and not to meet people and party.

As far as people flocking to the San Antonio area as one reader wanted, I feel there has been enough flocking to that area and many other areas of Texas that used to be beautiful places to see and visit. We have enough developers taking away from the country life and turning it into a place for cities and all that cities have to offer, which is nothing.

GEORGE MCELVY | BORGER, TEXAS

RETAMA DOES IT RIGHT

Texas *does* have a really nice community in Mission called Retama Village. There’s another RV community in Whitney south of Fort Worth, and Alabama has some in the Gulf Shores area.

I think Missouri and Oklahoma could use some more RV resort communities. Oklahoma has several large lakes that would be ideal for something like Retama



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Village. Mannford, Okla., on Lake Keystone would be ideal. It's close to the Tulsa area yet away from the busy city. Skiatook Lake close to Skiatook, Okla., is an excellent place, close to a small, progressive community and also close to Tulsa metro. Missouri has lakes and areas that would be great for a nice RV community. Both states have a reasonable cost of living. Maybe someone will decide to take advantage of these areas.

**DICK AND MARLENE PINKSTAFF
FULL-TIMERS FROM TULSA, OKLA.**

KUDOS TO GOOD SAM

As we started out on a trip from Massachusetts to Florida, we arrived in Maryland on our second day of travel. While we were in the process of parking our motorhome in a relative's driveway, the brakes failed. This happened on a weekend, so we waited until Monday to call for assistance from Good Sam Emergency Road Service (ERS). The ERS agent was extremely helpful and located a towing service and also a nearby truck repair facility that would be able to work on the problem immediately. As soon as the required repair part was received the next morning, the repair was completed and we were on our way by noon.

We highly recommend Barnes Towing Service in Westminster, Md., and especially Brian Cunningham and his staff at J&M Truck Repair Inc. in Frederick, Md. The work was done in a professional manner and at a reasonable cost.

We also commend Good Sam ERS for its prompt, courteous and efficient handling of our problem. Thankfully, what could have been a disaster turned out very well.

**BETTY-JOAN AND MERRILL SPILLER
NORTH EASTON, MASS.**

SANTA FE BOUND

Regarding "A Jewel of a Route" (April): What great timing for this article. I will be taking this New Mexico route soon. I called Santa Fe Skies RV Park and asked the staff a couple of questions and they were very pleasant and knowledgeable. That's where I will stay for my visit to Santa Fe. And, of course, I will travel the route as outlined in the article.

I might suggest that in an article

like this (and I hope to see more) that you include the road conditions for the different types of motorhomes. I have a 40-footer and a tow vehicle (63 running feet), so I always question the side roads for height and road conditions.

ED KOLIBABA | SUN CITY WEST, ARIZ.

RVING IS A TWO-PERSON OPERATION

We spent more than 35 years camping in tents and boating before we started RVing two years ago. We've had our share of "shouting matches" at the boat launch ramps and now at RV sites, so we now use walkie-talkies and hand signals when backing into sites.

We have two important lists: "Packing" and "Going Home." Usually I pack everything I think we need, then I go down the list and check off the items. I've surprised myself many times when I almost forgot the basics like sandwich bread. When it's time to go home we start down the separate list, and keep it handy until the RV is backed into our driveway.

My husband knows I'm not mechanical, so he made me a "cheat sheet" of how to operate the RV's important features in case he were to become sick during a trip and I had to be in charge of getting us safely home.

I think RVing is a two-person operation. If one partner depends on the other to do everything, there will always be stress.

**KATHY WHEALE AND BOB CATHEY
GREENVILLE, S.C.**

QUESTION:

If you travel with a co-pilot, how do you divide up the RVing duties?

Send your comments to MotorHome, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001; or e-mail letters@motorhome.com. ♦

CORRECTION

The article, "Caching In On a Craze" (June), referred to a geocaching event at The Rally in Louisville, Ky., in July. Since publication of the article, the geocaching event has been canceled.

CONTACT **MOTORHOME**

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Sip.



With the new Winnebago Via,[™] it's hard to say which is more attractive: the scenery outside your window, or your fuel gauge as it ... just ... sits ... there. Based on the proven Dodge/Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis, the Via's sleek lines leave no doubt this 25-foot Class A coach was designed to sip fuel, delivering an estimated 15 to 18 mpg, depending on load and driving conditions. Yet its 6-cylinder turbodiesel provides plenty of hauling power, and two floorplans – each with slideout and a host of innovative features – offer all the comforts and amenities of a much larger coach.

The remarkable Via is just one of many innovative new models you'll find at your nearby Winnebago dealer. With an abundance of exclusive new floorplans, new features and redesigned exteriors, our 2010 lineup is the most exciting in our 51-year history.

To learn more about the Via or any of our new models, visit your Winnebago dealer or call 1-800-643-4892.



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EVENTS | NOTEWORTHY | NEWS BRIEFS | CROSSROADS

THE ORIGINAL AMERICAN IDOLS

MOUNT RUSHMORE ICONS DRAW MILLIONS OF VISITORS EVERY YEAR

John, Paul, George and Ringo don't hold a candle to the famous quartet that is Mount Rushmore National Memorial in the Black Hills of South Dakota. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln are memorialized in granite, representing "the founding, expansion, preservation and unification" of the United States.

Each year, nearly 3 million "fans" from throughout the world visit the mammoth carved statues. Gutzon Borglum and 400 workers toiled for 14 years (1927 to 1941) at a cost of nearly \$990,000 to create what has been dubbed one of seven man-made wonders of the U.S.

A few fun facts about the monument: Jefferson's figure was started on Washington's right. After 18 months of work, it was dynamited off the mountain and re-carved on Washington's left. Mount Rushmore is named after New York City attorney Charles E. Rushmore. He was sent to check property titles in

the area in 1884 and asked the name of the mountain. A nearby resident said it didn't have one but that from then on it would be called "Rushmore." And Washington's nose is larger than the others at 21 feet.

The memorial features an information center, a visitor center (where you can watch two park films and view exhibits), a half-mile loop trail, a sculptor's studio, a Native American Heritage Village, a gift shop and a café. All facilities are wheelchair accessible.

Reservations are not needed to visit the park, and the only fee is for parking (\$10 for an annual pass for cars, motorcycles and RVs). For more information, call 605-574-2523 or go to www.nps.gov/moru. There are no overnight RV facilities at the memorial, but to search for campgrounds in the area, go to www.motorhomemagazine.com/travelresources/#1.

— Patricia Marroquin



JULY 1-4 | Celebrate one of America's most beloved writers, Mark Twain, at **National Tom Sawyer Days** in Hannibal, Mo. Many of the festivities are pulled straight from the pages of Twain's novels, such as the National Fence Painting Competition, in which kids compete at whitewashing fences, or the frog-jumping contest. There will also be a music festival, parade and fireworks; 866-263-4825, www.visithannibal.com.

JULY 3-10 | Get some sleep and put your party hat on because it's an eight-day fun-filled extravaganza at the **National Cherry Festival** in Traverse City, Mich. Fireworks, nightly outdoor concerts, air shows, parades, games and a variety of cherry products are just a few of the more than 150 activities that round out this affordable family event; 800-968-3380, <http://visit.cherryfestival.org>.

JULY 9-11 | Just a stone's throw away from a few of the most popular national parks is the oldest multicultural festival in the U.S., the **National Folk Festival** in Butte, Mont. Celebrate the roots of American culture with music and dance performances, storytelling, regional and ethnic foods, children's activities, parades, arts and crafts and more. Choose from one of the many campgrounds in the area; 406-497-6464, www.nationalfolkfestival.com.

JULY 16 | Observe the magnificent tall ships that go sailing by at the 7th annual **Maine Windjammer Parade** in Rockland, Maine. Spectators



PHOTO: FRED LE BLANC

can stand anywhere along the mile-long Rockland Breakwater to get closeup views of the 12 boats, which comprise the largest fleet of traditional sailing schooners in North America. Tours of the Rockland Breakwater Lighthouse will also be part of the festivities; 800-807-9463, www.sailmainecoast.com.

JULY 17-18 | The action is up in the air at the **Vectren Dayton Air Show**, taking place at the "Birthplace of Aviation," Dayton, Ohio. The U.S. Navy Blue

Angels, U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds and civilian aerobatic pilots will undoubtedly draw oohs and aahs from the crowds, while on the ground there will be displays and aircraft tours. Dayton is located at the intersection of I-70 and I-75, making it an easy road trip stop, and designated RV parking is available; 937-898-5901, www.daytonairshow.com.

JULY 17-18 | Your spirits will be flying as high as the kites at the 18th annual **Southern Oregon Kite Festival** at the Port of Brookings-Harbor, Ore. Watch as beautiful kites sweep and twirl in routines choreographed to music, performed by professional kite fliers. Kids can learn how to build their own kites, while the adults can bid on kites being auctioned off at the banquet. Free RV parking and shuttle service will be provided, or

you can camp at one of the many nearby campgrounds; 541-412-2941, www.sokf.org.

JULY 22-25 | RVers will not want to miss "the greatest RV rally in the world," **The Rally**, in Louisville, Ky. Hosted by MotorHome and its parent company Affinity Group, this fun-filled event has something to strike every RVer's fancy, be it a dog show, entertainment by Tanya Tucker and Bob Newhart, hundreds of RVs and products, tours, raffles, technical seminars and more; 877-749-7122, www.therally.com.



PHOTO: THOMAS NEILL

JULY 4

Celebrate our nation's birthday at an event that's rich in history and patriotism — the **1830s Independence Day Celebration at Old Sturbridge Village** in Sturbridge, Mass. In addition to the regular attractions of the largest outdoor history museum in the Northeast there will be a giant Declaration of Independence to sign, accompanied by a dramatic reading, and 1830s-style "baseball" will be played. In the evening there will be a Fourth of July fireworks display over the village countryside, and music, dancing and family activities will create a magical night; 508-347-3362, www.osv.org.



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Honda Generators, go to www.motorhomemagazine.com/info



NEW NEPTUNE

Monaco RV of Coburg, Ore., has unveiled the 2011

Neptune diesel-pusher from Holiday Rambler. The popular motorhome has been upgraded to the eight-air-bag proprietary Roadmaster chassis, from the previous four-air-bag model. The outboard-mounted air bag RR8R Roadmaster chassis provides a wide and stable platform for the coach, improving drivability.

The 2011 Holiday Rambler Neptune is powered by a 360-HP engine, standard on 40-foot models, with an ISB 340-HP engine standard on 36-foot models.

Four floorplans are offered, including a full-wall-slide model. The interior, with three color choices available, features ceramic tile throughout the living area, kitchen and bath. In the kitchen, there are solid surface countertops with mosaic tile backsplashes, an optional residential refrigerator and a handy flip-up countertop.

All floorplans offer an optional king bed as well as solar screens with blackout shades. Behind the wheel, safety-minded features include the Panaview one-piece windshield, standard three-camera rear vision system and optional GPS system.

For more information, visit www.holidayrambler.com.

CAMP FREIGHTLINER



Freightliner Custom

Chassis Corporation is giving RV enthusiasts a chance to learn about diesel motorhomes during two-day Camp Freightliner sessions, now through November.

Motorhome owners and prospective buyers will spend two intensive yet fun days

learning about motorhomes built on Freightliner chassis in sessions in Gaffney, S.C. (A discounted campground fee at Spartanburg KOA is available during the class session.) One West Coast class is planned in Harrisburg, Ore., Aug. 19-20. Cost of the session is \$100 for an individual; \$150 for driver and co-pilot.

Freightliner experts will lead workshops covering such topics as: understanding and maintaining air brake and electrical systems; tips for maximum performance; suggested maintenance intervals; the importance of weight distribution; and proper vehicle storage. In addition, attendees will be able to examine a bare chassis and review its features and components.

For more information, visit www.freightlinerchassis.com.

News Briefs

Winnebago Industries is offering free tours of its Forest City, Iowa, manufacturing facilities. Tours are offered twice daily through Oct. 29, and once daily in November. The behind-the-scenes look into the building of a motorhome starts with a 20-minute video that offers a preview of the manufacturing process. After the video, the tour bus departs for a drive around the grounds, and a walk-in tour of the Chassis Weld facility and the main production area. From a mezzanine overlooking the production lines, visitors are able to get a bird's eye view of the motorhome manufacturing process. Each tour lasts about 90 minutes. Visitors can also tour the Winnebago Industries Museum. For more information, call 641-585-6936 or go to www.winnebagoind.com/company/visit-us.

Affinity Group Inc., parent of MotorHome magazine, and the Good Sam Club, the world's largest RV owners' organization, have announced that Executive Director Sue Bray is leaving to form her own consulting business, **Sue Bray Consulting**, (www.suebray.com). Bray's new business will focus on and utilize her expertise in marketing, managing and operating membership clubs and events. Affinity CEO and President Mike Schneider said: "Sue has dedicated her 33-year career to enhancing our members' experience through excellent membership benefits development and service. Much of Good Sam's phenomenal growth over the years can be attributed to Sue." During her tenure with the Good Sam Club, the organization grew from less than 200,000 members to nearly 1 million families today. In 2009, Bray was inducted into the RV Hall of Fame in Elkhart, Ind.

U.S. Forest Service (USFS) Chief Tom Tidwell recently announced his decision not to implement proposed changes to fees charged to holders of passes at USFS campgrounds operated by private businesses. The chief's decision means seniors and people with disabilities will continue to receive a discount at USFS campgrounds run by private concessions, according to a news release. The USFS had proposed changes to discounts provided to holders of **Golden Age and Golden Access Passports and Senior and Access Passes**. Under the proposal, discounts at concession-operated campgrounds would have changed from the current 50 percent to 10 percent.



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**FISH
CREEK:
A BEAR'S
DINNER
TABLE**

PHOTO: LEE SMITH

From early July through mid-September, chum and pink salmon follow an imprinted road map from saltwater depths to their birthplace in the clear, shallow waters of Fish Creek in Tongass National Forest. Only a short distance from Hyder, Alaska — the only community in southern Southeast Alaska accessible by road from the continental highway system — the freshwater spawning bed at Fish Creek Wildlife Observatory Site spreads a virtual banquet table for black and grizzly bears.

The bears, splashing through waters swirling with rainbow-colored salmon intent on spawning, are easily observed or photographed from an elevated wooden viewing platform running parallel to the creek. Situated in a day-use area operated by the U.S. Forest Service, it is accessible by vehicle, and visitor permits are required during spawning season.

Forest Service employees at the site from April 1 to Sept. 30 provide information and answer questions about the bears and salmon. Facilities include a limited parking area for small motorhomes. RV parks are available in Hyder, known as the friendliest ghost town in Alaska, as well as in Stewart, British Columbia, only two miles across the Canadian border.

For more information, call 907-225-2148, or visit www.fs.fed.us/r10/tongass.
— Arline Chandler

HOOVER'S HUMBLE HOME

If your travels trend across Iowa on Interstate

80, plan a stop at Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, 10 miles east of Iowa City. Here, you will learn about the country's 31st president (1929-1933), who hailed from Quaker beginnings. Although Hoover ranks back in the pack, historians consider him controversial and underrated — reasons to get to know him better.

Orphaned at the age of 9, Herbert Hoover persevered to secure a good education before venturing into the world theater. Relief work in World War I won him international recognition. He served as Secretary of Commerce under President Harding and President Coolidge before rising to the nation's highest office.

