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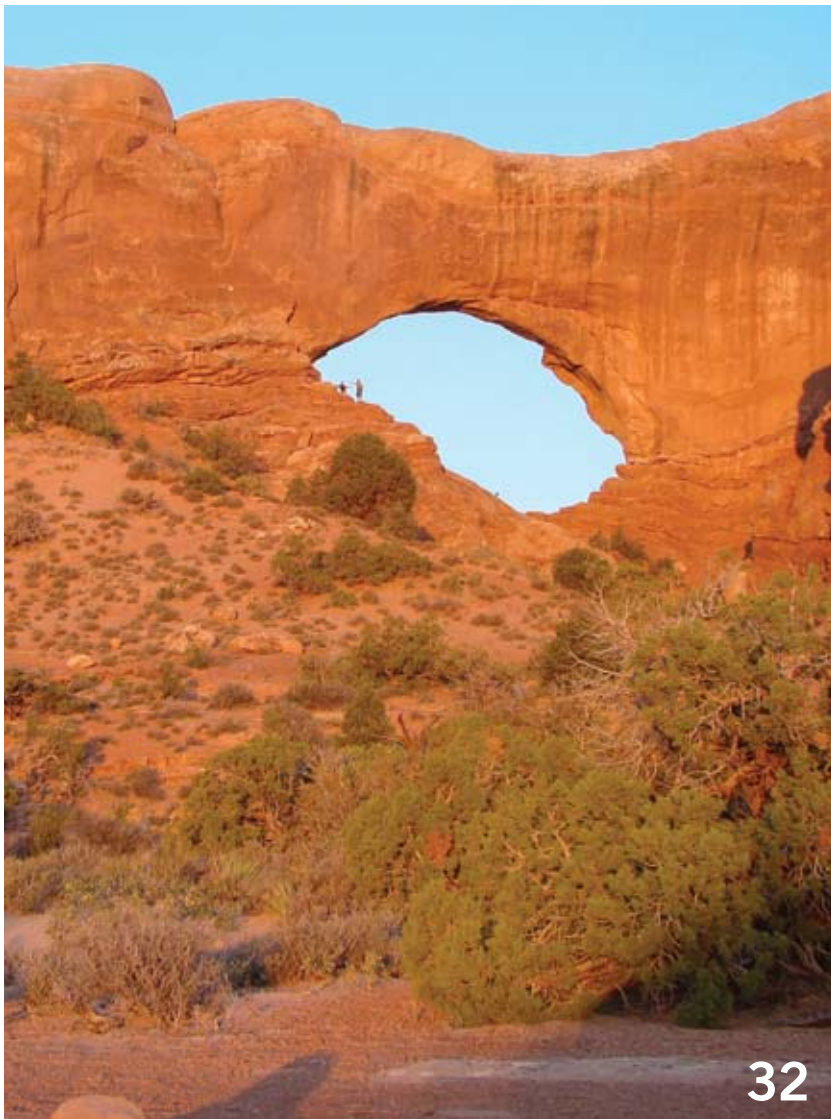
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On The Cover: The Winnebago Tour (see test on page 40) is situated for a great sunset ocean view at Emma Wood State Beach, located west of Ventura, Calif. Emma Wood offers 90 primitive campsites for self-contained RVs and easy access to the Pacific Ocean. Photo by Rich Cox Photography.

THE RALLY IN REDMOND



Every spring, I get into Rally mode. It's the time of the year when I plan my trip to the location that will host our annual get-together of thousands of RVers, appropriately named The Rally. This year the country's largest RV rally will be held in Redmond, Ore., an eastern Oregon community that will host — by popular demand — The Rally for the third time.

Redmond, a sister city to Bend, is in one of Oregon's most exciting and contemporary regions, and definitely a favorite location for The Rally. The area is a recreation buffet for outdoor enthusiasts, making it a great summer vacation destination. There's plenty of fishing in beautiful rivers, spectacular mountain ranges nearby, wonderful sightseeing and a bunch of very friendly people.

Since The Rally presented by DISH Network officially starts on July 14, with early-bird days on July 12 and 13, we'll take advantage of the Fourth of July holiday weekend to begin our trip through most of California and into Oregon. We'll start in Plymouth, Calif., where we'll spend a few days at Far Horizons 49er Village RV Resort and visit with owners Chuck and Karen Hays, who have been friends of mine for many years. My memories of this campground go back to when I interviewed Chuck's grandfather in the early '70s and wrote an article, which appeared in our sister publication, Trailer Life, about how he conceived and built the park.

California's Gold Country is an all-around destination, and not just because it's become a fruitful wine community. We love the romanticism of California's gold rush, and the area is steeped in history.

While we work our way into Oregon a few days after we leave Plymouth, I doubt we'll be able to duplicate the fateful events that highlighted our trip to Redmond in 2007 for The Rally. We were camped in Diamond Lake at Diamond Lake RV Park for a couple of days before heading to the Rally grounds,

which incidentally are some of the nicest we've ever used for our annual event. I struck up a conversation with a woman who was camped next to us. She was single and traveling solo full time in a 35-foot motorhome — a "certified" RV enthusiast. After a short time, a light bulb went on in my brain. We were traveling with a close friend who was also single and traveling solo. So in my infinite wisdom, I invited this newly made acquaintance to our dinner party that night. Hey, I figured no one would be foolish enough to turn down ahi tuna and fine wine under the awning on a beautiful Oregon evening.

Our new friend now travels full time with our old friend in a bigger motorhome — a match-up accomplished the RV way.

This year's trip to Redmond likely won't have me playing matchmaker, but the fun factor will be equal. Getting together with thousands of other RVers is what makes The Rally so special. There will be hundreds of seminars covering RV topics such as maintenance, travel and lifestyle fulfillment; fantastic entertainment is planned, including Bobby Vinton, who will headline opening night. The last night we'll be entertained by The High Street Band, a group my wife, Lynne, and I befriended at one of the many jazz festivals we have attended. The band leader, Matt Summers, hails from Bend and promises to have us stomping into exhaustion as his lively band plays tunes from the '40s through the '70s.

As always, there will be lots of new motorhomes on display and hundreds of exhibitors selling everything from RV parts and accessories to electronics to clothing to art items. Check out all the goings-on at www.therally.com.

We can't wait to visit with our friends who've attended our rallies over the years and have kept in touch, as well as meet new friends. ♦

MOTORHOME

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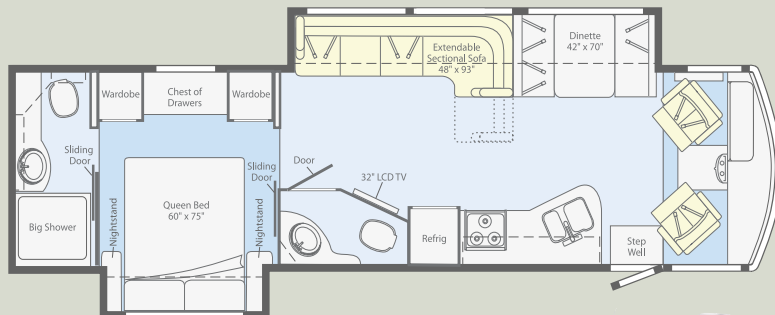


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“WOULD YOU BUY A FOREIGN-MADE MOTORHOME? WHAT FACTORS WOULD INFLUENCE YOUR DECISION?”

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

BETTER MADE IN EUROPE

Yes, most certainly. From personal experience European products are far better made and don't have the horrendous amount of building faults U.S. motorhomes have. The European products also are designed for better fuel economy, handling and performance.

ROGER SLATER | MICA, WASH.

PRICE DRIVES THE CONSUMER

The largest factor in buying a motorhome is how much of the materials, appliances and chassis components are actually made in the unit's country of origin (United States, Canada or China). I would not consider an imported motorhome from China, but I would consider an imported RV from Canada because they build units to keep out the cold, which helps keep out the heat in our part of the country.

I would rather see our money go to U.S. manufacturers for profits made on the imported materials and equipment and to the labor costs earned by the U.S. workers. But remember, buyers want convenience and quality at the lowest possible price.

CHARLIE AND JEANNE COLLINS | MARANA, ARIZ.

'AMERICAN MADE' IS A MYTH

Yes, I would buy a foreign-made motorhome — as long as the quality was there, the price was right and it could be serviced locally.

In reference to Darrel Dixon from Albany, Ore. (“Build Motorhomes Here,” February), the days of “American made” are pretty much over. Take a look at the amenities, appliances and most of the parts (for example, electrical and plumbing) that make up today's motorhomes. Made in China, assembled in Mexico, shipped to Elkhart, Ind., and assembled by the Amish. I would guess 85 percent of today's motorhomes are already foreign made. Hey, who knows, maybe there are Chinese Amish building motorhomes over there.

DOUG MOESTA | PENSACOLA, FLA.

DON'T SEND MORE JOBS OVERSEAS

We need to support U.S. motorhome manufacturers, not the foreign ones. The U.S. has lost enough jobs to overseas companies and our economy needs to be supported. The RV industry in this country took enough of a hit in the current economic downturn. We don't need to put more companies out of business and people out of work by buying

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



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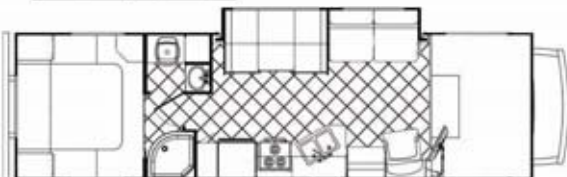
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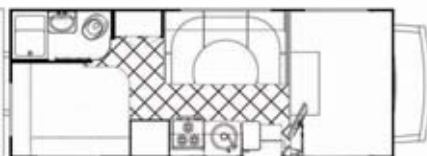
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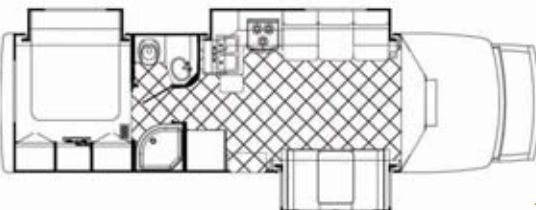


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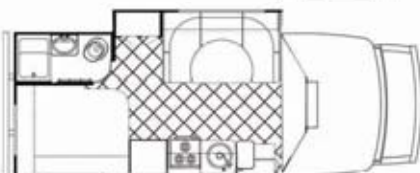
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foreign-made RVs.

J.L. WELCH | SEVIERVILLE, TENN.

WAKE UP, COACHBUILDERS

The motorhome industry is on a parallel course to the automotive industry of the '70s and '80s — poorly designed and built. Most motorhomes built today have slipshod construction, poor design and basically are not worth the money we pay for them. If China, or any other country, starts producing quality products at fair prices, then we again are deserving of what we get. Wake up, motorhome manufacturers — you could soon be crying the blues.

WAYNE DIGGS | LAKEPORT, CALIF.

BUYING FOREIGN IS TREASON

I think any American who buys a foreign-made motorhome or any other foreign product, including foods, should be considered “traitors” to our country. If everyone would refuse to buy foreign products our jobs would come back to America where they belong. American corporations that are using foreign products and labor should be boycotted and put out of business.

**ED AND ELAINE LIPSCOMB
EGLON, W.V.**

HYBRID VS. COACH: NO COMPARISON

Although I agree with Bob Livingston (“Motorhomes Are Greener,” On Ramp, February) that our overall RV lifestyle is environmentally friendly, in many ways the motorhome itself is near the bottom of the list when it comes to preserving our natural resources and controlling pollution.

I am sorry Livingston selected two extremes of travel for comparison: flying versus driving a motorhome, staying in a no-hook-ups RV park versus a plush Vegas hotel with maximum conveniences. Surely you jest.

Here’s another example: Our daughter lives 370 miles away. Our motorhome gets 8 MPG. A recent trip to see her required 92.5 gallons of fuel. Fuel was \$2.85 per gallon. Total round trip for the motorhome: \$263.63. The same trip in our hybrid, which gets 48 MPG: 15.42 gallons of fuel at \$2.85 per gallon. Total round trip for the car: \$43.94.

All other factors balance. We park free in our daughter’s driveway and use her water and electricity; LP-gas for the rig is extra. All meals are together and shared.

In this example, there’s no question which trip is greener.

I believe the RV industry will drastically change to become truly green or it will die, as we know it. When fuel goes to \$5 or more per gallon and stays there, most of us “old folks” will have no choice. We sure are not going back to tents!

JIM RAWLINS | BIGELOW, ARK.

STRIKING OUT AT ‘BAT’

Just read the caption with the article “Texas Hill Country Bucket List Achieved” (February). When and how did bats, which are mammals, become birds?

STEVE SPEAR | SAN ANTONIO

Editor’s Note: We must have been a bit batty when we wrote that caption. The furry, winged creatures are indeed mammals.

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We are full-time RVers and we want to let other RVers know what a great company Demco is.

Two days before Thanksgiving we left the Fort Worth, Texas, area for our winter stay in Arizona. As I was driving, I felt a slight jerk and one of the bars on our tow bar assembly let go. I tried to keep our dinghy vehicle from hitting anything as I pulled into a parking lot.

I made a call to Demco (the tow bar manufacturer) and spoke with Scott in customer service, asking him for a dealer in Fort Worth. He suggested United RV Center and told me he would call them to make sure they had a replacement unit and arrange for the exchange. After a few minutes I received a call from Jesse at United RV. He said he would send someone right over with the new replacement.

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**CHRISTINA AND DAVID KIDD
POLSON, MONT.**

QUESTION:

What’s your favorite restaurant you’ve discovered on your travels and why?

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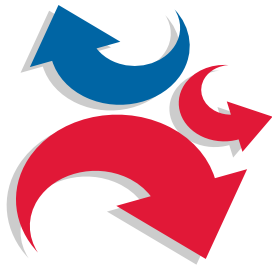
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edited by PATRICIA MARROQUIN

EVENTS | NOTEWORTHY | WHEELS & GEAR | CROSSROADS

For generations, travelers in Owen County, Ind., passed through 140-foot Cataract Covered Bridge — by horse, buggy, wagon and automobile. These days, only pedestrians are allowed to walk through the quaint covered bridge, which was erected in 1876 and spans Mill Creek, the site of Cataract Falls.

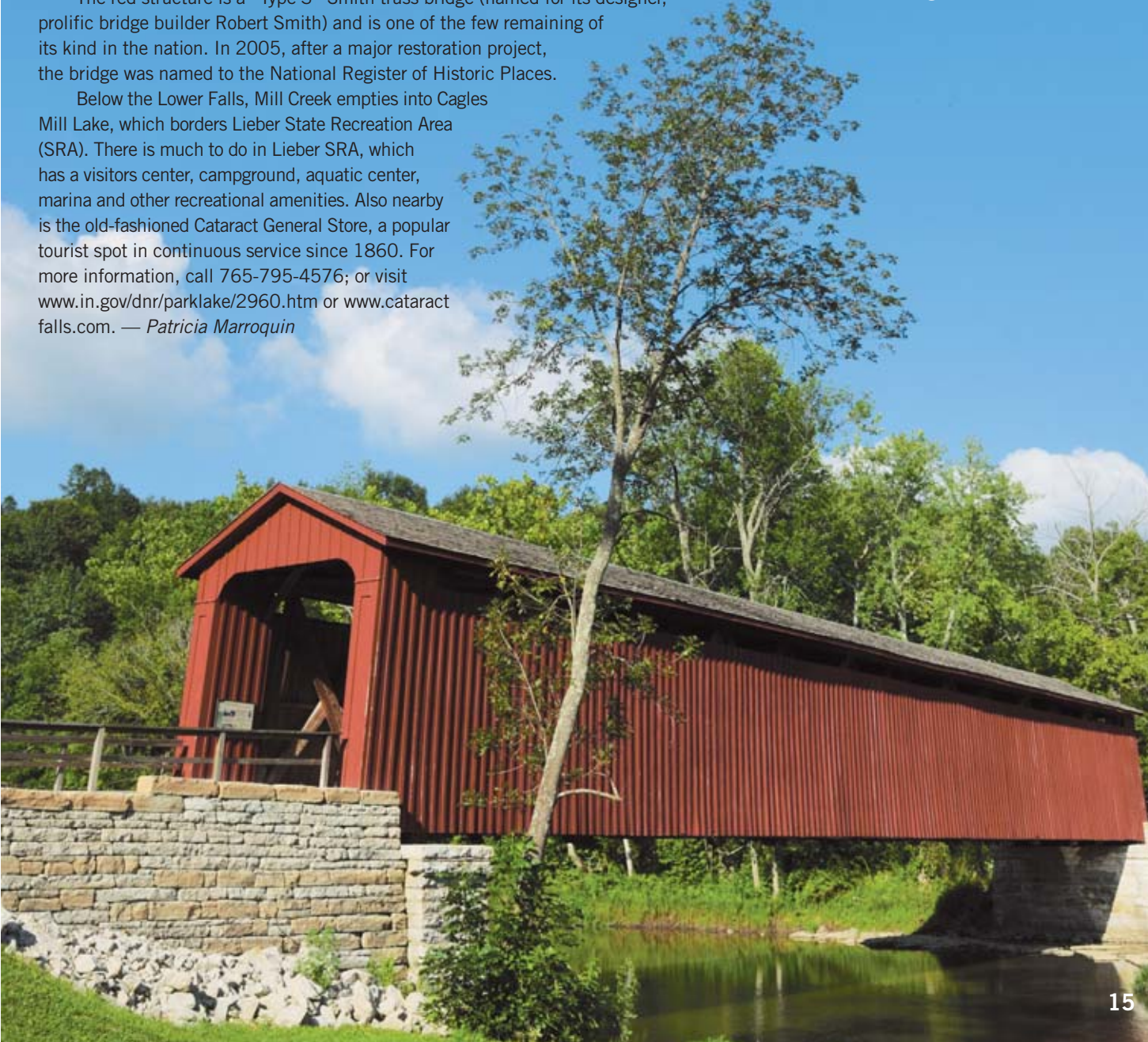
Upper and Lower Cataract falls, southwest of Indianapolis, have the distinction of being the largest waterfall by volume in Indiana, creating a cascade plunging 86 feet. The falls are .8 mile apart and connected by a nature trail.

