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Wi-Fi boosters, solar panels and USB ports: New recreational vehicles target millennials

DENVER — RV dealers are hoping campers fitted with solar panels, USB ports and Wi-Fi signal boosters will entice younger buyers as the industry worries over slowing sales and higher prices from President Donald Trump's so-called trade war with China and Canada.

"People nowadays want all the comforts of home," said Jim Humble, president of Colorado-based Cousins RV dealership. "All your campgrounds have Wi-Fi now, but if you're far away from the front, you want that signal booster."

The RV industry has been aggressively targeting millennials for several years, hoping to tap into a group of buyers who've traditionally shied away from the lifestyle once associated primarily with retirees. New offerings are lighter and easier to use. Hundreds were on display this week at the Colorado RV Adventure & Travel Show, one of the nation's largest.

25 STORAGE TIPS, IDEAS, & HACKS FOR ORGANIZING TINY KITCHENS

ASHLEY MANN

Use wall space for storing and organizing.

1. Just about every empty wall in my RV is used for storage, like this wall of my kitchen, where I have a knife holder (a vintage one from a thrift store that I repainted; I've seen some similar ones for sale on Etsy) and a wire storage basket. I initially tried hanging the basket with three Command hooks, but since the items I keep in it are pretty heavy, it eventually it fell down, so I used screws instead.
2. My friend Brooke mounted this cute narrow spice rack (which she painted blue) on a wall in her travel trailer, along with a galvanized metal file organizer she uses as plate storage. I believe she purchased her spice rack secondhand, but here's a similar style on Amazon.
3. The owners of the RV pictured below doubled their kitchen cupboard space by installing two kitchen cabinets purchased at a home supply store, which they stacked

- on top of each other and secured to the wall. Since they matched the oak color of their existing cabinets, can hardly tell they weren't part of the original design!
4. One of my personal favorite uses of wall space is for spice storage. I made this magnetic spice storage wall in my RV.
 5. I purchased this rack to hang over a cabinet door, but it ended up being too wide, so I used screws to mount it over this panel which conceals our converter instead. If I hadn't already purchased this one, I would have bought a wall mount style instead.
 6. Mug hooks and Command hooks are definitely an RV necessity. I used mug hooks to hang wire baskets from the end of a kitchen cabinet as a place to store fruit and root vegetables.
 7. This gap next to my microwave seemed like it should be used for something, so I stuck a couple of magnets to the side of my microwave and it became the perfect spot to store my pizza pan.
 8. Even the refrigerator in my RV is used for storage. With the help of magnets such as these hooks, I am able to use it to store all kinds of kitchen supplies. (If your fridge isn't magnetic, you could use adhesive hooks in a similar fashion.) I got my magnetic hooks at Lowe's, but I believe they are cheaper on Amazon.
 9. First of all, I just love the wall decor in this kitchen. But also, I love how the owner of this motorhome hung her pots and pans and other kitchen items from the bottom of her cabinets.
 10. I hung wine glasses from the bottom of one of my RV cabinets using a couple of racks. We've only moved our RV once so far since I hung them, and unfortunately, I forgot to run a bungee cord across the end of the rack before we left so they wouldn't slide off, and a few fell off and broke. But the ones that stayed on the rack did just fine with liquor bottle sleeves over them. (I use those sleeves to protect my actual liquor bottles and glassware as well.)
 11. For RV owners who prefer to use paper plates, one of these paper plate dispensers mounted to the bottom of a cabinet could come in really handy.
 12. A lot of people mount a magnetic knife strip on the wall of in their RV kitchens, but I'll bet you could attach one to the bottom of a cabinet also, although you might have to buy shorter screws. I often suggest using acrylic tape for hanging things as an alternative to screws, but this is not something I would try that with. The last thing I would want would be for a bunch of knives to fall down on my hands while I was preparing dinner!
 13. A wrap and bag holder like this one, which is designed to be mounted on a kitchen cabinet door, could just as easily be mounted to the bottom of a cabinet. You could even try using Command hooks or adhesive cable clips to hang it if you wanted, although I would probably choose mug hooks myself so that the height and angle could be adjusted as needed. You could also spray paint the rack to be whatever color you wanted.
 14. Do you use a Keurig to make coffee in your RV? If so, under the cabinet can be a great place to store K cups.
 15. This space saving "stuff" organizer (it's literally called an "Anything Keeper" has a similar design, but can be used to store anything. It comes in either black or white, but of course it too could be spray painted to match your RV decor.
 16. Here's another under cabinet storage idea that I would love to try sometime. It's a wooden drawer that's actually meant to go under a computer, but I can imagine all kinds of uses for it. It's unfinished wood, so it could be stained or painted to match cabinets, and could be mounted to the bottom of them using L brackets, acrylic mounting tape (it weighs less than 6 pounds), or countless other ways I'm sure. If you do this, please send me a picture!
 17. The owners of this RV use the space under their kitchen cabinets as a place to store kitchen gadgets in their camper by hanging them from a utensil rack. These can be purchased in different lengths and you can even get an adhesive one, but be sure to measure the height of your space before buying one. I actually tried to make something similar myself using a tension rod and S hooks, and it was a total failure because 1) the S hooks were too long and made the utensils hung down too low, and 2) the tension rod wouldn't stay put and the whole thing came crashing down. So don't be like me, haha. I would probably buy one of the screw mounted ones if I were to try this again.
 18. Here's a neat idea that one of my blog subscribers sent to me in an email. It's a nail polish rack, which she keeps on her counter, held in place by clear Command hooks. The bottom was originally rounded, her husband used a grinding wheel to make it flat across the bottom, but if you're like me and have no way of cutting metal, you could get a rectangle shaped one instead. I'm sure these could also be secured in place with a bit of my trusty friend, acrylic mounting tape.

