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NOVEMBER 2010

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**On The Cover:** The Phenix — Foretravel's flagship Class A motor coach — travels through the area surrounding Lake Livingston in Livingston, Texas (see story on page 44). Photo by Bob Livingston.

## FACEBOOK

Remember all those fantastic campgrounds you visited where the vistas were breathtaking and you were having so much fun that you couldn't wait to tell others? You'd take a few snapshots then have to wait to get the film processed or, if you were in a hurry, send a postcard and hope it was delivered before you returned home. The Internet — and the advent of digital communication — has changed all that, providing almost instant interaction with those who couldn't be there with you — especially now that most campgrounds have Wi-Fi capabilities and air cards are so accessible.

E-mail and texting work great, but unless you have groupings of people you want to communicate with, the dialogue is normally one to one. And while it may be hard to believe, staying in touch using e-mail may already be outdated; using a phone certainly is — even a cell phone. If you really want to share your experiences with lots of people, whether something about your motorhome, a particular campground or even a special on-the-road activity, Facebook seems to be all the rage.

Admittedly, I was a holdout. Although my wife, Lynne, has been a Facebook member for some time, I was very ho-hum about the social networking site, thinking of it as a modern form of CB radio where people chitchat and say nothing really meaningful. Who the heck has time to say nothing?

After a while, however, I couldn't help but notice that Lynne was making connections with people we haven't seen or talked to in many years. When she reconnected with her college roommate who, along with her husband and 6-month-old baby, shared a motorhome with us on a cross-country journey in 1973, I perked up on the value of Facebook.

Then by chance we got in touch with an exchange student from Germany who lived with us for a year (and traveled with us on many motorhome adventures) when our kids were in high school.



Michael is now an adult with a career of his own, and we likely would have never re-established a connection without finding him on Facebook.

After MotorHome signed on as a Facebook member ([www.facebook.com/MotorHomeMagazine](http://www.facebook.com/MotorHomeMagazine)) in July, I began reading the postings and viewing the pictures. Within hours after signing on, we had hundreds of "friends." I slowly got hooked on the social camaraderie afforded by this popular website.

Motorhome enthusiasts are a social crowd by nature. All you have to do is walk the streets in a campground on a warm summer evening to experience the joy of making new friends. With Facebook, it's easy to stay in touch with friends on a daily basis. And no doubt, that constant communication will make it easier to cross paths in the future rather than lose touch.

Part of my motivation for joining the Facebook crowd was the result of seeing an old Cortez motorhome while Lynne and I were visiting the RV Hall of Fame in Elkhart, Ind., last summer. I climbed into the driver's seat and immediately had flashbacks of that aforementioned 4,100-mile trip 37 years ago. Admittedly much more spoiled by today's motorhomes, I couldn't imagine how we piled four adults and a baby into a 21-foot Class A for 16 days and were still talking to each other at the end of the trip!

At that point I really wanted to share that photo with the readers of this magazine, so Editor Eileen Hubbard suggested that I post it on Facebook along with the original story that was published in the October 1973 issue of MotorHome Life. Excited about the idea, I immediately signed up as a Facebook member.

You can reach me at [www.facebook.com/BobLivingstonRVPublisher](http://www.facebook.com/BobLivingstonRVPublisher). Let's keep in touch. ♦

## MOTORHOME

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## “HAVE YOU EVER RENTED A MOTORHOME?”

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

### ALASKA IN A RENTED WINNEBAGO

We are just back from Alaska, where we rented a 25-foot Winnebago from Great Alaskan Holidays. It was a wonderful trip. We traveled from Homer on Kachemak Bay to north of Denali National Park and many places in between. A total of 1,320 miles in two weeks. If you don’t have time for that long drive up the Alcan this is the way to go. I highly recommend both the travel method and the company.

**LINDA CLARK | NORTH PLAINS, ORE.**

### NO-MUSS, NO-FUSS RENTALS

I have rented motorhomes on a few occasions here in Eastern Canada. Every time, the quality and the services were great. Some of the advantages of renting are: no investment, no maintenance, no RV storage, always new products and in good condition. The major disadvantage is that the rig is not organized for secure storage the way it would be by an owner (shelves, racks, trays, hooks, clips, tie-downs, etc.).

**YVAN JEROME | LAVAL, QUEBEC**

### FOUR CORNERS, ENDLESS MEMORIES

A couple of years after my father passed away my mother was still having trouble coping with the loss. My wife and I decided to take her on a therapeutic trip to visit the Four Corners area of the Southwest. We rented a Southwind motorhome at a U-Haul dealer in Las Vegas and headed out for an early fall trip of 10 days covering about 2,300 miles. At roughly 1,100 miles into the trip the speedometer cable on the motorhome broke.

When I turned the motorhome back in to the U-Haul dealer I fully expected to pay for my estimated mileage of the entire trip. I told the dealer about the broken speedometer cable. He said he would only charge me for the mileage on the odometer — then he apologized to me for the inconvenience. That was in 1986. My mother passed away in 2005 at the age of 93. Up until the end she still told stories about that wonderful trip.

By the way, my wife and I purchased our first motorhome a year later — a well-used 1975 GMC Palm Beach. We are now on our fifth motorhome, a Winnebago Journey DL. We cannot imagine living our lives without a home on wheels.

**GORDON W. ZUMWALT | MINDEN, NEV.**

### ADVENTURES BEGAN WITH A CAVE

Our family’s first experience with a motorized RV was the renting of a Class C motorhome from Route 66 RV near Claremore, Okla. We rented the RV to go to Carlsbad Caverns, N.M. Our 5-year-old granddaughter, Brittney, wanted to see a cave.

We had dreamed of owning a motorhome for years. Our first night on the road saw us setting up after dark (we didn’t know what we were doing). The experience was hilarious. All of the adults took turns driving and found it easier than we thought. At the caverns, Brittney discovered the Junior Ranger program. We enjoyed a number of stops going to



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and returning from the caverns. Brittney cried when we returned the RV.

After the rental we bought a Class C Minnie Winnie. A couple of years later, we traded for a Class A Georgetown with bunk beds. Brittney now has been to 31 states and has more than 30 Junior Ranger badges.

**JIM AND MEL GILLMORE  
SUZY AND BRITNEY DECOUX  
CLAREMORE, OKLA.**

### 1 MORE KENTUCKY TIP

The Central Kentucky article was excellent ("Touring Central Kentucky: Glasgow to Lexington," August). One additional place to visit to complete a perfect trip is Loretto, southeast of Bardstown, the source of my favorite drink — Maker's Mark. Watch the workers dip each bottle into hot wax and be sure to ask about the missing "e" in whisky.  
**JOHN VAN NESS | ALLEN COUNTY, KY.**

### IT'S SILVER THREAD FALLS

In the August issue there is a wonderful article about the Delaware Water Gap and the surrounding area, including Dingmans Falls ("A River Runs Through It"). However, one of the photos may be misleading. The photo shown is that of Silver Thread Falls, which is on the walkway leading to the main Dingmans Falls. While Silver Thread Falls are almost picture-perfect, I wouldn't want visitors to skip the rest of the walk to see the main falls, which are much larger.

Also, if you're able, walk up the steps to the top and see the falls from a different angle. It's a great place to sit and have lunch.  
**LINDA LADUC | UTICA, N.Y.**

### OVERLOADING CONCERNS

With the reality of fuel costs, many manufacturers are now offering Sprinter-based motorhomes. These RVs have a very good reputation for reliability and fuel economy, but the gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 11,030 pounds seems inadequate.

One quality rig recently featured in MotorHome has an unloaded vehicle weight rating of 9,420 pounds, which includes fuel. Adding the weight of full water, holding tanks and LP-gas, the vehicle weighs in just shy of 10,400 pounds. If the two passengers weigh 150 pounds each there is only 330 pounds for food, clothing, gear, tools, etc. Carrying four passengers becomes problematic. I think there might be a lot of



**WHAT YOU'RE  
SAYING ON OUR  
FACEBOOK PAGE:**

In response to our posting about a missing RVing couple from Canada, whose motorhome was found torched at a campground, our Facebook fans weighed in about staying safe while RVing. Here's what some of them said:

**Christine Stockton:**

*Please everyone, always have your RV locked when you are inside. This is horrifying. I will hope for the best.*

**Leonard Zuzchik:**

*This is the reason we carry two handguns, and a shotgun all the time loaded while we are in the RV, and also when we are outside too. My wife and myself have a concealed license permit, and it has already saved us from an incident in Homestead, Fla., where somebody was trying to break in.*

**Leonard Zuzchik:**

*While we were in Canada last year, we duly registered the shotgun and paid the \$50 to be safe and legal.*

**Debra Benton Hummel:**

*Tragic! Doesn't sound too well. We always carry a gun.*

**Penny Bextel:**

*I have never felt the need to carry a gun. When I get to the point where I feel threatened by the life around me, I will go home and lock myself in my house and wait to die. I respect your right to carry arms and your reasons for doing so, but I refuse to live in fear of my fellow man.*

**Debra Benton Hummel:**

*I wish "Peace on Earth and Goodwill Toward Men," but I live in a real world. I don't live in fear; I go and do as I please; however, I am prepared in case that person or persons attempts to "rain on my parade."*

**Christine Stockton:**

*I agree with you, Debra. I have never felt any fears while traveling. But I feel it is my right to be armed.*



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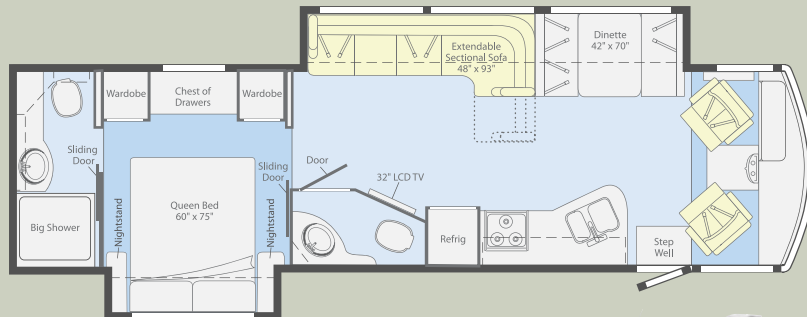


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**JAMES PAUL | PUNTA GORDA, FLA.**

#### ALMOST PERFECT

Regarding "Leisure Travel Unity U24MB" (August): I've read the article twice and I'm still amazed at how long it took for the RV industry to realize the queen bed is not used 12 to 16 hours a day. Now if they had included a cruise control that kept the RPMs constant, rather than the speed, it would have been the perfect motorhome in 24 feet with the comfort of a 28-footer.

**JOHN KEEFE | ROCKLAND, MASS.**

#### CANADIAN BORDER CROSSINGS

If you as an RV driver or a passenger have ever had a DUI (driving under the influence) or a DWI (driving while intoxicated) conviction and plan to cross the border into Canada, I want you to be aware of something.

After two years of planning and saving, we departed from home hoping to cross the Washington state border crossing at Sumas, Wash., before nightfall. We had all the right papers, our dog was vaccinated and had her papers, yet we were turned away because of two DWI's my husband had in 1968 when he returned from Vietnam. A DWI is a felony by Canadian standards.

So be aware that being turned away is a real possibility if a DWI/DUI is in your past. The border-crossing people will not just wave you through.

**MRS. J.E. COOLEY | CLE ELUM, WASH.**

#### COACH & CHASSIS CORRECTION

In the Coach & Chassis column (August), in response to the letter "Battery Float," you answered that the Charge Wizard steps up the voltage to 14.5 volts every 21 days for 15 minutes. Actually, this should be every 21 hours, not 21 days.

**BILL ROBINSON | NEWBURY PARK, CALIF.**

#### QUESTION:

**How do you stay safe while RVing? What methods do you employ to ensure your safety and to minimize the risk of crime?**

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 | WHEELS & GEAR | CROSSROADS

## BARREN AND BEAUTIFUL

### BONNEVILLE SALT FLATS' VAST WHITE PLAIN ATTRACTS RVERS, AUTO RACERS AND FILMMAKERS

**“Pass the salt” has a whole new meaning** here in northwestern Utah’s Bonneville Salt Flats, where you’ll travel amid 30,000 acres of snow-white salt with the 11,000-foot-high mountain peaks of the Pilot Range towering over them.

The flats, located along Interstate 80 near the Utah-Nevada border, are what remain of ancient Lake Bonneville and they are administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

Their unique natural beauty as well as their use to attain land-speed records at the Bonneville Raceway make them a world-famous attraction. The salt flats have also been used in scenes of such movies as

“Pirates of the Caribbean: At World’s End” and “Independence Day.”

The BLM does not allow overnight camping, as it is an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. The small casino town of Wendover is five miles away, and camping options include the Wendover KOA in West Wendover and the Wendover Nugget RV Park.

To help preserve the salt flats and to ensure safety, visitors are asked to stay on existing roads or areas designated for vehicles. RVers are also urged to rinse off their motorhomes at nearby gas stations, as salt can be corrosive. For more information, contact BLM’s Salt Lake Office at 801-977-4300. — *Patricia Marroquin*





**NOV. 19-20** | With the number of people in period dress usually outnumbering the people in modern clothing, you'll really feel like you've stepped back in time at **Gettysburg Remembrance Day** in Gettysburg, Pa. A wreath-laying ceremony and Dedication Day ceremony take place in the Soldiers' National Cemetery, and a parade of living history groups will walk the streets on Saturday. If you want to put on a costume yourself, the Remembrance Day Ball at historic Gettysburg Hotel is period-dress only, and be prepared to have a truly authentic experience; 800-337-5015, [www.gettysburg.travel](http://www.gettysburg.travel).

**NOV. 25** | Families around the globe gather around the TV every year to watch the **Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade** in New York, so why not take the trip in your motorhome to see it in person? There are hundreds of campgrounds in the tri-state area where you can leave your rig while you take the train into the city, or if a family member lives in the area, even better. Watch Tom Turkey lead more than 200 followers made up of marching bands, giant floats, entertaining performances, and balloons of all shapes and sizes for a fun-filled holiday you'll remember for a lifetime; 212-484-1200, [social.macys.com/parade2010](http://social.macys.com/parade2010).

**NOV. 27** | What goes better together than classic comfort food and great wine? At the **Great Macaroni & Cheese Bake-Off**, hosted by the seven wineries of the Old Mission Peninsula near Traverse City, Mich., you can taste rieslings, pinot grigios, chardonnays and more while trying delicious and unique dishes of macaroni and cheese that have been prepared by the finest restaurants in the region. Camping in the Traverse City area is plentiful, making it easy to enjoy a relaxing wine tasting and some comfort food with your copilot; 231-933-9787, [www.wineriesofoldmission.com](http://www.wineriesofoldmission.com).



**NOV. 4-6** | A warm and spicy bowl of chili is the perfect thing to combat the brisk autumn temperatures, so if you're heading south for the winter be sure to check out the **Terlingua International Chili Championship** at Rancho CASI de los Chisos in Terlingua, Texas. The governor even declared the first Saturday in November the "Chili Appreciation Society International Day" in Texas because of this special event, which features cook-offs in barbecue and salsa in addition to chili, as well as live music, dancing and unique vendors, set against the backdrop of rugged Texas terrain; [www.chili.org](http://www.chili.org).

