

Subject: July Newsletter from Air Safe Hitches



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Newsletter

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Crazy Creative RV & Camping Hacks

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There's nothing we love more than a good hack. Usually, they are so simple, but so smart that they make us jealous we didn't think of them first. But - let me tell you - the list of hacks we've compiled below has us green with envy - these truly are the best of the best.

Doritos make the best fire starters. As surprising as it may sound - there really isn't a better fire starter out there than a good old bag of Doritos - and the best part? There's literally nothing to it! Pick up your favorite - or maybe least favorite - bag at the grocery store, light one corner on fire, and watch it burn. But there's a catch - it's actually necessary to get the Doritos brand. Apparently, it has something to do with their fat content. This is one of our favorites - but definitely slightly concerning if you're a Doritos lover because once you see how long these burn, you might lose your appetite.

Make a zipline for your dog. We, like many RVers, are big time dog people - so we're all about anything we can do to make our pup's trip more comfortable. And making them a zipline, instead of tying them out, gives them way more freedom to enjoy their interesting, new surroundings. And, like the Doritos, this is another super easy trick. You just need a piece of rope and some carabiners to attach their leashes to it. From there - find some trees a decent distance apart to tie the rope to and hitch Fido on up. He'll be much happier being able to wander back and forth freely - but you'll still have peace of mind knowing he's not going to take off on you.

Sage bundles repel mosquitos. We hate mosquitos. They are the fastest way we can think of to drive even the most tolerant RVer back inside. So this hack is definitely worth a try. This particular article says that you can also throw some lavender and mint in there - but the majority of reading we did specifically called out the sage - so if you add nothing else, make sure to have that. You can hang these outside of your camper or put them in your fire - either way, they seem like an essential way to keep the ultimate pest away.

Ok - so tell us the truth. Had you heard of these before? We hope there were at least a few that surprised you and will make their way into your bag of tricks as you head out on your next great adventure.

A Guide To 5th Wheel Campers

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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.

10 Tips for Fifth Wheel Camping in Extreme Winds

March 6, 2018

Over the course of seven years of full time RVing we've endured our share of powerful storms

and winds. During that time I've learned ways to help combat the high winds and stay safe in our RV.

The tips are for our fifth wheel trailer but many are transferable to other RV types.

- 1) Pull in Slide Outs Pulling in the slides will reduce the RVs surface area and center the weight. This should help reduce rocking and keep the slide topper awnings from being damaged.
- 2) Store Outside Items, Check Neighbors Too Loose outside items can blow around and possibly damage yours or others RVs. Store lightweight items like camp chairs, mats, folding tables, portable solar panels, etc. Keep an eye on neighboring rigs for items that may be blown into yours.
- 3) Close Vents and Windows If camping in a region prone to blowing dust close all vents and windows. We once left them open during a windy day in the Utah desert, and we are still cleaning fine red dust from the rig.
- 4) Hookup Truck Attach the fifth wheel to the truck. The heavy truck will act as an anchor and save possible damage to the front landing legs from excessive rocking.
- 5) Point Trailer Nose Into the Wind If possible point the trailer into the wind. The fifth wheels front cap and vent covers are aerodynamically designed for highway speeds. You'll experience a lot less rig rocking and noise compared to the wind coming from side or rear.
- 6) Fill Water and Waste Tanks Fill up the water and waste tanks. In a fifth wheel like mine, for instance, this adds an extra 1000 lbs of weight. Since the tanks are located low in the rig, it lowers the center of gravity making it harder to tip.
- 7) Check the Roof Make sure roof vent and AC covers are securely attached, tighten any loose bolts. Put down TV and/or satellite antennas. You don't want to have to go up there once the wind hits.
- 8) Look Up Check what's overtop of the rig. Are there any large tree branches or power wires?
- 9) Use a Weather Alert Radio Keep a quality battery operated weather alert radio on hand to monitor the storm in case internet access goes down.
- 10) Have a Plan B for Shelter Know beforehand exactly what you will do if the winds get out of hand. Where will you go if hunkering down in your RV becomes unsafe? (IE. a tornado is approaching.) Most campgrounds in tornado-prone areas will have a shelter. Make sure you know where it is.

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A Joyful RV Road Trip For Foster Children

By Silvana Clark

Most RV owners know the joy that comes from traveling and exploring new locations. Yet at times, it's easy to have the feeling of, "Is that all there is?" Here's a way my husband and I managed to travel and also have a purpose as we moved from state to state.

