

Subject:

October Newsletter from Air Safe Hitches



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Newsletter

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Adjusting to RV Life – The Struggle is Real

Adjusting to RV life can be pretty hard at first. Making the choice to follow our dreams and live life on the road is one of the best decisions we've ever made, but it's definitely got its own unique set of challenges.

It's a major adjustment to leave behind the life you knew; You're saying goodbye to your house, your friends and family members, and probably your old job too. You're journeying into the unknown and that's HUGE. If you've made this transition or plan to, you're so very brave and you have a huge community out there to support you.

Back to the RV struggles: I wanted to share some things with you that have helped us in our journey. It can be difficult for some, especially in those first few months, but it gets so much easier and we're here to help. It just takes a little while to find your bearings.

SET REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS People refer to RV life as a "permanent vacation" and that's just not true. We still have to work, keep up the laundry, buy groceries, and pay bills. We're not immune to stress and our problems don't disappear. RV life has some amazing perks, like exploring beautiful landscapes and changing your backyard whenever you want, but we do regular people stuff too.

You could be on the go all the time and moving every couple days, but we've found that we need balance so we don't burn ourselves out. Find that balance and a pace that works for you.

BE OPEN TO THE JOURNEY Mindset is everything. If you approach things with an open heart, without expectations of what it "should" be you will save yourself a lot of grief. Almost nothing goes as planned when you want it to, so be flexible and learn to adapt.

Be open to changing plans. Not holding ourselves to strict schedules, has given us so much freedom. That doesn't mean there's no planning involved, but we give ourselves some wiggle room. We can add a few days at or leave early if we want to. On actual travel days, we personally like to leave early and move no more than 200 miles. That may sound short, but it keeps us stress free and we still have the whole day ahead of us.

Sometimes you get a flat tire, or the campground is full or you get on the road later than expected... We like to have a lot of daylight to come up with a backup plan. No matter the obstacle, there's always a lesson to be learned from any situation. You just might end up learning a new skill, finding a great new camp spot, or making a new friend.

FIND YOUR TRIBE We spent the first few months on the road navigating this new life by ourselves. We learned a lot in those months, but I can't even describe how much we grew once we found our place in the RVing community.

We found our tribe with the Xscapers, we met like minded individuals, who understood the joys and struggles we faced. They helped us learn the ropes of boondocking, we learned about generators and solar and so much more. We shared stories, campfires and meals together and we still meet up every chance we get.

We had no idea how important this was to us, until we found it. We encourage you to find your tribe. Join a club, attend a rally, invite your neighbors over to your campfire. Just put yourself out there, you won't regret it.

NURTURE YOUR RELATIONSHIP This may not apply to you, but if it does its very important. Your partner is not your enemy. It will feel like it at times (ahem..backing up the trailer) but they are going to be your biggest support system. You're a team and it requires both of you for the ship to run smoothly. It will take a while to figure out your individual jobs, but once you do you will be unstoppable!

We tend to take our frustrations out on the ones closest to us, so its very important to communicate openly with your partner. Improving our communication skills have been key to avoiding conflict in our tiny space.

ENJOY THE RIDE Your confidence will grow day by day and the experiences you have will be priceless. RV Life is filled with beautiful natural wonders and the most kind hearted people. Enjoy the journey and know that you made it happen.

As you grow and learn, don't be afraid to help out others who are just beginning. They may need advice or they may just need a friend, but it will mean the world. We had others show us the way and now its our duty to pass it on.

Becoming An RV Transporter: Is It Worth It Or Not?

The last time you went looking at new RV's at the dealer's lot, did you ever wonder just how all those new rigs get from the factory to the dealer?

Transporters, thousands of men and women, actually drive or tow new motorhomes and trailers across the country from their point of manufacture to the dealers who sell them.

Fleetwood, Country Coach, no matter the brand, they all must be driven or pulled from the factory to the dealership.

I worked for an RV transport company in Tucson for about 6 months. During that time, I transported everything from small travel trailers to \$400,000 luxury motorhomes all over the country for hire.

Here are some interesting things I've learned firsthand about the business of transporting RVs...

If you've been thinking about becoming an RV transporter, there are a few things you might want to consider before you sign up to transport motorhomes or RV trailers for the first time.