The red structure is a “Type 3” Smith truss bridge (named for its designer, prolific bridge builder Robert Smith) and is one of the few remaining of its kind in the nation. In 2005, after a major restoration project, the bridge was named to the National Register of Historic Places.

Below the Lower Falls, Mill Creek empties into Cagles Mill Lake, which borders Lieber State Recreation Area (SRA). There is much to do in Lieber SRA, which has a visitors center, campground, aquatic center, marina and other recreational amenities. Also nearby is the old-fashioned Cataract General Store, a popular tourist spot in continuous service since 1860. For more information, call 765-795-4576; or visit www.in.gov/dnr/parklake/2960.htm or www.cataractfalls.com. — *Patricia Marroquin*

GOING UNDER COVER

Travel back in time through a quaint covered bridge





MAY 15 | The **Marin Sonoma Concours d'Elegance** in San Rafael, Calif., featuring some vintage motorhomes, is certain to stir nostalgic feelings among RVers. The last surviving 1929 Raise the Roof Chevrolet house car headlines the lineup, which also includes Rolls-Royce and Stutz automobiles, a decade-by-decade display of Chevrolet motor vehicles and rare Indianapolis 500 race cars. Classic wooden runabouts will grace the site's lagoon and there will be a special British car club gathering; 415-479-7727, www.marinsonomaconcours.org.

MAY 21 | The horse race is just a part of the excitement during the **Preakness Celebration** in Baltimore. The Preakness Stakes is the second jewel in horse racing's Triple Crown and leading up to the big day are several fun events,

including concerts and fireworks, an Air Force flyover, parade featuring the Budweiser Clydesdales, balloon festival,



and tours of the barns where you might just run into the jockeys and star horses themselves; 877-206-8042, ext. 300, www.preakness.com.

MAY 26-28 | The 600 Festival Association produces the **Food Lion Speed Street** event in Charlotte, N.C., to commemorate the May races at Charlotte Motor Speedway, particularly the Coca-Cola 600. Motorsports-themed and very family friendly, this three-day event has concerts with national headlining talent, interviews with NASCAR drivers and other celebrities, a kids' zone, interactive displays of racing cars, and the NASCAR Hall of Fame is also in the area; 704-455-5555, www.600festival.com.

MAY 6-7 | It's springtime in the Smokies and what better way to celebrate than at **Townsend in the Smokies Spring Festival and Old Timers Day** in Townsend, Tenn. Visitors will experience a hands-on look at the unique traditions of Appalachian culture, such as arts and crafts, bluegrass music and storytelling. Take a guided wildflower walk, indulge in some Southern barbecue, enjoy the Young Pickers Talent Contest and camp at one of several Townsend campgrounds with full amenities; 800-525-6834, www.smokymountains.org.

MAY 6-8 | The annual **Breaux Bridge Crawfish Festival** in Breaux Bridge, La., has



become one of the largest gatherings of Cajun, zydeco and swamp pop musicians despite the environmental hardships that the area has faced in recent times. In addition to the lively music, attendees can learn about accordion-making and Cajun dance and cooking. An étouffée cook-off, parade and crawfish race (yes, real crawfish will race on an 8-foot circular target) are just a few of the crawfish-themed, family-friendly activities; 337-332-6655, www.bbcrawfest.com.

MAY 12 | Touted as one of the South's finest arts and crafts shows, the biannual **Canton Flea Market Arts & Craft Show** in Canton, Miss., brings more than 1,100 artisans to the historic Madison County Courthouse grounds and the surrounding area of downtown Canton to showcase their pottery, jewelry, quality artwork and more. Located right in Canton is Movietown RV Park, a Good Sam Park, which has plenty of room for big rigs; 800-844-3369, www.canton-tourism.com/market.html.

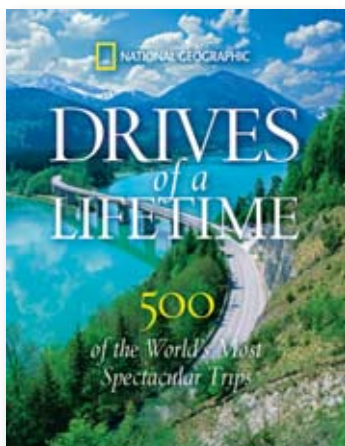
MAY 7-14

If a motorhoming trip through the Netherlands isn't in your spring budget, a trip to the **Holland Tulip Time Festival** in Holland, Mich., is probably your next best bet. The annual festival began in 1929 as a way of celebrating Dutch culture and heritage while beautifying the community and has evolved into a popular event that has a little something for everyone. Listen to live music, watch Dutch dance performances and theater, shop at the Dutch Marktplaats and take advantage of the 6 million blooming tulips in the area that provide unbeatable photo opportunities; 800-822-2770, www.tuliptime.com.



EMBRACING THE ROAD

Wondering where to head on your next RVing adventure? National Geographic has done the road research for you and the result is a full-color, hardcover coffee-table book, "Drives of a Lifetime: 500 of the



World's Most Spectacular Trips." "Drives of a Lifetime"

(\$40, 320 pages) offers inspiration, in-depth information and practical advice. The book is divided into eight chapters by type of trip: from mountains to the sea; from roads less traveled to drives rich in history; journeys to delight foodies and music fans; and more.

Discover Amish culture and crafts outside Elkhart, Ind.; follow Philadelphia's 95-mile freedom trail; visit Oregon dunes on the Pacific Coast Scenic Byway; travel a loop route

through forests and along rugged shores in Minnesota and Canada.

The drives feature a handy side rail that includes starting and ending points; distance and driving time; best time to

go; and tips and advice for planning, such as website addresses, recommended restaurants and weather warnings.

We can't guarantee all these drives are accessible by motorhome. For those that aren't, take a seat in your favorite armchair and live vicariously through the book's pages and stunning photos. "Drives of a Lifetime" proves it's not always about the destination, but the incredible journey to get there.

For more information, visit www.nationalgeographic.com/drives. — *Patricia Marroquin*

News Briefs

Fleetwood RV will be holding its third annual motorhome owner's event June 25-29 at the Heart of Oklahoma Expo Center in Shawnee, Okla. "Circle Your Wagons in Shawnee" will include a lineup of the latest motorhomes, access to Fleetwood factory service support, RV seminars, kids activities and family-friendly entertainment. Fleetwood motorhome owners are welcome to invite friends with non-Fleetwood motorhomes to attend the event. For more information or to register online, go to www.fleetwoodrv.com/mhevent.

Fresno, Calif., Good Sam Club members Don and Marilyn Buller, who founded the RVing arm of the Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS), have been named the club's 2010 **RVers of the Year**. The Bullers have traveled the country with other volunteers to rebuild homes devastated by fires, hurricanes, tornadoes and floods. The couple's commitment to helping others impressed Good Sam Club members during online voting late last year. When Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast in 2005, the Bullers saw a need for a group of RV volunteers who could arrive at disaster sites with their own shelter. Their proposal for such a group was approved by the MDS leadership, and the MDS RV Program was born. The Bullers plan to attend The Rally July 14-17, which will be held in Redmond, Ore.

Forest River Inc. has acquired high-end motorhome manufacturer **Dynamax Corp.** Forest River Chairman Pete Liegl said he anticipates few changes at Dynamax, which will operate as a stand-alone Forest River division.

President William Jefferson Clinton Birthplace Home National Historic Site in Hope, Ark., has been officially announced as the 394th park in the National Park System. Former President Clinton spent the first four years of his life in the 2½-story frame house on Hervey Street in Hope. The National Park Service has been working closely with the Clinton Birthplace Foundation to transition from private to federal ownership. The home is open to the public for tours.



WOODALL'S TOP PARKS



Woodall's has announced the top-rated, privately owned RV parks and campgrounds in North America. Of the 8,000 privately owned parks listed in its 2011 North American Campground Directory, 333 parks earned the highest designation in the rating system.

The rating system allows RVers to search and find the top-rated "5W" parks and campgrounds that meet their travel needs. Campers can identify parks by their 1 to 5

"W" ratings for both park facilities and recreation. The more W's in a rating reflect the presence of more developments and facilities available at the park. The list of 333 parks may be found at www.woodalls.com/article/details.aspx?articleID=2683351.



CHIC LANTERN

Looking for something to add a touch of style and sophistication to your motorhome's patio this spring? The new **GE LED Carriage Lantern** from Jasco will keep your patio bright into the night, but might also solicit looks of envy from other campers.

The lantern requires four D-size alkaline batteries to power its long-life, energy-efficient LEDs, which are said to provide more than 100 hours of battery life and a warm white light reminiscent of a campfire.

Settings range from normal power to

extra bright and the unit is lightweight enough to be carried around if needed. A loop on the top of the lantern allows you to easily hang this beauty, which has an oil-rubbed bronze finish, from an awning or patio umbrella.

The GE LED Carriage Lantern is priced at \$34.99.

Jasco Products, 800-654-8483, www.jascoproducts.com.



MULTI-SURFACE PROTECTOR

This RV-cleaning must-have has been around since the 1980s, but that doesn't mean it should be overlooked amid the hundreds of such products that have since gathered dust on the shelves.

Protect All Polish, Wax & Treatment is a tried-and-true formula for all types of surfaces found inside and outside a motorhome, including fiberglass, stainless steel, glass, plastic and leather.

With Protect All there's no need to crowd your valuable storage space with a variety of products for different applications — the non-abrasive carnauba wax formula works on all vehicle surfaces and doesn't leave behind any residue. The water-repellent formula produces a durable shine, and with each application you'll notice less dirt and grime because of the slick, anti-static surface that Protect All creates. It also has a UV-absorber to shield surfaces from sun damage.

Protect All Polish, Wax & Treatment retails from \$9 to \$14. **Protect All, 800-322-4491, www.protectall.com.**

RATTLE-FREE COFFEEMAKER

Contoure has introduced a new coffeemaker designed especially for RVs. The **Contoure CMM2000** uses slide-on mounting brackets to securely install under a cabinet or attach to a wall, so that it won't slide around during travel, but will brew a delicious cup of joe.

The carafe, water reservoir and brewing basket are all designed to stay in place while driving on bumpy roads. The stainless steel thermal carafe keeps coffee hot even without a hot plate and the brewing basket easily slides out for cleaning and filling with coffee grounds. A detachable water reservoir makes it easy to fill at the galley sink to the desired level. The coffeemaker is also programmable, brews 10 cups of coffee at a time and features a digital clock and timer.

The Contoure CMM2000 is 12 inches long, 11 inches wide and 9½ inches deep. It retails for \$139.95.

Contoure, 941-355-4488, www.contoure.com.





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Views from the Road

Al Luehmann and his wife, Mary, are committed RVers from the North Star State of Minnesota. When they're away from home, Al and Mary enjoy our country's beautiful landscape in their 2007 Itasca Horizon motorhome, spending the winter months in Casa Grande, Arizona.

Al describes his time on the road as "a way of life after you retire. I have a whole new set of friends from around the country - we've become a family."

Even when traveling, he enjoys the comforts of home, including live TV. Al chose DISH Network to bring TV to his RV because of the unique service benefits.

"The ability to deactivate it whenever we aren't using the motorhome is a terrific feature. Plus, the rate was better than the competition, and we can get high definition free. I would highly recommend DISH Network service."

And what does he watch most when on the road? "Sports - the (Minnesota) Vikings and Wild, and my wife is a Jimmie Johnson (NASCAR) fan."

So what's next for Al and Mary? "Nova Scotia - beautiful country - and Yosemite."

Happy travels.



Al and Mary traveling the country



THE 'GIFT' OF TAMALES

PHOTOS: PATRICIA MARROQUIN

For "fiercely proud New Mexican" Rocky Durham, a "happy meal" most likely would be any dish that includes a tamale, or what he calls "the world's first to-go meal." Chef Durham is the culinary director of the Santa Fe School of Cooking (SFSC), a staple for more than two decades in downtown Santa Fe, N.M.

Tourists worldwide sign up for the three-hour hands-on Tamales class, which the chef teaches with relish, or should I say salsa. "They are stuffed, wrapped and tied. They are like little gifts," says Durham, who passionately blends a food history lesson with cooking instruction.

The class concludes with lunch, which consists of the fruits of your labor — four types of tamales. The session, limited to 16 people, costs \$98. The school has a staff of chef instructors and many other offerings year-round, such as a salsa-making class, a traditional New Mexican demonstration class and the popular Santa Fe Restaurant Walking Tour. Nicole Curtis Ammerman, SFSC's director, says classes fill up fast and many participants book the classes before their accommodations.

RV parking is available in the Archdiocese Lots off Cathedral Place and the Montezuma Lodge Lot off Paseo de Peralta next to the Scottish Rite Temple.

For more information, call 800-982-4688 or visit www.santafeschoolofcooking.com.

— Patricia Marroquin



FULL STEAM AHEAD

Although the Amish avoid technology, their Strasburg, Pa., neighbors give trains their due at the splendid state-run Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, where visitors can view a fascinating, world-class collection of more than 100 historic locomotives and vintage railroad cars. An interactive cab simulator and other hands-on activities can be found in the Stewart Junction railway education center.

We boarded the steam locomotive for its 11 a.m. run on the Strasburg Rail Road, across from the Railroad Museum. The conductor ushered us into the wooden dining car, where we had lunch as the antique coal-burning Baldwin chugged across more than 1,000 acres of fertile land. We passed a young couple in an Amish buggy who held back their trotter as he pranced sideways, eager to race the train.

For more information on the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, call 717-687-8628 or visit www.rrmuseumpa.org, and for the Strasburg Rail Road, call 717-687-7522 or visit www.strasburgrailroad.com. — David Hilbert ♦



PHOTO: STRASBURG RAILROAD COMPANY

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WHALES, WINGS AND NATURE'S THINGS



EXPLORE TIMELESS FISHING VILLAGES AND ENJOY ENVIRONMENTAL TREASURES ON 40-MILE-LONG DIGBY NECK, NOVA SCOTIA

The pilot cut the boat's engine and our guide hopped onto the bow and listened. For several minutes, no one spoke as waves slapped against the hull. Fog had settled over the water off Digby Neck in southwest Nova Scotia, and it limited visibility. My family and I stared into the soup and trained our ears on the distant sounds.

Then we heard it — a distant whooshing like a fire hose blasting water into the air. A whale was just ahead.

The Pirate's Cove Whale Cruise boat cranked to life and off we went. We made a few more stops to listen, and a few more charges to the sound of the fog-shrouded whale. Then, like an ancient serpent rising from mysterious waters, a dark gray finback whale broke the surface. Two more followed closely behind. Their sparkling bodies swam beside the boat as we raced with cameras to capture images of the world's second-longest whales.

