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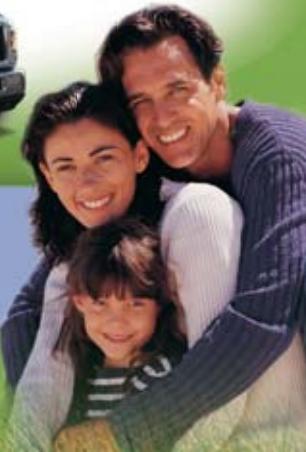
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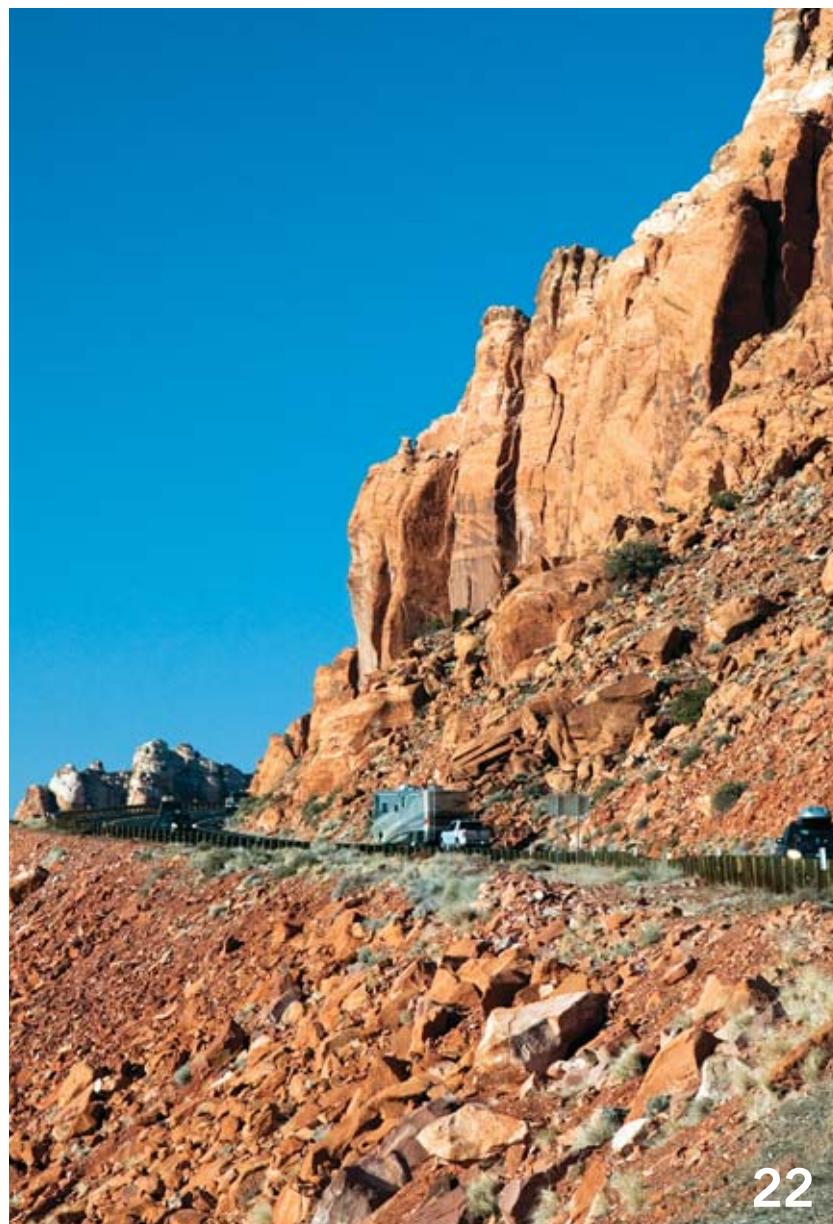
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On The Cover: The 2011 45-foot P2000i Newell motor coach takes a ride down the country backroads of Miami, Okla., home of the Newell factory (see story on page 38). Photo by Bob Livingston.

MEN REALLY DO ASK FOR DIRECTIONS



I'm probably going to take a little heat from the male readers of this magazine by admitting this, but I have to confess: Men aren't as tough as they think they are. Sure, pride — or some odd little chromosome in their DNA — keeps them from asking for directions, and, heaven forbid, reading the directions before beginning a project. I'm not qualified to provide a scientific explanation, but I assume something happened during the development of the male ego that makes guys believe that they are the only ones capable of handling the nuts-and-bolts portion of RV ownership.

Fortunately, while guys typically stress over things that go wrong with their rigs, women take a more pragmatic approach. They stay calm. They think logically. And they don't throw wrenches. As part of this calmer disposition, many wives encourage their husbands to sign up for technical seminars. Now, I'm not suggesting that women are the sole drivers when it comes to expanding one's horizons on the RV lifestyle, but they were instrumental in making July's Centennial Caraventure in Elkhart, Ind., very successful — and a lot of fun.

The four-day program was designed to help RV enthusiasts learn about the 100-year-old RV industry and, along the way, to discover solutions to their pressing problems while becoming totally immersed in the lifestyle. After getting to know the attendees and witnessing the number of slaps on the back and "I told you so" gestures, it was clear that learning more about our fabulous lifestyle is very high on the list, and that owners — men and women alike — absorb information and tips like sponges.

A special event before The Rally — our RV extravaganza in Louisville, Ky. — the Caraventure focused on RV education and was new territory for us. We initially gathered at the Elkhart Campground, where we mixed in enough touring to get a flavor of this northern In-

diana region's colorful history. Elkhart is the heartbeat of the RV industry, and its people are instrumental in building the RVs most of us own. But it was back in camp where the event really took shape.

Other than the tours, programming for the gathering was relatively informal, allowing attendees to pick any topics that were on their minds — and there were plenty of questions! We spent hours digging into the inner workings of RV systems, finding solutions to pressing problems and helping those who were relatively new to the lifestyle become better acclimated to their particular RV.

While it was fun to visit with owners at their sites and see how they individualized their own RVs, we also offered "house calls" as part of the deal, making on-the-spot repairs or diagnosing problems. Not surprisingly, a number of attendees ran into technical difficulties the moment they arrived in camp, problems that were quickly rectified by Bill Gehr of Bill's RV in Ventura, Calif. Needless to say, this service was very popular at the event — and very much appreciated.

All were eager to learn, and beyond that, a lot of new friends were made. On the final day everyone made their way to The Rally for seven more days of seminars, shopping, entertainment and socializing before hitting the road in separate directions.

This is only the beginning of the technical Caraventures. Plans are already in the works for another tech tour that will end up at The Rally in Redmond, Ore., next July.

So guys, I don't want to throw you under the bus — but you've got to give up that macho stuff. Clearly, the women were right by your side the whole time we "talked shop" in Elkhart. Perhaps it's by design that most GPS navigational systems use female voices. ♦

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"IF YOU TRAVEL WITH A COPILOT, HOW DO YOU DIVIDE UP THE RVING DUTIES?"

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

DUTIES ARE SPLIT 90-10

Since we retired 11 years ago, we have spent most of our time traveling. Shirley does about 90 percent of the driving. She enjoys driving our 35-foot motorhome and I enjoy bragging about her driving. The only time I drive is when we park in a campground. This is because she can't understand my directions. She only uses hand signals and gets it right on the first try. There is only one scratch on the motorhome and it was caused by me — rushing to get out of a space because someone was waiting to get in.

BOB AND SHIRLEY COX | CARNATION, WASH.

DRIVING 'DIPPY' IS NO BIG DEAL

My husband, Bob, and I are in our 70s and have been RVing for eight years. I enjoy driving, so when we first started out I nagged for two months about driving our 40-foot ("Dippy" for Diplomat) motorhome and our tow "Maxx." I had driven a 24-foot motorhome in my "other" life (my second marriage), so what was the big deal about driving 16 extra feet with a tow? Now I do most of the driving while Bob reads or naps. His job is chief mechanic and he handles the outside duties. I do the inside stuff and we both cook or eat out.

ROBERT AND DIANE CREASEY | EMERY, S.D.

A WELL-ORGANIZED TEAM

My wife and I have been RVing for more than 25 years and we have always done it as a team. We currently have a diesel Class A. Although we both drive, I generally pilot while she navigates. Upon arrival we share a few duties, such as backing or positioning in narrow spaces, extending the slideout, etc.

The remainder of the duties for arrival and departure are loosely separated into "internal" vs. "external." I get all of the "fun" stuff like attaching cords and hoses, and draining the tanks. She sets up the inside, verifies refrigerator, A/C, heaters, etc. We both use checklists to ensure we don't forget anything. This works well for us — we're ready to explore within 15 minutes of arrival at a site and can be ready for a morning departure in about 25 minutes.

GARY AND NANCY PRADE | CASTLE ROCK, COLO.

WOMEN BEHIND THE WHEEL

I'm writing to let you know that women do drive motorhomes. I am 76 years young and have driven three motorhomes, the first one after I lost my husband. When a friend and I drove to Alaska, we also met some women who were traveling alone in vans. I have since sold my motorhome and have started taking bus tours, but I still love to travel. So, women,



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RUTH CORY | SHELBY, MICH.

AMERICAN PRIDE

I have a question. Why is it so great that a motorhome has a European design? What is wrong with an American design? Don't get me wrong, I have nothing against Europeans, but what is wrong with being American? We Americans must be terrible people because everyone thinks we need to follow someone else's way. I am getting a little tired of this. I for one am proud to be and buy American.

LOU DA ROSA | ELK GROVE, CALIF.

BUGGED IN FLORIDA

Regarding "I Can See Clearly," by Kevin Livingston (Hands-On, April), testing Rain-X for bug removal ease: Go to Orlando, Fla., and drive west for 60 miles and you will be able to test this theory. When I drove that route I almost couldn't see out of my windshield because of all the bugs.

TOM HAMILTON | OKLAHOMA CITY

STELLAR SELLERS

Once in a while I run across a company that goes above and beyond my expectations. This letter is to recognize such a company.

My Forest River Lexington motorhome had a vibration ever since I bought it in 2007. I was told by various service providers that the aluminum wheels were the problem or bad tires or a myriad of other possible ailments. I replaced the tires, replaced the brakes, balanced driveshafts and wheels, to no avail.

My last hope was with Sellers Manufacturing, the company that altered the Ford chassis for Forest River. I arrived at the facility around 9 in the morning and by noon they had diagnosed the problem to be in the driveline, resolved the issues, fed me lunch and then said there would be no charge for the service or the lunch.

So the next time you are in the area of Milford, Ind., and have an RV chassis problem, remember Sellers Manufacturing, the company that makes E-Z Ride.

CHUCK PALMER | POLK CITY, FLA.

PRACTICING THE BASICS

Why do so many diesel owners let their motors idle for so long, thereby disturb-

ing their neighbors' camping experience? I find this rude and inconsiderate. So many parks have rules and regulations. Excessive idling should be included. Furthermore, not only is it annoying, but it's also harmful to their coach's engine.

KEN MATTOCKS

HUNTINGTON BEACH, CALIF.

SOMETHING FOR ALL

MotorHome is a great magazine. There is something for everyone. I especially like the articles reviewing the kinds and models of motorhomes. I also enjoy articles regarding new products and organizing your RV. I just wish there was more of it. Thanks.

SHERRY RALLS | TURNER, ORE.

SMOKE GETS IN THEIR EYES

When are nonsmoking RV sites going to be offered? Nonsmoking locations and areas are everywhere today, even at outdoor amusement parks and sports stadiums. Owners and operators of campgrounds and RV parks should start offering this type of site.

We have all pulled our motorhome into a site at a great location; connected power and water; put out the awning and carpet in front of our door; then set up our chairs to enjoy the great outdoors. Then, while enjoying a cold drink or dinner outside, the smell of cigarette and/or cigar smoke comes drifting over from your neighbor's site. On a warm, calm evening this can not only be annoying but also a health hazard to adults, children and pets. This recently happened to us at two sites while on a trip.

There's no argument for not offering nonsmoking sites and the owners of some wonderful locations should start offering smoke-free locations.

BOB AND NANCY ADAMSKI

LOUDON, TENN.

QUESTION:

How do you feel about smoking at campsites? Should RV parks establish nonsmoking camping areas?

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

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escapes

edited by PATRICIA MARROQUIN

EVENTS | NOTEWORTHY | NEWS BRIEFS | CROSSROADS

MAKE A PIT STOP AT CARHENGE

NEBRASKA'S AUTO ARTWORK PAYS HOMAGE
TO ENGLAND'S FAMED ANCIENT MEGLITHS



Driving north on Highway 87 from Alliance, Neb., you might think you are in southern England and are seeing the ancient alignment of megaliths known as Stonehenge. But then, doing a double take, you realize these aren't stones but antique automobiles planted in the ground, replicating the prehistoric work.

The Nebraska site is no random attempt at a copy. The 38 automobiles, mostly from the 1950s and '60s, are arrayed in a 96-foot-diameter circle, nearly the same as Stonehenge. Some of the cars are held upright in 5-foot-deep pits, trunk end down; cars forming the arches have been welded in place.

Within the circle, like the prototype, are a heel stone, slaughter stone, two station stones and the "Aubrey circle," after Sir John Aubrey, who in 1648 first realized the array of megaliths on the English plain was a temple that charted the sun and moon phases.

Carhenge was designed in 1982 by artist Jim Reinders as a memorial to his father. It was dedicated on the summer solstice in 1987. Since then other sculptures (most notably a whimsical spawning salmon and T-rex) have been added at the 10-acre site, which attracts more than 80,000 visitors a year.

For more information, call Friends of Carhenge at 308-762-3569 or visit www.carhenge.com. — Pamela Selbert

OCT. 9-10

Explore the picturesque grounds of historic Prater's Mill, a working gristmill established in 1855 and dedicated as an American cultural legacy by the United States Library of Congress, at **Prater's Mill Country Fair** near Dalton, Ga. The fair celebrates the cultural history of Southern Appalachia, with mountain music, living history exhibits, blacksmithing and woodcarving demonstrations, self-guided tours of the gristmill, a country store and barn, authentic Southern foods (like fried apple pie), canoeing and scenic nature trails; 706-694-6455, www.pratersmill.org.

PHOTO: MIKEY SIMS



OCT. 2-3 | Maritime fun is the theme at the 29th annual **Morro Bay Harbor Festival** in Morro Bay, Calif. Enjoy the scenic drive along California's central coast that will lead you to this event that's jampacked with activities, including three stages of local entertainment, a California cuisine pavilion, arts and crafts, maritime displays, a shark slide and dol-



OCT. 2-3 | The annual fall gathering of the French and Native Americans during the mid-1700s is the inspiration for the 43rd annual **Feast of the Hunters' Moon** at Historic Fort Ouiatenon Park near West Lafayette, Ind. A former fur-trading outpost on the banks of the Wabash River, the fort is the perfect setting for this autumnal celebration, re-enacted by thousands of participants. Rifles will bang, authentic food will be served and the heavy aroma of wood smoke will fill the air; 765-476-8411, www.tcha.mus.in.us/feast.htm.

phin obstacle course for the kids, a chowder cook-off and a "silent seas" auction. Park at one of the beach campgrounds or RV parks in the area; 800-366-6043, www.mbhf.com.

OCT. 15-17 | Seize the opportunity to visit the private studios of more than 50 artists and craftspeople on the Fall

Art Tour throughout the southwest Wisconsin towns of Baraboo, Spring Green/Dodgeville and Mineral Point. Enjoy the fall foliage and small-town charm as you talk to the artists and watch them demonstrate their work, perhaps even taking home a piece of artwork. The artists featured at this free event include painters, glass artists, weavers and sculptors; 608-588-7509; www.fallarttour.com.

OCT. 15-17 | Snowbirds looking to get a head start won't want to miss the **Sunny Isles Beach Jazz Fest** in Florida's Riviera, Sunny Isles Beach. Sink your toes into the pristine white sand as you listen to world-renowned celebrity jazz entertainers and music groups from several Florida universities. Before or after the concerts, check out the shopping, museums, golfing and fine dining this resort destination has to offer; 305-792-1952, www.sunnyislesbeachjazz.com.

OCT. 16-17 | This isn't just any seafood festival — the **St. Mary's County Oyster Festival** in Leonardtown, Md., is host to the U.S. National Oyster Shucking Championships and the National Oyster Cook-Off Contest — serious business for any foodie or hungry traveler. Feast on southern Maryland seafood, meat and poultry specialties and, of course, oysters made any way you like 'em, while listening to choral groups and regional bands and having fun at the petting zoo and carnival. Plus, there's plenty of free parking; 301-863-5015, www.usoysterfest.com.

OCT. 22-24 | Ever wonder how "rough" gems are transformed into dazzling pieces of jewelry?

by MEAGHAN ALFIER

Find out at the **Gem Capers** show in Austin, Texas, featuring rocks, gems, minerals and fossils. More than 30 dealers will be selling unique jewelry and gifts just in time for the holidays. Live demonstrations will include glass bead making, food will be offered, and kids can make their own jewelry and hunt for polished gems in the mine; 512-248-2797, www.gemcapers.com.

RV SHOWS**OCT. 1-3**

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OCT. 6-10

21st Annual Fall Detroit Camper and RV Show
Novi, Mich.;
517-349-8881

OCT. 15-17

23rd Annual Fall New Jersey RV and Boat Show
Edison, N.J.;
732-616-2922

OCT. 15-17

Toronto Fall RV Show
Toronto; 888-331-8885

OCT. 15-18

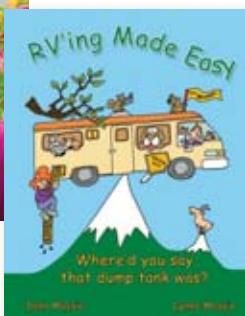
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As beginning RVers, mother (Lynne) and daughter (Dana) experienced these incidents and more — some of them embarrassing, some of them expensive — on a 1,600-mile trip from Olympia, Wash., to Denver in their new motorhome.

Finding most user's manuals too complicated, the women learned by doing — and by talking with other RV owners. Out of these experiences came "RV'ing Made Easy," a spiral-bound guidebook in which they share their lessons, stories and handy tips.

In its 260 pages, "RV'ing Made Easy" gives motorhome novices (and even experienced RVers) the facts — interspersed with fun — about the world of RVing.

Everything about the book is easy — from its conversational tone to its large-size type to its alphabetically organized chapters.

"RV'ing Made Easy" is available in RV bookstores for \$29.95 and may also be purchased online at www.rvingmadeeasy.com for \$24.95. — Patricia Marroquin

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What plays music, warns you of an impending tornado, lights your way in the dark and charges your cell phone — all in a single 7.5-ounce product using power from the sun? No, this isn't a joke and there is no punch line. There is such a product — with

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L.L. Bean, 877-855-2326, www.llbean.com. — Patricia Marroquin

News Briefs

MotorHome magazine is now on **Facebook**. The intent of the Facebook page is to engage the magazine's readers by creating a community that shares its love of the motorhome lifestyle. "Facebook is a wonderful avenue for us to be more interactive with our readers," said MotorHome Editor Eileen Hubbard. "It's a place for everyone to share favorite RVing stories, funny photos from the road, tips on camping or just special memories." In an introductory note on the page, MotorHome Publisher Bob Livingston said: "This is your page, and its success depends on your interaction. We hope you'll share your ... passion. We plan to do the same." You can join MotorHome's Facebook community by visiting www.facebook.com/motorhomemagazine and clicking "Like."

