

RV Consumer e-Magazine

August 2012

Volume 2

Issue 8



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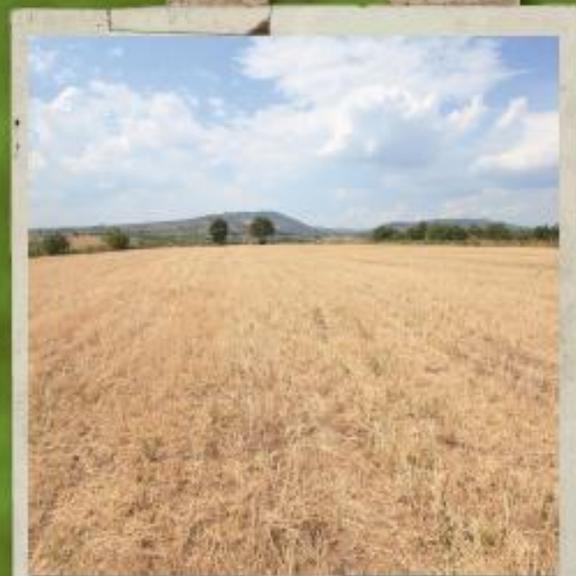
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How will you
Remember
your travels?



*The laptop we would've used to
keep in touch with the kids.*



*Cook's Field, the week after we
missed the Bluegrass Festival.*



*The guy from Ed's Towing.
Spent three hours with him.*

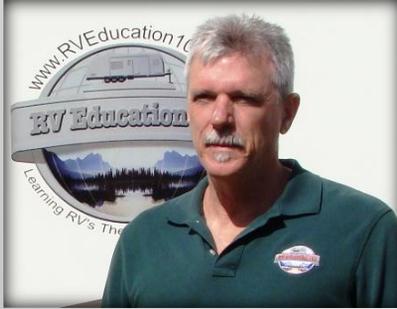
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Hello Fellow Campers,

We just returned from a great RV trip. It's the most relaxing 2 weeks I have had since our last RV outing.

Our plan was to go to St. Augustine Florida, but the tropical storm that went through the area changed our plans. At the last minute we decided to head to the mountains in an attempt to beat the heat. We started the trip in Asheville, NC where we visited the Biltmore Estates and hiked around Chimney Rock. Next we headed to Pigeon Forge, TN. to check out Dollywood and enjoyed some time at the water park. The third leg of the trip was to Cherokee, NC where we took in some beautiful scenery and I got some fly-fishing in.

If you ever get the opportunity to visit these areas I highly recommend it. Enjoy this edition of RV Consumer e-magazine.

Mark

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"Your total RV experience will be enhanced through your RV education." ~ Mark Polk

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Handling RV Odors

By Mark Polk



Odors in our RV come in many different forms and are caused by many different sources. Some odors are pleasant, like fresh coffee brewing in the morning, and some are not so pleasant. The “not so pleasant” category includes holding tank odors, pet odors, and cooking, smoke, must and mildew just to name a few. Some of these odors result from normal use of the RV and some from sitting in storage. Today I want to give you some tips to help control and eliminate some of these unpleasant odors.

❖ Because RVs are relatively small in size, when compared to a 2,000 SF home, odors tend to be more pronounced. Add to this the RV sits closed up for periods of time and odor problems are compounded even more. This leads to one of the key factors for controlling odors, ventilation. Ventilation not only helps with odors, but can limit the amount of heat build-up in the RV too. A quick fix for this odor related problem is to install some aftermarket roof vent covers, like MaxxAir vent covers, over the existing roof vents.

They are easy to install and a great feature about these ventilation products is that you can leave the roof vents open, even when it’s raining outside. These ventilation products will keep the air circulating throughout your RV and help prevent musty odors.

❖ With the ventilation problem solved we can focus on other types of odors that linger in our RVs. These odor molecules aren’t just in the air, they get in the fabrics, carpets, ceiling, window treatments and other areas of the RV. Pet, smoke, and musty odors can be extremely difficult to eliminate.



During my days of selling RV’s I witnessed RV interiors that were professionally cleaned, but odors, like smoke, still remained afterwards. I also experimented with many different odor controlling products, but perhaps the best product I found for eliminating difficult odors is Fabreze. Lots of air fresheners just mask common odors, but in many cases masking an odor won’t eliminate it. You need something that can kill the odor causing bacteria in the air, which is what Fabreze does. After RV trips, or before storage, clean the RV thoroughly and spray Fabreze throughout. Don’t forget to spray the upholstery, carpet and fabrics too.

❖ To help prevent cooking odors from becoming permanent odors in your RV make sure you turn the range exhaust fan on whenever you are cooking, and it's a good idea to open a window too. To maximize the efficiency of the range exhaust fan keep the filter clean. On some RVs it is necessary to go outside and open the range exhaust fan door so the cooking odors actually vent outside. Check your RV owner's manual for more details concerning maintenance and operation of your range exhaust fan.

❖ When it's time to put the RV in storage there are several steps you can take to assist with controlling and eliminating common household odors. First, thoroughly clean the interior of the RV. Remove all perishable food and leave cabinet doors and drawers open so air can circulate. Defrost the freezer and thoroughly clean the refrigerator. Leave the refrigerator and freezer doors cracked open. Put a small tin of charcoal in the refrigerator compartment to help absorb any odors, baking soda works well too.

❖ If you decide to leave your clothes in the RV during periods of storage use some mothballs to help control musty odors and leave the wardrobe doors and clothing drawers open to promote air circulation.

❖ This brings us to the least favorite topic when discussing odors in our RV, holding tank odors.

The good news is there are some very effective methods for controlling these odors too, and it doesn't involve strong chemicals that can be dangerous to humans, pets and septic systems. First it would probably be helpful to explain why we sometimes get a bad odor from the RV black water holding tank, especially when you are traveling. RV holding tanks are designed with a vent pipe going from the holding tanks to the roof. The holding tank odors accumulate in the tank and can't really vent outside because there is no air pressure to force these gasses (odors) up and out of the vent pipe.