19. I know most of us grew up with a silverware drawer as a basic kitchen essential, but after experiencing the convenience of having a silverware caddy next to my sink where I can easily grab a handful of silverware from off of my drying mat and put it away in just a few seconds, I can never go back to individually drying and neatly stacking forks and spoons. I made this caddy by putting some tin cans in a basket I got at a thrift store. There are some really neat silverware caddies on Amazon, such as this galvanized metal one, which would be super handy for carrying outside to eat at a camp table or picnic table—a must-have camping accessory if you eat most of your meals outside. I think my favorite silverware storage idea is to use a wooden sugar mold like this one, which you can find on Etsy. They come in different lengths with varying numbers of holes.
20. Sometimes the best camper organization ideas involve using items in a way that was different than their intended use: RV owner used a caddy purchased in the bathroom department at Walmart to add extra storage in her kitchen.
21. If you're a tea drinker, this wooden drawer caddy would be perfect for countertop storage of the packets (or it could probably be mounted on a wall, also!). It also comes in a deeper size with just two drawers.
22. Here's a cool space saving idea if you're really desperate for storage space in a small camper or travel trailer: use the microwave as storage. RVer Amanda Kehler keeps a basket in her microwave which she simply removes whenever she needs to use the microwave and replaces afterward.
23. In my RV, I put the kitchen ceiling to use by hanging a pot rack above my sink. The screws in my RV's vent cover happened to be perfectly located where I was able to remove them and replace them with hooks, but I've seen other RV owners hang a pot rack from a wooden light fixture.
24. Giving drawers a storage upgrade with multi-tier cutlery trays and drawer dividers is a good way to utilize space near the top without them becoming messy. RV owner Kathy Johnson is a pro at drawer organization, as you can see in the photos below.
25. Many RV kitchens have panels with empty space behind them that can be turned into storage, like this spot I found underneath my pantry cabinets.

6 INCREDIBLE TOY HAULER GARAGE TRANSFORMATIONS

Full time RVers need to maximize living space, and one way many choose to do this is by converting a toy hauler garage into an extra bedroom, living area, or office. Here are eight toy hauler garage makeovers to inspire your life on wheels.