The site includes the Birthplace Cottage, Quaker Meeting House, a reconstructed blacksmith shop, a one-room school and the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum. President and Mrs. Hoover are buried on the grounds and there are 81 acres of restored tall-grass prairie, recalling the roots of this area.

For more information, Herbert Hoover National Historic Site, 319-643-2541; www.nps.gov/heho. Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, 319-643-2541; www.hoover.archives.gov. — Rhonda Ostertag ♦



PHOTO: GEORGE OSTERTAG

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FLOCKING TO KEARNEY

ALTHOUGH MASS CRANE MIGRATION IS A SIGHT TO BEHOLD, THIS NEBRASKA TOWN HAS LOTS MORE TO OFFER VISITORS

Through the predawn chilly darkness we stumped along single file following our guide, Carl Wolfe. A dozen of us were being led by the red-filtered beam of his flashlight to Straw Bale, a blind at the river's edge a quarter mile from the Rowe Bird Sanctuary/Iain Nicolson Audubon Center.

My husband, Guy, and I, like hundreds of others from around the world every year, had come to the sanctuary located just east of Kearney, Neb., to watch the great migration of sandhill cranes, a major Nebraska event and one of the largest migrations of any kind in the world.

Every year, between late February and early April, some 600,000 sandhill cranes that are en route from their winter quarters in Texas, Arizona, New Mexico and northern Mexico to nesting grounds in northern Canada, Alaska and Siberia stop along a 40-mile stretch of the Platte River Valley to "bulk up," said Wolfe. Their numbers represent 80 percent of the world's population, he added. Feasting on corn, beetles and earthworms, they add nearly a fifth of their body weight for the remaining



Clockwise from top: Thousands of sandhill cranes make a stop at the Rowe Bird Sanctuary near Kearney, Neb. Their journey is one of the largest migrations of any kind in the world. Re-enactors Cody Royle and Del Peck are greeters at the 79,000-square-foot Great Platte River Road Archway. An old train shed and station are part of Harold Warp Pioneer Village in Minden, 22 miles south of Kearney.



PHOTO: NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



At Harold Warp Pioneer Village, above left, there truly is a “village” of historic buildings with more than 50,000 items “from every field of human endeavor.” At the Great Platte River Road Archway monument, a grandfather and grandson whittle beside a campfire at an early tourist camp along the road in the 1920s. Below: This “Soddy” reconstruction of the first building at Fort Kearny illustrates the lack of building material on the prairie. Soldiers cut sections of sod to make the “bricks.”

FOR MORE INFORMATION

FORT KEARNEY STATE HISTORICAL PARK

308-865-5305,
www.ngpc.state.ne.us.

FORT KEARNEY STATE RECREATION AREA

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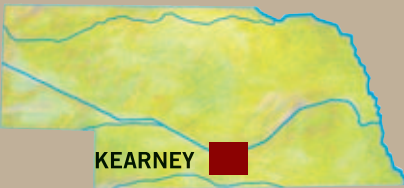
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thousands of miles to their destinations.

The birds, which emit a trilling call that seems to combine the cry of a spring peeper (frog) and the clack of a metal “cricket,” are never quiet. But as we watched, wind-whipped, through the glassless windows of the blind, and early light turned the dome of sky to deep gray-blue, the long, gray mass across the Platte, 400 yards wide here, slowly came into focus. Thousands of birds stood ankle deep at water’s edge (for safety from coyotes, bobcats and raccoons), and the chorus of their calls became near-deafening.

Suddenly, when there was barely enough light to distinguish the birds from the river, some secret message passed among the flock, and with a mighty flapping of wings, all 4,000 or so birds took to the sky in a cloud.

Trilling loudly, they swirled overhead. Some returned to the shore, legs forward, wings wide for a glider-like landing, to stand or perform a mating dance, a short hop into the air, wings fluttering. Others cruised off to spend the day massed in nearby fields foraging for corn. Thus, within a minute, the show we’d shivered for hours in the blind waiting to see was over (and worth every goose bump).

During their stay along the Platte, the birds are highly visible — in the fields,

stitching the sky in hundreds of thread-like V’s, and coming down for the night along the shore or on one of the river’s many sandbar-islands, a spectacle that draws dozens of visitors to a bridge over the river at nearby Fort Kearney State Recreation Area.

Exhibits at the Audubon Center explain that the cranes are among the oldest bird species on Earth, dating back some 40 million years. In the wild, cranes live about 25 years, a decade longer in captivity. The sanctuary also includes several miles of hiking trails and the Audubon Center, an eco-friendly straw-bale structure.

Although the sandhill cranes are the main attraction during the migration, dozens of other bird species come through, including as many as 8 million stunningly paper-white snow geese that polka-dot the fields and lift off like clouds of silver confetti.

Kearney also has numerous attractions that can be enjoyed other times of the year. Among these is 79,000-square-foot Great Platte River Road Archway, decades in the planning, new in 2000 and the first structure of its kind — a tourist attraction over a major national highway, Interstate 80.

The site for the 308-foot-long museum was chosen because the three major historic trails — Oregon, California and Mormon — had converged here, explained executive di-

rector Gary Roubicek. Construction was a complicated affair, but the highway was closed only one night as the 1,500-ton multimedia museum was rolled into place.

Exhibits — dioramas with life-size figures, murals, films, artifacts and more — tell the story of the Platte as a “watery highway to Western territories,” said Roubicek. Visitors don headphones and ride a 117-step escalator up a steep, rocky hillside, then walk through history as a narrator reads from journals and historic newspapers, and dramatic sound effects bring it all to life.

The first-rate museum provides an overview of 130 years of Platte River Valley history, featuring the historic trails, Native Americans, Pony Express, Transcontinental Telegraph, Transcontinental Railroad, Lincoln Highway and Interstate 80. There’s plenty of parking for motorhomes, and Roubicek notes that RVers are welcome to dry camp on the museum’s spacious lot.

Nearby is the new Nebraska Firefighters Museum and Education Center, a 10,000-square-foot facility displaying a dozen or so retired firetrucks and fire equip-

ment from around the state. Particularly impressive are the 1922 American LaFrance pumper that was used by the Kearney Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) until 1948; an 1899 35-foot-long hook and ladder wagon from the Yutan VFD; and a Cozad VFD 1888 hand pumper that could project a stream of water more than 75 feet. Also here is an extensive collection of historic toy firetrucks, a photo wall of epic fires in the state, classic firefighting uniforms and gear, and interactive exhibits on fire prevention.

The Museum of Nebraska Art in the heart of downtown Kearney claims to be the state’s “only collection of paintings, sculptures, drawings and prints created only by Nebraskans.” However, many of this fine museum’s 5,000-piece collection are by other familiar artists such as Thomas Hart Benton, Karl Bodmer, George Catlin and John James Audubon.

The Frank House, a Romanesque mansion built in the 1880s and listed in the National Register of Historic Places, is another local attraction. The home, which features one of the largest Tiffany windows

installed in a residence, is on the University of Nebraska-Kearney campus.

Fort Kearney State Historical Park and Fort Kearney State Recreation Area are about three miles south of town (note the difference in spelling; Kearney, the town, is a misspelling of the old fort’s namesake, Colonel Stephen Watts Kearny).

Fort Kearney, built in 1848, was the first fort built to protect travelers on the Oregon Trail, and served for 23 years. After it was decommissioned in 1871, the buildings were torn down and the land opened for homesteading, said Jeff Noetzelman of the historic site.

In 1928 newly formed Fort Kearny Memorial Association purchased the 40 acres where fort buildings had stood and the next year turned the land over to the state of Nebraska. Reconstruction of the old stockade began in 1962, and several other structures — the blacksmith shop and powder magazine — have been rebuilt. An additional 10 structures have been “ghosted” on original foundations and may eventually be rebuilt, said Noetzelman.



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The fort, never attacked, served mainly as outfitter for travelers, and included a Pony Express station, later replaced by a telegraph office. Self-guided tours are available and a large visitor center includes exhibits, films and a bookstore.

Neighboring Fort Kearny State Recreation Area was acquired by the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission in 1960 as a "recreational and camping addition" to the historical park. It includes hiking trails,

seven lakes and a fine campground with 110 campsites, 80 with electricity. There are also showers, restrooms and a dump station.

Harold Warp Pioneer Village, another major Nebraska attraction, is located in Minden 22 miles south of Kearney (and well worth the drive; take Nebraska Highway 10).

The museum, filling 28 buildings on 20 acres, includes more than 50,000 items "from every field of human endeavor," and illustrates "man's progress" since

1830. Collections of anything you can think of are here — from clocks, antique autos, animal mounts and cash registers to pocket watches, airplane engines, kerosene lamps and farm machinery. There is also a village of historic buildings — a general store, church, one-room school, sod house and more — brought here from elsewhere in the state.

The museum, which opened in 1953, was founded by Harold Warp, who grew up in a frame house outside Minden. He and his 11 siblings were orphaned in 1914 when Warp, the youngest, was 11. But within a decade he had developed an "inexpensive replacement for window glass in chicken houses called Flex-O-Glass, and he became a very successful businessman," said general manager Marshall Nelson.

In 1948 Warp began acquiring historic buildings to preserve the history they represented, and the original six became the basis of Pioneer Village, said Nelson. Today this fascinating museum, which includes a restaurant, motel and campground, draws some 80,000 visitors annually. ♦

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GAITED COMMUNITY



Assateague Island, on Maryland and Virginia's Eastern Shore, enchants visitors with its **primitive beauty and wild horses**

by PATRICK BORDERS



During the annual Pony Swim in July, herds of wild ponies are driven across the channel from Assateague to the island of Chincoteague, Va., where they are auctioned off. Those that are not sold will eventually swim back to Assateague. The event is sponsored by the Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Company, an organization that provides year-round care for the ponies. Sand dune grass, rosehips, bayberry twigs and persimmons supply the bulk of the animals' food, though the wild ponies also graze in the marshes and campgrounds. During the summer, the ponies head for the beach to escape the heat and mosquitoes.

At night when you're nestled in your motorhome, listening to the sound of the crashing waves, you might feel like you're camping in any oceanfront RV park. But then you hear a distinctive sound — the neighing of a wild horse — and you know you're in a different kind of place.

Assateague Island is a windswept, 37-mile barrier island that straddles the Maryland-Virginia border, running between the Atlantic Ocean and the Sinepuxent and Chincoteague bays. It's known for its remote and primitive beauty — its pristine beaches, coastal bays and salt marshes constantly reshaped by wind and water. But most of all, Assateague is known for the regal wild horses that roam the island and stir the imaginations of the island's visitors.

Thanks to Marguerite Henry's famous children's book, "Misty of Chincoteague," the island's horses are familiar to people who have never visited Assateague. Henry's story, written in 1947, takes place during the annual Pony Swim in Chincoteague, a Virginia island just off the southern portion of Assateague.

PHOTOS: PATRICK BORDERS; ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/SWANTER (LEAD)



Clockwise from above: Assateague Light is open for tours Friday-Sunday from Easter weekend through Thanksgiving weekend. On the Life of the Marsh Nature Trail at Assateague Island National Seashore, hikers can experience a closeup view of a salt-marsh habitat — just remember to pack the mosquito repellent. The bays on the western part of the island are a great location to explore the marshes by canoe or kayak and see the wild ponies, too. The area is a major destination for bird-watchers, with more than 300 species of migratory and resident birds including the great blue heron. The islands offer some of the best shore fishing along the Atlantic coast.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

ASSATEAGUE ISLAND NATIONAL SEASHORE

410-641-3030 (Maryland),
757-336-6577 (Virginia),
www.nps.gov/asis.

ASSATEAGUE STATE PARK

410-641-2120,
www.dnr.state.md.us/publiclands/eastern/assateague.html.

CHINCOTEAGUE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

757-336-6122,
www.fws.gov/northeast/chinco.



During the festival, horses on the Virginia side are rounded up and herded across the channel.

No one knows exactly how the horses originally ended up on the island. A local legend tells of a Spanish galleon that sank off the coast during the 1700s. The surviving cargo of horses swam to shore, where they — and their descendants — remained. Another more likely scenario suggests the horses were turned loose by early settlers. Colonial legislatures had enacted laws requiring fencing and taxes on livestock. Assateague provided open land and a natural corral between the ocean and the bay, so the local settlers contained their horses and other livestock on the island and evaded the taxes.

Although they might have been domesticated once, today's horses are wild and need space away from humans. Still, many opportunities exist for horse lovers and photographers to safely observe the animals' sinewed beauty and fascinating social behaviors.

The horses usually graze in family groups called bands (two to 10 mares and offspring, plus a stallion). In the spring, you'll typically find them in the marshes, where the rains produce the best source of food — the abundant grasses. During the summer, they relocate to the beaches to avoid the heat and mosquitoes. In the fall,

it's back to the marshes, and in the winter, they're often spotted staying warm among the shrub thickets. They also meander through other areas, including the island's campgrounds, roads and parking lots.

Many visitors get up early and walk on the beach to catch a glimpse of the horses on the sand. You'll never forget watching the animals in such a setting — their muscles flexing beneath their shiny coats, the surf crashing around them, their hooves leaving prints in the sand as they meander along the beach.

Two herds live on the island, separated by a fence along the Maryland-Virginia border. The National Park Service (NPS) manages the free-roaming Maryland horses. The Chincoteague Volunteer Fire Department manages the Virginia horses, which are fenced in very large enclosures and are often seen grazing in the marshes near Beach Road or near the Woodland Trail observation deck.

There are two entrances to Assateague Island: one in Maryland and the other in Virginia. There is no vehicle access between the two entrances — vehicles must return to the mainland to access either the north or south entrance.

The first thing to do when arriving at Assateague is to visit one of the three visitor centers, where you can view exhibits explaining the Assateague environment

PHOTOS: ISTOCKPHOTO.COM/AIMIN TANG (FISHING); CJ MCKENDRY (BIRD); WILLIAM SHERMAN (LIGHTHOUSE)

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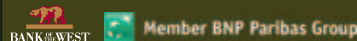
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and learn about the area's bountiful recreational opportunities.

Horse-watching lures people to the island, but the unspoiled landscape offers other activities. During the summer, the beaches have lifeguards on duty. Here, you can enjoy swimming and sunning without the crowds of the region's popular beaches, such as Ocean City, Md., to the north. You can also scan the beaches for seashell souvenirs (visitors are allowed to keep up to a gallon of unoccupied shells).

Surf fishing and shell fishing are also popular activities. You can surf fish from the non-lifeguarded areas, where you'll find striped bass, bluefish, flounder, red drum, black drum and shark. Maryland is known for its crabs, especially the blue crab. With a line, net and bait, you can obtain a delicious dinner. If clams are more your style, you can get a clam rake and go digging in the mud for your meal.

If you are towing a 4WD dinghy vehicle, you can drive it along the beaches. Assateague Island offers 12 miles of beach in Maryland and a small portion in Virginia for over-sand vehicles (OSV). An annual OSV permit, which ranges from \$70 to \$150, must be purchased.

One of the best ways to explore the island's treasures is to get off it and into the water. Boat tours take visitors along the coastline's secluded areas — the inlets, channels, coves and marshy grasslands. From the water, you can see the wild horses, birds and even dolphins and porpoises.

Kayaks and canoes may be launched from several designated locations. Rentals are available from a shop at the end of Bay-side Drive on the Maryland side or from commercial providers in Chincoteague. The NPS conducts kayak tours during the summer from the Toms Cove visitor center.

