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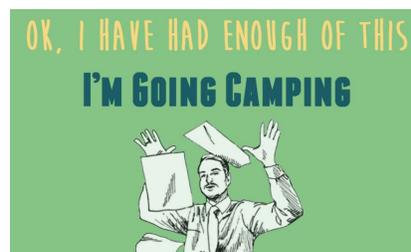
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New Newsletter Design

Welcome to the new design for the monthly newsletter from Air Safe Hitches. After you read this newsletter please email and let me know what you think and any suggestions that you might have.



Postcards: relics of the past

By **Chuck Woodbury**, EDITOR, RVTRAVEL.COM

Go back 100 years. Just imagine: there were no RVs and only a few primitive cars with few roads to travel. There was no television and only the very beginnings of movies. Hardly anybody owned a camera, and the handful who did shot in black and white. There was no Travel Channel, fancy travel magazines or countless travel websites.

So wherever you lived, the rest of your country — as well as the world — was an unknown, mysterious place.

Then, right around the turn of the 20th century, postcards appeared. They became popular after they were distributed at Chicago's Columbia Exposition in 1893. In 1908, 677 million were mailed.

The first postcards were in black and white. Then hand-coloring was added. Imagine what it was like to receive a postcard 100 years ago, when there were very few ways to see faraway places. I bet those cards were treated as treasures.

I bring this up because I found a box of old postcards the other day. I especially like the colorized ones from the '40s and '50s.

Now fast forward to today. Nobody needs postcards anymore. We email digital photos from our phones or post them on Facebook . We've seen every corner of the world in living color on TV and websites, in movies, on YouTube and in newspapers and magazines. Our neighbors return home with blow-by-blow videos of where they traveled.

I quit sending postcards years ago. I made an exception on a recent trip to Germany when I mailed one to my daughter. By the time she received it a week later I had emailed her dozens of digital photos and video chatted with her live on Skype. I felt no need to send her a card saying "Having a good time. Wish you were here."

For decades, postcards introduced the world to many people. Today, they are curiosities. I bet tourist shops sell a fraction of what they did in the olden days.

A Guide To 5th Wheel Campers

When it comes to RV's and campers, there are two main types; motorized and towable. Class A, Class B, and Class C motor homes are all motorized. Fifth Wheel campers are one of the types of towable campers, and one of the most popular. But what is a 5th wheel camper?

The distinguishing feature of a 5th wheel camper, and the thing that makes it a 5th wheel camper, is its hitch and how it hooks up to its towing vehicle. A 5th wheel camping has a gooseneck hitch that hooks into the truck bed of a heavy duty truck (the towing vehicle). By hooking the camper into the bed of the truck, there is better stability and a better center of gravity. Many travel trailer owners complain of the swaying back and forth that their trailers do when they are towing them. Fifth wheel owners don't have this problem. Many say they hardly realize they are towing a camper because the 5th wheel is so easy to tow.

That stability and better center of gravity comes at a price though. The gooseneck hitch requires a truck for towing, and the heavier weight of a 5th wheel requires a heavier duty truck to do that towing. And, when you look at towing capacities, try to stay under the recommended maximums for your vehicle. Many people recommend this. It's much easier on your truck's transmission. Either opt for a lighter 5th wheel than you originally planned or invest in a heavier duty towing vehicle.

Fifth wheel campers are the most luxurious of the towable campers. This also makes them the most expensive. Some of the amenities that can be found on 5th wheel campers (some standard and some optional depending on the manufacturer) include:

- Full size appliances
- Solid wood cabinetry in woods such as maple
- Crown molding
- Solid surface countertops
- Leather recliners
- Slideout kitchen pantry
- Microwave
- Bay window
- Large LCD TV's on a swivel base for multiple viewing areas
- DVD player
- Computer work station with data port hookups
- Surround sound entertainment systems
- Satellite radio
- Washer/Dryer
- King sized bed in the master bedroom
- Electric fireplace
- Built in safe
- Central Vac
- Full sized shower stall with glass doors
- Outside cooking grill

Size

Fifth wheel travel trailers are available in many different lengths starting at 22 feet and up to 40 feet. The most popular sizes are the 32, 34, and 36 foot 5th wheels. To gain additional interior space, most 5th wheels have optional floor plans that include slideouts. Slideouts are most often used in the living room and dining room area, but they are often utilized in the master bedroom area as well. Multiple slideouts are becoming more common and more popular. I've seen as many as five slideouts on one fifth wheel. Keep in mind though, that slideouts add weight to a fifth wheel.