The abundance of natural attractions on Digby Neck includes the region's whales. Passengers on a whale-watching expedition enjoy the show. Digby Neck is a bird-watchers' paradise, thanks to its strategic location along the Atlantic Flyway. Birds from as far away as Antarctica flock to the area. Seals are a common sight along the coast of Brier Island.



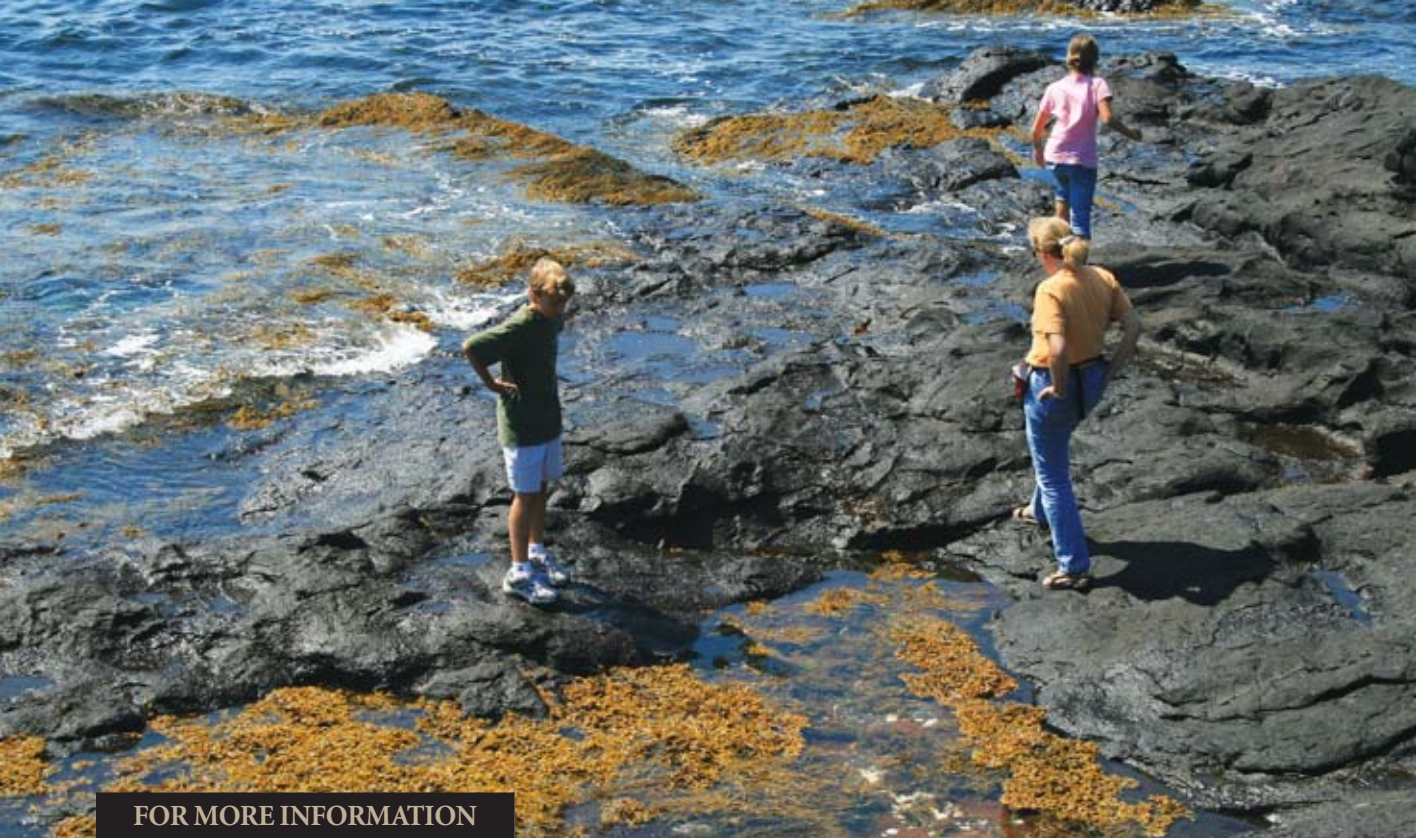


PHOTO: PATRICK BORDERS

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The Bay of Fundy's rich ecosystem leaves behind fascinating tidal pools at low tide, perfect for exploring. An easy, 20-minute hike along a trail on Long Island leads to Balancing Rock. From the observation deck visitors can see a quirk of nature — a basalt rock tower that seems barely connected to its base.



Later, after the finbacks departed, we spotted several pairs of humpback whales. The gentle giants hung around for a while — as they broke the water, they flipped their enormous tails and dove below their delighted spectators.

During the summer, the rich feeding grounds off remote Digby Neck play host to some of North America's best whale watching. In addition to finbacks and humpbacks, sightings of minke and en-

dangered right whales are also common, as well as Atlantic white-sided dolphins, harbour porpoises and seals.

Although whale watching attracts visitors to Digby Neck and its two extending islands — Long Island and Brier Island — many people are amazed to discover the abundance of natural attractions on the land itself.

For motorhome travelers who enjoy bird-watching, hiking and exploring small,



Basalt formations and rock ledges along the rugged coast provide the perfect spots for viewing birds and other wildlife.

timeless fishing villages, Digby Neck delivers a captivating blend of old-time Nova Scotia with environmental treasures.

Digby Neck begins near the gateway town of Digby and meanders down Highway 217, connecting fishing villages, such as Sandy Cove, Little River, Tiverton and Westport, as well as the two island ferries. The finger-like peninsula is roughly 40 miles long and as narrow as half a mile wide. It was formed from two lava flows, creating ridges that slope toward the sea at Brier Island and leaving basalt formations and rock ledges along its rugged coast.

While exploring the coast, visitors are bound to notice the abundance of birds. Because of the Neck's strategic location along the Atlantic Flyway, shorebirds, waterfowl and seabirds — some from as far away as Antarctica — flock to the area, creating a bird-watchers' paradise.

The tide-chiseled coast also offers ample opportunities for hiking. Although rugged, most of the coastline is walkable — either by trails that skirt the rocks or, as my children love to do, by hopping along the rocks themselves.

From the coast, you can observe the birds soaring over the crashing waves,

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WHALES, WINGS AND NATURE'S THINGS

discover the lighthouses that have long stood sentry, and stroll into the fishing villages to watch fishermen unload their day's bounty. You can also swim at a sandy beach, such as the one at Sandy Cove, or explore the tidal pools left behind by the world's highest tides.

After investigating the natural beauties of the mainland, we took a short ferry ride across the Petite Passage to Long Island, traveling from the village of East Ferry to Tiverton.

As with the rest of Digby Neck, St. Mary's Bay borders Long Island on the southern coast and the Bay of Fundy on the north. The southern coast offers stunning views from dramatic cliffs, while smaller cliffs and rock beaches accent the northern coast.

Halfway along Long Island, we pulled over at a parking area for a trail leading to Balancing Rock. After an easy 20-minute, one-way hike through a forested area, we exited at the sparkling blue waters of the bay. Below the observation deck rose an odd quirk of nature — a basalt rock tower teetering at the edge of the sea, barely connected to its base. It appeared as if it would plunge into the waters at any moment, but it actually had balanced on that point for ages.

After exploring the Balancing Rock area and a few scenic coves that dot the island, we continued our quiet jaunt down 217 and across the second ferry to Brier Island. The entry village of Westport, home to a few hundred residents, is the island's only town, and beyond it, six square miles offer a nature lover's paradise.

Gravel roads led us to the two lighthouses on the island: Brier Island Lighthouse (known locally as Western Light) and Northern Point Lighthouse. From there, we hiked along several coves and cliffs, spotting a colony of seals sunning themselves on the rocks and numerous wildflowers blanketing the landscape.

Rare wild orchids grow on the island, and near Northern Point Lighthouse we came across an enormous field of wild roses, their pink petals vividly accenting the black rocks and crashing waves behind them.

Brier Island offers an abundance of trails that wander by stunning coastal views, but also among inland features,

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including bogs that contain several rare wildflowers and plants.

The island is Nova Scotia's top birding location. In the spring, warblers arrive, and during the summer, millions of semi-palmated sandpipers stop off to munch on mud shrimp before heading to South America. Birds such as phalaropes, shearwaters, eiders and puffins congregate in August and September, and in the fall, thousands of hawks, including the threatened peregrine falcon, put on quite a show.

After returning across the ferry to Long Island, we stumbled upon our last great discovery of the day. With the sun setting below the bay, and our stomachs grumbling, we spotted a sign for Lavena's Catch Café as we exited the ferry and entered Freeport. It was closing time, and we raced in as a woman turned off the OPEN sign.

"Come on in," she warmly welcomed, and there, in the charming restaurant overlooking the remote channel, we feasted on the freshest and sweetest scallops we'd ever enjoyed.

The next morning, before leaving the area, we drove into the quaint town of Digby at the eastern end of the Neck. Digby is nestled along the Annapolis Basin shore and looks over Digby Gut — a glacially carved cut in the landscape that opens to the bay. It is also home to the Princess of Acadia ferry, which connects travelers to New Brunswick.

The town is best known for its plump and sweet scallops and possesses one of North America's largest scallop fleets. At high tide, you can watch the fleet return, see the day's catches unloaded, and while walking along the wharf, take some classic fishing port photographs of the colorful scallop-dragger boats.

The historic waterfront hosts several unique shops, as well as restaurants that serve lobster and, of course, those delicious scallops.

After a final helping of scallops over lunch, it was time to head on. Within the hour, we were driving aboard the Princess of Acadia, beginning a three-hour cruise to New Brunswick, and then driving back to the States.

Our memories of whale watching thrilled us, but we were just as thrilled by natural wonders we'd enjoyed along Digby Neck. ♦

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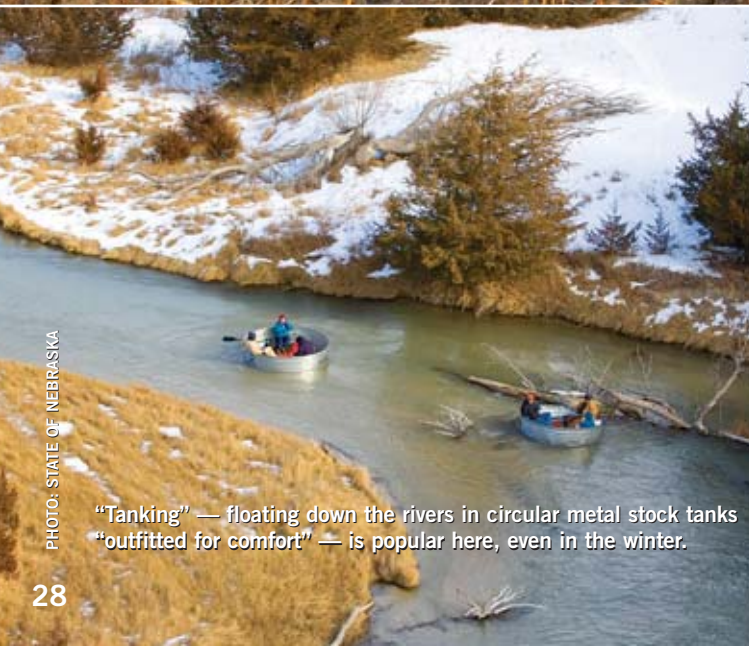
DISCOVERING NEBRASKA ON
THE SANDHILLS JOURNEY SCENIC BYWAY

by PAMELA SELBERT



Still iced over in the early spring, these lakes are typical of the Sandhills. The sandy ground traps rain and snowfall and the nature of the hills forms “sinks,” or low areas that have no outflow. The freshwater lakes and ponds yield rich grasses in the summer, which are cut for hay and rolled into giant bales. They also provide important habitat for the many waterfowl that use Nebraska as a flyway.

PHOTO: GUY LOUIS SELBERT



“Tanking” — floating down the rivers in circular metal stock tanks “outfitted for comfort” — is popular here, even in the winter.

PHOTO: STATE OF NEBRASKA



Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway, a 272-mile route that arcs across central Nebraska on Highway 2, begins officially at Grand Island. But the bustling town and wide fields of corn west of it offer scant preview of the strange landscape that lies ahead, providing the “scenic” for the byway. It’s a terrain unlike any other: grass-spiked sand dunes towering up to 400 feet and spanning nearly 20,000 square miles — 200 miles east to west, 100 miles north to south, roughly a fourth of the state, the largest area of grass-stabilized sand dunes in the Western Hemisphere.

Charles Kuralt, in one of his CBS “On the Road” segments, called Highway 2 “one of America’s 10 most beautiful highways ... a road that takes you to one of the last unexplored frontiers where vast treasures can be discovered.”

It is surprisingly beautiful, the 13 million acres once considered “ir-reclaimable desert,” where pheasant, quail, deer and others are plentiful (though mostly unseen) and cattle graze, spread out because the dunes are fragile. Ranchers, who have used the area for rangeland since the 1870s, must take care to keep it from being overgrazed, which can cause “blowouts” — grassless pits resembling huge golf course sand traps that are not easily repaired. Similarly, the dunes can’t be cultivated because grass holds them in place, and without it they blow away in the wind, which seemingly never stops.

Nearly two dozen small towns lie

along the scenic drive that ends at Alliance, many with an Old West ambience. We suggest taking a leisurely pace, allowing several days for the trip. For an introduction to the Nebraska of pioneer days, begin with a visit to Stuhr Museum of the Prairie Pioneer in Grand Island.

Located on Henry Fonda Memorial Highway (U.S. Highway 34), this living history museum, which opened in 1967 on 200 acres donated by local farmer Leo Stuhr, offers glimpses into Nebraska’s past. Exhibits at the modernistic Stuhr Building depict various aspects of prairie pioneer life, and Railroad Town, 60 restored century-old homes, shops and other buildings, re-creates a prairie community.

An 1890 depot, locomotives and “rolling stock” help tell the story of Nebraska’s early railroads. Pioneer Settlement, a complex of eight mid-19th century buildings, interprets “road ranches” along the pioneer trail that served early travelers.

A fine collection of Native American and Old West memorabilia is displayed at Gus Fonner Memorial Building, another of the museum’s many attractions, which also include the birthplace of actor Henry Fonda (1905-1982), who paid to have his former home moved here from elsewhere in Grand Island and restored.

Drive north from the museum then west on Highway 2, into a world of cornfields, “shelter belts” (hedgerows) and widely spaced clusters of farm buildings. A dozen miles ahead is Cairo, population 790, which claims an “Egyptian flavor.”

The streets, mostly ending in cornfields, have such names as Alexandria, Suez and Nile, and just north of the drive on State Highway 11, a metal camel and pyramid welcome visitors to the town, which locals pronounce “Care-oh.”

West of town you drive through flatland, where wide fields rumple into distant hills, then suddenly you’re ringed by hills, tiers of dramatic sand shapes studded with pines and junipers.

Just east of Ravenna a historical marker notes the site of a Civilian Conservation Corps camp that from 1934 to 1939 put some 200 men to work planting shelter belts on area farms and building the dam for nearby Buffalo Lake.

Also near here was an outpost of Fort Kearny, established in 1865. It was named Post South Loup Fork, but was so remote soldiers stationed there called it “Fort Desolation,” even “Fort Banishment,” as duty there may have been punishment for some infraction.

Despite such street names as Genoa and Milan, Ravenna, on the South Loup River, is more Western than Italian. A high bridge over the rail yard leads into town, where a large mural depicts Ravenna as it appeared a century earlier. West of town the railroad tracks — Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) — connecting Grand Island with Alliance closely parallel the highway. Coal trains, at least 130 cars long.

The drive runs through tiny Hazard, Litchfield, Mason City and Ansley, platted in 1886, two decades after the Union Pacific tracks were laid through the

Stuhr Museum gives visitors an introduction to Nebraska’s pioneer days and its grounds include Native American and Old West displays.