The miles of warm waterways offer a chance to explore tranquil scenery and observe from one of the best bird-watching locations in the country. Bird-watchers will find migratory and resident birds, including shorebirds, warblers and waterfowl.

Back on land, the Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge on the Virginia section is the nesting home to a vast population of birds. The refuge is located along the Atlantic flyway, and its salt marshes, maritime forests and freshwater impoundments offer birds an ideal location to rest

and feed. The 14,000-acre wildlife preserve was created in 1943 to protect the migratory waterfowl habitat, and today, it's one of the country's most visited refuges.

The refuge features Assateague Light, a 142-foot lighthouse constructed in 1867. A conical lighthouse with alternating bands of red and white, it originally used a first-order Fresnel lens, but was replaced by an electrically powered beacon in 1933.

Many excellent trails for wildlife observation and photography wind through Assateague. However, make sure you use insect repellent; the mosquitoes can be overwhelming if you're unprepared.

On the Maryland side, three half-mile loop trails sample the island's different environments: Life of the Dunes Trail, Life of the Forest Trail and Life of the Marsh Trail.

Within the refuge on the Virginia side, the Wildlife Loop is very popular. This trail skirts around a large freshwater impoundment area — a major attraction for waterfowl and wading birds. From the Wildlife Loop, you can also take the Swans Cove Trail to the beach. The mile-long Fresh-

water Marsh Trail explores the marsh grass and offers an observation deck. The 1.5-mile Woodland Trail is a popular shaded hike through a maritime pine forest and includes an overlook offering occasional glimpses of horses.

If you want some civilization after nature exploring, then neighboring Chincoteague Island offers a fine assortment of restaurants and activities. Chincoteague serves as the Virginia gateway to Assateague and is the state's only resort island. It's a popular vacation spot for its scenery, charm, proximity to Assateague, as well as its oyster beds and clam shoals. Chincoteague Island hosts plenty of specialty shops and local artisans who craft items such as duck decoys and dramatic paintings of the horses.

For many, the high point of a visit to Chincoteague occurs on the last Wednesday in July for the annual Pony Swim (this year held July 28). The young horses are herded across the Assateague Channel in the spectacle made famous by Marguerite Henry. After the swim, visitors can attend

the Firemen's Carnival and the pony auction, which takes place the next day. The auctioning of the younger horses helps control the population and raises funds for the Chincoteague Fire Department.

The private RV parks located on Chincoteague provide the only motorhome options near the Virginia side of Assateague. On the Maryland side, campgrounds within Assateague Island National Seashore and Maryland's Assateague Island State Park can accommodate motorhomes. The state park offers beachside camping and hookups. The national seashore has beachside and bayside options but no hookups. The breeze of the beachside section helps counter the heat and mosquitoes during the summer, and the calmer air on the bayside section is warmer during the fall and spring.

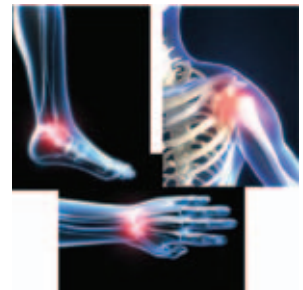
Regardless of which side you camp on, however, you can retire to the comfort of your motorhome after a day of hiking, biking or kayaking. There, you can relax, listening to the occasional nighttime neigh of the horses, and know you are in a very special place. ♦

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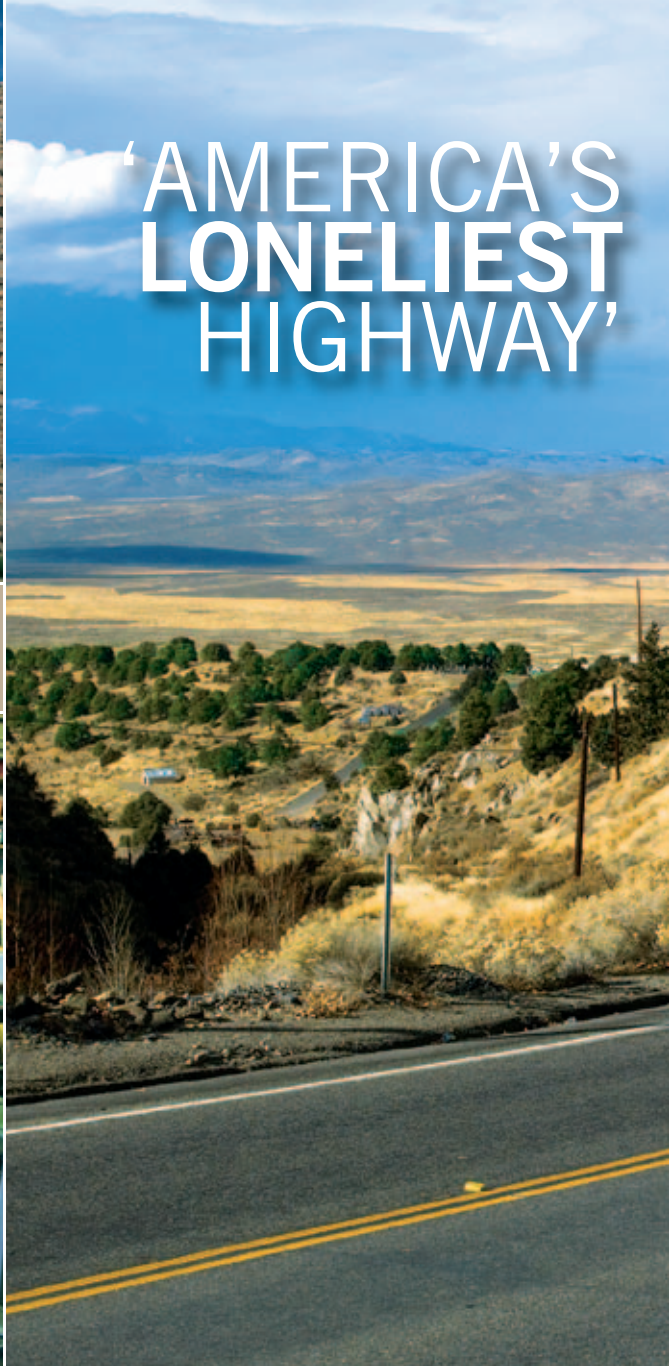
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Highway 50 lends itself to isolation. Drivers will encounter unchanged land for 350 miles. Six beehive-shaped brick ovens near Ely, Nev., were built around 1876 to produce charcoal for the smelter serving the nearby gold and silver mines. Dan Braddock tells visitors the history of McGill Drug Store.



‘AMERICA’S LONELIEST HIGHWAY’

Not far from Cold Springs Station, Nev., once a stopover for riders of the Pony Express, there is a sign that dramatizes the hardships these young men once confronted. It does so in a few lines and the words sing out in a way that can get your imagination working mighty quick:

“Wanted! Young, skinny, wiry fellows not over 18. Must be expert riders willing to risk death daily. Orphans preferred.”

In those days, some of the risks came from marauding Indians, but certainly some of it derived from the lonely country made so by vast prairies and isolated mountain ranges. Hurt yourself out here and before long the vultures would be circling. Well, times have changed — a little — but small wonder the highway that stretches across this portion of the state has attracted such a cult of followers — and

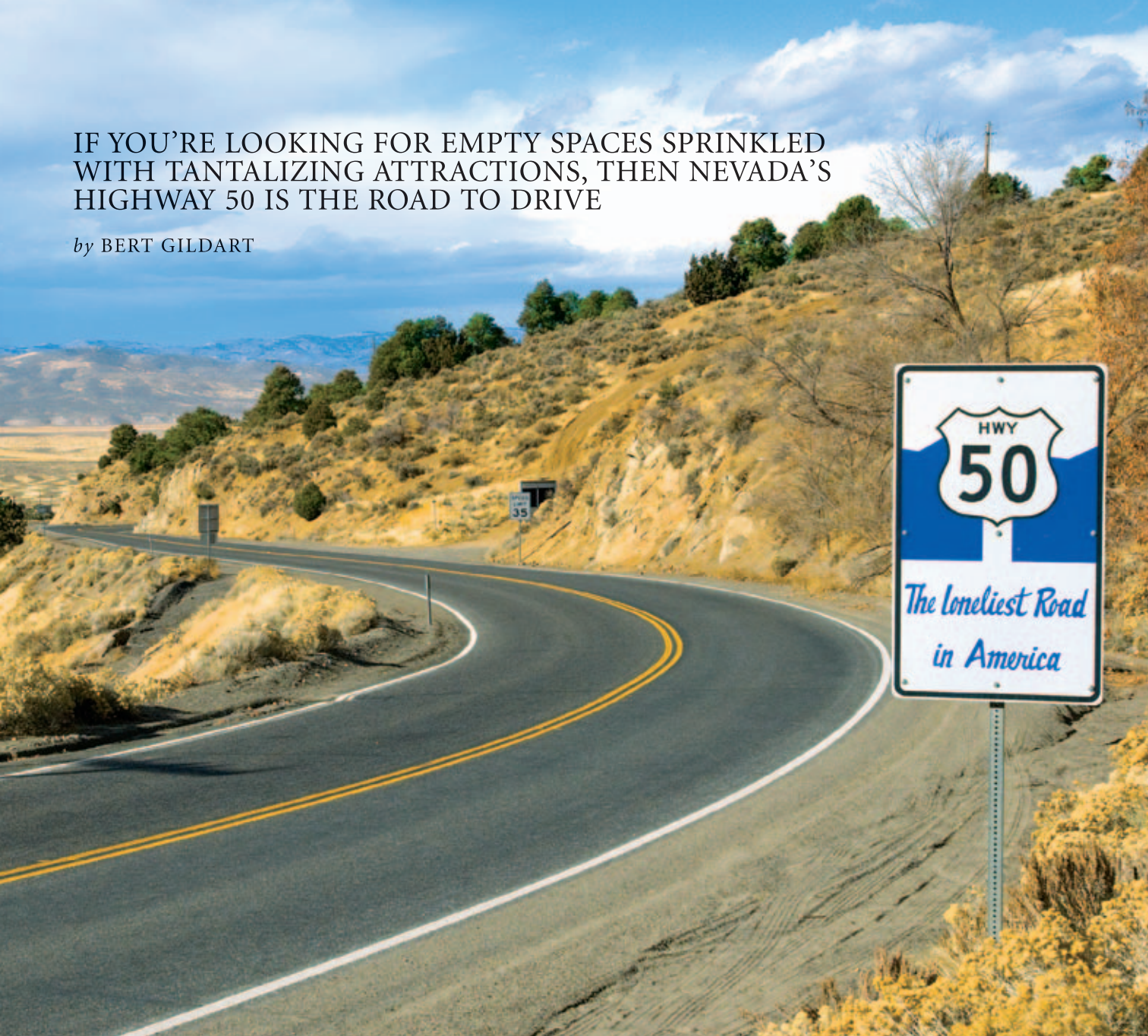
that it has served as the backdrop for major motion pictures.

Still, it remained for Life magazine to endow Highway 50 with the most telling description. Back in July 1986 it dubbed the segment through Nevada “America’s Loneliest Highway”; and if you’re looking for a region that has resisted change, Highway 50 is the road to ride.

Recognizing the tourist potential, the Silver State has capitalized on the image, offering a “Survival Kit” complete with maps. Nevada also designated the route as an official state scenic byway. If you are an RVer searching for open spaces and easy driving conditions, you’ll want to check out this corner of America. We did, and in our zeal to never bypass anything of interest, my wife Janie and I lingered on this 350-mile-long highway for about 10 days, taking in all the highway offered and many of the

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR EMPTY SPACES SPRINKLED WITH TANTALIZING ATTRACTIONS, THEN NEVADA'S HIGHWAY 50 IS THE ROAD TO DRIVE

by BERT GILDART



easily accessible attractions. During our travels I climbed Nevada's second-highest peak and we toured such places as petroglyph sites, local theaters, giant sand dunes, an old military fort — and even a genuine working brothel — concluding that Nevada certainly goes its own way.

For most, the attractions offered from Highway 50 begin near Carson City, and while there you might want to tour some of the town's historic homes, including Orion Clemens' old Victorian mansion. In 1861 Orion induced his brother Samuel, who was back in Missouri, to join him. Traveling two weeks by stage, Samuel (soon to be known as Mark Twain) joined Orion but found what he was really looking for in nearby Virginia City, also accessed from Highway 50.

Twain arrived looking for adventure — and quick riches — which he found in Virginia City, albeit briefly. Though he

was disgruntled at the time, he later joked that he was wealthy but “for an hour,” explaining he had improperly filed his mining claim. After his failed venture, Clemens turned to writing, which he had first tried in high school. Reporting for the Territorial Enterprise, Twain found an abundance of story-filled characters, and today, many of their clones haunt the old taverns and mines of Virginia City. On a mining tour with a man whose ruddy face suggested he'd spent a life in the mines, we explored a portion of the town's 700 miles of underground tunnels. Another day we listened to David John and the Comstock Cowboys in the Bucket of Blood Saloon.

Focusing on such types of people, Twain began developing his great literary humor. Twain witticisms, in fact, are posted throughout Virginia City. Of course it was wealth associated with the Comstock Lode that lured miners to

PHOTOS: BERT AND JANE GILDART; ISTOCKPHOTO.COM (LEAD)

Virginia City, and to many of the other towns along the highway.

Not far from Virginia City is the former mining town of Dayton. However, Dayton — immediately off Highway 50 — became famous not for gold and silver, but for its role as a backdrop for “The Misfits,” a 1961 movie starring Clark Gable, Marilyn Monroe and Montgomery Clift.

In the movie, Mia’s restaurant in Dayton was used, and if you take a little time to visit the restaurant’s contiguous bar, you’ll see life-size photographs of Marilyn Monroe. Knowing about the movie’s impact on the area, we camped one night in Dayton and then watched the movie on DVD. With a little direction from the bartender, we found the setting for a major scene in which Marilyn Monroe had sat on a pile of trash, listening as Montgomery Clift poured

out his tales of broken-hearted loves. Clift played a masterful role as a cowboy working rodeos, and Gable had the role of an aging cowboy determined at times to lose himself in the empty space of Nevada. Here, we soon discovered, you can easily do that better than most any place else in America, definitely making Highway 50 the road to ride.

The road lends itself to isolation. In the course of our journey, we traveled over six passes exceeding 6,000 feet in height. Then, just west of Austin, we entered the Reese River Valley and drove through a vast saltpan, which Twain elaborated on in his book “Roughing It.”

“... we crossed the Great American Desert — 40 memorable miles of bottomless sand, into which the coach wheels sunk from 6 inches to a foot.”

Space and distance; distance and space. On and on



Above: In Virginia City, Behr Hofner helps the Elliott sisters of Bakersfield, Calif., pan for gold. Below: Frank Rappold is dwarfed as he stands at the 13,063-foot summit of Wheeler Peak in Great Basin National Park. Below left: The famous “Shoe Tree” off Highway 50 is always good for a laugh. Left: Robin Riggs explains the archaeological digs conducted in Berlin-Ichthyosaur State Park. There are intact specimens of dinosaurs dating back 40 million years.



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'AMERICA'S LONELIEST HIGHWAY'

went the lonely road for a total of about 350 miles through an unchanged land — peaking at 7,484 feet near Austin Summit, where at high noon we clocked but one vehicle in a 20-minute period.

