

# August 2022

Newsletter

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## It used to be just retired folks

Full-time RV residents are getting younger BY ELLA MCCARTHY

Thomas Hoff was tired of living in a regular old house. He was fascinated with “tiny-living,” and often dreamed of moving into a recreational vehicle. When his roommates moved out of his Gardner Lake house in Johnson County in 2018, he saw his opportunity. He has been living in RVs ever since. “I took it on a few trips but I’ve just been basically living the tiny house life,” Hoff said. “I love it.” Hoff is part of a growing group of millennials who are ditching their traditional homes and exploring RV living. “It used to just be retired folks,” said Mark Atkinson, general manager and co-owner of Walnut Grove RV Park, in Merriam, where Hoff has been living. “Now, it’s becoming the working class.” THE DROP IN AGE Of the 11.2 million RV-owning households, the median age of owners is 54 years old, according to Monika Geraci, a spokeswoman for the RV Industry Association. “When we then surveyed people who had bought RVs for the first time in 2020, that median age dropped to 41,” Geraci said. “In 2021, that median age dropped to 33.” Though only 1.5 % of owners live in their RVs full-time, many park managers such as Atkinson have seen this trend to younger residents.

“The age of the people that are going full-time are just getting younger,” Atkinson said. “A lot of the people that can work out of the home are deciding to live in an RV, and that way they can travel and go anywhere.” Hoff, 40, has a lawn business, which he now runs from his RV at Walnut Grove. The reason he switched from a permanent residence was in part because of a bad experience. “I had bedbugs,” he said. “Once you have them, you can’t get good sleep because you’re afraid they’re going to attack you in the middle of the night. ... I had to throw away all my furniture and all my clothes and start over from scratch.” “Now, if I end up with bedbugs, I can just turn off the AC and it’ll go up to 120 degrees in that thing and it’ll get rid of all the bedbugs,” he said. Another reason he made the switch, one more common among full-time RV residents, is the freedom. “I wanted to be able to have a way to bug out if I have to,” Hoff said. “I can go anywhere I want and set up and have the same lifestyle.” Hoff began his journey living in a small camper. “I lived in that for a year and it just wasn’t enough room,” Hoff said. “You need a certain amount of space (for it) to actually feel like a house.” So, he bought an RV.

“I have a full size closet, full size bed, full size bathroom,” Hoff said. He moved into the Walnut Grove RV Park shortly after purchasing the larger unit. Carla Brewer, who owns Wagon Wheel Mobile Park with her husband in the East Bottoms, has seen the change as well. Residents are getting “much younger,” Brewer said. “A lot of our people are people that work here during the week and go home on the weekends.” The full-time residents there work a variety of jobs, Brewer said. “We’ve got property managers, we’ve got a couple of engineers, ... just all kinds of levels of employment,” Brewer said. Younger families are drawn to area parks like Walnut Grove. “A lot of the people that stay here on a longer term, bring the whole family,”

Atkinson said. “They can all be together and still do these jobs. ... One person may be the one that moves, like a travel nurse, whose spouse does some kind of computer work where they can stay in that unit and work.” One family who recently moved out of Walnut Grove RV Park, had their kids attend the local school district. “Generally, I’ll have maybe one couple that does have kids in the school area,” Atkinson said. “Most of the people that are just stopping by to visit and then leave, they’re home schooled because they don’t stay in one place very long.” When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, Atkinson did not see a significant change among long-term residents. RV owners have been trending younger for some time, Geraci said. “What the pandemic did was supercharge the interest in RVing,” she said. “The freedom to travel and controlling your environment was very important during the pandemic, but has always been a thing with RVing.”