**NOV. 5-7** | The Northwest's drizzly and cool weather won't be dampening spirits at the **Stormy Weather Arts Festival** in Cannon Beach, Ore. Showcasing the varied artistic talents from the region, the event will include art galleries holding receptions, an art

walk, photography exhibits, musical entertainment and literary events. A noteworthy highlight of this three-day art celebration is "The Quick Draw," in which artists have just one hour to create individual "masterpieces" from raw materials; 503-436-2623, [www.cannonbeach.org](http://www.cannonbeach.org).

**NOV. 5-11** | Share your gratitude for the sacrifices made by the men and women in uniform who have defended our country with others at **Branson Veterans Week** in Branson, Mo. This RV-friendly city annually honors veterans with this Veterans Homecoming celebration, in which thousands of veterans, active-duty military personnel and their families attend more than 50 special events in their honor, such as free music shows, formal dinners and recognition ceremonies and hot air balloon displays. A grand parade on Veterans Day concludes the festivities; 800-296-0463, [www.explorebranson.com](http://www.explorebranson.com).

## NOV. 13-14

The premier air show of the U.S. Air Force, **Aviation Nation** at Nellis Air Force Base in Las Vegas attracts more than 100,000 attendees every year. The Thunderbirds are the featured aerial performers in what is their last public show of the season. About 100 aircraft will be on display, as well as exhibits describing the history of U.S. aviation and America's military. If you're unable to attend, you can watch the live webcast, which attracts an additional 150,000 viewers; 702-652-2750, [www.nellis.af.mil/aviationnation](http://www.nellis.af.mil/aviationnation).



## RV SHOWS

**NOV. 12-14**  
Atlantic City Fall RV & Outdoor Recreation Show  
Atlantic City, N.J.;  
804-425-6556



## SAM'S FANS

The Good Sam Club this summer exceeded 10,000 fans of its Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/TheGoodSamClub](http://www.facebook.com/TheGoodSamClub)), and it has invited all fans and members to join the online social-networking party. The Good Sam Club, whose parent company, Affinity Group, also owns MotorHome magazine, posts to its Facebook page daily to provide updates and information about club activities, new benefits and RV-related news.

Local Good Sam chapters and state and provincial organizations have joined in the Facebook fun, as a way to get the word out about their activities. Some of the most lively chapters on the Facebook fan page are Maine, Ohio and Tennessee.

If you aren't already a fan, just click the "Like" button at the top of the page. And the same goes for MotorHome's fan page at [www.facebook.com/MotorHomeMagazine](http://www.facebook.com/MotorHomeMagazine).

## CHINA-BUILT CLASS A PLANNED

**Yutong Bus Co. Ltd., the largest manufacturer of**

commercial buses in China, expects to be selling Class A diesel-pusher motorhomes in the U.S. by next spring, according to RV industry veteran Bill Horvath, who is heading up the venture.

The yet-to-be-named motorhome will be built in China and initially will be shipped to the West Coast for distribution, Horvath said. Horvath said Yutong expects to build 150 to 200 motorhomes the first year — mostly using components manufactured in the U.S. — and "hopefully double or triple that in the second year."

"We will buy some of the material in Elkhart (Ind.), ship it here (to China) and then ship the unit back to the U.S.," said Horvath, whose domestic industry experience dates back to Mallard Coach and Damon Corp. Ironically, he noted, many of the components used to build motorhomes in the U.S. already are manufactured in China to U.S. specifications.

The fiberglass-and-aluminum motorhomes will be available in 28-foot to 30-foot floorplans, built on a chassis with a GVWR of



22,000 pounds and powered by a 250/280-HP Cummins or Navistar diesel engine. Retail pricing is not yet available and the specific chassis for the new motorhomes has not been selected yet. — *Bob Ashley*

## News Briefs

For the 13th consecutive year, Home and Garden Television (HGTV) is producing a one-hour special on cutting-edge RV innovations and product trends. "RV 2011" is scheduled to air next March and will re-air several times throughout the year. Chi-Lan Lieu — a self-proclaimed karaoke addict and gadget geek — is the host of the show. The program was scheduled to be taped at the Pennsylvania RV and Camping Show in Hershey, Pa., in September.

Monaco RV LLC and Navistar International Corp. have unveiled the first motorhome developed in a collaborative effort between the two — the 32-foot and 35-foot 2011 Monaco Vesta Class A. The Vesta, which will also be marketed under the Holiday Rambler Trip nameplate, brings together Monaco's motorized RV legacy and Navistar's truck industry technology. The result is a sleek front-engine coach with a low center of gravity, air bag suspension and a tapered rear section. The Vesta/Trip will be built on a proprietary Monaco Roadmaster chassis with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) of 26,000 pounds and equipped with a 260-HP MaxxForce 7 diesel engine that, according to Monaco, should get 15 to 18 MPG. A single-slide 32-footer, which will be built at Monaco's Oregon facilities, will retail for \$195,000 to \$200,000 with interiors featuring Ultraleather furniture and Corian countertops.

Jayco Inc.'s Entegra Coach division has reintroduced the Insignia diesel-pusher as the entry-level unit in the high-end Entegra line. "As we have in several of our other products, we have incorporated higher-end features in a lower-priced coach," said Sid Johnson, marketing director of Middlebury, Ind.-based Jayco. With a base MSRP of \$265,000, the Insignia is available in three quad-slide, rear-bedroom floorplans. Built on a Freightliner XCR chassis with a 32,400-pound GVWR and powered by a 360-HP Cummins ISB diesel engine, the Insignia features heated holding tanks, frameless flush-mounted slideouts, gel-coated fiberglass side walls, and a steel-reinforced front cap and windshield frame. Interior appointments include glazed maple hardwood cabinetry and leather sofa beds.





## A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

There are a lot of roof vents out there in the RV market, but not all of them circulate fresh air, offer rain protection and come in a sleek design to boot. MaxxAir Corporation's **MaxxFan Deluxe** fits standard 14-inch by 14-inch motorhome-roof openings and features a unique built-in rain cover that keeps the coach's interior free from the elements while circulating 900 cubic feet of fresh air per minute throughout the cabin.

The 10-speed, 12-inch fixture can also be used as a ceiling fan when the vent is closed, and features flush-mounted keyboard controls for fan speed, thermostat, air intake and exhaust functions.

When you're ready to hit the road again, simply close the vent using either the manual knob or optional remote control and the rain shield automatically retracts, creating a streamlined exterior appearance. The MaxxFan Deluxe is available in four versions, and has a starting price of \$298.95.

**MaxxAir Vent Corporation, 800-780-9893, [www.maxxair.com](http://www.maxxair.com).**



## A LIGHT IN THE DARK

The fun doesn't have to stop when the sun disappears behind the silhouette of your motorhome. With a little light, you can enjoy a round of cards under the canopy of your awning or take the dogs for a walk around the campground. **N-rit's Aluminum Mini Lantern** is lightweight, compact and durable, making it suitable for a variety of uses.

It operates on three AA batteries, providing 10 hours of 40 lumens of bright light, according to the company, so you can have enough light to enjoy lots of outdoor activities. It features a magnetic base to ensure that the light stays right side up and so that it can attach to most magnetic surfaces, even upside down. A hook on the top allows it to be easily hung up. Constructed of high-strength aluminum alloy, the lantern — which is also water- and shock-resistant — will be difficult to damage.

The lantern retails for \$24.95, but Good Sam Club members can save up to 20 percent online by entering the promo code "goodsam" at checkout on the company's website. **TheCapLight.com, 918-758-0045, [www.thecaplight.com](http://www.thecaplight.com).**

## SQUEAKY-CLEAN SURFACES

Keeping the surfaces clean in your motorhome is no easy task. When you're trying to juggle enjoying the outdoors, spending time with family and friends and driving to your next destination, it's inevitable that a little dirt and grime will accumulate on your galley or lav's countertops.

Thetford's **Ultra-Foam Aqua-Clean Kitchen and Bath Cleaner** with a brand-new formulation is designed to cut down the amount of time RV owners spend on clean-

ing. A trigger spray releases foaming bubbles that immediately lift dirt, soap scum, rust stains and hard water spots, according to the company, with no mess from dripping or running that is common with other cleaning products.

Selected for the Environmental Protection Agency's Designed for the Environment recognition, Aqua-Clean is suitable for cleaning many surfaces without being abrasive or harmful to the environment.

**Thetford, 800-543-1219, [www.thetford.com](http://www.thetford.com).**







PHOTO: GEORGE OSTERTAG

## STROLL THROUGH THE TREETOPS

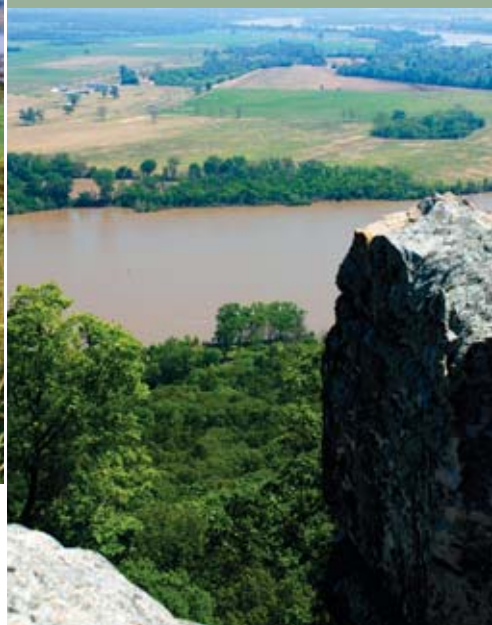
On the Myakka River, southeast of Sarasota off Interstate 75, you'll find one of Florida's premier parks. Myakka River State Park unfolds a rich tapestry of palms, oak hammocks, wetlands and open water. Look for storks, palm warblers, red-shouldered hawks, bald eagles, vultures and other birds by the hundreds.

The bird walk leads to a platform overlooking Upper Myakka Lake. In the dense hammock, a barred owl can stop travel. Deer, armadillos and alligators are other park dwellers.

Unique to the park is the canopy walkway, 25 feet above ground. The walkway's 85-foot-long suspension bridge spans between a 74-foot tower and a 35-foot tower, providing an unusual perspective among the treetops.

The park's campsites accommodate motorhomes up to 35 feet in length and feature water and electricity. A dump station is available on site.

**For more information**, call 941-361-6511 or visit [www.myakkariver.org](http://www.myakkariver.org). — *Rhonda Ostertag*



## LOVE IS IN THE AIR

### Romance enfolds Petit Jean

State Park, Arkansas' first state park. In the 1700s, a French bride-to-be refused to be parted from her betrothed, an explorer. So she disguised herself as a cabin boy (Petit Jean) to travel undetected to the New World. The masquerade held until she became deathly ill at this mountain location on the Arkansas River where the exploration party had summered. She begged her fiancé to forgive her deception and bury her on the mountaintop. Her wishes honored, visitors ever since have paid homage to the brave lover.

A romantic wooded backdrop, falling waters, wind-sculpted earth and rock, and Arkansas River Valley vistas pair with this bittersweet saga. An ancient Native American bluff dwelling and the 95-foot Cedar Falls summon feet onto the park's 20 miles of trail.

Northwest of Little Rock, the park offers 125 campsites, all with water and electrical and some with full hookups.

**For more information**, call 501-727-5441 or go to [www.petitjeanstatepark.com](http://www.petitjeanstatepark.com). — *Rhonda Ostertag* ♦



## WWI MUSEUM: A TRIBUTE TO THOSE WHO SERVED

The National World War I Museum, a superb 30,000-square-foot facility in Kansas City, Mo., opened in 2006, the "only American museum solely dedicated to preserving the objects, history and personal experiences of a war whose impact is still felt today."

The focus of the museum, which counts more than 60,000 items in its collection — including weaponry, uniforms, medals and photos — is to "honor the memory and sacrifices of all those who served their country and defended liberty during the war."

Visitors enter the main exhibit hall from the lobby via a glass bridge over a field of 9,000 red poppies, each representing 1,000 lives of combatants killed during the war.

Exhibits in the museum — first envisioned soon after the Nov. 11, 1918, Armistice — explain the events leading up to the war; provide monthly chronologies of the 4½-year conflict; and include a trench with audio quotes of the soldiers who fought there.

**For more information**, call 816-784-1918 or visit [www.theworldwar.org](http://www.theworldwar.org).

— *Pamela Selbert*

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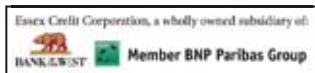
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Essex Credit Corporation, go to [www.motorhomemagazine.com/info](http://www.motorhomemagazine.com/info)

It was the middle of summer and the temperature was sweltering, but that didn't seem to matter at The Rally, Affinity Group Inc.'s 11th annual gathering of RVers, which took place July 22-25 in Louisville, Ky. Rather, the hotter it got, the happier the crowd was to be indoors at the fully air-conditioned Kentucky Exposition Center, attending what's dubbed as "The Greatest RV Event in the World."

The Rally, hosted by MotorHome, Trailer Life and Camping Life magazines, along with the Good Sam Club, Woodall's pub-

lications, Trailer Life Directory, Coast to Coast Resorts, Camp Club USA and the Camping World President's Club, welcomed an estimated 10,000 attendees, who included those in 2,867 RVs plus 5,000 day-pass visitors.

To help celebrate the 100th anniversary of the RV industry, vintage RVs from the 1930s to the '60s were showcased. Attendees browsed the latest and greatest RV models from 42 manufacturers and dealers and enjoyed 350 booths displaying the newest RV products, gadgets and services.

# A PEP 'RALLY'

## ENTHUSIASTIC CROWD OF 10,000 ENJOYS SHOWS, SEMINARS, SHOPPING AND PRIZES AT 'THE GREATEST RV EVENT'

by MARLEEN CANNIFF



Motorhome sales were brisk at The Rally. Fleetwood RV Inc. significantly exceeded sales projections, while Lazydays RV, a leading RV dealer, sold 20-plus units. Pat Terveer, national sales director for Newmar Corp., said the company had good results that included selling six of the seven motor coaches it displayed at the show, including its new luxury 2011 Essex diesel-pusher, a \$650,000 model. Camping World, which was an exhibitor in both the RV Sales and RV Accessories areas, reported strong sales results as well.

A portable rotisserie, called the Auspitt (www.auspittbbq.com), was one of the hottest new products available at The Rally.

Other products for RVers, such as Dometic's new portable ice-maker (www.dometicusa.com) and several LED displays from Star Lights Inc. (www.starlightsinc.com) and The Jirah Company (www.jclampstand.com) were also big hits.