Cost

The cost of a new 5th wheel varies widely depending on the length you choose; the number of slideouts, if any; and the extra amenities you purchase. Prices start at \$26,000 - \$30,000 (not including the cost of the vehicle to tow it); and can get close to \$100,000 for high end models with all the optional amenities.

How Many People Can I Get In It?

The number of people a 5th wheel will sleep comfortably will vary depending on the size and the floor plan you choose. Most floor plans have only one bedroom in them, the master

bedroom. The additional sleeping areas are housed in the sofas and in the dinette areas, depending on the model of 5th wheel. Typically, a 5th wheel will sleep 4-8 people comfortably although the open floor space does give you enough room to inflate an air mattress and offer sleeping space to a few more people if you are really short on sleeping space.

Pros and Cons

As with any type and style of RV, camper, or travel trailer, a 5th wheel has its advantages and disadvantages. Its main advantages are:

- Easy Towing because of the gooseneck hitch.
- Spacious and roomy inside. A 5th wheel has lots of room inside. If the weather outside is inclement, there is plenty of room for everyone to be inside enjoying the amenities.
- 5th wheel can be detached at destination which frees up the towing vehicle for excursions and trips around the area.

The main disadvantages are:

- A towing vehicle, outfitted with a special package to house the gooseneck hitch is needed. Because most 5th wheels are heavy, the towing vehicle needs to be heavy duty. But, on the bright side, manufacturers have begun to introduce lightweight 5th wheels that can be pulled by smaller trucks.
- The steps. Some people don't like the bi-level design of a 5th wheel travel trailer and don't like having interior steps that lead to either the master bedroom that is typically housed in the area of the trailer that sits over the bed of the towing vehicle (although this area is also sometimes the living room area). If interior steps are a problem, you may want to consider a travel trailer or consider a motorized RV.
- The cost. Fifth wheel campers are the most expensive of the towable RV's which can make them too expensive for entry level buyers. If you really have your heart set on a 5th wheel, consider purchasing a used 5th wheel. There are some very good deals available on "previously road tested" 5th wheels.

Fifth wheel campers are my personal favorite type of towable camper because of the ease of towing and the incredible interiors. If you haven't looked inside a 5th wheel, go to your local 5th wheel dealer and ask to look at one. You'll be amazed at how nice and how spacious they are on the inside. One popular floor plan, my sister-in-law's favorite, has a master bedroom at one end of the camper and a room with three bunk beds at the other which is perfect for her three kids. My personal favorite floor plan has the master bedroom at one end with a king size bed in it (and an optional washer dryer) and a living room area at the other end with a large bay window and two leather recliners. I could see myself stretching out in one of those recliners with a cold beverage at the end of a long day hiking or biking the trails at one of my favorite campgrounds.

Another thing I love about 5th wheel campers is their awesome kitchens. They are surprisingly roomy, with ample cabinet space, the availability of solid surface countertops,

the availability of stainless steel appliances in some models, slide out pantries, microwave, kitchen islands (again, depending on the model and manufacturer), and snack bar area.

Remember, when looking for a fifth wheel, first and foremost on your mind should be the towing capacity of your vehicle unless you are buying a different towing vehicle. Once the towing concerns are out of the way, you can concentrate on the style, color, and amenities you want most in your new home away from home.