Little-Known Facts About Transporting RVs

- With a wide variety of RV transport opportunities, chances are good that you can find just the right position to match up with your particular needs. Qualified careful drivers are a valuable asset to any organization. Most reputable companies will gladly work with you to ensure that your needs are well taken care of.
- When you're transporting RVs, you can sign on to drive full time, or you might just want to earn some extra money to supplement your current income.
- Some companies only require one trip a month to maintain good status on their driver board. How much you want to be on the road, or what level of income you require is pretty much up to you.
- As a fulltime RVer, you might like to work between a couple of different terminals. Work the southern dealerships in the winter when they are the

busiest. Then, when the weather changes, move your portable home up north and haul rigs to northern dealerships all summer, avoiding the extreme heat of the south.

There are a few things to take into consideration before you head for the phone to sign up, though.

What's Expected Of RV Transport Drivers

- You must supply your own truck and all hitch components when delivering trailers.
- Each company will have their own requirements as to what size of truck they will accept. It's to your advantage that your rig be set up to pull *any* possible trailer combination, as the more types you can pull, the more loads you will get.
- Some transport drivers even purchase gooseneck flatbeds so they can haul multiple smaller travel trailers all at once. Your freight is figured on each individual rig, so by hauling 2 or 3 at a time, your profit margin will increase by leaps and bounds.
- When delivering motorhomes, you're responsible for finding your own way home. Most motorhome transporters have a small economy car with a tow bar that they use for the return trip. Again, you are responsible for all hook-up gear, as the motor home will probably only have a 2" receiver.
- Usually a CDL (Commercial Drivers License) will be required for transporting motorhomes or RV trailers. You will be running under transporter tags and will be considered the same as over-the-road trucks when it comes to paperwork and permits.

How Much Money Do RV Transporters Make? You can expect to make reasonable money. By that I mean what you are paid for total freight will cover all the expenses of the trip. So, as long as your return trip home is planned economically, and you don't go crazy at restaurants, you will usually finish the trip with a reasonable profit.

Have I finished a same day, out and back with a profit after expenses of \$100? Absolutely. Though I've also been on the road for 3 days, to finish up with only \$50 left as profit for my efforts. Published high figures of profit might be gross income, but after expenses that you can't get away from, the profit is dramatically reduced. I've never lost money on a delivery, but without watching your expenses it's easily possible.

So, Is Transporting RVs Worth It Or Not? All in all, I'd say that transporting RVs is a good way to travel with someone else picking up the tab. But it isn't a way to get rich quick, or support a family. There just isn't enough money in it, in my opinion.

Is it a good way for a person (or couple) looking to supplement an existing income while traveling the country at someone else's expense? Absolutely. There's nothing better than experiencing the open highway in a brand new motorhome, even if you don't own it.

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Prepping your RV for Autumn

By Megan Buemi

You've broken out the leaf blower and your coziest flannel sheets, and you're starting to build up a nice, hefty pile of firewood. Heck, if you're *really* well organized, you might already have made your holiday shopping list, not to mention a budget.

Autumn's about to arrive, and winter won't be too long after. It's time to hunker down and get ready!

But even if your home is 100% prepared for the coming drop in temperatures (and leaves), it can be easy to forget about your camper. Your RV needs some seasonal love, too!

So whether it's a motorhome, travel trailer, or tiny camper van living in your driveway, don't leave it out in the cold — at least, not metaphorically.

Here's a quick guide to how to prep your RV for the quickly-approaching fall season.

RV Autumn Maintenance Tips Although autumn is a fantastic time to take camping trips, many families take a break from vacationing for September and October. The fun-filled summer's at an end and school is back in session, so it can be a good time to get back into a routine and recoup some travel funds.

But it's important to give your rig the proper attention it needs before you say goodbye to it for a whole season. After all, keeping up with your RV's maintenance requirements helps ensure it'll live a long, adventure-filled life, which will save you both money and the headache of dealing with service mechanics.

If you won't be using your rig for a while — or even if you will — you should take the opportunity at the end of the summer to double-check all your rig's systems. Change the oil, check all the filters, and do a thorough search for any signs of water damage (which, ideally, you should be doing after every single camping trip anyway!). If you put your rig away with issues you don't know about, you could face a nasty surprise next time you take it out for a camping trip — one that could postpone or even cancel your travels.

It's also a good idea to check your RV's tires for pressure and tread, as well as to give your RV's fresh and wastewater holding tanks a thorough cleaning.

In fact, it's a good idea to give your entire rig a scouring before you store it for any length of time, both inside and out. Although it might collect some dust in the meantime, cleaning your rig will help prevent the musty, mildewy scent that can build up when your RV isn't in use. (Plus, a dusty rig is a lot better to uncover than one with moldy leftovers in the fridge and muddy footprints in the carpet!)

