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MOTORHOME

AUGUST 2010

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- *PRESSURE GAUGE
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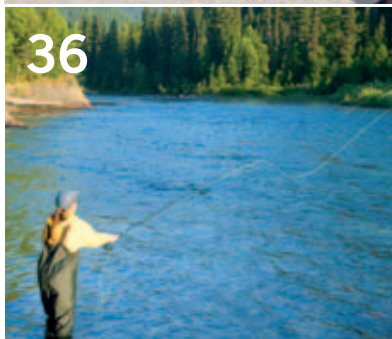
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On The Cover: Michelin's X One XRV single fitment tire is designed to replace dual rear tires — and save weight. The tire was developed for the motorhome market, and at this time can be used in place of three 22.5-inch tire sizes. The tire is earmarked for OEM and retrofit applications (see story on tire care and maintenance on page 39).

KEEP ON ROLLING

A few years ago, we planned a trip south of our Ventura, Calif., offices during the long Labor Day weekend. At the time, a couple of our friends — who were going to caravan with us to San Diego — were full-timing but really didn't put that many miles on their 36-foot coach. To get ready for the trip, I checked out my buddy's motorhome, making sure the drivetrain was in good enough shape to leave its campsite (where the coach had been perched for most of the year). Part of that pre-trip inspection and maintenance was to scrutinize the condition of the tires and make sure they were inflated properly.

My friend dutifully kept his tires covered while parked — something that everyone should do to limit deterioration of the sidewalls. Since the odometer was registering very low mileage for the age of the coach, the tread was in excellent shape — at least visibly. Upon inspection, I discovered that the tires actually predated the coach, which was 10 years old. At that point, I strongly suggested that my friend replace the tires before the trip.

Most people have a hard time replacing what look like perfectly good tires. I understand that thinking; we've all been trained to use tread depth as a barometer for tire condition — and in this case they appeared virtually unworn. So, naturally, my friend ignored my warning, and we headed out as planned.

On the way home, the inside dual on the passenger side blew apart while traveling at 65 MPH on the freeway. I was behind my friend and called him on the radio to report the problem. He pulled over almost immediately, but it was too late. The flailing tread ripped out portions of the wheel-well structure, wrapped itself around the nearby exhaust pipe — mangling it beyond recognition — and finally took out the adjacent hot water tank.

While we waited for Good Sam's Emergency Road Service tow truck to arrive, I had to bite my tongue, resisting the urge to tell my friend, "I told you so."



Thousands of dollars later, the coach was repaired, the tires were replaced anyway, and a valuable maintenance lesson was learned.

As you will discover from our tire feature this month (see page 39), maintenance is critical to the safety and performance of your motorhome. Unfortunately, most people experience some type of collateral damage when a tire blows out. If you follow some simple and timely maintenance procedures, you lower your risk — and potential repair bills — tremendously.

Beyond ensuring the tires are inflated properly (see page 43 to find out which gauges are the most accurate), based on actual weights with the coach loaded for a typical trip, checking for cracking, adverse wear patterns and age are all critical to improved service life and safety. Knowing when to replace your tires is somewhat controversial. For years we've suggested that tires "time out" after seven years. As you can see from Doug Jones' feature story, Michelin allows up to 10 years with certain caveats.

Storage is hard on tires. Tires have a substance that finds its way to the outer sidewall when the coach is rolling down the highway. Keep the coach idle for long periods of time, and this natural barrier to the elements is absent, leaving the tires vulnerable. Covering helps, but driving is better. The bottom line: Inspect tires often and enlist the advice of a tire professional if you're unsure of the condition and whether the tires have timed out.

Sidelining a trip because of tire problems is not very pleasant, as my friend can attest. Taking the time to check air pressure and inflate to loading requirements — and keeping a keen eye on wear patterns and signs of sidewall damage — will pay off handsomely in uninterrupted trips and improved safety. ♦

MOTORHOME

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“DO YOU TRAVEL WITH YOUR PETS? IF SO, PLEASE TELL US WHAT KIND AND HOW MANY.”

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

IDEAL TRAVELING COMPANIONS

Peter, our Quaker parrot, perches securely in his “motorhome cage” while we ride in our 2005 Phoenix Cruiser 2551S. My husband, Red, bolted a swivel wall-mount TV stand to the bulkhead behind the driver’s seat. The cage, secured with bungee cords, is easily removed for cleaning. Red made “Peter’s pan,” a seed catcher, using nylon cloth attached to dowel rods. The pan is held in place with bungee cords, which I lengthen while underway, allowing the pan to lower down so Peter can enjoy watching passing scenery and make comments — especially if the road is rough or traffic jammed. When we stop for the night, Peter is free to move about — yes, his wings are clipped. Peter’s pal, Daisey, a miniature schnauzer, knows the sound of the engine starting. Without being told, she assumes her position snuggling on her mat between the two front seats. She’ll arise to tell us it’s time for a stretch or potty break. Peter and Daisey are for us the ideal traveling companions.

BONNIE AND “RED” ERICKSON | PORT ANGELES, WASH.



RVING WITH A QUARTET

My wife, Vonette, and I travel with four small dogs: a mini long-hair dachshund, a mixed-breed chihuahua, a Yorkie/chihuahua mix and a rat terrier. They love traveling everywhere we go, and they love their home away from home.

ALLAN CURTIS | HANSON, KY.

SETTERS ENJOY THE SNIFFING

We travel with two Irish setters in our 39-foot Class A diesel-pusher — they love all the new places to sniff. They don’t take up much room in the coach and they keep us active. We lived in the motorhome for the last six months and the dogs did great. We never leave without them.

EARLE WOLFROM | COEUR D’ALENE, IDAHO

AUSSIE IS A VETERAN TRAVELER

Our 12-year-old Australian shepherd has been RVing with us since we got her at 8 weeks old. She loves camping, and is a joy to have with us. When she sees the motorhome parked in front of the house to load it, she knows that we’re going somewhere.

We don’t know what she would do if we ever set out without her being in the motorhome. In her mind, it’s *her* motorhome!

TOM MIHALIC | KISSIMMEE, FLA.



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TWO HUSKY SENTRIES

We always travel with our Siberian huskies, Thor and Zoey. They love to travel and enjoy the outdoors more than we do. They can sense when we are preparing for a trip as we load our motorhome. Everyone we meet as we travel comments on how beautiful they are as they sit like statues outside the door when we are setting up at a campground.

**DAVE AND DEE PAPPAS
VALLEY VIEW, OHIO**

DOCUMENTS AND DOGS ON THE GO

We have a 36-foot Itasca Horizon. We travel every chance we get and take our four Chinese crested dogs with us. We always carry a copy of their shot certificates and microchip numbers with us.

**JOHN AND ANITA WARD
OKLAHOMA CITY**

SWEET SADIE'S SOJOURNS

We trained service dogs for many years and "home schooled" several, which we took everywhere with us, even into restaurants and grocery stores. They traveled

well in our motorhome, and they were a hit at all the music festivals we attended.

We have been foster parents for 17 dogs from Golden Retriever Rescue of Atlanta. We've taken many of our dogs in our rig in their safety harness, which is bolted to the floor. They are well-mannered and enjoy the trips as much as we do.

Our last foster stole our hearts. Sweet Sadie is now in her forever home with us. When we are loading the coach, she lays patiently at the front door until we say "Let's go!" and she bounds into the rig. Sadie has her bed, toys, food and water and, most importantly to her, she is with her doting parents and she is happy!

We hope this encourages other travelers to take their pets with them. It's not necessary to board them if you let them become accustomed to the motorhome before their first trip. If they are trained correctly and taught not to bark when you leave them, they won't bother other RVers, and of course, always carry a plastic bag in your pocket to clean up after your pet.

PAT AND LEN CORLEY | MILTON, GA.

PETS IN MILEAGE PLUS CLUB

We have been campers and boaters for many years and have always taken our pets with us. Our dog (a boxer named Ginger) and cat (named PK) have been traveling with us since 2003.

They got their first taste of traveling on a boat. We circumnavigated the eastern part of the nation — a trip of about 10,000 miles. The hardest part was walking Ginger when we were anchored out.

After this boating trip, we bought our first motorhome. Since then Ginger and PK have been to Alaska, the Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta, Florida and New England. We figure our pets have about 35,000 miles under their collars.

Our pets are a fun part of our travels. They are good "friend" makers for us, too. We couldn't ask for better companions!

**CHARLES AND BETTY WILSON
JARRETTSVILLE, MD.**

BANNED BREEDS

My husband and I have taken our well-behaved, quiet Rottweilers (one is a registered



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therapy dog) on several of our RV trips. Having a dog along enhances our enjoyment of traveling as well as providing an additional sense of security. The only difficulty we've encountered is that many private parks have dog breed restrictions, which invariably include Rotties. It's unfortunate that "a few bad apples spoil the barrel."

M. BIONDO | LAKEPORT, CALIF.

NO MORE TAXES

Regarding Bob Livingston's On Ramp column, "State Parks Under Fire" (May): California drivers should not be forced to pay yet another tax — this one to maintain a third-rate set of state parks. If Livingston wants to camp in those parks, he should pay whatever is necessary to do so but don't ask me to help pay his way.

I own an RV and I've camped at Morro Bay State Park. It was dirty, poorly maintained and the only amenity was the trees, which did not make up for its downsides. The California governor and Legislature should stop spending tax money like there's no tomorrow. Then there

would be enough money to support state parks. But no more taxes and no more tax subsidies — not even for RV parks.

GERALD CRAMM | CARLSBAD, CALIF.

WORK TO CAMP

In response to "State Parks Under Fire": I'm grateful that Colorado uses Lotto funds to help fund parks and open space.

I travel in a 25-foot Class C. I've read about RVers spending time at a Habitat for Humanity site helping with building, painting, etc. It makes me wonder if that would work for some state parks — a week of free camping in return for working on campsites and amenities in the state parks. The parks could provide needed supplies and coordination.

I don't know how many people would be interested, but if it could help to keep the parks open, maybe it would work.

BEV CAMERON | ERIE, COLO.

BREAKWATER CAVEATS

In the Escapes section in May, there was a great article about the breakwater

in Rockland, Maine ("Rockland Breakwater: 70,000 Tons of Fun"). I recommend a visit to this site. However, there are three important points: This is a rather tricky walk — the breakwater is built of boulders, which in some places can be quite far apart, so caution is needed. Also, there are no restroom facilities when the lighthouse is not open, so remember that it's a mile out and a mile back. Finally and most importantly, parking is on a dead-end street so turning around and parking with a motorhome can be a challenge.

NEIL CUNNINGHAM | AUBURN, MASS.

FALLS, CANYON ARE STILL IN S.D.

As frequent travelers to South Dakota, my husband and I enjoyed the article on Spearfish Canyon ("From Canyons to Custer") in the June issue. But we were saddened to learn they have moved it to Wyoming (see description of Roughlock Falls photo on page 25). It was a beautiful park when it was located in South Dakota!

CLAUDIA WALSH | ELGIN, IL

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Editor's Note: Roughlock Falls and Spearfish Canyon haven't been relocated — they are still in South Dakota. Thank you for the correction.

RENTING RECOMMENDED

I enjoyed the article from the British couple who motorhomed through Europe in their Class A Damon Intruder ("A Gap Filled With Memories," May). The part about shipping a motorhome to Europe was most interesting to me. But, one bit of information was left out. The European electrical system is different than here in the States. Here it's 120 volts. There it's 220 volts. Anyone taking a U.S. motorhome to Europe and plugging it in to shorepower is going to be in for a shocking surprise. The only way around this problem is to use a transformer, but I'm not aware of there being any capability to provide the power needed for a standard U.S. motorhome. My suggestion: Leave the coach here and rent one there that meets all European requirements.

**GERALD BOUCHER
FROSTPROOF, FLA.**

Question:

Have you ever rented a motorhome? If so, please briefly describe your experience, including where you traveled to. Send your comments to MotorHome, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001; or e-mail letters@motorhome.com. ♦

CORRECTIONS

In "Born Free 22'," June, a price of \$3,200 was given for the 13,500 Btu roof air conditioner. Born Free Motorcoach states that the price is \$985. The company also states that there is not a \$1,050 charge for the solid oak wood cabinetry. Oak is standard; cherry wood is optional and also comes with Born Free's Casual Elegance package.

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escapes

edited by PATRICIA MARROQUIN

EVENTS | NOTEWORTHY | WHEELS & GEAR | CROSSROADS

'GRAND CANYON OF TEXAS'

PALO DURO CANYON STATE PARK PERSONIFIES THE RUGGED WILD WEST

In the panhandle, southeast of Amarillo, this park is quintessential Texas — enduring, big, red rock and Wild West. It's a land of sagebrush and mesquite; coyotes and scurrying lizards. This signature park even has a pair of longhorns, Biscuit and Gravy. Most notably, though, the park unrolls superb vistas of the "Grand Canyon of Texas."

The state park covers more than 26,000 acres at the northern reaches of Palo Duro Canyon, which extends for 120 miles. Sculpted by the Prairie Dog Town Fork of the Red River, the canyon can span 20 miles wide and plunge 800 feet deep. Fog, wildflowers and fast-moving weather systems can complement the balanced rocks, washes, alluvial fans, hoodoos, contorted rock forms and rims.

This is one place to keep artist brushes and

cameras ready. Bumping into history, hiking, picnicking, birding and camping engage visitors. A stable provides guided horse tours for an authentic western-eye view.

Another popular attraction is the summer-running musical drama, "Texas," at the Pioneer Amphitheater (806-655-2181; www.texas-show.com). Showtimes are 8:30 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday, June 4 through Aug. 21.

At this year-round park, plan to reserve campsites well in advance. Although sightseeing by motorhome is possible, dinghy vehicles are easier. For more information, call 806-488-2227, or visit www.palodurocanyon.com or www.tpwd.state.tx.us/spdest/findadest/parks/palo_duro. — Rhonda Ostertag

AUG. 12-22

A good, old-fashioned state fair with a “nonstop fun” theme, the **Iowa State Fair** in Des Moines is one of the oldest and largest agricultural expositions in the U.S. Besides having one of the world’s largest livestock shows and a huge number of food vendors (40 of them have foods served on a stick), the fair will also host world-class entertainment, such as Keith Urban and Sugarland, and plenty of unique competitions and kids’ activities. The icing on the cake — thousands of RVers camp at the fairgrounds every year; 800-545-3247, www.iowastatefair.org.



AUG. 7-8 | If you plan to head to the beach this month, why not take in one of the most intense sand-sculpting competitions around at the 30th annual **U.S. Open Sandcastle Competition** in Imperial Beach, Calif. The event kicks off with a Sandcastle Dance on Friday night, followed by a street festival on Saturday with more than 140 vendors. There will be food, arts and crafts, and

family-friendly entertainment, such as the kids’ sandcastle building competition. Sunday is the official competition day and concludes with an awards ceremony; 619-424-6663, www.usopensandcastle.com.

AUG. 10-16 | Put on your blue suede shoes and dance on over to Memphis, Tenn., for **Elvis Week** festivities. It’s a can’t-miss event for anyone who has enjoyed the music of the king of rock ‘n’ roll. There will be live musical entertainment, impersonator contests, special exhibits, tours of Graceland and the annual Candlelight Vigil, during which fans remember Elvis by walking up his driveway with a lit candle to the Meditation Garden. An RV park is located within walking distance of Graceland, and downtown Memphis is a short drive away; www.elvisweek.com.

AUG. 20-22 | Step far back in time, to the pre-American Revolution period, and experi-

ence a French and Indian War encampment at **Colonial Homecoming Days** in Wolfeboro, N.H. Re-enactors from throughout New England — clothed and outfitted as they would have been 250 years ago — will gather here to demonstrate colonial cooking, musket handling, crafts and period dance. The event takes place on the Brewster Memorial Field, a stone’s throw away from bustling downtown Wolfeboro; 603-569-2200, www.wolfeborochamber.com.

AUG. 21 | If you never thought that encountering a hoard of bats would be something to celebrate, think again: **Bat Fest** in Austin, Texas, is an annual



PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA

celebration of the nightly flight of between 1.5 million and 2 million Mexican Free Tail Bats from underneath the Congress Avenue Bridge. When you’re not watching the bats, you can listen to live music, read the educational displays, go on carnival rides, do something “batty” with the kids or shop for jewelry, pottery, stained glass, sculptures and more; 512-441-9015, www.roadwayevents.com.