The real problem occurs when wind blows across the vent cap on top of the RV roof, which escalates when you are traveling. This higher air pressure forces air down the vent pipe pushing the tank gasses (odors) to the only other way out of the system, the toilet. Whenever the air pressure is higher inside the holding tank, than it is inside the RV, the odor escapes into the RV by way of the toilet when it is flushed.

The good news is there are aftermarket RV products that will help solve holding tank odor problems caused by the design of the RV waste water system. These products are basically a redesigned breather system that attaches to the top of the vent pipe and actually draws the fumes out of the holding tank. These products work when the RV is stationary and when it's moving.



[RV 360 Siphon](#)

❖ Another problem associated with RV holding tank odors is the use of strong chemicals to help control these holding tank odors. Some of these are formaldehyde based chemicals and can be dangerous to humans, pets, and the septic systems we empty our holding tanks in to. Because little water is used, in comparison to a domestic waste water system, RV holding tank wastewater is far more concentrated. The organic strength from the mixture in an RV holding tank can be fifteen to twenty times stronger than a typical wastewater system. This problem is compounded when the RVer gets some odors from the holding tank and dumps even more chemicals in the holding tank in an attempt to control the odors.

As many of you know I am a big advocate for saving our RV dump stations. I recommend using a holding tank treatment that is environmentally friendly and safe to use in septic systems.



Enzyme based holding tank treatments, combined with a redesigned vent breather system, can effectively control holding tank odors. Don't be afraid to put some holding tank treatment in the gray water holding tank too. When the gray tank is empty add some water, and the holding tank treatment, to the sink drains to help keep the gray water tank free of odors. I add some dish washing liquid to the gray water tank periodically to assist with breaking down and grease and keep the holding tank clean.

So it's safe to say with proper ventilation and a few good aftermarket RV products you can eliminate all of the tough odors commonly associated with enjoying our RVs.

RV101

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RV Holding Tank Quick Tips



Sewer Hose Tip

Do not pull or drag the sewer hose on the ground. This will cause it to tear or get pin holes in it.

Sewer Hose Components

I recommend you only use heavy duty sewer hoses. They are not that expensive and they hold up much better. Keep an extra 10 foot hose and 15 foot hose extension available so you can always reach the campground sewer connection. Take extra sewer hose couplings and connectors along on your RV trips. It may be necessary to attach two hoses together to reach the sewer connection.

Holding Tank Flushing

After you empty the holding tanks you need to thoroughly rinse and flush the black water tank. Some RVs have a built-in system for flushing the holding tanks. If not there are other ways to do it. Purchase and use a tank wand designed for cleaning and flushing the black tank. [Watch Video](#)

Controlling Odors

Water will assist a great deal with controlling holding tank odors. After you empty the tank add enough water to completely cover the bottom of the tank. You always want the contents of the tank to be covered by water. Add water to the toilet bowl each time you flush the toilet.

Gray Water Holding Tank

Over time grease and residue build-up in the gray tank and it causes a foul odor. Periodically treat the gray tank with environmentally safe holding tank chemicals to avoid odors from the tank. When the tank is empty you can also add some dishwashing liquid down the drains to help break down grease and residue build up.

Gloves

Always wear gloves when you are working on or around the RV wastewater system. Disposable gloves work well and come in handy for other jobs too.

Applying these simple tips can increase the life of your RV wastewater system. **RV 101**

Q&A with Mark

Q: When we were camping it was 95 degrees outside and the RV was in full sun. The thermostat was set at 73. The temp inside the RV with the air on, was at 88 degrees. When the sun went down, temp outside was 80 and the temp inside RV went to 73, which is what it was set to. RV shop said this is normal, as it only has a 15-18 degree variance due to "ambient temp" Is the air conditioner working correctly?

A: A properly running A/C unit should have a temperature difference of 18 to 22 degrees between the air entering the A/C return grill and the air leaving the A/C unit. Your A/C unit only had a 7 degree difference which is not normal. Keep in mind when the RV is in direct sunlight it is much harder for the A/C unit to work efficiently. Something else to consider is how often the entry door is opened and how long it stays open. All of these conditions affect the operation of the A/C, but it should cool more than 7 degrees.

There are a couple things you can check before taking it to a repair shop. First if you haven't already done it check the A/C filters. The filters need to be clean for maximum efficiency. Next if nobody has checked the condenser coil in awhile you may want to inspect it. Dirt and leaves get trapped around the coil and reduce the flow across the coil which in turn decreases the A/C cooling. You will need to get on the roof (keep safety in mind) and remove the A/C shroud cover. You can use a vacuum or compressed air to blow out the coils and remove the dirt and debris. While you're up there inspect the coil fins. Crushed or damaged fins will reduce the A/C air flow and decrease cooling. If it still isn't cooling properly you will need to take the RV to a repair facility for advanced testing.



To stay current with what's happening in the world of RVs between magazine issues visit our [Blog](#). We post informative RV tips and information a couple times per week. There is also an option to follow the [Blog](#) via e-mail. Just look on the right sidebar and when you sign up you'll be notified each time we make a post.



RV Quick Tip

Don't come up short at the campground. This is why you always take extra sewer hoses and sewer hose connectors along with you on camping trips.



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RV Education 101 Product of the Month



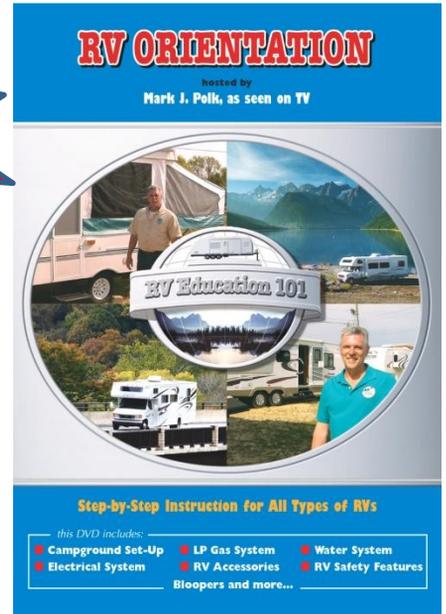
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Subscriber's Special

The RV Orientation instant download is 54 minutes long and is packed with great information. The easy to understand format uses charts and hands-on instruction to cover topics like campground setup, the LP gas system, water system, wastewater system, and the electrical system. In addition to the major systems of an RV the download includes instruction on RV appliances, RV accessories and much more. We even added a bonus chapter on RV safety features and some bloopers to make it more entertaining. The video is generic and covers all types of RV's including motorized and towable RV's.