**THE COST OF LIVING** Though full-time RV living has captivated a new generation, the costs can be steep — sometimes more than living in a permanent house. To stay at Walnut Grove RV Park full time, rent is almost \$1,000 a month, Atkinson said. “You’d be making two house payments because of buying the trailer as well,” he said. The cost of an RV can be anything from around \$6,000 to over \$1 million, Geraci said. The most common units purchased range from about \$30,000 to \$60,000. “I’ve seen people go from this to an apartment to get cheaper rates, because then they can sell their unit,” Atkinson said. At Wagon Wheel Mobile Park, renting a lot for an RV is significantly less expensive at \$350 per month. Brewer finds that many of her residents “are looking for affordable housing and they can do a trailer payment or a lot payment for less than what they can do rent for.” The growing interest in the lifestyle has made purchasing an RV a promising investment for some. Hoff said he bought his used RV at around \$80,000. Now, it may be worth even more than its original price. With people “wanting to move and get into the RV lifestyle, they’re on back order for several years,” Hoff said. “One that’s like mine, a 2018, it’s in high demand. ... I found out I could sell it for about \$20,000 more than what I actually paid for it.” Due to the increase in demand, Hoff might sell his “RV for a profit and take that profit and use that as a down payment to buy a reasonably priced property,” he said.

## **Airstream eliminates gas and loads lithium into Mercedes Sprinter RVs**

**By C.C. Weiss**

**June 13, 2022**

As it prepares to more fully electrify its RV fleet with some exciting innovations, Airstream is stepping closer by beefing up the available power on its Mercedes-Benz Sprinter camper vans and small motorhomes. The new E1 package eliminates the need for a propane tank or gas generator, adding a higher capacity lithium-battery-based electrical system and diesel heat/hot water system that runs off the Sprinter's fuel tank. E1-equipped Airstreams will better support modern travelers, from digital nomads to family vacationers.

Airstream's lineup of Mercedes-Benz motorhomes is heavy on camper vans but also includes the Atlas Class C motorhome. The E1 package is available across the entire range and multiplies available battery capacity by up to 10 times with a 12.1-kWh Volta Power Systems lithium battery bank. To go along with the powerful battery, Airstream has added a 3,200-W pure sine inverter, two 30-A converters, a secondary 51-V alternator and extra solar hookups.

*The Volta Power Systems electrical package brings some serious off-grid power*

### **Airstream**

Airstream has stopped short of the type of pure-electric camper equipment setup we recently saw from ModVans, but it's streamlined heating by adding a diesel Timberline 2.0 hydronic heat and hot water

unit. This addition, along with an induction cooktop, eliminates the need for an LPG tank, fueling directly from the Sprinter's diesel tank.

"The E1 Package is a major innovation for our motorized products, with a simplified experience that delivers more power than ever before," said Airstream president and CEO Bob Wheeler in today's announcement. "Whether you're working from the road, heading south for the winter, or looking to spend more time off-grid, the E1 Package's powerful battery and single-fuel-source comfort system makes it easier than ever to get the most out of your touring coach."

*Whether driving deep into the desert or making camp in a large field like above, the E1 Package helps Airstream motorhomes stay off-grid longer*

## **Airstream**

The E1 package is available as an optional add-on that tacks US\$24,700 onto Airstream touring coach base prices that range from \$200,681 for the Interstate 19 to \$289,911 for the Atlas motorhome. The package promises to be a particularly valuable addition for the off-road/off-grid-focused Interstate 24X adventure camper Airstream introduced last year.

## **HOW LONG CAN YOU BOONDOCK IN AN RV?**

Unless you're planning on really roughing it, you probably want to boondock while still enjoying certain comforts like running water and electricity. Obviously, your resources are limited by the size and power of your setup and your personal camping habits. Your main limitations are your fresh water tank, gray water tank, black water tank, and batteries.

Depending on your rig and personal habits, it's likely you'll find one of these normally runs out before the others. For some campers, the gray water tank is the first thing to fill up and require dumping. Others run out of fresh water. Still others have trouble making their batteries last. How long can you, personally, boondock in your RV? What's the average number of nights campers spend boondocking at a time? How can you make your camping trip last longer? Below, we'll give some example scenarios of a day in the life of a serious boondocker and what it looks like to conserve your resources. Let's get started!