Bud Surles' **Signature Resorts** has announced a completed master plan for **Tiger Creek Resort** in Tyler, Texas. Tiger Creek Resort is developed in conjunction with **Tiger Creek Wildlife Refuge**, a nonprofit organization in tiger conservation, education, big cat rescue and rehabilitation. The resort will sell RV memberships and cottage timeshares, rent RV sites and cottages and rent event facilities at the resort, according to a news release. Amenities include a pool, a small lake and dock, a camper service building with a gift shop, a playground and outdoor pavilions. "This development is really about bringing people and animals together through a nature-based tourist attraction that also provides sustainability for the big cats of Tiger Creek Wildlife Refuge," said Brian Werner, co-owner with wife Lisa of Tiger Creek Resort.

Just as diners pair food and wine, a new program is pairing wineries and farms with RVers. **Harvest Hosts** — a nationwide network of vintners, farmers, growers and producers — invite RVers to visit their vineyards and farms and allow them to dry camp overnight free of charge. Harvest Hosts is the first membership program of its kind in the United States. RVers pay a \$20 annual membership fee (a discounted rate for the 2010 founding year). As of mid-June, there were 146 hosts in 31 states. For more information, go to www.harvesthosts.com.



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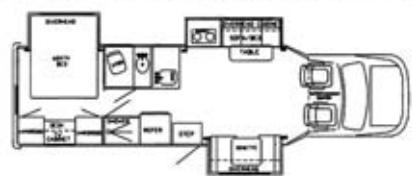
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A RELAXED PACE OF LIFE

Point Roberts, Wash., dangles from the southernmost tip of British Columbia, Canada, like a misplaced appendix. In 1846 cartographers and politicians sliced a line through the tiny peninsula and left it isolated from its torso like Alaska in miniature.

At Point Roberts the 49th parallel goes right through the northern part of the peninsula, leaving five square miles surrounded by Pacific waters and the U.S./Canada border. There is no ferry service between the island and the U.S. mainland. This isolation results in a community of 1,300 that's so laid back visiting motor-homers may feel as if they have stepped back in time.

Here, driving an RV is a pleasure as every road is a country lane with little traffic. You can bask in the sun, enjoy the singing of birds and explore the island on bike or on foot. When ready for something else, head to the beach. These shores are rocky and rooted, great for exploring.

Dry camping is available at Lighthouse Marine Park (ironically, there is no lighthouse) March through October. For reservations, call 360-945-4911.

— Jim Couper



PHOTO: DYLAN COUPER



LAVA LAND

When leaving your footprint (and tire tracks) within El Malpais National Conservation Area in northwestern New Mexico, you join those who spent time amid this diverse landscape as long as 10,000 years ago.

Today Native American tribes continue ancestral activities in El Malpais (Spanish for "the badlands") such as gathering plant

materials. For RVers, this 263,000-acre national conservation area (NCA) — managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) — holds opportunities for hiking, photography, wildlife viewing, mountain biking, horseback riding and ranger-guided walks. The adjoining El Malpais National Monument is managed by the National Park Service. Within El Malpais NCA are two wilderness areas; sandstone cliffs and canyons; volcanic features such as lava tube caves and cinder cones; and La Ventana Natural Arch (pictured here). La Ventana is one of the largest natural arches in New Mexico. Erosion from sandstone deposited in the dinosaur age formed this feature.

There is free primitive camping in El Malpais; and private and U.S. Forest Service campgrounds in Grants and near El Morro.

For more information, go to www.blm.gov/nm/st/en/prog/recreation/rio_puerco/el_malpais.html and www.nps.gov/elma. — Patricia Marroquin ♦

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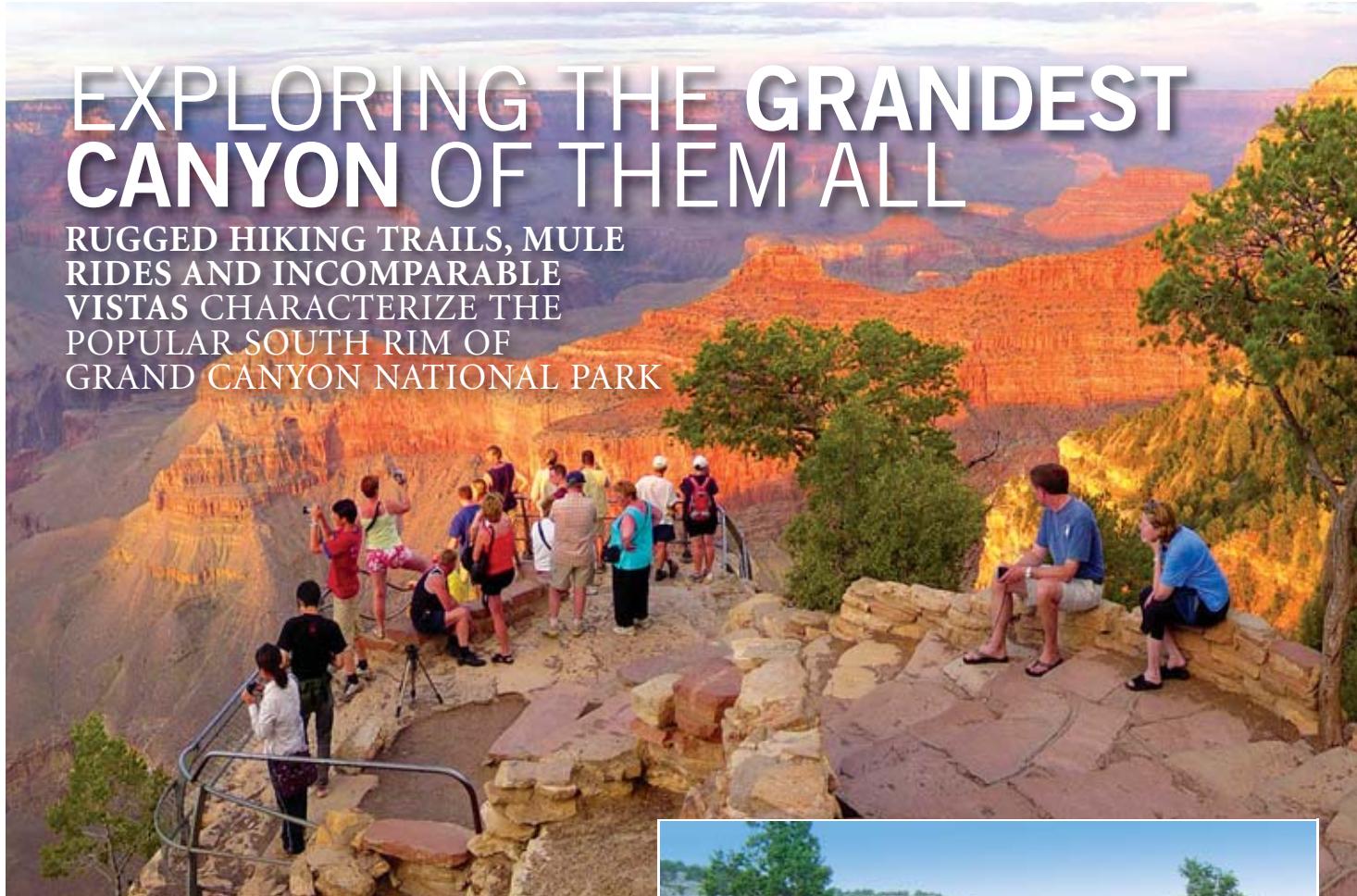
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EXPLORING THE GRANDEST CANYON OF THEM ALL

RUGGED HIKING TRAILS, MULE RIDES AND INCOMPARABLE VISTAS CHARACTERIZE THE POPULAR SOUTH RIM OF GRAND CANYON NATIONAL PARK



“I want to see the hole!” the little boy said. “I want to see the hole!” Holding his father’s hand, he walked along the ridge to Mather Point.

“We’re almost there,” his father said.

“Wait until we’re closer, and I’ll lift you up to see.”

In another moment, the father found an open spot along the overlook rail. He wrapped his arms around the boy’s chest and lifted him. The boy’s expression exploded in stunned wonder. “Whoa! That’s a big hole!”

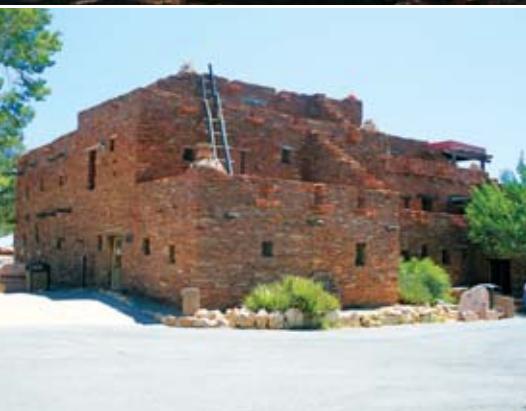
Yeah, you could say that. The Grand Canyon, the mother of all holes, is a national treasure without comparison.

Many consider it the most awe-inspiring natural landmark in the world. At 277 miles long, up to 18 miles wide, and a mile deep, its size overwhelms visitors. It actually isn’t the longest, widest or even deepest

RELATED ARTICLE
AFTER VISITING THE
GRAND CANYON,
HERE ARE 5 SITES
TO CHECK OUT
WITHIN 3 HOURS'
DRIVE. PAGE 22



Top: A wonderful way to end the day is by viewing the canyon colors at sunset. **Above:** A popular alternative to inner canyon hiking are mule rides, offered year-round on the South Rim.



Clockwise from left: Hopi House in Grand Canyon Village was built in 1905 and designed by architect Mary Jane Colter to resemble ancient Hopi structures. Inside are a Native American art gallery as well as handicrafts for sale. Trailer Village, located within Grand Canyon National Park, provides full hookups and a host of other amenities. One way to explore the canyon is by water. White-water and smooth-water adventures from half a day to 18 days are offered.

canyon, but its combined spectacle creates a visual marvel that can't be matched.

With its massive drop to the famed Colorado River, and buttes that rise from below like ancient Eastern temples, time itself seems to get lost in the vastness. The canyon isn't made of sheer cliffs that form something like a natural hallway. Instead, it is jagged, stepped and filled with fascinating formations with fascinating names,

such as Vishnu Temple, Zoroaster Temple and Cheops Pyramid.

The complex and colorful vistas also preserve a fascinating geologic display. Exposed along the canyon walls are near-perfect layers of geological time, revealing 1.84 billion years of the planet's history within a rock rainbow of black, red, lavender and cream. The layers range from the nearly 2-billion-year-old granite Vishnu Schist at the bottom of the canyon to the 270-million-year-old Kaibab Limestone along the rim. Millions of years ago when the Colorado River channeled through the uplifted Colorado Plateau, it created the most studied geologic feature in the world.

The Grand Canyon is largely contained within the 1.2 million acres of Grand Canyon National Park — slightly smaller than the state of Delaware. For viewing, it is divided into two sections, the South Rim and North Rim, although most of the park's 4.5 million annual visitors stay at the more convenient South Rim. In addition to its proximity to Interstate 40 and the cities of Flagstaff, Phoenix and Las Vegas, the South Rim offers more amenities for visitors. There are rugged hiking trails, numerous overlooks of incomparable vistas, plus abundant opportunities for dining and shopping.

As it did for the boy and his father, Mather Point offers many visitors their initial canyon panorama. It is the first over-

look on the South Entrance Road, offering an unforgettable first-time view.

Fortunately, many opportunities exist for experiencing the canyon and avoiding the infamous crowds. Desert View Drive, for example, is a 26-mile drive between Grand Canyon Village and Desert View (the east entrance to the park), which offers several less-populated overlooks. It follows the rim to Desert View, and the farther west you drive, the farther you leave behind the crowds.

Hermit Road follows the rim eight miles east of Grand Canyon Village and also offers access to other viewpoints. It is closed to private vehicles during most of the year, however the park's free shuttle travels to the overlooks.

The evening after visiting Mather Point, I drove along Desert View Drive to watch the sunset at Lipan Point. Sunset is a popular time to enjoy an overlook, but at Lipan Point, my family and I shared the promontory with only a handful of people. Without lots of fellow spectators to crowd out the views, we watched the sun descend over the rock strata, the shadows stretch across the buttes and the colors of rock and river glow in their low-sun brilliance.

The central hub of activity — Grand Canyon Village — lies to the west of Mather Point. It's home to several popular overlooks, as well as historic buildings, restaurants, shopping and the trailhead to the inner-

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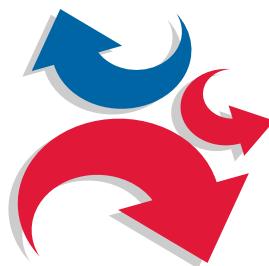
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canyon Bright Angel Trail. Within the village, the Market Plaza area also offers a large parking lot with a shuttle system connection, plus a general store, bank and post office.

Many historic buildings are located within the park, including several within Grand Canyon Village. In 1904, the Kolb Studio was built by the Kolb brothers, who ran a business photographing hikers. Today, it offers an art gallery, bookstore and other exhibits. Opened in 1905, the chalet-looking El Tovar Hotel offers the park's finest lodging. For motorhomers already enjoying their special version of luxury, the El Tovar also offers a fine restaurant with a stately dining room. The Hopi House, also built in 1905, was designed by the famous architect Mary Jane Colter to resemble ancient Hopi structures. It once served as a residence for Hopi Indians who sold their wares to visitors. Today, Hopi House offers a large selection of Native American handicrafts as well as a Native American art gallery.

Also located in the village, the 1909 Grand Canyon Railway Depot is a unique log-style station that serves as the northern terminus of the Grand Canyon Railway. The railway made its first journey in 1901, and today offers day visitors the option of boarding the morning train in Williams near I-40, spending a few hours at the canyon and returning in time for dinner.

A short walk from Mather Point is the Canyon View Information Plaza, which serves as the park's main visitor center and offers general information, including brochures and maps, and exhibits on the canyon's natural and cultural history.

The Yavapai Observation Station, built in 1928, is also near Mather Point. Through its large windows, visitors enjoy panoramic views of the canyon, plus the Colorado River and Phantom Ranch within the inner gorge. The station uses a large topographic relief model and other exhibits to explain the rock layer deposits, the uplift of the Colorado Plateau and how the river carved the canyon.

At Desert View to the west, you'll find the 70-foot Desert View Watchtower — the highest point on the South Rim and home to one of the finest views of the canyon and the Colorado. It too was designed by Colter and replicates the architecture of the area's ancestral Pueblos.

Three miles west of Desert View, the

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EXPLORING THE GRANDEST CANYON OF THEM ALL

Tusayan Ruin sits on a site occupied 800 years ago by Pueblo Indians. You can tour the ruins, and at the museum, explore artifacts from area Native Americans dating back 4,000 years.

Although overlooks are accessible by vehicle or shuttle, the best way to experience the park's beauty and enormity is by foot. A short walk from most parking areas will bring visitors to the Rim Trail, which follows the edge of the South Rim from Hermits Rest in the west to Pipe Creek Vista in the east. Much of the Rim Trail is level and paved and is especially wide around the Grand Canyon Village area to handle the crowds. The trail is an easy hike for most people, and between the designated overlooks, you can enjoy breathtaking and quieter views of the canyon.

For a completely different perspective, another hiking option is to journey into the canyon. After a few feet, hikers enter the rugged scenery and leave behind the village. No longer simply observers, they are participants in the immense natural landscape.

There are no easy hikes into the canyon, however. If visitors want to hike to the Colorado they should plan a two-day trip that includes spending a night at Phantom Ranch or Bright Angel Campground. For non-hard-core hikers, a day trip partially into the canyon is usually safer and more enjoyable.

Two of the most popular canyon trails are the South Kaibab and the Bright Angel. The South Kaibab Trail begins near Yaki Point and descends 4,860 feet. It offers partial-canyon day hikes up to six miles round trip, but it is steep with little shade and no water. The most used trail, Bright Angel, is located just west of Kolb Studio and descends 4,460 feet. Partial-canyon day hikes range up to 12 miles round trip. There are some shady spots and water is usually available in the summer at rest houses.

Hikers must be cautious and prepared. The hikes begin at high altitudes and descend into a desert environment with triple-digit summer temperatures. It also typically takes twice as long to make the challenging hike out as it does to hike in.

While exploring into the canyon, you can look to the sky and try to glimpse the California condor — the largest land bird

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in North America. The Grand Canyon is one of the few places where you can spot the endangered bird, which soars on thermal updrafts, gliding up to 50 MPH.

Mule rides are a popular alternative to inner canyon hiking. They are offered year-round but can book up 13 months in advance. The remarkably sure-footed animals are trained for the trails and provide an easier opportunity to engage the dramatic canyon. Three-hour trips are offered as well as one- and two-night trips, which take riders all the way to Phantom Ranch.

In addition to exploring the canyon by foot or mule, a white-water journey down the Colorado lures many Grand Canyon visitors. White-water adventures range from three- to 18-day trips on rafts or dories. They are expensive and also book at least a year in advance. If you're not up for that level of adventure, a half-day smooth-water trip is available outside the northeastern end of the park. And the Hualapai Tribe offers a full-day white-water trip in the western end of the canyon near Las Vegas.

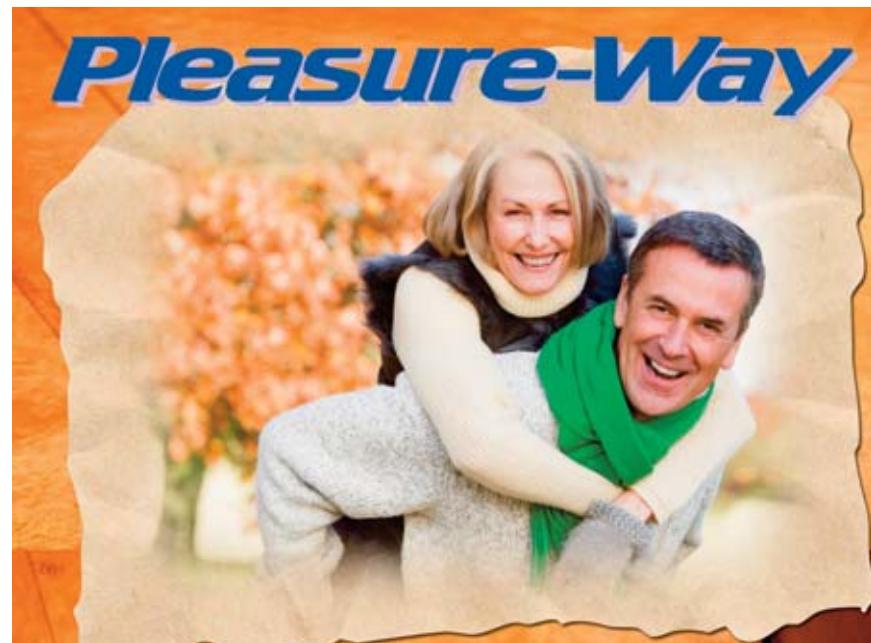
Motorhomers can make campground reservations at Mather Campground, operated within the park by the National Park Service, or Trailer Village, which is adjacent to Mather Campground and operated year-round by a park concessioner. Mather Campground has 327 sites and does not offer hookups, though its neighbor Trailer Village offers full hookups and an abundance of amenities.