AUG. 21-22 | Enjoy fine works of art without having to step inside a stuffy museum at **Fresh Paint: Festival of Artists at Work** along Everett Marina’s scenic promenade in Everett, Wash. One hundred artists, including glassblowers, sculptors, weavers and painters, create unique art that families can take home with them. Attendees can walk the beach in search of handblown glass sea floats, and kids can explore their creativity with art projects; 425-257-8380, www.freshpaintfestival.com.

AUG. 27-28 | Go back to the days when cowboys and Indians wasn’t just a childhood game at the 18th annual **Western Legends Roundup** in Kanab, Utah, also known as Utah’s “Little Hollywood” because of the 150 movies that have been filmed there. Stroll down the “Walk of Fame,” watch an Old West shootout or the High Noon Parade with a cattle drive, taste some food from a Dutch oven, cheer at the rodeo and learn about Native American culture. There’s face painting and hands-on activities for the kids; and three campgrounds are nearby; 435-644-3444, www.westernlegendsroundup.com.

RV SHOWS

AUG. 13-15

Colorado RV Liquidation Super Sale
Denver;
303-892-6800, ext. 25

AUG. 13-15

Eastern North Carolina RV Sales Event
Greenville, N.C.;
910-423-5200

AUG. 20-22

16th Annual Summer Boat & RV Super Sale
Richmond, Va.;
804-425-6556



THREE-POINT STAR RETURNS TO SPRINTER

Mercedes-Benz showcased its Sprinter van lineup during a presentation for journalists at its Daimler Vans Manufacturing facility in Ladson, S.C., recently. The presentation was part of a two-day media event aimed at familiarizing the public with the rebranding of Sprinters under the Mercedes-Benz three-point star logo, which occurred earlier this year.

The 2010 Sprinter lineup includes a cab chassis and a Class A (F-50 platform) — powered by a 3.0-L BlueTEC diesel engine that utilizes a super-clean Diesel Exhaust Fluid (DEF) system. Upfitter companies affiliated with the Sprinter include Winnebago, Coachmen and Airstream.

Since 2001, the Sprinter has been sold in the United States by Dodge and Freightliner. Mercedes-Benz USA (MBUSA) began offering the Sprinter line through select Mercedes-Benz dealers earlier this year. As of press time, there were 117 Sprinter dealers, and the network is growing. MBUSA and Freightliner are divisions of Daimler AG, the world's largest manufacturer of commercial vehicles.

For more information, go online to www.mbsprinterusa.com.

— Patricia Marroquin



SPORTY CONVERTIBLE

When you travel in a motorhome, weight really counts. Everything you pack into the coach needs to be as light as possible, and even better, do double-duty. That applies to clothing as well. You definitely don't want to over-pack.

The Essential Jacket by Scottevest is both lightweight and multifunctional. Made of Teflon-treated, wrinkle-resistant fabric, the jacket has removable sleeves — so it can be worn as a vest — and 20 pockets. These pockets and compartments are designed to hold such items as travel gear, portable electronics, maps, a camera, cell phone and eyeglasses, so you can carry everything you need while out hiking or sightseeing. The jackets are available in men's and women's sizes and retail for \$119.50. **Magellan's, 800-962-4943, www.magellans.com.** — Eileen Hubbard

News Briefs

In a recent forecast for the RV market, Richard Curtin of the **University of Michigan's** Surveys of Consumers says that the industry is “firmly on the road to recovery” and expects 2010 year-end wholesale shipments to approach 216,000 units. The gain would be a 30 percent rise over the 2009 year-end total of 165,700 units. Further strengthening Curtin's assertion that the industry is recovering are the results of a **Recreation Vehicle Industry Association** survey of manufacturers, which reported that 15,800 units were shipped to retailers of all RVs in January, more than twice the total of January 2009 shipments. Both towable and motorhome categories grew, with all categories at the same or substantially above their January totals last year. Although he maintains that things have improved, Curtin cautions that there may continue to be some bumps on the road to recovery, such as lagging income growth. Curtin has stressed that one factor helping the RV industry is that consumer demand remains strong for RV products.

GMAC Financial Services announced recently that it will provide consumer financing for RVs and has been selected by **Thor Industries Inc.** as the preferred financial provider for its retail customers. Thor is the world's largest manufacturer of recreational vehicles, including brands such as Damon, Four Winds and Airstream. To start, GMAC will extend retail financing through Thor dealers in 14 high-volume states — Alabama, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and Washington. The business will eventually expand nationwide to all 1,200 dealers that comprise Thor's U.S. network.

Woodalls.com is offering campgrounds and RV parks a new way to connect with RVers and family campers — via **Facebook** and **Twitter**. Woodall's is launching a program that will connect its website users to a campground's own Facebook or Twitter page. By sending Woodall's website users directly to an RV or campground park's social media pages, consumers can connect with the campground and other camping enthusiasts who are fans or followers of that campground. **Woodall Publications** is a sister company of **MotorHome** magazine.



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escapes CROSSROADS



VILLAGE ANTIQUES

RVers who enjoy gazing at the clouds and interpreting their shapes can find plenty of fodder for their imaginations at City of Rocks State Park off State Route 61 in southern New Mexico, where 35 million years ago volcanic ash was welded into rows of monolithic rocks. Over the years, erosion has shaped the rock formations so that they have the appearance of a small village, complete with houses and streets.

Scattered among the rocks are 62 campsites (10 with electric and water hookups), offering easy access to the park's hiking trails, picnic areas, visitor center with interpretive exhibits and a botanical garden. The landscape is replete with desert and grassland vegetation. The animal inhabitants visitors may encounter range from mule deer to road-runners, and with more than 35 species of birds, you'll want to bring your binoculars.

The park is located in the Mimbres Valley of the Chihuahuan Desert, where thousands of years ago Mimbres Indians roamed, leaving behind arrowheads and pottery shards that are still often found in the park today. During the 1500s, Spanish explorers passed through while transporting copper from a nearby mine, and carved mysterious crosses on the rocks that some say point to long-buried treasure.

A solar-powered night sky observatory is a surprising plus to the park's offerings, and was the first one established by New Mexico State Parks. It has a roll-off roof and a monitor so that visitors can get a closer look at the planets, stars and constellations transmitted through the telescope.

For more information, visit www.emnrd.state.nm.us/PRD/cityrocks.htm. — Meaghan Alfier

**INTO THE
BATTLEFIELD**

Thirty miles north of Albany, N.Y.,

10 miles southeast of Sarasota Springs, Saratoga National Historical Park (NHP) above the Hudson River preserves the hallowed grounds of what's been dubbed "the turning point of the American Revolution." Here, in two decisive battles in the fall of 1777, American soldiers were victorious over the British.

The park preserves the land much as it would have looked then — pastures, rolling fields and woods. Monuments, cannons and forts aid in visualizing the conflict. A paved 10-mile auto tour (April through November) and the Wilkinson Trail lead you into history. Year-round, the visitor center/museum sets the stage. Besides the 3,400-acre battlefield, two satellite offerings to the north make up this park: Saratoga Monument, a 155-foot obelisk; and Schuyler House, the country home of Gen. Philip Schuyler, shown by guided tour. There's ample parking at the battlefield and limited parking at the two others.

For more information, call 518-664-9821, ext. 224, or visit www.nps.gov/sara.

— Rhonda Ostertag ♦



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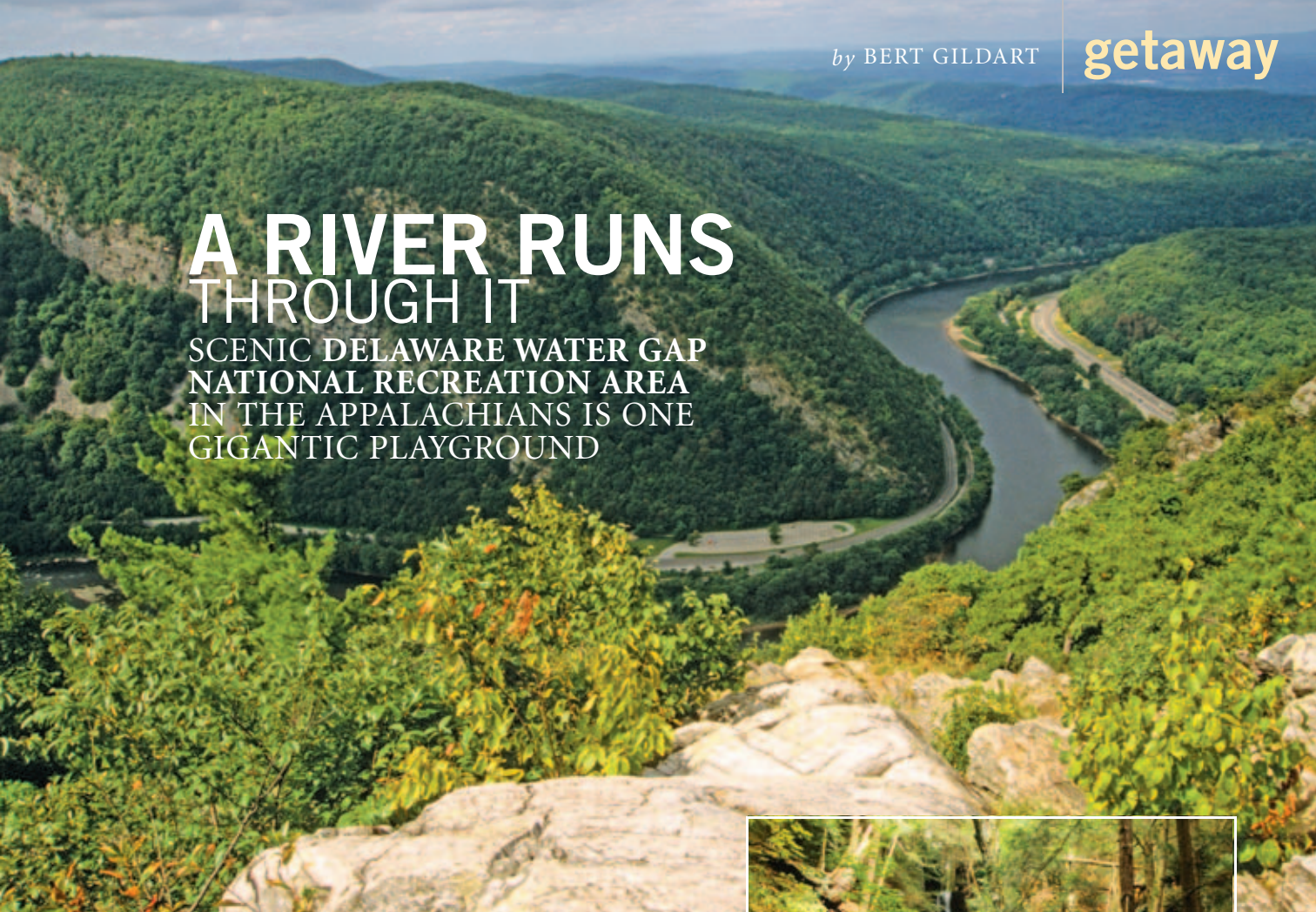
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A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

SCENIC DELAWARE WATER GAP NATIONAL RECREATION AREA IN THE APPALACHIANS IS ONE GIGANTIC PLAYGROUND



There are a lot of scenic overlooks in New Jersey and Pennsylvania from which you can gaze over the landscape, but some of those views are magnetic, compelling you to turn your eyes upon a huge depression in the Appalachian Mountains.

One of my favorite overlooks is along New Jersey's Interstate 80, and I've been stopping there for years. From it I can clearly see the immense saddlelike indentation and the verdant forest that blankets its flanks. I can detect a hint of the river that runs just below. It's all part of a mesmerizing vista, and though I always marvel when I see the Gap, as it is called, I understand much more about it now than I did 20 years ago. Today, after having hiked many trails to the defile, I know this setting as an immense playground that is alive and well, despite some initial struggles the park once experienced.



Clockwise from top: The winding Delaware River can be seen from one of many overlooks in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. In the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, a relatively easy hiking trail leads to 130-foot-tall Dingmans Falls. At the Delaware Water Gap/Pocono Mountain KOA, children of all ages are welcome to take a hay wagon ride around the campground.

PHOTOS: BERT GILDART



Clockwise from top left: The turkey vulture is a commonly found resident of the Delaware Water Gap. It's identified by its red beak and dark coloration. Naturalists encourage visitors to study the birds with binoculars only. A boardwalk links up with a short but steep walk to Bushkill Falls. The falls has been owned and operated by the Peters family since 1904. A pair of hikers climb a two-mile-long trail to the Gap. Their reward was a stunning view of Delaware River and the mountain flanks forming the actual gap. Children pan for gold at the Bushkill Falls visitor complex, which helps to interpret the entire area.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

BUSHKILL FALLS

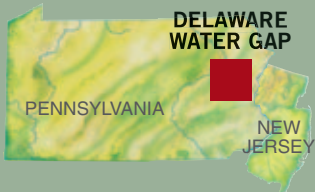
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www.nps.gov/dewa.

DELAWARE WATER GAP/ POCONO MOUNTAIN KOA

570-223-8000,
www.poconokoa.com.



Specifically, I'm referring to the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and it may come as a surprise to discover that such a lovely blend of pristine mountain features exists in the midst of one of the nation's greatest concentrations of people.

The Delaware Water Gap has a complicated history. In 1962, Congress authorized the building of a dam on the Delaware River near Tocks Island to create a multi-purpose reservoir project aimed at developing the bounty of recreational opportunities created by the dam. The area was deemed Tocks Island (later Delaware Water Gap) National Recreation Area in 1965, but because of controversy the dam was deauthorized in 1992, although the recreation area is still managed by the National Park Service (NPS). Today, the park comprises about 70,000 acres, all of which, my wife, Janie, and I decided, needed to be enjoyed.

We set up our campsite at the Delaware Water Gap/Pocono Mountain KOA and then, with a little help from our three grandchil-

dren, pitched a tent for their parents. In the meantime, we began mapping our plan for exploring the area's many features.

Not far from our camp in Pennsylvania are two major waterfalls: Bushkill and Dingmans. Dingmans is managed by the NPS and provides a relatively easy hike down to the 130-foot falls, which are spectacular. The other, owned and operated by the Peters family since 1904, is in the same area and is a must-see enchantment. Here, surging waters forming the Bushkill complex drop precipitously and then continue, cascading down eight more falls.

Appropriately, the first in the series is called Bridal Veil Falls, because it is reminiscent of its western counterpart in Yosemite. On a hot day, the mist it spews out is soothing, but it's only the beginning. All along the boardwalk lush ferns cover verdant banks, sprayed in turn by cascading waters that pound underlying pools. The boardwalk skirts these areas, affording splendid views of thundering water at each and every



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bend. The 40-minute descent was worth the effort — as was the subsequent ascent.

Back at the trailhead, we returned to the Bushkill Falls visitor complex, finding that it offered yet other natural history activities. The Water Gap is the hub of a vast ecosystem, and you won't go wrong by making several trips to the visitor complex, which helps interpret the area and its inhabitants, including a number of species of birds. One of the species we'd talked about frequently was the turkey vulture, a common resident of the Gap. Often, we'd watch as they massed in large flocks, doing what vultures do best: "cleaning up" the landscape.

We took the naturalists' advice to study the bird through binoculars, since it has such interesting but vile habits. Overhead, some vultures soared majestically, set apart by their distinctive, huge red beaks and dark coloration. As we studied them, a naturalist explained that the bird has a habit of regurgitating its last meal when threatened. "Try climbing a tree with a vulture above you in a nest," said the naturalist, "and you'd better watch out, 'cause

you'll get covered."

The Bushkill Falls visitor center interprets some of the other species you'll see at its wildlife museum. Curators exhibit dozens of species, including bear, beaver and cougar, and the exhibit fascinated everyone. So, too, did the center's interpretation on "mining." Here, a long sluice box provides children of all ages with the opportunity to pan for minerals and gold. For us, it was another winner.

That night we returned to our campsite and found the KOA had a series of planned activities. Toward evening, a huge open-air wagon with seating for perhaps 40 children began making the rounds. Drawn along campground roads by a four-wheeler, the arrangement offered adults down time while simultaneously diverting active children.

As the days unfolded, hiking was our preferred activity, and the park offers many informative hikes that encompass strolls along old military and mining roads. Yet another trail climbs to a well-known point that offers incredible views of the famous river and Gap. The trailhead is located across the

road from the Kittatinny Point Visitor Center in New Jersey. Our route ascended 1,250 feet in 1.5 miles to Mount Tammany, where it provided a commanding panorama of the Delaware River and the Water Gap.