### **Conserving Water While Boondocking**

Let's pretend that instead of a house with a faucet that supplies you with water anytime you like, you have to carry a bucket down to the nearest lake and haul it back home. You'd want to make this water last as long as possible, right? Well, your RV fresh water tank is your bucket, and you *will* have to abandon camp to get more water if you run out. So use it wisely. It's impossible to say exactly how long your tanks will hold out, but depending on your tank size, the number of people camping with you, and your personal conservation habits, you can usually expect your tanks to last anywhere from a few days to about two weeks. To give you an estimate, **many boondockers use about 3-1/2 gallons of water per person, per day**. A particularly conservative camper can use as little as 1-2 gallons, while a camper who does not conserve may use 6-7 or more on average.

**Wasted Water = Wasted Waste Tank Space** Keep in mind that making your water tanks last is not only about limiting what comes *out* of the fresh water tank, but also limiting what goes *into* the black and gray tanks. In most cases, you'll fill your gray tank (for shower water, cooking, dishes, etc.) much faster than your black tank (where the toilet water goes). For fresh water, you can bring water bottles or other portable water

containers to supplement your fresh water tank. When it comes to your waste tanks, you can use a portable wastewater tank, but it's still good practice to limit the amount of water that ends up in your tank to begin with. By limiting the amount of water you use and recycling water when you can, you can postpone dumping your tanks for as long as possible and extend your camping trip without having to go find a dump site.

## **Tips for Conserving Water While Boondocking**

### **1. Keep Showers Short & Sweet**

- Take navy showers. Step into the water, then turn the water off to soap up. Turn it on again to rinse off.
- Use a low-flow shower head. For boondocking, you'll want a showerhead that puts out 2 gallons per minute (GPM) or less. (Some put out 1.5 or 1.75 gpm, which is even better for conservation purposes.)
- Explore alternatives to daily showers, such as dry shampoo and wipes.
- Don't shave in the shower. Fill a bucket or the tub with a few inches of water, and use this water to rinse your razor when needed.
- If you're super serious about water conservation, you can cut your hair to make it quicker to wash. (This one takes some dedication—I can't say I'd go through with this one myself.)

### **2. Keep Water Usage Low When You "Go"**

- Depending on how comfortable you are with this (and how much luxury you're willing to forgo for the sake of convenience), you can get conservative with your toilet flushing. Avoid flushing after each use of the toilet and live by the common boondocker's phrase, "If it's yellow, let it mellow. If it's brown, flush it down."
- Use a toilet with a hand-sprayer to further reduce the amount of water used for flushing.
- Use public restroom facilities when possible.
- You may even consider a composting toilet to replace your current setup if you plan on boondocking often. Composting toilets don't require any plumbing or water.

### **3. Recycle Running Water**

- Use a dish pan to catch water from your kitchen sink when you do dishes, wash up, etc. Use a bucket to catch shower water (particularly the cold water that comes out before it heats up). Use this water to flush the toilet.
- Offload your gray water into your black tank to maximize the holding potential of both tanks. You don't want your black tank to dry up, so this has the added bonus of keeping things "liquified" inside the tank.

### **4. Change Your Kitchen Clean-Up Routine**

- Wipe remaining food off your dishes with a napkin or paper towel prior to rinsing them in the sink.
- Limit dishwashing to once per day (bonus: this gives you a great excuse to put off doing the dishes).
- Depending on how eco-friendly you want to be, you can use paper plates and throw them away afterward, rather than using plastic or glass plates you have to wash.

- Try cooking foods that don't require much water to make (for instance, avoid boiling pasta, as this uses a lot of water).

Obviously, you don't have to stick to every one of these religiously, but taking as many steps as possible to conserve water when you can, will add up to significantly longer boondocking trips.

To give you an idea how much water conservation can affect the length of your stay, and to help you gauge how much water you'll use per day, we've broken down two boondocking scenarios. The first scenario is an estimated length of your camping stay if you are heavily conservative with your water; the second scenario is the estimated length of your stay if you're less conservative.