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"We Sell for Less - Buy from us and save"

Mobile Box Office

By Kristopher Bunker
January 22, 2017

"Assembling a motorhome theater makes the audio/visual experience more pleasurable"

It all started in 1927, with a movie called "The Jazz Singer." For the first time, audiences were introduced to moving pictures with a synchronized soundtrack, and the cinematic experience was born, drawing patrons to the theater in order to get away from the humdrum of day-to-day life, in order to be truly entertained.

To say we've come a long way since Al Jolson's controversial classic is an understatement; not only do today's movies feature computer-generated images, eardrum-ringing explosions and \$200 million budgets, but the way we watch them has evolved as well. We no longer have to pack in to crowded movie houses to see the latest Hollywood flick, as modern technology allows us to view these cinematic gems (or duds) from the comfort of our

homes, with picture quality and audio rivaling that of the local movie theater. And, naturally, that technology has extended to our motorhomes — why should stick-house owners have all the fun?

In order to enjoy a fully immersive cinematic experience, there is a fair amount of equipment involved, much of which comes standard on your motorhome. But understanding what you'll need in order to get the highest-quality experience is more important than ever, and can be a bit more involved than simply flipping a switch and flopping down on the couch.

To begin with, there obviously needs to be a way for a motorhome to receive television-programming signals. At minimum, your motorhome likely came equipped with an antenna that has been designed to acquire free, over-the-air (OTA) signals, and which can be adjusted from inside the motorhome in order to find the best reception — though its effectiveness is limited by local-signal strength. There is a variety of OTA antennas available to receive free programming.

Batwing/OTA Antennas

KING offers the Jack antenna (\$159), with a wider signal range than traditional batwings and a built-in signal meter for added convenience.

Shakespeare's SeaWatch lineup (msrp begins at \$56.99) offers four omni-directional, in-motion antennas to receive over-the-air signals to view local programming. Each antenna is equipped with a low-noise amplifier (for improved signal quality) and is able to receive HD signals, depending upon the availability in the area in which you're traveling.

Winegard offers a quintet of antennas to handle OTA signals. The roof-mounted Rayzar Automatic (\$399.99) is designed to receive VHF and UHF signals, therefore increasing the chances of receiving clear OTA HD broadcasts. It automatically detects the best position and locks in for increased viewing performance. The Sensor (\$106.25) features a range of 55 miles from the source and is a batwing-style antenna with a built-in amplifier. The Rayzar z1 (\$109.99) doesn't require any cranking and is designed to receive optimal UHF reception in addition to high-band VHF signals where available. The Rayzar (Micro, \$29.99; Amplified RV-RZ85, \$69.99) is a portable, indoor multi-directional antenna designed for stations within a 30-mile range (50 for the RV-RZ85). The permanently roof-mounted RoadStar antenna (\$89.99) offers 360-degree signal reception and doesn't require hand-cranking for use.

Satellite-Provider Antennas

If you don't wish to be at the mercy of the OTA programming, you'll need to either utilize the campground cable connection, or you'll have to subscribe to a satellite provider such as DISH Network, DirecTV or Bell TV. In some cases, the companies offer special packages to RVers that allow users to activate and deactivate the receiver box based on their travel schedule.

Along with the satellite subscription comes the more advanced (and, yes, more expensive) antennas. Your motorhome may already be equipped with a satellite antenna (commonly referred to as a satellite dish). Antennas come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and can be permanent structures on the motorhome's roof or portable units that are set up on demand. This is where the selection gets much more varied, and prices adjust accordingly as features are added on.

KING

For DISH Network subscribers, KING offers a pair of portable antennas, the DISH Tailgater (\$329) and the KING Tailgater (\$379), the latter of which can also be permanently attached to the motorhome's roof. Both are HD-compatible units that feature automatic signal acquisition, and are powered via a receiver. They are designed for stationary use.

The KING Quest (\$549) shares many of the same features as the Tailgater series, but is compatible with non-HD DirecTV programming. A portable Quest model compatible with Bell TV is also available (\$649), and can be reprogrammed to receive DISH programming stateside.

KING's flagship KING Dome satellite receives programming from all three providers (DirecTV non-HD), and the fact that it's an in-motion satellite means the kids can watch TV while on the road.