Ever since becoming empty nesters, my husband Allan and I have looked for ways to travel as often (and as cheap!) as possible. Fortunately, we spent several years working as brand ambassadors, a little-known field where companies pay people to travel the country, usually in branded vehicles, and promote a product or service. We know what life on the road entails and love it!

So, with our experience as brand ambassadors, we created a customized proposal to be volunteers with Royal Family KIDS. This non-profit based in Santa Ana, California serves neglected, abused and abandoned children between the ages of 6-12-years old. Royal Family KIDS runs over 200, one week camps in the United States, serving over 8,000 foster children every year. We volunteered with the camp in our hometown of Bellingham, Washington, so knew about the quality camps they run. During the school year, many camps offer "club" meetings once a month so volunteers can maintain contact with the children through pizza parties and fun activities.

We contacted the CEO, Chris Carmichael and made him an offer he couldn't refuse. (Well, he probably could have refused, but thankfully he didn't!) Our offer was simple. We would buy an RV and volunteer for six months to travel around the US, visiting camps, training staff in creative camp activities and assisting with Royal Family KIDS events such as fund raisers. It seemed a perfect fit since I've spent the last 25 years traveling around the world giving presentations on helping children gain resilience through innovative activities.

Within two short months we found ourselves in Southern California, getting our plain-looking white RV "wrapped" and transformed into a rolling billboard for Royal Family. Now we can't get gas without someone asking, "What is Royal Family and why are you driving this cool looking RV?" Of course that gives us the ideal opportunity to talk about the fun and safe time foster kids have at camp. Sometimes children don't want to take off their long sleeved shirts for swim time. Counselors understand that is because many children come to camp with scars and burns on their bodies from abuse. Other young campers hoard food, since they are never sure when they'll have another meal. Royal Family KIDS' Camps solve that problem by announcing an "All the bacon you can eat!" policy.

Many children at camp have never experienced a birthday celebration. Camp puts an end to that! Each camp sets aside one night to throw an "Everybody's Birthday" party, complete with cake, balloons, games and of course presents. It's hard not to ache in your heart when a young camper holds a new toy and says, "This is the first birthday present I've ever had!"

Allan and I thrive on variety, so this volunteer position fits our personalities perfectly. As a professional speaker, I can still fly off and give a keynote or workshop at a conference. My latest book deals with Millennials in the workplace. MILLENNIALS VS. BOOMERS...BOOMERS VS. MILLENNIALS. Working with Millennials connected with Royal Family provides me with first-hand experience in working with these enthusiastic young adult volunteers. Driving from state to state gives us the chance to see all aspects of the Royal Family camp program.

In Roswell, New Mexico, we participated in a toy drive where community members donated over 300 gifts for the camp birthday presents. In Cedar Hill, Texas we trained 125 counselors on a variety of games, crafts and activities to do with their campers during free time. A Lion's Club in Santa Ana, California asked for a presentation, so we shared how their group could help these children. Other times finds us doing TV interviews. The most fun is honoring local Royal Family KIDS' volunteers. In our best "Publishers Clearing House" style, we drive the RV to a volunteer's home or workplace, honking the horn to attract attention and draw a big crowd. The volunteers are totally amazed to come outside and see their name on the side of the RV, acknowledging them for all their hard work.

In just a few weeks, camps will be in session and we'll transform the RV into the "Fun-Mobile". We have props and supplies to play parachute games, and perform silly skits. To tie in with each camp's Olympic theme, campers get their picture taken with an actual Olympic torch I carried for the 2002 Olympics in Seattle. Those photos are part of a personalized memory book each camper receives, depicting the fun they experienced at camp.

Children leave camp with new skills and a stronger feeling about their self-worth. As for Allan and I, we're not only traveling, but traveling with the purpose of helping children experience a week of s'mores, tea parties, tailgate parties, all surrounded by positive adult role models. When this tour ends in September, we'll look for paid positions as brand ambassadors. That way we can save up to volunteer for another non-profit in the future. Stay tuned!

Travel Writing – The RV Way

By Book Author - Ellen Behrens

When my husband and I decided to sell our "sticks and bricks" house nearly eight years ago to travel full-time in our RV, I'd planned to write travelogues – and he planned to fish. We didn't have too many destinations in mind past getting to South Dakota to establish our residency. After that? Westward ho! Let the writing and fishing begin!