### Scenario 1: Careful Water Conserver

You have a 60-gallon fresh water tank, a 40-gallon gray tank, and a 40-gallon black tank. You are camping with one other person. **SHOWER** Your low-flow shower head puts out 1.5 gallons of water per minute, and you both take 2-minute navy showers every other day for a total of 6 gallons on shower days. If you use the shower on 7 out of 14 nights, this is 42 gallons of water used from the fresh tank. Let's assume you offload a gallon per shower into the black tank, so you end up adding 7 gallons to the black tank and 35 gallons to the gray tank. **KITCHEN** You avoid pastas and other foods that require a significant amount of water to cook, and you drink from water gallons purchased at the store. You use paper plates instead of washing dishes in the sink, so you only use about 1 gallon per day for kitchen use, including hand-washing and other quick sink uses throughout the day. You save the 1 gallon of sink water per day to use in the toilet. If you use 1 gallon per day for kitchen use for 14 days, this is 14 gallons from your fresh water tank. You offload these 14 gallons into your black tank. **TOILET** You use public facilities or the great outdoors the majority of the time, so you don't need any additional water besides what you save from the sink and shower.

At the end of your 14 day camping trip, you've used about 56 of your 60 gallons of fresh water. You've added about 35 gallons to your gray tank and 21 gallons to your black tank (plus a minimum 1 gallon of water that should already be in the black tank as your liquid "base").

All in all, you can boondock for about two weeks before you need to refill your fresh water tank and dump your holding tanks. You may even be able to squeeze another day or so out of your tanks.

### Scenario 2: Amenity Appreciator

We'll use the same setup: you have a 60-gallon fresh water tank, a 40-gallon gray tank, and a 40-gallon black tank. You are camping with one other person. **SHOWER** This time, you're not as careful with your water consumption. Your shower head still puts out 1.5 gallons per minute. You and your partner take 2-minute navy showers, but you take them every night. This comes to 6 gallons per night. Five nights' worth of showers comes to 30 gallons of water used, which flows into your gray tank. **KITCHEN** You boil pasta and wash vegetables in the sink (about 2 gallons per day). You each drink half a gallon of water per day from the sink. After 5 days, you've used 15 gallons for drinking, cooking, and washing up. **TOILET** You save your recycled kitchen water to flush the toilet, so it goes into your black tank rather than your gray tank. You also use an additional 2 gallons per day from your fresh water tank to flush your toilet, so this is an additional 10 gallons used. Four gallons per day end up in your black tank. After five days, this is 20 gallons.

In this scenario, within 5 days you've used a total of 55 of your 60 gallons of fresh water. You've added about 30 gallons to your gray tank and 20 gallons to your black tank.

At this point, you have about 5 gallons of fresh water left but not enough to make it through a 6th day with the same habits.

## Using Electricity While Boondocking

As with your water tanks, your capabilities when it comes to electricity depends heavily on your power usage. When you're camping in the boonies, your power options are pretty limited. Without access to hookups, your options are a generator, solar power, or some combination of the two.

**GENERATOR** The easiest way to ensure you have power anywhere you go is by using a generator. Power needs can vary widely, so we suggest estimating your power needs with the simple calculation shown in our generator help article. Depending on the model and fuel type (diesel and propane are more efficient than gas), a generator can run anywhere from a couple of hours to a couple of days. If you prefer the "glamping" style of boondocking, you're probably going to want a generator to use devices like your hair dryer, espresso machine, and air conditioner. However, you may not like the noise, fumes, or limitations that come with a generator. Many campsites only allow generator use at specific times of day. Generators are also not designed for continuous use, so even if generator use is freely allowed, you can't run one 24/7. Plus, the constant noise kind of ruins the postcard-perfect nature experience of boondocking. This brings us to our next option below.