Geologically, the gap began forming as the river flowed through a flat plain created during the Wisconsin Period (reaching back about 100,000 years and ending in 12,000 B.C.) when ice mantled the area. Simultaneously, mountains rose, and as they were uplifted, the river began scraping, grinding and cutting down until almost 1,000 feet of mountaintop had been cut away. Eventually, mountain uplifting triumphed and so the Delaware had to find another route. Minus elaborations on complex tectonic plate activity, it's just about that straightforward.

Today, the view from the Gap and of the Delaware River flowing so determinedly below is reassuring, for it is one of the region's major sources of water. In size the Delaware ranks 25th among U.S. rivers, but it provides 10 percent of the nation's population with drinking water. Because of



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protective measures, more than 70 miles of the river's 390 miles have been declared a National Wild and Scenic River. Not surprisingly, kayaking, canoeing, tubing and fishing are popular. Facilities in and around the Gap make it easy to rent a canoe or kayak, or launch your own.

On Day Three of our visit, we decided to take a quiet drive to the site of the old Dingmans Ferry and some of the other historic structures. The NPS has preserved the site of the old Dingmans Ferry, linking Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Today, however, the ferry is gone, replaced about 1890 by a now-historic bridge. It's one of the few privately owned and operated toll bridges in the country, run by descendants of some of the original settlers. Weight limitations restrict large RVs from crossing, but if you have a dinghy, you're in luck. Cost to cross? Just a dollar.

On the New Jersey side of the Water Gap the park road twists and turns, passing an assortment of historic homes. We saw the Isaac Rundle House, Chado Farm, the Van-Scoder-Knight House and dozens of others. Many similar buildings have been preserved in the village of Millbrook, a mix of original, relocated and reconstructed structures.

Millbrook Village provides the setting for an interpretation of a late 19th-century rural community, and we arrived when a number of NPS staff and volunteers were engaged in various living-history performances. One of those was Bob Demarest, who explained his life as a woodworker. His woodworking exhibits drew an appreciative audience. So too did a gentleman working at the old Carriage Shop. He said knowledge of all skills should be retained, for you never know when you'll need it again.

From Millbrook, the tour road (about 70 miles long) wanders up and down hills, all forming a part of an extensive series of mountains. Soon, the road returned us to our campground, where we kindled a fire and reminisced a bit about our time together.

Several days later we departed from the park, and then gradually began winding our way through the Appalachians, stopping at almost every pullover spot for views of the Delaware Water Gap. And so our leave-taking became a gradual thing; we were reluctant to let go of a region that not only was beautiful, but which also could provide so many activities for a group as diverse as ours. ♦

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WHERE THE SEA IS THE SOUL

HALIFAX AND PEGGY'S COVE
CELEBRATE NOVA SCOTIA'S
SEAFARING HISTORY

by PATRICK BORDERS

The enemy approached. I stood atop Citadel Hill, like a British soldier of old, and surveyed Halifax's historic Town Clock, deep-rooted churches and ever-bustling waterfront. The sun reflected off the waters that harbored masted ships and the modern skyscrapers that stood alongside historic buildings. But looking to my right, I spied the dastardly foe of every tourist — fog. It encroached along the waters and stretched its insipid fingers toward this Nova Scotia town.

Within minutes, the soup conquered the city. And my view. But despite the setback, I was determined to discover the town's rich history even if the hand in front of my face was somewhat obscured.

I turned away from the fogged-in view. Spread out before me was the anchor of Halifax's 18th-century defensive system: the star-shaped Halifax Citadel National Historic Site.

Along with 2,500 settlers, Gov. Edward Cornwallis established Canada's first permanent British town on Halifax's shore in 1749. The ice-free waters provided the second-largest natural harbor in the world. With the islands and points in the harbor, and the high ground of Citadel Hill, Halifax offered an ideal locale for a military base to protect against feared French incursions.

Four forts were built on Citadel Hill, with the current fortification completed in 1856. Today, Parks Canada has restored the fort to a Victorian-era living museum of period life. Exhibits and guided tours educate visitors on the fort's structure and its history as a vital naval and military base. The star-shaped walls, defensive ditch, ramparts and signal masts exhibit a typical bastion fortification of its era.

But to enter the Citadel is more than entering a military relic. Once I passed the kilted gate sentry, the sounds echoing around the grounds took me back in time — I heard the pop of rifle fire, bang of the big guns and haunting hum of the bagpipes. The MacKenzie kilt-attired 78th Highlanders were performing precision drills and firing demonstrations. Royal Artillery re-enactors were also performing drill demonstrations on 12-pounder and 32-pounder smoothbore guns and 7-inch rifled muzzle-loading guns. The period sounds peaked with the firing of the noon gun, a Halifax tradition, which sent shock waves resounding from the fort. If only the guns would take out that enemy fog, then we'd be talking about some power.



PHOTOS: PATRICK BORDERS (HARBOR); NOVA SCOTIA TOURISM; CULTURE AND HERITAGE (LIGHTHOUSE); DESTINATION HALIFAX/NOVA SCOTIA TOURISM AND CULTURE/W. HAYES (SOLDIERS)



Far left, kilted gate sentries greet visitors to the Citadel. In summer, the MacKenzie 78th Highlanders — a famous Scottish unit of the British army — perform drills, sentry duty, firing demonstrations and bagpiper parade marches. About 30 miles southwest of Halifax is the quaint fishing village of Peggy's Cove. The tiny town attracts 750,000 visitors each year and is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Atlantic Canada. The showpiece of Peggy's Cove is its celebrated lighthouse. The town and its lighthouse atop rugged granite rocks are an artist's and photographer's dream.





The star-shaped Halifax Citadel National Historic Site was the anchor of Halifax's 18th-century defensive system. Guided tours and exhibits explain the Citadel's history as a vital military and naval base. On a stroll along the Halifax waterfront, visitors can enjoy musical performers and see world-traveled boats docked along the piers. At Historic Properties Privateers Wharf, restaurants serve a variety of fresh seafood.

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With the noon gun's echoes still reverberating in my ears, I set off to face the fog — man to mist. I descended the hills to the waterfront, but there I discovered the murkiness only enhanced the romance of the historic harbor. The waterfront bustled with activity as music performers entertained passers-by, world-traveled boats docked along the piers, and tall-masted ships disappeared and reappeared through the mist.

Walking one of the fingered piers, I watched as tourists and locals traveled on the ferry to Halifax's harbor sister city, Dartmouth, which also offers a fine waterfront and historic attractions. Operating since 1752, the Dartmouth ferry is North America's oldest saltwater ferry system. Besides commuter transportation, the ferry provides a picturesque harbor view of Halifax's waterfront and skyline.

Continuing along the waterfront, I stopped at the three blocks that make up the Historic Properties Privateers Wharf. A four-acre National Historic Site, Historic Properties includes 10 beautiful buildings from the late 1700s and early 1800s, which were once a bustling center of seafaring activity. The British crown licensed many of the area's seafarers as privateers to raid and plunder enemy vessels. In many ways, the smuggling and privateering made Halifax what it is today. The Privateers Wharf warehouses safeguarded the booty that helped make the city prosperous. In fact, Enos Collins, one of the more successful adventurers, later started the first bank in Nova Scotia. When he died in 1871, Collins was considered the richest man in British North America. Today, the Halifax



PHOTOS: DESTINATION HALIFAX/NOVA SCOTIA TOURISM AND CULTURE/W. HAYES; PATRICK BORDERS (PORT OF HALIFAX)

Banking Company building remains as part of the Historic Properties complex.

Historic Properties offers boutiques, fine dining, pubs and entertainment. Places such as Bounty Boutique, The Lower Deck Pub and Salty's Restaurant add a distinctive seafaring flavor.

After enjoying lobster at Salty's, I headed south, taking in the mystical and mist-shrouded sounds of the foghorns and halyards clanking off moored boats.

Next, I stopped in the acclaimed Maritime Museum of the Atlantic. Canada's oldest and largest maritime museum, it celebrates the area's seafaring heritage and offers permanent exhibits about shipwrecks, the Titanic and the Great Halifax Explosion.

Many of the Titanic victims were brought to Halifax, along with many pieces of wreckage from the ship. The exhibit tells the story of the disaster and houses the largest collection of wooden Titanic artifacts.

The Halifax Explosion exhibit details the largest man-made explosion before the atomic bomb, which destroyed much of the city in 1917. The blast occurred when a French cargo ship, loaded with war-related explosives, collided with a Norwegian ship. The resulting destruction killed as many as 2,000 people, injured 9,000 and left 25,000 homeless.

Docked behind the Maritime Museum is the HMCS Sackville, a World War II convoy escort corvette. The Sackville has been restored as a floating museum and is dedicated to those who served in Canada's navy.

After the museum, I continued along the waterfront to Pier 21 — Canada's Immigration Museum. The museum, often compared to New York's Ellis Island, offers exhibits and multimedia presentations that tell the collective story of the more than 1 million people — immigrants, war brides, soldiers and children sent from England to escape the war — who passed through from 1928 until 1971.

By late afternoon, just as I'd learned to appreciate the fog's finer attributes, and now considered it more friend than foe, sunlight suddenly burst through and gradually chased away the mist. The water glistened, and I scanned the harbor and took in the sights of George's Island and its lighthouse.

Nova Scotia is famous for its lighthouses, and Halifax sits just north of the province's Lighthouse Route. In fact, one

of Nova Scotia's most famous monuments to its seafaring history lies just 31 miles southwest of Halifax in Peggy's Cove.

With the sun at my back, I decided to head out along the Lighthouse Route, skirting the rugged shore, to the quaint fishing village of Peggy's Cove and its celebrated lighthouse. The tiny seaside town is one of the most popular tourist attractions in Atlantic Canada and as I learned, if you're driving your motorhome, it's best to arrive early in the morning.

After parking by the visitor center, I headed through the town on foot. Colorful fishing boats and weathered sheds decorate the village, but its centerpiece is the lighthouse perched atop the rugged granite rocks. An artist's paradise, the town and lighthouse make Peggy's Cove one of the most photographed locations in Canada.

With a population of about 50, Peggy's Cove is still an active fishing village. I strolled along the wharf and snapped photographs until my memory card begged for mercy. Every rugged boat or colorful buoy — the humdrum tools of a fisherman's trade — called out for a photo to hang at home.

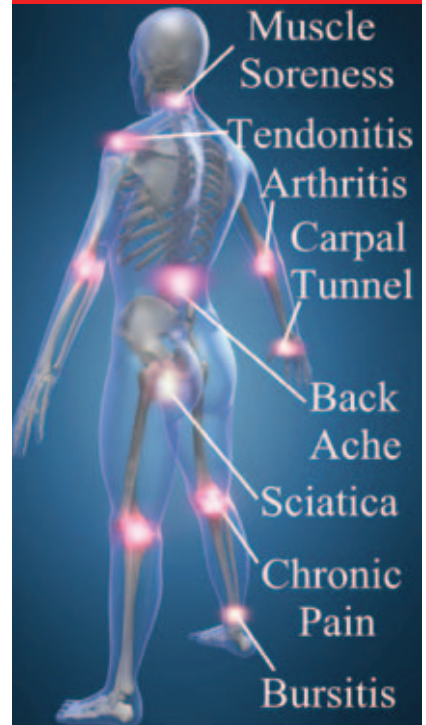
From town, I then wandered the winding road to the white octagonal tower, which marks the entrance to St. Margaret's Bay. Although the lighthouse itself attracts visitors, it's the surrounding setting that makes it unique and a magnet for photographers. The tower sits upon a sea of wave-sculpted granite outcroppings — perfect for exploring (very carefully) and enjoying the spectacle of crashing waves.

With the setting of the sun, it was time to return to my campground. I took one last look at the rugged sea and celebrated the day I'd spent along the large harbor of Halifax and the tiny harbor of Peggy's Cove. As I gazed toward St. Margaret's Bay, I heard the haunting sounds of bagpipes suddenly echo across the rocks.

Near the lighthouse, a woman in full Scottish regalia was piping. I asked her if she knew any tunes about battling fog. Alas, she didn't, so I requested "Amazing Grace." The soulful tones seemed to float over the waves and gave me a memorable image to depart with.

Whether for defense, fishing or tourism, the sea has always been the soul of this region of Nova Scotia. I'm sure it always will be. ♦

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TOURING CENTRAL KENTUCKY: GLASGOW TO LEXINGTON



Glasgow, a small town in south-central Kentucky's Barren County, is as rich in Scottish heritage as its name suggests. It's also the start of a 155-mile scenic drive through some of the loveliest pastoral country you'll see anywhere.

The drive follows U.S. Highway 31E north from Glasgow to the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park, then picks up the Lincoln Heritage Scenic Highway (U.S. Highway 31E to Bardstown, then U.S. Highway 150 to Danville) and ends in Lexington.

But before you set out on this drive, which also showcases much of Kentucky's history, spend some time in Glasgow, founded by Scottish-Irish immigrants more than 200 years ago.

A good place to start is South Central Kentucky Cultural Center, which was originally called "Museum of the Barrens" for the county named by early pioneers. They had arrived in 1798 shortly after Native Americans had

burned off vegetation to promote grassland and attract bison — and the pioneers found the land barren. The 30,000-square-foot museum tells the story of the area through exhibits that include a military display, one-room school, log cabin, gristmill and early farm implements.

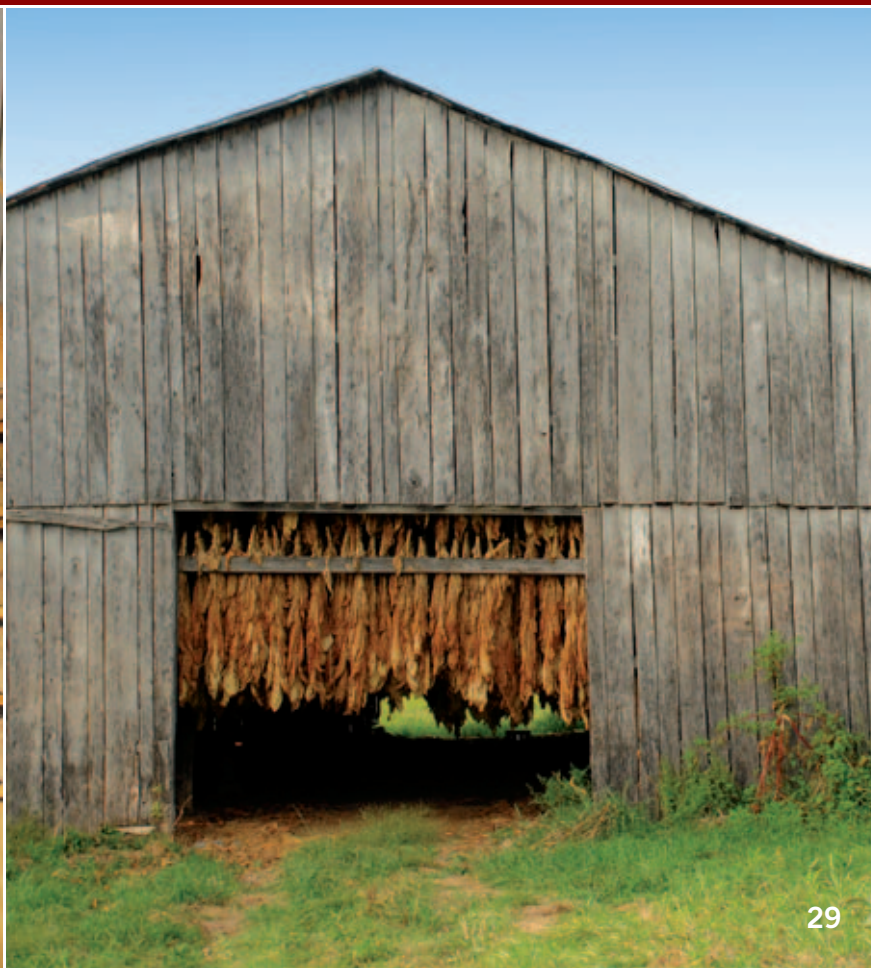
The town's major annual event is the Glasgow Highland Games, which celebrates the area's Scottish heritage and draws more than 12,000 visitors the weekend after Memorial Day. There are whiskey tastings, Celtic concerts, a banquet and a tartan ball, but the main events are the traditional Scottish games, such as caber toss, clachneath (stone toss) and sheaf toss.