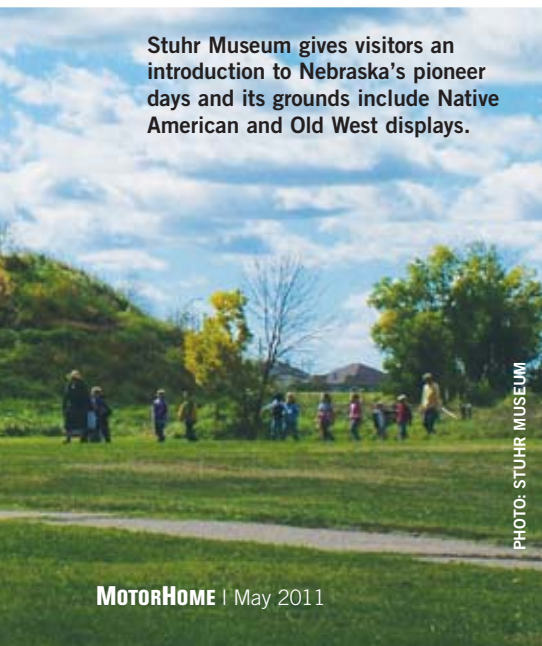


PHOTO: STUHR MUSEUM

The 90,440-acre Nebraska National Forest is the largest hand-planted forest in the nation. Planting of the forest, which included ponderosa pine, jack pine and red cedar, began in 1902.



PHOTO: STATE OF NEBRASKA



PHOTOS: GUY LOUIS SELBERT

Left: Bob the Rottweiler, nicknamed the “Ellsworth Ambassador,” greets customers at Old Spade Ranch Store in Ellsworth. **Right:** Between Lakeside and Antioch along Highway 2 are acres of concrete structures that are the remains of giant factories built during World War I. Because German potash was unavailable during the war, workers began distilling potash from local alkaline lakes. The end of the war brought the end of the boom, with most of the workers moving out.

state. By the town’s centennial 35 coal trains a day were coming through.

Ahead is Broken Bow, a lovely town with an interesting story as to how it got its name. In 1879 settlers began taking land on Muddy Creek, near today’s town. Settler Wilson Hewitt wanted to open a post office in his dugout home, but the fledgling town needed a name, and the government rejected the first two he suggested. Then one day Hewitt’s sons, wandering along the creek, found pieces of an old Pawnee bow and a broken arrow — and a third name was suggested. Late that year a post office



MAP ILLUSTRATION: SUE CARLSON

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opened in Broken Bow, today the county seat of Custer County. Pieces of the bow are displayed at Custer County Historical Museum on the town square.

A lovely century-old bandstand, where performances are held on summer Thursdays, is at the center of the square. Nearby, at 8th Avenue and Highway 2, is an excellent chamber of commerce/visitor center. (Director Denise Russell told us about Nebraska’s “Junk Jaunt” (www.junkjaunt.com), a 300-plus-mile yard sale held the last full weekend in September.

The Sandhills Journey Scenic Byway Interpretive Center east of town on Highway 2 is open May 1 through Sept. 30. For RVers seeking a campground we recommend staying at economical Tomahawk Park with some services and spacious, level sites.

Continue to Merna, population 391,

with antique false-front buildings and a fine 1916 Carnegie Library on Center Avenue, the wide main street. Next is Anselmo, a petite burg with just 189 residents. Nonetheless magnificent St. Anselm Catholic Church is here; it’s known as the “Cathedral of the Sandhills.”

Well-marked roads lead north from the two towns to Victoria Springs State Recreation Area, a 60-acre “oasis in the Sandhills” and the third-oldest in Nebraska’s park system. Open Memorial Day through the third weekend in November, it’s a sublime site for picnics and camping.

As you cross the Dismal River into Dunning, population 109, we suggest stopping at the Sinclair station even if you don’t need fuel, as Marlene Van Diest’s Sandhills Pottery studio is adjacent and dozens of her lovely creations are available at the station.

Past Halsey, a town of antique, weathered buildings, is 90,440-acre Nebraska National Forest, once a grassland and now the country's largest hand-planted forest. The planting — of ponderosa and jack pines, red cedars and others — began in 1902. Bessey Nursery, where the trees get their start, is the oldest operating nursery in the national forest system. The forest offers a variety of activities to visitors, including miles of hiking and ATV trails, bird-watching and camping (38 sites, 20 with electricity) for RVs up to 30 feet long.

At Thedford we suggest visiting the Thedford Art Gallery for fine western art, paintings, bronzes, carvings and more, and the Thomas County Historical Museum, which focuses on the history of the county and displays donated artifacts.

Mullen, ahead, offers another museum at the Hooker County Historical Society. Visitors to Mullen can also enjoy a river adventure with Glidden Canoe Rental or another company on the Dismal or Middle Loup rivers in canoes or kayaks and, surprisingly, in metal stock tanks. "Tanking" is popular here — floating the rivers in cir-

cular tanks that are "outfitted for comfort."

At Hyannis, stop at Grant County Museum (in the courthouse) to see a display of John Wayne memorabilia. Charles Bert Hayward, a stunt double for Wayne in many of his films, was from here.

Ahead are railroad towns Ashby, Bingham and Ellsworth, population 25, where we suggest stopping at Old Spade Ranch Store, founded in 1898. You'll be greeted by "Ellsworth Ambassador" Bob, a charming 155-pound Rottweiler, who "helps" his owner, raconteur Wade Morgan, run the old-fashioned store.

Lakeside, which had 1,500 residents during the "potash boom" of World War I, and now has just 30, is ahead at Nebraska Highway 250. When World War I broke out in 1914, exportation of German potash (potassium carbonate) used in American agriculture and industry suddenly ended. After it was discovered that potash could be extracted from alkali water in nearby lakes, Lakeside and Antioch a few miles west became boomtowns overnight, with more than half a dozen large "reduction" plants producing up to 200 tons a day.

But soon after the war ended so did the need for Sandhills potash — and the "boom" was over as quickly as it had begun. Today ruins of the plants, smokestacks and evaporation towers are all that remain. Antioch, with more than 2,000 residents 90 years ago, today counts just 10.

Halfway between Antioch and Alliance the hills begin to flatten, and by the time you reach the end of the drive, you're again in wide-open prairie. Railroad town Alliance is the coal capital of the state and a hub for the BNSF, where locomotives are maintained. The town also offers numerous attractions including Carnegie Arts Center, Sallows Conservatory and Arboretum, Sallows Military Museum, and Knight Museum and Sandhills Center, which provides an excellent finale for the Sandhills Journey.

A walk through the 5,000 square feet of exhibit space is a walk through time, starting some 400 million years ago when the Sandhills began forming. Dozens of exhibits with hundreds of artifacts tell about the Native Americans who lived here, the arrival of the railroad, and the birds, animals and plants that call the Sandhills home. ♦

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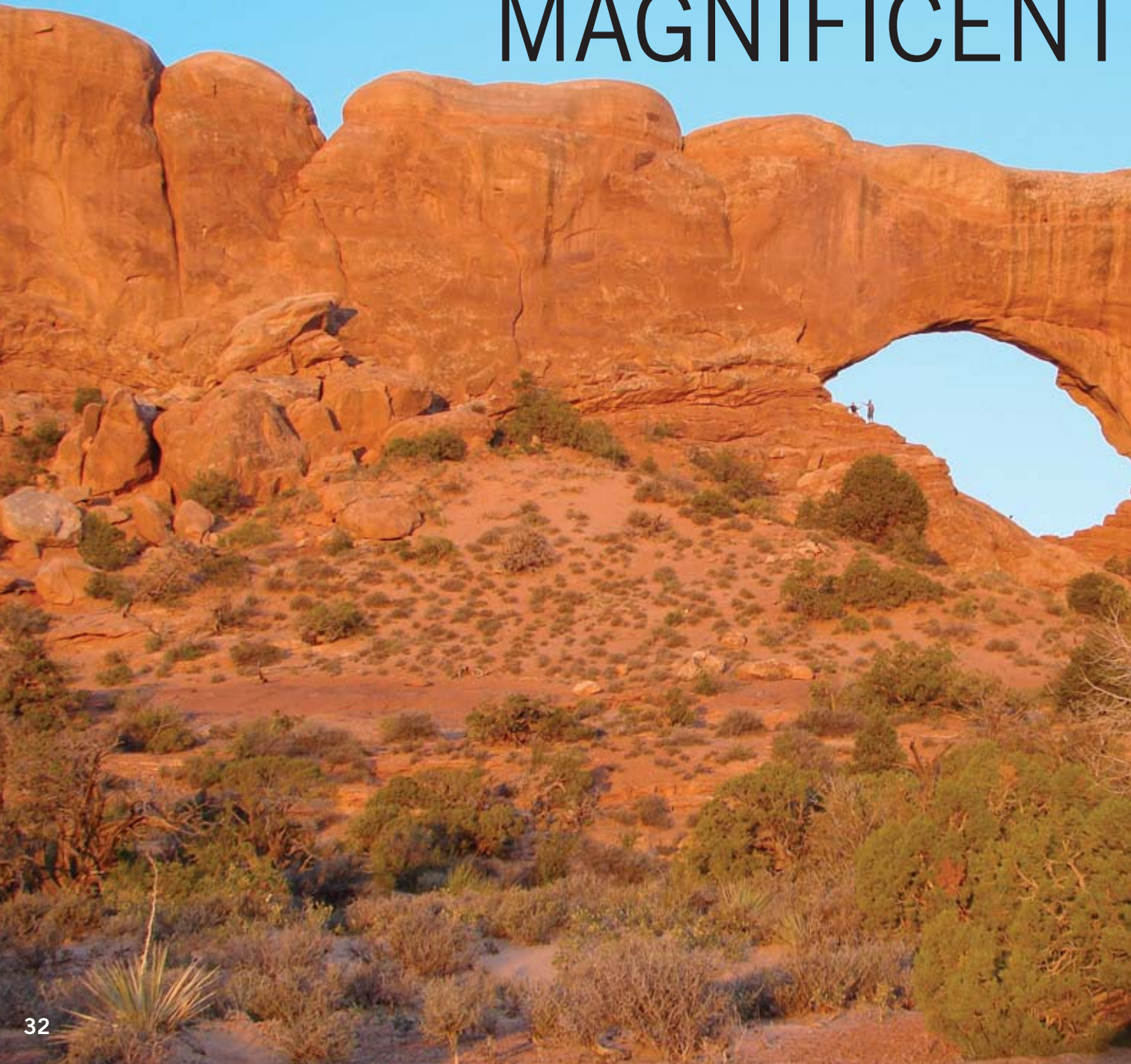
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MOAB

SOUTHEASTERN UTAH IS A MECCA FOR RVERS AND OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS

by MARY ZALMANEK

We all have our own idea of paradise. For Edward Abbey, the late author and environmentalist, the canyon country around Moab was “the most beautiful place on Earth.”

Moab, a small town in southeastern Utah, lies near the Colorado River, surrounded by awe-inspiring red rock terrain. My husband, Jim, and I first visited here 24 years ago. We became enchanted by the area and have returned at least once a year ever since.

In our earlier journeys, we'd often leave after work on Thursday and drive six hours to get there. Once we arrived we'd set up our tent in darkness so that we were ready to mountain bike Moab's famous trails the next morning. On Sunday, we'd head home, already planning our next long weekend.

Through the years our accommodations included tents, a yurt, motels, cabins, condos and finally an RV. When we bought a motorhome in 2002, Moab was our first destination. We met friends at a primitive Bureau of Land Management (BLM) campsite on the Colorado River east of Dewey Bridge. To celebrate the occasion, they surprised us with live Maine lobsters for dinner. It was a memorable introduction to RVing.

Moab is an RV-friendly town. RVers can choose from 25 BLM campgrounds in the Moab area for boondocking or from 13 RV parks with full hookups. Moab's peak months are April through October. During that time, and particularly on weekends when there are special events, RV parks are often filled to capacity and reservations are advised. While individual campsites are not reservable at BLM campgrounds, seven campgrounds have sites that are reservable for groups.

Arches National Park, Canyonlands National Park and Dead Horse Point State Park are all located within a short drive from Moab. Arches, five miles north of Moab, contains the world's largest concentration of natural sandstone arches. More than 2,000 arches are located within the park's 76,518 acres, along with other sandstone formations such as balanced rocks, fins and spires. The easiest way to see the park is to drive the 36-mile round-trip scenic road. For a closer look, explore viewpoints within the park. Better yet, take a hike. Some of the trails are short and easy; others are longer and more primitive. A late afternoon or early evening hike to Delicate Arch affords the best lighting and is a three-mile round-trip hike.

Clockwise from top left: There are tons of options for boating on the Colorado River, whether you want a leisurely paddle on calm waters or white-knuckle rafting on Class IV and V rapids. John Tilson displays his freshly caught rainbow trout at Warner Lake in the La Sal Mountains. The streams and lakes in the area offer great trout fishing. Mountain biking in Moab can be challenging, but most trails lead to outstanding views. The Windows Section in Arches National Park is especially vibrant at sunrise when it is bathed in golden light.

PHOTOS: MARY ZALMANEK



Clockwise from above left: Pretty Moab Golf Course is very well-maintained and popular, so make sure to reserve tee times in advance. You could also try Hideout Golf Club in Monticello, which is 10 to 15 degrees cooler than Moab during the summer. The shops and restaurants in Moab's shopping district offer a respite from the heat and plenty of souvenirs, jewelry, clothing and more available for purchase. Hogan Trading Company is easy to recognize, as it's surrounded by Lyman Whitaker's wind sculptures, which are crafted out of copper, steel and stainless steel. Visitors gather at sunset at Dead Horse Point — 2,000 miles above the Colorado River — to observe "one of the most photographed scenic vistas in the world." Spanish Trail RV Park, just three miles south of Moab, has spacious pull-through sites and panoramic views.



Edward Abbey's experiences as a seasonal park ranger at Arches are described in his classic book "Desert Solitaire." Published in 1968, this book is still relevant today, stressing the importance of preserving our natural resources. He writes eloquently about the beauty of the desert. It's easy to understand why he wrote, "May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome, dangerous, leading to the most amazing view."

With more than 300,000 acres, Canyonlands is Utah's largest national park. The Colorado and the Green rivers divide the park into three districts: Island in the Sky, the Maze and the Needles. Each district has its own entrance. Island in the Sky is closest to Moab and therefore the most popular. It has 20 miles of paved roads and more than 15 miles in hiking trails. If you hike five miles into Druid Arch, start early

for the best lighting.

Canyonlands' 100-mile White Rim Trail, with its steep and rugged terrain, provides a challenge for experienced mountain bikers and four-wheel drivers (ATVs are not permitted). Most visitors complete the entire loop in two to four days by four-wheel-drive or by mountain bike. Campsite reservations and backcountry permits are required.

Dead Horse Point State Park is 32 miles from Moab. The view from Dead Horse Point is "one of the most photographed scenic vistas in the world," according to the Moab Area Travel Council. From the overlook 2,000 feet above the Colorado River, the effect of 150 million years of erosion creates a staggering view.

Sunrise and sunset are the best times to photograph the sandstone formations around Moab. We stopped by the Moab

Information Center on the corner of Main and Center streets for some photography suggestions. They gave us a list of sunrise and sunset viewing ideas with driving times from Moab to each location.

Even though I'm not a morning person, a Moab sunrise is worth getting up early. When we arrived at the Windows Section in Arches 30 minutes before sunrise, we were the first car in the parking lot. We walked to the east side of the North and South windows and waited for the sun to peek out. The sandstone formations glowed with intense colors when the first light appeared.

Moab attracts people passionate about outdoor activities. Whether it's mountain biking, golfing, four-wheeling, ATving, rafting, technical climbing or hiking, this area provides the perfect weather and terrain for people serious about sports.



BLM campgrounds in Moab are primitive and surrounded by nature. This site is located in Big Bend Campground along the Colorado River and is encircled by imposing cliffs. Sites are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

The world-famous Slickrock Bike Trail was the reason we initially visited Moab. Motorcyclists developed the trail in 1969, identifying the 12-mile route with white dashes and dots painted on rocks. Called "slickrock" by early settlers whose metal-shod horses found the sandstone difficult to cross, the opposite is true for mountain bikers. The knobby tires hold tight to the coarse rock surface, allowing riders to ride

up and down ridiculously steep hills.

Once my favorite Moab ride, the 15.6-mile Porcupine Rim starts with a moderately strenuous climb, offers an amazing view of Castle Valley at the Rim, then tests technical skills and courage on the steep, rocky downhill. We've since discovered we can have just as much fun and not hurt nearly as much afterward on rides such as Gemini Bridges, Klondike Bluffs or Flat Pass.

Moab's terrain appeals to four-wheelers as well. The Easter Jeep Safari is one of the biggest events of the year, attracting four-wheeling enthusiasts from all over the country. Red Rock 4-Wheelers of Moab organizes the rides for this nine-day happening. Each day they lead about nine trail rides, with the exception of "Big Saturday," when up to 30 groups ride 30 different trails. Trail difficulties range from easy to nearly impassible. Seeing is believing. On YouTube.com, search for "Moab Easter Jeep Safari" to watch videos of Jeeps climbing what I would have thought was impassible. If you plan to visit during this time make your camping reservations early.