Note: The only exception would be a pop up. The video does not include setting up and taking down a pop-up. We have a specific training video available for [pop up trailers](#).

In addition to the RV Orientation download you also receive an 8 minute video presentation on Mark's recommended "RV Essential Items." This product review presentation informs you on what items you will need to purchase, in addition to your "RV starter kit" to make all of your RVing experiences more enjoyable.



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more info](#)



In the News

From the National Park Service:

Vicksburg National Military Park has recently teamed up with 145 other parks to create the Civil War trading card program. Each park in the program has created its own set of cards designed to tell interesting stories. Vicksburg National Military Park currently has two sets

The *Military Stories* collection highlights the accomplishments of commanding officers while the *Civil War to Civil Rights* honors the contribution of African Americans, women, and children.

[Go here to read more](#) and to find out how to earn your cards and print a guide to bring along with you for your adventures in the park!

From www.mercurynews.com

By TRACIE CONE and DON THOMPSON Associated Press

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—The irregularities at California's state parks department—and the director's resulting departure—blindsided the nonprofit groups that had been scrambling for donations to keep open 70 parks once doomed by funding shortages.

Their work to keep park gates open from Mendocino to San Diego past a July 1 closure deadline suddenly appeared meaningless when reports surfaced last week that the Department of Parks and Recreation had secret accounts holding more than \$53 million. [Read More](#)

From RV Daily Report

By Ron Howerter

BASALT, Colo. -- If a bear can rip open a screen window to a cabin, it can do so on an RV, too, said Ron Howerter, "The Security Sleuth."

Visiting guests from Texas staying in a cabin in Colorado were awakened from a deep sleep with loud sounds in the kitchen, as if someone was 'cleaning' out under the sink with the sink water faucet flowing. When the kitchen light was turned on, the guest observed a big, brown, furry, 3-foot wide butt sticking out from under the sink. Being disturbed by the light coming on, the unwelcomed guest stood at least 6 foot tall with a lot of brown, scraggly fur. [Read More](#)

Analog Vs. Digital TV

By Mark Polk

A couple years ago all analog television signal transmission came to an end. All analog TVs now require some type of receiver to convert digital, over the air signals, to analog signals that older TVs can display. With a receiver, you can still use your analog TV to receive digital signals, so there is no need to buy another TV. So what is the easiest way to deal with this problem in our RV's?

Here's how things work in your RV with an analog TV. Between your analog television set, TV antenna and a built-in NTSC tuner you are able to pick up free off air programming like ABC, NBC and CBS channels. Analog television has been the standard broadcast technology since TV's have been around. Analog technology uses magnetic waves to transmit and display the picture and sound you are seeing and hearing. When you are spending the night in a rural type area analog reception can be poor, resulting in the poor color, snowy and static picture you see.

Several years ago local television channels started broadcasting a free digital signal in addition to an analog signal. Digital broadcasting technology transmits the information used to make

a TV picture and sound as data bits, like a computer. Digital broadcast technology can carry much more information than analog technology, resulting in a DVD quality picture and sound that will never have a poor, snowy or static picture. **The problem is your analog TV cannot receive digital broadcast signals.**

I mentioned a moment ago you need some type of receiver to convert digital signals to an analog TV. Most of these receivers connect easily between your TV antenna and your analog TV to deliver these digital channels. I also mentioned earlier that local channels started broadcasting free digital signals several years ago. To receive this free, over the air digital programming you simply connect the receiver to your TV and scan in the digital channels for the area you are staying in, using the receiver. The receiver has a built in ATSC tuner that decodes the free digital signals and displays them on your analog television.

Let's say, for example, that you receive the local NBC affiliate broadcast in your area on channel 10. If your TV antenna is directed towards that station's origin, and you turn your analog TV to channel 10 you receive the programming. This is an analog

channel for the local NBC affiliate. This local channel is also broadcasting a digital signal. Digital channels are multicast, meaning you could pick up as many as six additional channels from the local NBC digital signal. Once you scan the digital signal into memory, on the digital receiver, the digital channel will appear on your TV as the standard analog channel plus a dash (-) or a dot (.) and a number.

It sounds more confusing than it really is, let me try and explain it better. I said a moment ago, as an example, that the local NBC affiliate is broadcast on channel 10 in your area. The digital channels for NBC might appear as 10-1, 10-2, 10-3 etc. 10-1 would be the standard digital channel for regular NBC programming. The additional multicast digital channels (10-2, 10-3, 10-4 etc.) might be a 24 hour news broadcast, 24 hour weather broadcast, 24 hour movie, sports, special features broadcast and more. So, not only is the picture and sound crystal clear, but you are receiving more channels. The same is true of the other local programming available in your area like ABC and CBS. When you tune in your digital channels all available multicasting channels in your area will be available.

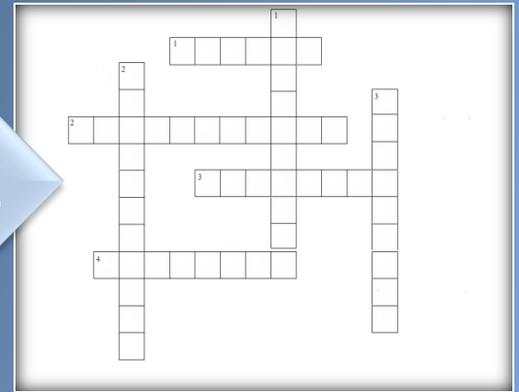
If this particular receiver is connected to a High Definition capable TV you will receive any free, over the air High Definition programming automatically too.

So you can keep your old analog TV in the RV, but the picture will look like it's being viewed on a brand new TV.

RV 101

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[Extend the Life of your RV Awnings](#)

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RVing with Mark Polk & friends

This month I had the pleasure to interview my good friend and colleague Greg Gerber. In 2009 Greg launched, and is the editor of RV Daily Report. Let's talk to him right now.