To keep your rig in ship shape during autumn and year-round, check out our preventative maintenance guide. You know how the saying goes — an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. That's certainly the case when it comes to RVing, especially considering the cost of professional service for even minor repairs and issues!

How to Prepare RV for Storage Aside from checking all your rig's systems and cleaning the cabin, exterior, fridge, bathroom, and tanks, there are a few other steps to prepare your RV for storage — especially during the fall season.

First of all, remember that it's called "fall" for a reason. A whole lot of leaves and debris are about to come tumbling from the sky, and ideally, you don't want them landing on the roof of your rig!

Bird droppings, tree sap, twigs, branches, and even leaves can create a sticky and stubborn mess that's difficult to clean up after it's been sitting for a while. And when you do try to dislodge the goop from your RV's roof, you can bring the finish off with it — which can actually contribute to roof damage and water leakage. No good!

So when you store your RV for a longer period of time, whether it's the whole fall season or just a few weeks, it's a really good idea to invest in a sturdy RV cover — or even to find a garage or other building in which to store it.

By keeping your rig shielded from the elements, you'll help its roof and seals last longer, and also extend the life of that nice, shiny paint job and finish. Many quality RV covers even boast UV protection, which adds an extra layer of prevention to the equation.

Finally, keep in mind that if you're planning to store your RV well into autumn or winter, you may face freezing temperatures... which means you do *NOT* want water in your holding tanks and pipes. Just like in a house, that water can freeze and expand, wrecking your RV's delicate plumbing and causing a huge mess (and expense!) for you to deal with later.

Fall RV Prep Checklist Looking for a comprehensive fall RV prep guide?

Here are the steps you shouldn't miss.

- 1. Thoroughly clean your RV's interior.** Don't forget the bathroom, cabinets, kitchen sink, or refrigerator — the last thing you want is to find leftovers in there come spring! It's a good idea to strip all the linens and defrost the refrigerator entirely so you get a totally fresh start for your next camping trip.
- 2. Give your RV's exterior a wash.** You'll remove any debris and dirt, ensuring it's nice and clean for its time in storage.
- 3. Double-check your RV's water holding tanks.** You want them empty and clean before you store your rig for any long period of time!
- 4. Go through all your regular preventative maintenance steps, including oil and filter changes, tire checks, battery maintenance, etc.** This is a great time to make sure every part of your rig is up to snuff.
- 5. Store your RV under a canvas cover — or better yet, in a garage.** That way, you'll ensure all the hard work you just did to make sure your rig is good as new stays that way, no matter how long it is until your next camping trip.

There you have it: Your rig is totally ready for autumn! (Unless, of course, you're going on a fall camping trip — in which case, all you need to do to prepare is grab a few of your favorite warm blankets and a big jug of apple cider.)

Easy RV Hacks: 41 Tips to Improve Your RVing

By Carrie Todd

What a mess. Another plate broke. Whether you are relocating or settling in for a summer at your favorite RV park, there are things you can do to make your life easier, cleaner, and overall happier. Many of these tricks were learned the hard way, through trial and error. What if, instead of learning from your mistakes, you can pick up these simple RV hacks? Check out the following 41 tips. Print them or commit them to memory, then share them with other RVers to make their life easier, as well.