While many shopped, others attended their picks from the 120 RV seminars presented. "We've met so many people and have learned so much; it's almost overwhelming," said Jean Larson, who traveled with her husband, Glenn, in their RV from Santa Paula, Calif. They had no need to purchase cell phones before this day, but they had so much fun attending as many seminars as they could manage, "we bought cell phones just to keep in

**The Rally**  
*A Special Thank-You to Our Big Supporters!*

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 Roadmaster Inc.  
 Cobra  
 Ready America Inc.  
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- Mindzone Publishing
- SHURflo
- DuraFlap
- Thetford
- Fan-Tastic Vent
- Eagle One
- Good Sam Club
- Trailer Life Directory
- Woodall's

*MotorHome and Trailer Life Magazines*



On Publications Day, Affinity Group staffers (in green shirts), from left, Donna Brown of Woodall's, Marleen Canniff of Trailer Life, Stuart Bourdon of Camping Life and MotorHome Publisher Bob Livingston congratulated the raffle's grand prize winners, Sue and Jim Haggerty of Sioux Falls, S.D. They won a Tracks to Adventure RV Caravan trip to Branson, Mo. Comedian Bob Newhart entertained the crowd. A Special Event Entertainment artist applied a temporary tattoo to a Rally attendee.

## THE RALLY 2010 SPONSORS

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**Other Rally Sponsors**  
 Good Sam Club RV  
 Emergency Road Service  
 Good Sam Visa



touch with each other at the show,” said Glenn.

Between visiting the exhibitor booths and attending seminars, rally-goers were excited to check out Brian Brawdy’s Self Reliant Mobile Residence (SRMR), an RV that’s fully functional while off the grid. The SRMR features solar panels, wind turbines and a water-harvesting and purifying system.

Parked next to Brawdy’s SRMR was the pet adoption station, and once again, it was a success — with nine dogs and three cats finding homes with new owners, thanks to Rally guests.

And if that wasn’t enough to keep everyone hopping, the event also delivered on entertainment. Vic Sands from

Tennessee sang his way to first place at The Rally’s Got Talent contest, while the Best in Show winner of the Seventh Annual Dog Show — Kentucky K-9s! — was Molly. She and her owner, Emma Freeman, also won first place in the dog/owner look-alike contest. Others kept themselves occupied with golf or local tours, and then reveled in the top-notch evening entertainment with comic-actor Bob Newhart and legendary country-music artist Tanya Tucker.

Special daily events included Camping World President’s Club Day, Good Sam Club Day and Coast to Coast Resorts Day, with RV Publications Day starting it all off right. Pub Day is a great venue for RVers to connect with staffers from their favorite RV publications and to learn about what’s new in the industry by receiving complimentary magazines and winning some of the newest and handiest products on the market.

It was also a great venue for fun and free stuff. The free temporary-tattoo kiosk, by local vendor Special Event Entertainment ([www.bymaddy.com](http://www.bymaddy.com)), added a coolness factor to the event. Maddy Batteiger and her assistant Midge Fatheree airbrushed hundreds of artfully designed tattoos on rally-goers who, in turn, showed off their new look for the remainder of The Rally.

People from all over the country attended Pub Day for the giveaways and to win prizes — with a total value of more than \$20,000. Literally thousands of rally-goers went home with free loot. The first 2,000 attendees received an embroidered ball cap along with fun prizes after spinning the Wheel of Wonder.

While waiting in hopes of winning the raffle’s grand prize — a Tracks to Adventure RV Caravan to Branson, Mo., valued at \$3,300 — hundreds of Pub Day guests got their hands on other prizes. Those included Roadmaster’s Falcon All-Terrain non-binding tow bar, TengoInternet’s wireless adapter, DuraFlap mud flaps, Ready America’s LCD wall mount for RVs, Protect All RV cleaning supplies, a Xantrex inverter and a Powerpack Solar, SHURflo’s water pump and universal filter, OtterBox cell phone and storage cases, Magellan’s travel accessories, an Eagle One carwash kit, Buck Knives, Fan-Tastic Vent Pop ’N Lock screen kits, Cobra cell phone accessories, Microsoft Streets & Trips software, Thetford wipes, ThermaCELL Mosquito Repellent Lanterns and the very popular Rally Ho! board game from Mindzone Publishing.

After more than an hour of spinning the raffle drum, Bob Livingston, publisher of MotorHome, read aloud the grand prize ticket’s numbers: 6-3-1-6-5-5.

Sue Haggerty from Sioux Falls, S.D., ran up to the stage with her husband, Jim, holding the matching ticket. It was Jim’s birthday the day of the raffle, with Sue’s on the following day. Married 27 years, the lucky couple had just started full-timing in their 30-foot Class C Itasca Spirit after their retirement in April. They travel with Mitzi, their Yorkshire terrier, who won third place with Sue at the dog/owner look-alike contest. They are planning to join the Tracks to Adventure RV Caravan to Branson in October, a tour that’s already booked.

The Rally keeps getting better each year. The 12th annual event will take place in Redmond, Ore., July 14-17, 2011, at the Deschutes County Fair & Expo Center. Call 877-749-7122 or visit [www.therally.com](http://www.therally.com) to make your early bird reservations. ♦



The pet adoption station was once again a success, top. Nine dogs and three cats found new homes. Country-music singer Tanya Tucker energized the audience with her performance. Attendees browsed the hall that contained 350 booths offering the latest RV products and services.





# A SUNNY OUTLOOK



Clockwise from top: SunLand RV Resorts has spent nearly \$3 million in upgrades to the 251-site Emerald Desert RV Resort in Palm Desert, Calif. Signature Resorts' Naples Motorcoach Resort in Naples, Fla., boasts a boat ramp with 26 private docks. Bella Terra Motorcoach Resort in Gulf Shores, Ala., features an infinity edge pool. Guests enjoy the pool and clubhouse at Chassa Oaks RV Resort in Homosassa, Fla.





# IN THE SUN BELT



## SHORTAGE OF LUXURY SITES FUELS DEVELOPERS' **PLANS FOR UPSCALE RV RESORTS**, EVEN AMID RECESSION

by JEFF CRIDER

**W**hen Ed Rymer and David Gorin obtained financing to acquire, tear down and rebuild Holiday Cove RV Resort in Cortez, Fla., in mid-2007, neither of them knew the country was about to dive into the worst recession in 70 years.

"Our timing could not have been worse," Gorin told MotorHome recently, adding that he and Rymer spent \$1.5 million gutting most of the park and rebuilding it into an upscale Best Parks in America-affiliated RV resort that sells and rents RV sites.

Of course, they weren't the only Florida RV resort developers faced with the prospect of developing, selling and renting upscale RV sites in the recession.

Ed Mayer of Elite Resorts of America started building the first 305 sites of the company's Citrus Valley resort after acquiring land for the project in 2007, while Bill Harvey started building the first 166 sites of Silver Palms RV Village in Okeechobee in July 2008.

Jim Eyster had already started selling sites at his new Chassa Oaks RV Resort in Homosassa, Fla., when the recession hit. "When I started developing this resort," he said, "I didn't realize we were heading into a big recession."

But even facing the most challenging real estate market in decades, Eyster, Mayer, Rymer, Gorin and other RV resort developers are convinced their investments will pay off in the long run, largely because of the continuing shortage of upscale RV resorts in Florida and across the Sun Belt.

"If I had known then what I know now, I still would have gone ahead with it," said Eyster, whose Chassa Oaks resort features upscale RV sites with 850-square-foot garage condominiums on a property next door.

Eyster said many RVers, particularly full-timers, need space to work on their cars, woodworking and other projects, not to mention a place to park their motorhome when it's not in use. "Some of these garages are big enough to put their RV in if they want to go someplace and be gone for two or three months and don't want their RV sitting in the sun," he said.



**Emerald Desert RV Resort offers RV storage garages.**



**Holiday Cove Resort in Cortez, Fla., sells and rents sites.**



**One of 166 sites at Silver Palms RV Village in Okeechobee, Fla.**



**The clubhouse at Naples Motorcoach Resort has a home theater.**

Most RV resort developers, of course, focus on providing their renters and RV site owners with upscale amenities.

“Anybody who’s in this market knows there’s a shortage of first-class RV spaces,” said Harvey of Silver Palms RV Village, whose amenities include a 9,000-square-foot clubhouse with a grand ballroom, a 1,000-square-foot fitness center, and a resort-size swimming pool and hot tub. Harvey said he’s already sold a third of his sites and plans to rent out his entire inventory of RV sites this winter.

Gorin added that the recession has failed to discourage retirees from enjoying their winters in the Sun Belt. “Most of the folks who come down to Florida for the winter are folks who have retired recently. This was their plan for retirement, and they’re not giving it up easily,” he said.

Falling real estate prices have also increased market demand for upscale RV sites. “If you’re an active RVer and prices have gone down to the point where they are reasonable, that’s an opportunity for you,” Gorin said, adding that investing in a high-end RV resort is far more affordable option for a getaway retreat than a second home. “The taxes are less. The insurance is less, and you get all of the advantages of a resort,” he said.

RV site owners also enjoy never having to worry about site reservations. In fact, owners can even generate income from their sites if they opt to have their resort rent them out when they’re away.

Randall Henderson, president of Nashville, Tenn.-based Signature RV Resorts Inc., said there are relatively few companies that have remained financially strong enough to complete development of their resorts during the recession, and those that do so will retain a market advantage.

Signature Resorts, in fact, completed its 184-site Naples Motorcoach Resort in Naples, Fla., last year and is now marketing its sites to consumers.

“To be quite frank, we have less competition now with our prod-

uct than we’ve had in the past 25 years,” Henderson said, adding that the Naples resort features a large clubhouse, three swimming pools, including a lap pool and an infinity pool, plus a boat ramp with 26 private docks along the waterway and 32 boat-storage sites.

Tripp Keber, chief operating officer of Bella Terra Realty Holdings LLC, said his company has also found strong demand for sites at the company’s recently developed Bella Terra Motorcoach Resort in Gulf Shores, Ala., with 82 of the 88 sites in the resort’s first phase being sold by late summer. The 40-acre Best Parks in America-affiliated resort, roughly 25 miles west of Pensacola, Fla., includes customized outdoor kitchens and barbecues and a zero entry infinity edge swimming pool. “I still believe there is under-served demand from the high-end motor coach owner,” Keber said.

Across the country, La Jolla, Calif.-based SunLand RV Resorts is similarly bullish on the market, and hasn’t allowed the recession to put a damper on its enthusiasm for acquiring and developing luxury RV resorts.

SunLand, which owns several RV resorts in Southern California, acquired Emerald Desert RV Resort in Palm Desert last year and has since invested nearly \$3 million in improvements to the property, which now includes RV storage units, a renovated clubhouse and theater with high-end furnishings as well as a state of the art sound and lighting system. The 251-site resort also has a sports lounge, featuring all new Olhausen billiards tables, 60-inch flat-panel TVs and new furnishings. Even its 1,200-square-foot lobby is luxurious, and features a floor mosaic comprised of tumbled marble, two shades of travertine and Vitoria Regia granite.

Reza Paydar, SunLand’s chief executive officer, said RVers are taking note of the company’s investments in improvements. “We are maintaining and increasing occupancy, despite the economy,” he said, adding that the recession hasn’t stopped SunLand from continuing to seek worthwhile acquisition and RV resort development opportunities across the country. ♦



# TUCSON:

## A NEW LOOK AT THE OLD WEST

AN AUTUMN ADVENTURE IN ARIZONA INCLUDES MUSEUMS, A MISSION, A MOVIE STUDIO AND GOLF — AMID THE DISTINCTIVE SAGUAROS

**T**he Spanish came to the American Southwest in 1539 in search of gold. Missionaries followed in the early 1600s in search of natives to convert to Christianity. Today, snowbirds flock to Tucson for the warmth of a golden sun. Whatever the draw, the “Old Pueblo” has enticed visitors for centuries.

Tucson is diverse in its geography as well as its history. While the area is well-known for its abundant saguaro cacti, a drive to the top of nearby Mount Lemmon offers a snow-covered peak with a pine forest and the southernmost ski area in the United States. Arizona’s second-largest city is surrounded by five mountain ranges.

The colorful landscape, rich history and pleasant autumn temperatures drew us to Tucson. When our friends Judy and Michael bought their first RV, we agreed to spend several weeks traveling with them. Arizona seemed like the perfect place to introduce them to the joys of the RV lifestyle.



Voyager RV Resort, inset, is a playground for the 55-plus set. The resort, on 186 acres in southeast Tucson off Interstate 10, has such amenities as a restaurant, golf course and billiards. In Saguaro National Park East, a saguaro cactus stands like a giant stick figure. There are paved and unpaved hiking trails in the park.



Left: Old Tucson Studios — where more than 300 movies and TV shows have been filmed since 1939 — today is a movie studio and theme park. Shows include a Billy the Kid gunfight and a dancing cancan girl. Above: Pima Air & Space Museum is one of the largest aviation museums in the world. It holds the world's smallest plane and the world's fastest, as well as the "Boneyard," a storage facility of more than 4,400 aircraft. Below: The Preserve Golf Club at SaddleBrooke is located about an hour away from Tucson, but it's worth the drive.

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Our visit to Tucson began by setting up camp at Voyager RV Resort. Voyager is a gated age-55-plus community on 186 acres in southeast Tucson just off Interstate 10. It's easier to say what Voyager doesn't have than to list all of its amenities. Eat at the restaurant, play golf or billiards, get a massage or learn to line dance, all without leaving the facility. A large activities building includes rooms dedicated to making stained glass, quilts and glass fusion, just to name a few. With hundreds of scheduled activities, there is something for everyone.

The vast selection of offerings at Voyager includes writers' workshops, diet support groups and pickleball lessons. Judy was even able to arrange for a pet-sitter to walk her dog twice a day when we spent time off site. There's also an on-site wellness clinic, staffed by a certified nurse practitioner and a registered nurse, that offers flu shots.

I met Al Martens, a snowbird from South Dakota, in the resort's Silvercraft Shop where he and five others were making sterling silver jewelry. He stays so busy here that he jokingly says he looks forward to going home in the spring to rest.

Tucson has some amazing attractions, interesting enough to lure us away from the RV resort.

Our first stop was the Pima Air & Space Museum, one of the largest



Mission San Xavier del Bac is also known as the White Dove of the Desert. The church, which serves an active parish, blends Moorish, Byzantine and late Mexican Renaissance architecture.

aviation museums in the world. The collection of about 300 planes includes the world's smallest, the Starr Bumble Bee with a 6½-foot wingspan, and the world's fastest, the SR-71 Blackbird with a top speed of 2,500 MPH, which is Mach 3.5, or more than three times the speed of sound. The one that caught my eye was the B-377 Super Guppy, a large, wide-bodied cargo plane. Not to be missed is the bus tour of the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group (AMARG), also known as the "Boneyard." A storage facility for more than 4,400 aircraft, it's also a moneymaker. Between sales of parts and aircraft put back into service, there's a return of \$22 for every dollar spent.

Many of the 300 museum volunteers have a military or commercial airline background. Our guide on the Boneyard tour, Chuck Osborn, spent more than 30 years as a pilot. Although he claimed to volunteer at Pima "to get out of nasty chores around the house," his passion for aviation was evident.

Late one afternoon we drove through Saguaro National Park East. Cactus Forest Drive is a combination one- and two-way eight-mile loop. We stopped to hike the paved hiking trails, although plenty of unpaved trails exist. The saguaros stood like giant stick figures with arms raised to a watermelon sky. The only thing missing was a cowboy riding off into the sunset.