MP: Hi Greg. Thanks for the opportunity to sit down and talk with you today.

GG: Hi Mark. Thank you as well, I appreciate you asking.

MP: Let's get right to it. Can you tell our readers a little about Greg Gerber, and your background in the RV industry?

GG: Well let's see. I wound up in the RV industry by accident. I had been working as a volunteer recruiter for Big Brothers Big Sisters, but desired to put my writing skills to better use. Because I had worked as a weekly newspaper editor in the Air Force and while going through college, I responded to a help wanted ad looking for an editor for a business magazine serving

the RV industry. I submitted my resume, was interviewed several times and eventually hired as the editor in chief of RV Trade Digest in January 2000 because I had taken the time to interview several RV dealers at an RV show to learn about the most important issues facing the industry.

My first day on that job, I flew to Las Vegas to take part in a trade show put on by a wholesale distributor. I didn't have a business card and had not even seen my desk. I called motorhomes "driveables" and travel trailers "pull behinds." But, I immediately fell in love with the industry and its people. They were very patient with me as a newbie, and I learned a lot of things quickly through the immersion process. While at RV Trade Digest, I started the RV industry's first business blog in 2005, which really gave us a strong online presence. However, the publishing company I worked for wasn't willing to embrace the power of the Internet and believed that print publications would survive the technology change. They were wrong and shut down the magazine after being in business more than 26 years.

Less than a year before it shut down, I left RV Trade Digest in November 2007 to launch a new magazine called RV Industry News that

combined a print publication with a strong online presence. Unfortunately, that publishing company went bankrupt at the height of the Great Recession.

At that point, I decided I was tired of working for other people and opted to venture out on my own. I launched RV Daily Report on April Fool's Day 2009 and started the RV industry's first daily electronic newsletter. Until then, other companies were sending out newsletters three days a week, but there was just too much news coming out every day for that to remain effective.

MP: That's very interesting. I am hooked on RV Daily Report, but can you tell our readers what RV Daily Report is and what gave you the idea to start it?

GG: I envisioned RV Daily Report to be the RV industry's first entirely online publication. One of the biggest challenges for me as a magazine editor was the unfortunate necessity that forced me to cut out A LOT of great quality news and information simply because we didn't have enough space for it all in that issue.

For magazines, the number of ads sold determine the size of the publication. That means an editor has to make a determination as to which stories his readers get to see and which articles will never see the light of day.

With a web-based publication, there is no limit to the amount of news I can publish any day. I can print a newsletter with 100 articles a day if we wanted to do so.

I founded RV Daily Report on the premise that I would publish all the news I could find about the RV and camping industry on any day -- and allow my readers to determine what news is most important to them. We publish company press releases, scan wire services in order to link to other published reports, and we research our own stories. As a result, I feel confident saying that RV Daily Report is the most comprehensive news outlet serving the RV and camping industries.

What makes RV Daily Report unique is that we allow comments to every story – even anonymous comments

I feel it is very important to give everyone the ability to step up to the microphone to contribute to the industry-wide discussion. Who knows, an RV owner might have the perfect idea to solve a problem or to develop a product that could revolutionize the industry.

For too long, the industry has been segmented with RV-related businesses doing their thing and RV owners doing theirs. RV Daily Report attempts to bridge the two segments and draws in campgrounds in the process.



I think the RV industry can be described as a four-legged stool supporting RV owners. The legs are RV manufacturers, RV suppliers, RV dealers and RV parks. Take away any one of those legs, and there is no RV industry. Communication among all segments is essential if the industry is to thrive.

MP: I like that analogy. RV consumers like to stay informed on RV topics that concern them. How can the RV consumer benefit from RV Daily Report?

GG: I think RV Daily Report helps keep consumers abreast about what's happening so they can thoroughly enjoy the RV lifestyle. We publish recall notices, introduce new RVs and new products, describe market conditions and report on what's happening at RV manufacturer and supplier companies.

We announce fun activities taking place at campgrounds as well as news about the outdoor industry and RV industry in general, such as fluctuating RV values, and companies opening or closing their doors. We report on changes to parking and storage regulations to help RVers avoid legal hassles on their trips. And run stories on safety issues impacting RVers as well as lifestyle stories about people who just enjoy traveling in their RVs.

We publish an average of 575 stories a month, or about 28 per day, all of which appear in the daily report that is published Monday through Friday. That's a lot of news! In fact, we often publish more news

stories each month than our next two closest competitors combined. I'll admit that might be too much news for some people who don't make their living from the day-to-day activities of the RV industry.

However, our weekly edition, which comes out Sunday morning, features the Top 50 most read stories of the week. I think that's an excellent way for RVers to stay on top of the most important stories about RV dealers, manufacturers, suppliers, campgrounds and RV owners.

MP: In closing, where can folks go to subscribe to RV Daily Report?

GG: The subscription is free, and they'll get news every day or every week that they are not likely to find anywhere else. To subscribe, simply visit www.rvdailyreport.com and click on the Subscribe button located on the left side of the home page.

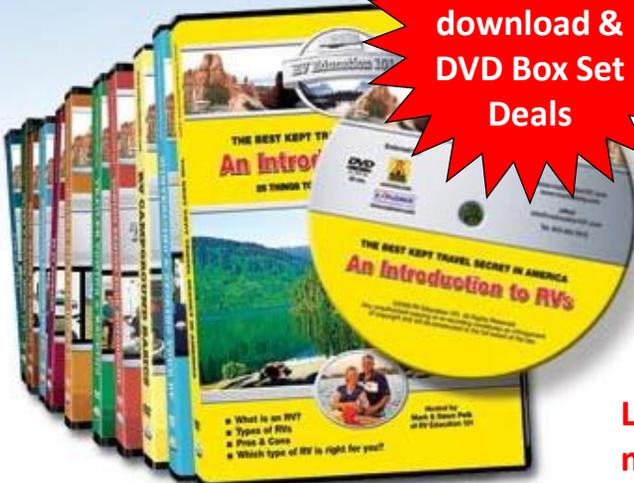
Subscribers can chose to receive the daily edition only, just the weekly edition or the daily and weekly editions. I want to make RV Daily Report the best source for news and information, so if RV users have any ideas or suggestions on things we can do differently, I'd appreciate hearing from them.