Glasgow is also a town with a rich history and placards at the red-brick courthouse tell of its role in the Civil War. On Christmas Eve 1862, Morgan's Raiders, a band of Confederate irregulars who were camped south of town, rode in to celebrate the holiday. But as they dismounted at the tavern, members of a Michigan cavalry unit rode up "with the same de-

Opposite, counter-clockwise: The re-created 1790 Old Bardstown is part of a complex that includes the War Memorial of Mid America, Wildlife Museum, Women's Civil War Museum and an excellent Civil War Museum. A woman in period dress works on a quilt at Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill. The National Historic Landmark has 34 buildings on 2,900 acres, the largest restored Shaker community in the nation. The Kentucky Railway Museum in New Haven is a must-see attraction. The 1905-built steam locomotive No. 152 is one of the world's last surviving Louisville and Nashville steam engines. Visitors view an exhibit at Heaven Hill Distilleries' Bourbon Heritage Center. Tobacco leaves hang drying in a barn.

DIVERSE ROUTES EXPOSE TRAVELERS TO LINCOLN LAND, A TARTAN TOWN, QUILTER CULTURE AND A SHAKER VILLAGE

by PAMELA SELBERT



PHOTOS: GUY LOUIS SELBERT, KENTUCKY TOURISM (QUILTER)



The olive-green Kentucky River near Lexington is flanked by thickly treed palisades, some of which tower 200 to 500 feet. Hour-long excursions on the river are available aboard the “Dixie Belle” sternwheeler. The 115-passenger boat makes five-mile round trips, and the captain/guide identifies plants and animals along the way. At Kentucky Horse Park in Lexington, a horse is put through its paces. The 1,200-acre complex includes museums, galleries, theaters, farm exhibits and a first-rate campground.

sire.” A skirmish followed and “both parties stampeded without celebrating.”

From Glasgow, the scenic drive heads north into a bucolic world of wide fields rumpling into low hills, acres of tall corn and pastures dotted with cattle. There are also occasional fields of tobacco and red barns where tobacco leaves hang drying like withered arms, and sweet pipe-smell fills the air.

We suggest a stop at Dennison’s Roadside Market (about 15 miles north of Glasgow) — a cornucopia of flowering plants and arrays of produce, and shelves of candies, jellies, jams, relishes and fruit baskets inside a cavernous old-fashioned store.

The drive continues through tiny Uno, Canmer, and then Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park south of Hodgenville. Exhibits and a 15-minute film at the visitor center tell the story of Lincoln’s Kentucky years and later life. His parents, Thomas and Nancy, bought Sinking Spring Farm here two months before Abraham Lincoln was born in February 1809. Two years later a dispute over land forced them off the farm and Thomas Lincoln rented 30 acres at Knob Creek about 10 miles northeast.

A neoclassical marble and granite monument up a grand four-tier stone staircase encases a “symbolic” one-room cabin

of “dressed” logs, not the original Lincoln home but similar. The spring, a thin stream of water flowing along a trough and clattering to a pool 10 feet below, is nearby down a dank, curved stairway.

The memorial and Sinking Spring Farm were designated a National Historic Site in 1959. In 2001 the farm at Knob Creek became part of the site, and in 2009 the site was redesignated a National Historical Park.

A historic cabin from the area represents the Lincolns’ home at the Knob Creek site (just north of Hodgenville), and placards explain that the 16th U.S. president’s “earliest recollections” are of this farm. Lincoln’s

FOR MORE INFORMATION

ABRAHAM LINCOLN BIRTHPLACE NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK

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Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park, located south of Hodgenville, Ky., features a neoclassical marble and granite monument reached by a four-tier stone staircase. The structure houses a “symbolic” one-room log cabin, similar to the original Lincoln home.

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TOURING CENTRAL KENTUCKY

formal education — such as it was — began two miles from here at what he called a “blab school,” as there were no books. In 1816 the anti-slavery Lincolns left the farm for Indiana across the Ohio. Lincoln as president, echoing his father’s sentiment, wrote: “If slavery isn’t wrong, nothing is wrong.”

Hodgenville’s pride in its most famous native son is reflected in the town square by a life-size bronze “Boy Lincoln” sculpture and inscriptions of Lincoln’s famous speeches along the walkways. Across the street, The Lincoln Museum reflects Lincoln’s life from his log cabin birth to his assassination at Ford’s Theatre through a series of dioramas, realistic wax figures, exhibits, art collections, library and film. RVers can park nearby at the large, free parking lot off of the town square.

Quilters may want to follow the Kentucky Quilt Trail, which includes some 500 colorful, large-scale quilt blocks painted on back-roads barns, eight of them near Hodgenville.

The drive continues northeast through New Haven, where Kentucky Railway Museum is a must-see. The 5,000-square-foot museum is a replica of the old Louisville and Nashville’s New Haven depot, and displays more than 70 pieces of rail equipment: locomotive whistles, bells, lanterns, antique passenger cars and engines (including a restored, fully operational 1905-built steam locomotive No. 152). The museum also has a large model train display and offers a variety of historic-train trips.

Lovely, antique Bardstown, where an 1852 visit to Federal Hill plantation inspired composer Stephen Foster to write “My Old Kentucky Home,” is next. Founded in 1780, Kentucky’s second-oldest city, first Catholic diocese of the West and “Bourbon Capital of the World,” offers an almost bewildering array of attractions.

Walking tours of the downtown include 48 historic sites. Of particular interest are Old Nelson County Jail, the oldest operating jail in Kentucky, with a replica of an 18th-century stock and pillory out front; Old Talbert Tavern, a fine stone building in use since 1797 (now a restaurant); Basilica of St. Joseph Proto-Cathedral, built in 1816, the first Catholic cathedral west of the Alleghenies; and among many others, the neoclassical monument to steamboat-inventor John Fitch and a 12-foot replica,

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one-twenty-fifth scale, of his 1786 boat. Bardstown ("to bourbon what Napa Valley is to wine") has long been famous for the amber-hued spirit produced here. Five distilleries operate nearby, tours are available, and the annual Kentucky Bourbon Festival the third week in September (Sept. 14-19, 2010) celebrates with tastings, seminars, a balloon glow and more. Heaven Hill's first-rate Bourbon Heritage Center and Oscar Getz Museum of Whiskey History detail the potation's story.

Among the town's many other attractions is the complex that includes re-created 1790 Old Bardstown Village, War Memorial of Mid America, Wildlife Museum, Women's Civil War Museum and a Civil War Museum that's the best we've seen anywhere. Nearby is My Old Kentucky Home State Park, where antebellum Federal Hill is open for tours and a campground offers 39 wooded sites.

The scenic drive continues east through rolling hills to Perryville Battlefield State Historic Site, where a limestone obelisk honors the 22,000 Federals under Gen. Don Carlos Buell, and a soldier-statue on a pedestal engraved with lines from "Bivouac of the Dead" remembers the 16,000 Confederates under Gen. Braxton Bragg who clashed here on Oct. 8, 1862, in the state's bloodiest battle of the Civil War. The Confederates ultimately withdrew, after sustaining 3,396 casualties; Union losses were 4,211. Placards tell the story.

Quaint Danville, first capital of Kentucky, is next. The town's entire commercial district, rows of ornate two-, three- and four-story buildings, is in the National Register of Historic Places. The site of the state's first post office (1792) is here, as are replicas of an early jail, courthouse and meetinghouse where in 1784 plans were made for Kentucky's independence from Virginia; it entered the Union eight years later.

Take U.S. Highway 127 north nine miles to Harrodsburg and Old Fort Harrod State Park, where a full-scale replica of the 1775 fort has been built. Cabins and blockhouses are furnished as they were in pioneer days, and interpreters in period dress demonstrate 18th-century life skills (mid-April through October). Exhibits at Mansion Museum, an 1830 Greek-Revival home, include Native American artifacts and Civil War history.

The route proceeds to Shaker Village

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of Pleasant Hill, a National Historic Landmark with 34 buildings remaining (of nearly 270) on 2,900 acres, the largest restored Shaker community in the country. Placards explain that the sect — the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing — came to the United States from England in 1774. Dubbed "Shakers" for their "vigorous worship practice," they were "devout, orderly and followed celibacy."

Pleasant Hill, created in 1805 as "the perfect society," was flourishing by 1825 with nearly 500 residents. For years Shakers led the state in scientific farming, and the brooms, preserves, garden seeds and herbs they produced were considered "hallmarks of excellence." But after the Civil War their numbers began to dwindle, and the village officially closed in 1910. The last Pleasant Hill Shaker died here in 1923. The village opened as a living history museum with self-guided tours in 1968.

Hour-long excursions (April to November) on the Kentucky River aboard the "Dixie Belle" sternwheeler (operated by Shaker Village) are highly recommended, as the scenery is spectacular. The 115-passenger boat makes five-mile round trips passing thickly treed palisades that tower 200 to 500 feet, cut by the olive-green river over some 450 million years, says captain/guide Bruce Herring. A wealth of information, he identifies plants and animals along the way, notes fossils found in the bluffs, and tells the story of the 255-mile river (one of the longest in a single state).

The final stop on our route is Lexington, where attractions include Ashland, home of 19th-century statesman Henry Clay; Mary Todd Lincoln's childhood home; Lexington History Center; 734-acre Raven Run Nature Sanctuary; and The Aviation Museum of Kentucky.

The town offers abundant shopping for antiques, art, handcrafted items and equine-related gifts. The latter is not surprising in this "Horse Capital of the World," where many other attractions are horse-related: the American Saddlebred Museum; Keeneland racetrack; The Red Mile harness track; The Thoroughbred Center; and 1,200-acre Kentucky Horse Park with museums, galleries, theaters, farm exhibits and numerous shows throughout the year. There's also a first-rate campground with 260 spacious, wooded sites with electricity and water. ♦

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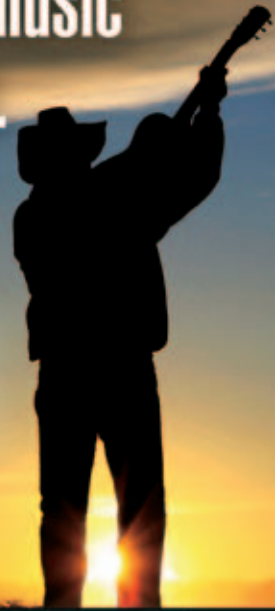
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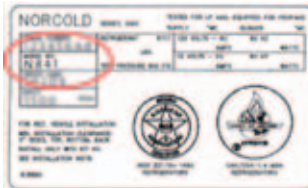
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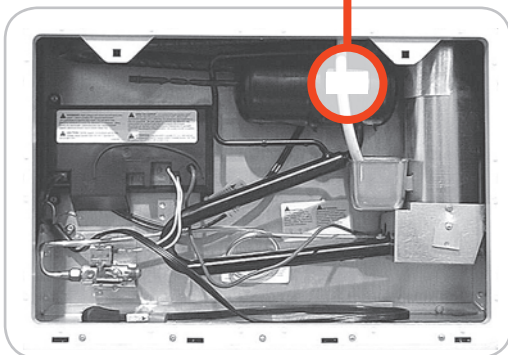
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The seductive dance of the fly-line over a clear-flowing stream has long held my imagination and spoken to my soul. So, a couple of years ago, I answered the call and took up the sport of fly-fishing. I paid my dues, flying chunks of hideous yellow yarn over the high school sports field, learning to command the graceful arcs, loops and rolls. In good time, I graduated to imposter flies, barbless hooks and open water. And, in no time at all, the seduction became an addiction.

Ever since, I have been taking my act on the road. One obvious destination was my birth state, Montana, with its superb blue-ribbon trout fishery. I'd say I checked it off my wish list of

places to go in 2009, but fishing Montana is a wish that never fades. It's a fixture on my list.

The state's fishing and grand landscapes did not disappoint, but what truly won me over was the access. Montana boasts a superb fishing access site (FAS) system, serving residents and visitors alike. The set-asides provide river, lake and stream approaches for fishing and boat launching, with primitive camping available at nearly one-third of the sites. New accesses are added annually. Although not all of the camps or access roads are suitable for motorhomes, where you *can* camp the view from the picture window is top-notch.

The program's funding comes from the sale of the state fishing

REELING IN



license. One dollar from each license sold goes toward the acquisition and maintenance of these sites. Too often, great waters are locked up by private ownership. This program is a win-win for recreationists and landowners. It opens the waters and reduces trespass.

Having great waters is one thing; having great access to those waters is quite another. And, Montana has both.

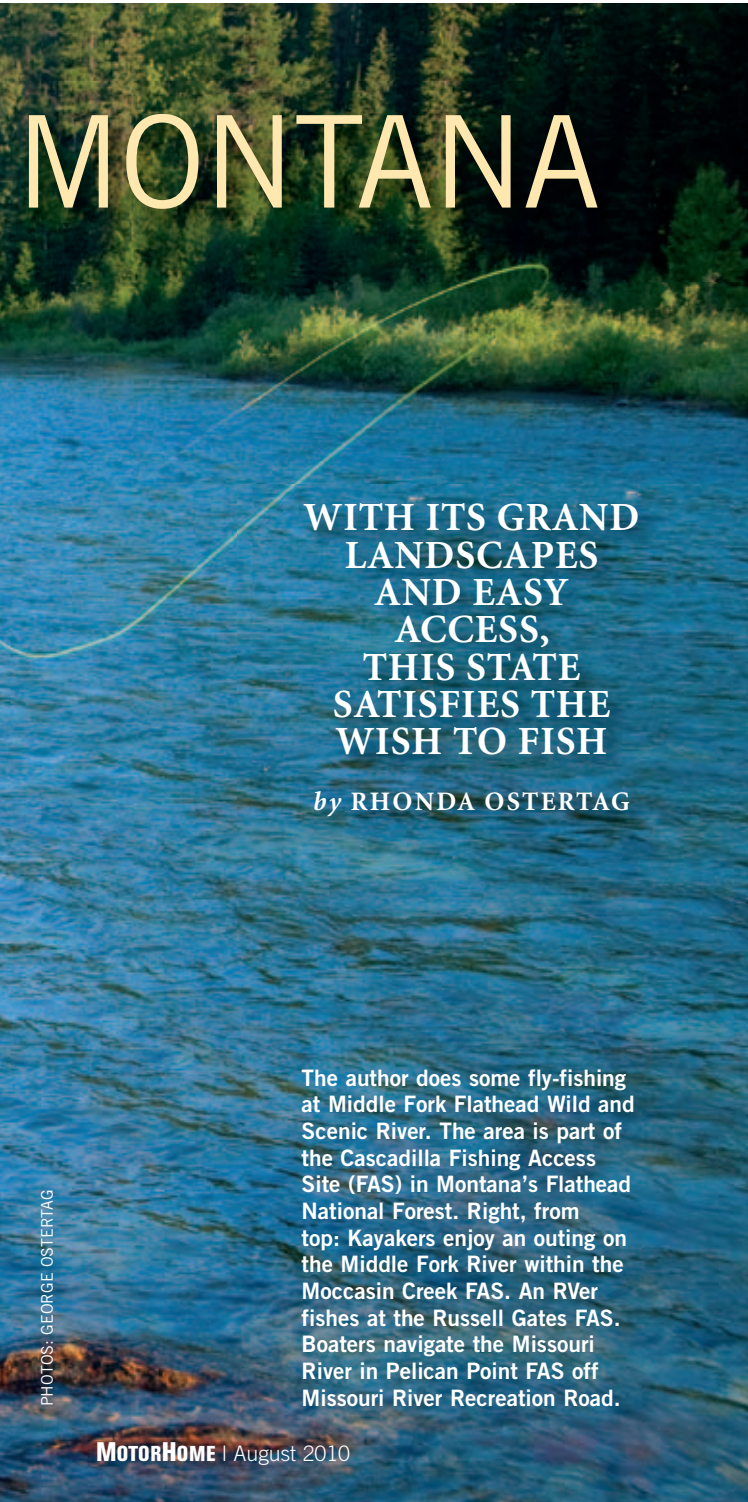
The FAS program alone offers 332 places to get you started fishing. State park, Bureau of Land Management and U.S. Forest Service sites swell the offering and, in many cases, add to the complement of camping. Private RV parks can add more civility and comfort to your nights after a day on the water. Consult your

Trailer Life RV Parks and Campgrounds Directory.

According to Allan Kuser, FAS coordinator for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, the program officially went on the books in 1974, but lands had been acquired as early as the 1960s. Currently, due to the pure size of the system, 75 cents from each dollar goes to maintaining the existing sites, with the remainder used for new acquisitions.

"I guess you could look at it as the price of success," said Kuser.

Because of the current money skew and because getting on the water is the primary goal, Kuser explained that future



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WISH TO FISH

by RHONDA OSTERTAG

The author does some fly-fishing at Middle Fork Flathead Wild and Scenic River. The area is part of the Cascadilla Fishing Access Site (FAS) in Montana's Flathead National Forest. Right, from top: Kayakers enjoy an outing on the Middle Fork River within the Moccasin Creek FAS. An RVer fishes at the Russell Gates FAS. Boaters navigate the Missouri River in Pelican Point FAS off Missouri River Recreation Road.