In addition to transporting us to lonely places, Highway 50 has preserved part of its interesting past. One such area is Fort Churchill, established to protect settlers from Indians. Another is Berlin-Ichthyosaur State Park, located to the south of Highway 50. We camped there and the next morning we toured the old mining site of Berlin. Here, at the park, we also joined Robin Riggs and listened to his explanation of the finds resulting from a major archaeological excavation at the Ichthyosaur site. Riggs showed us intact specimens of fish-like dinosaurs that dated back 40 million years. Then we returned to Highway 50 proper and found the famous “Shoe Tree,” which seemed to scoff at the notion of loneliness. We drove an additional 10 miles to the Cold Spring Pony Express Station.

“Throwing thousands of shoes into a tree,” said manager Barbara Chappell, “is just one of those things people do in a lonely land to break the sameness and get a chuckle.” She also told about some of the hardships endured by Express Riders, focusing on Bob Haslem, a rider in 1861. His story sheds light on why young men were chosen for their skills as riders, and, yes, on their short-lived lives.

According to Chappell, Bob Haslem rode from Lake Tahoe past Cold Springs to Smith Creek Station. On his return he found that Paiutes had killed attendants at Cold Springs, so he kept on going, finding a fresh mount at the next station. He kept going to Lake Tahoe, making it a 300-mile horseback trip completed in just two days.

We digested the story, then asked Chappell to sign our Highway 50 “Survival Guide,” which was definitely a tourist gimmick. Still, we cheerfully subscribed, for upon completion you realize that there is an element of “major achievement.”

Though the old Pony Express way stations were fascinating, it was the towns with their bars and signs bragging of “GIRLS, GIRLS, GIRLS” (not noted or advertised in the survival kit) that seemed to offer such a potpourri of characters. Near the end of our journey in a town called Eureka — across from a filling station that had labeled itself

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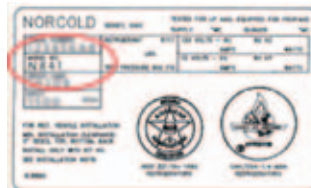
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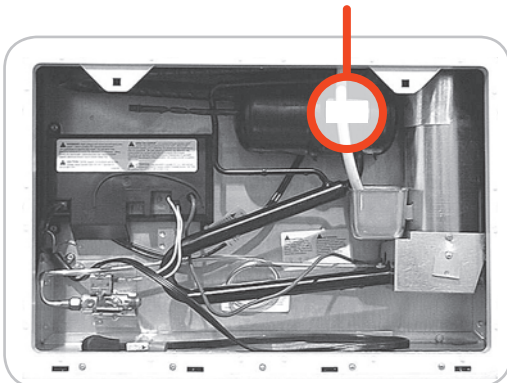


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THE PAMPERED CAMPER

SOME RV PARKS AND RESORTS NOW OFFER MASSAGE, ACUPUNCTURE AND OTHER **WELLNESS ACTIVITIES**

by JEFF CRIDER



In addition to a nine-hole golf course and therapeutic hot mineral baths, The Springs at Borrego RV Resort offers yoga, Pilates, tai chi, acupuncture, acupressure and many types of massage. The luxury resort has 90 pull-through RV sites — each 35 feet wide — with full hookups, including cable and high-speed Wi-Fi.



After being diagnosed with cancer last summer, Sheri Fraser went through nearly two months of chemotherapy, radiation and proton therapy.

After it was over, she couldn't wait to escape with her husband, Terry, to one of their favorite getaways, The Springs at Borrego RV Resort in Borrego Springs.

The 90-site luxury desert resort, on the outskirts of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park in the Southern California desert, includes panoramic views of rugged mountains and hot mineral baths with natural spring water from an on-site well.

What Fraser didn't expect when she visited the park last winter, however, was its newest amenity: a wellness center led by Anna Morris, a holistic health practitioner and expert in Ayurvedic massage who trained with Deep-



Water aerobics classes are available to RV guests at no additional charge at The Springs at Borrego RV Resort in Southern California. One of the wellness activities offered at The Great Outdoors RV Nature and Golf Resort in Titusville, Fla., is Zumba — a dance fitness system that incorporates Latin music with easy-to-follow exercise moves. An outdoor labyrinth, like the one at Sacred Rocks Reserve, is truly an unusual feature for an RV resort. Unlike a maze, which tries to trick the participant, a labyrinth quiets the mind and helps facilitate meditation.



ak Chopra and Dr. Vasant Lad, two of the nation's premier experts in holistic health medicine.

"It was just heaven," said Fraser, 51. "Anna was one of the best massage therapists I've ever been to."

And she's not the only massage therapist at the RV resort's wellness center. Joining her are Amy Baay, a licensed massage practitioner, and Betty Patterson, a licensed acupuncturist who also does herbal medicine and teaches classes in Qigong, an energy building exercise with slow body movements.

"It was just surreal to think that I had all these things available to me while I was camping," Fraser said.

The Springs at Borrego RV Resort isn't the only park offering these kinds of amenities. Several RV resorts across the country, in fact, are broadening their repertoire of health- and wellness-oriented amenities to soothe body, mind and, in some cases, even the spiritual health and well-being of its guests.

Consider The Great Outdoors RV Nature and Golf Resort in Titusville, Fla., about 30 minutes from Orlando. The 1,625-site park, one of the largest in the Sunbelt, has two fitness centers, three swimming pools and three whirlpool spas as well as classes in Zumba, yoga and Pilates.

"We also have our own beauty salon, acupuncturist and massage therapist," said Judy Willeke, a director at the resort.

She said the resort's acupuncturist and massage therapist previously had their own offices in the Titusville area, but demand for their services was so strong they found it worthwhile to move their practices on to the resort. One of the park's residents is also a retired nutritionist, who now performs house calls to help the park's guests keep in health.

"The 60s are the new 40s," Willeke said, adding, "RVers want to take better care of themselves and they want to look good."

Chicago-based Equity LifeStyle Properties (ELS), which owns RV parks and resorts throughout the Sunbelt, is also seeing increased demand for a greater variety of health and wellness services. Professional massage practitioners work out of the fitness centers at the company's Arizona properties, including Monte Vista Village Resort in Mesa and Voyager RV Resort in Tucson. ELS also offers wellness seminars and special events at its Arizona and Florida properties throughout the winter season, said Pat Zamora, a company representative.

Doreen Fuller, activities director for Rincon Country RV Resort in Tucson, said her park also complements its pool and spa with classes in low-impact aerobics, tai chi and yoga. And, for the past three years, she said, the resort has invited several doctors and physician's assistants to provide seminars on a variety of topics, including blood pressure, joint and shoulder pain,

arthritis, as well as brain health in dementia and Alzheimer's patients.

"Most people are being very careful about their diet and they are taking better care of themselves," she said.

And it's not just retired RVers who are taking a greater interest in health and wellness activities.

"It seems like we're seeing younger people, in their 40s, come out and enjoy a weekend," said Jolene Wade, managing partner of Fountain of Youth Spa Campground in Niland, Calif. "Some are coming in to pamper themselves. But others are coming because they need limbering up."

The Fountain of Youth Spa has complemented its hot mineral baths with on-site massage therapists for many years. But Wade sees growing interest in health- and wellness-oriented activities. "There seems to be more demand for bodywork," she said.

Of course, it's certainly feasible for people to seek massages and other types of wellness activities at home. But there's something uniquely special and relaxing about engaging in these kinds of activities while enjoying time away at an RV resort.

Consider the experience of RVers at the Fountain of Youth Spa.

"We have restorative energy with beautiful views, plenty of sunshine, lots of areas to roam and hike," Wade said. "We also have a walking course within the park. You can stop at different stations and do different exercises. People like to head out into the

desert, do the walking course and relax by the pool. And we have the Chocolate Mountains that change colors all day. You can see the Salton Sea in the distance. It's really a pretty peaceful, rejuvenating experience."

Sacred Rocks Reserve in Boulevard, Calif., has taken the concept of health and wellness even further by complementing its natural surroundings with a man-made labyrinth, a circular walking path that is said to facilitate contemplation, meditation and spiritual awareness.

"The Christian church adopted the labyrinth for meditation and prayer in A.D. 300, but labyrinths have been found in carved rock much earlier. The oldest one found was about 5,000 years old," said Sharon Courmouis, who owns the park with her husband, Dimitri.

Sacred Rocks' labyrinth is a mile long and was patterned using an 800-year-old design from a monk in Chartres, France.

"It's one of the oldest symbols for spiritual connection," Courmouis said.

Unlike a maze, which tries to trick the participant, a labyrinth facilitates meditation. "What happens when you take the time to walk the path of a labyrinth is that somehow your mind becomes clear and the extraneous thoughts fall away," Courmouis said. "I've seen people who are agitated or nervous, and once they start walking in the path of a labyrinth, they are able to pull themselves in, center themselves and be in a healing environment. And because our labyrinth has only natural noises, since we're away from the freeway and in a remote location, it's a very special experience. People go out to walk the labyrinth in the morning and the evening and even at midnight when there's a blanket of stars."

Courmouis said she took a personal interest in labyrinths after a cancer diagnosis. "Five years ago, after a breast cancer diagnosis and during chemotherapy and radiation, I walked the labyrinth daily. I feel it helped me in all ways to deal with this shocking situation — emotionally, spiritually and physically," she said.

Sacred Rocks has frequent orientation sessions to explain to its guests what a labyrinth is and how to use it. "As time goes on," Courmouis said, "we find more and more people are driving up just to do the labyrinth." ♦

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DISCOVERY 40X



This page: Featuring high-gloss fiberglass, full-body paint and a one-piece bonded-in windshield, the Fleetwood Discovery is in tune with the wants and needs of discriminating motorhome buyers. Inside, the coach delivers all the livability and comfort an owner could want, and more, with comfortable seating for at least 10 adults. Opposite page: The bedroom is a sleeping haven when the MCD black-out shades are drawn. A monitor station above the co-pilot's seat houses controls for the slides, awning, leveling system, generator and inverter. An optional exterior pull-out grill and kitchenette make a nice complement to the outdoor entertainment center.





2010 DISCOVERY 40X

PHOTOS: RICH COX

WHAT'S HOT

High quality, name-brand fixtures and appliances; enormous living area when slides are deployed; robust onboard 12-volt DC electrical system; good road handling.

WHAT'S NOT

Cheesy shower diverter valve; only one towel holder in bathroom; water pump is a little anemic; could use more horsepower for climbing hills; less than compliant suspension on rough roads.

FLEETWOOD STILL HAS WHAT IT TAKES TO BUILD LUXURY COACHES FOR DISCRIMINATING MOTORHOME ENTHUSIASTS

by BOB LIVINGSTON

The Fleetwood moniker has been around a long time, and the company can certainly be credited with influencing the direction of the RV industry since the early 1970s. After hitting the wall last year and filing for bankruptcy protection, the company has reinvented itself, albeit in much more svelte form. Fleetwood emerged as a motorhome-only builder, retaining some its well-established nameplates.

One of those models is the Discovery, and we were eager to see what a fresh slate could do for Fleetwood. After spending time with the Discovery 40X, we're convinced the company hasn't lost its touch, and in this case, it has produced a motorhome that's even better than previous models.

Although the \$236,000 price tag dictates less-than-highline placement among big-bucks motorhomes, enthusiasts will be hard-pressed to deny this 40-footer luxury status. Everywhere you look, from the handsome exterior paint scheme to the interior floorplan, the coach exudes style, convenience and practicality. The first thing I noticed was the use of high-quality, name-brand components, many of which are strangers to the RV world. These top-notch fixtures and appliances, which are better able to withstand the rigors of long-term habitation, will keep potential owners from having to make redundant upgrades.

Once the opposing slides are opened up front, the biggest decision owners will have to make is where to sit. The choices include a curvy C-shaped dinette behind the driver's chair, Euro-style recliners adjacent to the dinette, or the couch on the opposite wall, next to the galley. If that's not enough, then the occupants can swivel the cockpit chairs to face the living room.

Since every seat in the house is worthy of extended lounging, settling into a favorite spot will take some experimentation — and lots of nap time. But that process will likely be influenced by activities: reading, eating, lounging or watching TV. For example, there are two TVs in the living room, one up front in a traditional mounting place above the dashboard (optional), and the larger in the wall that divides the living room from the bathroom and bedroom. The logic behind two TVs in the same room is puzzling, unless you're completely addicted to the tube. If so, you'll appreciate the third TV in the bedroom and the fourth in the outside entertainment enclosure. All four are Sony Bravias, which produce wonderful HD pictures.

Obviously, entertainment is a big factor in the design of this coach. TV visuals are backed by a surround-sound system and the signal is pulled in by an ambient antenna or the KVH automatic dome. Outside there's another high-quality stereo

SPECIFICATIONS

PERFORMANCE

FUEL ECONOMY: 9.2 MPG

ACCELERATION:

0-60 MPH: 40.0 SEC

40-60 MPH: 22.0 SEC

CHASSIS

MANUFACTURER: FLEETWOOD RV

MODEL: POWER BRIDGE

ENGINE: CUMMINS ISB 6.7-L DIESEL

SAE HP: 350 @ 2,600 RPM

TORQUE: 750 LB-FT @ 1,800 RPM

TRANSMISSION: ALLISON 3000MH

6-SPEED AUTOMATIC

AXLE RATIO: 4.88:1

TIRES: 275/70R22.5

WHEELBASE: 276"

BRAKES: AIR WITH ABS

SUSPENSION: AIR BAG

FUEL CAP: 100 GAL

WARRANTY: 3 YRS/50,000 MILES

COACH

EXT LENGTH: 41' 4"

EXT WIDTH: 8' 6"

EXT HEIGHT: 12' 10"

INT WIDTH: 8'

INT HEIGHT: 7'

CONSTRUCTION: VACU-BOND WALLS, FLOOR AND CEILING. TPO ROOF.