They can e-mail me directly at editor@rvdailyreport.com

RV Product News



Summer camping season is here and that means RV awnings will play a big part in keeping you cool. [Watch an informative video](#) where Mark Polk demonstrates some of the latest RV awning accessories to hit the marketplace. These RV awning products are designed to protect your awning and to make your camping trips more enjoyable. [Watch Video](#)



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Favorite RV Destinations



by Mark Polk

Asheville NC West KOA

The Asheville West KOA is a family run campground located in the heart of Appalachia and the Blue Ridge Mountains. It's just a few minutes drive to all the great local attractions. The campground was well maintained and offers accommodations for everyone from tent campers to RVers. And if you don't have an RV or prefer not to stay in a tent the Asheville KOA offers camping cabins and lodges for rent. We had a nice level pull-through site with 50 amp service, cable TV and free Wi-Fi. The pool was inviting as well when temperatures crept into the 100s during our stay. Yes 100 degrees in the NC mountains. [More Info](#)



In addition to being a great campground to stay at, the Asheville KOA West is within a few minutes drive to all the local attractions. Whether you enjoy white water rafting, gem mines, vineyards, or touring the Biltmore House, and Chimney Rock Asheville has it all. I would plan on staying an extra day or two since there's so much to see and do!



Perhaps my favorite highlight of the entire trip was touring the Biltmore Estates. If you have never been there add it to your bucket list. More than a century ago, George Vanderbilt created a larger-than-life country retreat in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains. Its centerpiece — Biltmore House—provided 250 rooms of hospitality to family and friends. You won't believe the architecture, woodwork, fine art and antiques. The gardens and landscaping is a masterpiece as well and if you like wine don't miss award-winning vintages at Biltmore's winery.



Plan to spend an entire day at the Biltmore Estates. There is so much to take in, and you won't want to miss any of it.

We spent another day at Chimney Rock State Park. It was pretty amazing to see how it was constructed. Chimney Rock is a scenic attraction about 25 miles southeast of Asheville, NC. When you are on top there are spectacular 75-mile views, and if you hike up even further the views get even better. **RV 101**

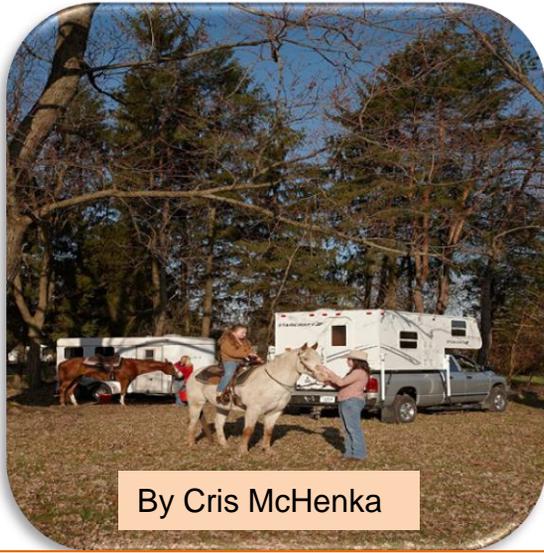


We hiked to Devils Head and then made our way to “Exclamation Point” at the very top.

If you still have some energy left you can hike down to a 404-foot waterfall and cool off.



Trip Ideas for Horse Lovers with RVs



By Cris McHenka

From spring to summer there are a series of horse races that are located in wonderful colorful places around the country. In May you might think the Kentucky Derby, but before the Derby is a race called the Blue Grass where you can visit the Lexington area with the Kentucky Horse Park which is home to champion Cigar, Derby winner Go For Gin, Derby and Preakness winner Funnycide, a champion trotter, and a champion quarter horse.

Next you can head to Louisville for the Kentucky Derby, home to the great paddlewheel race between the Delta Queen and the Belle Of Louisville. Travel up the Interstate to Baltimore where steamed crabs and home of legend Babe Ruth and Edgar Allen Poe keep visitors busy and entertained.

Three weeks later is the Belmont where visitors have all of New York City to keep them company. About six weeks later the Haskill at Monmouth Park runs. RVer's can lay on the beach and enjoy a trip to Atlantic City during a week in New Jersey.

July and August is time at Saratoga where the Travers runs, called the summer Derby. It is restricted to three year olds. While you are there don't forget to visit Cooperstown which is home to the Baseball Hall of Fame. This will be a fun day for grandparents, parents, and kids alike. The Racing Hall of Fame in Saratoga offers a day of learning some American history, as well as racing history, since many of the owners of these great horses were the titans of industry.

Later in the fall a drive to California for the Breeders Cup allows the fan to see all the champion horses in the world compete for the world championships. Nearby is Ridgeville Ranch, home to Seabiscuit. Santa Anita is a beautiful track in a stunning area and known by fans as the "great race place".

Places to Stay Along the Way

The Kentucky Horse park has camping and shower facilities on the grounds. In Louisville, the fair grounds offers dry camping for \$7 dollars a day with a nearby shuttle to the track. In Baltimore there are camping sites at the State Parks and the transit system will take you to the track. At Belmont parking is easy and since there is a train station in the track many New Yorkers use the train, and traffic on a big day like Belmont day is not a problem. Many campsites are available along the New Jersey shore. Saratoga is a park and there is no shortage of campsites. We dry-camped at the trotting track and woke up to the trotters working out at dawn. We sat in our RV and sipped our coffee watching the horses. RVer's should plan any west coast trip and if you plan to visit Ridgeville reservations are recommended.

As any RV fan knows the fun is in the trip!

Solar Panels 101

By Shelah Johnson
www.trailerchix.com



It never fails; almost every solar conversation I find myself in half of the people say “I have a solar unit but don’t know how to use it or even if it works. The other half want one but can’t figure out what to buy.

So I sought out some quick and easy answers—the easy answer is there is *NO EASY ANSWER*.

