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Articles in this Newsletter:

- [What's new with Air Hitch Advisor newsletter](#)
- [Embracing the childlike joy of RVing and rediscovering life's simple wonders](#)
- [Here are our Top 5 2024 RV Predictions](#)
- [Will RV Prices Go Down in 2024?](#)
- [2024 Camping Trends Outlook & Destination Index](#)
- [Horse Trailer Myth – Asking The Experts Gooseneck Vs. Tag-Along Interview](#)

What's new with Air Hitch Advisor newsletter

In Feb 2024, I was notified that Air Hitch Technology was severing our relationship.

My name is Lloyd Stegemann, and I am the owner of East Coast Partners Grp (ECPG). We are a dynamic and innovative company in the trailer hitch and accessories sector. I own the website www.AirSafeHitches.com.

I have been selling air hitches and accessories for over 21 years, The last 19 years I have been selling AirSafe hitches as an independent sales distributor / representative for Air Hitch Technology. Over the 20 years I sold over \$10M in hitches and accessories.

Where do I go from here:

East Coast Partners Grp (ECPG) will continue to assist customers with their trailer towing needs, assisting the customer in knowing all your options before you make your choice. We have over 20 years' experience with trailer hitches and accessories. Let Us Help You.

I have been asked by many customers to continue the Newsletter, Blogs and other information on my website. To do this I will need to include advertisers. I will be selective on who I will let advertise on my website.

Are you ready to take your trailer towing experience to the next level? Look no further than **ECPG**! As the industry leader, we specialize in working with customers to know all the options available before they make their choice. Whether you're hauling a horse, boat, race car, an RV, or a cargo trailer, our help will assist you in making the best choice and give you peace of mind.

"Your Trailer, Our Priority: Unmatched Customer Service"

Embracing the childlike joy of RVing and rediscovering life's simple wonders

By Nanci Dixon

More people than ever are looking at ways to rediscover that childlike wonder and awe they once had. We as RVers have the upper hand in getting there. We get to be in nature and discover, travel to, and uncover amazing places all the time.

Do you remember the first time you thought about RVing? It might have been when you were trying to sleep on that ultra-thin mattress over a rock in a tent. Or, it might have been when you saw an RV roll down the highway. Or perhaps when everything shut down in Covid, RVing looked like a way to salvage canceled vacations or was just a way to travel out of the house safely. Just stepping into your new or a new-to-you RV can be a moment of breathless joy.

The first time I saw a 1967 Winnebago at a car show in South Dakota, I held my breath and realized that was my dream sitting right in front of me. Oh

my! It had a sink, an ice box, a stove, a bed and, wonders of all... a bathroom! It would be many, many years before we actually had a vehicle that could be legitimately called an RV. However, that feeling of enchantment remains in my memory.

For whatever reason, sometimes that childlike joy and awe in RVing can dim, particularly with high gas prices, crowded campgrounds and service hiccups. How do we rediscover that awe? As RVers, we have a leg up, a starting point closer to that moment, that sense of childlike wonder.

What science says

So, how do you do it? How can you get that childlike moment of awe, wonder, and joy again? Dacher Keltner, a professor at UC Berkeley, has studied awe and wonder for 25 years and has found some of the ways that people access that moment. He cited being in nature, viewing art, seeing the virtue of others, group events like weddings, sporting events, spiritual experiences, and life and death epiphanies in his research.

Keltner explains that wonder follows awe. He writes, “It is a mental state where you are curious and wanting to explore and discover.” Keltner has recently published a book, “Awe: The Science of Everyday Wonder and How It Can Transform Your Life.” It is now available on Amazon.

For all of us who have national parks on our bucket list (that’s me!), who watch a sunrise over the Atlantic or a sunset on the Pacific, point excitedly to a landmark, a mountain, a winding road, or just pick up an unusual shell or pinecone... we still hold that wonder deep within us. And it does become awe... if we let it.

Look for awe in the mundane

Tune into the everyday things, even the things that seem to be mundane. Really see and appreciate them. It is easy when traveling from point A to B to forget the wonder of the journey along the way. What catches the eye, and what details—sights, sounds, and smells—are often overlooked?