FRESHWATER CAP: 100 GAL

BLACK-WATER CAP: 50 GAL

GRAY-WATER CAP: 75 GAL

WATER-HEATER CAP: 16 GAL

LP-GAS CAP: 30 GAL

FURNACE (2): 20,000/30,000 BTU

AIR CONDITIONER (2): 15,000/11,000 BTU

REFRIGERATOR: 22 CU-FT

INVERTER/CHARGER: 2,000 WATTS/100 AMPS

BATTERIES: (2) 12-VOLT CHASSIS,

(6) 6-VOLT COACH

AC GENERATOR: 8 KW, DIESEL

BASE MSRP: \$236,719

MSRP AS TESTED: \$224,364

WARRANTY: COACH, 1 YR/15,000 MILES; STRUCTURAL, 3 YRS/45,000 MILES

WET WEIGHT

(WATER AND HEATER, FUEL, LP-GAS TANKS

FULL; NO SUPPLIES OR PASSENGERS)

FRONT AXLE: 9,780 LBS

REAR AXLE: 17,920 LBS

TOTAL: 27,700 LBS

CHASSIS RATINGS

GAWR, F/R: 12,000/20,000 LBS

GVWR/GCWR: 32,000/42,000 LBS

ROCCC: 4,300 LBS

(DEDUCT WEIGHT OF PASSENGERS FOR NET CARGO CAPACITY)

GAWR: GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING

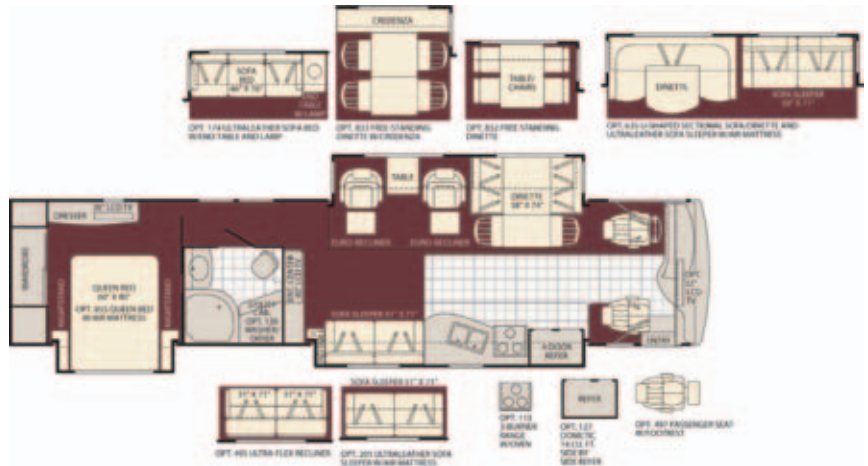
GVWR: GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING

GCWR: GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING

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

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The glass shower features a skylight and plenty of cubbyholes for stowing necessities. Fleetwood earns kudos for providing a very robust onboard 12-volt DC electrical system with six 6-volt deep-cycle batteries and two 12-volt starting batteries.

and speakers next to the TV, which hopefully will be used with your RV park neighbors in attendance. If you like to party, the pull-out exterior cooking station — with refrigerator, sink and barbecue platform — is very appealing and a perfect complement to the outside entertainment center.

For those who prefer to cook indoors, the front galley on the curbside offers exceptional spaciousness and the proper accoutrements. With the exceptions of the LP-gas

stove and oven, the kitchen is graced with non-RV components, such as the big, two-door residential refrigerator (with water and ice dispensers in the door) and the GE Profile microwave/convection oven. The solid-surface countertop and sinks are fitted with a Moen faucet with a pullout sprayer, soap and lotion dispensers, surrounded by a generous selection of cabinets and drawers.

The optional 22-cubic-foot refrigerator operates only on 120-volt AC power, which is supported by an additional 2,000-watt pure sine-wave inverter and two extra 6-volt, golf cart batteries. We let the refrigerator run without battery charging (other than what we got from the optional 65-watt solar panel) for most of the day with no problems, but boondocking will require the use of the 8 kW Onan diesel generator. Kudos to Fleetwood for providing a very robust onboard 12-volt DC electrical system backed by a total of six 6-volt batteries and two 12-volt starting batteries.

A central monitoring station above the co-pilot's seat provides instant access to the electrical system condition, including input and output power and battery state of charge. The controls for the slides, awning, leveling system, generator, inverter, water pump, water heater and co-pilot's retractable floor are part of the monitoring/control package behind the glass-faced cabinet door.

Complementing the living/galley portion of the coach is a gorgeous ceramic tile floor that extends to the bedroom, where carpeting is used. There's also an abundance of overhead storage cabinets and a number of strategically placed drawers — including two large drawers in the dinette structure. Rich-looking woodwork, understated — but aesthetically pleasing — window treatments, large windows and plenty

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DISCOVERY 40X

of lighting fixtures round out the décor. Windows are dual pane and covered by high-quality MCD Innovations pull-down window shades (diffuser and blackout). The MCDs are the best we've used in RVs.

Down the side hall is the bathroom on the curbside and rear bedroom. Allocated space for the bathroom is just about perfect and is highlighted by a corner shower with rounded doors. The skylight adds plenty of light and additional headroom — and there are even enough cubbyholes for stowing necessities like soap and shampoo.

Generous cabinetry for storing folded towels and toiletries contrasts beautifully with the tile floor, large sink and lighting fixtures, but I hope the single towel holder was just an oversight. Also, the shower diverter valve was way out of sync with the rest of the coach. It's one of those cheesy RV valves that does a poor job of mixing the hot and cold water.

Out back, the bedroom is pretty much standard fare, with a few features thrown in to bolster comfort. The queen bed with optional air mattress fits snugly into the slide structure, leaving limited, but enough, room to maneuver around it. Small shelves on each side, good lighting and controls for the generator are all within easy reach. Mirrored sliding doors conceal the rear wardrobe and there's an optional stacked washer/dryer in the adjacent closet. Once the blackout shades are drawn, there's total darkness. The only thing that can disturb a good night's sleep is the nearby hot water tank, which will serenade you if left on LP-gas instead of silent electric.

Overall, the creature comforts afforded by the systems work as designed. Heat and air are distributed well and there is good holding tank and freshwater tank support. The water pump is on the anemic side for such a big coach, but that's a simple matter of the factory selecting a pump with a higher flow rate. Hooked up, the water system flows nicely.

Hookup utilities are accessed through a single compartment door, laid out in a very usable fashion. There's even a gravity fill for water, which is rare these days in a luxury coach. We learned the hard way that the outside faucet valves (for the spray-down nozzle) must be closed in order for hot water to flow to the inside fixtures.

Outside storage will keep any pack rat

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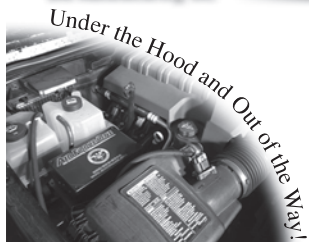
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happy and with more than two tons of capacity, the rig will undoubtedly be filled up by its owners. All the doors open to the side for super convenience and there's even a shallow compartment with peg-board to handle tool display and storage.

On the road, the Discovery is pleasant to drive, with a big part of the comfort attributed to the plush power captain's seat and the ergonomics of the instrumentation, steering wheel and pedals. Controls are easy to reach and visibility is excellent, helped by the side-view cameras that send an image to the monitor screen when the turn signals are deployed.

The coach is built atop a proprietary Power Bridge chassis using Spartan components and tied to a 350-HP Cummins engine and Allison six-speed auto transmission. Handling is very good, but the powertrain could use a few more ponies, especially traveling uphill. The rig slowed to 40 MPH on a three-mile, 7-percent grade, without towing a vehicle. On the other side of the grade, the engine brake held the coach back to controllable speeds without major brake pedal work. Maintaining a steady 60-65 MPH on flat ground, we were able to realize as much as 9.2 MPG.

It was easy acclimating to driving this coach; there were no surprises, other than the less-than-compliant suspension on rough highways. The choppy ride was a little more pronounced than we expected for an air-suspended 30,000-pound coach (loaded for the trip); once we left the concrete with the infamous expansion joints, the ride was very smooth. The sharp turning cut allowed critical maneuvers in camp, even though the rig is almost 41½ feet, bumper to bumper.

The bumpy ride on certain roads aside, piloting the Discovery was fatigue free, even after spending many hours behind the wheel.

Based on our time with this coach, it's clear that Fleetwood is in tune with the wants and needs of discriminating buyers. The Discovery 40X delivers all the livability an owner could want, and more. Combined with its wide-open floorplan augmented by three slides, the Discovery 40X will make a nice home-on-wheels for motorhome buyers who are looking to spread out for long periods of time.

If the Discovery is an example of the new company's culture, then, indeed, Fleetwood is back. ♦

MORE POWER!



BOOST PERFORMANCE AND MILEAGE FOR GASOLINE-FUELED COACHES WITH THESE AFTERMARKET PRODUCTS FROM GALE BANKS

by KEN FREUND



We've never met a motorhome owner who felt the ol' coach had too much power, or that its mileage couldn't use improvement. To this end, Gale Banks and his staff have developed numerous performance-enhancing products for most popular motorhomes that can improve acceleration and hill-climbing speeds and boost fuel economy. This seemingly impossible combination of more power and mileage is done by improving the efficiency of the engine.

Banks has been in the hot rodding, racing and RV performance industry for more than half a century. His background in engineering has led the firm to develop innovative methods of gaining performance with a systems approach — rather than piecemeal — to provide complete turnkey products. Many vendors offer only one or a few parts and leave it up to the consumer to try to install them, get them to work properly and hopefully pass emissions testing if your area requires it.

We recently followed along as a retail customer from Minnesota drove to Banks' headquarters in Azusa, Calif., to get a "factory" installation. These motorhome owners tow a dinghy vehicle and



A 2003 Itasca 32-foot Sunrise motorhome on a Workhorse W22 chassis underwent installation of a Gale Banks PowerPack System and OttoMind controller. Above: The OttoMind Programmer is an optional component that works with the PowerPack and delivers power on demand by removing the factory's power delay; it also provides service-technician diagnostic capabilities, displays critical engine functions and is upgradable. Top right: During installation of the PowerPack, the technician must reroute starter wires before removing the existing exhaust manifolds. Right: Restrictive stock cast-iron manifolds (shown), which are known to warp and crack, were replaced with Banks' TorqueTube headers.

felt their coach could use a little more power and mileage. Banks provided a parking place and electrical power so the rig could be plugged in the night before work began.

The test unit was a 2003 Itasca 32-foot Sunrise on a Workhorse W22 chassis powered by a fuel-injected GM Vortec 8.1-L V-8 gas engine and backed by an Allison five-speed automatic transmission. This model is rated at 340 HP and 455 LB-FT of torque, measured at the flywheel. However, Banks chassis dynamometer testing has shown that only 241 HP and 341 LB-FT of torque made it through the torque converter, transmission, driveline and rear axle gears to drive the rear wheels.

We took the motorhome for a test drive before the installation and measured acceleration and noted the sound, engine performance and general feel of the motorhome. After the installation, we repeated the same test drive and route.

The shop opened at 6 a.m. sharp, and an experienced technician who has been doing installations at Banks for nine years drove the coach up on the lift right away. Two techs began removing the stock parts, inspecting the components and preparing for installation of the full PowerPack System plus OttoMind controller. It was a flurry of wrenches, but it was also obvious that they had done this many times and knew exactly what to do.

Banks has found that there are several choke points in the stock intake and exhaust. Think of a garden hose; flow is deter-

mined by the most restricted point. If there is a kink anywhere, total flow is limited by that point. Suction-loss tests show that the stock air intake creates a high flow loss that limits air intake and maximum power output potential.

The intake solution is to install a bigger air-filter housing and large-sized tubing, and replace the stock paper air-filter element with a larger, cleanable, reusable K&N-designed part. Banks' lab testing has shown this takes care of improving airflow on the intake side.

The exhaust solution starts at the cylinder heads. Restrictive stock cast-iron manifolds are replaced with long, smooth-flowing Banks TorqueTube headers constructed of heavy wall 400-series stainless steel tubing with $\frac{3}{8}$ -inch-thick flanges. Stock manifolds can exceed 1,550 degrees Fahrenheit and are known to warp, crack or shear bolts and blow out gaskets. By reducing backpressure and providing more surface area for cooling, the headers run cooler and the thick flanges allow them to be run sans gaskets to eliminate any chance of failure there.

To maintain emissions compliance, the stock dual catalytic converters are retained. This system has a California Air Resources Board (CARB) executive order number and is smog legal in all 50 states. Behind them, the restrictive stock mufflers are removed and a large Monster exhaust with stainless steel tubing leads into a large stainless Dynaflo muffler. The dual-inlet muffler has



integral heat shielding and is resonance-tuned to direct exhaust gases through a suite of chambers, rather than using packing that can blow out or clog a muffler. It's capped off by a hefty chrome outlet on the driver's side just ahead of the rear axle.

By early afternoon the coach was finished and rolled out of the shop. It was clean and complete — with paper floor mats in place to protect the carpets — and ready for a road test. Before installation, the engine ran quietly and smoothly, but felt a bit sluggish and unresponsive. After the installation, the engine still started up and ran smoothly, but it had a noticeable exhaust rumble from the jumbo tailpipe tip that gave away the extra power on tap. On the road, the engine felt more responsive and revved up more quickly. When upshifts occurred, power didn't seem to fade like it did before, and the engine kept on pulling. In addition to our seat-of-the-pants impression, our stopwatch backed it up. Zero-to-60 MPH runs took an average of almost three seconds less; that's about a football field shorter to reach highway speed from an onramp.

Banks' chassis dynamometer testing on a similar 2004 Workhorse W22 chassis with PowerPack and OttoMind upgrades on the same engine and transmission combination showed some major improvements. The best gain showed a jump from 222.2 rear-wheel HP at 4,200 RPM to 292.4 horses at the same speed. That's a gain of 70 HP, 32 percent more than stock. Torque improvement was

similar, going from 302.3 LB-FT at 3,800 RPM to 394.6 at the same RPM. That pencils out to 92.3 LB-FT, a 31 percent gain over stock.

Other results included a gain from 57 MPH in third gear to 67 MPH in fourth gear on a 6-percent highway grade. Being able to pull a higher gear helps fuel economy and reduces strain on the engine. Banks' mileage testing showed an 8-percent improvement at a steady 70 MPH on flat road. These are results you can feel in the real world.

Banks offers systems for most popular models, including the Ford and GM P-series. Suggested retail price for the 2001-2006 Workhorse W-series PowerPack with OttoMind is \$3,049.47 and installation was \$845.50 (9.5 hours). The PowerPack without OttoMind is \$2,524.21 and installation would be \$756.50 (8.5 hours). Sales tax is additional and prices may vary with individual dealers across the country.

We found that the Banks products are well engineered, manufactured and installed. They offer a lot of bang for the buck and improve the way the motorhome runs and feels. We wouldn't hesitate to recommend them. ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Gale Banks Engineering
800-601-8072,
www.bankspower.com.

Last October, MotorHome ran an exclusive test on the first Sprinter-based Class A — the Winnebago Via. In the article we mentioned that Winnebago Industries would soon be rolling out a second floorplan, one with a queen bed on the driver's side in front of a rear bathroom. The new floorplan (25R) was unveiled in December and is the latest addition to the Winnebago Via/Itasca Reyo lineup of fuel-efficient Class A motorhomes.

Fuel efficiency — through technology, aerodynamics and lightweight materials — wrapped in a contemporary design is the hallmark of this Mercedes-Benz-powered Class A on an F-50 cowl chassis with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 11,030 pounds.

At a length of only 25 feet, 5 inches, the Reyo feels larger thanks to its open, airy interior. The layout has a distinctly European flair and lacks traditional boxy cabinetry. The living area features an amidships queen-size bed and an adjacent sofa bed

in the 12½-foot streetside slideout. A generous hanging wardrobe, storage areas and drawer space are conveniently located opposite.

At first glance, the centrally located bed seemed out of place, but it turned out to be a very useful feature we endorse. It provided a comfortable and convenient place to stretch out and read (spelled n-a-p), watch the wall-mounted 32-inch LCD TV or simply stay out of the chef's way, yet still remain a part of the conversation.

And then there's the view. A pair of large, scratch-resistant dual-pane acrylic windows next to the bed make you realize what you've missed in rear-bed floorplans. Pull-down window screens offer an alternative to traditional fixed-screen panels and fasten to the pull-up nightshades regulating the bugs, the breeze or the light, while providing just the right amount of interior privacy and ventilation.