Plenty of cowboys can be found at Old Tucson Studios. John Wayne and Clint Eastwood are among the Hollywood leg-

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## TUCSON: A NEW LOOK AT THE OLD WEST

ends who starred in some of the 300-plus movies and TV projects that have been filmed at Old Tucson since 1939. Today it's a movie studio and theme park. We watched Billy the Kid in a shootout with two other actors, rode in a stagecoach and watched a show in the saloon.

The Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum is just a few miles past Old Tucson. "Museum" is a bit of a misnomer; it's as much zoo and botanical garden as it is natural history museum. About 85 percent of the museum is outdoors, with exhibits re-creating the natural landscape. Native plants and animals, including American black bears, mountain lions and endangered Mexican wolves, roam in enclosed desert habitats. The Earth Sciences Center houses a fascinating collection of minerals from the Sonoran Desert region of Arizona, Sonora and Baja, California. The cool air in the center's artificial cave offers a welcome respite from the warm desert temperatures.

When I saw a photograph of Mission San Xavier del Bac, I added it to my must-see list. Also known as the White Dove of the Desert, this magnificent building blends Moorish, Byzantine and late Mexican Renaissance architecture. In 1692 Father Kino, a Jesuit missionary, came to the area. Eight years later he laid the foundation for the first church. The current church, completed in 1797, serves an active parish. Standing in the plaza, I could imagine generations of baptisms, marriages and funerals being performed there.

Given the pleasant climate, we were eager to play golf. Golfers have many options in Tucson. We tried three courses. Voyager RV Resort has a nine-hole par-3 course, perfect for a quick game. The city-owned Fred Enke Golf Course is a few miles from Voyager. The Preserve Golf Club at SaddleBrooke was about an hour away, but it was worth the drive. Online, we booked a reasonably priced twilight tee time (after 2 p.m.).

I was reapplying sunscreen on the 14th hole when my cell phone rang. Our neighbor, back home in Colorado, called to say 8 inches of snow was covering our driveway. I smiled at our good decision to spend a few weeks lounging in the Arizona sun before heading home for the holidays. ♦

# SOAKING IN WARM SPRINGS

A VISITOR DISCOVERS WHAT MAKES FDR'S RETREAT SO SPECIAL AND TOURS GEORGIA'S IDYLIC, WORLD-RENOWNED CALLAWAY GARDENS

by DAVE G. HOUSER



Top: F.D. Roosevelt State Park, five miles west of Warm Springs, Ga., straddles ridge-like Pine Mountain and is Georgia's largest state park at 9,049 acres. There are 37 miles of hiking trails, two lakes and horse stables for trail rides. Above: A simple frame cottage that came to be known as the Little White House was a favorite refuge for Roosevelt during his turbulent four-term presidency. Right: The 13,000-acre Callaway Gardens, opened to the public in 1952, is one of the nation's premier display gardens.

**N**estled in densely forested red clay hills some 70 miles southwest of Atlanta, Warm Springs and nearby Callaway Gardens are two of the Peach State's most popular visitor attractions. But that wasn't always the case.

Native Americans were undoubtedly the first to utilize the geothermal springs for which the town was named. Rising from 3,800 feet within Pine Mountain, pure, highly mineralized water flows at almost 1,000 gallons per minute

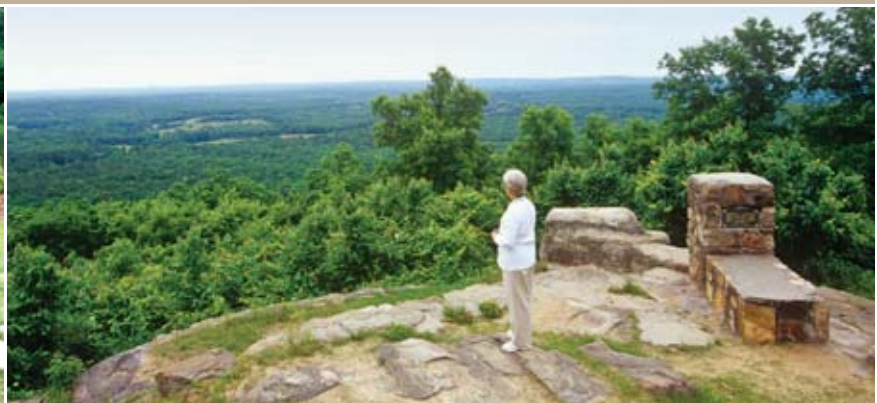
and at a constant 88 degrees to provide a buoyant, refreshing bath without the normally enervating effects of some hot mineral water. With development in the late 19th century of the rambling Victorian-style Meriwether Inn, Warm Springs became a popular resort for Atlanta's high society.

By the time, however, that the town's most famous resident — President Franklin Delano Roosevelt — came to Warm Springs in 1924 seeking a cure for the poliomyelitis





Clockwise from top left: The FDR Memorial Museum in Warm Springs, Ga., celebrates the life and achievements of the nation's longest-serving president, Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Among the features and exhibits are FDR's Ford Phaeton convertible, specially outfitted with hand controls. Founded by FDR, the Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation still serves the needs of the disabled and is open to visitors. Dowdell's Knob, overlooking Pine Mountain Valley in F.D. Roosevelt State Park, was his favorite picnic spot. A Birds of Prey show features native raptors in a lakeside amphitheater at Callaway Gardens.



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that had recently struck him down, the area was impoverished because of a collapse in farm prices following World War I and the once-elegant Meriwether Inn had slipped into disrepair.

When FDR, whose promising political career had been interrupted at age 39, found that soaking and exercising in the warm mineral waters helped his paralyzed legs, he bought the ramshackle resort and spent a large part of his time and personal fortune over the next few years converting it into a rehabilitation center for polio patients. In 1927 the facility was incorporated as the Warm Springs Foundation.

While governor of New York and just before being inaugurated as president in 1933, Roosevelt built a simple frame cottage nearby. It soon became known as the Little White House and it remained FDR's favorite refuge during his turbulent four-term presidency — which spanned both the Great Depression and World War II.

Not many of us living today actually experienced the FDR years so the legacy of the

nation's 32nd president is left largely to the history books and museums. Good reason for the creation in 2004 of the FDR Memorial Museum, a sorely needed repository for a splendid collection of Roosevelt mementos and a revealing storyboard of a great world leader's many accomplishments. It is a good thing, too, that it's located right where it is. Warm Springs was pivotal to Roosevelt's presidency and political career.

"Most historians would agree that the improvements FDR experienced, largely through self-treatment at Warm Springs, were sufficient to give him the optimism and courage to push ahead in politics," says Michael Shadix, librarian at Roosevelt Warm Springs Institute for Rehabilitation, the present-day progeny of FDR's Warm Springs Foundation. "FDR did not want people to know the full extent of his disability," Shadix said, adding that Roosevelt might not have run for president if he thought he was perceived as disabled.

Visitors keen on history or those just seeking a bit of old-fashioned national nos-



**Pine Mountain RV Resort is the closest private campground to F.D. Roosevelt State Park.**

talgia can easily spend a day at Warm Springs. Begin with a visit to the museum and Little White House. Don't miss the museum's introductory film narrated by Walter Cronkite that includes some historical footage from the Roosevelt years. Among the exhibits, you'll find FDR's immaculate 1938 Ford convertible equipped with hand controls that he loved to drive through the surrounding countryside; a 1930s kitchen with a radio that plays some of the president's most notable "Fireside Chats," and the famous "Unfinished Portrait" of FDR.

On April 12, 1945, just 83 days after taking office for a record fourth term, FDR was sitting for a portrait with artist Elizabeth Shoumatoff at the Little White House when he suffered a stroke and died a few hours later. The house remains precisely as the Roosevelts left it and the portrait, too, can be seen exactly how it was abandoned in mid-brush stroke by Shoumatoff more than 65 years ago. This is extraordinarily touching history.

For lunch there's no better choice than The Bulloch House, an 1893 mansion just a block from Warm Springs' downtown row of cutesy Victorian shops. Locals and visitors alike pack the place for the lunch buffet featuring Southern home-cooked dishes such as fried chicken, field peas, collard greens, okra and scrumptious fried green tomatoes.

There should be plenty of time in the afternoon for a drive through F.D. Roosevelt State Park, which straddles Highway 190 about five miles west of Warm Springs. FDR loved steering his Ford convertible up to Dowdell's Knob for picnics and it is no secret locally that the president played a role in getting a detachment of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) assigned to the park to build cottages, bridges and a splen-

did little swimming pool — all from native stone. CCC structures are all still in use today throughout the park, which at 9,049 acres is the largest in the state.

Active types will find 37 miles of hiking trails, two small lakes for boating and fishing (one of the lakes is subject to rental by groups), and Roosevelt Stables, which offers trail rides both hourly and overnight. Cottage rentals, RV and tent camping are all options at the park, which lists 140 sites served with water and electricity. The nearest private campground is Pine Mountain RV Resort, a few miles west of the park on U.S. Highway 27.

Just as warm water had proven a magnet drawing FDR to this once-impooverished area, a rare flower served at about the same time to attract Cason and Virginia Callaway to a corner of Harris County called Pine Mountain. Although surrounded by depleted cotton fields and abandoned farms, this was an idyllic spot punctuated by bubbling springs and the rare plumleaf azalea, found natively only within a 100-mile radius. This finding by an amateur botanist and an industrialist who operated a huge textile mill in nearby LaGrange sparked the beginning of what would become the world-renowned Callaway Gardens.

The Callaways wanted to protect the shrub and other native flora and they bought up much of the land where it grew to establish a preserve. Their horticultural instincts finally got the best of them and they moved to the property in 1935, planting gardens and constructing lakes. They eventually opened the place to the public in 1952.

The rest, as they say, is history and today Callaway Gardens ranks as one of the nation's premier display gardens. With its

accompanying educational and resort attractions, it arguably comprises the region's finest family vacation complex.

You can drive, bicycle or walk to various attractions, including the Virginia Hand Callaway Discovery Center, a striking contemporary-style orientation center/theater/exhibit hall that's the best place to begin a visit because it helps put the 13,000-acre gardens into perspective for you.

Nearby, a popular, seasonal Birds of Prey show featuring live raptors holds forth several times a day. There are acres of seasonal azalea gardens; a 7.5-acre model vegetable garden; the Cecil B. Day Butterfly Center; the John A. Sibley Horticultural Center that's said to be the world's most advanced greenhouse complex; Robin Lake Beach, which offers swimming and boating and plays host each summer to the world's premier water-ski tournament and Florida State University's famous Flying High Circus; and, for a moment of reverence, a lovely old chapel of stone and stained glass. There are two golf courses; one of them, the Mountain View, is a reputed monster course and former home of the PGA Buick Challenge. Add in 13 well-stocked lakes for fishing and there's plenty for dad to do as well. During the holiday season, the displays at the drive-through Fantasy in Lights show consist of more than 8 million twinkling lights, and you can experience the sights and sounds from the comfort of your motorhome.

Scenically situated just a few miles off Interstates 85 and 185, Callaway Gardens and Warm Springs present a perfect stopover opportunity for passers-through — and a wonderful weekend getaway destination for residents of the Deep South. ♦

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## IN DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK, THE HILLS, FLOWERS, DUNES AND BADLANDS ARE ‘DESERT GOLD’

by BERT GILDART

**F**our substantial mountain passes provide access into California’s Death Valley National Park, and because they are high, weather conditions vary dramatically from those encountered in the valley far below.

Consider, for example, Towne Pass, a broad gap in the Panamint Mountains that my wife, Janie, and I crossed in late January. Surrounding the 4,956-foot pass were snow-capped peaks, several of which stood as high as 11,000 feet.

The temperature at Towne had also contained a wintry bite, registering 49 degrees Fahrenheit, but as we began dropping toward Stove Pipe Wells the look and feel changed. At an elevation of 2,000 feet, flowers began inserting themselves into the otherwise rocky landscape. Then, shortly thereafter, we saw brown-eyed evening primrose putting forth tiny white blossoms. But as we dropped yet farther — descending to sea level — the look was even more pronounced. The temperature registered 75 degrees, and it was here that spring flowers ran rampant. They filled canyons that feed into this immense valley called Death Valley. They so dominated the land with their one radiant color that when we closed our eyes we saw only the endless gold of a species known as desert gold.

Because that picture lingered in the valley’s depths for the entire three weeks of our stay, gold — desert gold — soon became a byword for many of the park’s other features, attractions and mysteries.

“Look at Telescope Peak.” It towers more than 11,000 feet high and Badwater sinks to 282 feet below sea level. “Now that’s real desert gold.” Such was the wording of some of our many metaphorical rambles.

Death Valley was established in 1933 as a national

In Southern California’s 3.3-million-acre Death Valley National Park, the dominant color is “desert gold,” as the canyons are filled with flowers in this single radiant hue. Far left: The author’s wife and a friend descend into Ubehebe Crater. Middle: Among the park’s sand dunes are five huge mounds. Some say that one set, the Eureka Dunes, can “sing.” What happens is that when sand granules rub against one another, the friction creates a sound similar to that of a bow moving across the strings of a violin. Near left: Scotty’s Castle, one of California’s most luxurious turn-of-the-century “castles,” is named after the colorful Death Valley character Scotty, a trick rider for Buffalo Bill Cody.



PHOTOS: BERT GILDART





Clockwise from below: A hiker explores Charcoal Kilns in the Panamint Mountains. Mule-team wagons are preserved at Harmony Borax Works. The wagon treks provided a backdrop for the 1950s TV series "Death Valley Days." Visitors leave Zabriskie Point and pass through Golden Canyon. One scenic drive takes RVers past the aptly named Teakettle Junction.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

**DEATH VALLEY NATIONAL PARK**  
 760-786-3200,  
[www.nps.gov/deva](http://www.nps.gov/deva).



monument — an area set aside by President Herbert Hoover. At the time, Death Valley National Monument engulfed a 2-million-acre expanse of land that even then bisected massive mountain ranges.

In 1994 the monument was dramatically increased by virtue of the California Desert Protection Act. At the time, Congress deemed it fit to change its status from monument to park — something that requires congressional approval — and provide additional environmental protection by designating 91 percent of the park's acreage as wilderness. Today, at a little more than 3.3 million acres, Death Valley is the largest national park outside of those in Alaska.

Because so much of the park is wilderness, hikers and other backcountry users will be greeted with the same types

of conditions that so many of the early explorers — and even the early prospectors — encountered. You'll discover two vast and beautiful desert regions, specifically the Mojave and Great Basin.

Though these deserts vary most notably in vegetation, they retain the basic underlying words defining all deserts, receiving less than 10 inches of rainfall a year. Death Valley, however, surpasses those entry-level standards, and in most parts, receives less than 1½ inches of rain a year.

But despite the apparent scarcity of water, Native Americans who once roamed the valley knew that there was no place in the valley more than 15 miles from potable water. That does not mean, however, that you can embark on a hike without an adequate supply of water. Tragically, in 2001, a summer hiker perished from heatstroke less

than a mile from a front-country trailhead.

The man perished near Zabriskie Point, one of the most enticing areas in the park and an easy drive from Furnace Creek. Except for a cap of chocolate-colored candy, the hills here are, in fact, the color of gold and give rise to some of this area's nomenclature. Trails course throughout these rolling hills, and if you want, you can make a great loop starting in Golden Canyon, returning then to your vehicle via an interconnecting trail down Gower Gulch.