Transportation RV Hacks

1. If you've ever broken your wine glasses or juice glasses while traveling, this one is for you. Slide koozies over them, and place them back in the cabinet. If they knock together, they won't break.
2. Protect your wine bottles, as well. Slide plastic mesh sleeves over the wine bottles.
3. To save space, use a collapsible laundry basket as a wastebasket when camping. They can be collapsed between uses and stored out of the way.
4. Most people realize the benefit of keeping duct tape in their rig, but what about clothespins? They can be used for laundry, chip clips, and securing the trash bags.
5. For that matter, keep some clothesline handy as well. You can use it to assist with laundry, hang wet towels and swim suits, and tie cabinets.
6. Another option to keep cabinets closed, while traveling, is to secure them with bungee straps. The 3-inch loops with a ball end are useful for cabinet doors, and ones with hooks on the ends are great for drawer handles.
7. Dry erase boards have many uses. Magnetic ones can be hung on the refrigerator. Along with emergency information, you can post a checklist of things to do before heading out, a grocery list, or the Wi-Fi password.
8. Name tag holder clips can be used to hang lights from the awning.
9. Hold bath products in place with a towel rod.
10. Use pantyhose to tie a bar of soap to the water spigot. This makes hand washing easy.
11. Create easy bed storage with a cut-up shoe organizer.
12. They can also be used for shower storage.
13. Keep electrical adapters organized by mounting them.
14. Save space by using square containers instead of round ones.
15. Place tissue boxes in plastic, to keep them from getting wet or smashed.
16. Hold blackout curtains where you want them, with Velcro.
17. Create a wastebasket out of a dry food container.
18. Keep things clean by using Press n' Seal to turn a regular cup into a travel cup.
19. Use shower caddies with suction cups, to hold and organize activities for the kids, while on road trips.
20. Make a front-seat hammock from PVC pipe for the kids.
21. Fix warped veneer with a syringe.
22. Replace current floors with vinyl plank flooring. Pre-glued, and waterproof, they are easy to install.
23. If you don't like to sew, use this method to re-upholster your RV cushions.
24. If you can wrap a present, you can reupholster your furniture.
25. These IKEA LED lights will run on a camper's 12-Volt system.
26. Install floor mats to the bottom of your bunks. They provide insulation and comfort.
27. Makeover your RV by sprucing the plastic parts, faded by the sun, with a bit of spray paint.
28. Use a ½-cup of Calgon Water Softener and a cup of Borax detergent to make your own cleaner for the waste tank.
29. Propane attracts wasps. Place cut up flea collars in compartments to avoid wasp infestations.
30. Eliminate mice with a bar of Irish Spring soap. They hate the smell. Bounce fabric sheets are reputed to do this as well.
31. Keep flies away by wiping down awnings, tables, and counters with a 50/50 solution of Pine-Sol and water.
32. Use non-slip liners to line drawers and shelves. This keeps items in place when traveling.
33. Don't dirty up a bowl. Scramble the eggs in a salad shaker or empty water bottle.
34. Hang curtains using command hooks.
35. Use bubble wrap to cover the RV windows and insulate your space during cold weather.
36. A vent cushion is a great way to reduce heat loss.
37. Make awning track hangers from para-cord.
38. Although many campgrounds provide wireless Internet, the signal is not always strong. Improve the Wi-Fi reception in your RV with a booster.
39. Stock up on free condiments from fast-food restaurants. They're free, and they take up less space than regular ones.
40. Protect your head from hitting the metal awning strut, by slitting foam swimming noodles and slipping them over the struts.
41. You can hang your clothes while they're damp, if you place a suspension rod in the shower.

In Conclusion

Ensure your glassware doesn't break. Get the most out of your storage. Keep your home-on-wheels free from pests. Simple tricks like these take all of the guesswork out of enjoying your motorhome. Try them yourself, and do your friends and family members a favor, by sharing with them. Many of these clever RV hacks are so useful, your friends will thank you, even if they don't travel.

EDITORIAL The Rise And Possible Fall Of All-Aluminum Horse Trailers

Why do many of the large, well known horse trailer manufacturers such as Sooner, Sundowner, Featherlite, Four Star, and Exxiss, build horse trailers with all-aluminum frames, walls, roofs and interior dividers, whereas others such as Trail-et, Hawk, Bee, use mostly steel, and/or a combination of both?

I believe the answer lies, not so much in benefits of one over the other, but in the history and development of the horse trailer industry itself.

Back in the late seventies and early eighties, horse trailer manufacturers such as Sooner Trailers, Featherlite horse trailers, and Four Star horse trailers, began searching for alternate materials to replace steel since steel horse trailers were quickly deteriorating from rust. Since rusted horse trailers were generally everywhere horse trailer owners went, it didn't take much to convince consumers to switch to something better.

After many materials were considered - Sooner and Merhow trailers had built some of their horse trailer models with a product called FRP (fiberglass-reinforced plywood). Others such as Bison Horse Trailers experimented with all fiberglass - aluminum was the ultimate chosen material, and all-aluminum trailers quickly grew.

What horse owners didn't know were the negatives and dangers of using aluminum in the frame, sidewalls, floor and roof - that it was a more brittle material, would shear and tear when stressed beyond its capacity, and that it conducted heat. These negatives were not readily apparent, and the ability to research construction materials of horse trailers was not as easy as it is now. What most consumers basically did know about aluminum was that it didn't rust - and that seemed to be enough.

One of the negatives that was apparent to the manufacturers, and worried them, was the high cost of aluminum. However, the high costs eventually worked in their favor - the market was ready to spend more for a supposedly better product, and the high cost gave consumers the impression that it was a superior trailer. It costs a lot more therefore, it must be better.