Even if your dinghy vehicle is better suited for black top than slickrock, you can still join in the four-wheeling fun. Several companies offer Jeep and Hummer tours, ranging in length from two hours to multiple days. At Moab Adventure Center, professional guides operate Hummers customized with raised seating in the rear for optimum passenger viewing. You can also rent Jeeps, ATVs or motorcycles.

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changed over the years, so have our activities. We still mountain bike, but we spend more than half of our days on the golf course. Moab Golf Course is one of the prettiest courses I've ever played. The well-maintained fairways and greens are surrounded by red cliffs and boulders. If you plan to golf during high season, reserve your tee times before you arrive.

Hideout Golf Club in Monticello is about an hour's drive south of Moab. It's a beautiful, uncrowded course with plenty of hills and trees. Each time we've played there, we've seen more deer than golfers. Since Monticello is several thousand feet higher than Moab, the temperatures can be a refreshing 10 to 15 degrees cooler during the summer months.

If you visit in the summer, you can expect temperatures in the 90s to over 100 degrees. Fortunately, there's more than one way to cool off. The La Sal Mountains rise 20 miles southeast of Moab, with 12 peaks above 12,000 feet. It's the perfect spot for hiking or biking on shaded trails and dirt roads, or for trout fishing in the mountain streams and lakes.

When the hot sun beats down, the cool river starts to look mighty inviting. We've joined a rafting trip and paddled a canoe on the Colorado River. There are plenty of options, with about 20 river guides and outfitters to put you on the Colorado, Delores or Green rivers in a raft, kayak, canoe or jet boat. Rafting trips in calm waters are suitable for everyone from 40-pound youngsters to seniors. If white-knuckle white water is more your style, there are several companies that take trips in Cataract Canyon. Snowmelt from the Rocky Mountains in late spring churns up massive Class IV and V rapids. Rafting trips range from a couple of hours to multiday excursions.

Canyonlands by Night and Day, a tour company in Moab for 47 years, offers tours by water, land and air. Its signature tour is the Night Show, which features a cowboy-style Dutch oven dinner and a slow flat-bottomed boat ride up the Colorado. The show starts after dark when stories about the area's formation and history are told using lights, shadows, music and narration. This unique history lesson about the Native Americans, Catholic conquistadors and Mormon pioneers unfolds on the canyon walls.

One surefire way to beat the heat

in any charming resort town is to browse in the air-conditioned stores in the shopping district. Moab is no exception, with plenty of shops selling T-shirts, souvenirs, jewelry, clothing, sporting goods, books and art. One of our favorites is Hogan Trading Company on Main Street. It's easy to recognize, surrounded by Lyman Whitaker's wind sculptures. These kinetic works of art — made of copper, steel and stainless steel — dance in time to the wind, whether it's a gentle breeze or a heavy storm.

In addition to the year-round scenery and seasonal outdoor activities, there are numerous special events to entertain visitors. Whenever you go and whatever you do, you'll find plenty of activities to entertain you and keep you coming back for more. Even after 24 years, we can't get enough. Maybe next year we'll stay longer. ♦

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WINNIE'S FLAGSHIP ADDS A NEW FLOORPLAN FOR PENTHOUSE-STYLE LIVING WHERE YOU SUPPLY THE VIEW

by FRED PAUSCH

This year has brought changes to Forest City, Iowa, as Winnebago's 2011 Tour gets a new tag axle floorplan, a facelift and new power. Thanks to the talents of Winnebago engineers, a 28-foot full-wall slide has been designed to create a refreshingly open and uninterrupted floorplan in this almost 43-foot full-time explorer.

To create such a large opening in the side of this rolling penthouse, a custom extruded aluminum double-stacked beam mates with a thick-wall rectangular steel beam to create a strong hybrid support element. This hybrid beam combination locks into the roof structure as part of Winnebago's "SuperStructure" construction method and bridges the slide opening from the cockpit's vertical steel "B" pillar behind the driver, to the framing structure that defines and supports the rear cap. Test track

durability results and the factory's Iowa location have successfully demonstrated the span's ability to properly handle the vibration and stresses of road travel as well as winter snow loads.

Entering the Tour, the wow factor is immediate. Beautiful dark cherry cabinets surround the cabin accented by matching fluted pilasters, ornate bridge casings and crown moldings. Handsome 18-inch by 18-inch floor tiles with mosaic inserts, a touch of accent carpeting and dark Corian countertops against light upholstery complete a very upscale environment.

This luxury touring coach is arranged with a forward living area anchored by an expanding multi-position 60-inch by 75-inch "Rest Easy" sectional sofa sleeper. This piece of furniture wrings out every usable inch of space and offers versatility and comfort. The Rest Easy can be used as a regular sofa or with a



pullout ottoman for perfect feet-up viewing of the 40-inch LCD TV mated to a very nice HD surround sound system; it's satellite-ready with optional (\$2,114) in-motion King Dome dish.

Maybe you'd rather curl up with a good book in front of the optional (\$490) electric heating fireplace using the travel position of the sofa as a comfortable chaise lounge? To sleep, a push of a button electronically drops the sofa back and by releasing a manual latch on the aisle sofa arm, the sofa end extends into the cabin, revealing an additional pop-up cushion completing an L-shaped sofa or the nearly 6-foot by 6-foot bed.

A comfortable free-standing swivel recliner can be used anywhere but it's handy at the pullout laptop desk concealed in the fireplace cabinetry along with the leaf for the free-standing dinette. Both fully adjustable cockpit seats swivel to provide additional cabin seating when needed. We easily entertained 12 adults in comfort when the weather forced all of us inside for meals and to watch movies until the rain passed.

Entertaining often centers around the galley and this coach is designed for it. With nearly 13 feet of cabin width, there's plenty of room for the chef and helpers. A glass-topped, recessed three-burner Thetford cooktop will keep the fare coming, served from the space-saver countertop extension structure that slides with its three-drawer lower cabinet to augment the abbreviated countertop. This galley relies on the optional (\$553) GE Advantium 120 oven that uses conventional microwave or high-intensity halogen light to cook.

The space normally reserved for a gas oven is occupied by a Fisher & Paykel drawer-style dishwasher that can accommodate dinner plates. A stainless twin-basin sink with pullout faucet is set in the corner base cabinet and rather than use a conventional backsplash, Winnebago designers added three handy storage drawers at the back of the counter topped with another counter piece to set small items on out of the way.

In addition to whole coach water filtration located in the exterior utility bay, a countertop filtered cold water faucet further improves filtration for drinking and for the icemaker in the optional (\$1,372) Maytag residential 20-cubic-foot (AC only) stainless refrigerator with freezer drawer. This must-have item is the best bang for the buck on the options list as it also includes a larger 2,800-watt inverter, two additional Group 31 AGM coach batteries and is aided by the standard 10-watt solar charger, which is only for battery maintenance when the coach is in storage.

The coach's appetite for power is pretty big because of the all-electric refrigerator and the large number of electri-

Opposite page top left: An optional electric heating fireplace and a pullout laptop desk raise the Tour's residential feel. The layout of the cockpit controls is simple and intuitive, with easy-to-read gauges and a touch-screen radio. This page clockwise from top left: The fully carpeted bedroom features a king-size bed that stows for travel. With the push of a button, the Rest Easy sectional sofa can be configured to fit your needs. The roomy galley features dark cherry cabinetry and a space-saving countertop extension. The dining table extends to seat four, and the cabinets behind provide extra storage and serving space.



2011 WINNEBAGO TOUR 42QD

WHAT'S HOT

Aqua Hot's quiet, even hydronic heating system, 28-foot slide engineering, Rest Easy multi-position electric sofa bed, 450-hp emission-compliant diesel engine, new front cap and full-body paint schemes

WHAT'S NOT

Lack of roof gutter diverters protecting full-body paint, entry switch panel is difficult to read at night, half bath gets a little too much heat



The high-end trim is carried into the rear bath, which features an optional stacked Ariston washer and dryer and a generous 6-foot-2-inch lighted shower stall.

cal goodies. Camping without hookups requires a close eye on battery condition and the use of the 10 kW diesel-fired generator. The generator can be set to start automatically when battery power gets to a critical level and the multistage charging system does a good job of bringing the batteries back to life. We found that the battery bank, tied to the inverter, can easily keep everything working for about 12 hours without the use of the generator, but the power requirements will take the batteries down past optimum levels. During our testing, we ran the Aqua Hot for interior heat and hot water, the refrigerator at normal levels, watched TV through a satellite receiver and did not scrimp on lighting usage. Don't expect the batteries to last exceptionally long if they are allowed to be discharged deeply on a frequent basis. This will only be an issue if camping in areas that restrict generator-running hours and/or where hookups are not available. Nevertheless, it proves that it's possible to keep the refrigerator at

acceptable cooling levels without hookups.

The dining area consists of a diminutive free-standing 22-inch-wide dinette for two that extends to seat four when you use the two additional dinette chairs stowed in protective bags in the basement. A large window provides nearly al fresco dining along the under-dinette storage cabinet's matching Corian countertop that augments food service space. After-party cleanup is no problem with the optional (\$378) central vacuum system that includes a convenient galley toe-kick broom port and additional hose ports, including one in the basement for compartment cleanup.

As one benefit of tag axle body lengths, this floorplan offers a useful half bath next to the galley and eliminates late-night forays through the master bedroom to visit the rear bath. Wainscoting matching the cabin cabinetry surrounds the room highlighted by task and accent lighting and an automatic ceiling fan. A Thetford Tecma (china bowl) vacuum flush with push-button controls for water usage is used in the half bath and in the rear master bath.

To provide some privacy for the bedroom, a shoji-like sliding door with translucent panels is used — but be forewarned that dressing too closely to it while backlit may provide additional entertainment for those in the cabin. The fully carpeted bedroom suite contains a very comfortable 72-inch by 80-inch Ideal Rest king-size bed with dual numerical controllers (for mattress comfort) that fills the curbside slide. Bed-side dual pane windows used throughout the Tour provide convenient ventilation and light aided by the 34-inch ceiling fan. The bed stows for travel allowing aisle access by raising the head using push buttons on either nightstand, which are also equipped with AC outlets. Adjustable overhead reading lamps and stereo/DVD speakers are mounted under the overhead storage cabinets while wall sconces provide general lighting.



SPECIFICATIONS

PERFORMANCE

FUEL ECONOMY: 8.1 MPG

ACCELERATION:

0-60: 32 SEC

40-60: 18 SEC

CHASSIS

MODEL: MAXUM BY FREIGHTLINER

ENGINE: 8.9-L CUMMINS ISL TORBU

SAE HP: 450 HP @ 2,100 RPM

TORQUE: 1,250 LB-FT @ 1,200 RPM

TRANSMISSION: 6-SPEED ALLISON 3000MH

AXLE RATIO: 4.63:1

TIRES: 275/80R22.5/H

WHEELBASE: 279" PLUS TAG AXLE

BRAKES: DISC/DRUM AIR ASSIST WITH ABS

SUSPENSION, F/R: NEWAY AIR BAG

FUEL CAP: 150 GAL

WARRANTY: 3 YRS/50,000 MILES

COACH

EXT LENGTH: 42' 10"

EXT WIDTH: 8' 5.5"

EXT HEIGHT WITH A/C: 12' 11"

INT WIDTH: 8' ½"

INT HEIGHT: 7'

CONSTRUCTION: STEEL REINFORCED

ALUMINUM SUPPORT STRUCTURE WITH

EXTRUDED POLYSTYRENE SHEET (ESP)

INSULATION, FIBERGLASS SKIN AND

CROWNED FIBERGLASS ROOF

FRESHWATER CAP: 90 GAL

BLACK-WATER CAP: 53 GAL

GRAY-WATER CAP: 105 GAL

WATER-HEATER CAP: ON DEMAND

LP-GAS CAP: 30 GAL

AIR CONDITIONER (3): 13,500 BTU

FURNACE: 45,000 BTU

REFRIGERATOR: 20 CU-FT

INVERTER: 2,800 WATT

BATTERY: (2) AGM 12-VOLT CHASSIS,

(4) AGM 12-VOLT COACH

AC GENERATOR: 10 KW

BASE MSRP: \$328,598

MSRP AS TESTED: \$357,830

WARRANTY: 1 YR/15,000 MILES

WET WEIGHT

(WATER AND HEATER, FUEL, LP-GAS TANKS

FULL; NO SUPPLIES OR PASSENGERS)

FRONT AXLE: 13,540 LBS

REAR AXLE: 22,520 LBS

TOTAL: 36,060 LBS

CHASSIS RATINGS

GAWR, F/R: 14,320/30,000 LBS

GVWR/GCWR: 44,320/59,320 LBS

ROCCC: 8,260 LBS

(DEDUCT WEIGHT OF PASSENGERS FOR NET

CARGO CAPACITY)

GAWR: GROSS AXLE WEIGHT RATING

GVWR: GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING

GCWR: GROSS COMBINATION WEIGHT RATING

ROCCC: REALISTIC OCCUPANT AND CARGO

CARRYING CAPACITY (FULL WATER, NO

PASSENGERS)

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That very long curbside slide ends in the bedroom and holds the Jack and Jill wardrobes with storage drawers below. Connecting the wardrobes is a 36-inch by 20-inch dresser hiding a 32-inch LCD TV that rises through the tabletop. The multi-format stereo is centered below the dresser top and the pair of lower cabinet doors is actually a handy tip-out clothes hamper.

The step-up rear bath offers a generous 6-foot-2-inch lighted shower stall with a

domed skylight and seat. An automatic wall-switched ceiling fan will quickly clear the fogged mirrors on the large three-door medicine cabinet. Deep twin drawers and storage below should handle most bath necessities as well as laundry supplies for the optional (\$1,750) separate but stacked Ariston washer and dryer. A large corner storage closet is also provided with a hanging rod but could be used for a variety of cargo. The handsome cabin tile is continued throughout the bath and includes a recessed locking floor hatch to access the top of the engine.

The dual-zone, triple-unit roof A/C system worked flawlessly maintaining zone temp settings and reinforced our love of the Aqua Hot hydronic heating and hot water supply system. Having spent decades in RVs with conventional LP-gas furnaces with noisy blowers and ever-fluctuating temperatures, we enjoyed the quiet, even heat and unlimited hot water supply so much it was hard to give the Tour back. Flip on the system, set the zone temps and forget it. Temperature control inside was as near perfect as possible, with just a little too much heat in the half bath. This system was also equipped with the engine block preheat feature, which allows easier starts in very cold weather and later uses waste engine heat while traveling to augment coach heating needs.

Excellent exterior pass-through storage is provided and the optional (\$616) compartment pullout storage tray simplifies access to heavy cargo. Standard electric awnings for the coach body and entry provide the necessary protection to enjoy the optional (\$1,890) entertainment center that includes a 32-inch LCD TV, speakers and DVD player housed in a weather-tight side wall panel.

The utility bay is designed to handle

wet conditions and features clear labeling, protected fill and dump controls as well as the water hose power reel, cleanup features and a remote control to monitor the leveling jacks. An optional (\$735) power cord reel in the adjacent compartment is also available. We'd like to see rain gutter extensions added to the standard equipment list to help protect and maintain the handsome body finish, especially dark paint schemes.

The cockpit of the Tour is a real treat to spend time in thanks to easy-to-read gauges, large mirrors with side camera mounts, tilt and telescoping steering, and comfortable heated full adjust electric seats. The optional heated (\$406) copilot's seat also offers a footrest and reclining seatback, adding a second recliner to the mix. A 6.5-inch touchscreen radio with steering wheel controls and copilot remote makes radio, MP3, CD, auxiliary input, exterior cameras and Bluetooth cell phone functions simple and intuitive. Below the radio, a 6-inch GPS screen provides navigation information with a USB port available to plug in storage devices or a printer. Remaining controls are clearly laid out along the side dash console, making it easy to operate a variety of coach, engine and transmission functions.

The Tour is built on a proprietary Maxum chassis, a drop-rail model to maximize basement storage and built by Freightliner to Winnebago's specifications. Our Tour was equipped with the new but optional (\$13,188) EPA emission-compliant 450-HP Cummins 8.9-L turbocharged engine and six-speed Allison transmission.