**SOLAR POWER** Solar power charges your rig's battery bank (and does it silently) by converting power directly from the sun. Provided you have a large enough solar setup (read more about what that looks like here ), solar power can last indefinitely if the weather is right. Solar panels don't require fuel, but they do require mild, sunny days to provide sufficient energy to power your camper. In fact, we recommend bringing along a backup generator even if you do have solar panels. It's a lifesaver on rainy days and those times you want to run the air conditioner or other high-power appliances. You may also want to consider a battery charger that can pull power from both solar panels and a vehicle alternator (such as Redarc's Manager30 ). Keep in mind, there is a LOT to know about solar power before you dive into it. Solar power can be a wonderful green source of energy that allows you to boondock to your heart's content. However, it can also be an ineffective setup that ends up wasting your money. If you're considering solar power, we highly recommend you check out our help articles on the subject to help determine if you're a good candidate for solar power, how much solar power you'd need, and what type of panels would be best for you.

## Tips for Conserving Electricity While Boondocking

### 1. Become One With Nature

- Take advantage of the brightest source of light—the sun. The closer you align your sleeping schedule to the sun's schedule, the more natural light you can take advantage of. For instance, if you usually read for an hour before bed, you might consider making this part of your morning routine instead.
- Park in the shade if possible on hot days.
- Avoid using high-power devices like hair dryers, coffee machines, etc. If possible, try preparing food and drinks the old-fashioned way—over a fire.

### 2. Embrace Low-Power Alternatives

- Replace inefficient bulbs with LEDs to save energy (how much energy? We answer that here).
- Avoid using your furnace or air conditioner if you can help it. Try a portable fan with low power consumption or a propane-powered heater.

- Try using battery-powered or power-efficient devices whenever possible. For instance, a tablet draws less power than a laptop and can easily be charged in your vehicle with a USB outlet. A flashlight only takes a couple of batteries, in contrast to a light bulb.

### 3. Power Up & Power Down

- Supplement your current battery bank with additional batteries. The more battery capacity you have, the longer you can rely on your battery bank to power your rig.
- If using an inverter to charge your laptop, phone, etc, turn off the inverter when you're finished.

## Meet the all-electric RV startup steered by Tesla alumni

Kirsten Korosec

Wed, July 13, 2022

What started as a pet project to electrify food trucks in the San Francisco Bay area — an enterprise inspired by the cacophony of generators that greeted Ben Parker every day during his lunch break at Tesla — has evolved into a much larger, complex and potentially more lucrative undertaking.

Parker and partner Toby Kraus have set their sights well beyond food trucks and are aiming instead to build an all-electric RV company that will upend the industry.

"Every time that I would tell people about the food truck project, RVs would come up in conversation because these (vehicles) have similar needs for onboard power," said Parker, a Tesla veteran who worked on the battery for the Model 3.

He soon discovered that the RV market, and specifically the towable travel trailer sector, was much larger than he realized. It was also badly in need of a switch to electric. A three-month, 6,000-mile RV road trip designed to give Parker firsthand experience as well as an understanding of the customer and market provided the final proof points.

Lightship Energy, the startup the pair co-founded in May 2021, was soon charging forward with a high-flying goal.

Lightship is not only trying to design and produce an electric travel trailer that ditches the propane tanks and generators that creates a "bummer RV camping experience" as Parker describes it, the company is also trying to remove a barrier for owners of all-electric SUVs and trucks who want to haul a travel trailer on long road trips.

An EV truck with a 300-mile range traveling at 65 miles an hour with a traditional travel trailer in tow becomes a 100-mile truck, explained Parker, who is CEO. The team at Lightship, which now numbers 20 people, experienced the range loss first hand.

"We pulled the most aerodynamic trailer we could rent behind a Tesla Model X and we actually had to drop the trailer in the middle of an off ramp on an interstate because we couldn't pull it to the next Supercharger," said Kraus, who is chief operating officer at Lightship. "It was miserable."

The effort promises to be complex, but the pair contend the market size and opportunity are simply too large to ignore.