Overnight guests can be accommodated on the 36-by-67-inch sofa bed or in the StudioLoft, a spring-assisted, pull-down

ITASCA REYO 25R



BUILT ON A SPRINTER CHASSIS, THIS COACH JUST MIGHT CHANGE THE WAY YOU LOOK AT CLASS A MOTORHOMES

by FRED PAUSCH

49-by-73-inch bed above the cockpit. It's simple to use — just recline the cockpit seatbacks and release a pair of retaining hooks, and the bed is pulled down into position. Lighted by an adjustable low-draw LED reading lamp and ringed by a privacy curtain, the setup creates the perfect "Fort Reyo" for the kids. When the bed is lowered, it's about waist-high, which means getting in and out should pose little problem for some users.

The curbside galley is designed for space efficiency while retaining the ability to prepare full menus. It employs a dual-burner cooktop and single 14-inch basin sink, both with recessed glass covers, offering additional and useful countertop space when not in use.

The Italian-styled (Tecnoform) mocha-colored cabinetry with metallic accent inlay and matching door hardware gives a fresh, contemporary feel to the galley. The cabinets are composed of a lightweight material that, according to the company, offers a 15-percent weight savings over traditional cabinetry.

An IntelliSense one-touch glass screen systems monitor is positioned above the refrigerator and keeps tabs on the coach's capacities while blending in with the cabinet trim. The 7-cubic-foot, Dometic three-way auto refrigerator features a 6-degree, plus or minus, tilt tolerance, removable freezer compartment, vegetable drawers, fingertip latching and an audio "door-open" alarm.

The convection/microwave with lighted power exhaust hood handles cooking/baking needs, and if a major vertical cooktop spatter occurs, the durable vinyl ceiling makes cleanup easy. A

2010 ITASCA REYO 25R

WHAT'S HOT

Airy interior; large dual-pane acrylic windows with pull-down screens; pullout laptop work table; 6-foot-4 domed skylight in shower; excellent road manners and fuel efficiency.

WHAT'S NOT

Generator is noisy, making it difficult to hear the TV.



The Reyo feels larger than its 25-foot 5-inch length, thanks to 14 inches of aisle width when the rig's streetside slide is extended. The 49-by-73-inch bed above the cockpit includes a reading lamp and is ringed by a privacy curtain. Once it's set up in camp, the StudioLoft becomes the perfect "Fort Reyo" for the kids. Centered dash controls include an optional satellite radio/dock, in-dash rearview monitor and optional turn-signal activated side-view cameras. The tip-shift paddle shifter allows specific gear selection.





The angled rear bath includes a shower and runs nearly the full width of the coach. It has a handy corner medicine cabinet with vertical accent/night lights.

handsome mottled vinyl flooring is laid throughout the coach, augmented by throw rugs for the cabin and cockpit.

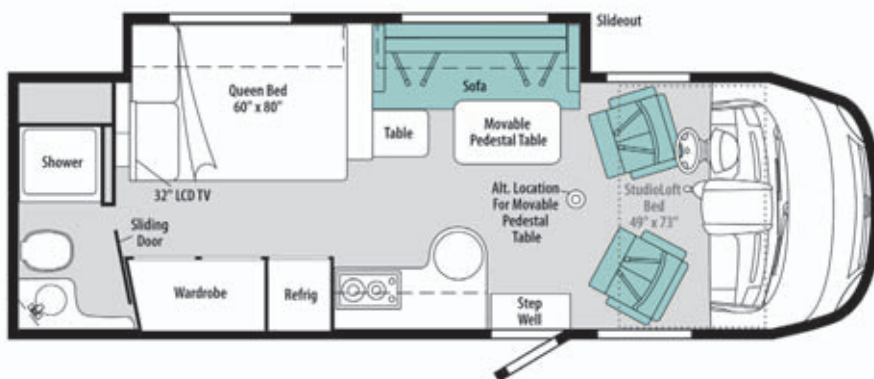
Meal service can be handled in a variety of ways using the lightweight 22-by-31-inch pole table that stows under the sofa. One floor socket is located in front of the sofa and a second one is between the cockpit seats, which swivel to create additional cabin seating. We appreciated the useful pullout laptop work table concealed in the cabinetry between the sofa and bed. It can also be used for meal service when needed.

The entertainment system consists of an AM-FM/CD/DVD unit with four ceiling speakers and hookups for a DVR, satellite receiver or other AV component. Over-the-

air HD TV reception was excellent using the amplified HD-ready batwing-style antenna. We enjoyed the 32-inch LCD TV despite a slight oscillating background hum from the inverter. It has a significant power appetite for the pair of deep-cycle house batteries, so if you enjoy TV in remote locations, a smaller screen or larger batteries may be the solution. Running the generator to reclaim lost battery capacity made it difficult to hear the TV, and we encourage Itasca to consider adding additional sound-deadening materials to reduce the resonance.

The angled rear bath runs nearly the full width of the coach with the shower offset inboard. This creates a large, useful street-side exterior storage compartment behind it, augmenting the conventional lower storage compartments. The nearly 6-foot-4-inch-high shower has a domed skylight and is equipped with a useful clothes rod for wet items. The optional (\$98) power ventilator makes quick work of clearing the large mirror above the vanity when the sliding privacy door is closed. Additional vanity storage is available as well as a handy corner medicine cabinet with vertical accent/night lights. RVers venturing into cold climes can still enjoy those hot showers and will appreciate Itasca's optional (\$224) heated drain system. It's been tested to 10 degrees Fahrenheit using heating pads to head off freezing in holding tanks and drain valves.

Getting behind the wheel is always the highlight of the trip for us and the Reyo did not disappoint. There's excellent visibility through the panoramic windshield and side glass, plus additional visibility from the heated electric mirrors, which provide a clear, vibration-free look at where you've been.



SPECIFICATIONS

PERFORMANCE

FUEL ECONOMY: 15.8 MPG

ACCELERATION:

0-60 MPH: 24.0 SEC

40-60 MPH: 15.0 SEC

CHASSIS

MANUFACTURER: MERCEDES-BENZ

MODEL: SPRINTER F-50 COWL

ENGINE: 3.0-L 6-CYLINDER TURBODIESEL

SAE HP: 154 @ 3,400 RPM

TORQUE: 280 LB-FT @ 1,200 RPM

TRANSMISSION: 5-SPEED AUTOMATIC WITH TIP SHIFT

AXLE RATIO: 3.92:1

TIRES: LT215/85R16 LRE

WHEELBASE: 170"

BRAKES: DISC

SUSPENSION, F/R: INDEPENDENT FRONT WITH STABILIZER/LONGITUDINAL REAR LEAFS WITH STABILIZER

FUEL CAP: 25 GAL

WARRANTY: 3 YRS/36,000 MILES

COACH

EXT LENGTH: 25' 5"

EXT WIDTH: 7' 6"

EXT HEIGHT: 10' 10"

INT WIDTH: 7' 3"

INT HEIGHT: 6' 5"

CONSTRUCTION: STEEL AND ALUMINUM FRAMING, FIBERGLASS EXTERIOR WALLS AND ONE-PIECE FIBERGLASS ROOF, POLYSTYRENE INSULATION

FRESHWATER CAP: 30 GAL

BLACK-WATER CAP: 30 GAL

GRAY-WATER CAP: 40 GAL

WATER-HEATER CAP: 6 GAL

LP-GAS CAP: 13 GAL

FURNACE (1): 20,000 BTU

AIR CONDITIONER (1): 13,500 BTU WITH HEAT PUMP

REFRIGERATOR: 7 CU-FT

CONVERTER/CHARGER: 45 AMP

INVERTER: 300 WATTS

BATTERY (1): 12-VOLT CHASSIS,

(2) GROUP 24 12-VOLT COACH

AC GENERATOR: 3.2 KW

BASE MSRP: \$136,466

MSRP AS TESTED: \$141,226

WARRANTY: 1 YR/15,000 MILES

WET WEIGHT

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

FRONT AXLE: 3,700 LBS

REAR AXLE: 6,460 LBS

TOTAL: 10,160 LBS

CHASSIS RATINGS

GAWR, F/R: 4,410/7,720 LBS

GVWR/GCWR: 11,030/15,250 LBS

ROCC: 870 LBS

(DEDUCT WEIGHT OF PASSENGERS FOR NET CARGO CAPACITY)

GAWR: GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING

GVWR: GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING

GCWR: GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING

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

WINNEBAGO INDUSTRIES

641-585-3535,

WWW.WINNEBAGOIND.COM.

Centered dash controls include the optional (\$336) satellite radio/dock, in-dash 5½-inch rearview monitor and optional (\$161) turn signal-activated side-view cameras. They are all surrounded by the optional (\$175) panel appliqué, stacking dash climate and radio functions within easy reach of the Ultraleather captain's chairs. The chairs are equipped with a power-lift feature needed to clear the cab's step-down when swiveling them to face the cabin. A useful driver information screen located between the simple twin gauges provides numerous service, fuel and distance functions, conveniently controlled from the steering wheel. The tip-shift paddle allows conventional transmission control or specific gear selection with a flick of the shifter.

We drove a favorite section of moderately twisting mountain road that was fodder for the resilient Reyo suspension. The coach dismissed roadway irregularities without jarring or negative steering feedback and without significant body lean. With power on tap for steeper sections at posted speeds, braking was excellent during the decent. Controlled without fade and when combined with the engine braking of the Mercedes-Benz, it felt more like a large Class B.

The subject of factory servicing is an often-asked question and as of Jan. 1, specific Mercedes-Benz and Freightliner dealers will handle factory and warranty service on upfitted 2010 Sprinter vans and chassis. Dodge-branded chassis through 2009 will continue to be serviced by Dodge (go to www.mbsprinterusa.com or www.freightlinersprinterusa.com to locate dealers).

In camp, the Reyo's full-body standard paint turned heads. Its sharp turning radius and excellent visibility allowed us to maneuver into the scenic lake-view campsites normally favored by smaller coaches. Within seconds, the slide was extended and we were ready for the day's activities in a beautiful oak-shaded campground.

The fuel-efficient Reyo is an easy to use and drive coach that has the features and conveniences found in larger motorhomes. The Reyo is a new breed of Class A that will certainly spark the competition and requires very little out of the box other than food, fuel and a sense of adventure. ♦

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RV Generators



Cummins Onan EC-30W Wireless Generator Auto-Start

- Wireless operation means the average coach owner can install the unit in under 30 minutes
- Can monitor shore power to only start when power is lost



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Onan Corporation, go to www.motorhomemagazine.com/info



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All proceeds benefit Innovations Housing, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that builds affordable homes for low-income families around the world.

Raffle monitored by Nystrom & Company, LLP, CPAs of Redding, CA. State of California, Department of Justice Raffle Registration Number R-173. Must be over 18 to enter. Void where prohibited. Winner need not be present to win.

Winner will take home a new 40-foot Winnebago Journey motorhome or \$250,000.00. Winner responsible for taxes, title and license.

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Drawing Will Be August 31st, 2010

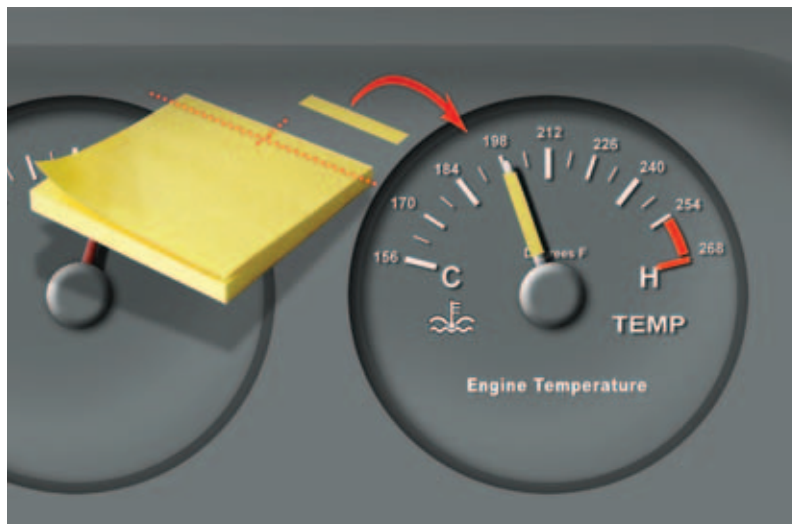
Innovations Housing, go to www.motorhomemagazine.com/info



JOIN THE CLUBS

The prongs on a shorepower cord can easily become damaged due to dirt, gravel or other debris. Even storing the cord in your bin can cause damage. To alleviate this problem I found that a golf club cover for a wood driver is the right size and shape and it zips up to protect the prongs. I put it on when I unplug the cord from the power source until I need to use it again.

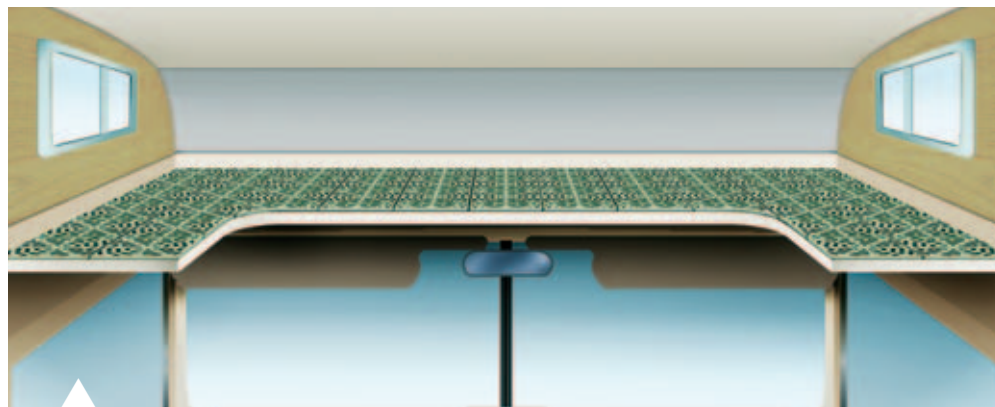
RICK ZELLER | COVINGTON, LA.



STICK FIGURES

When I'm driving and glance at the dash gauges, I have to remember what the normal readings are for the vehicle I'm driving. I cut thin strips from the sticky end of a self-stick note and put them on the gauge where the normal reading should be. Then it's easy to glance at the gauge and see if the reading is in or out of the normal range.

JOSEPH VOLK | PAHRUMP, NEV.



BUNK ALL WET? TILE DRY

I had a problem with moisture under the mattress of the cabover bunk in my Class C motorhome. I needed something that would allow air to circulate between the mattress and the bunk bottom. My solution was to install a material called Easy Tile 12-inch by 12-inch Dry Floor Interlocking Drainage Tiles over the complete bunk bottom area (I used 28 tiles). Since then no moisture has been detected. The tiles are 3/16-inch thick and have ample air space. They come in boxes of 10 tiles at about \$25 per box and are available online and at Ace Hardware.

KEITH JOHNSON | BOW, WASH. ♦

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.

ILLUSTRATIONS: BILL TIPTON

techsavvy

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



HANDS-ON | by KEVIN LIVINGSTON

AIRING UP

VIAIR's 400PA-RV portable air compressor kit allows convenient on-the-road tire maintenance

Proper maintenance procedures suggest that tire pressure should be checked frequently. It's prudent to verify — and adjust, if necessary — tire pressure (including the spare, which is commonly overlooked) before setting out on any trip. The problem is, pressure should be checked while the tires are cold and unless you have a compressor at home or on board, you'll have to drive somewhere to get air, which heats up the tires. The solution is to have some sort of portable compressor handy, such as the VIAIR 400PA-RV — an automatic shut-off model designed specifically for RV use.