You can also hike these beautiful badlands with a park naturalist, and if you are not yet a desert rat, that might be a good way to begin your exploration of Death Valley. That's what we did years ago, joining a ranger-conducted trip led by Charlie Callagan. He's a great naturalist and a good salesman, and knows the trigger phrases that will prompt further exploration.

As we hiked, he spoke of a river that disappears; of a strange species of fish adapted to a very salty Salt Creek. And, then, raising his eyebrows, he told of rocks that move, sands that sing and historical characters that bamboozled their followers at every turn.

Because he also gives a talk on the park's record temperatures, he invariably lures you to his lecture on heat, saying that while the park has the world's hottest official average temperatures, it also produces the world's hottest.

Death Valley may in fact be the hottest place on Earth. Although the world record is held by the African country of Libya, which registered 136 degrees at a weather station called Azizia, Death Valley has an official record of 134 degrees recorded at Furnace Creek on July 10, 1913. And here's when Charlie made his case.

"Twenty miles away," says the ranger, "Badwater averages 4 degrees hotter on any given day. Doesn't it then follow that on that historic day of 1913, when it was 134 at Furnace Creek, it was 138 at Badwater?"

"I think so," concluded Charlie. "But on that day there was no one around at Badwater."

With such torrid temperatures, it is not surprising that the bulk of RVers visit in the winter, and after setting up at Furnace Creek, Texas Springs or Sunset campgrounds (all in the Furnace Creek complex), we always find that the easy one-mile bike

ride from the campground to the Harmony Borax Works provides a nice eye-opening excursion. Along the way, we may see a road-runner and sometimes a coyote. Upon arrival, however, we always learn more about "white gold," or borax, and how this substance helped to establish a TV series.

At this well-preserved site the use of charcoal at the Charcoal Kilns in the Panamint Mountains is spelled out — and then linked to the great 20-mule-team wagons preserved here at Harmony Borax Works. Once these wagons were used to transport borax to the railhead at Mojave and these treks of great hardship eventually provided the romantic backdrop for the U.S. Borax Company's popular 1950s TV series "Death Valley Days," once hosted by Ronald Reagan. But don't stop exploring the area after reading the panels or listening to the naturalist. Sometimes this area is also the setting for vast sweeps of desert gold, fields that actually glitter when backlit by the afternoon sun. Poke among these flowers and you may well find more gold, such as the rare desert five-spot.

Though what glitters for some will not always glitter for others, I contend the park's sand dunes will always enrich the heart and soul. The park has five huge mounds and devotees like to say that one set, the Eureka Dunes, actually "sings." Apparently, sand particles there are of such a size that when granules rub, the resulting friction generates a sound like a bow moving across a violin.

Certainly the huge Eureka Dunes are the park's most magnificent, but they are also difficult to reach and, so, when it comes to dunes, we defer to Mesquite Flat Dunes, located almost adjacent to the campground at Stove Pipe Wells. The best time to visit these dunes is just after the coyotes have ceased yipping. At such times, bold shadows leap out and reveal a multitude of nocturnal stories, all written in the dunes. In one area you may see where a sidewinder has looped its way across the sand. Intermingled with these impressions may be the tracks of a kangaroo rat. Sometimes these prints end abruptly, and then you know a coyote or sidewinder has dined. Certainly you'll remember all such scenes, but what will stir your memory forever is the recollection of the feel of sand on your sandals and the golden light that

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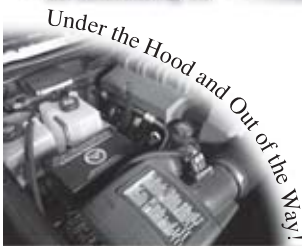
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illuminates each particle of sand.

Death Valley also offers a number of fascinating drives, both on paved and unpaved roads. The Racetrack is popular with visitors, but rangers will warn you about the rough road conditions. It is a rocky, gravel road that is graded occasionally. A high-clearance vehicle with sturdy tires is recommended. The road is 27 miles one way and the biggest problem for visitors is flat tires. So, if the Racetrack is on your list, come prepared. The Racetrack Road begins near the young Ubehebe Crater. Here the asphalt gives way to rock, mud and sand, and this challenging road surface then conveys you to Teakettle Junction. The road continues seven more miles to the Racetrack where you can then study the mysterious tracks left on the dry lake bed by the movement of large rocks.

A less challenging but equally interesting road departs from Stovepipe and ascends into the Grapevine Mountains. The drive is particularly enjoyable in late spring, when afternoon temperatures climb into the 90s. The road takes you to the Charcoal Kilns and then, a few dirt-road miles from here, provides access to the Telescope Peak Trailhead. The trail is challenging and climbs past stands of bristlecone pines (the oldest living species of tree in the world) and takes you to the 11,049-foot-high mountaintop. From here you can look down on Badwater and enjoy some of the greatest vertical relief in all of North America.

But you can also drive to Badwater (about 18 miles from Furnace Creek) and we find this to be a particularly inspiring early-morning experience. At 282 feet below sea level, you are not only at the lowest place in North America, but, also, one of the most beautiful. Here, when Telescope Peak reflects into the salty water contained at Badwater, images are golden, not only in the metaphorical sense but also in the literal. It's what will draw you back time after time and why you will never really say "Goodbye, Death Valley."

Another drive, the West Side Road, is a good 40-mile-long dirt road that takes you to the area historians believe early gold-seeking parties once traveled, trying to escape Death Valley. History tells us that in 1849 the Bennette-Arcane Party had

trudged through endless expanses of sand, sunk in salt marshes, ground their way over lifeless gullies of rocks and boulders, and then ascended the Panamints. Upon ascending to a pass, a member of the party, recalling their near encounters with starvation and no water, looked back and muttered, "Goodbye, Death Valley."

Though the name stuck, word was out: Someone discovered Death Valley contained gold and from that time on, the hills and valleys began to crawl with prospectors. Many were genuine characters, as you might expect from grizzled old men with names like Shorty Harris, Pete Aguerberry and Seldom Seen Slim. Each added a chapter to the park's history, but one man was such a character that stories of his life here generated books.

"Death Valley Scotty" first made money as a trick rider for Buffalo Bill Cody. Learning of gold strikes in California, he journeyed to Death Valley. Scotty found his riches here, but not because he was a good miner, rather because he could spin a good yarn. Eventually this ability produced one

of California's most luxurious turn-of-the-century "castles."

But how did all this come about? Quite simply Scotty was the quintessential con artist, who managed to befriend Albert Johnson, an accident-weakened Chicago millionaire who overlooked Scotty's beguiling ways. Instead, Johnson thanked Scotty for restoring his vigor by investing his wealth in Scotty's ideas.

Scotty's story should be explored in depth, but in brief, Scotty was simply a good friend of Johnson's who told fascinating stories. His tall tales of lost gold mines endeared him to the local populace. Once, for instance, when asked to explain why an ornament on a door contained two holes, Scotty explained the device optimized the capabilities of a fired bullet. If two thieves (generally gold thieves in his stories) entered, his tale claimed only one shot was necessary to incapacitate his assailants. His yarn insisted the bullet would hit the knife-edged piece of metal, split, and then be deflected in two directions, simultaneously sending both as-

sailants to Boot Hill.

You've got to see it to believe it. Just remember, it's called "Scotty's Castle," not "Johnson's Castle."

But there are other things you must also see to believe. You've got to drive to Salt Creek and see the desert pupfish and taste the salty water in which they live. If you have the appropriate vehicle and the right type of tires, you've got to drive to the Racetrack and look at the tracks left by rocks that have actually moved on the flat playa. Could it be that powerful gusts of wind powered the boulders following one of the infrequent winter rains?

And, of course, you've got to walk among the fields of desert gold. And when you do, you'll understand why so many of us no longer say "Goodbye, Death Valley." Like others, we have not only discovered gold, but we've also learned that there's always a new way to mine it. All we've got to do is point our rig in the appropriate direction, and then holler out: "Hello, Death Valley. Here we come again!"

The rest simply takes care of itself. ♦

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## 2011 SPORTSCOACH CROSS COUNTRY 390TS

A triple-slide diesel-pusher  
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**Y**our faithful gasser has provided thousands of miles and years of safe and reliable family fun and now you're ready to step up and experience new adventures behind the wheel of a diesel-pusher. But which one?

Offering the amenities and features expected in higher-priced coaches, the Sportcoach Cross Country rides on Freightliner's XC straight-rail chassis with front air discs and a 55-degree wheel cut. Cummins' 6.7-L, six-cylinder ISB powers the coach, generating 340 HP and 660 LB-FT of torque, channeled through the six-speed Allison push-button, lockup transmission. Variable geometry turbocharging complements performance, economy and enhanced engine braking, eliminating the need for add-on exhaust brake components.

The 390TS triple-slide floorplan uses the time-proven forward cabin, amidships galley and rear bath and bedroom formula. Versatile seating includes a curbside sofa bed with adjustable pneumatic mattress across from a very comfortable paired set of fixed-back lounge chairs and matching ottomans. The lounges share the streetside slide with a facing booth-style dinette that has a gas strut assisted easy-drop table. All seating provides a clear view to the hutch and the wall-mounted 32-inch LCD TV with separate DVD player. The coach is prewired for satellite as standard equipment and is equipped with cable TV connections and phone jacks.

Pleasing medium-toned cherry cabinetry with solid raised-wood door panels and matching trim surround the cabin's overhead and cockpit, providing needed storage for a trip of any length. An easy to clean padded vinyl ceiling houses recessed halogen lighting and the ducting for the twin air-conditioning system while the matching floor-ducted twin-



furnace system handles chilly days. The streetside living area is carpeted and a handsome faux stone Beauflor floor vinyl, in matching cabinet hues, eliminates carpet cleanup chores in high traffic areas.

Meals in the Cross Country are prepared in the efficient galley, which is contained entirely in the curbside slide. A three-burner cooktop is aided by the overhead stainless convection/microwave combo with cookware and full-extension drawer storage below. Solid surface countertops make cleanup an easy task with help from the pullout double-basin-sink faucet. The optional stainless 8-cubic-foot, four-door refrigerator completes the galley.

The bath is split across the coach; a private toilet room is opposite the neo-corner shower with domed skylight. A storage lav with medicine cabinet next to the shower creates a dressing area with privacy provided by use of pocket doors at both ends of the bath area.

The queen pedestal bed shares space in the third streetside slide with the bath's dividing wall and lav cabinetry. Small nightstands that can hold eyeglasses and other small items are provided as well as full-width overhead storage. At the foot of the bed is a three-drawer dresser. There is also additional overhead storage and a recessed 19-inch LCD TV and separate DVD player.

In many diesel-pushers, the rear wall is





## SPECIFICATIONS

<b>CHASSIS:</b> FREIGHTLINER XCS	<b>INTERIOR HEIGHT:</b> 6' 7"
<b>ENGINE:</b> CUMMINS ISB 6.7-L 340 HP	<b>WHEELBASE:</b> 242"
<b>GVWR:</b> 27,910 LBS	<b>FRESHWATER CAP:</b> 79 GAL
<b>LENGTH:</b> 39' 4"	<b>GRAY-WATER CAP:</b> 45 GAL
<b>WIDTH:</b> 8' 6"	<b>BLACK-WATER CAP:</b> 46 GAL
<b>HEIGHT WITH A/C:</b> 12'	<b>LP-GAS CAP:</b> 41.6 GAL
	<b>BASE PRICE:</b> \$193,713

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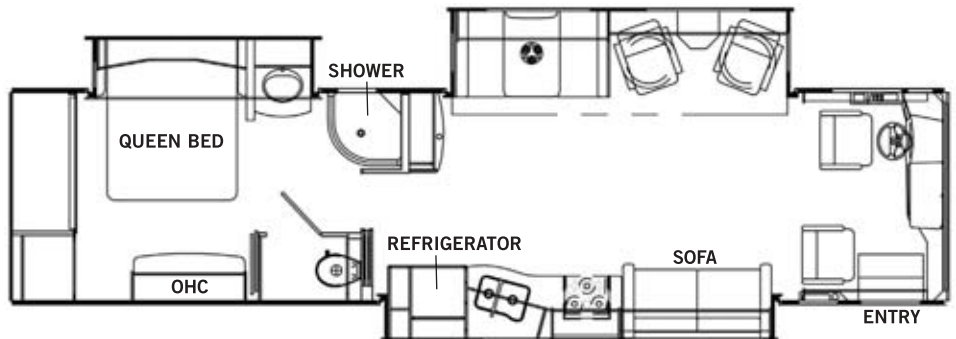
generally reserved for closet storage because of the raised floor required by the drivetrain's cooling system. In this coach, a flat floor all the way to the rear wall allows easy access to 64 inches of hanging closet space with the remainder in vented door cabinet storage, already plumbed for a washer/dryer combo unit.

Comfortable, manual cockpit swivel seats with armrests anchor a full and complete cockpit. All the driver amenities expected in this class of motorhome come as standard equipment, including a weather and satellite-capable radio. The only available cockpit option is a side-view camera system added to the standard rear-view system.

Exterior highlights include full-body paint, auto leveling jacks, a 6kW AC generator, slide and patio awnings, auxiliary air inflation connections, black tank flush system and side-hinged storage compartment doors — again, all standard equipment.

The Sportscoach Cross Country offers the entry or move-up RV enthusiast a complete drive-away diesel-pusher package with few needed options at an attractive price point for the savvy shopper.

Our thanks to McMahon's RV in Irvine, Calif., for providing this motorhome for our review. ♦



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# COOL RUNNINGS

## THE WHY AND HOW OF ROOF A/C REPLACEMENT

by CHRIS HEMER

**T**he ability to take refuge from the elements is one of the reasons we love our motorhomes so much. While a tent can fulfill the basic need for shelter when roughing it, there's nothing like walking into a motorhome with the thermostat set at exactly the right temperature. In the spring, summer and even some fall months (depending on where you live), that means an air-conditioning system that's blowing reliably cool air to keep you and your pets comfortable.

Like any component or system in your coach, the roof A/C system won't last forever, and at some point will

likely require replacement.

This could be due to a mechanical or electrical problem, or in the case of the example we're featuring here, because the refrigerant has leaked out and the unit no longer blows cold air.

Wait a second ... it's necessary to replace the roof A/C when it's out of refrigerant? In a word, yes — but there is a logical explanation for this. Older A/C units use a refrigerant called R-22, which was deemed harmful to the environment, and is being phased out under federal law (you might recall a similar instance in the world of automotive air

conditioners, where R-12 refrigerant was phased out in favor of the more environmentally friendly R-134A). Since January, air-conditioner manufacturers have stopped producing new units containing R-22. An EPA-approved substitute for R-22 is an environmentally friendly refrigerant called R-410A.

Why does this matter to you? Because although R-22 refrigerant is still available, it has been taxed to the point where it is no longer cost-effective to recharge an older unit with it. Even if it were, consider that it could be very difficult for even a qualified professional



to find the leak, and the labor costs associated with the repair could likely be more than a new unit. Finally, the new R-410A refrigerant isn't compatible with older units, so replacement of the entire assembly is really the most cost-effective solution.