Located at the quieter east end of the park, about 26 miles from Grand Canyon Village and available on a first-come, first-serve basis, is Desert View Campground. The campground offers dry camping only — there are no laundry or shower facilities, and motorhome lengths are limited to 30 feet.

Whether you're interested in scenery, geology, history or adventure, you'll find them all and more at North America's grandest canyon. You can take a half-day detour off the interstate for quick peeks over the edge, or spend a week or more exploring everything at the most awe-inspiring "hole" the world has to offer. ♦

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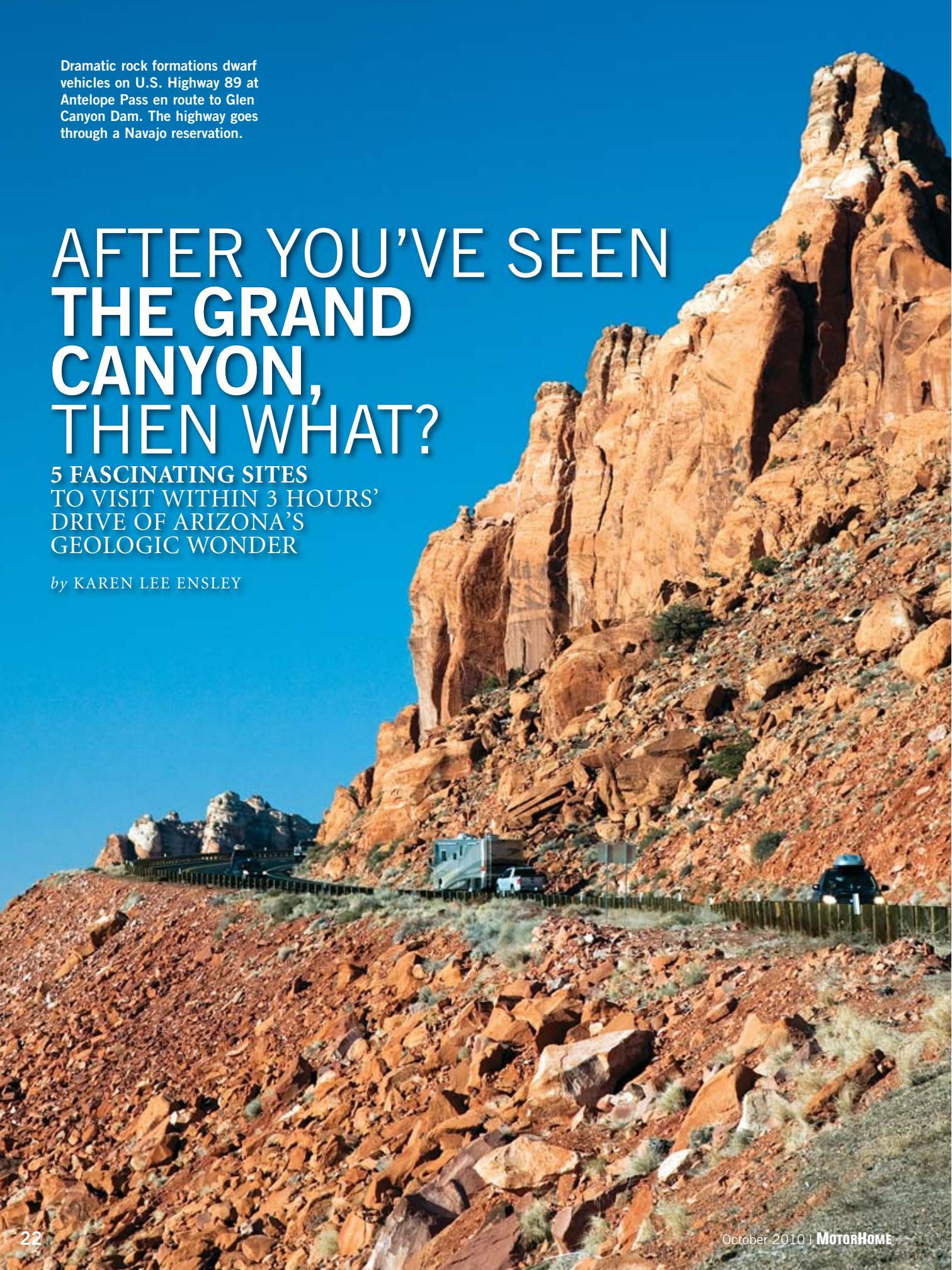
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Dramatic rock formations dwarf vehicles on U.S. Highway 89 at Antelope Pass en route to Glen Canyon Dam. The highway goes through a Navajo reservation.

AFTER YOU'VE SEEN THE GRAND CANYON, THEN WHAT?

5 FASCINATING SITES
TO VISIT WITHIN 3 HOURS'
DRIVE OF ARIZONA'S
GEOLOGIC WONDER

by KAREN LEE ENSLEY





Sometimes a vehicle breakdown can be positively life-changing. That's what happened to Blanche Russell around 1927. After her car broke down in northern Arizona, she was forced to camp overnight in a region filled with steep cliffs and vast open expanses. She liked the scenery so much, she stayed.

Today's motorhome traveler will find Arizona's scenery, especially the Grand Canyon, awe-inspiring. It's no wonder the state's nickname is the Grand Canyon State. But after you've seen the geologic wonder, what else is there to do in the 48th state? Here are five intriguing places to put on your must-see list. Each one is three hours' drive or less from the famous canyon.

CLIFF DWELLERS

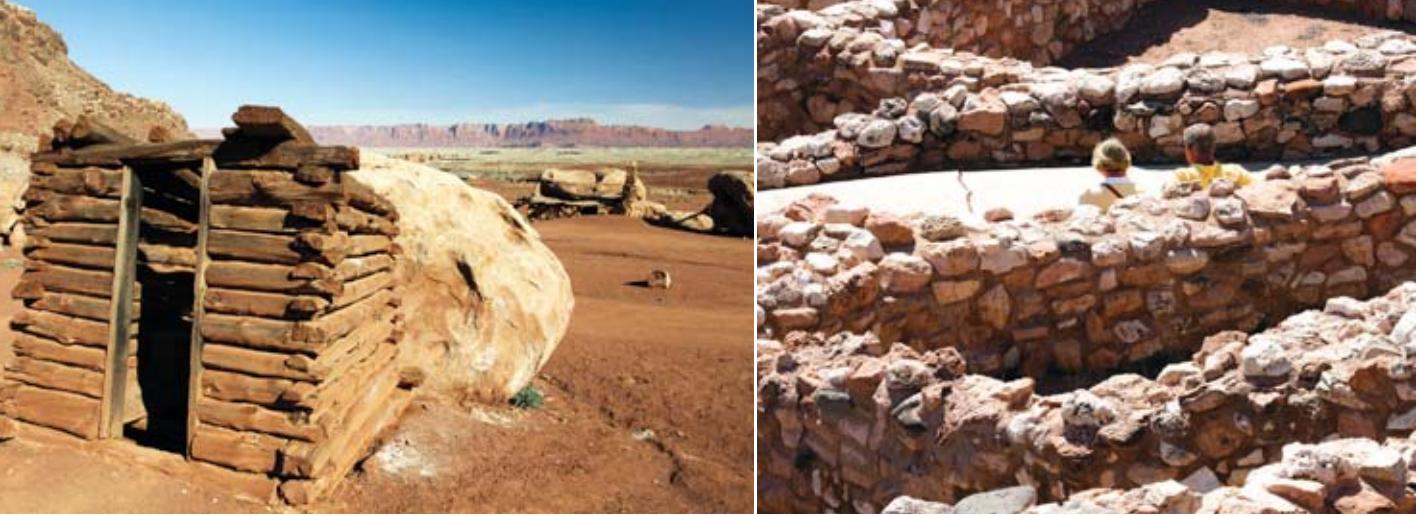
Just below the Utah/Arizona state line is the place Blanche Russell liked so much that she made it her home. Reportedly, Blanche was a Ziegfeld Follies dancer who gave up her career and headed to the Southwest for her husband's health. In a region of spectacular cliffs with huge boulders scattered at the base, the couple built a lean-to against one of the boulders. Blanche resourcefully began serving food to travelers in return for labor to make their house larger. Eventually, the couple had a restaurant and a hand gasoline pump to serve some of the earliest motorists traveling to the Grand Canyon's North Rim.

Some of those early cars had gravity-fed gas pumps and when they tried to climb the steep Kaibab Mountain, the cars couldn't get gas to the engine. Clever drivers solved the problem by backing up the steepest parts.

In the '30s, other primitive stone homes were built at Cliff Dwellers. You can see these unique homes, long abandoned, by the vivid Vermilion Cliffs. A testimony to the endurance and creativity of early travelers, this site has the convenience of being located alongside a paved highway.

Clockwise from top left: An ancient lava flow can be seen at Sunset Crater Volcano National Monument. A drive through this monument includes views of a 1,000-foot volcanic cone, cinder hills and pueblos. The letter "J" on the top of a hillside marks the location of Jerome, once called the "wickedest town in the West." Glen Canyon Dam was dedicated in 1966 by then-first lady "Lady Bird" Johnson. The 1,271-foot-long Glen Canyon Bridge rises 700 feet above the Colorado River.





Left: One of the buildings constructed against a boulder at Cliff Dwellers remains in good condition — it was an outhouse with three seats. **Right:** A couple relaxes at Tuzigoot National Monument. The ancient pueblo is on a desert hilltop near the town of Sedona, Ariz.

There are lots of places to dry camp nearby, but the closest RV park with hookups is at Page-Lake Powell Campground.

GLEN CANYON DAM

From Cliff Dwellers, it's just a short drive to Glen Canyon National Recreation Area and the Glen Canyon Dam. To get to this engineering marvel, take U.S. Highway 89 through the Navajo Reservation and you'll see some distinctively western scenery, including gorgeous Echo Cliffs. Take heed: The gas stations in this part of Arizona are often long distances apart. Also, be cautious of blowing sand, which can obstruct visibility quickly.

On Oct. 15, 1956, President Dwight Eisenhower kicked off the official construction of the dam by firing the first blast, from the White House. The remote control-fired blast dislodged a huge slab of rock, preparing the way for the 710-foot Glen Canyon Dam, which is the second-tallest concrete-arch dam in the United States. The remarkable Glen Canyon Bridge was built to provide access to both sides of the river during construction. Today, you can drive over the 1,271-foot-long bridge.

The dam was dedicated in September 1966 by first lady "Lady Bird" Johnson, nearly 10 years after the initial blast. The power plant at the dam has eight generators with a combined operational capacity of 1,320 megawatts. It produces 5 billion kilowatt-hours of hydroelectric power a year.

Be sure to stop at Carl Hayden Visitor Center in Page, Ariz., which features exhibits and a giant relief map of the Glen Canyon area. Tours of the dam and power plant are also available. Encompassing 1.2 million acres, Glen Canyon National Recreation

Area (featuring picturesque Lake Powell) offers a variety of recreational opportunities.

TUZIGOOT NATIONAL MONUMENT

Besides having a fun-sounding name, Tuzigoot (Apache for "crooked water") is an interesting place to explore. This ancient pueblo sits high atop a hill in the Verde Valley near the town of Sedona, Ariz. The pueblo originally had 110 rooms, including second- and third-story structures, but today 86 ground-level rooms remain. A self-guided trail leads you through this masonry structure, where you can imagine what life was like here almost a thousand years ago.

Made with freshwater limestone, the pueblo was built by people archaeologists believe to be of the Sinagua culture. Though it was considered the village of its day, Tuzigoot was constructed with very few doors. Instead, rooftop entrances provided their only light and ventilation.

The view from the rooftop affords a grand vista overlooking the Verde River. Look for the large letter "J" on top of a hill; it marks the location of Jerome, once called the "wickedest town in the West," and the next stop on your list of fascinating places.

JEROME

Long after the Sinagua left Tuzigoot, the town of Jerome was incorporated on the side of nearby Cleopatra Hill, because the United Verde Company purchased mining claims for the copper ore. Eugene Jerome was so instrumental in providing financing needed to extract the copper that the town was named after him — even though he never visited there. But you'll want to visit — just plan to drive your dinghy on the steep switchback road leading up the hill

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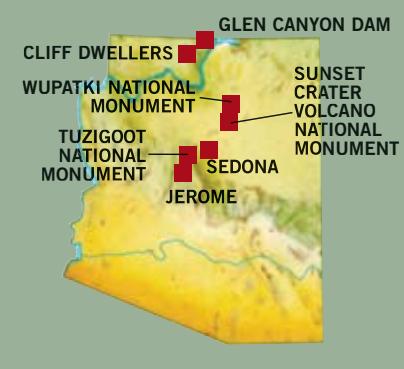
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and onto the narrow streets of town.

While those narrow streets might be a challenge for your motorhome, history was made on them. With the success of the mining industry, Jerome became a boom town. You can still see original buildings from the Victorian era through the 1920s, including old hotels and saloons. The entire town is a National Historic Landmark.

When the mine closed in 1953 the town suffered greatly and only about 50 residents remained. It was during this time that Jerome got its reputation as the "largest ghost town in America." Ghost tales abound, and there's even a building known as "Spook Hall." The Jerome Grand Hotel, originally the United Verde Hospital, has a reputation of being haunted by groaning miners. A "lady of the evening" is rumored to haunt the Inn at Jerome, while the abandoned shafts of the old Phelps Dodge mine are said to be haunted by "Headless Charlie."

WUPATKI AND SUNSET CRATER VOLCANO NATIONAL MONUMENTS

This is a "two-for-one" deal you won't want

to miss. Enjoy a scenic drive that includes a 1,000-foot volcanic cone, lava flow, cinder hills and ancient pueblos. While the drive alone is worth the trip, allow time to explore.

Have you heard of the San Francisco volcanic field? It's in Arizona. Most of the mountains between Flagstaff and the Grand Canyon are young, extinct volcanoes within the 1,800-square-mile volcanic field. Erupting between A.D. 1040 and 1100, Sunset Crater is the state's youngest volcano.

In the 1960s, the cinder fields around Sunset Crater were used by astronauts to practice for the first lunar landings. Today, to protect fragile resources, the crater is closed to climbing. Enjoy a mile-long trail to the base and an overlook from the road.

Sunset Crater Volcano Visitor Center has interactive exhibits, such as one that says "jump here," then watch a screen to see the "seismic wave" you created; push a button to see how a cinder cone is formed; and learn how memories of the eruption continue in the stories of the ancient inhabitants' descendants.

Before the eruption, people lived in

the area for hundreds of years. Farmers who lived in pit houses apparently had enough warning to leave the area. After the eruption, the area couldn't be farmed, but nearby regions with thinner layers of ash actually helped the crops by holding moisture in the soil. One of these areas is Wupatki, where you can tour inside pueblos that remain partially intact more than 700 years after their owners departed. Set on desert-like land with little else in sight, the pueblos stand out, imploring you to explore. Enter through the narrow doorways, and step back in time.

There are no camping facilities in either of the national monuments; the closest is the U.S. Forest Service Bonito Campground with 44 dry camping sites. RV parks with hookups are available in nearby Flagstaff.

As the sun sets and visitors leave, take a moment and listen to the silence. If you're lucky, the stillness will be interrupted by a faint sound in the distance, repeating a little louder until it's answered with a chorus of coyote howls. Could they be saying, "Come back and visit again"? ♦

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THE NATCHEZ TRACE

SPEND TWO WEEKS, LIVE TWO CENTURIES

by LARRY MACDONALD



PHOTO: SCENIC TRACE



Clockwise from top: At Milepost 41.5, visitors may walk on the "Sunken Trace," a portion of the original Trace that was deeply eroded by thousands of travelers walking over the loess soil. There are more than 100 points of interest as well as scenic views that beckon RVers to stop, look and learn, including this one atop Little Mountain at Jeff Busby Campground (Milepost 193.1). Just south of Jeff Busby is French Camp, an Early American village in Mississippi that includes a plantation house and log cabin museum, a blacksmith shop, a gift shop and a café.

The sound of heavy rain pelting the roof of our motorhome was strangely incongruent with the early morning sunshine peeking through our bedroom blinds. I hopped out of bed and opened the door, half expecting to see a rainbow. Instead of rain, a shower of oak leaves was falling helter-skelter onto our roof, adding to the brown blanket already covering the forest floor. Autumn was changing the Tennessee landscape from verdant green to shades of umber in preparation for winter. With the exception of a cluster of RVs parked in our primitive campground, I imagine the forest scene would have looked the same to early settlers in these parts.

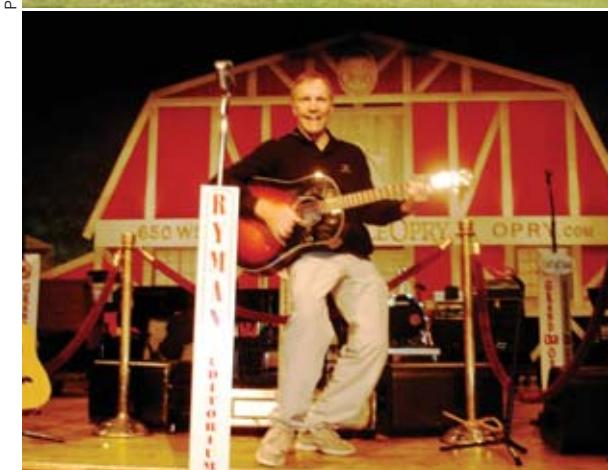
In the late 1700s, local farmers, hunters and trappers floated their crops and furs down the Mississippi River to ready markets in Natchez and New Orleans. After selling their now-useless barges for timber, they walked or rode horses back to Tennessee and Ohio along an old buffalo and Indian trail known as "The Trace." For more than 30 years, this heavily traveled trail became an important wilderness road, complete with "stands" (inns) providing food and shelter. With the coming of the steamboat in the 1820s, northbound travelers no longer needed to walk, and The Trace returned to a quiet forest lane.

More than a hundred years later in the late 1930s, the government began construction of the Natchez Trace Parkway to commemorate the Old Trace. The New Trace, more commonly called "The Trace," is a designated All American Road and a National Forest Service Scenic Byway. Completed in 2005, this 444-mile-long parkway offers travelers an unhurried route northeast from Natchez, Miss., to Nashville, Tenn.; or southwest if you're so inclined. Unhurried indeed. The Trace almost demands a relaxed pace to fully appreciate its scenic beauty and historical significance. First, the maximum speed limit on the two-lane road is 50 MPH with straight stretches rare as hen's teeth. Second, motorists must be watchful for deer, wild turkeys and the occasional bicyclist. And third, as many as 100 points of interest, averaging one every four miles, beckon motorists to stop, look and learn. If you're in a hurry, choose another route.

Commercial vehicles, such as trucks, are prohibited on the parkway. Fortunately, RVs are allowed and easily accommodated, with a length limit of 55 feet and a height restriction of 14 feet 6 inches. All parking spaces for restrooms, picnic areas, hiking trails, scenic overlooks and other points of interest are designed for large motorhomes, unless marked "no circular drive." Three free, unserviced campgrounds are located on the parkway, while half a dozen state parks and a dozen private campgrounds as well as fuel and supplies are available in nearby communities.