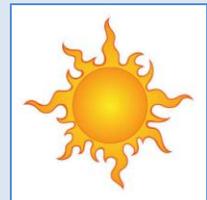
But I did sit down with John Yozamp, founder of Zamp Solar, to get some straight answers on what one should look for in a solar unit and some standard guidelines.

Like everyone else the first question I asked was “Can the solar panels run all my electronic devices?” And the answer I got back was “it depends” — not very helpful. After all, I’ve spent my entire life never questioning that I would be able to run my blow dryer and TV (I plug in, it turns on), aside from those few times in college when I couldn’t pay the PGE bill and had to

run an extension cord from the neighboring vacant flat. The point is we have had a plug and play system our entire lives and that’s how we measure electrical value.

To understand an alternative energy source such as solar we have to somewhat retrain our thinking. We cannot think of it as just on/off, it’s more about keeping your battery full.

When you’re not hooked up to shore power, your solar panels collect energy



from the sun and feed it to your batteries, which then store this energy until you’re ready to use it. Unlike batteries that sit and lose energy, a solar option will keep your batteries charged even while they’re not in use.

So back to my original question, can I run my laptop, charge my mobile phone AND run the blender? Yes, IF...

- The panel is big enough (If in question – go bigger!)

▪The onboard batteries are large enough. (Often one can add additional batteries if needed.)

We all know solar power makes environmental sense, but it has to make economic sense as well. Let's face it, the reason why many of us live fulltime in small footprints is that we no longer want to be held hostage to a job we hate. We are looking for more control in the way we choose to live our lives. So where is the payoff?

First you have to look at how you camp. A solar solution gives you additional off the grid options, like dry camping on BLM land for example. If you use or are considering the use of a generator, a solar solution can prove to be a cost effective alternative.

Here folks at [RV Solar](#) put this great generator versus solar comparison guide together:

Eco-friendly aside, have you ever tried to sleep with a generator going, or worse yet, been kept up all night by someone who had? It's like hearing a bad sax player outside your window playing Somewhere Over the Rainbow for the 19th time.

If you purchased an older unit with a pre-installed solar panel, there are only two ways to check its efficiency:

- 1) Dry camp for a few days—which is kind of like driving till you run out of gas to measure the accuracy of your gas gage, or
- 2) Find a reputable installer to test your system.

Key things to remember when purchasing solar

- ✓ Upgrade your battery – solar is only as good as the battery storage
- ✓ Not all solar systems work with all battery types
- ✓ Always have an experienced technician do the install (protect your warranty)

Gas Generator

Solar/Generator Combo

	Consideration/Cost		Consideration/Cost
Hours used/year	\$200	Hours used/year	Unlimited.
Noise	You decide	Noise	None
Maintenance	\$750	Maintenance	None (add \$450 for generator oil changes)
Useful life	15 years?	Useful life	30-50 years
Replacement cost	\$5,000.	Replacement cost	\$3,500
Depreciation	\$1,666	Depreciation	\$583
Pollution aka 'the green factor	Yes	Pollution aka 'the green factor	None
Fuel cost	\$1,500.	Fuel cost	\$450 (for some generator use)
Total 5 year cost	\$3,916	Total 5 year cost	\$1,483



The US is far behind other countries in adopting solar energy options, but we can make an effort by migrating our outdoor lighting, laptops, microwaves or hot water to solar, or by patronizing eco-friendly RV parks. Every appliance or application we take off the grid helps.

If you are purchasing a new RV, tiny home, floating home or travel trailer, look for alternative energy options. Send a message to manufacturers that you want these options and don't let them strong arm you into thinking that you will have to pay through the nose for them. Prices have come down as the technology has improved and the market is more competitive.

Rely only on reputable installers when retrofitting—check out their reputation online and make sure they guarantee their product and work. Remember the lowest price doesn't always mean a good deal and a high price does not always stand for quality.

The bottom line is we have the technology and the economics to support a migration, even if only a partial one, to solar energy. Most importantly it's just the right thing to do.

About Shelah Johnson



I'm a total trailer chick. I live full time in my 1976 – 31' Airstream Excella 500 which is parked on an island in the middle of two converging rivers in the Pacific Northwest. Working in marketing and business development can be very stressful but my trailer allows me to be on vacation every day, at least for part of the day. And it keeps me in touch with my more bohemian side.

About TrailerChix:

TrailerChix tries to return some of the lost charm and elegance to trailer life while utilizing many of the new and exciting technological advances that will help build a more sustainable planet through a smaller ecological footprint.

For more information on TrailerChix take a minute to visit www.trailerchix.com

RV Product Spotlight

by Mark Polk



RV Levelers, Wheel Chocks & Stabilization

This month Mark takes a look at some products designed to help level your RV, secure your RV and stabilize your RV.

Watch the video to learn the easy step-by-step process of how-to properly level, secure and stabilize your RV.



RV Education 101
presents...



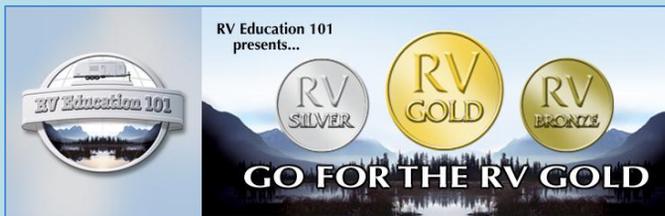
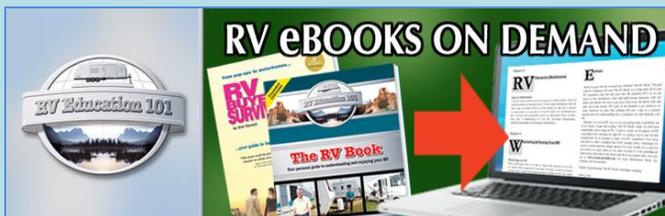
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RV Speak the B's

Backup Monitor – A monitor located within the driver's view that is attached to a small camera on the back of a motorhome or trailer. It is used to assist in backing and to monitor what is happening behind you while traveling down the road.