1. Four person bunk room - The Ticknor family added two sets of bunk beds for their four boys as well as a stackable washer and dryer and extra storage.
2. Bunk room plus garage - The Taylor family completely rebuilt the inside of a toy hauler and even added two walls to turn it into a tiny house.
3. Bedroom with temporary flooring - RVer Shanna and her husband wanted to keep the option of returning their daughter's bedroom to its original toy hauler function, so they screwed down a plywood subfloor, covered it with peel-and-stick laminate flooring, and hung a curtain to disguise the ramp wall. Her comments on the project: "We didn't want to damage the flooring that is original to the RV, so we laid a subfloor 1/4-inch plywood, screwed not glued, and then laid a vinyl peel stick laminate flooring on top of that....I think the only thing we would change is to use 1/2-inch plywood instead of 1/4-inch." Carpet is another temporary flooring option for those who want to create a cozy feel without doing any permanent damage.
4. Extra storage added - In addition to carpet, the Bauman family added cabinets to what has become their multipurpose room.
5. Office - Two fold-down tables from Ikea created an instant workspace or eating area in this garage-turned-office.
6. Bonus room - Area rugs, full-length sheer curtains, residential furniture, and plants work together to make this garage feel like a home.

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Does an RV Solar Power System Make Sense for You?

A solar power generating system is made up of solar panels and batteries, plus monitoring and controlling devices. The more solar panels and batteries you have, the more appliances you can power. Once you know how much power you typically use, you can estimate the costs of powering some, or all, of your appliances and devices.

The Math of Energy Consumption

This chart is a quick gauge as to whether solar power makes sense for an RVer, based on lifestyle categories. For a more in-depth look, examine your own power consumption. Determine how much power your individual appliances consume. It is possible to use solar to power a portion, but not all, of your appliances.

Typical Power Consumption per Day, in Watt-Hours/Day

Below are typical daily power consumption figures for some popular RV appliances: a 19" LCD TV, a 13" laptop, four lamps, a water pump, two fans, a 1000-watt microwave and an under-the-counter refrigerator. While this chart provides common usage amounts, you should develop your own list tailored to your personal power consumption levels.

Samples of RV Appliance Energy Use

Device	Typical watts	Hours of daily use	Watts-hours/day
TV	150	4	600
Laptop	60	8	480
Lighting	60	6	360
Water Pump	100	.5	50
Fans	15	2	30
Microwave	1000	.25	250
Refrigerator (RV)	200	24	4,800
Total			6,570

Note that a refrigerator is an energy hog, representing more than 70 percent of power

consumption, with the remaining appliances using 1,770 watts a day.

In doing your calculations, also figure in appliances you use only occasionally, such as a vacuum cleaner or hair dryer. And note that all appliances continue to draw small amounts of power even when not actively being used, so you'll need to add a margin of capacity for sleep mode.

How Much Do Solar Panels for RVs Cost?

A 400-watt system gathering sunlight for five hours a day can theoretically generate 2,000 watts. In reality, few days are 100 percent sunny, and few systems are 100 percent efficient, but a 400-watt system can generate enough energy for daily appliance use for Weekend Warriors and Boondockers.

As a practical matter, a system of 800 watts or more is ideal for an RVer, particularly if you are boondocking. You'll generate twice the wattage, up to 4,000 watts, which is sufficient to run the majority of your appliances. Doubling the wattage will require four additional panels and one or two additional batteries, but your converter and inverter remain the same. The net additional cost might be \$800 to \$1,200.

You can buy solar panels at home improvement stores and online at Amazon, eBay and a number of other websites. Solar power systems are often sold in kits, which include panels plus a system monitor, wiring and connectors. Kits may or may not include mounting gear, controller and inverter — check kit contents carefully, as you will need all these components.

Did we save another RVer's life?

May 3, 2019

By Chuck Woodbury

We write a lot on RVtravel.com about RV electrical safety. Our resident expert Mike Sokol is the nation's authority on the subject. We know that through the years we have saved people's RV electronics (including air conditioners and appliances) because the RVer knew how to recognize a problem. We suspect we have saved a life or two as well.

Here's a letter I found in our archives that I would like to share with you again — a reminder how even a defective electrical cord can be serious business. The letter, from a reader named Larry, went:

"We're RV camping in my friend's driveway in Houston, TX. My wife and I received slight shocks when touching our RV door. Concerned, I remembered seeing the notice about watching the electrical shock video posted on RVtravel.

"I viewed it and immediately went to Sears where I bought a no-contact voltage detector. Returning and checking the outer skin of my RV, I saw that everywhere I put the detector, the warning light flashed on and the audio beeped! How frightening! I checked my friend's 'homemade' extension cord, changed it, retested the RV and now all's well. Wow! I am so glad that video was posted, and my story turned out okay."