VIAIR has been a player in the portable air compressor field for a long time and is known for its high-quality products. The company's 400PA-RV kit features a 12-volt DC air compressor powered via a fused set of alligator clips. For dispersing the pressurized air, a tire inflation gun with a 130-psi inline gauge and bleeder valve is provided to make the process simple and accurate. The inflation gun has two filling chucks: a 45-degree extended-reach hard chuck (ideal for dual wheels) and a handy 90-degree twist-on. The manufacturer includes everything in one convenient heavy-duty carry bag that holds the compressor, filling attachments and the included primary and extension hoses. The hoses, when connected, supply more than a 60-foot reach from the compressor, which allows access to the tires regardless of where the compressor connects to the battery. And all

the components easily fit back in the bag without frustration.

To use the 400PA-RV, simply attach the aforementioned cushion grip alligator clips to a battery and hook up the hose and air chuck. All the fittings and hoses connect using quick-connect air couplings similar to the ones used in auto repair shops. The automatic shut-off function turns the compressor off between fillings, without having to disconnect the battery clips.

The performance of the 400PA-RV lived up to our expectations. The compressor, for example, was able to fill a tire from 0 psi to 70 psi in five minutes and 50 seconds. This model compressor has a 33-percent duty cycle, meaning it can run continuously for 15 minutes at 100 psi (72 degrees) before needing 30 minutes rest time. It's unlikely owners will experience shutdown mode since the compressor will usually be used to top off the tires, which only takes a few minutes. The compressor has a maximum working pressure of 150 psi.

We especially liked the gun-style inflation tool and gauge. It was far more stable filling through the use of the gun versus an average hose and chuck. Couple the gun with the two quick-connect hoses and the VIAIR 400PA-RV kit is a home run for RVers looking to maintain proper air pressure, on the road or at home. The kit can be purchased through online retailers for about \$280.

For more information, call 949-585-0011, or visit www.viaircorp.com. ♦



Cancellation Concern

Displeased with the early termination fee charged by his satellite TV service provider, a reader requested Hot Line's help. He wrote:

Last June I signed up with DIRECTV for satellite service in my motorhome. I specifically stated I would be traveling to Canada and Alaska and the representative said service was available in those areas and it shouldn't be any problem. That summer, as I traveled through Canada and Alaska, I wasn't able to receive a signal. When I returned home, I called DIRECTV and expressed my disappointment; I asked that the service be cancelled and that I receive a refund. Although my contract was for two years, I believe what I was sold was misrepresented. DIRECTV did cancel my account, but charged me a \$400 early termination fee. I do not think I should have to pay that fee.

**CHARLES GELTZ
LAKEWOOD, WASH.**

The service representative should have told Geltz that DIRECTV is prohibited by law from offering service in Canada and that an HD satellite dish might be needed to receive programming in Alaska. We sent a letter to DIRECTV requesting further consideration for Geltz. Unfortunately, we didn't receive a reply. According to the agreement on DIRECTV's Web site, customers agree to a programming commitment of 12 to 24 months, effective when the customer accepts equipment and activates service. If the customer cancels service or doesn't maintain the minimum programming requirements, DIRECTV may charge an early cancellation fee of up to \$480.

Because it is common for such businesses to charge an early termination fee, it's the responsibility of the consumer to know what cancellation fees might apply before entering into an agreement. Although we were unable to help Geltz, we are sharing his case with our readers to help prevent them

IT'S COMMON FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS TO CHARGE AN EARLY TERMINATION FEE, SO IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CONSUMER TO KNOW WHAT FEES APPLY BEFORE ENTERING INTO A SERVICE AGREEMENT.

from experiencing a similar situation.

POST-PURCHASE PREDICAMENT

Experiencing post-purchase problems with their new coach, two readers asked Hot Line for help. They wrote:

Last year we purchased a new 2006 Itasca Horizon Class A motorhome from Camper Clinic in Rockport, Texas. Even though it was 3 years old, it had never been titled and came with a full warranty from the manufacturer. Several items needed attention, but we decided to return home and have the warranty work done later at the Winnebago factory in Forest City, Iowa.

We dropped the rig off at the Iowa factory and mentioned that the cockpit seats had a problem. After the repairs were made, we picked up the coach. The passenger seat was fine at that time, but after I adjusted it a few times, it quit working. We would like to have the repairs done at Camper Clinic, but it's no longer a Winnebago dealer, so it doesn't have to honor any more warranty work. What do we do now?

**JOHN AND GLENNA TOLLIVER
ST. PETERS, MO.**

Hot Line contacted Winnebago Industries on behalf of the Tollivers. We received the following letter:

Per my recent phone conversation with Mrs. Tolliver, I have agreed to repair the driver's seat under warranty. She said she will try to have a local

Winnebago dealer repair the seat prior to them leaving for Texas. If repairs to the seat cannot be done in a timely manner, I have agreed to either work with a dealer in Texas or honor the repairs once the Tollivers return home.

**ROD SCHLINGMANN
SERVICE ADVISOR
WINNEBAGO INDUSTRIES
FOREST CITY, IOWA**

TOWING TROUBLE II

Believing he was unjustly charged for a lack of service by a roadside truck repair company, a reader sought Hot Line's assistance. He explained:

I had a problem similar to the one Judy Pupek had ("Towing Trouble," February). I had a breakdown in my Class A coach near Mount Shasta, Calif. I called Good Sam Emergency Road Service (ERS) and requested tow service. ERS dispatched a serviceman who did nothing more than add water to the radiator, and charged me \$60. I was concerned that he might be the only service garage in town, so I paid him. Later that day, ERS sent out a tow truck and took us an hour north, where the motorhome received service. I had to pay for a new engine, which cost me more than \$10,000. Can Hot Line help me recover the \$60 for services not rendered?

DON VERHOEF | RENO, NEV.

Hot Line asked Good Sam ERS to review Verhoef's complaint. A company representative responded as follows:

Thank you for contacting Good Sam Emergency Road Service regarding Mr. Verhoef's complaint. This case has been successfully resolved; I contacted Verhoef to inform him of his claim approval and the amount of the check. ERS has paid Verhoef the \$60 he requested.

**ZACH WEEKS
SENIOR ERS COORDINATOR
AFFINITY ROAD AND TRAVEL INC.
ENGLEWOOD, COLO. ♦**

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

Frozen Battery

My Fleetwood Jamboree 31W Class C has two six-volt batteries for the coach. Over the winter one battery froze and cracked. Can I just replace the one that is bad or do I need to replace in pairs, and if I have to replace both can I install two 12-volt batteries in place of them? I never camp without being plugged in to shorepower, so I'm not worried about using batteries to camp. Thanks.

MICHAEL MURPHY
FRANKLINVILLE, N.J.

It's best to replace the batteries with like brands, part numbers and age. That being the case, you'll need to replace both six-volt batteries. But, you may want to consider replacing the six-volt batteries with just one 12-volt battery. Since you never camp without hookups, you really don't need the higher capacity; one battery will allow you to operate a slideout or run a few appliances while on the road to your destination. Buying one battery will save you some money. Of course, you can use two 12-volt batteries, but they will have to be undesirably wired in parallel rather than in series, as is the case for your six-volt batteries.

I suggest that you remove the batteries while the motorhome is in storage and put them in a warmer place so they won't freeze during the winter. Make sure the batteries are fully charged before putting them into storage, and hook them up to a good multi-stage charger once a month.

SURGE PROTECTORS

I have a 2006 32-foot Southwind and I would like to know if there's a company that makes a surge protector that can be used when connected to shorepower? I have just replaced several appliances and an inverter due to either high or low fluctuations of electrical power. Thank you for your help.

CHARLES WHITE | PASADENA, TEXAS

There are a number of surge protectors on the market that will protect your electrical system, but Surge Guard

makes the one I get the most feedback on. This company builds portable 30- and 50-amp surge protectors that connect directly to the electrical hookup; the motorhome's power cord connects to the surge protector.

Both models offer 6,500-amp spike protection and respond in one nanosecond. As is the case for most surge protectors, there's a Joules rating provided by the manufacturer. The 30-amp model has 1,050 joules surge suppression while the 50-amp counterpart has 1,750. This rating, which is the amount of energy over time that the surge protector can handle before failing, is pretty much meaningless to the average user. Both these models offer enough protection under most circumstances. Obviously, the more joules, the better the protection, but don't get lulled into complacency just because you have a surge protector with a higher number. If there is lightning in the area, you should still disconnect from power until it subsides.

These units will shut off when voltage dips to 102 and return power to the coach if voltage stabilizes during an eight-second delay period. It clamps down instantaneously when voltage hits 132.

FILLING YOUR WATER TANK FROM THE DUMP STATION WATER SPIGOT IS UNSANITARY AND CAN BE DANGEROUS TO YOUR HEALTH.

EVEN IF THE WATER IS POTABLE, THE SPIGOT IS LIKELY CONTAMINATED FROM OTHER PEOPLE DUMPING THEIR TANKS.



Because surge protectors are on the pricey side, it behooves owners to lock them down while hooked up. The company offers a special locking hasp for this purpose. Surge Guard products are available at Camping World and other RV supply stores.

REALLY A RADIATOR?

I just received my April issue of MotorHome and I have a question regarding a picture of the Winnebago on the cover. It shows a rear side radiator or a cover that appears to be for a radiator vent. Is it a 454 Chevy pusher? If so, why is there a photo of an engine doghouse cover on page 44?

KEITH MCADAMS | SAN DIEGO

Keith, you're looking at the compartment that houses the basement air conditioner. The coach was built on a Workhorse chassis with the gasoline engine up front — thus the doghouse cover.

SANITIZING QUANDARY

I read with interest "Getting Ready to Roll" in the April issue. I ponder every year the process to freshen the potable water system in our motorhome. Our present coach has a single water inlet with a garden-hose end connection only, with an internal spring-loaded check valve, and a single lever to switch between fill tank and city water functions. There is no gravity fill opening on the exterior or interior of the coach to allow the entry water, or either of the recommended freshening solutions into the freshwater system.

Due to the placement of the freshwater tank and the water lines in the coach interior, installing an additional gravity feed access, or using the same, would not be easy.

Certainly the water system anti-freeze pickup could be used to run the solutions through the water lines, but that still leaves the question as to how to freshen the main freshwater tank as well. Further, as some federal and provincial parks, and even some private RV parks we have encountered, have freshwater supply hoses without standard screw-type hose ends (i.e. cut-off hose

ends) at their sani-stations, we always leave home with our coach full of fresh water. We will at least be assured of the water quality, and that we will have enough water for several days.

Your suggestions regarding this seasonal and extended travel problem are likely to be of interest to others too.

IAN WHITE | EDMONTON, ALBERTA

It is more difficult to sanitize the freshwater tank on a coach without a gravity fill, but it can be done a number of ways. After diluting the bleach in water, you can pour the mixture into the water hose using a funnel. It takes a while, but it works. Once the mixture is in the hose, it's a simple matter of hooking up to the coach inlet to fill the tank.

You can also buy a garden sprayer and add the bleach to the container. The water will mix with the bleach as it enters the motorhome. I also discovered a device online that siphons the bleach and water mixture in a bucket into the hose while running water into the coach. It's called Dramm Syphonject and it's normally used

to mix fertilizer with water for spraying on plants. The unit sells for about \$25.

Once you go through the bleach-and-water routine, you can repeat the steps using baking soda and water to remove chlorine remnants that can alter taste.

Filling your water tank from the dump station water spigot is unsanitary and can be very dangerous to your health. Even if the water is potable, the spigot is likely contaminated from other people dumping their tanks.

If you run into spigots without a threaded fitting, you can always use a "water thief" adapter, available at most RV and camping stores. This device slips over the spigot, providing a friction-type seal and a fitting that connects to a standard water hose.

RUNNING THE AIR ON THE ROAD

Last summer my wife and I took a trip through Nevada, Utah and Arizona in our 1997 Itasca motorhome. At times the outdoor temperatures exceeded 100 degrees Fahrenheit, which overwhelmed the GMC air conditioner's ability to keep the interior

cool. During these times I fired up the coach generator and ran the coach air conditioner, which worked fine. I mentioned this to an RVer who said I should never do this. What's the harm, if any, in running the generator and air conditioner while driving?

**DENIS AND BARBARA DREW
SAN FRANCISCO**

There's no reason you can't run the AC generator to power your roof air conditioner. Just plan on using about six-tenths of a gallon of fuel per hour to run the generator.

CLEANING A TPO ROOF

I read the article in the May issue on "Winning the Battle With Rooftop Mold and Mildew." It goes into detail about cleaning a fiberglass roof, and I wonder if my TPO roof falls into this category? If so, it is exciting to see this article because no one really likes to talk about TPO roofs and their care. The only product the manufacturer recommends, that I have found, is Murphy's Oil Soap.

RANDALL A. ANDERSON | VIA E-MAIL

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Tanya Tucker
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Super Diamond
Sat. July 24

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July 21st is Brightside Community Service Volunteer Day
- An Annual RV Event to Give Back to the Rally's Host Community

Pet Adoption Days: July 23-24

Tanya Tucker performing July 23rd

Super Diamond (a well-known Neil Diamond tribute band) July 24th

Rally Pricing: \$359 (electric hookup); \$179 (dry camping) Includes two adults

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COACH & CHASSIS

There's nothing too mysterious about cleaning a thermoplastic polyolefin (TPO) roof. You can follow the same steps that the article suggests about fiberglass roof cleaning, but do not use products that contain petroleum distillates or are granulated. Make sure you run plenty of water during the process to prevent side wall streaking.

I haven't tried the Magic Eraser on a TPO roof, but according to the manufacturer of the membranes, it's OK to use.

Basically, you can scrub the membrane with a medium bristle brush, and while there are commercial cleaning products designed to clean rubber and TPO roofs, I ran into a product that really works well: Oil Eater Cleaner Degreaser. This cleaner contains no petroleum distillates, acids or abrasives and it's biodegradable. Oil Eater is available in premixed spray bottles (or larger quantities) and can be diluted for specific jobs.

Although the manufacturer of TPO membranes doesn't require treating the surface with a suitable protectant, I've found that doing so helps prevent the buildup of dirt and other stubborn stains — facilitating easier cleanup.

BALLOONING LINOLEUM

I own a 2004 34-foot Fleetwood Flair on a W22 Workhorse chassis. When I use my coach the linoleum balloons up and becomes a tripping hazard. What glue can I use to stick it back down? Thank you.

KENT LOCKEY | ERIE, ILL.

Any time the adhesive loosens, you'll experience problems with linoleum, especially on RVs where the floor is subject to movement. You can try using a syringe (typically used for marinating meat) to inject an adhesive that doesn't expand, like contact cement. Once the glue is in place, put something heavy on top of the linoleum and allow it to dry for 24 hours.

If that doesn't work, you can surgically slice the sections and attempt to glue them back down. A professional linoleum installer should be able to make the repairs. In the end, it's also possible that you will have to remove the existing linoleum and install new floor covering. ♦

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



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Workhorse Remedies

Your February column had a letter from Bob Davis in St. Louis about ABS problems as they relate to a symptom of an ongoing brake caliper problem that Workhorse is attempting to remedy. My 2007 Pace Arrow on a Workhorse chassis had the ABS light come on and at the same time the cruise control quit working. I took the coach to Joe's Auto RV & Truck Repair, an authorized Workhorse service center in Lake Havasu City, Ariz. He remedied both issues by replacing a 20-amp fuse with a 30-amp fuse to the brakelights. I pull a car/dolly with both using brakelights. Since replacing the fuse, the problem hasn't recurred. I hope the wiring will support the heavier fuse.