In 2021, 600,240 recreational vehicles were sold in North America, up from 430,412 units the year before, according to Thor Industries, the RV giant that owns brands Airstream, CrossRoads, Cruiser RV, Dutchmen, Jayco, Keystone, Tiffin and Erwin Hymer Group.

"Ninety percent of the market is towable travel trailers," Kraus said, who is an alum of Tesla and Proterra. "The market is huge."

Lightship is still creeping out of stealth and not yet ready to show its electric travel trailer to the world. But the company's idea and its progress has attracted investors and fresh capital.

Lightship, which previously raised \$1 million in pre-seed and \$3 million in seed funding, recently closed a \$23 million Series A round led by Victoria Beasley of Prelude Ventures. Existing and new investors include Obvious Ventures, Congruent Ventures, My Climate Journey, HyperGuap and Alumni Ventures.

Beasley, who has also joined the board, said the combination of market opportunity, the team, which includes former Tesla, Proterra, Apple and Rivian employees, along with Lightship's aim to create a delightful customer experience led her to invest in the startup.

The funds will be used to double the team by the end of the year and develop an alpha prototype of Lightship.

"Our goal is definitely to create a super satisfying long-range, EV roadtripping experience," Parker said. "As any good Tesla alum would work, we started with going back to the fundamentals and asking, 'what should a travel trailer be?'" The team identified that efficiency was an absolute necessity for it to exist in the future.

But the project extends beyond designing a sleek-looking, aerodynamic trailer. Lightship is also developing the underlying EV skateboard architecture.

The final ingredient to Lightship's secret sauce is the powertrain, which includes a battery pack comparable to one in a Tesla Model 3, that will propel the trailer as it is being towed. Lightship is also exploring the integration of solar cells on the roof for passive charging.

"I think the gravity of the problem around towing and towing range is just starting to hit home with people as more EV trucks are hitting the market," Parker said. "With an EV powertrain on board you can use that additional energy for the trailer to propel itself, reduce all of the load on the tow vehicle and get back to a range loss zero experience — now you have a 300-mile trailer and a 300-mile truck."

## **AIRSAFE Webinar** (Next date: Aug 3, 2022)

ZOOM Webinar will be held the first Wednesday of each month

This month we will review:

**"Do's and Don'ts on each hitch type"**

**"Main't requirements over the years"**

Lloyd Stegemann will be hosting a monthly series of Zoom Webinar's to answer any questions you may have on our Air Safe Hitches.  
(5th Wheel, Gooseneck, and Receivers)

Time: August 3, 2022 04:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Sep 7, 2022 04:00 PM

Oct 5, 2022 04:00 PM

Nov 2, 2022 04:00 PM

Please download and import the following iCalendar (.ics) files to your calendar system.

Monthly: [https://zoom.us/meeting/tJEtdugtqzkgGtEcIWUtNtG45KWyDFKftycJ/ics?icsToken=98tyKuCtrjopH9GXsxmCRowMAoi4b-wmHpejbd4nxPSNjR9diSiY811K5ZZO97E](https://zoom.us/join/https://zoom.us/meeting/tJEtdugtqzkgGtEcIWUtNtG45KWyDFKftycJ/ics?icsToken=98tyKuCtrjopH9GXsxmCRowMAoi4b-wmHpejbd4nxPSNjR9diSiY811K5ZZO97E)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/95013552305?pwd=S3VLbEZYS0cwRkFsa3c5YW51ZUFWdz09>

Meeting ID: 950 1355 2305

Passcode: Z8EweF

The discussion is open to anyone that's wishes to attend.

If you would like to discuss anything in advance of our meeting, please contact me at (407) 973-2980

or email: [LStegemann@AirSafeHitches.com](mailto:LStegemann@AirSafeHitches.com).

I look forward to meeting and talking to you about Air Safe Hitches and discuss any questions you may have.

## [AirSafeHitches.com](https://www.AirSafeHitches.com)



Why Use an Air Hith?