KVH

TracVision satellite TV systems are permanently mounted, in-motion automatic antennas designed to be compatible with the major satellite providers. The popular TracVision RV1 antenna (\$2,695) weighs only 8 pounds, while the TracVision A9 (\$4,995) boasts a low 5-inch profile and includes a receiver. Both antennas are HDTV-compatible and can support multiple receivers.

RF Mogul

When it comes to delivering DirecTV HD programming to your motorhome, your options are limited. RF Mogul offers the Eagle DirecTV Satellite System (\$1,995), which the company claims features the fastest satellite lock time of any HD satellite. RF Mogul offers satellites for DISH Network and Shaw Direct as well.

Winegard

Perhaps the most popular antenna supplier among RVers, Winegard offers a host of satellite antennas to meet most every TV-viewing need.

The portable DISH Playmaker (\$329) works exclusively with a DISH HD Solo receiver. The Playmaker is fully automatic and weighs only 10 pounds, making set-up easy. The Carryout G2+ (\$649.99) can be permanently roof-mounted or used in a portable configuration, and even enables users to choose a proprietary satellite TV provider. The small and compact

antenna is powered through coax cable and supports multi-TV viewing. The in-motion RoadTrip T4 (\$1,399) allows passengers to watch TV while on the road. The fully automatic roof-mounted antenna features one-button on/off operation.

The Trav'ler is Winegard's crown jewel and is designed for enhanced performance with live TV programming and DVRs. The Trav'ler can receive programming from multiple satellites and is available in the DirecTV Slimline (\$1,899) and DISH Network 1000 and Bell TV (\$1,599) models, both of which fold down to less than 10 inches for storage.

TV Time

Whether or not you have satellite service, to watch a movie or TV content you need the proper equipment. Naturally, that begins with a TV (or two, or three ...). In many cases, your motorhome may have already been equipped with a Jensen TV from ASA Electronics. These Jensen TVs have been road-tested to withstand vibration and temperature extremes. The JTV4015DC is a 12-volt-DC-powered TV available in either 28- or 40-inch models. The TV is housed in a rugged metal cabinet and offers component video, stereo-audio and two HDMI inputs. The TV's integrated jCOM protocol provides direct, seamless communication to Jensen HDMI-equipped head units and DVD players. Additionally, a Jensen 120-volt-AC-powered lineup of flat screens ranges in sizes from 19 to 55 inches.

Aftermarket manufacturer Furrion offers LED TVs made specifically for the RVing segment as well. In addition to HDMI inputs, each TV features a Vivid A+ LED panel, Furrion's Climatesmart technology (to withstand harsh weather conditions), Furrion's Vibrationsmart technology (to withstand vigorous vibration and shock created during travel), audio out through RCA audio cables as well as an optical port and side or bottom access controls. They are available in sizes ranging from 19 to 65 inches.

Many newer TVs offer Ultra High Definition (UHD; also referred to as 4K or even 8K) technology, which is like HD but up to 16 times the resolution of standard HD. It should be noted that not only do you need a source (cable/satellite provider) capable of broadcasting that kind of enhanced resolution, but it is quite difficult to discern the improvement in picture quality, unless you have a monitor that's way too large for a motorhome, or you prefer to sit with your nose against the screen. Adjust your budget accordingly.

Of course, you could always go to the local electronics store and purchase a TV, but be warned: many of the TVs on the market have not been designed to withstand the on-the-road bouncing and banging, nor are they engineered to experience the temperature extremes of units manufactured specifically for the RV market.

Head Units

So, now you have a signal, and a monitor, so it's time to turn our attention toward the audio-visual (A/V)/stereo receiver, or head unit. An A/V receiver handles both the visual and the audio aspects of your motorhome's theater experience. Residential-type receivers can

certainly deliver on both fronts, but may not be ideal for mobile use and are usually big and bulky. Plus, a motorhome is often pre-wired for a mobile-type unit with easy-to-operate CD/DVD/AM/FM stereo features, so it makes sense to look in that direction when considering a new/upgraded purchase.