Once the "all-aluminum" horse trailers hit the market full force, the market quickly perceived that the all-aluminum trailer was a high quality, premium product. Therefore, horse trailers such as the models built by Sooner trailer manufacturing, Featherlite trailers, and Four Star trailers were perceived as being top of the line, not realizing that the extra expense was directly attributed to the higher cost of aluminum, not necessarily, because it was a better product. Because of this consumer perception, combined with the rapid market acceptance of the all-aluminum trailer, and the alternative being rusting steel, many existing manufacturers switched over to aluminum, such as Sundowner, Merhow, Cherokee, and Bison. Through the years, many new start ups opted to build all-aluminum horse trailers such as Exiss, Eby, Adam, and Gore for the same reasons.

Of course, it is true that all-aluminum trailers are not equal - some are better than others are. Companies such as Sooner, Featherlite, Exiss, and Four Star will vary in quality and design according to the company's construction and design philosophy. The real issues to look at are the problems inherent in the aluminum material itself.

Pound for pound, aluminum used in most horse trailers is only 1/3 the strength of steel, so when it is used in the frame, this has to be taken into account. Manufacturers often have to boost the amount of aluminum used in the horse trailer floor and frame to get the equal strength of a steel frame. This is why some of your better "all-aluminum horse trailers, such as

4 Star, will be the same weight, or sometimes heavier as a similar model steel built trailer. Where aluminum often fails the consumer and their horses is in the interior dividers. Since aluminum is weaker by about a 1/3 from that of an "equal in size" steel divider, it will fail quicker under stress. When aluminum fails, it shears and tears.

This creates a danger of minor to major lacerations to horses, often occurring from relatively minor mishaps, such as severe braking, or swerving to avoid hitting something. Aluminum is also a good conductor of heat - it makes good cookware. Keeping horses in a comfortable, controlled environment in a trailer with aluminum floor, sidewalls, and roof is a real problem, especially on hot days. Repair issues are also difficult since aluminum is not only difficult to weld, welds can never be re-welded to their original strength.

Some of the major "all-aluminum" manufacturers that I have mentioned - Featherlite, Sooner, Sundowner, Exiss, Eby have now been around long enough that they have vastly improved their manufacturing process, and thus, their trailers. However, the aluminum trailers have also been around long enough, that consumers are now seeing aluminum floor deterioration from the alkaline in urine and manure - a direct result from not cleaning. They have also directly experienced the heat problems, and are seeing the broken welds, and torn aluminum on fenders, running boards, ramps, and dividers.

SO WHAT'S THE ALTERNATIVE?

Because of the demands placed on steel from the auto industry, it's little surprise that almost all the rust problems with steel have been eliminated. Since rust is what originally started the crossover to aluminum, Galvaneel steel, galvanized steel, powder coated steel, and other new technologies, are now available as a viable, and better alternative. Besides adding strength and protection for the horses, steel is still less expensive than aluminum, and is easy to use, and repair.

Since consumers have more access to information today from many sources, but particularly the internet, they are realizing that if the car industry is surrounding drivers and passengers in a highly protective steel cage, and steel body, why should their horses not get the same protection. Consumers are also seeing very little, if any, rusting in automobiles over the last ten years. Processes such as undercoating and Z-Bart rust protection on cars, have all but disappeared.

SO WHY ARE ALL-ALUMINUM TRAILERS STILL BEING BUILT?

It would be highly difficult and much too costly from both a manufacturing and marketing standpoint for the larger horse trailer manufacturers to just quit, or change over. In addition, the horse trailer manufacturers have done such a good job over the last twenty years of convincing consumers that all-aluminum is first class, that it will take some time for horse trailer owners to form a new mind-set about what they have believed. But the market is dwindling, and horse trailer manufacturers will surely have to change their thinking if they want to survive.

SO WHERE IS THE MARKET HEADED?

For one thing, quality built, all steel trailers are having a resurgence. Those steel manufacturers that have hung in there over the years are seeing new growth in sales.

It's my belief that the future of horse trailer manufacturing will be in what I call, the composite-built trailer - using a variety of today's technologically advanced materials. Galvanized steel (dipped protected against rust), galvaneel steel (electrochemically treated against rust), powder coated steel (baked against rust), fiberglass, and a variety of new products that are appearing on the market every year.

We, at EquiSpirit, follow the safety ideas of the auto industry by building a steel (non-rust) cage around the horses. This includes galvaneel side walls, steel roll bars molded into the fiberglass roof, galvanized steel frame, solid steel doors in the rear with a ramp over the doors, aluminum used in a non-structure skin siding, powder coated steel in all dividers, and insulation throughout the dual walls.

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