PHOTOS: GEORGE OSTERTAG





The author's Montana river stops included Blackfoot River at the Monture Creek FAS.

acquisitions will likely focus on providing day-use access and not camping. But, he adds, there is still plenty to crow about.

The access sites can range from 1- to 2-acre poke-your-nose-in sites to ample sites of several hundred acres. Kuser said, "There are gems in every district, and all sites have merit."

Montana is a big state, so my travels were mainly confined to the west, but as I said, I'll be back. I fished such legends as the Thompson, Big Hole, Bitterroot, Middle Fork Flathead, Swan, Clark Fork and Missouri rivers. But I checked out other waters along the way, sometimes birding, sometimes sightseeing. I hooked into mountain whitefish and rainbow, cutthroat and brown trout. The sport fishery, though, is quite diverse, varying by region and by water body.

On the Middle Fork Flathead, a popular rafting water, I sometimes had to hold up my cast while floaters passed. But I also hooked into and released my first of the celebrated Montana cutthroat, a beautiful wild fish with a green back, black

spots and signature orange chin stripe and a fight that would put a Rottweiler to shame.

On the Missouri, my husband, George, and I camped with my parents at the Prewett Creek FAS, and hopscotched between access sites up and down river. I fished with my Dad for the first time since I was a kid. This time, he didn't have to tie my knots or untangle my line. He actually could spend his time fishing.

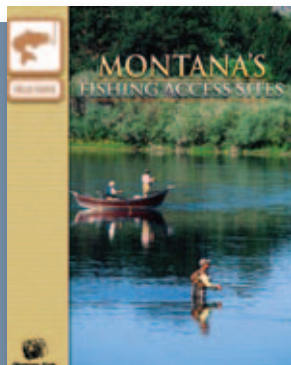
At the Dewey Access on the Big Hole River, I met up with a Pennsylvania fly-caster, thigh-deep in the river, juggling a fishing pole, a wading staff, a lively 17-inch brown trout and sporting a smile that could rival the fish in length, if only it were humanly possible. He and his wife were staying at an RV park in Butte, about a half-hour drive north on Interstate 15, and they were venturing out by passenger vehicle. After he landed and released the fish, though, his wife got behind the wheel to investigate some nearby primitive camping on the river.

George and I ended that day farther west on the Big Hole at Fishtrap Creek FAS (20 campsites, maximum RV length 28 feet). As the sun tipped its hat to the day, I stood in the river, tortured by a sci-fi blizzard of microscopic insects and the interlocking rings of percolating fish jumps and had not a clue as to how to match the hatch. Of the hundreds of fish nosing the surface, only two chose my flies. But it was a magnificent sight and George and I had it all to ourselves.

While on the rivers, I was treated to sightings of bald eagles, ospreys, white pelicans, Canada geese and mergansers. I also watched as deer sipped at the river's edge or swam to the opposite bank. An acceptance of fly-casters, not afforded other two-legged intruders, seems to exist. On road trips between the access sites, I spied prairie dogs, bison, bighorn sheep, antelope, elk and even badgers, on two separate occasions.

My river travels took me past Native American sites, Lewis and Clark sites, and ranching and mining history. Like the Pennsylvanians, our travels took us through Butte, with its ghosts and gallows and hot pasty (pass-TEE') lunches. This Cornish pastry was the traditional miner's lunch — a hearty pocket pie with cubed meat, onions and potatoes.

When you fish Montana you can have it all — great sport, grand landscapes, wildlife, sightseeing and good eats. So, hang out the "gone fishing" shingle and head to Montana. You'll be hooked, too. ♦



FISH FINDER

Montana has made finding its fishing access sites (FAS) easy, with a well-designed field guidebook and a searchable Web version. The guide is broken down first by geographic district. It then identifies the waterways within each district and each water's fishery species. Under the waterway heading are the access sites that serve it. Associated maps help users visualize the general locations.

For each FAS, a succinct description alerts you to the use: day or overnight; facilities (latrines, concrete or gravel ramps, docks, designated or undesignated camping spots); any Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) access; and the all-important directions. Some entries even give clues to limited parking spaces or vehicle size.

The free booklet is generally available where licenses are sold, at visitor centers, or by calling Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (406-444-2535) or contacting any district office. On the Internet, go to www.fwp.mt.gov/fishing/guide. — R.O.

KEEPING RUBBER ON THE ROAD

PROPER INFLATION AND MAINTENANCE OF A MOTORHOME'S TIRES HELP TO **INCREASE SAFETY AND LOWER COST**

by DOUG JONES



RV tires are complex. Understanding how they operate and how best to maintain them will help you keep your motorhome in safe running condition. If a tire goes down from improper air pressure or maintenance, so does the RV and the enjoyment of the trip.

Tires are composed of various types of material and rubber compounds, including performance properties essential to the proper functioning of the tire under various conditions. These properties evolve over time. For each tire, this evolution depends on many factors, such as weather, storage conditions and other conditions of use the tire is subjected to throughout its life. That is why, in addition to regular inspections and inflation pressure maintenance by the owners, it is recommended that RV tires, including spare tires, be inspected regularly by a qualified tire specialist, such as a

Michelin RV tire dealer, who will assess the tire's suitability for continued service.

RV owners are strongly encouraged to be aware not only of their tires' visual condition and inflation pressures, but also of any changes in dynamic performances such as increased air loss, noise or vibration, which could be an indication that the tires need to be removed from service to prevent failure.

It is impossible to predict when tires should be replaced based on their calendar age alone. However, the older the tire, the greater the chance that it will need to be replaced due to the service-related evolution or other conditions found upon inspection or detected during use. While most tires will need replacement before 10 years, Michelin recommends that any tires in service 10 years or longer from the date of manufacture, including spare tires, be replaced with new tires as a simple precaution, even if such tires appear serviceable

and even if they have not reached the legal-wear limit.

For tires that were on an original equipment vehicle (for example, acquired on a new vehicle), follow the vehicle manufacturer's tire replacement recommendations when specified (but not to exceed 10 years). The date when a tire was manufactured is located on the sidewall of the tire. RV owners should locate the Department of Transportation, or DOT, code on the tire that begins with "DOT" and ends with the week and year of manufacture. For example, a code ending with "0304" indicates a tire made in the third week of the year (January) in 2004.

SELECTING REPLACEMENT TIRES

One of the most important equipment purchases any RV owner will make will be tires. If the consumer obtained good service with the original set of tires, chances are they were matched well for the RV's



Always check air pressure when tires are “cold” and haven’t been driven for more than a mile. If you can’t avoid checking warm tires, be sure to allow for an increase in pressure.



Michelin recommends that a motorhome owner purchase a high quality truck tire air gauge with a dual-angled head. This allows the owner to check the pressure of the inner and outer dual wheels.



Checking air pressure on rear dual tires can be difficult; high-quality metal valve extenders can make the task easier. The easier it is to check the pressure, the more likely the procedure will be done.

weight needs, the RV type and the area of driving. Should the RV owner choose to replace his tires with another size, it is important to be very careful with this selection. There are some basic areas of concern, such as the load rating of the new tire, the overall diameter of the tire for vehicle clearance, speedometer reading and wheel width. There is also the matching of the tires to the dual wheel offset for the dual spacing clearance and the load rating of the wheel. For example: Buying a tire with a higher load rating that might require 105 PSI would be inappropriate if the RV wheel is limited to 80 PSI. Also, be sure that the wheel width is compatible with the new tire size; doing otherwise is dangerous. Consult the vehicle manufacturer for wheel specifications.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TIRE PRESSURE

After choosing the best tire for a motorhome, the most important factor in maintaining the life of RV tires is making sure they are always properly inflated. Incorrect air pressure for the weight of the vehicle is dangerous and could cause such situations as premature wear, tire damage or a harsher ride. An underinflated or overloaded tire will build up more heat that could go beyond the endurance limits of the rubber and radial cords. This could cause sudden tire failure. Underinflation will also cause poor handling, faster and/or irregular tire wear, and can decrease fuel economy. Overinflation, on the other hand, will reduce the tire’s contact area with the road, which reduces traction, braking ability and handling. A tire that is overinflated for the weight it is carrying is more prone to a harsh ride, uneven tire wear and impact damage.

The level of air pressure required in each tire depends on the weight of the fully loaded vehicle. So the owner cannot correctly determine the right air pressure unless he knows the vehicle’s actual weights. The maximum load capacity allowed for the size tire and load rating and the minimum cold air inflation needed to carry that maximum load are located on the tire’s sidewall. The lower the air pressure, the lower the load that the tire can carry. (A complete load and inflation table for Michelin RV tires is available at www.michelinrvtires.com or by contacting a local Michelin RV tire dealer.)

RV owners need to know the correct air pressure per axle for the vehicle, and they need to know when and how often to check the tires. Here are a few recommendations:

1. Check at least once a month and before any major trips.
2. On long trips, check every morning before driving.
3. Check before and after storage.
4. On short trips of a day or less driving each way, check before you leave and before you return home.

Always try to check tires when they are “cold” and have not been driven for more than one mile. The stated load capacity for a given cold inflation pressure is based on ambient outside temperatures. The pressure in a “hot” tire may be as much as 10 to 15 PSI higher than a cold tire pressure.

If the tires must be checked when they are warm, be sure to allow for an increase in pressure, and make sure the pressure of the tires on both sides of the axle are within a few PSI of each other. Never let air out of a hot tire.

To make checking the tire pressure easier and more accurate, Michelin recommends that the RV owner purchase a quality truck tire air gauge with a dual-angled head. This allows the owner to check the pressure of the inner and outer dual wheels. The easier it is to check the pressure, the more often you’re likely to do it. Nothing should restrict the ability to check tire pressure daily when driving.

Be sure to use pressure-sealing valve caps to prevent air from escaping the valve stem. If valve stem extension hoses are used, make sure they are good quality, solid stainless-steel braid reinforced and are securely anchored to the outer wheel. The joints should be soaped immediately after initial installation to check for air loss.

MAINTAINING MICHELIN RV TIRES

During any pretrip inspection, be sure to check the tires for signs of aging, weathering and/or ozone cracking — these show up as tiny cracks in the rubber surface on the sidewall of the tire. If the cracks are less than $\frac{1}{32}$ -inch deep, the tire is fine to run. Between $\frac{1}{32}$ inch and $\frac{1}{16}$ inch, the tire is suspect and should be examined by a local Michelin RV tire dealer. If the cracks are any deeper than $\frac{1}{16}$ inch, the tire should be replaced immediately.

Here are a few tips to help you protect the tires from these common damage conditions:

1. Keep the tires properly inflated.
2. Keep the tires clean.
3. Avoid prolonged exposure to heat, cold or moisture.
4. Avoid prolonged exposure to ultraviolet rays.
5. Cover the tires when the vehicle is

KEEPING RUBBER ON THE ROAD

not in use.

6. Do not park near electric generators or transformers.

7. Do not store the motorhome in an area where welding is being done or in a garage that has mercury vapor lamps.

STORAGE

Unless the motorhome is in full-time service, the coach probably spends some time in long-term storage. But what is not commonly known is that rubber tires deteriorate when not being used. So, if you must store your RV, a cool, dry, sealed garage is the best bet. Also, some storage surfaces can cause tires to age faster. That's why Michelin recommends placing a barrier (cardboard, plastic or plywood) between the tire and the storage surface.

Here are some other steps motorhome owners can take to help reduce the aging effects from long-term storage:

1. Thoroughly clean tires with soap and water before placing into storage.
2. Cover tires to block direct sunlight and ultraviolet rays.
3. Store out of a high ozone area.

Note: When a vehicle is stored, tires should be inflated to the inflation pressure indicated on the sidewall. Before removing the vehicle from long-term storage, thoroughly inspect each tire — this includes sidewalls, tread area and air pressure. If the tires have lost air, be sure to inflate them to the correct pressure before driving.

CLEANING AND DRESSING

Like the rest of the coach, it pays to keep the tires clean. Road oil will cause deterioration of the rubber, and dirt buildup will hold the contaminants next to the tire. As with the cleaning of any rubber product, proper cleaning methods must be used to obtain the maximum years of service from the tires.

A soft brush and normal mild soap that you would use to clean the RV may be used. If a dressing product is used to protect the tires from aging, use extra care and caution. Tire dressings that contain petroleum products, alcohol or silicones will cause deterioration or cracking and accelerate the aging process. In many cases, it is not the dressing itself that can be a problem, but rather the chemical reaction



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that the product can have with the antioxidant in the tire. Heat can add to the negative reaction. When these same dressing products are used on a passenger car tire that is replaced every three to four years, it is rare to see a major problem. However, in most cases, RV tires may last much longer due to limited annual mileage, and the chemical reactions have much longer to take place.

GETTING A FLAT

Even the best drivers can drive over a nail, and the best tires can pick up that nail or screw and go flat. If you pick up an object that causes a flat in your RV tire, repair must be made to the inside of the tire. To do this, the tire needs to be demounted and inspected on the inside of the casing for any other damage that the object may have caused.

INSPECTION

RV tires should be inspected thoroughly at least once a year, and any time the owner drives in rough or rocky terrain or is having the RV serviced. This inspection should include both sidewalls, the tread area, the valves, the valve caps and any valve extensions. Inspect for nails, cuts, bulges, aging or fatigue cracks, as well as for weathering or ozone cracking. Also, check between dual tires for any objects lodged between them. See a local tire dealer at once if anything unusual is observed.

On a regular basis, rub the palm of your hand across the face of the tread on your front tires to feel for any feathered wear from "toe" alignment problems, but be careful since severe wear can expose steel belt edges that are very sharp. A toe misalignment problem can be caused by impact with a "chuck" hole in the road. Bad toe wear can be hard to find visually, but can be felt very quickly with the hand. This type of alignment problem can wear rubber off the tread of the tires in just a few hundred miles.

LEVELING RVs ON RADIAL TIRES

When using blocks for leveling, extreme caution must be taken to make sure the tires are fully supported. The weight on the tire should be evenly distributed on the block. And in the case of duals, it should be evenly distributed on blocks for both tires. If not, the sidewall cables can become fatigued and damaged, resulting in a sidewall rupture and a complete, sudden loss of air pressure. Note that in the correct method, the blocks are wider than the tread and longer than the tire's footprint. This provides maximum support to the tires and assures that the load is evenly distributed.

Choosing the right tires is only the beginning. Tires play a big part in any motorhome use, so it is important to give them the proper attention they deserve. Understanding the importance of proper tire pressure, maintenance and storage will help an RV stay up and running, while minimizing down time or lost enjoyment for the RV owner. ♦

Doug Jones is a customer engineering support manager at Michelin Americas Truck Tires.



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UNDER PRESSURE

WE TESTED A VARIETY OF TIRE GAUGES TO FIND OUT WHICH ONES ARE **THE MOST ACCURATE**

by E. DON SMITH

By now everyone knows about the importance of maintaining the proper pressure in your motorhome tires. Improper inflation is the most common reason that motorhome tires fail and therefore the subject is a common topic at RV rallies and in Internet forums. Even after you have determined the proper inflation needed for your particular tire and coach combination, you still have to rely on a tire gauge to display accurate data or your attempts at correct inflation will be biased by the inaccuracy of the tire gauge. This holds true for your dinghy as well as your motorhome or any other vehicle you maintain that has pneumatic tires.

Many motorhome owners have turned to tire pressure monitoring systems, which allow you to monitor the pressure of your tire while on the road, and we highly recommend those systems as the very best and most comprehensive monitors available. Since they operate all the time, they allow you to monitor your tire pressure as you drive. Most of them even feature alarms that can alert you to an out of spec condition. If you are still using a traditional manual tire pressure gauge to check the pressure on your motorhome, dinghy or other vehicle, it is a good idea to make sure you are using a gauge that is accurate enough for the job at hand.

Most Class A motorhomes have 19.5- to 22.5-inch tires that call for tire pressures in the range of 75 to 120 PSI, while Class C motorhomes run smaller tire/wheel combos that typically run pressures in the 50 to 85 PSI range. Before selecting






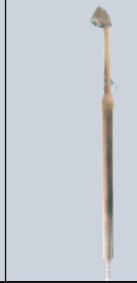
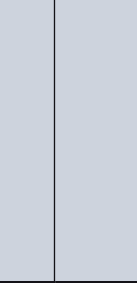

We used a wide variety of dual-foot gauges in our test, and all of them were made of durable metal except the Slime No. 20071, which uses a plastic dual foot.



Some motorhome owners prefer to use a round dial as opposed to the traditional pencil-style gauges.