What follows is the basic removal and replacement of a roof air conditioner on a 20-year-old Holiday Rambler motorhome at Imperial Custom Body and Diesel in Port Orchard, Wash. As its name implies, Imperial specializes in body and paint (the shop is equipped with a 40-foot paint booth) and diesel repair, as well as all types of general repair and maintenance.

It should be noted that the level of difficulty involved with such a job could vary widely depending on the year of the coach and the type of air-conditioning system it is equipped with. For example, the thermostat in some older ducted A/C units may not be able to communicate with your replacement unit because the electronics are no longer compatible. In these instances, the circuit board and/or the thermostat may need to be replaced as well.

According to Brad Sargent, vice president of marketing for Dometic Corp., the company has about 70,000 part numbers — so learning what you're going to need to complete the job could be confusing. If you happen to be replacing a Dometic unit, Sargent recommends that you call the company's customer service line, describe the issue you're experiencing, and provide the model and serial numbers of the unit in question. From that information, customer service should be able to tell you what you're going to need in the way of parts. Alternately, you can contact the nearest servicing dealer for help (click on the Customer Support tab on the website).

With the right parts and information, you'll be able to keep your cool for years to come. ♦



The original Dometic unit was replaced with a similar 13,500 Btu low-profile Dometic Penguin. This unit is only 9.5 inches tall and has a clean, aerodynamic appearance.



**STEP 3.** The underside of the A/C unit reveals the ducting, foam gasket and wiring harness with male connector. Many new A/C units are available as a direct replacement for your old one, but be sure that the male connector on your new unit is compatible with the female receptacle in your RV. If not, you'll either have to order another unit that is compatible, or rewire the receptacle in your motorhome to accommodate the new harness. It's better to find out now than after you've installed the unit.



**STEP 1.** You may not have considered how you're going to get your new A/C unit on the roof, but it's something to seriously think about before ordering it. These units are large and heavy (about 100 pounds), so if there's no practical way to get it up there safely, consider leaving the job to professionals. Imperial General Manager Ed Hall uses straps and a chain hoist attached to the shop's roof beams to move the unit to the roof.



**STEP 4.** The job begins with removing the old cover, as this will provide access to the wiring harness and fasteners that clamp the A/C unit to the roof.



**STEP 2.** The original Dometic Duo-Therm unit did its job for many years, but stopped blowing cold air eventually. Unfortunately, it is not cost-effective to recharge these older units with new refrigerant, so they should be replaced.



**STEP 5.** This unit had side vents that were removed to gain access to the main cover fasteners.

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**STEP 6.** From this view, standing at the back of the coach and looking forward, you can see where the A/C unit's plug is connected to the power receptacle.



**STEP 7.** Next, the main cover is removed to reveal the sheet metal and ducting.



**STEP 8.** Hall begins removing screws that hold the motorhome's sheet metal work in place, then holds it with one hand as the last few screws are removed.



**STEP 9.** With the sheet metal removed, you can see the bottom of the A/C unit, along with the layers of block foam insulation in the roof.



**STEP 10.** Now it's a simple matter of pushing up on the unit to break the seal. Typically, sealant isn't used at the factory, but the foam gasket can still get sticky with age.



**STEP 11.** As mentioned, sealant is typically not used at the factory level, but Hall says a little bit provides extra insurance against leaks, especially on compromised surfaces. He centers the new unit over the hole, tips it back, applies the sealant, then carefully lowers the unit in place.



**STEP 12.** The new unit is now in place. Hall prefers to remove the cover before installation so it won't get dirty while being handled.



**STEP 13.** Once the unit is in place on the roof, go back inside the motorhome and make sure that it's properly aligned in the hole. If not, small adjustments can be made while the sealant is still wet.



**STEP 14.** Here, the new unit is in place with the cover on, ready for 20 more years of use.



PHOTO: BOB LIVINGSTON

# FORETRAVEL PHENIX 45'

THE COMPANY THAT C.M. FORE BUILT FROM SCRATCH LIVES ON AS A PURVEYOR OF LUXURY CUSTOM MOTOR COACHES

*by* BOB LIVINGSTON





N

acogdoches may be recognized as the oldest city in Texas, but to the RV crowd, it's the birthplace of Foretravel, one of the oldest motorhome marques in the business. It was 44 years ago when C.M. Fore sketched out a plan for a motorhome for his son's high school project, which led to the birth of the first Foretravel. Since then, Foretravel has built a legendary name among the motorhoming fraternity, dealing almost exclusively from its plant in East Texas.

Fore no longer rides herd over the company, leaving the legacy of building quality coaches to new owner Lyle Reed and a small investor group. Since that change in ownership, there's been quite an evolution at the Nacogdoches plant. What used to be rock-solid coaches with very conservative design and décor (the company was one of the last to offer slideouts, for example) have been transformed into some of the most luxurious motorhomes on the road.

Today, it takes a minimum of \$550,000 (suggested retail price) to get into a new Foretravel, with the Phenix coach price tag reaching seven figures. Those understated interiors of yesterday that gave way to top-notch fit and finish and engineering prowess have been allocated to the archives. Foretravel coaches now rival bus conversions with wow factors left to the whims of potential owners. And quality has reached a pinnacle in the world of high-tech motorhome manufacturing.

We were given the opportunity to evaluate the company's flagship product, the Phenix, a handsome coach that measures 45 feet long and is graced with

**SPECIFICATIONS**

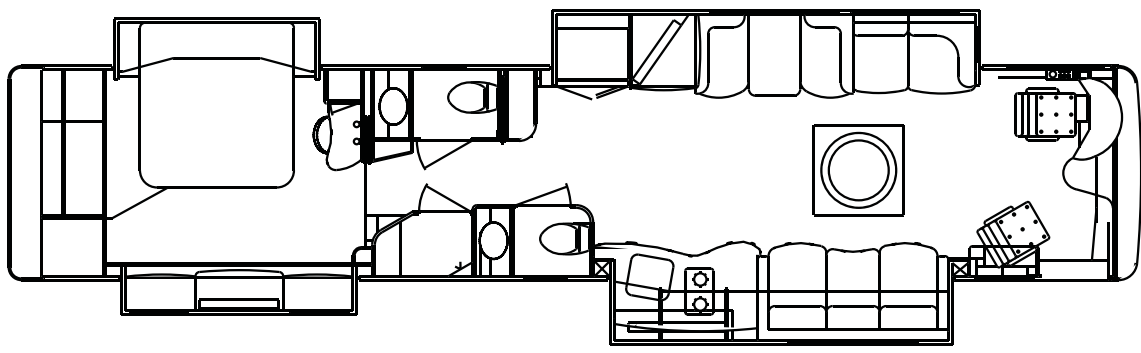
<b>CHASSIS:</b> PROPRIETARY	<b>HEIGHT:</b> 12' 5"
<b>ENGINE:</b> CUMMINS ISX 650 HP	<b>WHEELBASE:</b> 304"
<b>FUEL:</b> 200 GAL	<b>FRESHWATER CAP:</b> 135 GAL
<b>GVWR:</b> 52,000 LBS	<b>GRAY/BLACK-WATER CAP:</b> 145 GAL
<b>LENGTH:</b> 45'	<b>MSRP:</b> \$1,061,740
<b>WIDTH:</b> 8' 6"	

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four slideout rooms. The uniquely designed 1½-bath floorplan cleverly positions both bathrooms in the aisle that separates the rear bedroom from the rest of the coach. Strategically placed doors allow the bathroom on the streetside and the opposing shower to be incorporated into the bedroom suite, allowing guests access to the other bathroom without sacrificing privacy.

Once you leave bathroom territory walking toward the front, you'll be entering space devoted to the living room, kitchen and dinette. Foretravel offers a few floorplans as starting points; from here the customer works very closely with the company's custom design team consisting of a design engineer, an ASID interior designer and a graphic artist. The end result is a collaborative effort between the company and client, and a one-of-a-kind motor coach.

The coach is built from the ground up, starting with a proprietary chassis that rides on an independent front suspension with air bags on all four corners, disc brakes





with ABS and a tag axle. The structure consists of a welded steel chassis, 1½-inch rigid extruded plastic-foam-insulated laminated steel side walls, an insulated laminated floor with a layer of sound-proofing material between two pieces of plywood, a trussed insulated laminated subfloor and cargo bays, and an insulated roof made of aluminum. A one-piece fiberglass covers the roof and the side walls; front and rear caps are all fiberglass. The motorhome is finished with a luscious full-body BASF paint job.

Power comes from a 650-HP Cummins ISX engine coupled with an Allison 4000MHR transmission with Foretravel's signature retarder. The high-performance drivetrain combined with the substantial weight of the coach and the responsive suspension plant the motorhome firmly on the pavement, making for comfortable driving and precise handling.

Once the driver is belted into the Knoedler Air Chief seat and the passenger sinks into the mini-couch with power controls, it's hard to leave the cockpit — especially after using the copilot chair's heat/massage feature. The passenger can also control the navigation system or don headphones to use the personal monitor/TV/DVD player that's on an articulating arm.

Forward visibility is excellent and the three-piece mirrors virtually eliminate blind spots. Just in case, the driver can use the backup monitor that provides views of both sides, front and rear — and can dig-

itally process the images and show a bird's-eye view all around the coach, which is very handy for close maneuvering. Long hauls are easy to make, especially when backed up by a 200-gallon fuel tank.

Even the most diehard road warriors eventually stop for the night, and once the four flush-fitting slides are deployed using the HWH hydraulic system and sealed with the air bladders, the interior opens up into a palatial home. Multidimensional ceiling panels, gorgeous African Bubinga wood cabinetry and stunning tile floors with mosaic handiwork blend harmoniously with the plush furniture and wall coverings — featuring remote-controlled MCD shades. Lighting is superb and manipulated by a system of multiplexed buttons throughout the interior.

Opposing couches and the dinette booth provide the lounging and eating environment up front. The couches and booth are covered in soft Ultrasuede and have a very soothing feel. A 42-inch LCD TV hooked to a Blu-ray player and high-end home theater system is easily viewed from most of the seating positions.

Tucked between the curbside couch and half-bath is the galley. Any perceived lack of counterspace is offset by all the necessities for modest cooking stints using the twin-burner stove, convection/microwave, solid-surface countertops complemented by tile-covered backsplashes and plenty of cabinets to store foodstuffs — although we assume owners of this coach frequent restaurants. Cold items are handled in the home-style, 120-volt AC

refrigerator with water and ice dispensers in one of two doors. Dishes can be washed in the stainless sink with designer faucet or placed in the dishwasher in a drawer.

Separating the living area and galley from the bedroom suite are the aforementioned half-baths and walk-in shower. Inside these half-baths are a china toilet and beautiful lavatory with oval sink, designer faucet and enough carefully placed tile to create a stunning pattern. The rearmost bath opens directly across from the shower stall. Exquisite hand-laid tile — again creating very artistic patterns — high-end fixtures and a large skylight give this shower uncontested luxury status.

The striking wood and contrasting walls, carpeting, ceiling sculpture, window coverings and bedspread provide pure eye candy to the occupants of the bedroom. There are plenty of cabinets to store clothing and personal items, and the rear closet with mirrored doors opens to a spacious area with enough room to contain the stacking washer/dryer. A king-size SlumberEase mattress system makes breakfast in bed almost mandatory.

Outside, the Phenix has all the amenities expected of a million-dollar coach. Exterior compartments abound with one outfitted for hooking up utilities and two pass-through bays. The outdoor entertainment center can be located in one of the storage bays, or as in the model reviewed, the large flat-screen TV was placed in the front curbside slide to save cargo space. The rest of the under-floor storage areas can handle up to 4,480 pounds of supplies and toys, after counting the weight of all the liquids. Plus the coach can tow up to 18,000 pounds of dinghy vehicle (or trailer) with a hitch weight up to 2,700 pounds. Of course, that number will be dependent on overall loading.

There's not much missing in a motor coach of this caliber. If there is, the owner either forgot to include it in the plans or didn't know it existed. Foretravel has come a long way since the subject coach of Fore's son's high school project. Over the years, the brand has attracted a loyal following, and even though the Fores resisted change for the sake of change, the models progressed nicely, albeit slowly, over the years. Today Foretravel coaches have become a viable player in the field of custom coaches earmarked for discriminating buyers. ♦



# A MOTORHOME REMODEL WITH FLAIR

FOR LESS THAN \$1,000, AN RV OWNER CREATES EXTRA SPACE, FUNCTIONALITY AND LIVABILITY IN HIS 2008 CLASS A

by KENNETH E. EHLERS



Top: The author's Class A came stock with a sofa and club chair. Right: By removing the couch and chair and adding two free-standing recliner chairs the living space was expanded and the cockpit seats can now be turned around. Above: The recliners are neatly secured with straps and hook-and-loop fastener when the coach is underway.

**M**y wife and I purchased our first motorhome in June 2008. Our experience with motorhomes, up to that point, had been limited to a one-week rental so we approached our purchase conservatively and bought a 30-foot Class A Fleetwood Flair 30H. While it did come equipped with a backup camera and automatic levelers it did not come with any slides and, at the time, we felt that was something we really didn't need or want.

About a year later we started thinking about the advantages of having a motorhome with a little more room to move around in. Unfortunately, by the time we made the decision to upgrade to a coach with slides the market had pretty much collapsed and we were solidly upside-down on our loan, making any purchase impossible. We then began to consider how we might "remodel" our current home to make it more livable, comfortable and attractive to us. Our goal was to provide more space in both the living

room and the kitchen/dining area.

Our Flair came with a fold-down couch behind the driver's seat and a club chair behind the passenger seat. The couch was simply not comfortable to sit on for long periods of time and the club chair was only used as a repository for coats, hats and any other items tossed onto it. Both the couch and the club chair precluded the ability to turn either the driver or the passenger chair around so they could be used while parked, even though they were much more comfortable. So we decided the couch and chair had to go.

After an extended search we finally settled on two Mac Motion Recliner chairs from Sears for about \$360 each. These chairs are 30 inches wide, making them ideal for use in a more confined space while still providing ample room for seating. They also swivel 360 degrees, have adjustable headrests, adjustable recline, and at 40 pounds can be moved about the coach with relative ease. While they did



**Top:** In order to extend the usable floor space, the author built a carpeted entry door platform with a handle to place over the stairwell. He also added a fold-down table that he attached to the wall behind the copilot seat, right. **Above left:** When in camp, the recliner sits atop the new entry door platform and creates an ideal place to use a laptop or play a game of cribbage.



**BEFORE**

**Above:** The motorhome's booth dinette had a table that extended 43 inches out from the wall. The table was shortened by 12 inches to create more space in the walkway area. One of the dinette benches was removed and replaced with a free-standing dining chair, which is secured during travel, right.



**AFTER**

come with footrests, we do not use them in our coach. Central Point RV in Central Point, Ore., installed brackets with straps and hook-and-loop fastener to secure them during travel.

We also wanted to expand the usable floor space in the living room area of the coach. The entry door on the Flair is about one-third back

from the front of the coach. This leaves an unusable space of about 17 inches by 24 inches for the stairs. I had observed that those coaches that have an entry door at the very front usually have a platform that extends to provide a floor for the passenger. I constructed a similar platform from ¾-inch plywood and 2-inch-wide steel

strips, covered it with carpet and attached a handle. Once we are settled in, this platform is easily placed over the stairwell. While it may not seem like much added area, it greatly expands the usability of the space. For storage, it is placed just under the entrance handrail and secured with a hook-and-loop strip.