Ball & Ball Mount – Hitch balls have three basic measurements, the ball diameter, the shank diameter and the shank length. Ball diameter sizes come in 1 7/8", 2" and 2 5/16". The ball size must be the right size for the coupler on the trailer you are towing, and be rated to tow the trailers GVWR. The ball mount is the removable portion of the hitch that slides into the hitch receiver. For Weight Carrying (WC) hitches it may be necessary to find a ball mount with a drop or rise to help level the trailer when its hooked up to the tow vehicle. An adjustable ball mount is used for heavier trailer applications. Adjustable ball mounts allow the ball to be raised, lowered or tilted to compensate for trailer tongue weight and to attain proper height adjustments. Adjustable ball mounts are normally used with Weight Distributing (WD) hitches.

Basement Storage – Storage compartments or storage area located below the floor of the RV. You access the storage from outside. Some storage areas are referred to as pass through storage, which means it goes from one side of the RV to the other with no dividers, and can be accessed from either side.

Black Water Holding Tank – A tank mounted under the RV that collects water and waste from the toilet. When the tank is ¾ or more full it is emptied or dumped into an approved dump station or campground sewer. The black water tank is treated with chemicals to control odor and assist in breaking down waste.

Brake Controller – An electronic controller that is normally mounted under the dashboard of the tow vehicle, but within hands reach of the driver. The controller is designed to activate the trailer brakes when the tow vehicle brakes are applied. It also has a manual over ride that can be used to activate the trailer brakes without using the vehicle brakes.

Break-away Switch – A switch that is wired into the trailers brake system. It is attached from the trailer to the tow vehicle by a cable lanyard. In the event that the trailer and vehicle separate, the cable pulls a pin from the switch and the trailer brakes are activated. The switch must have a 12-volt source to operate.

Bumper Pull – A term used to describe towing a travel trailer or pop-up, also referred to as a pull behind.

My First RV Adventure

For those of you who don't know, last year about this time we completed a 17 episode Internet TV series coined "[Mark's RV Garage](#)." It was an educational RV series featuring a vintage Yellowstone trailer restoration project from the ground-up.



Yellowstone during restoration

Even though our vintage trailer is equipped with all of the features and amenities you would find in a modern day travel trailer; when we take it camping it brings back memories of my first real RV adventure in a not so well-appointed trailer of the day.

This story begins over thirty-five years ago as I prepared to tow my first travel trailer on my first real RV adventure. Of course at the time, like most teenagers, I knew everything. I had recently graduated from high school



Yellowstone on a recent camping trip

and was working for an RV dealership in Pennsylvania. I started my young career in the RV industry washing campers and eventually worked to the position of an apprentice technician. I was always mechanically inclined and interested in how things worked; since age twelve when I disassembled our perfectly good lawn mower to see how things worked inside the engine.

It was Thanksgiving and deer hunting season was quickly approaching, which in North Central Pennsylvania is very similar to a Federal holiday. I asked my boss if I could borrow an old travel trailer to use for a deer hunting trip, which to my surprise he said yes. I don't remember all of the details about the travel trailer, but I do know it was a Shasta because it had the classic wings on each back corner. I would guess that it was a mid-to-late 60's model and it was close to 20-feet long.

The only conditions for borrowing the trailer were:

- 1) To bring it back in one piece
- 2) Not to use the water system because it was winterized and the temperatures were in the low teens.

Antlered deer hunting season always started the Monday following Thanksgiving and I invited my best friend to go with me. We were going to head up into the foothills on Saturday, set things up and do some last minute scouting. I had a 1969 Chevy Blazer. It was a full size, K5 model, with a six-cylinder engine and rust holes in the body the size of softballs. Now, you would think that working for an RV dealership I would have access to, and use, the proper hitch work and brake control to tow the trailer. I do remember wiring a plug for the trailer lights, but figured since I wouldn't be towing the trailer on a regular basis I would forgo the brakes and just drop the trailer on the ball mount and go.

Keep in mind I knew everything back then. Kind of like how my youngest son knows everything now! There were no pre-trip checks or inspections. We packed the bare essentials, a pot and pan, some groceries, our sleeping bags and hunting equipment and off we went. It was about a sixty-mile trip to our favorite hunting destination. The first thirty-five miles was on two-lane paved roads and the last twenty-five miles was a winding, snow covered dirt road barely

wide enough for one vehicle. If you encountered traffic going the opposite direction somebody had to back up until there was a spot wide enough for both vehicles to safely pass.

I do remember the Blazer thinking if I had to stop quickly I would have hit whatever it was that was making me stop so quickly. I took a deep sigh of relief after the white-knuckle journey to get the trailer to our destination, and thanked my lucky stars that the trailer was still in one piece. Little did I know that getting there was just the beginning of my first RV adventure!

We set the trailer up, which at the time was really nothing more than leveling it from front to rear using the tongue jack and turning the LP gas supply on. Then we settled into the trailer for the first night. We figured since it was cold outside we didn't need to use the refrigerator, so we left our groceries in the Blazer. The furnace was the old style that you had to light manually. Soon after I got it to fire up it warmed up enough inside to take our gloves and winter coats off. For dinner we heated up some pork and beans on the range top and ate them out of the pan because we forgot to bring plates with us. Afterwards we played a card game called set-back and eventually turned in for a good nights sleep.

Early the next morning I went to the Blazer to get some bacon and eggs for breakfast.

The eggs were frozen solid. We fried some bacon and later that morning we used the frozen eggs for target practice to sight our hunting rifles in. We washed the pans in a nearby, nearly frozen stream, since we didn't have any water, and the rest of the day was spent scouting the snow covered hills for signs of deer activity. Then it was back to the cozy, but somewhat drafty Shasta trailer.

After another entree of pork and beans for dinner I put all of the empty cans and other garbage in a plastic bag and set it outside the camper's door. The next morning was opening day. It was difficult to relax and go to bed that night, but knowing we would be getting up early forced us to turn in for the night. The first major event of the evening was waking up around midnight because it felt like 10 degrees below zero inside the trailer. The trailer only had one full and one partially filled 20-pound LP gas bottle, and with the furnace running nearly non-stop since we arrived both cylinders were empty. Fortunately I did have enough forethought to bring two spare 20-pound LP cylinders along with us. I told my friend that since I got the trailer for us to use he would have to get out of his sleeping bag, change the bottles and re-light the furnace. After some reluctance and a few choice words he stumbled outside and changed them over. Soon it was warm again and we were both back to sleep.