A LITTLE BIT COUNTRY

Since the northern terminus of the parkway is at Nashville, my wife, Sandy, and I decided to spend a few days in this vibrant city. With more than 40 attractions and 200 live-music venues to choose from, we asked several locals what they recommended we see during our visit. At the top of everyone's list was The Grand Ole Opry, which I always thought was a building where country musicians performed. It's actually a live radio show (WSM 650). The Opry was first broadcast in 1925



From top: The Natchez Trace Parkway Bridge is a concrete double-arch bridge in Tennessee that rises 155 feet above the valley. The author does some guitar pickin' in Ryman Auditorium, one of the buildings where The Grand Ole Opry is broadcast. At Cypress Swamp in Mississippi, visitors can take a self-guided tour along the boardwalk trail and might even spot an alligator or two.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

NATCHEZ TRACE PARKWAY

800-305-7417,

www.nps.gov/natr.



MAP: SUE CARLSON



PHOTO: TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM

Clockwise from above: The Country Music Hall of Fame in Nashville has interactive displays and exhibits that embody the essence of country music. Key Civil War battles fought in northern Mississippi during 1864 are chronicled at Tupelo National Battlefield. Also in Tupelo is Elvis Presley's birthplace and museum, where visitors learn how a shy country boy became the King of Rock 'n' Roll.

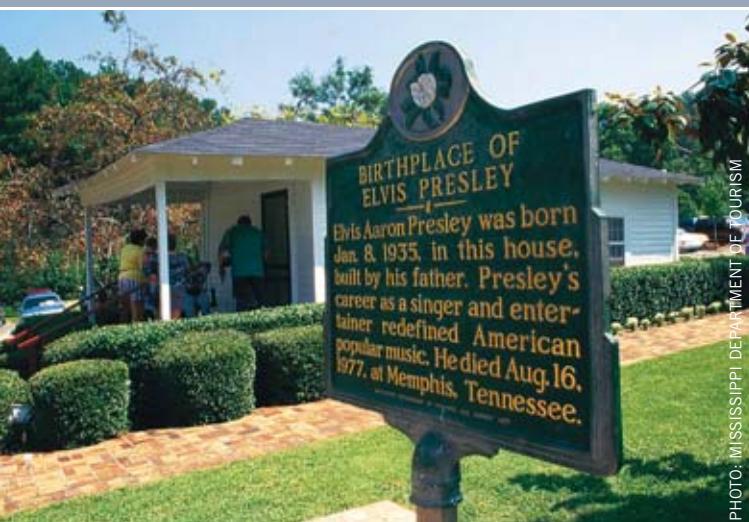


PHOTO: MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF TOURISM



PHOTO: NPS

and has played in several buildings, including the Ryman Auditorium, where we watched a toe-tapping country music show. Between acts, the emcee's commercials promoted sponsors' products. Earlier in the day, we had toured this historic building, a monument to legendary musicians such as Hank Williams Sr., Roy Acuff, Loretta Lynn, Patsy Cline and Johnny Cash.

The next most suggested attraction was the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, a \$37-million facility providing interactive displays and exhibits that encapsulate the essence of country music, from pickin' and singin' in backwoods cabins to venues throughout the world. Y'all can't have country without the pickin' and singin'!

We were also advised to visit the very popular Honky Tonk district downtown. In several crowded bars, photos and memorabilia of well-known country music artists lined the walls. The live music was excellent but loud — too loud for our liking. We opted instead for an impromptu Taizé Meditation Service at a

local church — very quiet.

On our last night in Nashville, we visited the highly touted Loveless Café and enjoyed a typically Southern meal of fried chicken and biscuits followed by "Music City Roots," a live radio show of country music performers.

SOUTHWARD HO!

The next day we departed Music City and entered Natchez Trace Parkway. Along the way, we visited most "significant exhibits" and many others referenced in the parkway brochure. Our first stop was a working tobacco farm, complete with the acrid odor of drying tobacco leaves hung in an old barn. An audio presentation describes the arduous task of harvesting and processing tobacco. From the parking lot, we drove along a narrow two-mile section of Old Trace Road, developed from the original footpath to accommodate horse-drawn wagons. It is generally not recommended for RVs because of its narrowness, and there may be low-hanging

limbs and tight corners to watch out for.

Meriwether Lewis Campground on the parkway is located near the grave of Meriwether Lewis, the intrepid explorer of Lewis and Clark fame. While governor of the Upper Louisiana Territory, he died of gunshot wounds here at Grinder House on the night of Oct. 11, 1809, while traveling to Washington. Who inflicted the wounds remains a mystery. Adjacent to Lewis' monument is a settler's cemetery. We searched for the most unusual first name among the tombstones: Eugenia, Truvinia, Drucilla, Cletus, Erline, Sam, Fred.

Since the parkway roughly follows Old Trace, there are numerous opportunities to stop and explore the original pathway. While walking along a narrow, well-trodden corridor through oak, dogwood and pine trees, we took a mental trip back in time.

Pretending to be travelers returning home to Tennessee after selling our wares in Natchez, we imagined the possibility of being confronted by "shur-nuff" bandits, robbed and possibly killed. Enough pretending, it was time to get back to the motorhome.

Travelers often had to ford streams and rivers in their journey northward. The mighty Tennessee River was the worst natural obstacle, until 1802 when Chickasaw Indian chief George Colbert began operating a ferry. Fees were set at 50 cents per person or horse, half price if you were delivering mail. Reportedly, Colbert charged Gen. Andrew Jackson \$75,000 for transporting his Tennessee army across the river southward to engage the British troops in the War of 1812.

Located just west of Tupelo, Miss., Trace State Park offers picture-perfect camping. Our motorhome was nestled amid stands of oak and pine trees on a narrow finger of land, not four 'gators from tranquil Trace Lake.

In Tupelo, we enjoyed touring Elvis Presley's birthplace and museum, learning about the many influences that transformed a shy young country boy into the King of Rock 'n' Roll. Other notable Americans born along The Trace include Helen Keller, Oprah Winfrey, Eudora Welty, Medgar Evers and Tennessee Williams. Tupelo National Battlefield documents some of the bloodiest and most decisive Civil War battles fought in northern Missis-

sippi during the summer of 1864.

In 1800, The Trace was declared a National Post Road with mail service provided between Natchez and Nashville. Postmen on horseback would leave their respective cities and meet halfway at a post office in Tockshish to exchange mail-bags. They would then mount fresh horses and return to their starting points, taking 12 days total. Slightly farther south, we visited the area where the Chickasaw Council House once stood, a meeting place where chiefs signed treaties with the federal government and established tribal laws. After the treaty of 1832 the Chickasaw territory, and the Choctaw territory to the south, were surrendered to the government and the tribes were forced to move to Oklahoma, where they remain today.

At Jeff Busby Campground, we hiked a nature trail to the top of Little Mountain, the highest elevation (663 feet) along The Trace in Mississippi. Just 12 miles south is French Camp, an Early American village complete with a plantation house and a log cabin museum, blacksmith shop, gift shop and café. A stand established here in 1812 by Frenchman Louis LeFleur later became a school and remains one to this day.

Jackson, Miss., is the largest city along the parkway, providing us with the opportunity to pop back into the 21st century to replenish supplies and do laundry at a local campground. Here we visited the Mississippi Crafts Center, which displays an extensive array of traditional and contemporary works created by Southern artisans.

Returning to the parkway, we pulled over at Cypress Swamp and took a self-guided trail through a typical Southern swamp. Spanish moss hung from bald-cypress trees, a heron and egret stood statue-like in the shallows, and sounds of songbirds filled the air. These words were on one of the signposts: "Its subtle beauty and peaceful setting can soothe a tired soul." It worked for us, but I doubt whether the early travelers slogging knee-deep through a mosquito-infested bog would have agreed.

Rocky Springs was our third and final campground along the parkway. Nearby, a shaded stretch of Old Trace led to the remnants of a small town called Rocky Springs, named for a spring flowing from a rocky ledge. A signpost urged visitors to

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"Leave your prints in the dust, not for others to see, but for the road to remember." Established in 1790, the town grew substantially during the 1800s. The Civil War, yellow fever and the boll weevil brought an end to this once-prosperous community. Today, a historic, still-functioning church, pioneer cemetery, and a couple of rusty safes and covered cisterns bring the town back to life.

Just a long day's walk north of Natchez at Mount Locust is a plantation and stand built in 1780. The first of 50 stands built along the Old Trace, it is the only one remaining to give visitors a glimpse of rural life during the 1800s. As we continued south, the mile markers counted down, from 444 in Nashville to now less than 50. We felt our pace slow even more as we reluctantly neared the end of our journey. We stopped for a final walk on the "Sunken Trace," a deeply eroded section of the original Trace. And we stopped again at the site of the first chartered school for women in Mississippi, established in 1818. The Elizabeth Female Academy, where Audubon had served on the faculty, closed its doors in 1845. Only a brick wall remains.

Passing the terminus marker at Mile Zero, we bade farewell to the quiet solitude that accompanied us the past two weeks. The frenetic pace of Natchez traffic swept us along to a nearby campground. The next day, we sought out the rough and rowdy barge landing where pioneer raftsmen exchanged their goods for money. Some managed to avoid carousing in the saloons, gambling dens and brothels. Others succumbed, beginning their return trip penniless and exhausted. The barge landing still has a saloon and a gambling den (a paddlewheel casino) as well as a restaurant, although I didn't notice any brothels.

Over the next few days, we explored picturesque Natchez with its well-preserved antebellum (pre-Civil War) homes and elegant mansions. Our horse-drawn carriage driver commented that before the Civil War, because of lucrative cotton plantations, more than half of the millionaires in the United States lived in Natchez. We thus ended our journey with a large dollop of grandeur atop precious memories of a desolate path through untamed wilderness that became a national treasure. ♦



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PHOTOS: ZION RIVER RESORT; JOSH RANDALL, MOUNTAIN GLEN RV PARK

Zion River Resort in Virgin, Utah, top and above, is 13 miles from the boundary of Zion National Park. Among the many amenities offered at the "gateway" RV resort are 30-foot by 70-foot pull-through sites; full hookups; Wi-Fi; and large family-style restrooms with showers. The resort also holds activities for its guests, such as an archaeological dig, above, where families can sift for arrowheads and "fool's gold" while learning about the Native American history of the region.

STAYING 'OUTSIDE' THE BOX

SOME RVERS VISITING NATIONAL PARKS AND FORESTS OPT FOR AMENITY-LADEN PRIVATELY RUN 'GATEWAY' CAMPGROUNDS AND RESORTS NEARBY

by JEFF CRIDER

Jeanette Copeland-Hood and her husband, Frank, travel extensively in their 30-foot Winnebago motorhome. But whenever they visit national parks or national forests, they stay only briefly in government-run campgrounds. "Occasionally, we'll find (government-run) campgrounds with electrical hookups," Copeland-Hood said, "but most of the time it's dry camping."

In fact, when the Hoods made their first trip to Zion National Park in October 2007, they spent just "two or three days" at the park's Watchman Campground, then drove outside Zion to look for a privately owned park with more amenities.

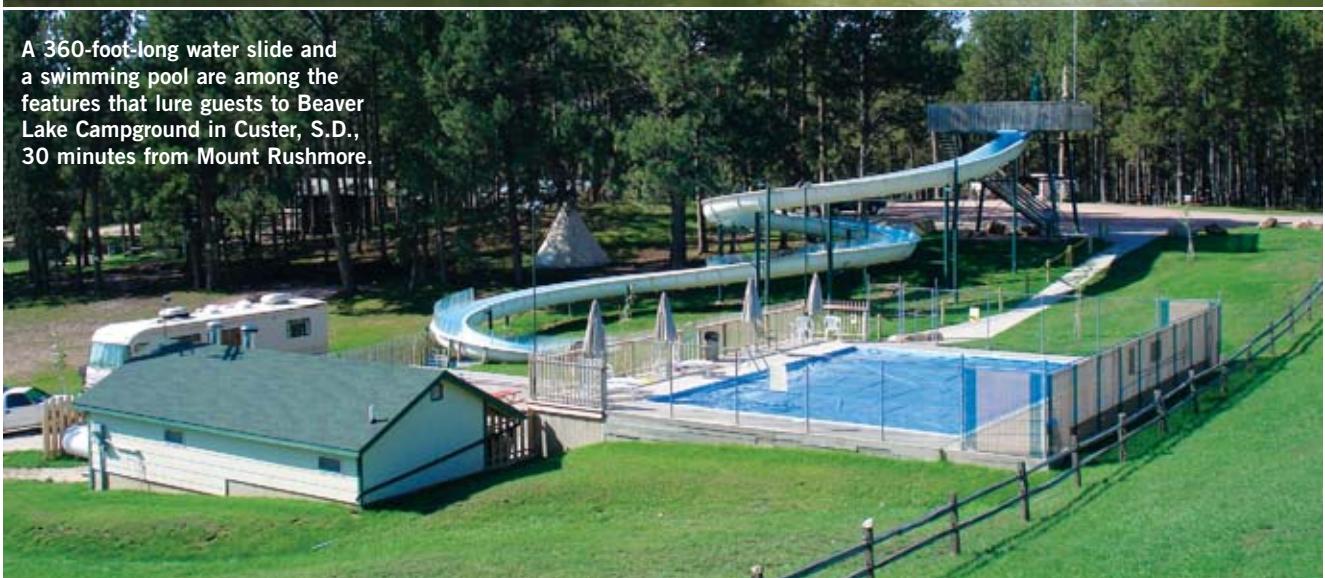
They found what they were looking for at Zion River Resort in Virgin, Utah.

The park, located 13 miles from the national park boundary, features paved, pull-through sites; full hookups, including 50-amp electrical service and phone connections; Wi-Fi; a swimming pool and spa; restrooms with showers; laundry facilities; a game room; a playground; a convenience store; and LP-gas service.



Mountain Glen RV Park in Pikeville, Tenn., features 42 full-hookup pull-through sites, free Wi-Fi, private bathrooms, a playground and catch-and-release fishing in its 2-acre pond.

A 360-foot-long water slide and a swimming pool are among the features that lure guests to Beaver Lake Campground in Custer, S.D., 30 minutes from Mount Rushmore.



"We thought we'd stay a few days, but we ended up spending the whole winter there," Copeland-Hood said, adding that the couple have since made Zion River Resort their winter base.

Mason Walters, general manager of Zion River Resort, said it's quite common for RVers to stay in "gateway parks" — the privately owned campgrounds and RV resorts just outside national parks and other federally protected parks and wilderness areas. "As people upgrade and purchase larger, nicer RVs, they are less likely to stay in a national park campground," she said, adding, "A lot of people with Trailer Life or Woodall's campground directories will do research before they come to this area and look for parks with the highest ratings."

John Croce, managing member of Huntington Beach, Calif.-based Team Management, whose holdings include Yosemite

Pines RV Resort and Family Lodging in Groveland, Calif., says the park caters to RVers who prefer to have lots of amenities while making day trips into Yosemite National Park. He added that national park campgrounds tend to attract "the real naturalists, the hikers and the tenters," while the gateway parks tend to attract more RVers as well as " yuppie campers" who like to stay in park models or yurts.

Allison Kelly, owner of the 180-site Hadley's Point Campground in Bar Harbor, Maine, sees a similar phenomenon. She said most people who camp inside Acadia National Park are tent campers, while RVers are more likely to stay in privately owned campgrounds outside the park.

"A lot of people are looking for amenities," she said, adding that her park features hot showers and flush toilets; a heated swimming pool; and full hookups.

Most National Park Service campgrounds provide RV parking, tent pads, restrooms and water. However, some also provide dump stations as well as electrical hookups, said Jane Moore, a Park Service spokeswoman.

Some national park campgrounds are planning to make upgrades, but the decision to do so is typically made locally by individual park superintendents and is based on their general management plan, she said.

The same differences can also be found when comparing state park campgrounds with privately run campgrounds.

Mountain Glen RV Park in Pikeville, Tenn., for instance, receives much of its business from RVers heading to Fall Creek Falls State Park, which is 15 minutes away. The state park has a campground and lodging facilities, and while improvements are being made to the park, many of its camp-

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STAYING 'OUTSIDE' THE BOX

sites cannot accommodate today's larger rigs, said Mountain Glen RV Park owner Joyce Randall. She added that her park gets a lot of spillover business from campers who can't find a space at the state park as well as RVers who prefer to stay in private campgrounds with more amenities.

Of course, even more rustic camping is available at campgrounds provided by the U.S. Forest Service, which has no plans to offer electricity at its campgrounds, according to spokesman Joe Walsh.

"There is a place for both types of campgrounds," Walsh said, referring to no-frills government-run parks and private campgrounds with hookups and other amenities. He said the federal government provides rustic campgrounds in an effort to help campers get more in tune with nature and to invite them and their families to explore America's scenic wonders.

Statistics indicate RVers do use both kinds of campgrounds.

A 2005 survey by the National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds, the Recreation Vehicle Industry Association and other travel industry groups found that RVers spend nearly six in 10 nights at privately owned campgrounds, RV parks and resorts and three in 10 nights at government-run campgrounds. They tend to spend the remaining time at retail parking lots and other locations.

Max Hammer, co-owner with his wife, Cindy, of Beaver Lake Campground in Custer, S.D., sees evidence of growing public interest in parks with a wide variety of amenities even as they visit national parks and other scenic lands. His park, located less than 30 minutes from Mount Rushmore, Wind Cave and Jewel Cave national parks, was packed during the summer, even though there are numerous Forest Service campgrounds in the area.

"We're full all the time," Hammer said, noting that guests stay at his family-friendly park because of the amenities, which include full hookups, including cable TV; two side-by-side, solar-heated swimming pools; a dog park; a playground with 16 activities; and a 360-foot-long waterslide.

So why have a waterslide in an area where most RVers are coming to see Mount Rushmore and other national parks? Easy question, Hammer tells MotorHome. "It fills campsites," he said. ♦

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GOING GLOBAL

HOW AN AMERICAN REALIZED HIS DREAM OF VISITING 22 COUNTRIES IN HIS MOTORHOME

by LARRY HOFFMAN

t was an incredible journey in my

26-foot Born Free motorhome, an adventure that took me through 22 countries on three continents — Europe, Africa and Asia — starting in Germany.

My eight-month trip spanned about 22,000 miles through some of the world's most extraordinary regions.

It was both a grand adventure and a rewarding learning experience. I traveled through some of the richest historical landscapes on the planet. One of the most rewarding aspects of the trip was the opportunity to meet fascinating people along the way. Throughout my journey, everyone was warm, friendly and hospitable; and many were awed that an American had traveled so far in his own motorhome to visit their village or town.

If you and your motorhome travel partner (if there is one) have dreamed of doing this kind of in-depth world exploration, and believe you have what it takes, that dream can become a reality.

Including this trip, I have traveled in my Born Free through about 60 countries on five continents. I can assure you that soaking up our amazing world in the comfort and convenience of your own motorhome is the ultimate way to go. I was a neophyte when I first decided to become an international full-timer, but believe me, you learn quickly.

The linchpin to making my dream trip a reality was finding the appropriate RV tour company. There are plenty to choose from (see companies listed under For More Information at the end of this article), but because I wanted to tour Iran, China and Siberia, the best fit for me was the family-owned German company known as Perestroika Tours. It specializes in leading small motorhome caravans into the far reaches of Asia, Russia and North Africa.



Top: There is more than one mode of transportation in Jordan, one of 22 countries the author visited on his incredible eight-month journey. Middle: To cross the inhospitable Gobi Desert into Mongolia, the motorhomes in the caravan were strapped down onto a railroad flatcar. The author, here with his 26-foot Born Free motorhome, began his trip in western Germany. Because he wanted to visit Iran, China and Siberia, he chose Perestroika Tours, a family-owned, Germany-based RV tour company. Perestroika Tours specializes in leading small motorhome caravans into the far reaches of North Africa, Russia and Asia.