But you know what they say about the best laid plans....

The day after we turned over the house keys to their new owners and turned the ignition key in our our rig, we suffered a mishap with our fifth wheel (not our first). In the next few months we experienced a tire blowout in the middle of the night, a neighbor with about twenty pug dogs, and we rescued some bikers stuck in Illinois.

Travel writing? That went out the window somewhere along I-90. Instead, I returned to fiction writing – my first creative love, dating all the way back to the first time someone stuck a fat pencil between my eager fingers and pointed my hand to a blank piece of paper. Since we hit the road I've completed two novels and a collection of short stories, all inspired by our full-time RVer lifestyle.

If you've wanted to capture your own experiences on paper, you have plenty of choices. But some ways of approaching them are better than others.

Travel writing: As RVers, we see plenty of places most other travel writers miss. We cruise the backroads, eat at out-of-the way cafes, explore quaint museums and attractions. We're perfectly situated to write about these neat places for magazines and guide books. Good travel writing advice is available in books and online, but here are a few things to consider as an RVer:

- Focus on the unusual aspects of a place. You aren't the first person to discover it, so find something unique. What surprised you? What did you spend the most time doing? What's not-to-be-missed by others who come this way? Why?
- Use your RVing experience to add to your article: How is parking? Can big rigs fit? Can you overnight in the parking lot? If so, do you have to obtain permission? From whom? Where? Often travel articles forget many of their readers drive large RVs and don't include information helpful to them – be the author that remembers these travelers!
- Include pricing information or, at the very least, mention whether it was costly or affordable, and whether the price was worth it.
- Write lean. Don't cover more than the essential history or background of a place, especially if it's widely known or easily found in other resources.
- Always think about the publication you're writing for and write the piece accordingly. What's their focus? What will their readers most want to know?

Blogging: A lot of RVers blog, and everybody has a different reason for it. Your blog might fit one of these categories – or something else entirely.

- Some RVers blog so family and friends can see where they are and what they're up to. This is the purest essence of a blog: a personal dialogue you carry on with others. The focus here is on – did you catch this already? – where you are, what you're up to.
- Other RVers write more instructive blogs. How to keep RV hoses from freezing when it suddenly dips below zero... that sort of thing. You can even blend the how-to aspect with your own experiences ("We're up in Bryce Canyon, where it dipped below freezing last night. It always seems we learn the hard way, but here's what we found out about keeping our water hoses from freezing...."). Many RVers blog along these lines.
- If you like the idea of doing some travel writing but don't want to deal with some editor somewhere (and you don't mind writing for free), you can use your own blog to share your experiences. Where did you go? Where did you stay? What did you see? Unfortunately, too many travel blogs I've seen by RVers spend too much time repeating what anybody could find out online. Readers would rather find out something new or see something specific to the RV experience in your posts.
- A few RVers use their blogs as sort of online journals, sharing their emotional journeys as much as they share their highway travels. This means being willing to reveal yourself to strangers, which might not be comfortable – and it could be dangerous, if you're not careful about how you do it. Some blog hosts allow you to keep your blog – or individual posts – private rather than public. This is worth considering if you need to write very personal things that shouldn't be shared with strangers.

Books and articles: Just type "RV books" into a Google search and you'll see what a popular choice this is for some writers.

- **How-to RV books:** Even though there are dozens of these published doesn't mean there isn't room for another one (has anyone written something on customizing your own RV? Building one from scratch?). If you can't find the book you need about an RV issue – write it!
- **How-to RV articles:** are like hungry beasts – they need to be fed on a regular basis. The good news is that new RVers are also constantly coming on the scene, so every now and then these publications have to cover the basics. What have you had to figure out how to fix on your RV? If you can write a clear description of the problem and provide step-by-step instructions anyone can follow on how to solve that problem, you probably have an article an RV magazine editor wants to read. Saving money, saving space – these are popular topics to devote your pen to as well.
- **RV cookbooks:** Who doesn't appreciate finding out how somebody made a great meal in a kitchen the size of the desks we used in grade school? If you've figured out some easy to make, great-tasting recipes using a few ingredients and no space, you've got a cookbook for RVers in you.
- **RV fiction:** When I approached the editor of a widely -read RV newsletter about my first Rollin RV Mystery (even offering a free copy so he could see what it was all about), he politely declined to review it, saying RVers just aren't interested in buying fiction. (I'm not telling that to my readers!) The fact is, many novels featuring RVers as main characters have been very successful. If you have a novel in you and it features RVing, write it! (And let me know about it – I'd love to read it.)