RICHARD MCCONNELL
HOUGHTON LAKE, MICH.

The cruise control requires operative brakelights in order to work. Most typical trailer/dinghy harness amperage draws are not a problem. I spoke with Joe and he said he learned over the years that some of these rigs with multiple brakelights draw just a little too much current and will eventually pop a 20-amp fuse if left on for long. He said he installed a 25-amp fuse, not a 30, and has not had a problem with insulation melting.

It should be OK, but rather than using a heavier fuse, I suggest either changing to LED bulbs in some of the brakelights to reduce current draw, or installing an automatic resetting 20-amp circuit breaker in place of the fuse. High-current draws can also be handled with a system such as Draw-Tite ModuLite No. 119191. It takes most of its power from the battery, reducing current on the switch, fuse and circuit.

ALLISON SHIFTING

I have a 2003 40-foot Monaco Diplomat with Cummins ISC 330 engine and Allison 3000MH six-speed transmission, which until recently has been an excellent driver. On my last trip I found that when I'm driving without using the cruise control, everything seems to be

running fine. But when I engage the cruise, within a few seconds the transmission downshifts to fifth and stays there and doesn't upshift to sixth when normally it should. If I disengage the cruise the transmission will upshift to sixth and I can drive normally. I had the unit checked and after a \$300 diagnostic fee and a road test the technician could only say the computer showed no fault codes in the engine or transmission and he was at a loss to explain the behavior.

Along with the problem described above I noticed that when the engine needs a little more power to climb a grade (with or without the cruise engaged) the automatic traction control (ATC) light illuminates and I feel a slight bump, which I can only describe as the transmission dropping out of lockup (there is no change in RPM.) When the need for more power passes, the light goes out.

I've contacted Monaco, Allison and Cummins and essentially got the same response: "We haven't heard that one before. Bring it in and we'll check it." I don't mind bringing it in, but at least I'd like to know if I have an engine or a transmission or an ATC/ABS problem. If I have a slight engine power problem it might explain

the downshifting in cruise, but I don't see how that would explain the ATC light.

One other comment: The engine batteries are right at 7 years old and though they seem to be OK, I wonder if they are beginning to weaken, if that could cause any of the problems? Any help you can give will be appreciated.

JOE FERRARO | BLOUNTVILLE, TENN.

This is indeed an unusual problem, but I have a theory on it. The automatic traction control (ATC) reduces engine power if wheel slippage is detected. Both the ABS and ATC share the wheel-speed sensors.

A brief, intermittent faulty signal from a sensor (or other system fault) could cause the ATC to react by briefly reducing engine power. This would explain the warning light and power loss that would trigger a downshift. Have them scan the ABS/ATC system and check the wheel-speed sensors.

Your throttle applications may be less aggressive than the cruise control's, which would explain why it downshifts more on cruise control, but not when you are controlling throttle inputs. That would also explain why there are no trouble codes.

I would also carefully clean all battery terminals and the grounds where they meet the coach and engine. The batteries should be tested with a hydrometer if the caps open, or load tested if they don't.

TOWING LAWS

We have a 25-foot Class C motorhome and have had a towing setup installed on our 2009 Honda CR-V. We've received conflicting information on whether we are required to have a braking system on the vehicle. Are there different requirements in different states? Are there weight limits? We are particularly interested in California, Nevada, Arizona and Colorado.

SUE AND BILL BENNETT | VIA E-MAIL

Yes, towing requirements for private vehicles are entirely up to the individual states. This is not to be construed as legal advice, but it's generally accepted that dinghy vehicles meet the definition

STATES HAVE VARIOUS LAWS FOR THE WEIGHT ABOVE WHICH A TOWED VEHICLE MUST HAVE OPERATIVE BRAKES.

CHECK THE TRAILER LIFE CAMPGROUND DIRECTORY FOR TOWING LAWS AND RULES OF THE ROAD.



of a trailer in that they are towed behind another vehicle. States have various laws stating the weight above which a towed vehicle (trailer) must have operative brakes, and this information can be difficult to find. The Trailer Life RV Parks and Campground Directory lists Rules of the Road and Towing Laws in its printed directory and it also provides the same information on its Web site at www.trailerlifedirectory.com/plan/RulesOfTheRoad.aspx. In addition, chassis manufacturers have limitations, including how much they are designed to tow without brakes (usually less than 1,500 pounds).

GAS VS. DIESEL

My wife and I are close to retirement and we have decided to become full-timers. My question is comparing gas versus diesel in a motorhome from 36 to 40 feet in length. I've done some research, but it depends on whom you ask, regarding service costs and intervals, comparison of fuel mileage — basically the technical and cost aspects. We're at the beginning of an incredible dream, and we want to make the best choice to begin living it.

DAROLD AND KATHY PERRY
GRANTS PASS, ORE.

This is a perennial favorite question in its various forms, and yes, it certainly depends on whom you ask. There's no sure-fire formula that takes everything into account. Basically, if you intend to drive a lot and carry a lot of weight, a diesel is the way to go. However, if you intend to drive occasionally and stay in one place a long time, such as snowbirds do, a gas model with its higher fuel consumption and lower price may fill the bill. There are some heavy-duty gas chassis that can handle large coaches. Many full-timers start with a gas rig and move up to a diesel, and don't forget: There are also good used coaches on the market.

HONDA TOWABILITY

Is a 2002 Honda Civic with an automatic transmission capable of being flat towed behind a Class C motorhome? I looked in the Civic's owner's manual and can't find any information on flat towing. I also searched several sites on the Internet and found conflicting information as to whether I can

flat tow this vehicle. Can you please help.
DENNIS DOLEZAL | HOLLISTER, CALIF.

The 2002 Honda Civic is not officially approved by the manufacturer for dinghy towing; however, they are commonly towed. This is the typical procedure: Be sure the transmission fluid level is full. Start the engine and, with your foot on the brake, shift the transmission from PARK to DRIVE. Then shift from DRIVE to NEUTRAL. Make sure the radio and accessories are off and turn off the engine. Always leave the key in the ACC (I) position with steering wheel unlocked to prevent damage to the steering when towing behind a coach. Release the parking brake.

Start the engine and shift the automatic transmission through the gears approximately every 500 miles or eight hours of driving, and again shift from DRIVE to NEUTRAL before shutting off the engine to continue driving. Severe transmission damage may occur if the car is shifted from REVERSE to NEUTRAL and then towed. American Honda (and MotorHome) do not assume responsibility for any towed vehicle, lighting hookup or other towing equipment or towing procedures; responsibility is assumed by the owner/operator.

SOLAR-HYBRID DRIVE SEQUEL

In the November 2009 issue ("Solar-Hybrid Drive?"), Larry Gipson was wondering about an add-on motor powered by solar panels that would assist the coach to go down the highway. Actually, any time you relieve the burden of an engine you increase its efficiency and fuel mileage. Adding solar panels on the roof of a rig, and then driving during the day, relieves the effort required to run the engine's alternator to provide 12 volts for equipment and batteries on board the RV.

BILL INMAN | MEDFORD, ORE.

Yes, there's certainly no harm in using solar panels to charge onboard batteries while you are driving. It could save a slight amount of fuel. That said, I don't think the fuel savings alone justifies the cost of a solar system, particularly if you stay in RV parks that provide power. If you already have solar panels, go for it. ♦

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RV Roofing Solutions.....	16		
RVT.com.....	28		
RV Marketplace	60-61		
Relief Mart	29		
SMI Marketing	44		
Skookum Rendezvous	22		
The Rally	56		
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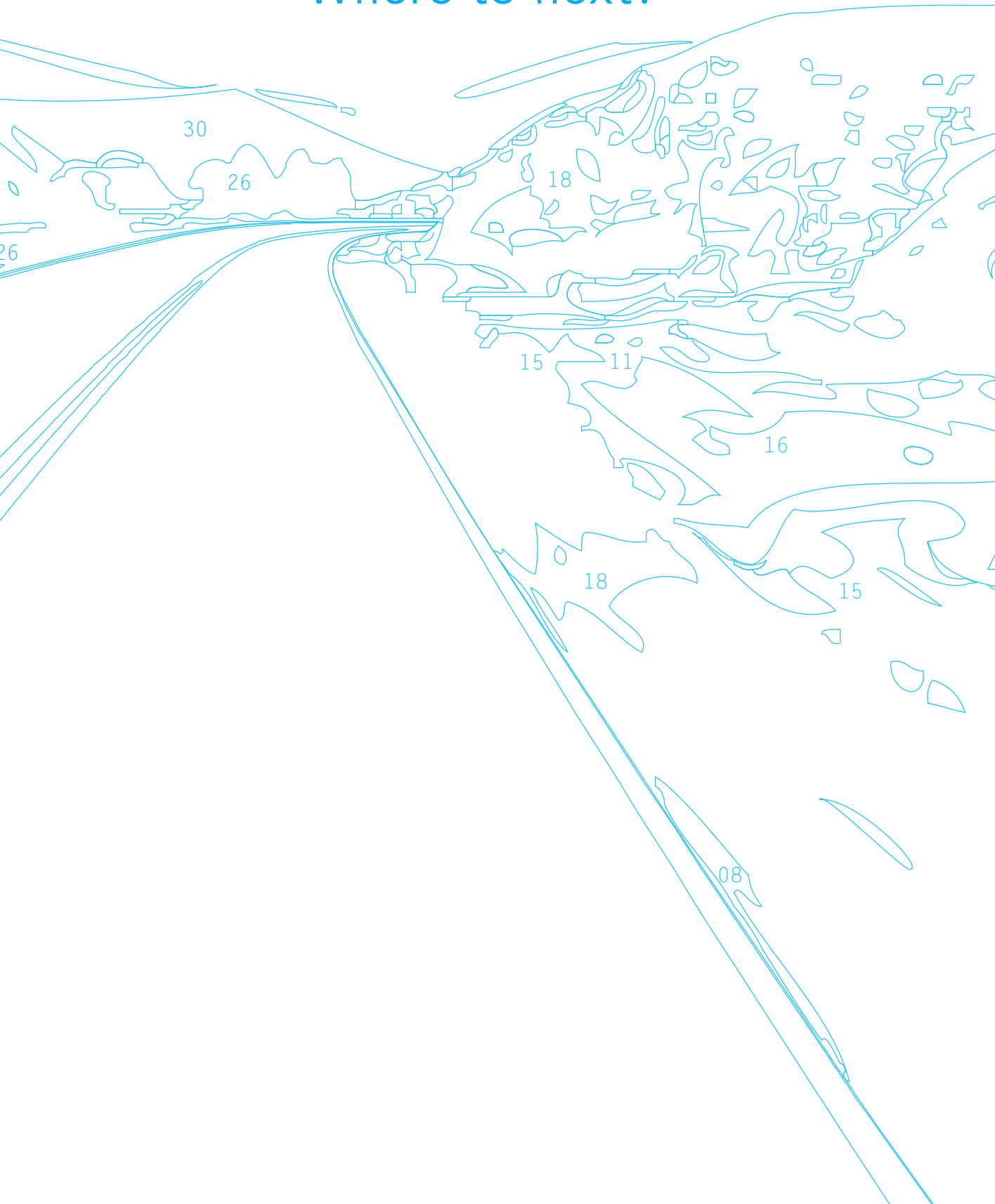


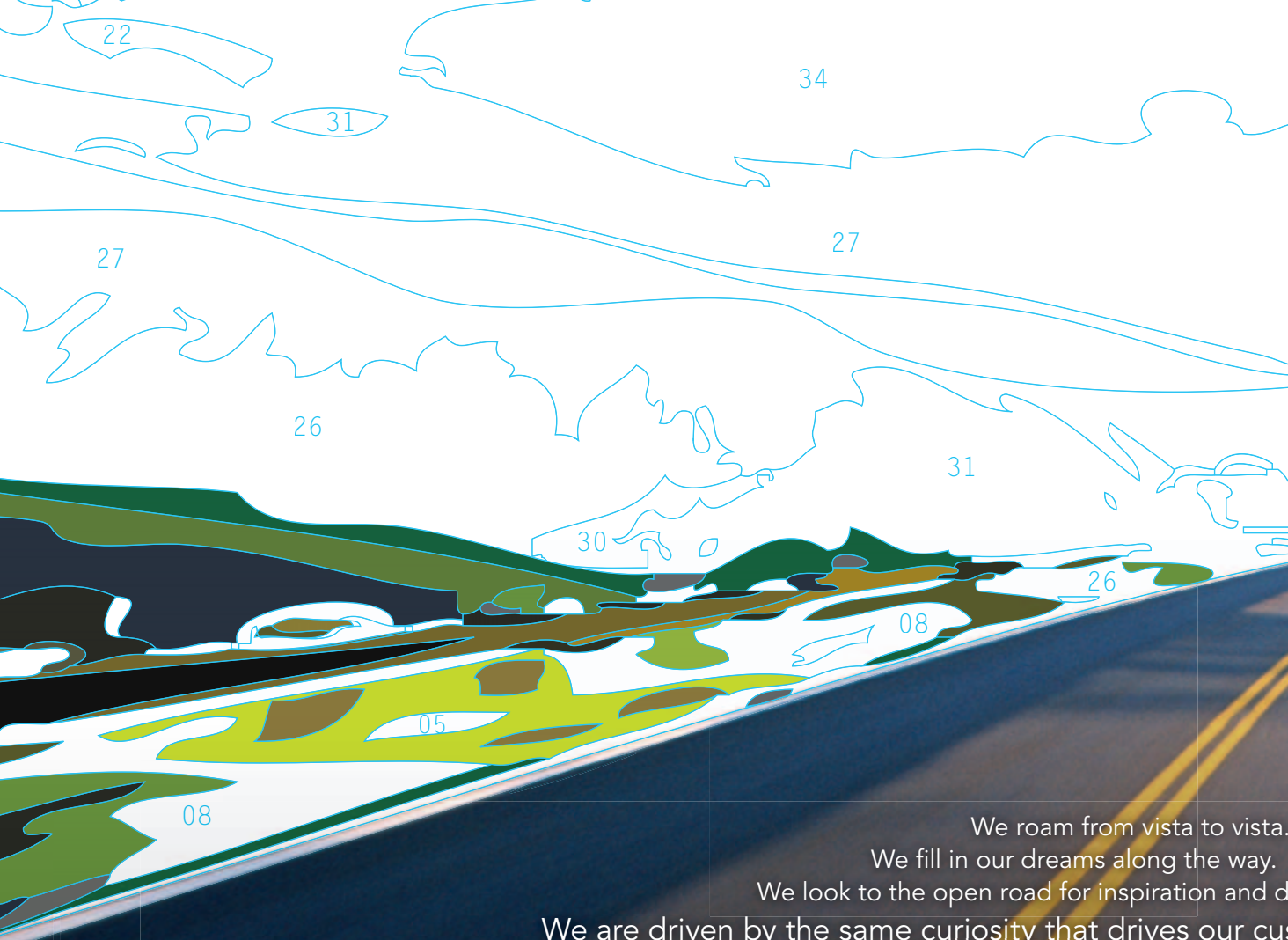
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