When selecting a head unit, it's important to first plan out how you'll be using it. Convenience items like Bluetooth connectivity, app control and auxiliary input can add a few dollars to the cost, though the additional coin is generally well justified. It should be noted that these units are not capable of playing Blu-ray discs, so if that's on your wish list, you'll likely have to look outside of the models designed for RV use. You should also note that due to the random placement of the speakers in a motorhome, calibration for enhanced-audio features like Dolby Digital Plus and DTS-HD Master Audio aren't possible and therefore are not included. To enjoy those features, a traditional A/V receiver would be needed; a growing trend has even seen some of the more expensive motorhomes being outfitted with these higher-end audio components.

There are a few recognizable names on the market, most notably those from Furrion, Jensen and Fusion. Examples of motorhome-friendly units include the Furrion DV3300, which features HDMI ports and Bluetooth, and can be configured to handle up to three TVs. Furrion also makes the DV7100, which can also handle multiple TVs and offers a front HDMI jack, perfect for HD game systems like Xbox1 and Sony PS4. As of press time, msrps on the Furrion units were not available.

The Jensen JWM9A features a slot-type DVD/CD-player mechanism and AM/FM electronic tuner. A jControl downloadable app controls the functions of the stereo, which ASA Electronics claims is the RV industry's first wall-mounted unit with all-digital connectivity and Apple (iPhone/iPad) control via a USB port. The unit supports up to three TVs, up to 1080i resolution and offers up to 160 watts of total power for audiophiles.

Fusion, headquartered in New Zealand (but offering many products stateside), offers the MS-AV750 (\$799.99) marine AM/FM/CD/DVD receiver, which runs a standard-definition DVD picture via HDMI, but its built-in Bluetooth, ability to control up to four zones and the fact that it's water-resistant certainly up the cool factor.

Speakers

Half of the theater experience is the audio, so it's important to select high-quality speakers/soundbars to deliver the proper kaboom of an on-screen explosion while still being sensitive enough for the whispers of a conversation. In all likelihood, your motorhome is already equipped with ceiling-mounted speakers, for stereo (or all-channel) playback. Again, speaker placement makes it difficult to enjoy a pure, fully immersive audio experience using the latest in digital technology, but, c'mon, we're just splitting hairs here. Today's speakers blow the doors off their larger, bulky forefathers, and there are dozens of manufacturers that produce these replacements.

If, however, you're looking for specialized RV or waterproof speakers, you'll want to start with manufacturers like Furrion, ASA (Jensen), PQN Audio and Fusion.

Furrion produces a variety of affordable wall- and ceiling-mounted speakers, many at or below \$20. Jensen does the same. Laying some additional money down will get you higher quality units capable of handling a higher range of sounds, such as Furrion's FSBT43S-BL line.

PQN is a specialty speaker manufacturer that specifically designs speakers for the RV/marine markets, in addition to outdoor applications like spas. PQN's Audio SPA series speakers (msrp begins at \$79.99) are waterproof and chemical-resistant (as in, hot-tub chemicals), and are also available with audio-driven blue LED lighting for additional fun. PQN also offers dual-cone waterproof speakers (\$109.99-\$119.99) and ultra-slim speakers (\$79.99-\$84.99) for increased installation versatility.

The 230-watt Signature Series Coaxial Sports speakers (msrp begins at \$349 per pair) from Fusion combine beauty and brute strength to bring the (pleasant) noise, and are available with a sound-activated blue or white LED light.

For a lively, outdoor listening party, KING offers a premium Outdoor Speaker and Light combo to replace your traditional exterior illumination. The combo unit (\$199-\$249) can stream music, is waterproof and produces up to 100 watts of sound for listening enjoyment.