If your brain is going a million miles an hour, hitting you with all kinds of possibilities – or maybe just one excellent idea – good for you! You're on your way!

Writing about RVing – about anything, actually – helps you sort things out, make a little more

sense of them, see angles and edges and potential you might otherwise miss. There's a reason psychologists suggest journaling for healing, and why Yale researchers have recently found that reading helps people live longer (so think of what writing does for you).

Don't let your amazing travels sit passively in your memory banks: write about them! That's what I do. And my husband? Still trying to find the time to fish!

Staying Healthy on a Long RV Trip

By Haley Kieser

Road trips can be very exciting and wonderful. Just imagine, you and your favorite people hopping into an RV and driving into the sunset. There is just a great sense of freedom that resonates with being able to stop wherever you desire and experience new air. However, there are drawbacks lingering in those long hauls. Most importantly, your health. On any road trip, it is easy to ditch concerns about your health and enjoy the open road. But when adventuring for a long period of time, it is best to keep it top of mind. Here are the best ways to remain healthy on a long RV trip.

Maintain good posture

When on a long road trip, you will notice that the first thing to start hurting is your back. Sometimes, placing a firm cylinder pillow behind your lower back will help you maintain an upright posture. This is also a great exercise outside of the RV. At first it may seem weird and unnatural, but as time goes on, you will grow adjusted to sitting up straight and you will wonder why you have never done it before. This will save you in the long run and prevent that horrid chronic back pain!

Stretch when you can

Make sure to stop frequently and stretch. Some great stretches would consist of stretching your hamstrings and lower back. Try putting your feet shoulder width apart, bending over, and dropping your hands to your feet. Make sure to keep breathing. This is a great stretch that will keep your sciatic nerve from being pinched. Sitting for prolonged periods of time can lead to this happening!

Maybe even consider stopping in the woods or in a gorgeous area to have a team yoga session. That tends to get everyone laughing and relaxed.

Drink water

Studies show that most people become tired halfway through the day because they are not drinking enough water. We all know it's not healthy for yourself and those around you to drive while tired. Quality water consumption will satisfy your thirst, keep you healthy, and keep your energy going. Of course, you might have to make more stops than usual but it's always better to be safe than sorry. Bring some nice refillable water bottles for everyone aboard to fill up at rest stops, and avoid soda or sweet coffee drinks that tend to dehydrate you.

Protect your eyes

It is an easy thing to forget, but make sure you bring your favorite pair of sunglasses. Blocking those harmful rays from the sun is crucial to keeping your vision clear for the road, as well as protecting your eyes in the long run. Light colored eyes take more damage from the sun, so keep that in mind next time you are out on the road.

Speaking of the sun, it would be fitting to add that you should protect your skin from the sun as well. Grab some nice SPF 30 sunscreen and apply it in sensible intervals to keep protected from the sun.

Dress comfortably

Nothing is worse than driving for countless hours in jeans. It is very uncomfortable and can get hot. Not to mention that if your jeans are too tight, you will cut off blood flow. This can cause you to get drowsy over time. Go ahead and put on some comfy shorts or sweats with a free-flowing shirt. You will thank yourself later for doing this.

Have more than one driver

I understand completely that the RV is your pride and joy. It's pretty nerve-racking handing over the wheel to another person. I say take out someone that is skilled at driving and teach them how to drive the RV. Once you teach them how you would like them to drive your RV, you will feel less stressed and anxious when they take the wheel. This is good because you

can have a full body stretch and nap in the back while letting the sounds of the road lull you to sleep. Once you feel well rested, you can take the wheel again and feel excited and rejuvenated rather than bored and tired

Bring healthy snacks

Healthy and nutritious snacks could be the difference between a smooth drive, or a long bumpy one. You don't want your digestive system distracting you from staying focused. This is crucial for safety and to enjoy your trip more. Try apples, bananas, oranges, or healthy granola bars. Try and stay away from the junk food. I know it's tempting, but think of this as an exercise in self-control!

There you have it. Now you will be the ultimate driving machine that everyone trusts behind the wheel. At the end of the day, it is important that you can keep you and your friends and family safe and healthy.

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