Last year as we traveled north, I became aware of so many places that were boarded up. I began snapping photos, changed them to black and white, and created an album I called, “Lost Dreams”.

I always hem, haw and complain about the work involved in extensive trip planning and packing up for RV trips. But I realized that the closer I get to the actual final plans and packing, the more excited I am. Some would say even I get giddy! And as all of us probably know, making endless reservations and packing up an RV can be pretty mundane.

Appreciate wonder in all places

We expect to be awestruck at the Grand Canyon or Yosemite National Park. But what about the places and people that also can bring about that moment of awe when and where we didn’t expect it?

Keltner was “surprised that moral beauty was the most prevalent source of awe across the world.” Volunteering, acts of kindness, friendliness of fellow campers and appreciating the good news of others all can inspire and provide awe in a momentous way.

Slow down and appreciate the moment

Yup, smell the proverbial roses. I try to remember that this moment is the only one I have now. The past is gone and the future is not promised. Now is my moment. It is indeed having gratitude for this trip, the campsite and the people around me. The simple warmth and smell of a campfire, the crackling of leaves underfoot, the unexpected handholding with a significant other are all memorable moments in time.

Be more playful

Go back to childhood! Try doing the things that brought joy as a child. Was it riding a bike and feeling free? Ebikes are all the rage! Did you like art? Pick up a sketchbook, art pencils, and doodle. It isn’t the finished piece but the feeling it evokes that counts.

Melissa Kirsch wrote a piece in the New York Times about returning to activities that gave her joy when she was young. Hundreds of people replied with their stories. Some said that they were embarrassing their children by taking up skateboarding again at 45, and one person returned to fly fishing where the rhythm of casting a fly came quickly back. Others were taking language classes and one person was figure skating again. I am thinking about getting some jacks, sitting on the floor, and seeing if I can pick up all of them at one time again.

Megan Brenenstuhl, in the same article, summed it up: “If there was something you once loved doing, give it a shot because the 20-years-ago you is still in there and it’s fun to find them!”

Fill your life with joyful people, people who inspire

We have neighbors, Van and Sandy, down the block, who have to be the most joyful and fun-loving people I have met. They are active, friendly and welcoming. Their world is large. Sandy just had her 22nd surgery this week and we can joke that she really knows how to recover! Their marriage is solid, loving, and boisterous. Both she and her husband share their full, unapologetic belly laughs with everyone.

We recently went camping with them in Quartzsite, Arizona. It was so fun to be able to “wagon up” and step out our door to cook, talk, and even play games.

Another friend, Nancy, has this as her email signature on every email she sends, *“It’s always a good idea to sit at the fun table.” —Esther Hicks* I want to “sit at the fun table,” learn to laugh, appreciate the precious moments as we travel in the RV, and let all the good fill me with wonder and awe. I wish the same for you.

Here are our Top 5 2024 RV Predictions

1. CAMPGROUND VACANCIES WILL BE HARDER TO FIND AND MORE EXPENSIVE IN 2024

The demand for camping shows no signs of easing, and as it has been for the past few years. To get a spot during the height of the season, on holidays, or in popular areas, it is going to take reservations made long in advance.

And they will cost more thanks to the growing practice of dynamic pricing that is sweeping the industry. The concept is nothing new. Hotels, airlines, and even restaurants have been doing this for years. Now, campgrounds are.

Dynamic pricing is the strategy of adjusting the nightly camping rates based on demand, preferences, and time.

If most of the spots are booked, the campground's booking software will increase the price because they know there is strong demand and people will pay. If it is a holiday weekend, up will go the price.

And the software can get pretty sophisticated. If most of the 50 amp sites are booked, those remaining will have a hefty price hike.

Conversely, I suppose, if the weekend weather forecast is lousy, the software could conceivably lower the prices... though we seldom hear of that happening.

But Dynamic Pricing makes campgrounds more money, just as it does in other segments of the hospitality industry.

Campers don't like it, of course, but for lots and lots of campgrounds, profit takes precedence over people. That's just the reality of our consumer economy.