Another alternative to speakers placed around the vehicle's interior is a soundbar. A soundbar is generally a solid speaker-type unit that connects to the TV/receiver's audio output for a clean installation. Inside a soundbar, you will often find multiple speakers designed to handle the highs and lows of Hollywood's finest blockbusters; there's also sometimes a wireless subwoofer to be placed out of sight that will deliver the big-box explosions to which we're now so accustomed. Soundbars, like many other components, are easy to find at electronics stores but, once again, we're looking here for road-tested, RV-specific models. To that end, Jensen's JSB4000 features six drivers and two subwoofers, designed specifically for installation inside an entertainment-center wall. Furrion also offers a soundbar rated for up to 80 watts.

Overall, that may seem like quite a lot of equipment, and let me assure you, it is. But it most certainly doesn't have to be difficult to achieve A/V nirvana, as more and more manufacturers are including higher-end entertainment features on their motorhomes standard, or at the very least as an optional package. Apart from that, if you're looking for an instant-gratification upgrade to immediately up the entertainment factor, changing out the components of your mobile theater is one of the best — and most easily noticeable — investments.

Take a Drive on a Scenic Byway

By Jessica Sanders
ReserveAmerica.com

There's a reason your parents liked taking "the scenic route" when you were a kid: it's because the scenic route is more interesting. In fact, 150 roads in the U.S. have been designated as scenic byways because of their cultural, historic, recreational or scenic qualities. Embrace the phrase, "The journey is the destination," and make your next trip more memorable on one of these scenic byways.



Kancamagus Scenic Byway

North Woodstock, New Hampshire to Conway, New Hampshire

Leave the hustle and bustle of life behind as you drive through the White Mountains. Few scenic byways are more beautiful in the fall than this one, each tree bursting with fiery red and brilliant yellow. With no gas stations, restaurants or hotels in close proximity you can truly get away from it all.

Camp at [Covered Bridge](#)



Peak to Peak Scenic and Historic Byway

Central City, Colorado to Estes Park, Colorado

Of all the scenic byways, history buffs need to travel this one. Peak to Peak was deemed Colorado's oldest scenic highway in 1918. Here you'll catch the Continental Divide, historic mining sites and Roosevelt National Forest. Snow capped mountains and yellow green meadows are the perfect backdrop for your photo op.

Camp at [Columbine Campground](#)



Nebo Loop Scenic Byway

Nephi, Utah to Payson, Utah

At 11,929 feet, Mt. Nebo stretches high into the clouds on one of the most geographically diverse scenic byways. The various terrains make this an interesting ride from end to end, with flat bottomlands, red rock formations and salt flats. The usually tall alpine conifers pale in comparison to the size of Mt. Nebo, but make for a distinct and breathtaking drive all the same.

Camp at [Blackhawk](#)



Whitefish Bay Scenic Byway

Whitefish Township, Michigan to Bay Mills Township, Michigan

This scenic byway runs through the Hiawatha National Forest, along Whitefish Bay, where clear waters and long, sandy beaches make this a drive to remember. Take a day trip in the summer season and try a few beaches as you cruise down the route.

Camp at [Bay View](#)



Big Sur Coast Highway

Carmel, California to Monterey, California

Few scenic byways are more picturesque than this one. Running parallel to the bright blue waters of the Pacific Ocean, rugged cliffs, infinite blue skies and sea lions give you a reason to stop at nearly every mile marker. Be sure to get out from behind your camera to breathe the fresh sea air and take in the pristine views.

Camp at [Pfeiffer Big Sur](#)



The Edge of the Wilderness Scenic Byway

Grand Rapids, Minnesota to Effie, Minnesota

One of the first scenic byways to be deemed a National Scenic Byway, this drive is as rich in history as it is in beauty. Roll down the windows as you wind through forests, swamps and unspoiled lakes. Then come back in fall to see the trees alive, bright with color.

Camp at [Clubhouse Lake](#)



Bighorn Scenic Byway

Shell, Wyoming to Sheridan, Wyoming

As you coast through the Big Horn Mountains you'll admire the lush forests and brightly colored meadows of this scenic byway. Don't miss the 120-foot cascading waterfalls of Shell Falls; some of the most extraordinary scenery you'll find on this breathtaking drive.

Camp at [Sibley Lake](#)

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