The Tire Minder Trucker's Choice pencil-type air gauge features a handy 2X loupe for easier reading.

						
NAME/ MANUFACTURER	BLUE POINT DIGITAL TIRE GAUGE AND INFLATOR	BLUE POINT DIGITAL TIRE PRESSURE GAUGE	INTERCOMP RACING SYSTEMS 150 PSI DIGITAL AIR PRESSURE GAUGE	MILTON DELUXE SERVICE DUAL-HEAD TIRE GAUGE	SLIME 10-150 PSI DUAL HEAD RV & SUV TIRE GAUGE	SLIME 10-160 PSI DUALY RV DIAL GAUGE
PART #	TPGDL1000	TPGHDD150	360045-150	S-976	2021-A	2020-A
TYPE	Inflator	Pencil	Digital	Pencil	Pencil	Hose
MAX HOLD	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
COST	\$87.50	\$42.80	\$329.99	\$14.99	\$10.99	\$12.99
STYLE	Dial/digital	Digital pencil	Digital box	Pencil	Pencil	Dial
INCREMENTS PSI	0.1	0.5	0.1	2	2	2
AUTO ON	Manual	Manual	Manual	N/A	N/A	N/A
AUTO OFF	Manual	Yes	Manual	N/A	N/A	N/A
NOTES	Inflator; rubber boot; very good but has to be connected to compressor; +/- Zero	Expensive; 1 PSI accuracy	22-inch Goodyear hose; certified	Made in USA; solid build; +/- Zero	Poor accuracy at 120 PSI	Rubber boot; well made; poor accuracy
MAX PSI	150	150	150	160	150	160
BLEEDER VALVE	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes
DISPLAYS	PSI, bar, kpa	PSI	PSI, bar, kg	PSI, kpa	PSI, kpa, bar	PSI, bar
30 PSI	30	30	30	30	31	33
40 PSI	40	39.5	40	40	41	44
80 PSI	80	79.5	80	80	80	83
100 PSI	100	99.5	100	100	99	102
120 PSI	120	119	120	120	117	120
SUPPLIER	Snap-on; 877-762-7664; www.snapon.com	Snap-on; 877-762-7664; www.snapon.com	Intercomp Racing Systems; 800-328-3336; www.intercomp-racing.com	Northern Tool + Equipment; 800-221-0516; www.northerntool.com	Slime; 888-457-5463; www.slime.com	Slime; 888-457-5463; www.slime.com

your ideal tire gauge it is important to know the maximum pressure that you want to read and choose accordingly. If you are going to measure a maximum of 50 psi you have various options available to you as opposed to someone trying to accurately read a 120 psi tire.

Our goal in this article was to gather a large sample of tire gauges that are available at various retail stores and test them against a calibrated digital gauge and report our findings. In order to very accurately test and compare our gauges we turned to Intercomp Racing Systems, which was kind enough to loan us a digital tire pressure gauge that is certified and cal-






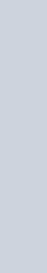
ibrated (NIST traceable) to 0.4 percent of the gauge range. That means it is accurate to 0.6 psi and it displays down to 0.1 psi. In our testing we found that even in repeated measurements of the same tire it never varied from its 0.1 psi reading until we had tested the tire enough times for it to lose 0.1 psi of pressure. This gauge sells for \$329 and is the gauge of choice among many professional automobile racers who rely on extremely accurate tire pressures.

In order to compare all the gauges, we inflated a 22.5-inch motorhome tire to a series of pressures (30.0, 40.0, 80.0, 100.0 and 120.0 psi) and used the calibrated gauge as the standard to obtain the

exact pressure targeted. Not every gauge in our test was capable of the higher pressure measurements so we tested them to their individual limits.

By using a large volume 22.5-inch tire, it allowed us to test it numerous times before losing enough air (volume) to change the reading by 0.1 psi. After getting the tire pressure exactly to the set point using the calibrated gauge, we then used a gauge and recorded the pressure. Each gauge was tested three times at each set point. Then to ensure the pressure had not dropped (even by 0.1 psi), we rechecked the tire again using the calibrated gauge after every test was completed. Although

TIRE GAUGES

					
SLIME DIGITAL TIRE GAUGE WITH EXTENDED HOSE	TIRE MINDER TIRE PRESSURE GAUGE COMMERCIAL GRADE TRUCKER'S CHOICE	TIRE MINDER TRUCKER'S CHOICE DIGITAL PRESSURE GAUGE	TRUCKER SPEC DUAL-FOOT TIRE GAUGE WITH BACKLIT LCD DISPLAY	TRUCKER SPEC DUAL-FOOT TIRE GAUGE WITH EASY-TO-READ DIAL	UNKNOWN — OLD PENCIL GAUGE
20071	TMG-330-39	TMG860-97	RP3238P2	JL-5008B3	N/A
Hose	Pencil	Pencil	Pencil	Pencil	Pencil
Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
\$24.99	\$19.99	\$21.10	\$27.95	\$27.95	N/A
Round/LCD	Pencil	Digital pencil	Digital pencil	Dial	Pencil
0.1	2	0.5	0.1	2	2
Yes	N/A	N/A	Manual	N/A	N/A
Yes	N/A	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
Four memory; hose; 1 PSI accuracy	2X viewing lens; rubber handle; great warranty	LED flashlight	Beeps when finished; 1 PSI accuracy; largest LCD screen	Rubber boot	4 years old
160	150	150	150	160	150
Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
PSI, kpa, bar	PSI, kpa	PSI, bar, kpa	PSI, kpa, bar	PSI, bar, kpa	PSI
30	30	29.5	29.9	32	32
40.5	40	39.5	40	42	42
80	80	79.5	79.9	81	78
99.5	99	99.5	99.7	100	98
119	118	118	119.9	120	122
Slime; 888-457-5463; www.slime.com	Minder Research; 772-463-6522; www.minderresearch.com	Camping World; 888-626-7576; www.campingworld.com	Global Trucker; 270-227-1439; www.globaltrucker.com	Global Trucker; 270-227-1439; www.globaltrucker.com	N/A

this is not exactly a laboratory test, it is very representative of how a typical owner would use a gauge and therefore we feel confident that it's a true test of the gauge's accuracy.

Our testing includes digital, stick and dial gauges. The dial and stick gauges do not have the resolution to display less than 1 to 2 PSI of pressure. So naturally they are not going to be as precise as a digital gauge since their scale (or our eyes) is not capable of displaying small increments. For those gauges we simply recorded the pressure in the range that it was capable of displaying, which was usually in one- or two-pound increments. If the reading fell between two increments we split the dif-

ference. This doesn't mean that dial or stick gauges are less accurate, just that they are less precise.

For motorhome tires, we consider acceptable accuracy to be within 2 PSI. If you are obsessing over 1 or fewer PSI you should know that ambient temperature at the time of the measurement can affect the pressure by that much or more, so it is best not to waste too much time or money chasing that degree of accuracy. It is important to check your tires cold each day before driving as is specified by every tire manufacturer.

All dual rear-wheel motorhomes require a dual-foot air chuck in order to test

the backward-facing valve stem, and most of our 120-plus PSI rated gauges had this dual-foot design. The gauges that display maximum pressures of 100 PSI or less usually do not feature this dual-foot design, so make sure you select the right gauge for your needs.

After reviewing the data for all of the gauges tested, including all of the ones I could dig up around my personal motorhome and various tool boxes, it is clear that all of them are fairly accurate. The worst one read 4 PSI high at 40 PSI (Slime #2020-A) while another showed 3 PSI low at 120 PSI (Slime #2021-A). Some gauges were consistently at reference pressure or

DIGITAL, SINGLE-FOOT TIRE GAUGES

				
NAME/ MANUFACTURER	ACCUTIRE DIGITAL CAR/ TRUCK TIRE GAUGE	SLIME 0-99 PSI DIGITAL LED GAUGE	SLIME 5-99 PSI DIGITAL TIRE GAUGE	SLIME SPORT DIGITAL TIRE GAUGE
PART #	MS-4021B	2071-A	22019	20017
COST	\$17.99	\$11.99	\$15.99	\$13.99
INCREMENTS PSI	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5
AUTO ON	Yes	Button	Yes	Button
AUTO OFF	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
NOTES	Rubber boot	1 PSI accuracy	1 PSI accuracy	Small, 1 PSI accuracy
MAX PSI	150	99	99	150
DISPLAYS	PSI	PSI, bar, kpa	PSI	PSI, bar, kpa
30 PSI	31	30	31	30
40 PSI	41	41	41	40.5
80 PSI	81	81	81	80
100 PSI	101	N/A	N/A	99.5
120 PSI	120	N/A	N/A	119

below, such as the Tire Minder digital pencil. Others were constantly over the pressure, which is less desirable. Many of the gauges were within our 2 PSI target and some of them were within 1 PSI of reference pressure.

A tire pressure gauge seems like a pretty simple device and on the surface they all seem about the same. We thought the same thing until we gathered more than 20 models and started testing tire pressure with them. Since we used each one so many times, patterns started to develop and so did personal preferences. The obvious difference in the digital models and mechanical stick or dials is the fact that they have greater resolution/precision in their ability to display down to 0.5 or even 0.1 PSI. They also require batteries, with some models using four batteries. The mechanical dial and pencil gauges are simple and never need a battery. Of course, they typically only read in 2 PSI increments which in our estimation is good enough, assuming you have an accurate gauge.

There are a few features on a tire gauge that we feel are important and the first is a peak hold display. Due to the odd angles often needed to read a tire it is critical for the gauge to hold that display long enough for you to read it, even after you re-

move the gauge from the valve stem. This feature is commonly called peak hold and we can't recommend any gauge without it. Another important, though not critical, feature is a bleeder valve. If you overinflate a tire, this button allows you to bleed some pressure while the gauge is connected to the tire until you obtain the exact pressure desired. We noted those gauges that have this feature in our ratings.

Though we didn't really intend on declaring a winner in this article, one gauge in particular stands out in many ways — the Milton S-976 Service Gage. First was its accuracy: It had no error at every pressure we tested it at. It is also made in the United States and priced at a reasonable \$14.99 at Northern Tool + Equipment. Lastly, it's built like a tank. If I were ever stranded in the woods with any one of these gauges and forced to defend myself against a wild puma, the Milton 976 is the tool I want in my hand. It is a mechanical pencil gauge, so make sure that is acceptable to you before you purchase it.

If you have poor eyesight you may prefer a digital model with a large readout such as the \$27.95 digital unit from Global Trucker. It has the largest display of all the handheld digital units tested, not to mention it had 0.3 PSI or less error from

30 to 120 psi. Another product that stood out to us was the Snap-on Blue Point Tire Gauge and Inflator for \$87.50. Yes, it is expensive, but it is intended to serve as a compressor-mounted filling device and it too displays amazing accuracy. Plus it allows you to fill the tire and read the pressure at the same time.

If you are searching for a tire gauge for your dinghy, motorcycle or other vehicle that doesn't use dual rear tires, then any of the car-specific gauges we tested should work fine. As you can see, all of them maintained accuracy within our 2 PSI standard. Two of our favorites were the Accutire digital gauge (from www.palmbeachmotoring.net) and the Slime digital tire gauge No. 22019. Both were within 1 PSI of the reference gauge and the Accutire gauge even goes up to 150 PSI and includes a durable rubber boot and easily replaceable batteries.

Perhaps the most important lesson learned is that most gauges sold today are accurate enough to ensure your tires are properly inflated. Now it is up to you to do your part and check the tire pressure on your motorhome every day before driving. You could save yourself a lot of grief and ensure you obtain the maximum life possible from your tires. ♦



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SIGHTSEER 33C



PHOTO: DAVE RIGGS

Winnebago raises the bar on its modestly priced Class A line with full-body paint, upgraded interiors, triple slides

Winnebago kicked up the level of style, comfort and practicality in its latest Sightseer line of gasoline-powered Class A motorhomes. The use of handsome body paint and higher-end interior components and décor have catapulted the modestly priced coach into territory that rivals entry-level diesel pushers. Add in three slides, including the one on the driver's side that spans most of the coach's length, and the interior of the new-for-2010 33C model becomes a comfortable home for a family of four — and an even better one for a couple.

Up front, the couch (that becomes a bed) and a Euro-style recliner — all graced in Ultraleather — occupy the

space inside the slideout room directly behind the passenger seat in the cab. Those seated in this area have an unobstructed (without cranking necks) view of the wall-mounted 40-inch flat-screen TV, flanked by two nice-size windows. The big TV is part of the dining table/buffet module (\$1,253) that swaps out the conventional dinette booth. Two chairs are used when the retractable table is in its smaller state, with two additional folding chairs stored under the rear bed. While it's a little tight when four people hover around the table, even when extended to its longest position, it's a wonderful arrangement for two people. If the table/buffet is not ordered, a 32-inch TV is centered above the cockpit seats.

The focal point of the kitchen is the L-shaped galley counter, supported by a liberal selection of cabinets and drawers, above and below the normal array of appliances. While not exceptionally large, the counter does provide enough room to spread out and prepare meals for a good-size group of guests.

Once you leave the kitchen, the wide-open hallway leads to the fully enclosed bath on the curbside and the rear bedroom. Inside the bathroom are the usual amenities, including a large shower with textured glass sliding doors. There's plenty of cabinet space and the floor is a continuation of the vinyl used extensively in the living room and hallway.

Out back, most of the space, including the slideout, is dedicated to the king bed, an option for only \$70. While very comfortable, the bigger bed makes access a little more challenging, although in this case, it's worth the space allocation. Small shelves on each side of the bed, overhead compartments and good reading lights complement the sleeping experience. On the opposite wall are the wardrobe, storage shelf and optional (\$441) 19-inch





SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: FORD F53	INTERIOR HEIGHT: 6' 8"
ENGINE: V10, 362 HP	WHEELBASE: 220"
FUEL: 75 GAL	FRESHWATER CAP: 86 GAL
GVWR: 22,000 LBS	GRAY-WATER CAP: 59 GAL
LENGTH: 34' 3"	BLACK-WATER CAP: 39 GAL
WIDTH: 8' 5"	LP-GAS CAP: 18 GAL
HEIGHT WITH A/C: 12' 3"	BASE PRICE: \$114,432

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WWW.WINNEBAGOIND.COM

eye-level-mounted flat-screen TV.

Décor throughout the coach is very tastefully implemented, exuding a higher level of luxury than previous-year Sightseers. Some of that eye candy can be partially attributed to the Interior Upgrade Package (\$364), which includes a number of extra features in the kitchen and two throw pillows. The optional day/night pleated shades (\$140) also add a touch of class. Dual-pane windows (\$385) facilitate fairly consistent comfort levels with a little help from the dual roof air-conditioners with heat pumps and the 35,000 Btu furnace. Heat distribution was relatively even throughout the interior, with a heavier dose in the bathroom, which was welcome on cold mornings.

Outside storage is generous, and access under the slideout is excellent due to the proprietary StoreMore system, which extends the compartments with the room. A service connection bay concentrates most of the hookup points, and an entertainment center is concealed behind another compartment door.

The Sightseer 33C is available on a Ford or Workhorse chassis (gas or diesel)

with the former used as the platform for the test coach. Ford's 362-HP V-10 moved the 18,000-pound coach with little effort while turning in fuel economy numbers that averaged 7.75 MPG over multi-terrain roads. The Ford chassis has its moments on concrete highways with expansion joints, but interior noise is abated by quality fit and finish.

Driving comfort is supported by plush cockpit seating and a very ergonomic dashboard and conveniently arranged controls. The one-piece windshield offers superb visibility; well-placed

side-view mirrors and strategically placed cameras allow the driver to keep tabs on side and rear traffic (and obstacles).

Winnebago's Sightseer 33C is a very versatile coach. It's big enough to offer plenty of creature comforts and elbowroom for long periods of time in upscale RV parks, while being equally at home in public campgrounds. ♦



LEISURE TRAVEL UNITY U24MB

IN THIS INNOVATIVE CLASS B,
LUXURY AND ECONOMY BECOME ONE



Life in a motorhome is all about compromise — if you want better mileage, you have to give up some space and amenities, and vice versa. However, given the volatile fuel prices and uncertain economy of the last two years, many motorhome manufacturers have become better at building products that provide their customers with all the comforts of home in a smaller, more manageable package. The new Unity from Leisure Travel Vans is one of the latest examples of this growing trend.

Built on the popular Sprinter chassis, the Unity has more to offer than the traditional Class B van conversion. And, the model U24MB brings some interesting features that would be considered innovative for any motorhome at any size or price point.

The Sprinter currently reigns as the fuel economy darling of the RV industry because it's capable of achieving mileage figures in the mid- to high-teens during real-world driving. That's pretty good for a motorhome.