2. BOONDOCKING SPOTS WILL BE HARDER TO FIND IN 2024

And that's a direct result of #1 above. Because boondocking becomes the best alternative when commercial and government campground openings are hard to find

We've sure seen this ourselves and we know from the email we get and campfire conversations we have, you are too. A boondocking spot in a national or state forest that you always had to yourselves, now may be filled when you make your way there. Or you will have neighbors close by. Another big factor for the pressure on boondocking spots is that across the country, dispersed camping areas are being shut down because they have been trashed by inconsiderate campers or, in many places, have become homeless encampments.

We have been hearing of this happening with increased frequency. We went to one boondocking spot we knew of in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan a while back only to find access to it chained. A sign out front said the state DNR closed it early for the rest of the season because of litter and trash left behind by irresponsible campers.

3. PRIVATE RV LAND OWNERSHIP WILL RAPIDLY INCREASE IN POPULARITY

Because of the previous two reasons, a lot of RVers are doing what we did... buy a piece of property and make it our private RV retreat.

For us, it is five acres in Middle Tennessee. We have put in hookups a driveway, gates, and a concrete pad for our fifth wheel. We know we can use it whenever we want and we can stay there as long as we want.

Another development is being sold a half hour away from ours. And we know of similar projects coming in the next year in Florida, Arizona, and Texas.

RV resorts and upscale campgrounds around the country are either expanding for-sale campsites or putting more of their campsites into seasonal, long-term use, where RVers can buy or lease them for guaranteed use.

Hardly a day goes by that someone doesn't email us asking if we know of RV land they can buy. Our sense is this is a trend that is growing fast.

4. GAS PRICES WILL BE DOWN OR STABLE FOR MOST OF THE YEAR

Here's some good news:

As inflation eases and the COVID-19 pandemic fades further into the background, the [GasBuddy app](#) is predicting that pump prices nationally to drop from an average of about \$3.51 for all of 2023 to \$3.38 in 2024, reducing annual household spending on gas by about 2 percent

We think another reason prices won't go crazy high this year is because it is an election year. The administration will do everything it can to keep fuel costs as low as possible. High fuel prices are always a hot-button issue and the pressure will be on the big oil companies to do all they can not to raise prices.

There will be fluctuations.

In a normal year, gas prices follow a seasonal cycle, bottoming out in the depth of winter, when people drive less, and rising steadily through spring and summer, when temperatures are warmer, days are longer, and people drive more.

And a catastrophic event or world crisis could change all this too.

But, based on what we have been seeing so far, we predict that prices will be down or stable for most of the year.

5. EV RV'S WILL AGAIN BE MORE STYLE THAN SUBSTANCE

The Florida RV SuperShow will open in a couple of weeks and for sure, you will hear some of the big manufacturers gushing about an EV RV.

They'll have a fancy-looking prototype on display. They'll get a lot of splashy coverage during the show. And then that will be pretty much it until next year, when they'll do the same thing.

Like EV automobiles, trucks, and cars, there's not much public interest in EV RVs.

At least not by RVers.

Everyone loves the idea of an EV but the reality is the infrastructure is not there, campgrounds can barely provide adequate 30 and 50 amp RV service let alone the chargers necessary for EVs.

Besides, the proof of concept prototypes can't go far enough between charging and they can't tow enough RVs without drastically reducing their already dismal distance between charges.

Someday, yes, there will be viable EV RVs.

Just not this year. Or probably next, either.

Will RV Prices Go Down in 2024?

The latest 2024 RV sales forecasts from industry associations are optimistic. In fact, the RV Industry Association (RVIA) projects a significant increase in wholesale RV shipments.

They predict that annual RV shipments will range 363,700 to 375,700 units, which would mark more than a 20% increase from the expected totals of 2023, showing a potential resurgence in the industry.

However, the trend of RV prices will be shaped not only by shipment numbers but also by broader economic factors such as interest rates,

inflation and consumer purchasing power. In fact, many experts think the industry forecasts are overly optimistic given the current market conditions.

With the rise of economic inflation and lending rates, as well as fluctuating diesel prices, we agree with many experts that **RV prices will decline in 2024**. However, there may be some exceptions, such as more fuel-efficient models like Class-B camper vans.