AirSafe is committed to giving you the safest and most comfortable ride possible. We offer the largest selection of air hitches in the industry, including 5th wheel hitches, gooseneck hitches, and receiver hitches for trailer hitches for trucks.

Our hitches utilize the most innovative engineering and design available on the market today. With a fully height adjustable design, AirSafe hitches are easy to use and don't cause any headaches.

Air Safe Hitches also delivers the ultimate in safety.

With only 10% trailer inertia, our hitches make your vehicles sway a lot less. By evenly distributing the weight between the trailer and the tow vehicle, you will have more ability to brake and steer safely.

AirSafe Hitches are the safest way to tow anything, and they provide the most comfort of any ride. If that isn't enough to convince you, these hitches are also affordable. With AirSafe Hitches, you get safety, comfort, and savings all in one.

**[5th Wheel Hitches](#)** - Omni-Directional 4 air bag vs competitor 2 air bag system. A four-air bag hitch is designed to allow the hitch head to move on the air bags in any direction based on articulation from the trailer itself. The result of such continuous motion results in a smooth ride and decrease chucking and surging forces from the trailer on the truck. In addition to the movement from the trailer, the 4-airbag hitch support 100% of the pin weight, increasing the effectiveness of the air springs. This results in a smooth and controlled motion for the trailer on the truck.

**[Receiver Hitches](#)** – If you want a smoother ride and the ultimate in control, then you need the advantage provided by Air Safe Hitches with the Receiver Hitch by AirSafe™. With an Air Safe Receiver Hitch you will get a 90% smoother ride than with a traditional hitch, which can save you money. Glide across the highways and roads avoiding the constant bouncing, which leads to a decrease in gas mileage and early wear and tear on your tires. Our Air Safe Receiver Hitches also reduce stress on your truck and trailer suspension and help eliminate breakages inside the trailer. Our design allows total air ride vs the Shocker Hitch with the hinged approach.

**[Gooseneck Hitches](#)** – Air Safe offers the industry's largest selection of air hitches. Innovation and engineering insures you receive the safest and smoothest ride. "Enjoy the ride, arrive alive." With AIRSAFE™ you stop the flow of shock flow between the tow vehicle to the trailer and greatly reduce the explosion of energy when these two forces meet. The patented AIRSAFE™ hitches are engineered so the connection to the trailer is separated from the connection to the tow vehicle by an industrial strength airbag. Air Safe Gooseneck Hitches by AIRSAFE™ are simply the best air product money can buy. They are engineered with you and your precious cargo in mind. Simply remove your existing gooseneck tube and coupler and replace it with the AIRSAFE™ system. Available in round and square necks.

**[Click to check out the benefits of an air hitch vs a rigid hitch.](#)**

## **CURB YOUR COSTS: 15 ways to spend less**

- 1. Track your spending:** "Everybody has their own personal inflation rate, depending on what they buy," said Bankrate.com analyst Sarah Foster. Tracking spending with an app such as Mint, one of the many free spreadsheet templates or simply scrutinizing receipts can provide insights into spending anomalies and goods and services with rising prices and possible alternatives. "Make sure you know what's inflated," she said.
- 2. Join a "buy-nothing group":** These localized Facebook groups give furniture, clothing and housewares a new life by offering them at no charge. Members offer each other free goods and solicit the products they need. Freebies also can be found on Craigslist, Nextdoor and other online services.
- 3. Rotate your streaming services:** With streaming services from Netflix, Disney, Apple, Amazon, Comcast and others proliferating, viewers may face their own pulse-pounding drama when it comes time to pay their bills. Retiree organization AARP suggests cutting costs by signing up for a streaming service, binge watching for a few months, canceling, and signing up for another service. Rotate as desired.
- 4. Food for thought:** There's no getting around the need to eat and drink. The Flipp app (available for iOS and Android) and website lets users find deals and coupons for supermarkets, drug stores and discounters like Walmart. Registered dietician Amanda Reichardt suggests that on-site workers pack their lunch instead of ordering out. The savings, over the course of a year, amounts to the cost of a vacation, she said. Reichardt's other tips: Buy local produce when it's in season and frozen when it's not and fire up crockpots for soup and chili meals that save money and time.
- 5. Check your auto insurance policy:** Are you a remote worker? If so, call your insurance company to make sure your policy reflects your reduced mileage. That call yielded savings of more than \$600 on an annual basis for this writer. (A good return on a 15-minute call.) And while you're at it, make sure you're getting a defensive-driving discount. If not, find a class for multi-year savings.
- 6. Travel strategically:** Travel can open vistas and provide a much-needed break. It also can be expensive. To keep costs down, be opportunistic. Traveling in low season (or at least in the margins between low and