The caravan takes a break in the shadow of dramatic Mount Ararat in Turkey. Overnight stops included parking lots and roadside fields.

In fact, the only way to do this type of motorhome journey through many of these countries is in a preapproved caravan.

THE ITINERARY

My trip began in western Germany and from there the route headed south through the heart of France, down the length of Italy to Sicily, across the Mediterranean by ferry to Tunisia and east across the coast of Libya into Egypt, where I spent a full month.

Next, we headed north along the Red Sea and around the Sinai Peninsula into Jordan, then Syria and into Turkey. From Turkey the route turned east traveling along the length of the fabled Silk Road corridor across Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and my favorite, Kyrgyzstan — and then into China and across its breadth to Beijing (I spent seven full weeks in China alone).

Next it was north into Mongolia, my motorhome strapped down on a railroad flatcar in order to cross the inhospitable Gobi Desert. Then it was on to Russian Siberia, finally turning west and beginning the long trek back to western Europe across Russia (which took five weeks), Belarus, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, and up the banks of the Danube through Austria, returning to the starting point in Germany.

What follows are some of the logistics and practicalities I found necessary and helpful for this unique journey.

THE PERESTROIKA CARAVANS

During the tour I traveled in two back-to-back caravans: The first caravan consisted of 11 RVs, and the second was comprised of 10, all from Europe except for my Born Free. An experienced German leader was our wagonmaster for both caravans. Fortunately for me, he spoke English. The leader called the shots along the road, navigated, coordinated with the local country guides and communicated with the police at checkpoints.

Each vehicle had a CB radio used primarily to coordinate movements of the caravan. The number assigned to each vehicle (I was “vagen vier,” which is four) was our call sign. For instance, each time we reached an important turn in the road the leader would call out the directions in German (and his wife would repeat it in English) so that everyone understood the maneuver. In congested towns and cities where twists and turns were frequent, we used the radio constantly. And when some of the group got delayed by traffic or signals, they would sound off so the leader would know and could slow or pull over to allow them to catch up.

The roads along our journey were unpredictable — some, like the new motorways in China, were first-class, but most were more like the rural roads of 1950s America, or sometimes worse. But we always managed to get where we wanted to go.

At the end of a travel day, we worked our way to our overnight parking spot —

anything from a field to a hotel parking lot. In the latter case, there would often be fresh water available to fill tanks, sometimes electrical power and a room or two in the hotel used for showers or bathroom facilities by those who needed them.

THE MOTORHOME

A suitable motorhome for the narrower roads and traffic lanes in Europe and much of the world must meet certain criteria. The vehicle should be no more than 27 feet long and 8 feet wide. The motorhome should not have a long rear overhang; if it does, like my Born Free, it should have sturdy drag wheels mounted below the rear chassis.

Preferably it would have a diesel engine, which is the case with most European motorhomes. Diesels are more powerful, are simpler, more economical, and diesel fuel is less expensive (except in England) and available worldwide. And, of course, the motorhome needs to be top-quality, in excellent mechanical condition and well-outfitted and -equipped for travel abroad.

There are two choices: “going American,” as I do; or “going European” — that is, buying a suitable new model in Europe and either arranging a buyback option or selling it yourself when you are done. Renting is really not practical for more than a few months because of cost, nor is out-of-Europe use permitted by most leasing companies.

There are a number of pros and cons, but for a single lengthy trip across Eurasia,

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GOING GLOBAL

going European is a definite option. Both the French and the Germans make proven models with Mercedes-Benz diesel engines that work well. In terms of going American, I know of nothing to match my expedition-customized 26-foot Born Free, which I ordered with a Ford 7.3-L turbodiesel engine.

As for vehicle insurance, it's easier with a European RV because available European insurance covers you in most of the world. It's a little more complicated with an American RV, but I've always been able to patch together suitable coverage, sometimes buying it at the borders of some countries.

SHIPPING A MOTORHOME TO EUROPE

Shipping a fully loaded motorhome across the Atlantic is straightforward (I've found that Baltimore to Southampton, England, works best) and is not particularly expensive — about \$2,700 for my Born Free. The key to shipping a motorhome on a "roll-on, roll-off" vehicle transport ship (or a "RO-RO") is the erection of a temporary barrier closing off the driver's compartment from the securely locked rear section so the port workers

who drive your motorhome on and off the ship only have access to the driver's compartment (which should be stripped bare).

What's nice is that once you are overseas you can drive throughout Eurasia and, in fact, most of the world using only your own U.S. driver's license and license plates.

BORDER CROSSINGS

On this journey (not counting the crossings between European Union countries), we worked through 16 full-fledged border crossings, some simpler than others. It required a total of 13 preissued visas, which Perestroika helped to arrange. For every country you "enter," you also have to "exit," so there were, in fact, 32 of these drills. It always took time, sometimes several hours, as we first had to work the caravan to the head of the queue at the border gate, although often we were given preferential treatment. Essentially they all work the same way and in the same order. First you have to get yourself into the country (Immigration), and then the Customs part involves getting your loaded vehicle admitted on a tempo-

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rary basis to avoid paying duty. And usually there is a cursory walk-through inspection.

When it comes to getting your motorhome into a country, you'll need the original title document and current state registration certificate. The other key document you need in many parts of the world is a "carnet de passage." I got mine with the help of Perestroika through the ADAC, the German Auto Club. It's essentially ADAC's written guarantee to pay the country requiring a carnet the full duty on your RV and penalties in the event you fail to take the motorhome back out of the country or to comply with the requirements of their temporary permit. And in some countries, such as Libya, Egypt and China, you are also issued a temporary set of that country's license plates and even a local driver's license.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I loved the trip so much I am considering doing it all over again. For those of you intrepid souls who may consider motorhoming abroad, I can promise you one thing: You will have the greatest journey of your lifetime. There is simply nothing to match it. ♦

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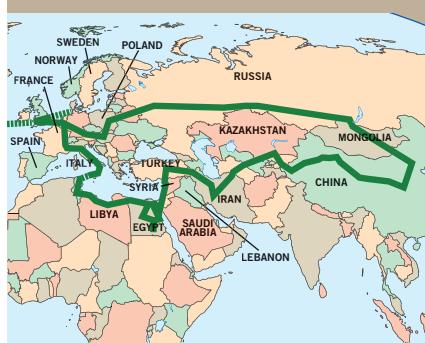
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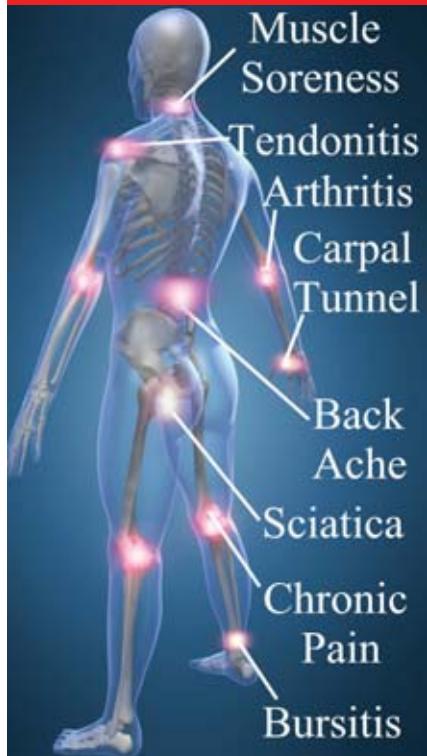
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PURE LUXURY

Creating a Newell motor coach relies on detailed teamwork between the owners and a highly responsive factory staff

by BOB LIVINGSTON

Buying a Newell motorhome is a unique experience. Potential owners start with a concept, plan every step through a private consultative process and then the first piece of metal is pulled from the shelf, starting the life of an extraordinary motor coach. Think, building a custom home.

Once the decision is made to buy a Newell, the coach gets a number and is named after the new owners. From there, the process involves deciding on a length, floorplan, décor, appliances, accessories and color scheme, inside and out. Newell consultants provide guidance, both verbal and through printed and electronic brochures, but the final say-so comes from the new owners.

Most buyers choose lengths from 39 to 45 feet; 45 feet seems to be one of the most popular sizes. A printed guide suggests a number of popular floorplans that can be used as a starting point for those buyers who don't have a specific arrangement in mind. Once the floorplan has been created on paper, a team of engineers, product planners and interior designers works closely with the owners in developing the final package. Many times the décor is patterned after specific themes, and the use of exotic materials is commonly used to get there. In all cases the result is simply gorgeous.

We spent time with a 2011 45-foot P2000i coach with an F-6 floorplan, which features a rear master bathroom that's right behind the master bedroom





SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: PROPRIETARY

BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION

ENGINE: CUMMINS ISX

FUEL: 225 GAL

GVWR: 63,300 LBS

LENGTH: 45'

WIDTH: 8' 6"

HEIGHT WITH A/C: 12' 10"

INTERIOR HEIGHT: 7' 6"

WHEELBASE: 308"

FRESHWATER CAP: 143 GAL

GRAY/BLACK-WATER CAP:

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LP-GAS CAP: N/A

BASE MSRP: \$1,248,500

MSRP AS SHOWN: \$1,549,300

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to form a very roomy personal suite. A second bathroom is positioned in the center of the motorhome with the galley and living room up front. The tremendous amount of floor space afforded by the sheer length of the coach is augmented by four slideouts.

Walking inside through the air-powered entry door opens up a world of sensuality unmatched in the motorhome world. Everything is exquisite, supported by a who's-who list of manufacturers that typically provide luxury components



to the home-building industry.

Granite flooring in the salon (the luxury world's term for "living room") and ornate ceiling treatment complemented by a strategically placed array of flush-mounted lighting lure occupants to sink into the plush leather upholstery and simply gawk at the surroundings. In this plan, the sofa and ottoman share the front streetside slideout with a free-flowing galley. Opposite is a beautifully appointed desk and Euro recliner, next to a wraparound dinette that's also housed in the curbside slideout. The 46-inch TV is concealed within the desk structure and is brought up using a motorized lift.

Like most of the mechanized components in this motorhome, the slideouts move in and out flawlessly. When extended, aircraft-style inflatable seals lock out the elements; when retracted, the edges become flush with the exterior body and are almost indistinguishable. The mechanism operating the slideouts uses pre-

sion linear bearings and provides a completely flat floor when extended.

The galley is simply a work of art. Ultra Wood cabinetry takes on a European flavor and is fitted with a single stainless steel sink with high-end fixtures, all placed in a beautiful solid-surface countertop. Appliances include a Gaggenau electric cooktop and GE Advantium microwave/halogen oven, dishwasher and built-in coffeemaker; a Sub-Zero refrigerator resides across from the galley.

Obviously, this coach has a large appetite for power, which is supported by a huge bank of batteries (eight 6D Lifeline AGM), multiple 12-volt DC chargers and a turbocharged diesel generator. A 240-volt electrical system provides 120- and 240-volt AC power to the appliances and accessories.

Adjacent to the entry to the master bedroom, inside a contoured structure, is a half-bath, which is perfect for guests, or when the coach is on the road. A stacked washer and 240-volt AC high-performance dryer occupy the other side of the aisle.

The bedroom and far rear bathroom create the aforementioned sanctuary that's fit for royalty. Lush cabinetry and window treatments surround the plush mattress. Those lounging in bed can control the articulating mattress, lights, pocket doors, window shades and most other electronic

components using remote controls. And that includes the motorized screen at the foot of the bed that's part of a very sophisticated home theater system complete with an HD projector, Blu-ray player and receiver. Breakfast in bed, anyone?

Out back, the master bathroom uses generous portions of finely crafted tile, mirrors, glass, fancy fixtures and a classy vessel sink. Of course, there's the very best china toilet and enough room in the multi-fixure shower to really luxuriate. No worries about hookups — this coach holds 143 gallons of freshwater, and has a 143-gallon holding tank.

While wanting to surround yourself in pure luxury is certainly a good reason to plunk down \$1.5 million for a coach, the fun of driving this machine runs a very close second when it comes to desirability.

Newells are not built on a subcontractor-supplied chassis; the bridge-construction structure is built, piece by piece, by experienced craftsmen. That, combined with the powerful Cummins ISX 650-HP engine (1,950 LB-FT of torque), Allison HD 4000MH six-speed transmission and ZF air suspension catapult this coach into one of the most drivable vehicles on Earth. It hugs the road, provides a smooth, whisper-quiet ride, accelerates with ease and brakes efficiently, not to mention the incredibly tight turning radius for a tag-axle coach. Throw in an orthopedic power captain's chair that rides on air and the driver has to be literally coaxed off the road. And with 225 gallons of fuel on board, that doesn't happen very often.

A stunning paint job — customizable to the whims of the owners — finishes off the exterior of the coach. The polished aluminum wheels and mirrors contrast nicely with the paint scheme and body contours that are uniquely Newell.

Creating a Newell motor coach and taking delivery of the final product is certainly reserved for a select few people. The start-to-finish process takes six months and countless worker hours. Everyone who touches the coach as it progresses through the assembly process is a highly skilled professional. When the process is completed, every Newell that exits the factory becomes an extension of the owners' personalities and a motorhome that will elicit pride of ownership for many years down the road. ♦

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MOTORHOME AC GENERATOR MAINTENANCE

There are many advantages to owning a large Class A motorhome but to most people the ability to have instant access to 120-volt AC power at all times is perhaps one of the greatest assets. Some motorhome travelers like to camp in wilderness areas where power or other connections are not readily available. Others spend long weekends at motor sports events where it's necessary to make your own power. The benefit of a built-in generator during these times is priceless. Even if you don't rely on your generator for hundreds or thousands of hours per year, you still need to perform scheduled maintenance procedures for those times when shorepower is not available.

Generators come in various types and sizes and, of course, run on different fuels. The most common fuel source is gasoline or diesel due to the ability of the engine to share the fuel tank with the chassis engine. Although there are some motorhomes equipped with LP-gas powered generators, they are less common. While the focus of this article will be on gasoline- and diesel-powered generators and how to perform basic maintenance on them, some of these tips will also apply to LP-gas generators.

Just like the chassis that propels you down the road, a generator also has an engine and that engine (depending on its type) has a crankcase, an oil filter and an air filter as well as fuel filter(s) and spark plug(s) if it uses gasoline. Gasoline-powered generators

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO SERVICING A GASOLINE- OR DIESEL-POWERED GENERATOR

by E. DON SMITH



can be fuel injected or carbureted and if they are carbureted they too will require servicing, which is best left to the pros. Diesels and some gasoline generators are liquid cooled so they also have a radiator and require coolant/antifreeze servicing as well.

According to most experts we talked with, one of the most common problems with RV generators is lack of use. According to Onan, the largest supplier of gas and diesel generators, all generators should be exercised for two hours per month with a 50 percent electrical load. This exercise ensures that the entire engine and electrical windings are brought up to full temperature, which burns off moisture that can lead to corrosion and other problems.

If you can handle changing the engine oil and filters in your automobile or other powered equipment around the house, you can likely handle this project. Because there are so many different sizes and types of generators, the service requirements will vary depending on the generator. Check your owner's manual for your brand and model to see which items need to be done.

Any time you are working on power equipment and under a motorhome there is some danger, so be sure to chock your wheels and if you are raising your motorhome using the built-in jacks it is also important to add safety stands. Before starting to work on the generator you need to



disable the auto start feature if your model is equipped with one.

Finally, remember to collect all fluids that you drain, such as the used engine oil and/or engine coolant, and dispose of them properly.

Also, before you begin servicing the generator, start the genset for a few minutes to slightly warm the engine and circulate the oil and contaminants to ensure they are drained and removed properly.

This is a fairly lengthy project because of the many steps involved in heating up



STEP 1. After warming the engine for two to three minutes, locate the oil drain plug and oil filter on the generator. Place a large catch pan under the generator and remove the drain plug, then the oil filter, and allow all of the old oil to drain.



STEP 2. On this Onan Quiet Diesel 7500 generator the oil filter is located behind the access panel, which must be opened in order to reveal the oil filter and the diesel-fuel filter.

and cooling down the generator several times and could take two to three hours depending on how hard and fast you work. But none of the steps is particularly difficult and this is a project that can be completed by the average do-it-yourselfer in your driveway, just as we did.

If you are not so inclined you can always seek out your local Onan service center and have it service the generator. Normally when a service center services the coach it also performs a full electrical load test that requires specialized equipment and it is also capable of removing the exhaust spark arrestor and cleaning it as needed.

A full DIY service like this is not very expensive but it could make a big difference in your comfort level when you're off the grid and need to make your own power. So don't overlook this item when it comes time to service the rest of your coach. ♦



STEP 3. Accessing the oil filter on some models can be difficult but using a rubber strap wrench allows it to be removed fairly easily. Expect some oil to spill when you remove the old filter.



STEP 4. Before installing the new oil filter, lubricate the filter gasket with fresh oil to allow it to be installed and removed more easily.



STEP 5. Next, install the new oil filter and tighten $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ turns past hand-tight. Most generator manufacturers recommend using OEM oil filters but in many cases aftermarket filters are available such as the Purolator PureOne model we used. Other high-quality brands include NAPA, WIX and Mobil 1. Cross-reference charts are available online or at most auto parts retailers. Of course, if you prefer genuine OEM brands they are available at Camping World and other RV-parts stores.



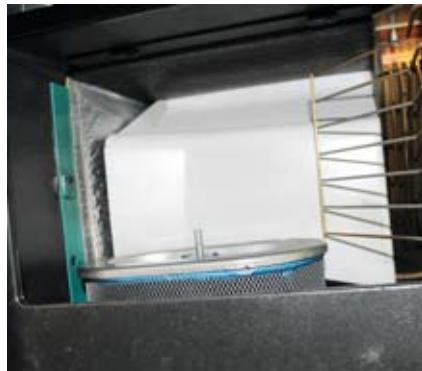
STEP 6. After draining the oil, removing the old oil filter and reinstalling the oil filter and drain plug you are ready to refill the crankcase with new engine oil. This generator specifies 3 quarts of a 15W-40 diesel-rated oil. We selected Shell Rotella T Triple Protection.



STEP 7. After refilling the generator start it up for a few minutes and then shut it down and check for leaks around the drain plug and oil filter. Also verify the oil level on the dipstick before moving to the next item on your maintenance list. Onan suggests that oil and filters be changed every 150 hours on most of its gas and diesel engines. But these intervals vary so check your model.



STEP 8. The next thing to check is the condition of the air filter. Though Onan only suggests that the air filter be changed every 500 hours, it also suggests you check it more often if you operate in dusty areas. So the next step is to locate your air filter housing.



STEP 9. After removing the wing nut and cover, the air filter is exposed and after removal of the second wing nut and air filter cap it can be easily removed and inspected. This one was in good condition so it will be reused. Now you will need to reinstall the filter, covers and wing nuts.



STEP 10. A generator has to have good electrical connections to the chassis for a ground and good connections taking the power from the generator to the transfer switch and main breaker. As you can see, this ground connection was slightly dirty and in need of cleaning.



STEP 11. We sprayed the connection with battery-post cleaner and allowed it to remove the corrosion and then brushed away the dirt.



STEP 12. After cleaning, the connection is ready for service. If your ground is really bad it may require removal and more aggressive steps to remove corrosion.