Buyers of smaller coaches are often former Class A owners who want to downsize, and according to Leisure Travel Vans, one of the things these customers miss the most is a large, luxurious bath area. To meet that need, Leisure Travel did away with the

traditional rear bedroom layout, choosing instead to make the space a master bath befitting a high-end rig. Then, a power Murphy bed was incorporated into the streetside slideout, effectively turning the living area into a bedroom suite.

The idea of a bedroom in the middle of the coach is not a new one, but the Unity excels in its creative use of space. During the day, the Unity's living area features electric reclining "theater seating" with two ottomans. The opposing countertop represents

SPECIFICATIONS

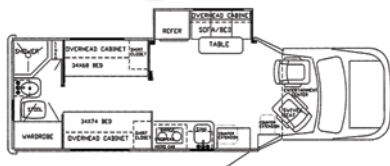
CHASSIS: MERCEDES-BENZ SPRINTER	EXTERIOR HEIGHT: 10' 5.5"
ENGINE: 3.0-L V-6 DIESEL, 188 HP	WHEELBASE: 170"
FUEL: 26.4 GAL	FRESHWATER CAP: 30 GAL
GVWR: 11,030 LBS	GRAY-WATER CAP: 37 GAL
EXTERIOR LENGTH: 24' 7"	BLACK-WATER CAP: 29 GAL
EXTERIOR WIDTH: 7' 8.5"	LP-GAS CAP: 12.7 GAL
	BASE MSRP: \$113,330

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Elkhart, Indiana



the RV equivalent of a Swiss army knife — push a button, and a 26-inch LCD TV rises out of its solid surface. A folding, swing-out table can also be deployed from underneath — just the spot to place beverages and snacks. When it's time to turn in for the evening, the 60- by 74-inch power Murphy bed settles over the recliners, and reveals the slideout window.

Understandably, the galley area is compact, but well-equipped. A contoured, solid-surface countertop plays host to a flush-mount two-burner cooktop and sink, each with its own hinged glass cover. The three-way Dometic refrigerator measures a generous 6.4 cubic feet, and features a removable freezer to provide an additional 0.6 cubic feet if needed. A convection icrowave oven serves baking and reheating needs, while a pantry and cherry cabinetry with solid, curved doors provide plenty of storage.

And now, about that bath area. The first thing you'll lay eyes on is the large corner shower with a skylight and glass door, next to which is a SeaLand china toilet with foot flush and sprayer. The generously proportioned lav is located along the back wall beneath the rear window, and a cavernous wardrobe accommodates clothes as well as the ottomans from the living area when they're not needed.

Elsewhere, standard features include a built-in, removable TomTom GPS navigation system with integrated backup monitor, large rear exterior storage and full-body paint. Options include natural maple cabinetry, a macerator pump, diesel or LP-gas genset, and a 600-watt inverter. ♦

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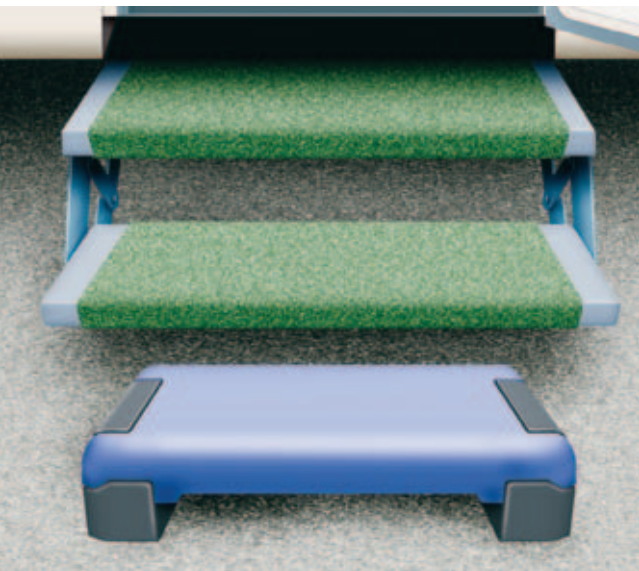
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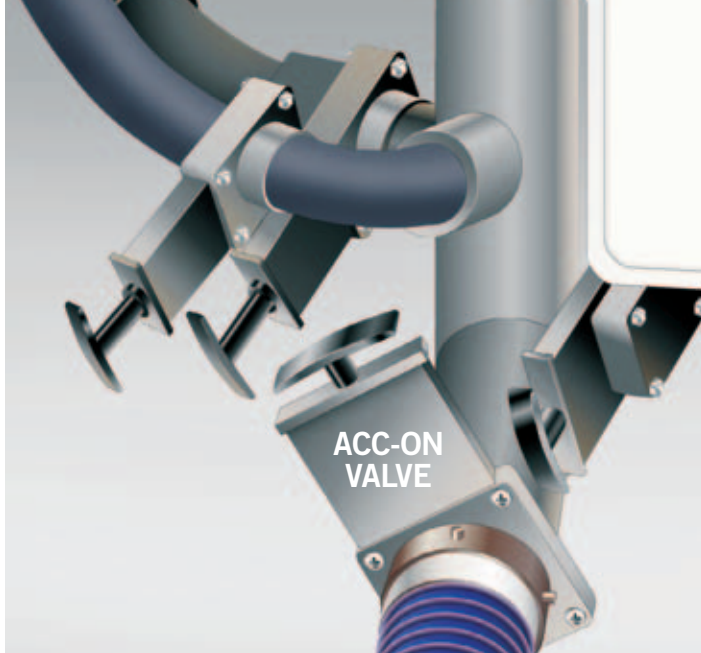


STAIR MASTER ▲

We recently traded up to a larger motorhome. Being slightly short in stature and not as young as I used to be, I found the bottom entry step to be a challenge as our new coach is several inches higher off the ground than our previous one.

We checked RV supply stores and found some folding platform steps for \$50 to \$85. We thought Wal-Mart might carry something less expensive and we found the perfect solution — an aerobic step in the sporting goods department. It adjusts from 4 inches to 6 inches in height and the non-skid surface is 26 inches wide and 12.5 inches deep, which is slightly larger than our motorhome steps. It's lightweight, portable, can hold 250 pounds, and best of all, it costs less than \$30.

ONA AND DENNY MEYERS | TITUSVILLE, FLA.



WASTE NOT, WANT NOT ▲

I've seen several Winnebago motorhomes that have two gray tanks. My Itasca Suncruiser also has that configuration. The galley tank only holds 20 gallons, which is pretty small for the kitchen, and really small if you have an onboard washer/dryer. The lavatory tank is 50 gallons. We dry camp about half the time and that tank gets full in a hurry.

I figured out a very easy and inexpensive way of joining the gray tanks together so that we now have a total gray-water capacity of 70 gallons. I bought another valve (Valterra T58) with bayonet fittings that twists on to the end of the dump fitting. When the motorhome is parked, I make sure the added valve is closed and then I open up both gray-water valves. This joins both tanks together. Before I hook up and dump all the tanks, I close both gray valves, open the new valve, dump the black tank and then use the gray tanks to flush out the hose like normal.

This additional valve did not require any change to the original plumbing.

TOM KRUGER | BOISE, IDAHO

IN CONTROL ▶

We were constantly activating the slides on our RV by accidentally hitting the control buttons. To prevent this, I cut holes in a sturdy plastic blister pack and mounted the pack over the buttons. The inch of clearance between the pack and the buttons prevents the buttons from being pushed unintentionally.

**ROBERT FALK
LOS ANGELES ♦**

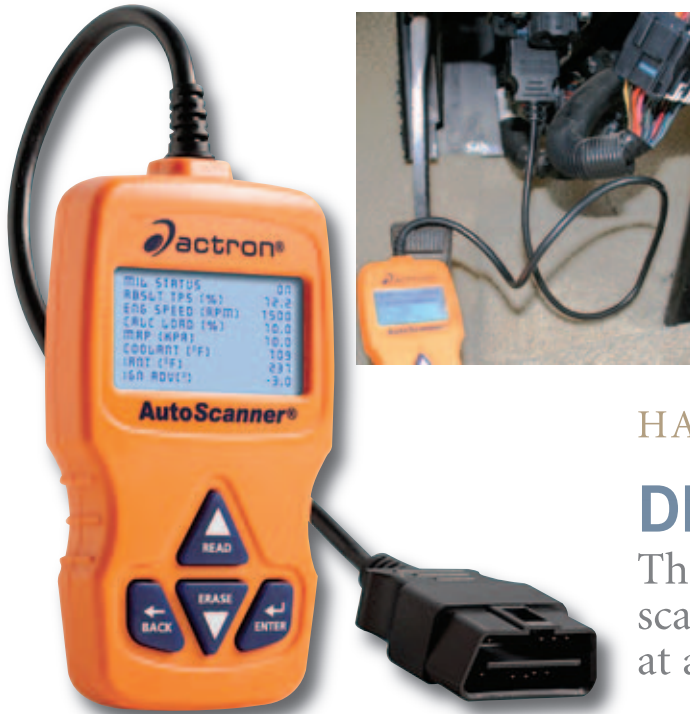


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Quick Tips, MotorHome's monthly column of useful, handy and simple tips by fellow RVers, is looking for submissions. Please send your favorite do-it-yourself ideas to: MotorHome Quick Tips, 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001. Be sure to include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

techsavvy

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



HANDS-ON | *by* KEN FREUND

DIAGNOSIS MADE EASY

The Actron AutoScanner CP 9575 scan tool offers professional features at a do-it-yourselfer's price

Oh no, that darn check-engine light is on again!

I wonder what's wrong — and if we can continue to our destination, or do we have to stop?

These pesky malfunction-indicator lights (MILs) are among the most frequent vehicle problems encountered nowadays, and they're even more common with powertrains that have been modified or move heavy loads. Actron has introduced AutoScanner model CP 9575, its latest OBD II scan tool that can not only answer these questions — but also can help you find and fix the problem.

The AutoScanner plugs into the standardized 16-pin under-dash diagnostic port found on most 1996 and newer gasoline-powered and some diesel-powered motorhomes. (The connector is required to be within 3 feet of the driver's position.) The CP 9575 will display more than 15,000 generic and manufacturer-specific diagnostic trouble codes (DTCs) and their definitions. Many so-called "code readers" can also do that basic function, but the AutoScanner does many of the tasks that professional scan tools perform, including showing six modes of OBD II data, and freeze-frames (snapshots of data from the time the fault occurred).

Using a live data stream of OBD II parameters, you can even read sensor, switch, actuator and relay inputs as they

occur, with the engine running.

Additionally, the CP 9575 can read and display the VIN, calibration verification number (CVN) and Calibration ID, check inspection/maintenance (I/M) monitors, pending DTCs, on-board diagnostic (OBD) system summary test status and drive-cycle monitor. These are very useful if you want to check your coach or other family vehicles (it works on cars, vans, light trucks and SUVs) before taking them for a state exhaust-emissions "smog" test.

We found the compact unit had an intuitive design, and was easy to use, accurate and versatile. The kit comes with a helpful instruction manual.

After you've diagnosed and repaired a problem that set an OBDII trouble code, you can erase stored codes and shut off the MIL. It also supports the controller-area network (CAN) protocol used by many 2005 and newer models, and can be updated through its USB port.

AutoScanner CP 9575 is designed for do-it-yourselfers. At a suggested retail price of \$120, the tool offers professional features at a price far below pro models and should pay for itself quickly.

For more information, call 800-228-7667 or go to www.actron.com. ♦



Tire Turmoil

NOT KNOWING WHERE TO TURN TO NEXT IN TRYING TO RESOLVE A LONG-STANDING PROBLEM WITH HIS MOTORHOME, A READER CONTACTED HOT LINE AS A LAST RESORT. HE WROTE:

I purchased a new Class A motorhome on a Ford chassis from Tom Schaeffer's RV in Shoemakersville, Pa., on June 11, 2008. Two months later, the coach developed a shake and vibration so bad that I thought I had lost a wheel weight. When I was driving at 40 MPH, I felt it under my feet, and at 60 MPH, the vibration was so strong that it was difficult for me to see out the mirrors.

When I contacted Tom Schaeffer's service manager about the problem, he told me to take the motorhome to my local Ford dealer for repairs. I ended up taking it in to two local Ford dealers as well as a truck tire dealer/recapper business, and the rig went through seven tire rebalancings, a tire Roadforce test, a vibration diagnostics test and tire-to-wheel matching — all to no avail.

Ford is convinced the tires are out-of-round or flat spotted from sitting on the dealer's lot. The dealer says it's Goodyear's problem and the manufacturer says it's Ford's.

No one should be allowed to buy a vehicle equipped with defective tires. Any help or direction that Hot Line can provide would be greatly appreciated.

CRAIG HESS | LEBANON, PA.

Hot Line contacted Ford Motor Co. and Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. for Hess, to see if the companies could help him out with his tire trouble. Soon after, we received an e-mail from Goodyear that concluded the case. It read:

On May 4, a customer service agent from Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co. contacted Mr. Hess and referred him to an authorized Goodyear Service Center for a tire inspection. On March 29, we received a call from the authorized dealer and they were given an approval number to replace all seven Goodyear G670RV 245/

70R19.5 tires at no charge to Hess.

If we can be of further assistance, please contact me. Thank you.

**KIM ROY
CONSUMER RELATIONS
GOODYEAR TIRE AND RUBBER CO.
AKRON, OHIO**

THE CHECK REALLY IS IN THE MAIL

Our next case is a good example of Yogi Berra's old saying, "It ain't over 'til it's over." A reader wrote to Hot Line in 2008, requesting help with receiving reimbursement from his extended-service contract provider. He explained:

When I purchased my Airstream motorhome, I also bought an extended-service contract from Heritage Finance in Dublin, Ohio. In August 2008, I had repair work done by Billy Sims Trailer Town in Lubbock, Texas. Prior approval was requested by phone and authorization was given by Heritage for repairs in the amount of \$1,219.53.

As of Dec. 6, 2008, I haven't received payment from Heritage, even after I have placed numerous phone calls and written two letters. Each call resulted in, "It has been approved and is in the process." No reply was made to my letters.

I realize that money matters are somewhat difficult right now, but more than three months late seems a bit unreasonable, to say the least. I would appreciate any help Hot Line can give me on this issue.

**EWART PHILLIPS
LUBBOCK, TEXAS**

At the time, we agreed with Phillips that three months seemed unreasonable. We had no idea that it would take almost two years before his case was concluded. Like Phillips, we also sent letters of appeal to Heritage and never heard back from the company. Though, in the meantime, we found out that in 2007, Heritage Administration Services Inc. "elected to cease

selling vehicle service contracts due to adverse loss development caused by a variety of factors."

We were pleasantly surprised when we recently received this follow-up note from Phillips. It read:

I received a check from Heritage for the full amount in question — there was no explanation included for the reason of the delay. Thank you, Hot Line, for your help.

E.P.

REFUND RUCKUS

Frustrated in his unsuccessful attempts at trying to secure a refund, a reader asked for Hot Line's intervention. He wrote:

In 2005 I purchased a 2004 Class C motorhome from La Mesa RV in Tucson, Ariz. Along with the RV, I bought an XtraRide Platinum service agreement at a cost of \$2,998. Three years later, I traded in the Class C for a Class A coach. At that time, I sent written notice to Protective (the XtraRide Platinum service agreement administrator) requesting a refund of the remaining unused portion of the policy. I also purchased a new XtraRide Platinum policy for the Class A.

To date, I have not received a refund or an acknowledgement of my request from Protective. I also contacted La Mesa RV and have not heard back from anyone at the dealership. Therefore, I would greatly appreciate Hot Line's help in getting me my refund.

RANDALL SHEROW | TUCSON, ARIZ.

We sent letters to La Mesa RV and Protective. Although we did not receive a reply from La Mesa RV, we did receive a phone call from Penny Morford with Protective-XtraRide, letting us know that a check in the amount of \$1,035.06 had been sent to Sherow and had been cashed. ♦

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

Battery Float

The “Deep-Cycle Battery Maintenance” letter in May’s Coach & Chassis column leaves me with a question and a concern.

My battery float chargers provide 13.2 volts. Is this still a useful float charger or have batteries changed enough over the years to require a higher float voltage?

I have read reviews, several years ago, that most vehicle electronics have a maximum rating of 15 volts. This would seem to require batteries to be disconnected from the electrical system during equalization. However, in my 2005 Winnebago this requires substantial work to disconnect the batteries and directly connect the three-stage converter to them. Perhaps this is why the converter Charge Wizard sets maximum voltage at 14.5 volts.