high season) can be a start. You can stretch your dollar by taking advantage of exchange rates. In recent weeks, the dollar has reached parity with the euro, meaning Europe is on sale. Also, avoid credit cards that charge foreign transaction fees and find a cost-effective mobile phone plan before taking off, or buy a SIM card at your destination.

**7. Check gas prices:** Gasoline prices remain elevated even though they are down from their recent highs. Comparison shop for the best gas prices using the GasBuddy mobile app or the GasBuddy and Geico web sites: [gasbuddy.com/home](http://gasbuddy.com/home) and [geico.com/save/local-gas-prices/](http://geico.com/save/local-gas-prices/).

**8. Inflate those tires:** For every pound-per-square inch each tire is underinflated, your car will lose about 1% of your vehicle's optimal fuel economy, said Robert Sinclair Jr., senior manager of public affairs at AAA Northeast. Doing the math, a car with one tire under-inflated by 2 psi and another by 3 psi would lose about 5% of its optimum mileage. A car that gets a healthy 30 miles per gallon at its best would get only 28.5 mpg with underinflated tires. Assuming a 12-gallon gas tank, the car's range would go from 360 miles to 342, requiring an additional half-gallon of gas to go roughly the same distance.

**9. Keep the pedal off the metal:** Aside from simply driving less, Sinclair suggested a more gentle driving style to save gas: "Accelerate gently, brake gently, lower your highway speed." The most economical speed for most vehicles is about 50 mph, he said. Need incentive to ease off the gas? "For every 5 mph over 50 it's like adding 25 cents to the price of a gallon of gasoline," he said.

**10. To your health:** Health care costs are hard to avoid and out-of-pocket expenses can be painful. Make sure medical and dental insurance covers your providers and procedures. Or find a health center that offers services at sliding-scale fees at [findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov](http://findahealthcenter.hrsa.gov).

**11. Trim the cost of your trim:** Students at Beauty School, can make you look like a million dollars, but at a discount price. Seniors get a steeper discount.

**12. Go to the library:** Public libraries are not just about books anymore. These unheralded gems offer dozens of services. Think free language classes, tax assistance, museum passes, movie-streaming devices, lectures, live music, audiobooks and pre-loaded Kindle ebooks. Many also offer defensive-driving classes for a fee (see No. 5).

**13. Get to the points:** If you're going to pay those bills, why not get a little something back? Web sites like The Points Guy [thepointsguy.com](http://thepointsguy.com) rate credit cards and provide strategies for maximizing points and cashback offers. For instance, the Marriott Bonvoy Boundless credit card carries a \$95 annual fee, but in addition to its welcome offer, cardholders get a free hotel stay every year. One caution: Cardholders typically have to reach a spending threshold to qualify for sign-up bonuses. ValuePenguin travel analyst Sophia Mendel warned against going into debt just to snare a tempting offer.

**14. Happy hour!** Many bars have early-bird specials and theme nights like Taco Tuesdays and Burger Wednesdays. Consult your local bartender for details.

**15. Call your cable/internet provider:** You are a hot commodity. Companies are vying for your business. Threatening to defect to a competing internet or cable TV provider often can yield a lower price or a premium service.

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