STEP 13. Locate the power terminals from the generator and clean them just as you did with the ground strap. You can even add a protective material such as battery corrosion preventative spray. They should look like this when you are finished.



STEP 14. Of course, diesel engines don't have spark plugs but gasoline models do and those plugs need to be replaced every 450 hours, according to Onan. Most of the common gasoline generators used in motorhomes have a V-twin engine, therefore they have two spark plugs that need to be removed and replaced. OEM replacements are available from RV-parts stores. As you can see in this photo there is a big difference between a new plug and an old, worn plug, and this will affect your generator's ability to operate efficiently. Check the owner's manual for your generator to find the location and proper gap for your spark plugs.

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MOTORHOME AC GENERATOR MAINTENANCE



STEP 15. Now it's time to flush the coolant, which is a diesel generator service item and should be tested every 500 hours and flushed and changed every 1,000 hours. First you need to locate the coolant drain on the generator and open the drain and the radiator cap to allow a complete drain. Of course, make sure the radiator is cool before opening the cap.



STEP 16. After the initial coolant drain (4.2 quarts total on this model), close the drain and refill the radiator (this one has a hidden radiator cap that has to be uncovered to access it) with distilled water. Replace the radiator cap and run the generator again until warm. Allow the generator to cool and drain completely and repeat one more time. This ensures all the old coolant has been removed.



STEP 17. After you complete the final drain of the radiator, reinstall the drain cap and this time fill with your choice of coolant/antifreeze. Because the radiator and hoses already have some residual water remaining inside you will need to add exactly half of the rated system-cooling capacity with 100 percent undiluted coolant. In our case that means 2.1 quarts. Then top off with distilled water until it is completely full. This ensures that the coolant will be a 50/50 mix of water and coolant. Reinstall the radiator cap, run until warm and recheck the level one more time. If needed add coolant until completely full. Also, drain and refill the overflow tank with the same 50/50 solution. We chose Final Charge Global Extended Life Coolant/Antifreeze, and we use the same product in the chassis engine as well. This prevents carrying around two different coolants.

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MOTORHOME AC GENERATOR MAINTENANCE

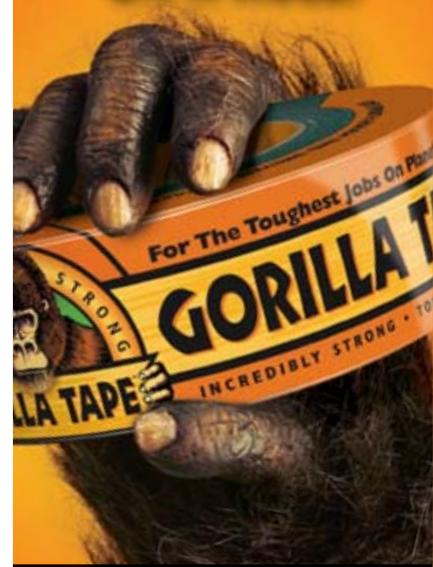


STEP 18. The final item(s) in a routine service is the fuel filter(s). Some coach-builders, such as Tiffin, install an extra fuel filter (shown here) in line with the generator in addition to the generator's own fuel filter. Onan calls for various schedules depending on the type of generator, but in general they range from 250 to 500 hours between filter changes. Here we have located the inline filter installed by Tiffin, which can easily be replaced using a screwdriver to loosen the hose clamps.



STEP 19. Because diesel engines and fuel-injected gasoline engines use high-pressure connections for the generator's fuel filters, special tools may be required to access the special fittings. In some cases flare-nut wrenches are required. If you don't have the right tools this may be best left to the pros. On this generator the fuel filter is in the same access panel as the oil filter and it has two flare nuts that have to be bled and relieved of pressure and then disconnected. There is a single mounting nut that has to be loosened to allow removal of the filter. For this service we are not replacing the filter as it only had 250 hours' use and it is rated for 500 hours. After changing the filter on a diesel or a fuel-injected gasoline engine you will have to manually prime the fuel system several times (see owner's manual for instructions) to restore fuel pressure, otherwise the generator may not restart properly.

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TIFFIN PHAETON 40 QTH

A QUAD-SLIDE CLASS A COACH WITH CLASSIC APPOINTMENTS AND ENDURING STYLE

Tiffin Motorhomes has a history of attracting discriminating buyers who are looking for affordable luxury. The company's Phaeton lineup is one of its most popular and has been one of the best-selling diesel-pushers in the U.S. For the 2010 model year the Phaeton stable includes three floorplans, including the 40 QTH — a 40-foot coach with a long list of features.

Our tour of the Phaeton 40 QTH began in the roomy living area with its 7-foot-high ceilings and two large, opposing slides. There's ample seating here thanks to a pair of opposing sofa beds. The sofa seating can also be substituted for a pair of optional (\$840) his-and-hers leather Euro recliners.

Tiffin's attention to quality and craftsmanship is immediately evident in the beautiful cabinetry, even wood finishes and tight joinery. Overhead storage cabinets, offered in Alderwood or the optional (\$420) Cherry Bark, surrounds the living area. Cabinetry above the cockpit accommodates travel needs and the multi-AV and distribution systems.

In the galley, convenient meal service begins on Tiffin's 21-inch-deep Cori-

an countertop with matching Corian wraparound backsplash, in a handsome subway tile pattern. If nearly 6 feet of countertop isn't enough to accommodate the chef's food-prep needs, just release a small latch on the three-drawer base cabinet to reveal a very handy matching 17-inch by 29-inch countertop.

The expected host of high-end appliances trims out the galley in the curbside slide with a dual-basin stainless steel sink, three-burner cooktop and a convection/microwave oven (an optional gas oven is available for \$350). The four-door refrigerator with icemaker shares space in the streetside slide next to the dinette. Two pantry cabinets on the wall next to the refrigerator provide food storage for extended trips.

When it comes to dining accommodations, the Phaeton's standard offering is a booth dinette, but it can be substituted with one of three options: a free-standing dinette with built-in cabinets, a free-standing dinette with computer workstation, or a U-shaped booth dinette.

Rounding out the living area is an entertainment center with a 32-inch LCD TV, which is mounted on the curb-

side wall next to the galley. An optional (\$1,120) overhead-mounted 32-inch LCD TV is available above the cockpit.

Moving toward the rear of the motorhome, there's a single amidships bath that's divided across the hall. On the streetside is an enclosed toilet room with lav, linen storage and medicine cabinet in matching Corian and wood treatments. The curbside houses a 36-inch neo-corner shower stall with clear skylight dome and a vanity with storage as well as a second medicine cabinet. Tiffin has conveniently exposed the labeled plumbing connections and shut-offs within the bath cabinetry, eliminating access headaches during service.

The carpeted bedroom offers a 45-inch dresser, upper two-door cabinet and standard 26-inch LCD TV filling the curbside slide, opposite the standard 60-inch by 80-inch queen pedestal-storage bed and adjoining nightstands with drawers. An optional (\$280) 70-inch by 80-inch king memory foam mattress or optional (\$1,120) Select Comfort mattress are both available.

The rear wall houses the optional (\$1,610) stacked Maytag separate washer and dryer next to the 5-foot hanging





closet, which provides easy access to laundry hookups and the coach and chassis electrical and fuse panels. Separate thermostats in the cabin and bedroom control HVAC needs and a two-speed ceiling fan assists ventilation.

The Phaeton rides on the Freightliner four air bag, XC chassis, pushed by the Cummins ISC 360-HP power plant with an Allison 3000MH six-speed push-button transmission and halted by air disc/drum brakes. With a 55-degree wheel cut, adjustable steering wheel and pedals, and available cameras in all directions, driving the Phaeton is a pleasurable experience.

Exterior storage is considerable with an easy-to-use and clearly labeled utility service bay. Easy-to-read dash gauges that are complete yet simple are provided, as well as Flexsteel captain and co-pilot chairs with electric adjustments. Handsome full-body clear-coated paint in six color schemes will suit even the most discriminating tastes.

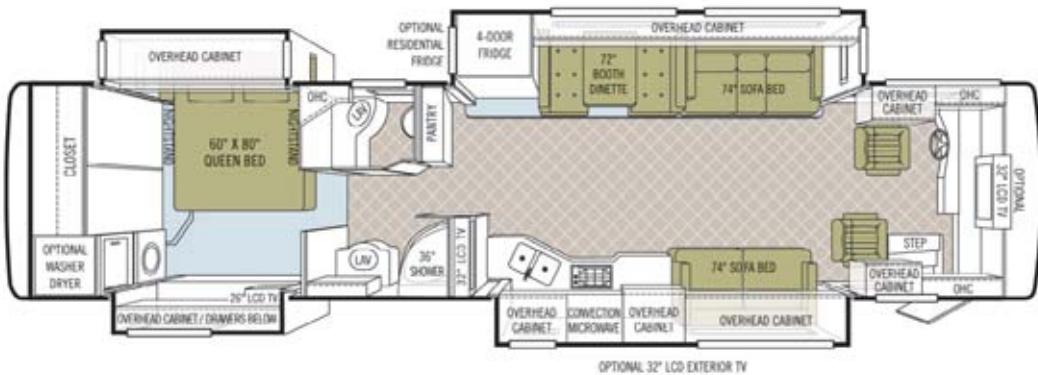
The Phaeton offers the features of a high-end full-timer coach at an attractive price for those looking to enter the

SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: FREIGHTLINER XC	INTERIOR HEIGHT: 7'
ENGINE: CUMMINS ISC 8.3-L 360 HP	WHEELBASE: 266"
FUEL: 100 GAL	FRESHWATER CAP: 90 GAL
GVWR: 32,000 LBS	GRAY-WATER CAP: 70 GAL
LENGTH: 40' 5"	BLACK-WATER CAP: 50 GAL
WIDTH: 8' 5"	LP-GAS CAP: 35.7 GAL
HEIGHT WITH A/C: 12' 7"	BASE PRICE: \$231,560

TIFFIN MOTORHOMES, 256-356-8661

WWW.TIFFINMOTORHOMES.COM



luxury motorhome segment. We're told that Phaeton's evolution will continue with significant new refinements set for 2011.

Our thanks to Mike Thompson's RV Super Store in Fountain Valley, Calif., for providing this coach for our review. ♦

WIDE-OPEN VISTA

Winnebago's entry-level Class A features an all-new floorplan



If you're a Class B or Class C owner thinking about moving to a Class A, Winnebago offers the Vista, an entry-level motorhome that costs less than many Class C's. This year, the company has added a new floorplan to its Vista lineup—one that's well-suited for couples or small families. It's

the Vista 30W and features a wide-open, amenity-laden floorplan in an easily manageable 30-foot package.

The 30W replaces last year's 30B floorplan, but keeps many of its best features. The entrance has been moved toward the rear to accommodate a mid-entry door, which creates a more defined front living area, and the cockpit chairs swivel to offer additional seating. Dual, opposing slides open up the front area even more, allowing plenty of space for everyone to spread out without bumping into each other.

The streetside slide features a built-in dinette (a 40-inch LCD TV with dining/buffet table and chairs is optional) that easily converts into a 42-inch by 70-inch bed for extra sleeping accommodations. Across the way, the curbside slide is smaller and houses a sofa bed with an inflatable air mattress, which makes it a bit more comfortable than traditional sleeper mattresses. Over the cockpit there's a 32-inch high-definition TV that can be viewed from the sofa bed and the forward-facing section of the dinette.

Also included in the streetside slide is the galley's three-burner stove, optional (\$154) oven and a microwave. When the slide is retracted, it closes off access to some of the kitchen cabinets and counterspace, which isn't much to begin with but it's certainly adequate for simple camping menus.

A splash guard on the stovetop offers a nice bit of separation between the cooking area and the dinette. The galley's dual-basin sink is surrounded by drawers and cabinets that offer an adequate amount of storage, and a pantry across the way, next to the 6-cubic-foot refrigerator, offers enough space for a week's worth of food.





A split bathroom is located amidships with a toilet and sink on the streetside and a shower across the hall. The bathroom door doubles as a partition between the coach's living area and the shower enclosure.

The master bedroom holds a queen bed with an innerspring mattress, and the optional 19-inch HDTV (\$441) is worth the investment if late-night TV watching is your thing. A wardrobe sits on the streetside of the bed and there's also a small nightstand with a trap-door enclosure to hold books, glasses and other small items.

The motorhome is built on a Ford F53 chassis and is powered by a 6.8-L, 362-hp Triton V-10 gasoline engine and five-speed automatic transmission. The cockpit features a one-piece windshield and available side-view cameras. The optional (\$434) video-camera system features a backup camera in addition to turn-signal cameras that alternate views on the console-mounted screen depending on which turn signal is engaged.

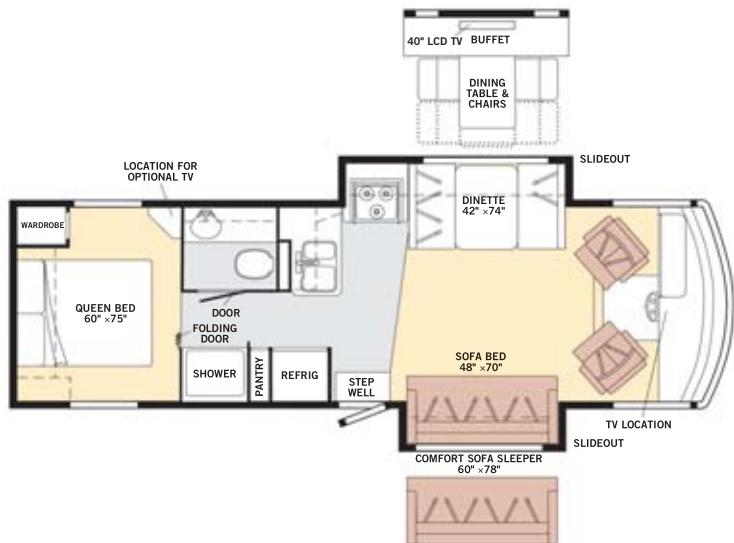
The Vista's exterior shines, thanks in part to the optional (\$6,720) full-body paint, optional (\$1,225) front protective mask and premium high-gloss side-wall skin (\$1,050). The available patio awning (\$1,288) will keep the sun off your face, and barbecues are sure to be extra lively with the optional (\$497) exterior entertainment center with AM/FM stereo, CD player, two speakers, removable TV table and an auxiliary jack for an iPod, all in a lockable compartment.

The utilization of space in the Vista 30W's floorplan, and Winnebago's attention to high-quality fit and finish, make this motorhome live much larger than its almost 31-foot length. ♦

SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: FORD F53	INTERIOR HEIGHT: 6' 8"
ENGINE: FORD 6.8-L TRITON V-10	WHEELBASE: 190"
FUEL CAP: 75 GAL	FRESHWATER CAP: 72 GAL
GVWR: 18,000 LBS	GRAY-WATER CAP: 42 GAL
LENGTH: 30' 11"	BLACK-WATER CAP: 37 GAL
WIDTH: 8' 5"	LP-GAS CAP: 18 GAL
HEIGHT: 12' 4"	BASE MSRP: \$94,513
INTERIOR WIDTH: 8'	MSRP AS SHOWN: \$104,411

WINNEBAGO INDUSTRIES
641-585-3535, WWW.WINNEBAGOIND.COM.





ON THE RIGHT TRAC

INSTALLING A **SUPERSTEER TRAC BAR** ON A WORKHORSE CHASSIS

by CHRIS HEMER



The SuperSteer SS302 Trac Bar kit fits the Workhorse W20, W22 and W24 Class A motorhome chassis. It comes assembled with polyurethane bushings and includes all necessary mounting hardware and instructions.

Our motorhomes provide us with a place of comfort and familiarity on the road, shelter from the heat and refuge from the cold. They allow us to visit friends far and near, go to places we've never seen, and enjoy conveniences not found in any other form of transportation. There are lots of things we love about our lifestyle — but with some vehicles, good handling isn't one of them.

To be fair, motorhomes were built for the open highway, not for carving up canyon roads. But nearly all of us have had at least one white-knuckle moment, such as a wayward deer or unsafe driver, where better handling would have been welcome indeed. Even under normal circumstances, a better-handling motorhome translates into reduced driver effort, which in turn results in reduced driver fatigue and a more enjoyable journey.

SuperSteer of Grants Pass, Ore., a division of the alignment, suspension and braking shop Henderson's Line-Up (HLU), offers products that are the direct result of the problems HLU customers were experiencing, for which there were no available solutions. The technicians began building their own products to solve these problems, and SuperSteer products were born.

One of SuperSteer's first products, and still one of its

most popular, is its Trac Bar. Resembling a large Panhard bar used in road racing, the Trac Bar operates in a similar fashion: It improves stability by preventing lateral (side-to-side) movement of the rear axle. But to understand the benefit of this product, first you have to understand the problem.

The only things that prevent the rear axle in a leaf-spring-equipped vehicle from moving laterally during cornering or emergency lane change maneuvers are its leaf springs, which are not optimally designed for this purpose in that they're best at supporting the coach. So, under hard cornering, the leaf springs deflect and the rear axle moves a certain amount from side to side. This creates a sensation HLU calls "tail wagging the dog," where the rear of the coach feels like it's steering the front. This effect can be aggravated in a motorhome with a chassis wheelbase that's somewhat short for its body length, by a top-heavy coach or one that has an extra-long body behind the rear axle.

The Trac Bar works by tying the rear axle housing into the frame with a coupling that allows unimpeded vertical movement but next to zero lateral movement. This helps keep the frame aligned with the axle and eliminates much of the stability-robbing tail-wag effect.

Installation is fairly straightforward in most applications; a bracket is attached to the frame, another to the rear axle housing, and the bar mounts in between. SuperSteer's Trac Bar kits are designed for bolt-on installation without the need for drilling.

To see how the SuperSteer Trac Bar works, we recently visited Henderson's Line-Up and tested a customer's Fleetwood Bounder Class A motorhome,

The only things that prevent lateral movement of the rear axle are the leaf springs, which are clamped to the housing with long U-bolt fasteners. The leaf springs are only designed to support the weight of the coach; during vigorous steering inputs (such as an emergency lane change situation) the springs deflect, allowing the rear axle to move laterally as much as $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch. That may not seem like much, but the movement causes the rear to steer the front, which can create unstable handling.



The first step is to install the frame bracket on the driver's-side frame rail. This bracket is secured using the supplied hardware and three existing holes in the frame.



Next, three fasteners around the differential center section are removed, and the axle bracket is bolted in place using the supplied hardware.





Here are the axle bracket and driver's-side bracket as viewed from the rear of the coach.



The Trac Bar is then bolted to both brackets. Note that the driver's side of the bar features an adjustment to ensure it will fit properly on W20, W22 and W24 chassis.



The finished installation as viewed from the front and rear of the axle.

built on the Workhorse W20 chassis, before and after the Trac Bar was installed. This coach had already had the bar installed previously, so it was removed for our “before” testing, then reinstalled for our photographic needs and evaluation.

Like many Class A’s, this one had significant rear overhang, which HLU claims creates more leverage on the rear of the coach, aggravating the tail-wagging sensation. On the road, the best way to describe the handling was “wobbly.” Turn the wheel quickly from one direction to the other, and the rear of the coach wobbled back and forth a few more times, struggling to keep pace with the steering inputs from the front.