RICK KEATON | ALTADENA, CALIF.

Most converters found in motorhomes are only float chargers and provide 13.5 to 13.8 volts. The Charge Wizard will keep voltage at 13.6 for about 30 hours, or until it senses there is no amperage flowing (signifying the motorhome is in storage) and drop to 13.2 volts until it detects a load. The Charge Wizard is a big step up from standard, cheapie converter/chargers. But it’s not a true multi-stage charger.

Multi-stage chargers provide maximum constant current at first, restoring about 80 percent of the battery’s charge — called the bulk stage. The next stage is the absorption stage, where the current declines to about 5 amps at near gassing voltage. Then, the charger goes into float mode, where it keeps the voltage at about 13.5 volts.

While flooded lead-acid batteries can handle this type of charging with no problems, the multi-stage units with more sophisticated algorithms can

alter the float voltage to 13.2 or 13.3 to accommodate AGM batteries. Some even have a fourth stage where the float voltage for AGM batteries holds at 13.3 to 13.4, and when amperage tapers to no load it shuts down the charger. When the batteries self-discharge to 12.8 volts, the charger goes back into float mode. When it senses a load, it starts the three-stage cycle.

Flooded lead-acid batteries should be equalized to prevent the plates from becoming sulfated. You can tell this is happening when the batteries charge quickly, but the capacity falls off rapidly. Your Charge Wizard steps up the voltage to 14.5 volts every 21 days for 15 minutes. While this is better than nothing, it really does not equalize the batteries sufficiently.

Flooded lead-acid batteries can take a higher charge during equalization as long as water is replenished; circuit boards that control some of your appliances can burn out when voltage hits 15 to 15.5 volts. If you have equipment that allows manual equalization at these higher voltage levels, it’s imperative that you turn the appliances off or pull their fuses beforehand. You should not equalize flooded-cell batteries for more than two to three hours, and preferably, check open cells with a hydrometer until specific gravity readings reach the proper level in each cell.

AGM batteries perform better when controlled by a multi-stage charger, and should not be manually equalized. The better multi-stage converter/chargers, inverter/chargers and solar regulators rely on temperature compensation to control charging. They utilize a temperature sensor attached to the battery.

BATTERY WIRING

The three coach batteries have finally died. I would like to replace these three with two golf cart batteries, but request clarification on parallel wiring of them. Currently the three coach batteries are wired in parallel with the starting battery. Can I attach the 12-volt starting battery in parallel with the two golf cart batteries?

JAMES POPOVICH | MORA, N.M.

All you have to do is wire the 6-volt batteries (golf cart) in series, where the negative from one is connected to the positive of the other. The remaining positive and negative terminals are then wired in parallel to the starting battery.

You should consider using a Perko switch (or similar quality switching device) so the golf cart batteries can be isolated from the starting battery. This comes in handy when primitive camping and when the coach is stored, allowing you to disconnect all the batteries from the system and eliminating parasitic drains.

CUTTING THE CORD

We recently experienced a problem while parking in a campground. We unhooked the car from the motorhome and wrapped the umbilical cord around the hitch. While parking, the hitch cut the cord in half. This shorted out our turn signals and backup camera. We have a Workhorse chassis and no one in the area of Newport News, Va., wanted to touch it. We could have tried our emergency road service, but we wanted to be frugal.

IT’S POSSIBLE THAT THE WATER PUMP BELT TENSIONER IS RUSTING AND CATCHING, CAUSING A BURNING-RUBBER ODOR. CAT ENGINES ARE PRONE TO THIS PROBLEM, AND IF THE PULLEY FAILS TO MOVE FREELY, THE BELT CAN BE HEATING UP.



I tried all the fuses and the one flasher but we are told that there is another flasher located somewhere in the motorhome. Since we have backup lights and four-ways we are still looking for the other flasher. The coach is a 2003 Itasca Suncruiser.

ELMER DETURCK | MOHNTON, PA.

Workhorse uses separate flashers for the four-ways and signals. Since your four-ways work and the signals don't, the other flasher is likely the culprit. The second flasher should be in the same general area as the one you checked. Typical area for mounting the fuse block (with flasher) is under the dash, which can be accessed by tipping the dash pod upward. If it's not there, check under the dash on the firewall. If you still can't find the flasher, look under the hood in front of the coach. If that doesn't work, take your motorhome to an RV service center.

The backup monitor gets its power from a wire coming out of the convenience center, provided the reverse lamps are working, which you confirmed. Once the monitor is operating, it sends power out to the camera via the system cable. Chances are the fuse in the holder in the back of the monitor is blown.

BURNING-RUBBER ODOR

I am the owner of a 2004, 36-foot Itasca Meridian motorhome that has a 350 diesel Cat motor, Freightliner chassis with 20,000 miles. Several years ago while traveling back to Las Vegas from a visit in California we noticed a very strong, burning-rubber odor coming from the back of our coach. Thinking we may have lost a tire, we pulled over and found all tires to

be fine. When arriving in Las Vegas we took our coach to the local dealership; it found nothing and advised us to take it to Freightliner, which we did. One item to point out is the odor appears much stronger when under a load while pulling our trailer or climbing hills.

Freightliner told us it was a belt, which was replaced, however that did not fix the problem. We then took it back and were told that they were unable to duplicate the problem and had no idea what to do. We contacted Winnebago and it was unable to assist as well.

The odor remains and we have had other dealerships try to find the problem without any success. I am writing in hopes that someone out there may have experienced a similar problem or Coach & Chassis can assist with a resolution to this problem.

GARY G. GOSZ | LAS VEGAS

There are a couple of places to look. The most obvious is to make sure the rubber skirt (if so equipped) is not too close to the exhaust pipe. Also, make sure there's nothing that can burn close to the exhaust manifold or muffler. This can become more of a problem if the engine is being over-fueled, which will elevate exhaust temperatures, especially when the engine is under a load — such as when climbing hills or pulling a heavy trailer.

It's possible that the water pump belt tensioner is rusting and catching. Cat engines are prone to this problem, and if the pulley fails to move freely, the belt can be heating up. Normally, you'll hear some squealing with this scenario. You might also check the air-conditioning compres-

sor. If it's freezing up, the belt will again be restricted and heat up.

On some Cat engines, the air-conditioning hoses are routed up and over the exhaust manifold and held in place with P-clips. If the bottom hose gets loose from the P-clips, it can get close enough to the exhaust manifold and run much hotter than normal.

KEYED UP FOR TOWING

I have a 2005 Saturn VUE with AWD V-6, 5-speed auto transmission that is flat towable. My question pertains to the position of the ignition switch while towing. I have enclosed the manufacturer's instructions for your review. I have towed another Saturn (L300) and they specifically stated that the ignition switch be in the ACC position when towing. The instructions tell you to shift to NEUTRAL, let it run for three minutes and then turn it off. Then remove the ING fuse. It never states that you should have the ignition switch in the ACC position while driving.

I called two Saturn dealers (service managers) and neither had a clue. I then called Saturn Customer Service; it had no clue and told me to contact a towing service and ask them.

The Saturn instruction manual also states that when the ignition switch is in the LOCK/OFF position, the steering wheel is locked. Obviously, you don't tow with the steering wheel locked.

Please inform me of the proper position for the ignition switch while towing the vehicle.

ROBERT WETHERBIE | ABERDEEN, N.C.

Robert, I'm surprised the Saturn service managers could not answer your question. The ignition switch in your vehicle has four positions: LOCK, ACC, RUN and START. When you unlock the steering wheel, the key will have to be in the acc position. That's your only choice when towing. It's also the reason you have to pull the fuse.

I assume the towing instructions did not specifically call out the Acc detent since it's the default position when the steering wheel is unlocked, which is required for towing. ♦

TO CONTRIBUTE TO COACH & CHASSIS, refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 12.

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Got Zinc?

I have a 1986 motorhome with a GM engine that is stored indoors and is in very good condition. I plan to keep it for a long time. However, I'm concerned with what I've heard about the latest energy-conserving oils not containing zinc additives and that this may cause failure to non-roller valve lifters where they contact the camshaft. Do you have any suggestions?

JEFF BRYANT | FAYETTEVILLE, ARK.

There is now an additive you can use to replace the zinc dialkyldithiophosphate (whew, what a mouthful) in motor oil. It's called Hy-Per Lube (www.hyperlube.com, 888-275-0015) and it is available at Pep Boys, Kragen, O'Reilly, Checker and other auto parts stores.

GENSET CHARGING BATTERIES

I own a 1992 Tiffin 34-foot Allegro Bay on a Ford F53 chassis. I've noticed that the 7.5 kW Onan generator doesn't charge the coach batteries very quickly (only a trickle charge). I have a portable charger with a maintenance feature that I plug into an outside outlet and connect to the coach batteries and charge them at 8 to 12 amps with the Onan supplying power. If the coach batteries are drained I start the coach engine, which charges all batteries fairly quickly. Is the slow charge from the generator normal, or should it charge more quickly?

I also store the motorhome in the winter with the power cord plugged into a 120-volt AC supply that is only on at night. Will this hurt the two 6-volt deep cycle coach batteries? I don't have a wiring diagram so I don't have all the

information I should have about the system. Who can I contact about getting a wiring diagram?

LELAND OLSON | OREM, UTAH

When you are powering your coach's electrical system from the generator, it feeds 120 volts AC to the onboard converter, just the same as when the coach is plugged into shorepower from a campground outlet. Most converters have a single-stage charging circuit for the coach batteries that only provides one charging rate. These one-stage converters charge too slowly to provide a quick charge when you are dry camping and want to recharge the batteries, yet charge too much for storage and often cause the batteries to use a lot of water. Leaving the converter on at night during storage will still

overcharge, unless you have a good multi-stage charger. In lieu of that, we recommend disconnecting the batteries from the coach and using a maintenance charger such as Battery Tender or a similar unit.

Coach wiring is put in by the motorhome manufacturer and is only available from the company, which in your case is Tiffin (256-356-0261). Chassis wiring and service information are available through Helm Inc., www.helminc.com, 800-782-4356.

CRUISE CONTROL QUANDARY

I have 1990 Class C motorhome on a Ford E-350 chassis with a 7.3-L diesel engine. The factory-installed cruise control stopped working and the tests done by a Ford dealer in Las Vegas indicated that the amplifier should be replaced. It is part No. E9UA-9D843-EA. My problem is trying to find a replacement as I don't like to use salvage yard parts. Ford doesn't have parts for it anymore, but there should be a substitute, aftermarket or similar. Is it possible to rebuild it and who could do it? I appreciate your help.

**DRAGO MILJAN
CALGARY, ALBERTA**

Ford had a safety recall on cruise controls that went back to the 1992 models, but should not affect your model year. You have the correct part number, and are right that it is no longer available from Ford. There are several ways to go with a situation like this. Everything else on the rig is used and amplifiers aren't affected by how the original coach it came from was maintained. If it were my coach I'd check for suppliers at www.motorhomemagazine.com/output.cfm?id=204823 and consider buying a used amplifier. If all else fails, you can have an aftermarket cruise control installed. Many shops that install stereos and alarms also sell and install cruise controls.

GM TIPS

The letter from Don Gordon ("GM Gas

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POWERTRAIN

Engine Loses Power," May) about losing power on his GM TBI is familiar to me. After spending lots of time and money, I finally traced the problem to the programming map on the computer chip. At certain speeds, load and specific throttle positions, the computer does cut the timing back to prevent the engine from lugging. It's noticeable in the sound of the engine and on the scan tool timing screen.

I had a new PROM chip burned (not a piggyback unit) that created a new programming map to boost the timing at these throttle positions, loads and speeds. The result cured the problem of the engine "tuning down" and made it sound better, but really didn't result in much increase in power. However, it did create a problem with spark knock or pinging, and elevated exhaust temperatures. Evidently GM engineers knew what they were doing, tuning the engine down for this application under those conditions.

Gordon can spend the money to get a new chip burned, but the bottom line is it won't help. Downshift, change your driving style, or learn to live with it, as a sign from GM you are overloading the engine for the RPM, speed and load it's running.

KARL WILSON | HUNTSVILLE, ALA.

These engines bog down and ping for several reasons. The stock exhaust systems, including the manifolds, are very restrictive. This restriction increases the pressure and thus the heat in the cylinder heads and this adds to detonation. The air intake is also restrictive at full throttle, which limits top-end power. On many of the engines, fuel pressure drops off at high flow during full throttle enough to reduce performance and cause pinging from the excessively lean mixtures that result. Therefore, a good aftermarket intake and exhaust system plus monitoring fuel pressure can make a difference. The chip will also work better with these changes.

JUMP-STARTING TIP

I had a Ford 460 V-8 engine in my motorhome that began having the same problem that Mike Callaghan had in "Won't Crank When Hot" (April). It would start fine cold, but had to be jumped after warming up. As soon as I remembered that I had put a battery quick-disconnect on the engine

battery, I removed it and never had the problem again.

PAUL HOWELL | AUBURN, CALIF.

Some battery disconnects can result in excessive resistance, especially if they are corroded. It's always helpful when troubleshooting a problem to review all modifications and work that have been done that might affect the component or system producing a problem. It's been my experience that many times this leads to the cause. I recommend that owners keep a log book and record everything done to the coach. Keep it with the motorhome so it can be referred to when on the road.

TRACKER DINGHY TOWING

I have a Safari Trek 28-foot coach and tow a Chevy (Geo) Tracker with a six-cylinder engine. I use a Hidden Hitch with a Falcon 2 tow bar. Can I use the Tracker to pull the coach backward for 20 or 30 feet to get out of a tight spot? I would have the Tracker in gear, the motorhome in NEUTRAL.

WES ROMBERGER | PAYSON, ARIZ.

Depending on the year and version of your Tracker, the motorhome may exceed the Tracker's tow rating by up to 10 times. So there's no way we can recommend it. If it were an emergency, certainly I might risk it (using low-range 4WD if equipped), but not as an everyday practice just because it's more convenient.

SLOW GAS TANK FILL FEEDBACK II

Since my last letter ("Slow Gas Tank Fill Feedback," June) I have done more research on this problem. First, I investigated why the nozzle doesn't fit into the fuel inlet of my motorhome. Using a plumb line on both my Chevy and Jeep, the fuel inlet is about 45 degrees from vertical, whereas my Winnebago Sunova is only 30 degrees. Hence, the California EPA version of the nozzle will not fit properly. There is ample space to modify the fuel inlet to a 45-degree angle without causing problems.

Secondly, I looked at the piping from the fuel inlet to the tank; the rubber hose drops down to a plastic connector that points at the gas tank. There is a long

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While every effort is made to maintain accuracy and completeness, last-minute changes may occasionally result in omissions or errors.

POWERTRAIN

horizontal distance for the fuel to flow such that the gas can enter the gas tank. It would be great for Winnebago to redesign the fueling system to create a slope down to the gas tank.

When I am unable to pump gas into the vehicle my temporary solution is to lower the rear leveling jacks, forcing the rear of the vehicle way up in the air. The gas then flows directly into the gas tank. In order to further improve the fuel flow, I need to know more about the automatic fuel shut-off that detects the gas tank to be full. Thanks for your suggestions.

RONALD L. SECORD | SUN CITY, ARIZ.

The fuel nozzles shut off when gasoline splashes back on the outer end (tip) of the nozzle. You'll see holes in the end. By law, onboard gasoline tanks and their related components must seal to contain evaporated gasoline fumes from escaping. There is considerable liability if a shop modifies a fuel system, both from the emission standpoint and in case of a leak and fire, including crashes. Therefore you may find it difficult to find a shop that's willing to take on this problem. If you are an experienced do-it-yourselfer, you may have to tackle this one on your own.

PRODUCT ENDORSEMENTS?

We have a 2006 Holiday Rambler Neptune motorhome with a Cummins ISB 5.9-L engine. What is your feeling about installing the Banks Power System?

RICH DABBERT | VACAVILLE, CALIF.

We don't endorse products or brands, but we have found over the years from both our own experience and letters from readers that Gale Banks products have a good reputation and are well-designed and work properly. Coincidentally, I am planning to do a test on a diesel coach with one of these systems in the near future. Stay tuned for the results. ♦

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2752



Sometimes you have to stop talking about "someday" and just say, this is the year! My parents have spent many winters traveling in the warm Arizona sunshine. I've long wanted to visit and have them show me the wonders they've discovered. At last, this was the year. While in the area, I also wanted to see the incredible scenery where this image was taken:
Zion National Park, Utah.

Karen Lee Ensley
Schnecksville, Pennsylvania



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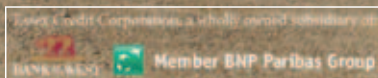
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