I told Mike Sokol, who produced the video, about the letter. He replied. "Larry or his wife could easily have been electrocuted by this miswired extension cord. It would only take a little rain to wet the ground a bit to make that a real possibility."

So, Larry – Thanks for writing us. Your letter made our day. No, actually, your letter made our week!

Top 10 RV Destinations 2019

If you live or travel in an RV, you have far more freedom than other travelers. You can take any road you want, go as fast or slow as you want (within legal limits of course), spend the night just about anywhere you want and more. This freedom allows you to go and see virtually everything but deciding what to see can be a challenge. Here is a list of awesome destinations that you and other RVers can go see. Let us know in the comment section which ones you have been to and if your favorite spot is not listed, let us know what it is.

1. **Yellowstone National Park** - Oh my gosh! Yellowstone, the flagship of the National Park system! See Old Faithful, amazing wildlife, stunning geological formations and much, much more. Lots of great campgrounds in and around the park but you may want to make reservations if during the peak season.
2. **Grand Canyon National Park** - It is what it is... a chasm 277 miles long and up to 18 miles wide. It was formed by the Colorado River which flows through the canyon. Check for campgrounds or boondocking locations in the area of the park you plan to visit.
3. **Redwood National Park** - Most visitors know Redwood National and State Parks as home to the world's tallest trees, icons that inspire visions of mist-laden primeval forests bordering crystal-clear streams. But did you know that the parks also protect vast prairies, oak woodlands, and nearly 40 miles of wild coastline, all of which support a rich mosaic of wildlife diversity and cultural traditions? Definitely a must see!
4. **Crater Lake National Park** - No place else on earth combines a deep, pure lake, so blue in color; sheer surrounding cliffs, almost two thousand feet high; two picturesque islands; and a violent volcanic past. It is a place of immeasurable beauty.
5. **Colonial Williamsburg** - The Historic Area of Colonial Williamsburg stretches over 301 acres, and includes 88 original 18th-century structures. Hundreds of houses, shops and public outbuildings are reconstructed on their original foundations. Some buildings are open to the public, while others are private residences and administrative offices. A flag at a building's entrance indicates that the site is open.
6. **Blue Ridge Parkway** - Outstanding scenery and recreational opportunities make the Blue Ridge Parkway one of the most visited sections of the National Park System. Split-rail fences, old farmsteads, mountain meadows and scenic overlooks with endless vistas make the Blue Ridge Parkway a popular attraction. The Parkway incorporates numerous campgrounds, picnic areas and trails.
7. **Mount Rushmore National Memorial** - Mount Rushmore National Memorial is a sculpture carved into the granite face of Mount Rushmore near Keystone, South Dakota, in the United States. Mount Rushmore features 60-foot sculptures of the heads of former United States presidents (in order from left to right) George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln. The entire memorial covers 1,278.45 acres and is 5,725 feet above sea level.
8. **Arches National Park** - Arches National Park preserves over 2,000 natural sandstone arches, like the world-famous Delicate Arch, as well as many other unusual rock formations. In some areas, the forces of nature have exposed millions of years of geologic history. The extraordinary features of the park create a landscape of contrasting colors, landforms and textures that is unlike any other in the world.
9. **Rapid City, South Dakota** - There are so many things to see and do in and around Rapid City, it would take several paragraphs to mention them. The obvious things are Badlands National Park, Mount Rushmore, Dinosaur Park, Bear Country USA, Custer State Park, Devils Tower, Wind Cave National Park and more! If you want to see a whole lot and only go one place, Rapid City, SD is the destination you should set.
10. **Fall Foliage Tour** - Every autumn, nature puts on a brilliant show of color in many parts of the United States. From bright yellows to vibrant reds, the leaves transform, showing their rich and vibrant hues. From the Northeast United States, to the Southeast and Midwest United States, the foliage season begins in early September in the northern regions and ends in southern locations in late October or early

November. Every year, people flock to these areas to take in the fall foliage, to catch a glimpse of nature's splendor.

As of 2019, Cynthia and I have been to 7 of the places on this list. We need to get to Colonial Williamsburg, Redwood National Park and Crater Lake National Park!

This list is simply our opinion, and yours may vary. If you enjoyed this article, please share it using the buttons that are near the top of the page.

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