The big Cummins propelled the coach effortlessly on the highway and allowed hill climbing with ease. Steep grades initially slowed us down, but by the time we crested the hills, we were almost back to normal highway speeds. Piloting the Tour keeps the driver much more at ease than the 43-foot stature suggests. The sharp turning cut makes negotiating RV parks stress free. The air bag suspension takes just about all the road shock out of the driving experience, but rough highway sections and concrete expansion joints are quite noticeable, although not objectionable.

Overall, the Tour receives high marks as a handsome part- or full-time luxury touring coach with a livable combination of features and amenities that are sure to make time on the road carefree and fun. ♦

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GETTING THE DIRT OFF

HOW RV CLEANING PRODUCTS —
FROM CLEANERS TO BRUSHES TO MOPS — MEASURE UP

by E. DON SMITH

Washing the exterior of a large motorhome can be quite a chore, but if you use the right tools, products and techniques, the task can be a lot easier. For most RV owners, the best way to clean is to do the work in the comfort of your own driveway. This way you can ensure that the job is done correctly and with no damage to the paint.

Of course, you can use one of the truck wash centers found along major interstates, but be careful, as these services aren't accustomed to dealing with the type of full-body paint jobs commonly found on most coaches. Some RVers we spoke with reported good results at truck washes, while others reported multiple scratches and swirls in the paint from the use of dirty or too-aggressive brushes. Another problem is their use of high-pressure nozzles, which can loosen decals or penetrate seals around doors or windows.

SIDESTEPPIING THE SWIRLS

One of the most common problems associated with full-body paint is swirls or circular scratches that can appear after washing. The swirls are more prominent on darker-color paint

jobs, but these scratches are visible on some lighter colors as well. It takes a major buffing by a skilled operator and many hours to remove the swirls. The trick is to avoid them in the first place. Most of these swirls are created during washing from dirt and grit that's on the surface. Other culprits include brushes that are too stiff or made from the wrong material, or soaps that don't provide enough paint lubrication between the mitt or brush and the paint. If you follow our advice, you'll end up with a clean, shiny motorhome and no new swirls on the paint.

Our goal here is to show you how to avoid swirls and other RV washing pitfalls using water or waterless washing methods. We contacted several leading RV/automotive detailing and cleaning suppliers to get some tips and products to evaluate. There are many suppliers and manufacturers of soaps, brushes, extension poles, etc., and we tried several of the more common products, as well as a few items that are not so common, to give you an overview of what's available today.

Each product has its strengths and weaknesses. Two suppliers we used, Autogeek (www.autogeek.net) and Griot's Garage (www.griotsgarage.com), offer auto detailing products



We used a wide range of Autogeek products, including its foam cannon and boar's hair brush.



Griot's Garage is another leading supplier of automotive products. We sampled its soap, nozzle and wash pads.



Camping World carries a variety of cleaning products. We found that the Swobbit sheepskin pad is very good at preventing scratches in the paint though it does require a special handle that can only be used with that pad.



Protect All Quick & Easy Wash is formulated to not leave streaks or spots and requires no rinsing. Just wash on and wipe dry.

that are widely respected in the detailing product market. We also used waterless products from Aero Cosmetics (www.washwax.com), a big supplier to the aircraft, RV and marine industries. Then we selected a range of products from Camping World (www.campingworld.com), a major supplier to the RV industry with cleaning products such as the Protect All line that are available online and through its large network of retail stores.

ON THE GO WITH H2O

The first challenge of washing a motorhome with water is finding a suitable location. If you're a full-timer parked in a campground, park rules likely prevent you from washing with water at your campsite. So unless you have a long driveway or an area large enough with access to water, you may have to search for a different site.

The next challenge is dealing with the coach's height. Some motorhomes are more than 12½ feet high, so you'll need to be able to reach well over 11 feet and still effectively wash at that height. You'll need an extension pole for your brush or wash mop.



Extension poles, from left: Camping World, Aero Cosmetics, Griot's and Autogeek. Our clear favorite was the Deluxe Mop Pole from Aero Cosmetics; our second favorite was from Griot's.

Each of the washing tools we tested comes with extension poles designed to give you the reach to wash the entire RV. The extension poles from Griot's, Camping World and Aero Cosmetics were all very good and capable of reaching the full height of a typical coach. Our clear favorite was the model included with the Aero Cosmetics kit. Not only was it plenty long enough, but it was also lightweight and very solidly built. Our second favorite was the pole from Griot's.

Next on the list of tools needed to wash an RV with water is the foaming soap.

The purpose of these cleansers is not only to help remove and dissolve dirt or other contaminants on the surface, but also to



These are the cleaning products we tested. We found quite a difference in their use and effectiveness. The best product at making suds was the DP Xtreme shampoo.

suspend those dirt particles and lubricate the surface of the paint to prevent scratching while washing.

We obtained several brands of RV-specific wash, some made for automotive use. There are several ways to spray the soap solution onto the motorhome and both



The Griot's nozzle features adjustable spray patterns, which are ideal for rinsing, and you don't have to remove the soap dispenser. It also has a flow adjustment that turns the foam applicator on or off.

Griot's and Autogeek have their own sprayers. The unit from Griot's is fairly small and has a plastic reservoir to hold the soap concentrate. It also has several adjustable spray patterns to aid in spraying and rinsing the soap. We used it along with the soap from Griot's and it produced only a fair rating for the volume and quality of suds produced.

The foam cannon from Autogeek (\$69.99) includes a large 2-quart reservoir. We filled the tank with water then added a few ounces of DP Xtreme Foam Formula Auto Shampoo, which is specially formulated for use in foam cannons. We then used the adjustable nozzle to literally blanket the entire area with the thickest foam we've ever seen. The foam also hangs on the surface, allowing you plenty of time to wash it before the lather disappears.



Using the removable nozzle from the foam cannon, we first wet the coach before applying the foam.



Although the Griot's nozzle is easy to use due to its size, it doesn't produce nearly the same level of foam as the foam cannon does. We even tried the DP Xtreme shampoo in it but the result was not the same as with the foam cannon and DP shampoo.

Of all the soaps we tested, this was by far the most concentrated and effective. It's also the most expensive at \$17.99 for 32 ounces or \$49.95 for a gallon. The Griot's car soap is \$39.95 a gallon but didn't produce nearly the same volume of foam, even when tested in the Autogeek



After wetting down the coach, we mixed the DP shampoo in the Autogeek foam cannon and applied it to the motorhome. This combination was by far the best at creating thick foam, which helps to float away contaminants and protect the paint from swirls.

foam cannon. By contrast, the Premium Gel-Gloss Wash and Wax from Camping World is \$27.77 (regular price) per gallon as is the Thetford Premium RV Wash & Wax. Both of them do a good job of cleaning but neither produced the thick foam of the DP Xtreme shampoo.

Another important part of properly cleaning a motorhome is the brush, mitt or mop you use to rub the dirt off the painted surface. To lubricate the painted area and help with the cleaning, you need to either spray the surface of the motorhome with



We also tested a variety of mops, mitts and brushes to see which did the best job and was least likely to scratch the paint. We really liked the boar's hair brush and the microfiber mop from Aero Cosmetics (for waterless washing).

foam or dip the brush or wash pad into a bucket filled with soapy water. By far the most effective way to do this is by using the foam cannon.

Just as important as properly lubricating the paint is choosing the right brush or mop. The most popular are synthetic brushes as they are widely available. But our research and interviews with several detailing experts revealed that most synthetic brushes are simply too stiff and can contribute to the dreaded paint scratches. The easiest way to avoid this is to use a softer brush or a microfiber mop or mitt.

In general, we prefer a brush (with a suitable extension handle) because it does a better job of reaching in and around the various surfaces of a typical motorhome. Slideouts, awning arms, windows and many other obstacles prevent a flat tool from effectively cleaning as well as a brush.

Our favorite brush was from Autogeek and is made from boar's hair, which is naturally soft, compliments of Mother Nature. Then the hairs are split once more during manufacturing to further soften them. You could easily bathe yourself using this brush, it's that soft. The brush is more expensive at \$99.99, but if using it prevents you



The Griot's microfiber wash pad is another cleaning tool that's easy on the paint. When attached to the company's very good extension pole it was easy to reach the entire coach and the microfiber pad won't scratch the paint like synthetic brushes can. Since the pad is not as thick as a brush, it makes cleaning around slideouts and awning arms tougher. Overall we still prefer the boar's hair brush.



Here's the boar's hair brush from Autogeek and the original handle, which is not quite long enough to reach the top of a tall motorcoach, but the brush is great at cleaning and not scratching the paint.



The boar's hair wash brush from Autogeek is used to clean the painted surface. Notice we have swapped the handle to the preferred unit from Aero Cosmetics to allow us to reach the top of the motorhome. This combination proved the best of the group for wet-washing.



The Aero Cosmetics Waterless Wash Wax kit comes with this carrying bag that allows you to store everything except the handle and mop head.



For \$219, you get all of the products shown here plus the bug scrubber. The Wash Wax All and the degreaser cleaner were very good and easy to use. We found this one of the easiest ways to clean a typical smooth-surface motorhome.



The Aero Mop is marked to help you remember which side to use for spraying cleaner on and which side to dry the coach with. It couldn't be easier.

from having to buff scratches out of your expensive motorhome paint, then it's worth it, in our opinion. Autogeek does need to improve its handle to better work with RVs as the pole included is far too thin and short to be used effectively. In fairness to Autogeek, the brush and handle are designed and marketed for SUVs and trucks, not RVs. If we could design the perfect combo for wet washing, we'd use the foam cannon and DP shampoo from Autogeek, along with its boar's hair brush. Then we'd use the extension pole from Aero Cosmetics.

Autogeek also supplied us with one more option that still requires water but not nearly as much as the typical wash



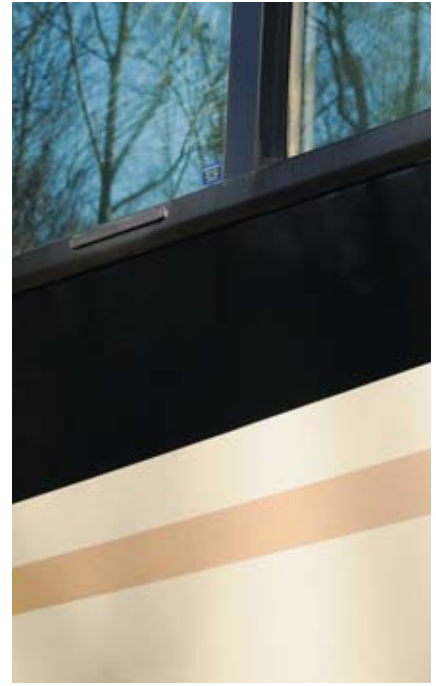
Spray the Wash Wax All on the wet side of the mop first.



Then simply mop the surface of the motorhome with the wet side, first doing one small area at a time. Then flip the mop over to the dry side and dry the cleaner off the surface.



The surface left behind is smooth and static-free, which should help repel dust and make cleaning easier next time.



The Aero Wash Wax All completely removed all of the black streaks and left a smooth, shiny surface.

described above. The product is made by Optimum and is called No Rinse Wash & Shine (\$15.99 a quart). When using this product, you simply mix a few capfuls in a bucket of clean water and use a mitt or mop to wipe down the surface. The surfactants in the product grab the dirt and enable it to float away in an instant. Then wipe it dry with a microfiber towel to prevent spotting.

Drying a coach is always a challenge with any wet washing method. We tried this product on a motorhome and several cars and on cars where you can reach the entire surface to dry them off. We've never seen anything like it. With a bucket of water, a wash mitt and some drying towels you can wash a car in 30 minutes in your garage and only use 1 to 2 gallons of water. But for motorhomes the required drying procedure makes it a bit tougher. We tried it on a motorhome, rinsed it with water and allowed it to air-dry, and it worked very well. Some mild spotting is to be expected as it air-dries unless you use deionized water.

NO WATER, NO PROBLEM

If washing with water isn't a good choice for you, you may want to use the Waterless Wash Wax system from Aero Cosmetics. We found it to be an effective and convenient way of cleaning a smooth-surface RV.

These products were originally devel-

oped for use on aircraft because of regulations that prevent typical water wash-downs at federally owned airports. Since then, they've grown in popularity and are now used on boats, as well as RVs and automobiles. Not only does waterless washing allow you to clean your motorhome most anywhere, it also allows you to wash a large vehicle in sections without the fear of streaks from water or soap drying on the surface. For our test, we used the Internet special called the "mop kit," which includes our favorite extension handle as well as a gallon of the cleaning solution and many other tools, towels and products packaged in a nice carrying bag. At first glance, the \$179 basic kit price may scare you, but when you consider the long-term cost and convenience of this setup, it's really a great deal.

To get started with waterless washing, just spray one side of the wet/dry mop with Wash Wax All and mop it up and down the surface, one small section at a time. Then flip the mop over and dry the same area. The surface left behind is significantly smoother to the touch compared with the water-washed areas, and it's streak-free. It also works great on windows and removes black streaks on paint. The only caveat from the manufacturer is to avoid using the product if dirt or dried mud are visible on the surface. The mud should be removed with water before using the Wash Wax All. Otherwise it will safely clean a typical motorhome even after driving in heavy rain.

A big advantage of this system is that it doesn't contribute to paint scratches. After its use, the surface is left treated with a shiny, antistatic coating that protects it and helps repel dirt and dust. This benefit alone helps with future cleanings. In fact, it's so smooth and slippery the supplier suggests you refrain from using it on floors and stairs. It also leaves glass very slick and aids in bug removal. Also offered is a special bug scrubber tool that's great for helping to remove dried insects off the large frontal area of a motorhome.

After cleaning a few sections, the mop cover will eventually become too wet to be effective, and then you simply change it out. Four extra covers and four microfiber towels are included in the kit, which we found to be plenty to clean our 36-foot motorhome. After you wash a typical RV about eight times, you'll likely be in need of a replacement gallon of the spray, which

can be purchased for \$27.95. This means you're using less than \$3.50 (one pint) of cleaner per wash, and no water. The kit also includes a waterless degreaser in the event you have areas like wheels that need a more aggressive cleaner. We found it to be very good at cleaning aluminum or chrome wheels.

Overall, we really liked the entire system, though it will take you a time or two of washing your RV to become accustomed to the new procedure. But if you stick with

it, you may join us in adopting this waterless system as your preferred method. Also, temperature, humidity and sunshine will affect the washing process, so pay attention as you learn how much to spray each time.

If you want to keep your motorhome looking good and maintain its resale value, one of the best things you can do is keep it clean. Using these tips and products will make the process a lot easier. So choose your method and get to work keeping your motorhome in tiptop shape. ♦

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2011 JAYCO EMBARK QX390

Luxurious appointments, a wraparound cockpit, and a 10-ton tow rating with Cummins power and torque



Sound too good to be true? Jayco's Embark QX390 combines the best of features found in Class A and Class C motorhomes to create a well-appointed and stylish coach that's as comfortable when boondocking in a remote location as it is when docked in a full-service luxury RV resort.

Using Freightliner's Business Class M2 106 chassis, the aerodynamic Embark is powered by a 350-hp Cummins ISC 8.3-L engine that transmits 1,000 LB-FT of torque at 1,400 RPM through the push-button six-speed automatic Allison 3200 TRV overdrive transmission. With those numbers, an engine brake and a 20,000-pound tow rating, bringing a full complement of family toys along should be no problem.

The full-power cockpit is equipped with Freightliner's wood grain wrap-around "wing" dash, which places all dash controls within easy reach. Cockpit access is very convenient using Freightliner's two-door day cab design with excellent visibility from the 2,500-square-inch windshield and sharply sloped front-hinged hood giving novice drivers added confidence that's further bolstered by the 55-degree wheel cut. Visibility is also enhanced by the large remote-controlled heated side-view mirrors and dash-mounted touch-screen backup camera and color monitor that also provides AM/FM/CD/DVD, Bluetooth and GPS functions.

The cabin employs large dual slides (11-foot-5-inch curb and 14-foot street) with facing sofa beds for guests and an optional streetside facing booth dinette (\$397) for meal service. Residential hardwood plank flooring handles high-traffic areas with no-track residential padded carpeting laid along the streetside of the cabin and through-

out the bedroom. An optional free-standing dinette and chairs or the popular sofa/dinette ensemble are also available as well as beautiful full leather furniture upgrades (\$1,786 to \$2,500) that must be seen

to appreciate. A standard 32-inch LCD HD TV is mounted in the handsome Washington Glazed Maple cabinetry with full AV distribution controls and feeds for the optional (\$2,529) in-motion roof satellite dish.