Sometime during the early morning hours the trailer began to shake, I mean literally shake back and forth. At first I thought I was dreaming, but soon realized I wasn't. I reached up and turned a small overhead light on and looked over at my friend to see if he was awake. Not having any clue what was happening we both stared, wide-eyed, at each other. I pulled the small curtain away from the window and peered outside. It took a minute to focus my eyes in the dark, but I soon realized that there were two bears outside; a small black bear cub and its not so small mother pushing against the side of the trailer. Not really sure what to do we both got our hunting rifles, loaded a round in the chamber, and stood back, ready for when the bear would come busting through the door or a window. We waited for what seemed like forever at the time, but it was probably a minute or two before the shaking stopped. We glanced out the window again and there were no signs of the bears anywhere. Needless to say we didn't get anymore sleep before it was time to head out to our favorite hunting spots early that morning. When we walked out of the trailer, with flashlights in hand, we soon realized why the black bears stopped to visit us that night. There were pork and bean cans and other garbage scattered everywhere around our makeshift campsite.

Another reason this camping trip remains so clear in my mind is because at 8:10 AM on opening day I shot my first 8-point whitetail buck on a ridge about 80 yards from where I was sitting.

My friend heard the shot and came over to check it out. After field dressing the deer it took us about two hours to drag it down the long ravine, back to the trailer. Knowing that we had enough LP gas for one more night we fired up the furnace and ate some more pork and beans. After making sure there was no garbage outside we settled in the warm, cozy Shasta trailer and played cards while I recounted the events of the great whitetail deer hunt over-and-over again.

We did manage to get the trailer back home safely, and other than some remnants of hungry black bear paw prints on the side of the trailer it was still in one piece. That nearly disastrous weekend hunting trip, in freezing cold weather, spent in the small Shasta travel trailer, is when I got bit by the RV bug.

Thirty-five years and six RVs later, we are still making new RV memories with each year that passes. And every time I camp in the "Old Yellowstone" I will be reminded of that first great RV adventure.

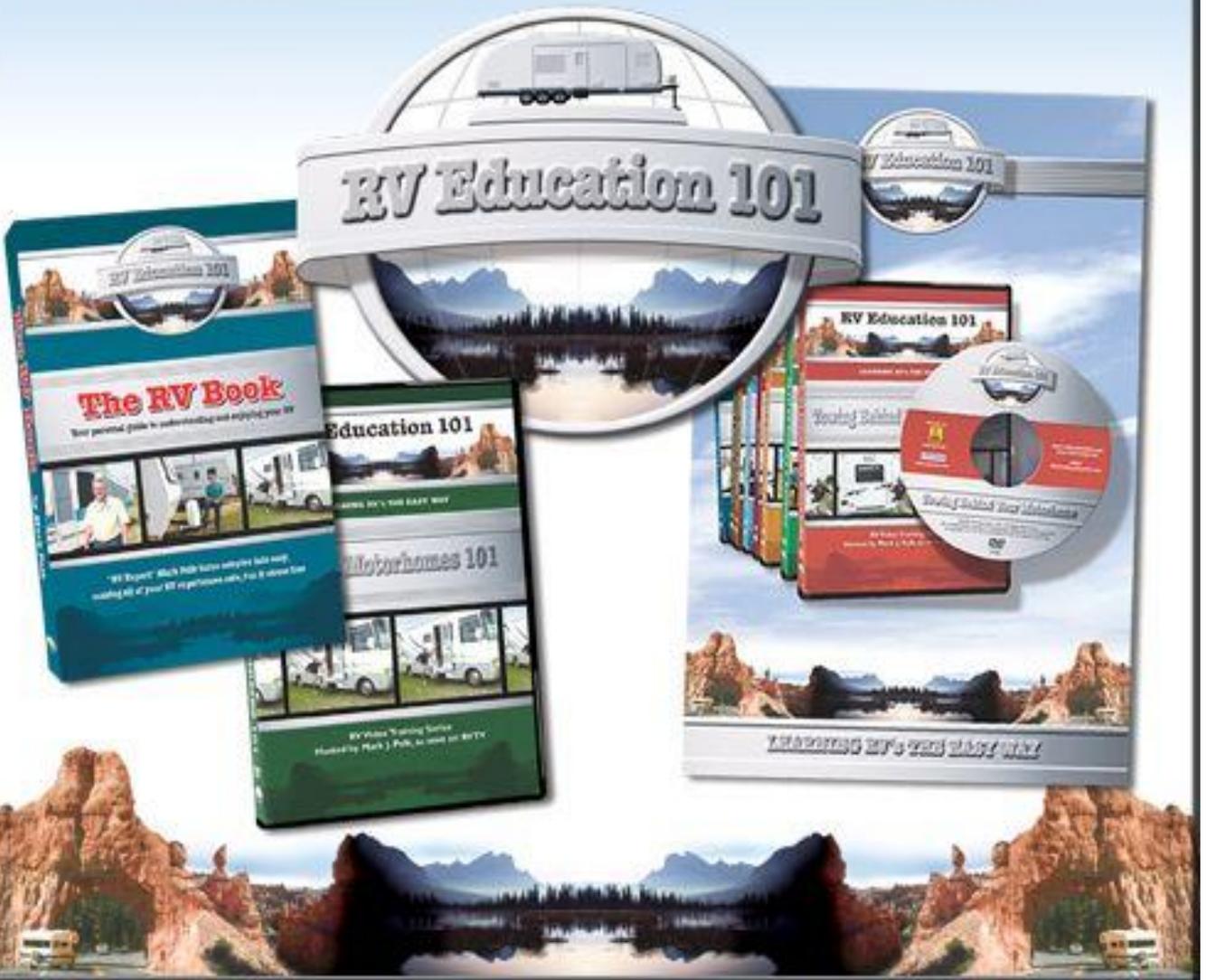
JUST RV IT and build some lasting memories with your family and friends.

~RV 101



**Settling into the
Yellowstone after
a day at the beach**

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