We also added an oak finish wall table purchased from Camping World for \$70 and attached it to the wall behind the passenger chair. This space-saving table portion folds down when not in use and works great as a stand for our laptop or our nightly cribbage game. As a result of these changes, both the driver's chair and the passenger's chair can now be turned around, creating comfortable, face-to-face seating for four when necessary and ample room for everyone.

The original eating area for the Flair consisted of a booth arrangement with two bench seats and a table extending 43 inches out from the wall, leaving only a narrow walkway for working at the sink/stove. This was a real bottleneck for us. One of the bench seats had to stay because it contained electrical connections and the handrail for the entryway. We felt the other one, however, was completely expendable and had it removed. In its place we put a standard wooden dining chair (which stores against the wall, again with hook-and-loop fastener) and shortened the table by some 12 inches.

The chair takes up much less space and is easier to get in and out of. For us there is plenty of table space remaining as long as we make sure the area does not contain any clutter. This greatly opened up the walkway, increased access to the refrigerator and makes working in the kitchen a real pleasure. And, as my wife says, "We can even dance in the kitchen if we want to."

We are very happy with the changes we made to our Flair. We spent less than \$1,000 and made the interior of our motorhome much more functional, livable and comfortable. ♦



# SPORTSMOBILE RB50 4WD

ADVENTURE IS LITERALLY IN YOUR HANDS  
WITH THIS FOUR-WHEEL-DRIVE CLASS B

by JEFF JOHNSTON



The cockpit of the Sportsmobile RB50 unit we tested was driver-friendly and easy to operate. That's because it's built on the familiar Ford E-Series chassis. A 2.7-cubic-foot, all-electric refrigerator and microwave oven are the built-in galley appliances. A solar panel, battery setup and inverter power it all when off the grid.

**W**hile most motorhomes are like luxurious rolling living rooms, a Sportsmobile is completely different. With this 4WD Class B, the trip is definitely an adventure.

Although the company will build its product to order on a GM, Ford or Mercedes-Benz Sprinter chassis, 4WD is not

available on the GM chassis. The Sprinter chassis uses its own factory-delivered 4WD system.

Interestingly, Sportsmobile's proprietary 4WD system used in the Ford motorhomes is considered so well-built that a number of law enforcement and government agencies needing a van-based 4WD





A foldaway cabinet/work shelf/storage unit on the side door supports a portable stove, acts as an outdoor galley and can be used as a food-prep area.



An optional quick-release shower hose fitting came mounted in the rear compartment of the unit we tested, so cleanup took place at the back of the motorhome.



The pop-top houses a bunk, but the lower level can be converted to either a lounge (pictured) or a comfortable bunk for sleeping.

## 2010 SPORTSMOBILE RB50

### WHAT'S HOT

4WD go-anywhere ability, complete customization, many body styles and brands, easy drivability

### WHAT'S NOT

Average fuel economy, minimal fluid capacities, non-LP-gas appliances, outdoor shower

unit are regular customers.

Right up front we need to be clear that this RV is not for those on tight budgets and it's tough to pin down a price on a typical Sportsmobile. That's because every one is custom-built. The one we tested here is stickered at around \$100,000 because it has just about every option in the book, although we're sure a determined shopper could find something else to add to the list.

At that price, why choose a 4WD Class B? Because it's easy to drive, can be parked almost anywhere and can tow a boat or other toys. And this is a motorhome that can take you anywhere.

### STOCKED UP

The standard Regular Body (RB) 50 4WD motorhome we tested included the signature Sportsmobile Penthouse fold-down-roof hardtop (\$5,432) with fabric side walls.

In travel mode the top offers a low profile and is aerodynamic for reduced wind resistance. In camp, the roof lifts easily with the assistance of the optional electric top feature (\$1,094) to provide 6 feet 8 inches of interior headroom.

Other optional features, such as the utilitarian Trojan front and rear bumpers (\$2,158 and \$2,523), Warn M12000 winch (\$1,198), Hella fog lamps (\$236) and Bushwacker flares (\$412) certainly helped to increase the RV's adventure

image. The winch and lamps would be worth every penny when needed.

After loading the motorhome with our gear, an easy task because of the many storage cubbyholes built in, we headed up the highway for the brief high-speed part of our jaunt into the Sierra Nevada east of Fresno, Calif.

The motorhome's 6.0-L turbodiesel engine easily pushed the Sportsmobile up the grades with power to spare. The optional BFGoodrich tires on 17-inch custom rims (\$2,485) howled a little, but that's expected from an aggressive tire design. Those gnarly tires would be welcome friends when the paved highway turned to dirt Forest Service roads leading to those choice secret campgrounds. We encountered a little bit of bump steer

## SPECIFICATIONS

**CHASSIS:** FORD E-SERIES

**ENGINE:** 6.0-L TURBODIESEL

**GVWR:** 9,990 LBS

**LENGTH:** 19' 6"

**WIDTH:** 6' 7"

**HEIGHT:** 7' 11"

**FRESHWATER CAP:** 16 GAL

**GRAY/BLACK-WATER CAP:** 8.5 GAL

**LP-GAS CAP:** 10 GAL

**BASE MSRP:** \$85,000

**PRICE AS TESTED:** \$100,147

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on irregular road surfaces, but nothing obnoxious. The custom front leaf-spring suspension is firm, but not stiff.

The optional two-tone Ultrasuede captain's chairs (a \$307 exchange and we think worth it for long trips) made the ride as comfortable as desired for a 4WD heavy hauler. A full complement of Ford's comfort and convenience options, plus a darn good stereo, helped the miles roll by easily.

### HOME TURF

Off the pavement is where the Sportsmobile's real "adventure" becomes apparent. The floor-mounted 4WD shifter is readily accessible and easy to use. The van offers surprising rough-road agility limited only by the driver's enthusiasm for travel in really tough spots.

Our campsite at Whiskers Campground, above Bass Lake, was easy to access and provided peace and quiet in beautiful Sierra Nevada surroundings.

There's no getting around the fact that making comfortable use of a smaller motorhome like this one takes some practice and patience. By judicious use of duffle bags and packing no more than needed, and shuffling things back and forth as needed during meals or sleep time, we found the Sportsmobile comfortable and cozy. A 5-gallon water jug kept us in freshwater, and augmented the motorhome's 16-gallon onboard supply. Our large ice chest helped supplement the refrigerator.

This motorhome featured a 2.7-cubic-foot, all-electric refrigerator and a microwave oven as the built-in galley appliances. A small LP-gas tank plumbed to quick-disconnect fittings made it possible to run a portable LP-gas stove, and the company also supplied a small portable butane-fired stove.

A combined solar panel, inverter and AGM 4D battery setup powered the electric appliances in this vehicle when off the grid, but personally, we would opt for a traditional LP-gas-based system for such a vehicle.

The Espar Airtronic diesel-fueled furnace (\$2,674) worked great and operated quietly, and the "flat plate" water heater (\$862) used a heat exchanger with the engine coolant to provide hot shower or washing water. That meant the engine needed to be running, or recently running,

to heat the water properly, and that could be a problem for some users. LP-gas-fueled appliances are also available, of course.

This motorhome is well set up for those RVers who like to cook outside. The Class B includes a foldaway cabinet/work shelf/storage unit on the side door that supports a portable stove and some kitchen utensils or supplies. We used this setup every day, and the awning placement means it's also a rainy-weather facility.

The sink's gray water drains into an 8.5-gallon tank. An optional quick-release shower hose (\$280) fitting was in the rear storage compartment so bathing took place outside at the aft end of this motorhome. Such fitting placement is entirely up to the customer and can be located elsewhere in the coach if desired. There's no bathroom in this model, however a Porta Potti stored in its own special garage is included.

### POP-TOP

We especially value a good night's sleep when camping, and this motorhome delivered. We slept on the penthouse-level bed that measures about 44 inches by 72 inches. The bed is 53 inches up from the floor so some climbing using the kitchen counter is needed. Once there, we zipped open the large surrounding vinyl windows to expose the bug screens and enjoyed marvelous flow-through ventilation. Privacy flaps are standard equipment inside.

We're both full-size adults, and we found the nicely padded platform a comfortable place for a sound night's sleep. Users can choose to sleep on the lower fold-down sofa bed and rear padded platform combination as well.

A small motorhome like this Class B certainly isn't for everyone. The high cost/compact size conundrum doesn't fit many people. But if a 4WD motorhome that screams "adventure" and is capable of taking you almost anywhere and keeping you comfortable in camp sounds like your idea of fun, the Sportsmobile may be for you. ♦

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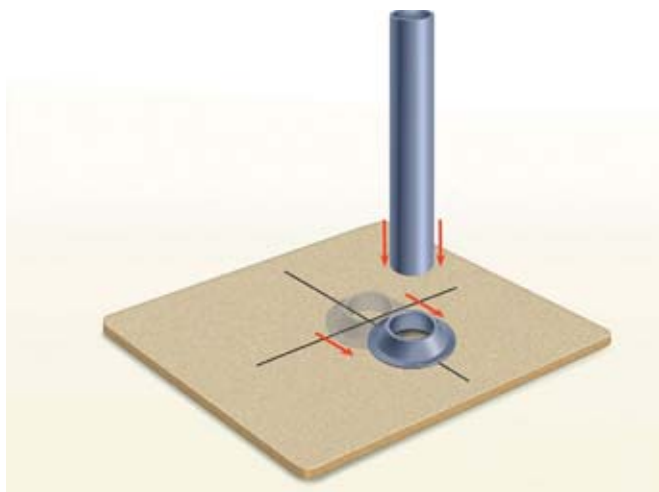
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## ▲ IMPROVED TABLE MANNERS

The floor mounting for an RV table is usually not movable. If you are slim and the table is too far away for comfort, or if you are not and the table is too close, try this solution.

The mount on the underside of the table can easily be moved with an electric screwdriver. If your motorhome's table is older, then marking and pre-drilling is recommended.

The illustration shows the mount shifted 2½ inches. This makes a 5-inch difference when the table is rotated 180 degrees.

**WILFORD CLARK | ASHLAND, ORE.**

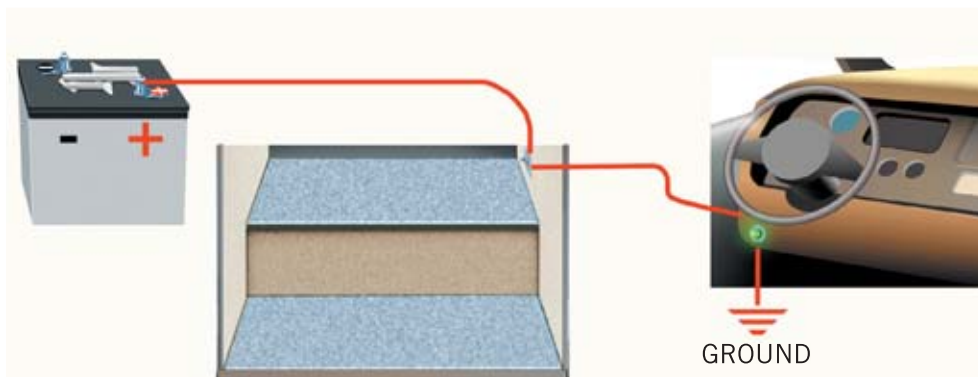


## PROTECTING EYESIGHT

In the same way that motorhome tires need to be covered to protect them from UV rays, plastic headlight lenses need to be protected from those same rays or they can become cloudy. I made protective covers from an old wheel cover by simply cutting it in half and trimming each half to size. Any fabric will do, but be sure that the dye will not transfer to your motorhome.

I hold these covers in place with plastic clothespins attached to wire wall hooks with suction cups. I chose clothespins because the springs won't rust. My clothespins have small holes on the end of each handle, but a hole could easily be drilled. I put a hook through one hole in each clothespin and crimp the hook tight. A clothespin at each end of the cover keeps the headlight protected.

**FRANK WINTER | MANALAPAN, N.J.**



## ▲ GETTING THE GREEN LIGHT

My motorhome's electric step developed a short and would extend whenever it got wet. I fixed the short, but did not trust if it was in or out so I ran a wire from the battery to a switch I attached to the step, then to the dash, and connected it to a green LED light. Now I know if the light is lit, the step is in. I got the contact switch and 12-volt DC LED from RadioShack.

**JOSEPH VOLK | PAHRUMP, NEV. ♦**

### 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, or e-mail [info@motorhomemagazine.com](mailto:info@motorhomemagazine.com). Be sure to include any photos, illustrations or drawings, if necessary. If your tip is selected for publication, you'll receive \$35.

ILLUSTRATIONS: BILL TIPTON

# techsavvy

HANDS-ON | HOT LINE | COACH & POWERTRAIN



HANDS-ON | by DAVE RIGGS

## WATERCOUNTER

A new device meters and displays gallons of freshwater actually used rather than tank level

**R**Vers who want to take full advantage of their onboard systems need to monitor freshwater levels on a regular basis. Typical monitors provide relative levels, but drilling down into gallons used is not the kind of information that's displayed or expected. The WaterCounter Water Management System takes freshwater monitoring to a new level.

Using a highly accurate (1.5 percent) flow meter/sender designed and built in Germany as the heart of the system, the WaterCounter is installed in the pressure side of the water line, which is between the demand pump and the plumbing to the

faucets, water heater and toilet. Adapters, provided with the kit, are attached to each side of the meter, leaving male  $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch NPT on the ends. From here the installer will have to determine if the meter will be cut into soft or PEX water lines and will need to acquire the necessary fittings to do so. The meter is then wired to a self-powered digital readout that can be placed just about anywhere inside the motorhome.

In theory, the installation is not difficult and should be possible to complete by most do-it-yourselfers who are not hesitant about cutting into water lines. Finding an adequate





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## WATERCOUNTER

location for the 12-inch-long (with fittings) sender may require some scouting. If there's room, the sender can be cut into the soft, reinforced hose used to connect the outlet of the pump and PEX water lines. If that's the case, 3/4-inch NPT female to 1/2-inch water-line nipples will need to be attached to the adapters on the meter. These are deep threads, so it's best to use red Teflon tape or pipe dope as a sealer. If you use the white Teflon, you'll have to pile it on so it fills the voids in the threads, otherwise it will leak.

If cutting into the PEX lines will work, I suggest using Seal Tech fittings, which will adapt to 1/2-inch tubing and are simple to use. Once the meter is in place the last step is to route 20-22-gauge, shielded, two-wire cable to the digital readout. Distance between the meter and readout is not an issue, but it's best to keep the shielded wire away from AC wires or motors.

The kit does not include the parts to install the device, which could be problematic, depending on geographic location. We did our fair share of parts-chasing during this project, which the manufacturer has rectified by offering the shielded wire (which can be difficult to find) as an option and providing a resource list for the other necessary components. Also, the instructions are not very detailed, but the company is accessible for additional guidance when necessary.