Back at the shop, the coach was put on a lift so the Trac Bar could be installed. Installation of the bar was accomplished in less than 30 minutes, even with us stopping to take photos — but allowing an hour or more is probably more realistic, especially if you are using hand tools. By virtue of the fact that these large Class A coaches are pretty roomy underneath, a do-it-yourselfer could do this job on the ground without lifting the coach under normal circumstances.

After the installation, we noticed an immediate improvement. To say it handled like a sports car is a bit of a stretch, but the handling became much more predictable without that uneasy feeling.

Considering the benefits of the Trac Bar and its ease of installation, it’s good insurance for safe handling. ♦

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Henderson's Line-Up

888-898-3281, ext. 313,
www.supersteerparts.com.



A CUSHY JOB ▲

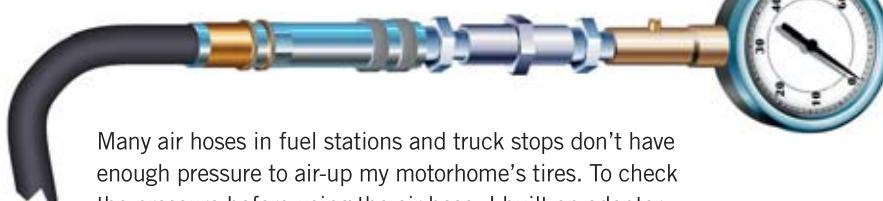
I created a simple wooden stop to keep the dinette seat cushions in my motorhome in place so they don't slide around.

I started with a 10-inch-square piece of good quality $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-thick plywood. I drew a pencil line 5 inches up and across. I then measured $\frac{3}{4}$ inch outside of the vertical line, so I had a strip $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide. I cut from the horizontal line to the $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch-strip mark on both sides, thus making a T. I sanded all the edges of the stop, rounded the top edges and stained the wood so that it matched the rest of the interior.

I then carefully removed the ledger that the dinette table rests on when it's made into a bed and made a notch in the back of the ledger board slightly larger than $\frac{1}{2}$ inch by $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches. I then reinstalled the ledger board. Be sure to put the holder in place before pushing down the cushions.

WALLACE MCCUAIG | PUEBLO WEST, COLO.

PUTTING ON THE PRESSURE ▼



Many air hoses in fuel stations and truck stops don't have enough pressure to air-up my motorhome's tires. To check the pressure before using the air hose, I built an adapter (made of two Schrader valves connected by a coupling) that enables me to use my gauge on the air hose. The valves and coupling are permanently connected; the air hose and pressure gauge are held on by hand.

ROBERT FALK | LOS ANGELES

ILLUSTRATIONS: BILL TIPTON



FILE THIS UNDER 'GOOD IDEA'

Managing books, manuals, supplies and other items in the overhead racks of my RV is sometimes difficult. I've tried using baskets, bookends and spring-loaded stick separators, but they tend to domino on quick stops and sharp curves. I found a simple and inexpensive solution that keeps the items organized and readily available.

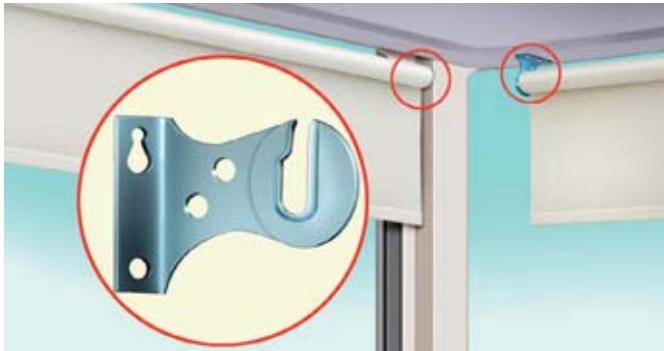
Office-type letter-size file organizers can be found in thrift stores and garage sales for \$1 to \$3. The metal type is preferred, but plastic will do fine. They keep the overhead compartment well-ordered under almost any road situation and seem to be custom-made for the job.

JIM LOCKRIDGE | RENO, NEV.

HAMPER GOES TO WASTE

I don't like to waste things, so I found the perfect use for my old, worn-out folding laundry hamper — I use it as a garbage can in my motorhome's galley. By putting a plastic kitchen trash bag inside and securing it on all four sides with plastic clips, I now have a much larger garbage container that I can use during the day and then I dispose of the bag in the evening. Once we break camp, I simply fold up the hamper and store it out of the way.

HELEN ANNA KORAL | CHEEKTONWAGA, N.Y.



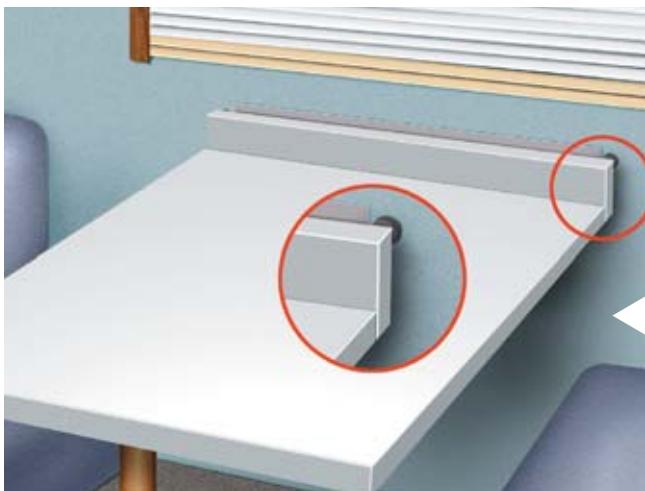
MADE IN THE SHADES ▲

If tour buses can have adjustable shades on their forward windows for the comfort of the driver and passengers, why not a motorhome? I installed four room-darkening roller shades in the cockpit of my coach — one on each side window and two for the windshield.

I started with standard 44-inch shades that I had cut to fit my motorhome (about 37 inches wide). Then I installed the shades on the side with outside-mount roller shade brackets and the ones for the windshield with ceiling-mount roller shade brackets. If you're attaching the brackets to metal, use sheet-metal screws and pre-drill the holes; otherwise, use self-tapping screws to hold the brackets in place.

I find the shades to be very useful when driving into the sunlight and also when I get to the campground at night.

JEAN LARDOENOS | HERINGTON, KANSAS



an idea to solve the problem. The bracket that holds the table to the wall is pop-riveted into the wall and removing it would entail drilling out the rivets, which would leave holes that I would have to fill. So I decided to add a 1x4, the same width as the table, to the end of the table.

First, I removed the bracket from the edge of the table and mounted the 1x4 to that same edge with screws, then attached the bracket to the top of the 1x4 with the original screws. I did not have to remove the bracket from the wall. I had painted the 1x4 a color that was a very close match to the tabletop. Of course, I had to cut 2½ inches from the table leg.

It works like I had hoped and now the table is the right height for us.

DOUGLAS KEOWEN | WOODLAND, CALIF. ♦



FILTERED AND FILLED

As an RV enthusiast for 30 years, I subscribe to most of the available magazines. I've seen a lot of questions about sanitizing the water system and how to get the solution into the water tank. Whether gravity fill is available or not, I've found what I think is the easiest way to get the bleach into the tank. It also sanitizes the filling hose.

Once I figure out how much bleach is needed for the holding tank, I remove the cartridge from my Sears-type water filter housing and pour the necessary amount into it. Then I close the housing, hook up between the water source and my fill hose (which is connected to my RV), turn on the water and fill the tank.

After all the faucets and systems are cleaned and drained, I turn the water back on to flush everything out. Don't forget to reinstall the filter cartridge when you're done.

DONALD HUBNER | OAK HARBOR, WASH.

JUST-RIGHT HEIGHT

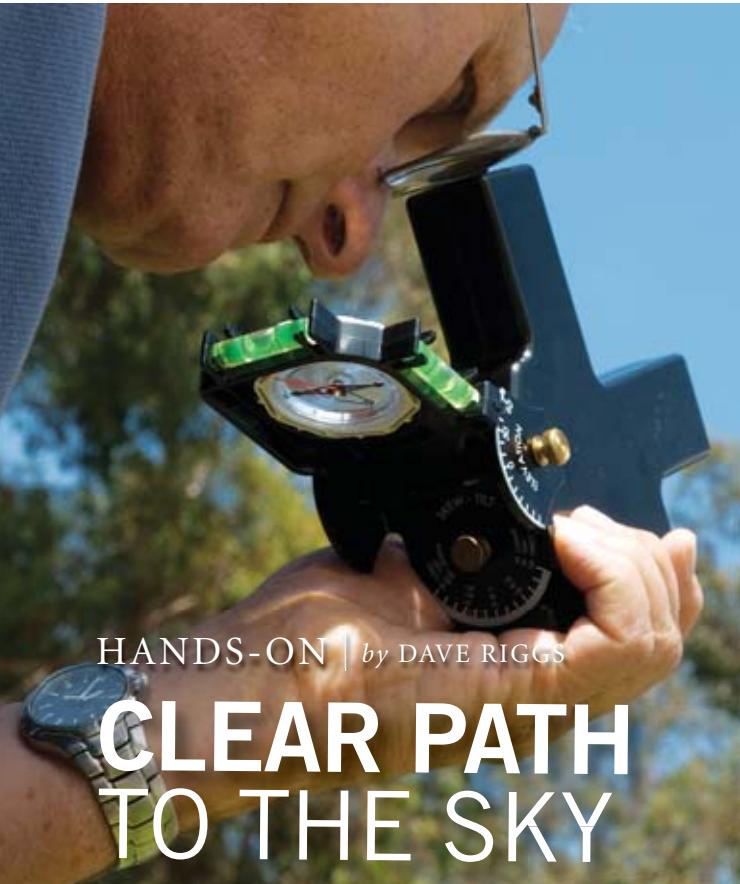
The dinette table in our RV has always been too high for us and I finally came up with

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

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

tech savvy

HANDS-ON | HOT LINE | COACH & POWERTRAIN



HANDS-ON | by DAVE RIGGS

CLEAR PATH TO THE SKY

Align-A-Site dish-aiming device locates TV satellites

Satellite TV offers enormous viewing options for the motorhome traveler, but unless you only travel in areas void of trees, mountains, buildings and other similar obstructions, aiming the requisite dish can be challenging. About 40 percent of the time, I park my motorhome only to find that the biggest tree in the RV park blocks the satellite signal. The Align-A-Site Dish Alignment System allows you to find a clear pathway to the southern sky before you park your RV and deploy the rooftop dish. For those who use a portable system, the Align-A-Site tool takes all the guesswork out of finding a suitable location to set up the hardware.

Simplicity is the theme for this tool. Once you obtain the dish-pointing coordinates from the receiver or online — elevation and azimuth for a single LNB unit, plus skew/tilt for dual LNB dishes — you're ready to set the aiming device. The elevation gradients are clearly marked on the articulating arm that houses

the compass for determining azimuth and two bubble levels. At this point you set the skew/tilt at 90 degrees, which will be adjusted later, if you have a dual LNB dish. Once the coordinates are set, you simply look through the viewfinder and confirm that the line-of-sight is clear of obstructions. From here, the motorhome or the freestanding dish can be positioned accordingly.

If you have rooftop equipment that automatically seeks the satellite, all you need is the Align-A-Site tool, which sells for \$119.95. Portable dish users can opt for a special bracket, which allows the sighting tool to be mounted to the dish for aiming. Once the dish mount (bracket) is attached to the edge of the dish, the sighting tool slides into it and is locked in place so the user can look through the viewfinder to confirm a clear path to the sky. Using the bubble levels and compass allows precise aiming. Skew/tilt can then be set for those who need this adjustment. The Align-A-Site sighting unit with the dish mount can be purchased as a package for \$169.95.

In order to lock in the signal to the receiver, you'll need a span of clearance of 3 degrees for one satellite, which is easily accommodated by the sighting device's 5-degree field of view. To find a clear path for two or three LNB dishes, you simply use the compass to look 4.5 or 9 degrees left and right, respectively, to make sure the span of clearance is OK.

The Align-A-Site is well-built, accurate and easy to use. It puts the kibosh on Murphy's Law when being assigned to sites that are too often shrouded by obstructions.

For more information, call 877-504-3473 or go to www.alignasite.com. ♦





Sales Tax Trouble

ATTEMPTING TO OBTAIN A REFUND FROM A REPAIR SHOP FOR TAX HE BELIEVED HE WAS INCORRECTLY CHARGED, A READER ASKED HOT LINE TO GET INVOLVED. HE WROTE:

I have an extended service contract through Assurant Solutions (administered by United Service Protection Inc.) for my 2003 Gulf Stream motorhome. I took my coach in for service to Vehicle Clinic/Charlotte RV Service in Port Charlotte, Fla., and was overcharged state sales tax. It charged 7 percent (sales tax) on the entire service bill. According to Florida state law, Service Warranty 12A-1.105, sales tax should not be applied to those services covered under a service agreement purchased in Florida.

I contacted the Florida Department of Revenue and was told that I was correct, but that the state could not refund me the money, only Charlotte RV Service could make the sales-tax refund request and then return the money to me.

I also contacted Charlotte RV Service and spoke with a manager and someone in the accounting department. Both of them told me I was wrong and that they'd been doing this for more than 20 years without a complaint.

I would appreciate any assistance Hot Line can provide me. Thank you.

TERRY THOMAS | NORTH PORT, FLA.

Taxation on labor charges for repairs delivered under warranty varies from state to state, so it's wise to check with your state's department of taxation before you buy an extended warranty. In general, most states charge a sales tax to the consumer when the service agreement is initially purchased. Then, when repairs or service are provided in satisfaction of the service contract, they are treated as having already been paid for and are exempt from any additional sales or use tax.

After reviewing Thomas' case, we contacted Vehicle Clinic Inc., dba Charlotte RV Service, to see if we could help.

MOST STATES CHARGE SALES TAX WHEN AN EXTENDED WARRANTY IS INITIALLY PURCHASED.

THEN, WHEN SERVICE IS PERFORMED UNDER WARRANTY, IT IS TREATED AS HAVING ALREADY BEEN PAID FOR AND IS THEREFORE EXEMPT FROM ADDITIONAL TAX.

Soon after, we received a copy of the company's response to Thomas. It read:

Thank you for writing us, Mr. Thomas. There was a miscommunication as to what your concern was when you called. I see that the problem is that the sales tax was charged on the entire bill, but it should have only been charged on the portion that was paid by you.

We have been transitioning to a new computerized billing system and the proper coding was not made in the system for your warranty company. We will promptly send you a refund check. In addition, please present this letter as an authorization to receive 50 percent off your next chassis preventive maintenance service, including oil and filter.

I sincerely apologize for the inconvenience and frustration you experienced in this matter.

AMOS SLATER

**PRESIDENT | VEHICLE CLINIC INC.
PORT CHARLOTTE, FLA.**

JACK JUMBLE

Frustrated in his unsuccessful attempt to get his motorhome's jacks repaired, a reader asked for Hot Line's intervention. He explained:

In October 2007 I purchased a 2008 Fleetwood Bounder Class A at an RV dealership in McMinnville, Ore. A few months later I noticed the jacks wouldn't go down, so I took the coach to a local repair shop (Poulsbo RV) in Washington

for repair and the jacks were fixed.

Six months later, I had another problem with the jacks — they wouldn't work. I learned the dealer was out of business. Poulsbo RV in Poulsbo, Wash., had also closed, so I took the motorhome to Peninsula Fleet Services in Bremerton, Wash. Peninsula Fleet contacted Power Gear (the manufacturer of the jacks) to try to secure replacement parts for the repair, but Power Gear refused to send them. Peninsula then recommended I turn to Fleetwood for resolution.

Can Hot Line please help me?

**JAMES JORGENSEN
POULSBO, WASH.**

Hot Line contacted Power Gear and Fleetwood on Jorgensen's behalf. We didn't hear back from Power Gear, but we did receive the following missive from Fleetwood and an update from Jorgensen.

Fleetwood RV:

In response to your recent correspondence regarding James Jorgensen, we apologize for any inconvenience Mr. Jorgensen has experienced with his motorhome and appreciate the opportunity to respond.

We have contacted Jorgensen and discussed his concerns with the Power Gear Electric Leveling Jack System. We also contacted Peninsula Fleet Services, the customer's repairing dealer, and are in the process of assisting them with their communications with Power Gear. As discussed with Jorgensen, we will follow up to ensure that his leveling jack system gets repaired.

We can assure you that we will assist Fleet Services and Power Gear in addressing Jorgensen's leveling jack concerns.

**RICARDO TORRES
SENIOR CUSTOMER SERVICE REP.
FLEETWOOD RV | DECATUR, IND.**

James Jorgensen:

The leveling jack system has been successfully repaired. Thanks, Hot Line.

J.J. ♦

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

Dinghy Brake Laws

We plan to drive our 30-foot Class C motorhome from Canada to the U.S. while towing a Chevrolet Tracker. Is an auxiliary dinghy brake system compulsory in the U.S.?

ALBERT CAREEN | CALGARY, ALBERTA

Many traffic and vehicle laws in the U.S. vary by state. Unfortunately, this can be confusing as there are different regulations for each state. Even if it is not required by law in certain places, I recommend the use of an auxiliary braking device because it increases safety, reduces the strain on the coach's brakes and shortens critical stopping distances.

TURBO RESONATOR TROUBLES

I just had my 2006 Itasca Navion with a Mercedes-Benz 2.7-L engine into the shop for the second time, because it would not go more than 45 MPH on the highway. Both times it was the turbo resonator that was the problem. My Navion only has 15,649 miles on it, so this would make the third resonator it has gone through. Is this a manufacturer's design flaw? What is causing these resonators to break so fast? I went online and could not believe the number of resonator complaints. What purpose does this resonator serve and what is causing it to break down? Is Mercedes-Benz aware of this problem? Something needs to be done about this.

PAUL DRAGO | CINCINNATI

Actually, something has been done: There is an aftermarket product called Turbo Resonator Eliminator SRE-06. The SRE-06 retails for \$139.95 plus tax and shipping. You can check it out at www.riordanco.com/our_products_catalog.htm#sprinterTurboResonator, or call 530-676-4729. It's also avail-

able at many Dodge dealers and the Sprinter Store (http://sprinterstore.com/sprinter_store.htm).

The stock turbo resonator used with the 2.7-L inline five-cylinder Mercedes-Benz turbodiesel engine in Dodge, Mercedes and Freightliner Sprinters is a two-part bonded plastic injection-molded polycarbonate assembly. Sprinter models with this part are: late 2004, 2005, 2006 and early 2007 models equipped with the 2.7-L engine. Models before 2004 do not have the plastic turbo resonators.

Reportedly this part is on its fifth revision, so obviously Mercedes is aware of problems. Many owners have reported multiple failures and based on the number of reported failures and product revisions, this part is not well-suited to the high temperature and pressure conditions under which it has to operate. A typical failure occurs under maximum

boost when climbing a hill or accelerating and results when the two halves separate, allowing turbo-boosted air to escape. When the resonator fails, the boost sensor signals the engine computer that there has been a turbo failure, the CHECK-ENGINE light comes on and it goes into "limp home" mode. This greatly reduces power and top speed (on flat ground) is limited to about 35 to 45 MPH.

The resonator acts as an intake-air muffler, so eliminating it may slightly increase turbo noise. The SRE-06 is made of solid-billet aluminum, designed to last the life of the vehicle. It neither changes engine operation nor alters the emission control system. Installation takes about 20 minutes with simple tools, and instructions are on the website. If the eliminator is installed after a failure, the CHECK-ENGINE light should go off after a few driving cycles.