The galley fills out the remainder of the slides with stainless steel appliances that include a three-burner cooktop set into the Corian countertop with integrated twin-basin sink and a 1.4-cubic-foot convection/microwave oven in the overhead cabinetry curbside. In place of a conventional gas oven, Jayco provides two useful 75-pound-capacity full-extension pot and pan drawers. Recessed solid-surface stove and sink covers augment counterspace. Opposite is the 10-cubic-foot refrigerator with icemaker and overhead storage cabinetry that circles the cabin and is highlighted by the striking wood trim.

The bath offers a streetside fiberglass radius shower with dome skylight and storage lavatory with matching solid-surface countertop and integrated sink with a brushed nickel faucet and mirrored medicine cabinet. Opposite is the toilet room with overhead linen storage cabinetry.

A walk-around platform queen bed with pillow-top mattress is centered in the bedroom, with matching wardrobes and eyeglass nightstands on either side.





SPECIFICATIONS

CHASSIS: FREIGHTLINER M2 106	INTERIOR HEIGHT: 6' 8"
ENGINE: CUMMINS 8.3-L ISC	WHEELBASE: 275"
FUEL: 100 GAL	FRESHWATER CAP: 105 GAL
GVWR: 33,000 LBS	GRAY-WATER CAP: 52 GAL
LENGTH: 39' 1"	BLACK-WATER CAP: 52 GAL
WIDTH: 8' 6"	LP-GAS CAP: 25 GAL
HEIGHT WITH A/C: 12' 1"	BASE PRICE: \$228,000

JAYCO

574-825-5861, WWW.JAYCO.COM.

Augmenting the matching wardrobes, a 55-inch mirrored closet occupies the entire rear curbside slide, providing 4 feet of vertical hanging length. The bedroom's 22-inch LCD HD TV is recessed in the dresser cabinetry that occupies the entire streetside slide.

Two 15,000-BTU low-profile roof A/C units with heat pumps are mounted on the one-piece fiberglass roof feeding dual full-length insulated ceiling ducts with adjustable vents. Climate control is enhanced with Jayco's R-23 rated roof, R-9 rated floor and walls and tinted thermal pane glass. An 1,800-watt inverter quietly draws off four coach batteries mounted on slideout trays, or users can choose the Onan 8,000-watt Quiet Diesel generator, both available to satisfy power needs when away from shorepower.

Outside, side-hinged baggage doors provide access to saddlebag-style storage compartments that line both sides of the coach. One forward compartment is reserved for the useful but optional (\$2,136) slideout portable refrigerator/freezer unit, shaded by the standard roof-mounted electric awning. An exterior audiovisual entertainment center in its own weather-tight compartment next to the entry door is also available.

The Embark aims to please discriminating tastes, attracting buyers

to its high-end fit and finish, intimate automotive-style cockpit, enormous tow capacity and aerodynamically handsome lines. Buyers moving away from larger luxury coaches or moving

to a dream coach should consider the Embark.

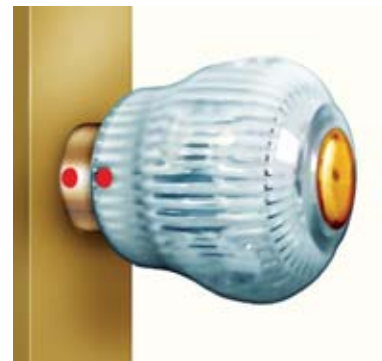
Our thanks to Richardson's RV Centers in Southern California for providing this Embark for our review. ♦



TRAVEL TOTE ▼

Because there's never enough storage space in the cockpit, I built a travel box that I keep between the seats. I made the two sides, bottom and dividers out of 3/4-inch plywood. The rest is heavy-duty pegboard. The pre-drilled holes make assembly and adjusting the compartments a breeze. Be sure to install the handles along the axis of balance of the loaded box.

ROBERT FALK
LOS ANGELES



WATER ▲ BALANCE

Here's my tip to speed up achieving the proper mix of cold and hot water in my motorhome shower. Standing outside the shower stream, I first turned the hot water faucet on full. Then I set the most comfortable mix of hot and cold water by adjusting the cold water faucet. I then turned off the RV's water source and the water pump, leaving the faucet handles in their current positions. I dried off the cold water faucet handle, and then applied two dots of red waterproof nail polish right across from each other — one on the cold water handle and one on the fixture itself. After the nail polish dried, I could turn the hot water faucet on full, and then turn the cold water faucet so the red dot is across from the dot on the fixture. This quickly gets me close to the optimum hot-cold water mix.

BRUCE GRONEN
EUREKA SPRINGS, ARK.



CRATE STORAGE

I have found one of the easiest ways to store my freshwater hose is in a plastic file crate, which I purchased from a discount department store for a reasonable cost. These plastic crates are also handy to store those items that never seem to have a home in the storage bay, plus they nest together.

JAMES GODDETTE
VERGENNES, VT.

SUNROOF SHADE

We own a 2003 Fleetwood Jamboree GT Class C motorhome and travel to the Colorado River near Parker, Ariz., almost exclusively — even during the summer. It can be difficult to keep the passenger compartment cool when the outside heat reaches 115 degrees Fahrenheit. One of the biggest sources of cooling loss is due to the translucent sunroof over the shower. We can feel the heat radiating into the motorhome and placing an extra strain on the air conditioner.

Our quick, easy and cheap solution is to use a windshield sunshade, the kind made for automobiles. We fold it in half and place it over the sunroof on top of the roof. It stays in place with the use of a tall plastic kitchen trash bag partially filled with dirt or gravel from the campsite. When it's time to go, we put the dirt or gravel back and fold the sunshade away for use on our next visit.

PAT AND LINDA RILEY MENTONE, CALIF. ♦

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HANDS-ON | HOT LINE | COACH & POWERTRAIN



HANDS-ON | by DAVE RIGGS

PORTABLE VACUUM

New Turtle Wax Auto-Vac may be light and nimble, but it packs a punch when cleaning vehicles

Most motorhome owners carry some kind of vacuum cleaner, but in many cases, the larger models are difficult to use in compartments and/or when cleaning the dinghy vehicle. There are a number of hand-held vacuums on the market, but for the most part these units are on the anemic side when it comes to versatility — and suction. Turtle Wax's Auto-Vac Bagless Vacuum is a departure from the norm, in both cleaning power and portability.

The 120-volt AC-powered vacuum cleaner has a number of unique and convenient features. First off, it's bagless, so owners don't have to worry about finding — and paying for — replacement bags. It's very light and has a large carrying handle that makes it maneuverable when working in close areas without causing fatigue, and all the cleaning tools are stored in the body.

Included with the vacuum are tools that are earmarked for specific vehicle duty. A dash and console brush attachment makes cleaning all the nooks and crannies of the instrument panel very efficient. The brush is so soft that it will not scratch any surfaces. A crevice brush makes it easy to clean between seat backs and cushions without damaging the upholstery — an important item for leather. A carpet/upholstery tool works well, but the 48-inch hose means the vacuum body stays close to you while

cleaning — which is actually not a big deal since it's easy to handle and weighs only a few pounds.

At the end of the hose is a nozzle that the other tools fit over, which makes detailing a breeze. It doubles as a blower tool that can be used to remove water from hard-to-reach areas; to utilize the blower, the hose is simply connected to the other side. A 360-degree pivoting elbow allows the hose to move effortlessly on either side.

Everything that's sucked through the hose ends up in the collection basket. Once the basket gets filled, the intake door is released to provide access to the basket for emptying. After a while the basket can be thoroughly cleaned using warm, soapy water and air-dried.

The vacuum doesn't look high-tech but from a practical point of view, it's well-designed. Airflow in both directions is pretty impressive, attributed to the 550-watt motor. Suction is stronger

than most auto vacuums we've tried and the unit picked up virtually anything in its path. The 12-foot power cord is long enough to maneuver inside a motorhome and the unit's small stature enables it to get into some of the tight confines created by motorhome floorplans.

Turtle Wax's Auto-Vac is available at Walmart and automotive retailers, and sells for \$49.95.

Carrand Companies Inc.,
310-761-8510, www.carrand.com. ♦





Window Woes

THINKING THE PROBLEM HE WAS EXPERIENCING WITH THE FAILURE OF HIS COACH'S WINDOWS MAY HAVE BEEN CAUSED BY A DEFECT OR INSTALLATION ISSUE, A READER ASKED HOT LINE FOR ASSISTANCE. HE WROTE:

I have a 2004 Beaver Monterey motorhome. While I have been extremely happy with the performance of the coach, I am concerned and disappointed with the dual pane windows. All of a sudden I have had seven windows fail, lose their seals and become cloudy, including the large one next to the driver's seat. As a result, it is very difficult to see out of this window while driving.

I do realize that the coach is no longer under warranty, but I think it's unusual to have so many windows become defective at the same time. Surely this can't be normal. The rest of the motorhome seems to be constructed of such top-quality components that I find it difficult to understand why all these windows would fail at the same time.

I question if the coach was built with a bad batch of windows, or if there was an installation problem, or if perhaps there has been some sort of a recall on them.

I have contacted the motorhome manufacturer (Monaco) twice and have not received a reply. I hope that the company would extend some sort of warranty to cover these windows or at least assist in the repair or replacement of same.

**TOM DUNCAN | CHILLIWACK,
BRITISH COLUMBIA**

Because of the constant movement and flexing that motorhomes endure while on the road, window seal failure is one

BECAUSE OF THE CONSTANT MOVEMENT AND FLEXING THAT MOTORHOMES ENDURE WHILE ON THE ROAD, WINDOW SEAL FAILURE IS ONE OF THE MOST COMMON COMPLAINTS HOT LINE RECEIVES.

of the most common complaints Hot Line receives. Unfortunately, it is the exception, and not the rule, that either the window manufacturer or the coach-builder will accommodate a request for reimbursement or replacement of windows, so we were not surprised to receive the following reply from Monaco RV regarding this case. It read:

Thank you for your letter regarding one of Monaco Coach Corporation's customers. As you may be aware, Monaco Coach Corp. is no longer in business. Monaco RV LLC is not the manufacturer or warrantor of Mr. Duncan's 2004 Monterey. While our company did purchase some facilities and proprietary information regarding Monaco Coach products and parts from the bankruptcy estate, we did not assume any of the Monaco Coach liabilities.

Although we cannot assist Duncan monetarily, we are happy to answer any questions or provide any technical assistance that may be needed. Our Monaco RV customer service group can be reached at 877-466-6226.

**TAYLOR SPIKE
CUSTOMER SUPPORT SUPERVISOR
MONACO RV LLC
COBURG, ORE.**

REFUND RECOVERY

Experiencing a delay in receiving a refund on the unused portion of their

extended warranty, two readers requested Hot Line's help. They explained:

When we purchased our 2006 Forest River Sunseeker motorhome from McMahons RV in Southern California we also bought an extended warranty through United States Warranty. Some time later, we traded in the Sunseeker for another motorhome and contacted McMahons to request the cancellation of the extended warranty and a refund of the balance.

After five months of trying to get through to someone at the dealership, we contacted United States Warranty directly. The person we spoke with told us that we were due a refund of about 90 percent of our original contract and that a check had already been sent to, and cashed by, McMahons RV.

We refaxed the necessary paperwork to the dealership and still have not heard from anyone at McMahons. We just want the refund that is due to us. Can Hot Line please help move things along?

**CINDI AND BRYAN HITT
SIMI VALLEY, CALIF.**

We contacted McMahons RV on behalf of the Hitts. Some time later we received the following from the Hitts, which provided information on the conclusion of their case. It read:

First, we have to say that United States Warranty is a stand-up company. The owner himself contacted us about this issue and sent us a check for the amount that was supposed to be returned to us. Finally, months later, we received the check from McMahons, which we sent back to United States Warranty.

This whole thing wouldn't have been a big deal if McMahons had just contacted us. We feel that we finally received our money because United States Warranty and Hot Line got involved. Thank you both.

C. AND B.H.

HAPPY CAMPER

Not to give the impression that every consumer-related letter received by

Hot Line is negative, we round out this month's column with some good news from a reader. He wrote:

We continually read of the problems readers have with receiving payment from extended warranty claims. We have no recollection of a story where the claims administrator actually reconsidered and adopted the owner's point of view and sent payment. We would like to relate such a story.

On our return home from a trip to Alaska, we experienced problems with the leveling jacks on our motorhome. We had purchased this coach used and had also bought an extended warranty policy. We stopped at Triple A RV Center in Medford, Ore., for repairs. They contacted the warranty administrator who, in turn, denied coverage. In order to continue our trip home we paid Triple A for the repairs.

Once we got home we sent a letter to Assurant Solutions, United Service Protection Corp., the administrator of the warranty policy. We explained our position and the reasons for asking for a review of the decision. Three days later, a letter was sent to us by a claim supervisor that denied coverage under the warranty provisions, but essentially agreed with our position. He sent a check for an amount that covered the jack repairs.

That truly is excellent customer service. We highly commend and recommend this warranty company and its representatives for a job well done.

W.L. ROZEBOOM
LAWRENCEVILLE, GA. ♦

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

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Air Ride Height

I have a 2003 Holiday Rambler Endeavor on a Roadmaster chassis with eight suspension air bags. The problem is that the left front corner of the motorhome does not sit level. It's about ¾-inch low compared with the right front. When I drop the air to lower the coach the left front will lower considerably more before the right front will start to lower. After all the air is out of the system everything is level. Recharging the system with air, the left front will not come level and stays about ¾ of an inch lower than the right front. I changed the air-leveling valve on the front (there's only one valve) with no results. Everything in the rear of the coach is OK and level. I also checked for air leakage and there is none. Any ideas?

BEN LINK | VIA E-MAIL

Since it has only one level control in the front and the coach is probably heavy on one side, you may have to add a second front level control, one for each side. I've spoken with shops that have done this successfully, and it should solve your problem.

STARTING SURGES

I carry jumper cables in case I can't start our towed car. However, I was told by a car mechanic to not jump a car battery with another car (or motorhome). He said that there is a voltage surge that can flow from one vehicle to the other and can destroy electrical circuitry. Is this correct?

**DOUG BRENTON
PLACERVILLE, CALIF.**

There is a small surge, because the voltage of the charging battery is higher than the voltage of the "dead" battery. However, it's not that much, and every year millions of vehicles get jump-starts successfully. When connecting cables, make sure the ignition is off, the cable polarity is correct (red to +, black to -) at both ends, and only connect batteries of the same voltage. The generator power packs used on some tow trucks produce higher voltages and surges that

cause damage, so these should be avoided. So should large trucks, which may use 24 volts. Be sure to read the owner's manual and follow its recommendations regarding jump-starting.

NITROGEN IN TIRES

I was discussing tire pressure with a friend recently and he said he uses nitrogen in his tires. I checked with a local RV dealer and he said they pressurize motorhome tires with nitrogen on a regular basis. Does nitrogen reduce the heat of the tires on the road? Are there portable tanks and pressurizing equipment available that could be carried in a motorhome? If a nitrogen-pressurized tire has low pressure, is it safe to pressurize with air until the tire can be evacuated and pressurized totally with nitrogen again?

**EDGAR L. MUNSON
SPRINGFIELD, MO.**

The benefits of nitrogen are limited, and some manufacturers, such as Michelin, don't even recommend it. Most of the heat comes from the rubber flexing as the tire rolls over the pavement, so nitrogen has little effect on that. You can

THE BENEFITS OF PRESSURIZING MOTORHOME TIRES WITH NITROGEN

ARE LIMITED, AND SOME MANUFACTURERS, SUCH AS MICHELIN, DON'T EVEN RECOMMEND IT.



get portable tanks of nitrogen from welding supply shops, but the weight, hassle and danger of carrying a tank under high pressure exceed the benefits. Atmospheric air already contains about 79 percent nitrogen, so yes, it's certainly safe to use air to top up a tire.

SINK DRAIN ODOR

There is an odor coming out of our sink drains. I know there is a solution you can put in them, but I don't remember it. Would you please tell me what it is?

**DEE AND BILL MILLER
FORT WORTH, TEXAS**

The water in the P traps may have evaporated during storage. Add some chemicals to kill odors and add a little water. Thetford, for example, offers Grey Water Odor Control, which is formulated to eliminate and prevent offensive odors in the drains, vents and traps of your coach's sinks, shower and gray-water holding tank. It's a biodegradable liquid that comes in a 24-ounce bottle.