The best way to use the system is to top off the freshwater tank, zero the readout and deplete the water. Then you simply note the number of gallons used for future reference, reset the readout and watch the meter as you run the water.

Two kits are available: The WC2 is the one we installed and it sells for \$225; the WC1 (\$325) has a more sophisticated readout and will also count down water used.

Those who hook up may not be moved by such a product revelation, but boondockers will love it. In either case, it's a fun gauge that promotes conservation while eliminating guesswork — and surprises.

For more information, call 912-898-8344 or visit [www.watercounter.com](http://www.watercounter.com). ♦

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## A Call for Help

UNCLEAR AS TO WHY SHE RECEIVED A BILL FOR FIRE RESPONSE SERVICE WHILE RENTING AN RV LOT IN ARIZONA, A READER ASKED FOR HOT LINE'S ASSISTANCE. SHE WROTE:

Last March, I dialed 911 for an ambulance to take my husband to Yuma Regional Hospital in Yuma, Ariz. At the time, we were staying in our RV on a gravel lot that we were renting. The ambulance arrived, as well as a firetruck, although I did not request a firetruck since this was a medical emergency and not a fire. My husband was put into the ambulance for the trip to the hospital; the firetruck did not go to the hospital. Medicare and our secondary insurance paid for the ambulance bill.

More than a year later, I received a bill from Rural/Metro Fire Department in the amount of \$525 for dispatching the firetruck. I called Rural/Metro to dispute the charges and was told that because the landlord of the lot we had rented did not subscribe to its fire response service we were responsible for the bill. We did not know there was a choice for the landlord to participate in fire protection.

Can Hot Line please intervene on our behalf concerning the \$525 bill? Perhaps MotorHome can alert snowbirds in Arizona that unless a landlord chooses to pay for fire response coverage in advance of a medical emergency, renters might be responsible for a large bill later.  
**JANICE DONOVAN | ROLLINS, MONT.**

*Donovan's unusual case brings up a good point for those RVers who rent spaces in unincorporated areas. It's important to know in advance if fire protection and emergency services are paid for through taxes or a private provider, such as Rural/Metro Corp. These private providers are part of a growing trend to privatize public services. The companies serve mostly unincorporated areas where taxes do not pay for a fire department.*

*We asked Rural/Metro Fire Depart-*

**IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW IN ADVANCE IF FIRE PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY SERVICES ARE PAID FOR THROUGH TAXES OR A PRIVATE PROVIDER, SUCH AS RURAL/METRO CORP.**

*ment to review Donovan's situation to see if there was anything the company could do to help her. Although Hot Line was unable to facilitate a positive resolution for Donovan, we are publishing her case to help other RVers avoid finding themselves in a similar situation.*

*Rural/Metro Fire Department responded to Hot Line's inquiry as follows:*

Rural/Metro Fire Department has received your correspondence regarding Janice Donovan. In many unincorporated communities, including Yuma County, there is no tax-based revenue or subsidies collected by the county to fund fire department services as is the case with most municipal fire departments. As a result, property owners and residents maintain annual fire service agreements or "subscriptions" with Rural/Metro that provide a funding mechanism for a full-time fire department. Standard fee-for-service charges are assessed to individuals who receive fire department services but do not maintain an annual fire service subscription.

Arizona statutes allow for towns, cities and/or fire districts to charge for services when rendered to individuals who are not paying for service through a tax or district fee.

Fire department charges are separate from emergency transport fees and are not covered by third-party payers in the state of Arizona. Fire departments must charge for response fees to those who do not maintain fire service agreements so as to maintain the availability

of these vital services.

Rural/Metro appreciates the opportunity to address this consumer issue.  
**LUTHER MOORHEAD,  
MANAGER OF FIRE PROTECTION  
RURAL/METRO FIRE DEPARTMENT  
SCOTTSDALE, ARIZ.**

### DELAYED PAYMENT

*Having difficulty obtaining reimbursement from her aftermarket service contract provider, a reader asked Hot Line to get involved. She wrote:*

In September 2008, the transmission in my motorhome had to be replaced. I took it in for service to Walt's Auto Service in Citrus Heights, Calif. The repair personnel at Walt's contacted my RV service contract provider — Heritage Administration Services — for authorization prior to starting any repairs. Heritage agreed to pay \$1,650 for defective parts and I paid for the remainder of the bill.

Since then, Walt's Auto has tried to contact Heritage numerous times for reimbursement; the company even filed a complaint with the Ohio Attorney General, to no avail.

I have called Heritage every month since November 2008. I finally found a contact person and have called her three times, but still no payment.

My Heritage Platinum RV Service Contract runs out soon and I'm afraid that if Heritage doesn't pay soon, it won't pay at all. I would really appreciate your intervention. Thank you.

**RUBY TRINIDAD  
CITRUS HEIGHTS, CALIF.**

*We passed on Trinidad's plea to Heritage Administration Services for its review and consideration. The following is the company's response:*

A check was issued to Walt's Auto Service in the amount of \$1,650 regarding the above-referenced claim.

**HERITAGE ADMINISTRATION SVCS.  
DUBLIN, OHIO ♦**

TO CONTRIBUTE TO HOT LINE, please refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 10.

## 30-Amp Step-Down

Can I use a step-down plug instead of installing a 30-amp hookup at my house?

**DON RODRIGUEZ | MIAMI**

*You can use a plug adapter, which is readily available from Camping World or other RV shops. However, you won't be able to run everything in the coach, such as the air conditioner(s), as it may overload the house circuit. You should be able to run the lights, TV and other items that use less power.*

### LP-GAS TANK ODOR

What can I do about a noxious smell coming from my LP-gas tank? I know it's vented but can I vent it up through the roof and away from the ground level? Could there be more liquid than gas?

**WANDA AND SKIP GREEN  
BUCHANAN, MICH.**

*Except during filling, there should not be any odor unless the tank or connections are leaking. Also, if it were overfilled and left in the sun or high temperatures, gas may escape from the safety vent. Shut off the main valve and take your motorhome to a qualified RV shop, LP-gas dealer or similar expert to have it checked for leaks and overfill before using the coach.*

### HIGH-SPEED IDLE

My 1998 Newmar Mountain Aire diesel-pusher with a Cummins 325-HP engine and a six-speed Allison transmission has an occasional problem with not shifting into gear after I restart the engine. I was told by my dealer the first time it happened that I would have to wait about 40 minutes and try it again. He didn't know what caused the problem.

A friend suggested that it was being caused by a high idle speed and it could be set back to normal idle by depressing the OFF switch on the cruise control. I was able to verify that the RPM was above the shifting threshold for the transmission.

Over the years I have learned to live

with this problem and I am now in the habit of touching the OFF switch of the cruise control as soon as I need to slow down. Even so, I would like to get some information on a better solution.

**ELTON HOMESLEY | AUSTIN, TEXAS**

*You should be able to isolate the problem by disconnecting the cruise control from the throttle system. It seems like the cruise-control actuator may be sticking. Another possibility is that there's a faulty coolant-temperature sensor that is "fooling" the engine into "thinking" that it is still cold.*

### FALTERING FORD

I have a 1995 Damon Intruder on an F53 chassis with 146,904 miles on it. Last August I went to Diamond Lake, Ore. There is a good incline, about 12 miles, and the motorhome ran very well up the hill. When I got to the top and let up on the throttle to turn in, the engine died. It was warm but the temperature gauge was normal. I tried to start it and

it fired but would not run. After it cooled down, three hours later, it ran like new.

The same thing happened a couple more times. Most recently, it ran fine, then started popping and missing and died. I talked to two shops about it and they were puzzled. The Ford shop said it sounded like the TFI module might be getting too hot.

**DARREL DIXON | ALBANY, ORE.**

*It is very likely a faulty in-tank electric fuel pump, which is a well-known problem with these chassis. To test it, have the shop install a test pressure gauge and drive it up hills in hot weather until it runs poorly to see if pressure drops. If it runs poorly with normal fuel pressure, suspect the ignition.*

### MIXING GAS AND DIESEL FUEL

A friend told me that if I mix a gallon of diesel fuel with a tank of gas, I'll get better mileage and a bit more power. Is there anything to this? Is there any harm in trying it?

**KENT BOSCH | ESTES PARK, COLO.**

*I've heard of a lot of mixture concoctions over the years, but this is the first time for this one. Adding diesel fuel may cause your engine to detonate under load. This could lead to severe engine damage. It can also foul plugs, cause carbon buildup and may harm the catalytic converters or oxygen sensors, if equipped. Don't do it!*

### REPLACING SHOCKS

I have a 1998 Coachmen Starflyte on a Ford E-350 chassis with 100,000 miles. I think it's time for new shocks. The ride is beating me up and the tail seems to drag more than before. Online I found replacement shocks for a van but not the motorhome. Would Coachmen have put different shocks on the chassis? Will I be OK using OEM shocks?

**L.C. CARVER | CHICAGO**

*If there are 100,000 miles on the original shocks it's definitely time. Coachmen used the shocks that came from Ford on the cutaway chassis. It's OK to use original equipment manufacturer (OEM)*

## ADDING DIESEL FUEL TO A TANK OF GASOLINE MAY CAUSE YOUR ENGINE TO DETONATE UNDER LOAD. THIS COULD LEAD TO SEVERE ENGINE DAMAGE.

IT CAN ALSO FOUL PLUGS AND MAY HARM CATALYTIC CONVERTERS OR OXYGEN SENSORS. DON'T DO IT!





## PREVENT PROBLEMS WITH REGULAR INSPECTION AND CARE



The engine compartment should have some sort of air filter restriction indicator. On this model, when the yellow gets near the red zone, it's time for the filter to be replaced.



What is often called a water or coolant filter isn't just a filter, but a reservoir that contains supplemental coolant additives (SCAs) that provide additional protection against liner pitting, scale and corrosion. A small stream of coolant is bypassed into the canister, where it picks up trace amounts of the SCA. How do you know when the coolant filter needs to be replaced? Simply dip a test strip (such as the 3-Way Heavy Duty Coolant Test Kit offered by Fleetguard) into the engine coolant reservoir. A scale on the back of the package will help you determine the condition of the coolant.



Your battery compartment can contain many connections, which should be checked regularly for corrosion, loose contacts, etc. Even with the corrosion-inhibiting primer used by the factory, connections can still become corroded, as shown. Corroded terminals can cause poor contact and create electrical problems.



Because the engine is rubber-mounted to the chassis for reduced vibration, a separate ground strap is typically mounted to the frame. There are also large ground cables attached to the engine and/or transmission (center). These can be hard to see and even more difficult to reach, but they are still reasonably accessible.



Before considering your own maintenance, remember that an engine like the Cummins ISC holds 8 gallons of premixed coolant and 6 gallons of oil, plus the fuel filter, coolant filter and oil filter. Make sure you have a place where you can dispose of the used materials safely and legally.

*Ford shocks, but don't use shocks designed for a lighter-duty van. Shocks make a huge difference in ride quality, so I suggest using premium aftermarket shocks such as Bilsteins if you can afford them and you plan on keeping the coach. Shock absorbers don't support weight, so if the tail is hanging lower, the rear leaf springs are also sagging and may need help. I suggest adding either air bags, Sumo Springs, or replacing the old springs if they are sagging.*

**DAMP BASEMENT**

I have a 1999 Coachmen Mirada 300Q Class A motorhome. I purchased it used and love it except that I keep getting dampness in the basement compartments (in all but the large one in back). It is not coming from the water pipes and there are no visible roof leaks. I am starting to get a musty smell in the compartments and am eager to find a solution. What could be causing this?

**GERALD ESKOW | HAMDEN, N.Y.**

*Since you live in an area that gets a fair amount of precipitation, and your coach is 11 years old, I suspect that the rubber seals around the doors are loose or deteriorated, the doors are out of alignment or the hinges and/or latches are loose. I would have someone small crawl into the compartments with a flashlight, close the doors and direct a garden hose on the doors one at a time to see if and where water is getting in. If you don't find any leaks, look for a plumbing leak that may be dripping down while the water system is pressurized.*

**BATTERY QUESTIONS**

I have three 12-volt deep-cycle batteries in my Class A Winnebago and would like to switch to six-volt batteries. I only have room for three batteries, so would I gain capacity by wiring two six-volters in parallel and then wiring those to a third 12-volt battery in series? If so, which battery posts should I connect my Battery Tender charger to?

**BARB HYRE | VIA E-MAIL**

*If you do that you will end up with an 18-volt battery pack that you can't safely use or charge. You didn't say which model you have, but if it has two coach batteries and one engine-starting battery, you need to keep them separately*



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*wired. You can connect a pair of six-volt deep-cycle batteries in series to produce 12 volts for the coach, and if you need more room for larger batteries, it may be possible to install them in a nearby storage compartment with proper venting. If you have a 12-volt Battery Tender, you would connect it only to a 12-volt battery pack (which includes two 6V in series) with red to positive, black to negative. You'd have to move it from one set of batteries to the other to charge separate engine and coach battery sets.*

**MANIFOLD DESTINY**

Is there a way to fix the exhaust manifolds on a 454-cid Chevy so they stop coming apart? I've heard these are known for doing that. My motorhome is a 1985 Excaliber Encounter by Georgie Boy.

**JANINE K. TRACY | HOLLANDALE, WIS.**

*The main problem is heat and there are*

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al starts. We had another 502 starter installed and at first it worked like a dream. But after a few starts the grinding noise began again. The mechanic said that since this was a brand-new 502 starter he installed, it was probably being caused by something hitting the "flex plate."

With a couple of the starter installations the shiming was adjusted and at first made a difference, but then back to the grinding. We are at a loss as to what to do. We can't drive this without worrying about the starter every time.

**LANCE AND CAROLE BLALOCK  
FLORENCE, ORE.**

*It seems like you need a new mechanic too. The flex plate holds the torque converter and connects the engine to the automatic transmission, plus it has an outer ring of gear teeth that the starter drive contacts when cranking the engine. If the teeth were damaged by any of the starters, either because of a faulty drive or if the depth was set wrong (it's done with shims), replacing just the starter will not solve the problem. So you need to have the starter removed and the teeth inspected, which requires that the crankshaft be turned 360 degrees manually.*

*There are a number of heavy-duty gear-reduction aftermarket starters such as Mean Green (www.mean-green.com) that should provide more cranking power for the larger engine. Also, make sure the gear depth to flex plate teeth depth is set right after replacement. ♦*

TO CONTRIBUTE TO COACH & POWERTRAIN, refer to Contact MotorHome, on page 10.

**SHOWER DOMES**

In motorhomes, a domed skylight over the shower is nice in cool weather and lets in lots of light, but it can really make it hot in there on a sunny day. Make a removable shade to use when it's too sunny and hot. Cut a reflective aluminized car windshield sunshade to fit and attach four hook-and-loop fastener dots at each corner, with corresponding dots applied to the corners of the skylight.

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When my husband and I rode our mountain bikes from Canada to Mexico along the Continental Divide, we used our motorhome as a support vehicle. Several friends volunteered to drive for a week or two at a time. After a long day of cycling, finding our motorhome in some remote campsite was an indescribable pleasure. This spot is on the Polvadera Mesa near the town of Cuba in northern New Mexico.

Mary Zalmanek  
Monument, Colorado



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