TIRE PRESSURE GAUGES

I have several different tire pressure gauges and they all read slightly different. How can they be calibrated so I can be sure to get accurate readings?

MARK LINDSAY | OWOSSO, MICH.

You could have them tested using an ISO-calibrated master gauge. Many tool vendors, such as Snap-on and Mac Tools, can do this, and some large tire stores have a reference gauge for calibration. In general, digital gauges are more accurate than analog ones. I have checked two digitals against an ISO-calibrated master gauge. One was +0.5 psi and the other, -0.5 psi. Mechanical stick-type gauges can be off by 25 percent or more depending on how much grit has gotten into them; if they are bent then it could be worse.

SLIDEOUT SOLUTION

I purchased a 2005 Winnebago Adventurer with 10,000 miles and as a contractor I live in it for months at a time. It has two hydraulic slides and one electric. The electric slide "creeps" in over time, sometimes as much as 5 inches in a day. Do you have any ideas?

**RICK SINGER
COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO.**



DRAIN THE TANKS

First, drain the storage tanks, then open the access panel for the water heater. Locate the pressure/temperature valve, which is very similar in appearance to the valve located on a residential water heater. Once the water heater is cold, lift up on the handle to release any residual pressure.



LOOSEN THE PLUG

Next, loosen the water heater plug located at the bottom of the tank (green stripe). As the plug becomes loose, stand back and prepare for the torrent of water that will flow from the tank. If your water heater is a Suburban model, inspect the aluminum anode attached to the plug for corrosion; some is normal, but if it looks like it's really been eaten away, now is a good time to use a water tank flush wand to remove any sediment at the bottom. Install a new anode.



PROTECT THE WATER LINES

Next, protect the water lines. First, run the pump and open valves in the sink(s) and toilet(s) one at a time until no more water comes out. Open and drain any low-water lines. Most motorhome water heaters are equipped with a bypass kit, which allows you to pump potable (safe to drink) antifreeze into the lines, bypassing the water heater. The water heater is bypassed because there's no risk of it becoming damaged by freezing once it has been drained. If there is a vertical line with valves on it that joins the hot/cold lines (shown here), you have a bypass kit. Note that the hot and cold valves are off, and the bypass line is open, ready for winterizing. If your coach doesn't have a bypass kit, they are readily available and inexpensive.



GETTING ANTIFREEZE INTO THE LINES

The easiest way to get antifreeze into the lines is to disconnect the suction side of the water pump and install a prepared length of hose (note that this owner has wrapped such a hose around his water pump for safekeeping). Dip the length of hose into a container of antifreeze, and turn the pump on. Typically, you'll only need 1 to 2 gallons of antifreeze to get the job done.



USING A BLOWOUT PLUG

An alternative to antifreeze is to remove all the water in the lines with a blowout plug. First, the water pump is turned on to remove excess water from the lines. Then, a fitting (such as this one from Camco) is threaded into the city water fill, and a pressurized air hose attached. You'll need a helper to go inside while you pressurize the system and run the faucets, toilet, etc., until all the water has been blown out.



WINTERIZING THE SINKS AND TOILET

Pour at least two cups of antifreeze down each sink to prevent the P traps from freezing, then pour a like amount into the toilet to keep the seal moist and lubricated. Be sure to add antifreeze or blow out the washer and dishwasher, if so equipped.



I did a little checking. You have a WPG35A model and the 35A Adventurer has three slideout rooms, all employing hydraulic mechanisms (no electric slide mechanisms onboard), so that's a bit puzzling. Additionally, the electric slideout mechanisms employed back in 2005 were Kwikee's Digi-Sync mechanisms that use a worm-gear assembly and this mechanism never had a creeping characteristic. Assuming it's not a one-of-a-kind coach, I'll make the call that it's actually a hydraulic mechanism.

You didn't mention which room. The left-front room has two rams and the two others—the right-side bed slide and right-side galley slide—are single-ram rooms. You mention a "creeping in" characteristic, since the left room (a level-out/drop-floor) must climb up a ramp to retract/creep in. So I'd suspect the problem room must be one of the single-ram installations. The hydraulics not only extend and retract the room, but they also hold the room's position hydrostatically. It's rare to have rooms move this much. If the problem was an externally leaking cylinder there should be fluid present. Since the room must be in an extended position to creep in, I suspect the retract solenoid valve is allowing fluid to return to the reservoir and the room to creep.

FUEL GAUGE FOLLIES

I have a 36-foot 2007 Country Coach Inspire with a 425-HP Cummins and 7,000 miles on it. The fuel gauge periodically drops from FULL to EMPTY, then after a restart comes back to FULL. The cluster that includes the fuel gauge also includes the voltmeter and both air pressure gauges. All four gauges periodically will drop to zero so I think this is an electronic problem. But the fuel gauge has inaccurate readings and now I am considering the possibility of microbial growth in the fuel. My gauge stays on FULL until I reach about 450 to 500 miles on that tank of fuel, then drops to almost empty, with no in-between readings. The coach runs well at speed, but I notice a slight stumble at startup. Since I purchased the coach it has never sat for more than 30 days at a time. Should I consider a fuel additive such as Biobor?

GREG DUM | SAN DIEGO

The climate in San Diego is ideal for the growth of microbes in diesel fuel tanks, so

I would definitely try some additive. The fact that the gauge sticks and suddenly drops is a strong indication that the sending unit is sticking. However, if all four gauges suddenly drop to zero, that does indicate an electrical problem in the dash. Before messing with the sending unit, I would wiggle the wires going to the gauges and see if they react, and also check their ground connections. You may actually have two separate problems there.

BUSTED BATTERY BOX

The battery compartment in our 2000 National RV Sea Breeze motorhome is located under the entry step and is made of fiberglass. My husband was doing maintenance on the batteries when he discovered the fiberglass has deteriorated and is literally falling apart. How can he fix it to keep the batteries from falling out on the road as we drive?

LYNN HERBERT | KANSAS CITY, KANSAS

As a temporary fix you could cut a piece of plywood to support it. For a permanent fix have the fiberglass repaired. If you don't know how to do it, have it done by an auto body shop or boat repair shop.

Once the fiberglass box is back in good condition you might want to use a plastic sealer product, like the materials used for pickup-bed liners, to protect the inside of the box. You should be able to find some kind of brush-on product available in a relatively small quantity such as a quart or so. Remove the batteries, add the liner, and that will help protect the box against any further acid leakage.

TOWABLE TOAD?

I didn't find my automobile listed in MotorHome's Dinghy Towing Guide. Does that mean it is not towable, regardless of conversions? Can I tow my 2005 Buick Rendezvous FWD V-6 with a lube pump?

JOHN WELLS | GULFPORT, MISS.

MotorHome's Dinghy Towing Guide only lists vehicles that are approved by their manufacturers for towing behind a motorhome without drivetrain modifications. Your model was not approved so it is not listed. Owners who have vehicles that aren't approved for towing can check with Remco (www.remcotowing.com; 800-228-

2481) to see if it recommends using one of their products such as the lube pump.

BRAKE BALANCE

We have a 1997 Class A motorhome on a Ford F53 chassis. The front brakes were severely overheating and I had the front brake lines and calipers replaced. The temperatures dropped from about 460 degrees F. to about 200 degrees, but they still run about 100 degrees higher than the rear and tag axles. Do you have any suggestions as to what to do next?

CLAUDE OVERSON

MONCKS CORNER, S.C.

I assume the front calipers were sticking on, and that you are measuring heat with an infrared thermometer on the rotors right after stopping. Most systems will work somewhere between 200 and 400 degrees Fahrenheit. It's not unusual that one axle may generate more heat based on the system balance bias, but if the rear axles are only reaching 100 degrees, which is almost the same as ambient temperature,

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they are not working properly. Some coach manufacturers have used some hokey methods of actuating the tag axle brakes and often they don't do much. You need to find out why they are not being applied.

AIR-BAG ANXIETY

I have a 38-foot diesel-pusher with air bags. Should I dump the air from the bags when I park the motorhome? I keep hearing conflicting stories on whether to dump or not to dump. Thanks.

ALVIN BLAIN | TORRANCE, CALIF.

The air bags on your motorhome are made of a tough synthetic rubber material and are similar to the ones on big trucks. Over time, the system may leak down. Therefore, when you park for an extended period, or store the coach, the frame should be evenly supported and the bags deflated. However, for daily use you don't need to do that.

SHOWER 'SHAMS'

As you know, keeping moisture out of a motorhome is always a major concern. We have discovered a way to cut down on shower moisture and make our towels last a lot longer between washings. We keep a ShamWow in our shower. Toward the end of the shower, we use hot water on it. Wring it out and use the ShamWow to towel dry, then dry the sides of the shower stall. We use our regular towel to finish drying off. Instead of the towel drying in the coach and adding moisture to the atmosphere, most of the moisture is picked up by the ShamWow, which is wrung out.

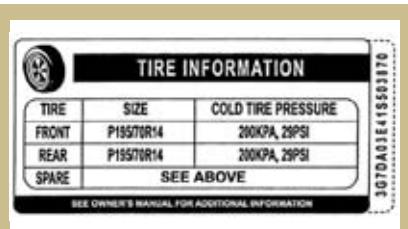
GLEN HARROUN

FULL-TIMER FROM WASHINGTON

Thanks for the tip. Lots of folks will appreciate this one. It's also important to ventilate the coach whenever possible to prevent mold and mildew, especially in damp regions such as the Northwest.

VEXING VECTRA

We have a 35-foot 1995 Winnebago Vectra with a Cummins 5.9-L turbodiesel on a Spartan chassis with 110,000 miles. It's a pleasure to drive on smooth pavement. However, toss in any road irregularity and our Winnie feels as though it switches from air suspension to no suspension. The noise is deafening, everything starts to shake,



AVOIDING TIRE TROUBLES

Some motorhome owners experiment with tire pressure to improve ride quality. When a coach is built, the manufacturer attaches a weight rating and tire pressure label, usually near the driver's seat or in the driver's door frame. Never use less than the recommended pressure, as this may result in sudden tire failure. If the label is missing, contact the motorhome manufacturer for a replacement.

Also, never attempt to reinflate a flat tire that has been driven on. Side-walls quickly become damaged because of the heavy weight and applying high pressure to a damaged tire can cause it to burst and possibly cause severe injury.

POWER PLUG POINTER

I recently encountered a problem that may be of interest to others. A friend of mine was having 120-volt AC problems with his motorhome, which is several years old. When I plugged my circuit tester into an outlet, it would read hot ground, reverse polarity. After doing some troubleshooting, I asked him if he had changed anything. He said the only thing that was different was that he had purchased a new 30/20-amp adapter plug so he could plug in at home. We switched adapter plugs, and everything was normal. Apparently, the plug was mis-wired at the factory, and there is a good chance more of them are floating around out there.

KEN KLEIBER

SANTA FE, N.M.

Thanks for the tip, Ken. We haven't run into that one yet, but someone else surely will and knowing this could save an electronic device and troubleshoot ing time.

rattle and roll, shelves collapse within closets and kitchen drawers go flying across the motorhome. We live on Long Island and just getting off the island is a nerve-racking experience. So far I've had the air levelers and air bags replaced, all the tires are less than 2 years old (less than 5,000 miles) and the front end was aligned and balanced to no avail. After this last trip we decided to forgo any further excursions until the problem is rectified. Any help you can give would be greatly appreciated.

SALVATORE PONZO | NESCONSET, N.Y.

I know the roads are bad there, and motorhomes do make a lot more noise going down the road than cars, but this doesn't sound normal. You may need to take it to a good truck shop that specializes in tires, suspension and vibration issues. You didn't mention if the problem cropped up recently. Have you replaced the shock absorbers? They should have been replaced at least once by now and I strongly recommend premium units. If the problem cropped up after something was changed, you need to look there first.

BAFFLING BACKFIRE

I have a 1995 Class A motorhome on a GM P-chassis with a 7.4-L gas engine that backfires from time to time when under load; high or low RPM, it doesn't seem to matter. I have cleaned the fuel tank and changed the fuel filter and pump. Still believing the problem is fuel, I changed the regulator diaphragm, which has given me the most help for my problem. I plan on changing the injectors (TBI) to see if that has been my problem. Any help you can provide would be appreciated. All ignition parts have been changed and are in good working order.

TOM JOHNSON | OAKDALE, CALIF.

Take a fuel pressure reading while the motorhome is being driven, not just idling in the shop. It should be 26 to 32 psi. The fuel pressure regulator is not recommended to be replaced separately by GM. From the factory, the unit is flow tested and the pressure regulator adjusted on the flow bench and then sealed in place. GM does not provide fuel regulator replacement parts; you have to purchase the fuel-metering assembly, including the injectors.

You didn't comment on whether the backfiring occurs in the exhaust or intake. Backfiring out the intake usually indicates a lean mixture, while popping in the exhaust could indicate air getting into the exhaust. You may have an air injection system problem. There is a good possibility the anti-backfire valve is not shutting the air off when it is supposed to. Also look for exhaust leaks, causing the oxygen sensor reading to vary widely. The backfiring could be made worse by reformulated oxygenated fuel, which makes engines run lean.

ALLISON SHIFTING — RESPONSE

Regarding "Allison Shifting" (Powertrain, July): I also have a 2003 40-foot Monaco Diplomat. When I purchased the coach in February, it had a slight buck on a grade. When that happened, the ATC light would come on. The bucking became progressively worse. I contacted Monaco, my dealer, an Allison dealer, and checked a forum on Yahoo. Everybody except the folks on the Yahoo forum said they had never seen this problem. The forum folks said it was my fuel filters — they needed changing. I took the coach to the Allison dealer, and they changed my fuel filters (or so I thought). When the bucking continued, I checked the filters. I could clearly see that they had not been changed. I personally changed both filters, and the problem has gone away.

What appeared to be an ATC problem causing the bucking was, in fact, an engine starvation issue that somehow caused the ATC to think the coach tires were slipping. When I took off each filter, there was slimy gunk present. The coach had sat for about six months on the dealer lot before I bought it, so microbes were able to grow. If it were not for the good folks on the Monaco forum, I'd still be chasing the wrong problem. Have Mr. Ferraro change his fuel filters.

FRANK STUMP | WINSTON-SALEM, N.C.

Fuel starvation on diesels usually shows up as a smooth loss of power, but it can produce bucking as you report, Frank. We heard from several readers with similar solutions. Thank you all for taking the time to write. ♦

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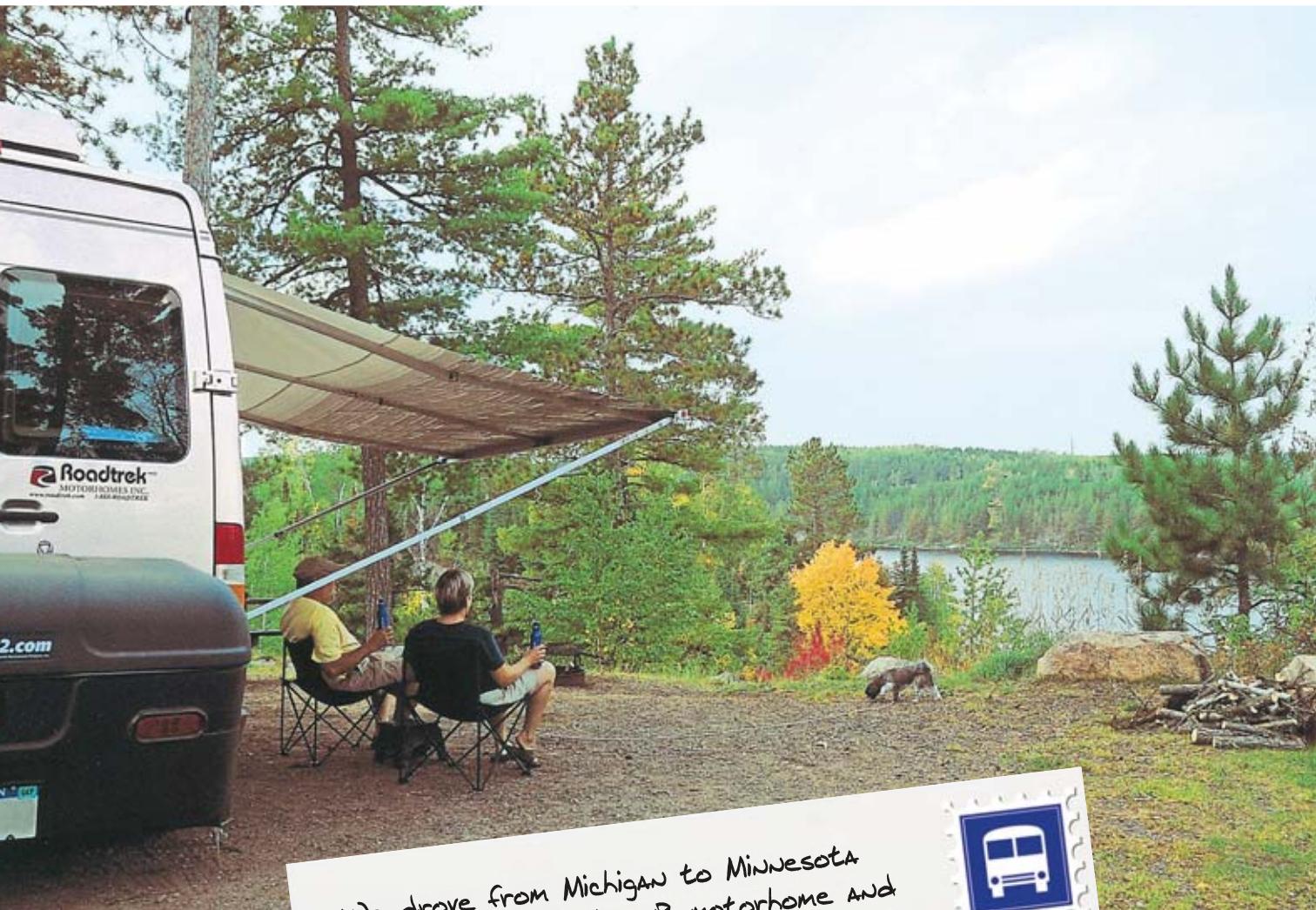


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We drove from Michigan to Minnesota in our Roadtrek Class B motorhome and went up the Gunflint Trail Scenic Byway. It's 57 miles up the byway from Grand Marais, Minn. Here we are camped at Trail's End Campground (located next to the Boundary Waters Canoe Area). We popped a cold one and sat and enjoyed the sights and sounds of the wilderness.

Awesome vacation!

Dave and Julie Christiansen
Charlevoix, Michigan



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES: We accept transparencies, prints and digital images saved as TIFF, JPEG or EPS files. We prefer uncorrected photos at the highest available resolution. All images must be unaltered and at least 300 dpi. For prints, we accept 4x5 or 5x7. Transparencies should be original 35mm or larger. MotorHome pays \$50 for each published photograph. Images, which preferably show a motorhome or motorhomes in the setting, must be your own work. Submissions cannot be returned. Send your image, name, address and phone number, as well as the story behind your image in 60 words or less (location, special trip or significance, etc.), to: MotorHome "Postcards From the Road," 2575 Vista Del Mar Drive, Ventura, CA 93001; or via e-mail to letters@motorhomemagazine.com.

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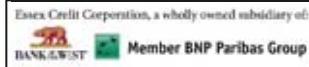
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