ROTOR HEAT CRACKS

What are rotor "heat cracks"? I own a 1999 Newmar Mountain Aire Class A motorhome. The front brake rotors have not yet been turned, and I have been told they have "heat cracks" and should not be turned.

DAN SMITH | VIA E-MAIL

Brake discs or rotors must absorb and then dissipate a tremendous amount of heat acquired during braking. They are made of cast iron, and when they get too hot they may warp or crack (or both). Normally, they can be re-machined (turned) on a brake lathe to remove shallow imperfections including grooves and slight warping. (There are minimum allowable wear thicknesses cast into the rotors.) However, if there are visible cracks in the surfaces that contact the brake pads, they should not be returned to service and should be replaced. To avoid this in the future, be especially careful to control speeds on long descents by downshifting in addition to braking, as this will reduce brake temperatures.

UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS OF YOUR MOTORHOME'S ELECTRICAL SYSTEMS CAN GO A LONG WAY TOWARD PREVENTION OF PROBLEMS — OR DIAGNOSIS, IF PROBLEMS OCCUR

Motorhomes have three separate electrical systems, described in terms of their voltage levels:

1. A 12-volt DC (direct current) system for the motorhome chassis.
2. A separate 12-volt DC system for the “house” portion of the motorhome.
3. A 120-volt AC (alternating current) “house” system, commonly described with the outdated term, “110.”

The 12-volt DC systems usually do not have the potential to cause electrical shock, but it's possible with 120-volt AC systems. Both must be handled with care to avoid short-circuits.

At the core of our convenience and comfort are the 12-volt DC systems that operate our engine and chassis controls as well as “house” functions: lights, water pump, fans, furnace and the electronic controls of the refrigerator and water heater. Also, an inverter may be used to transform 12-volt DC power into limited amounts of 120-volt AC.



Power for the core 12-volt DC coach appliances comes from auxiliary batteries that are charged by the chassis engine alternator while driving, by an electrical converter that transforms 120-volt AC power into 12-volt DC power while we are connected to an external source, or by our on-board 120-volt AC generator (via the converter) while dry camping.



Measuring voltage is the way we can track how well we're doing with our power sources. Meters that measure only DC voltage are available at RV supply stores. In addition, a multimeter capable of measuring DC as well as AC voltage and other elec-

trical functions is an essential RV tool.

With 12-volt DC systems, voltage (with no load) will range from a low of about 12 (batteries nearly depleted) to a high range of 14 to 14.5 while batteries are being charged. Fully charged batteries (at rest, with no load), will show voltage levels of 12.6 to 12.8. AC voltage will range from 105 to 120 or slightly higher, depending on load.

Low DC voltage signals the need for battery recharging, assuming batteries and connections are in good condition.



The primary precaution for AC systems is to check for proper polarity and ground connection using a circuit tester (available in RV supply stores) and an appropriate adapter. Do this before connecting the motorhome power cord to an external 120-volt AC power source.



After hooking up, it's a good practice to use an AC voltmeter to keep track of AC voltage inside the motorhome, which allows you to gauge the strength of your power source under varying loads — important because many RV parks have weak circuits. Some seem OK until you turn on a heavy load such as your air-conditioning system.

If AC voltage drops to 105, you'll need to curtail your load to avoid overheating your appliances and circuits. The AC voltage high point usually will be about 120 or slightly higher.

With a few relatively easy precautions, your motorhome electrical systems should provide reliable service. ♦

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INTERMITTENT REAR MONITOR

My rear-view monitoring system keeps getting interrupted. The picture disappears and I see nothing but lines. A friend told me this is being caused by CB radios in use. If this is true, is there a filter available that might work to keep this from happening? If it isn't true, what can I do to stop this? Any help would be greatly appreciated.

MARIO PUJOL | SAN RAFAEL, CALIF.

That radio theory should be easy to test. When the interference occurs, listen to every CB channel and see if one or more channels are "pegging" the signal-strength meter. This would indicate a transmitter is very near and the signal strong. There isn't a filter for this, but you could install shielded coaxial cable to keep the signal from getting into your system. If it's not interference, you may have a faulty component.

CUMMINS SERVICE CENTERS

I just bought a 2006 Monaco Camelot and



FIGHT MOISTURE AND MILDEW

Dank, damp air causes damaging mold, mildew and corrosion in motorhomes. Instead of unsightly dehumidifying bags and fan units requiring drainage, Air-Dry uses heat and natural convection to warm and dry the air, preventing mold and corrosion. Designed for constant use, the compact Air-Dry fits out of the way in an enclosed space and plugs into 120-volt AC power. With no switch, fan or thermostat, the silent Air-Dry draws no more energy than a light bulb. A thermal cutoff shuts down the unit if airflow is impeded. The Air-Dry 500 (\$60) handles up to 500 cubic feet and draws 70 watts; and Air-Dry 1000 (\$70) handles 1,000 cubic feet and draws 130 watts. For more information, call Davis Instruments at 510-732-9229 or go to www.davisnet.com.

I am trying to find a listing for service centers for the Cummins engine in it.
RONALD ELLIS | TILLAMOOK, ORE.

Cummins can be reached by calling 800-343-7357 and there's a service locator online at www.cummins.com.

DUAL ROOF AIR CONDITIONERS

I own a 1994 Rockwood Regent Class A motorhome on a Chevrolet 31-foot chassis. It has two Duo-Therm roof air conditioners. There's a problem with the one that is over the rear bedroom; it will not run unless the generator is on. The one in the front will run off either the generator or plug-in. I hope you can help me with this.

BYRON PENROD | ABILENE, TEXAS

This is very common with coaches that have dual air conditioners, but only have 30-amp external power cords. They are wired so that only one unit can run off shorepower. Otherwise the two units, combined with other loads, would overload the circuits. The solution, if you are determined to run them both simultaneously off of shorepower, is to have an electrician update the coach to a 50-amp system and power cord, which would be very expensive.

DISCHARGED DINGHY II

In the February letter "Discharged Dinghy," James Williams had a problem with a discharged battery. I use a 2008 Chevy HHR as my dinghy. The first day I towed it for eight hours without a problem. The next two times, I experienced a low battery after a couple of hours. After considering installing a charging line I decided to try towing again after making certain that all accessories were turned off, including the radio, A/C and heater fan and automatic lights. Since ensuring that all of those are off before locking the door I've never experienced a low battery again. Perhaps that will solve Williams' problem without adding a charging line.

WALTER C. GRIFFITH | ORLANDO, FLA.

It can be tricky to be sure everything is off, but the automatic battery disconnect from Roadmaster can handle that job for you, automatically. If you use an auxiliary braking device that draws current, you may still need a way to power it for long periods. Please read the next letter.

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DISCHARGED DINGHY III

Just a comment regarding the letter from James Williams in the February issue. I installed a brake device that works off the coach air to my Jeep Liberty, and then put in separate taillights, which the Jeep has punch-outs for. The installer decided that since I wasn't touching the Jeep lighting system, I didn't need a relay to turn off the brakelights when the power was off. What he didn't take into account was that every time the auxiliary braking system pushed the brake pedal, the brakelights would go on, and run my battery down. Once the relay was installed the problem went away.
BILL MORRISON | YOUNGSTOWN, OHIO

This is something most people don't think about that also results in run-down batteries.

DAMP BASEMENT TIP

In reply to the "Damp Basement" letter (November 2010) from Gerald Eskow: I had the same problem with one of the compartments on my motorhome. After changing door gaskets twice and adjusting the door and door hinges, I still had a wet compartment. I removed the carpeting and found the compartment was made of three pieces of sheet metal spot-welded in three places along each seam. This was where the water was entering the compartment. I bought 3M Fast 'n Firm Seam Sealer in a tube and caulked all the seams from the inside. I hope this will work for Eskow.
JERRY BYERLY | BEAVERCREEK, OHIO

This is one of several solutions, depending on how the water is getting in.

DAMP BASEMENT TIP TWO

The letter from Gerald Eskow in the November 2010 issue reminded me of a problem I had with my 1996 Itasca Sunrise. It had condensation in the outside compartments because they were not vented properly. I would open the compartment door to find about half an inch of water in the bottom and the sides would be covered with drops of condensation. It got so bad that the bottoms rusted through, leaving only the carpeting to contain the contents.

I have an 80-watt solar panel on the roof of my coach that supplies a charge controller that has a float terminal on it.

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After replacing the bottoms of the compartments, my solution to the condensation problem was to connect all the compartments with 1½-inch PVC tubing and mount a 12-volt computer fan, which was supplied with power from the charge controller float terminal, to the first compartment in the front. I installed a PVC elbow in the last compartment for a vent. I put a piece of screen over it to keep insects and debris out. Since I've installed this system I've had no problems with condensation and the system takes care of itself. The charge controller is a Model NC25 made by Flexcharge USA of Charlevoix, Mich.

DAN KANARR | ALPENA, MICH.

This is what they do on a larger scale to ventilate the holds of cargo ships. Those who live or camp in damp locales will find this very helpful. Thanks for sharing your experience.

VOLTAGE SPIKES?

I purchased a 2007 Fleetwood Discovery motorhome in August 2007. Since that time I have had four jack breakdowns. I've also had to replace the refrigerator, the inverter, converter, satellite controller and carbon monoxide alarm. It has also needed some computer reprogramming and now they tell me the computer for the jacks needs to be replaced. Is this kind of activity standard for motorhomes? It seems excessive to me.

H. LOUISE RICKEY | TURLOCK, CALIF.

It seems like you've had an ownership experience considerably worse than average. You didn't provide specific details of what was wrong with each item, which would be helpful. However, you'll notice that almost all the problems seem to be related to electronic components that utilize microprocessors with circuit boards. These can be very sensitive to voltage spikes and surges, which are common in some campgrounds, particularly in hot weather. It's likely that your coach's electrical components have been getting "bombed" by these surges and spikes. Therefore, I recommend adding a quality surge protector and voltage stabilizer unit, along with a voltage monitoring gauge. Also make sure that the batteries and power cord, etc., are making solid (not intermittent) connections; loose connections also cause spikes.

VACUUM PUMP AND LOW POWER

I own a 2001 Holiday Rambler Ambassador with two issues. One is that the vacuum pump that provides vacuum for the heater and A/C has an air leak and won't develop any vacuum. I can't find a replacement. There are no markings on the part. It's a small black box mounted on the firewall with an air line going in the bottom and the vacuum line out the side. This is the second one that has failed. My second question is about lack of power. I have a Cummins ISB 300-HP engine. I first noticed a lack of power. I then observed I wasn't getting full turbo boost. It only went to 15 to 20 pounds boost. The engine ran fine, no misses/smoke or warning lights. I took it to a local shop and they found no codes, air leaks or problems. The only symptoms are lower power and low boost pressure. Can you help?

RALPH OLSEN | BREWSTER, MASS.

You can get universal vacuum pumps through automotive air-conditioning specialist shops, on eBay, and by just looking up "12-volt vacuum pump" in a search engine such as Google. How long has it been since you replaced the fuel and air filters? These are the first things you should check when a diesel seems to be down on power. If it's not getting enough fuel, it won't build much boost, either.

INTERMITTENT ELECTRICAL PROBLEM SOLVED?

Regarding "Intermittent Electrical Problem" in the February issue from Diana Lester, the problem in Ford F53 coach chassis is a multiwire snap-lock connector just over the speedometer. If the connector is unlatched (bad latch or bumped open during coach build) the gauges go crazy and all sorts of lights including the CHECK ENGINE light may turn on and off intermittently. There are no trouble codes in the computer, just all the trouble lights that turn on and off and bad gauge readings. This problem drove me crazy until I found that unlocked connector.

WILLIAM HUCKALBY | SURPRISE, ARIZ.

It's hard to beat direct experience with the problem. This is sure to help. ♦

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Fig. 3 Asteroid Gaspra



Fig. 5 Mercury

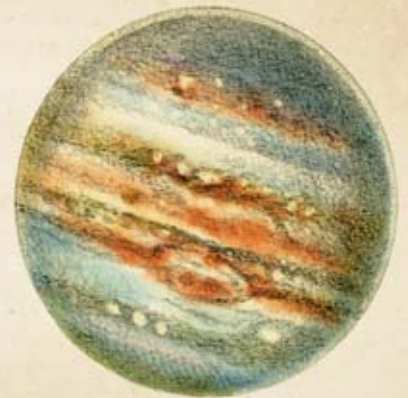


Fig. 7 Jupiter



Fig. 2 Neptune



Fig. 4 Phases of the Moon



Fig. 6 Mars

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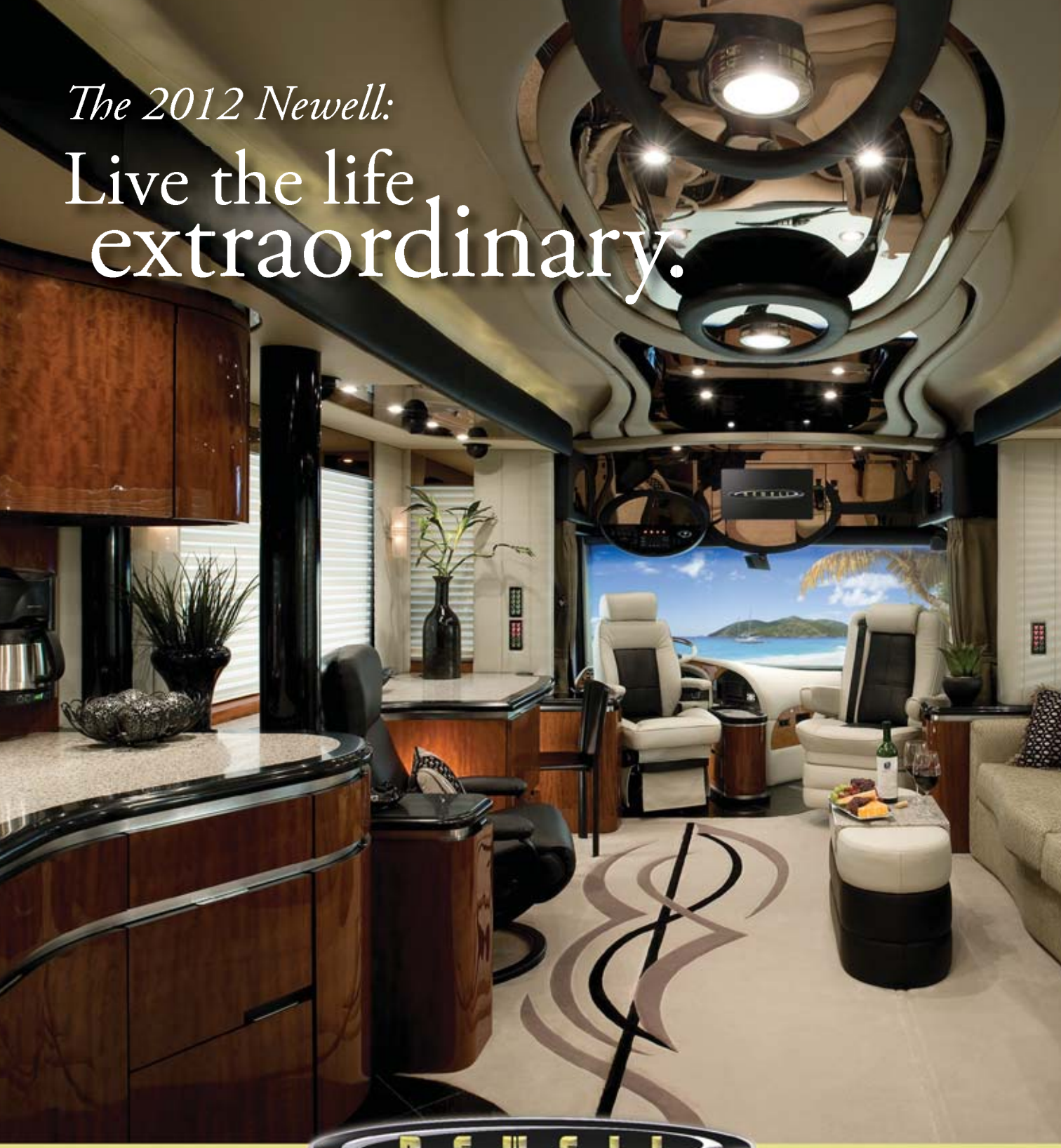
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