2023 RV Market Trends Recap

A Year of Decline

2023 has been a challenging year for the RV industry. Shipments plummeted by 42.8% compared to the previous year, a decline reminiscent of the 2007-2009 financial crisis. This decrease can be attributed to various factors, including the end of the pandemic RV boom, rising interest rates and shifts in consumer spending habits.

The decline was consistent across different RV types, with both towable and motorized RVs experiencing a nearly identical drop of around 16% in sales. This uniform trend indicates a broader market shift rather than segment-specific issues.

Interest rates and consumer spending habits, reshaped by the pandemic, played a significant role in this downturn. The shift in consumer behavior, coupled with economic pressures, led to reduced demand and a consequent drop in prices.

The Used RV Market: A Mixed Bag

The used RV market, meanwhile, has shown fluctuating trends. According to a fall 2023 analysis by Bish's RV, the value of towable RVs in the used market appeared to be rising, while motorized RV prices were up and down throughout the year.

These trends seem to correlate with the introduction of lower-priced options in the new RV market, affecting the valuation of used RVs.

Predictions for RV Market Trends in 2024

New RV Price Predictions in 2024

The pricing of new RVs in 2024 is likely to be influenced by a combination of economic factors and consumer demand. Given the projected increase in RV shipments, ranging from 363,700 to 375,700 units, there is an indication of a recovering market.

However, the impact of economic inflation, interest rates and fuel prices will play a crucial role in determining the final pricing. In fact, Greg Fore, former chairman of the RVIA, predicts a stagnant RV market in 2024.

The macroeconomic headwinds continue to blow, making RV market growth difficult in the short term. John Fore

If his predictions are correct and demand for new RVs does not increase, RV prices will decline in 2024.

Anticipated Discounts and Negotiations

In a typical RV market, discounts of 20% to 30% off the MSRP have been common, but recent years have seen a shift. During the pandemic, high demand led to RVs selling closer to the MSRP.

As the market stabilized, discounts returned in 2023, albeit in the range of 10% to 20%, with fewer instances of the higher 30%+ markdowns seen in pre-pandemic times.

However, as dealership lots return to healthier inventories, the trend in 2024 will likely lean towards more generous discounts. In fact, on a recent shopping trip, I saw several new RVs listed around 30% off the MSRP.

Used RV Price Predictions in 2024

The used RV market in 2024 will likely continue to offer value, especially considering the depreciation factor of new RVs. As new RV prices stabilize and potentially decrease, the value of used RVs might also adjust accordingly. The trend observed in 2023, with the value of towable RVs in the used market rising and motorized RVs experiencing alternating value shifts, is indicative of a market that responds dynamically to new RV pricing trends.

2024 Manufacturing Adjustments

Decontenting

One RV market trend that is clear with the release of 2024 models is decontenting. Decontenting is simply removing features from RVs. Responding to consumer price sensitivity, many manufacturers have introduced more affordable RV options that come equipped with less bells and whistles.

For example, Winnebago has launched the Access travel trailer series and Grand Design launched the 100 Series, a more affordable version of their popular Reflection fifth wheels. This shift towards cost-effective models could lead to a broader range of prices in the market, making RVs accessible to a wider audience.

Innovation and Technology

As the industry moves towards 2024, manufacturers are likely to continue focusing on innovative designs, particularly in response to the growing interest in electric RVs, lightweight and compact models and sustainable RVing practices. These advancements are not only in response to consumer demand but also align with global trends towards sustainability and eco-friendliness.

How to Get the Best Deal on RVs in 2024

Shop for New Older Year RVs

As 2024 RVs start filling dealership lots, the dealers will be eager to sell previous model year RVs that have been sitting for a significant amount of time. If there are any new 2022 model-year RVs left on the lot, the dealer will

likely be willing to make you a sweet deal to get rid of this two-year old inventory.

As the year progresses, 2023 units will also be available at a bigger bargain. Ask your local dealer when they expect to receive new inventory of your desired brand, and try to buy the previous year model shortly before the new inventory is expected to arrive.

Don't Be Afraid to Negotiate

When it comes to buying a new RV, don't be afraid to negotiate. While dealers may have been unwilling to negotiate during the RV boom, the bubble has burst and there are now deals to be had.

While out shopping for travel trailers recently, I saw several new 2024 RVs with a list price at least 25% off the MSRP. This indicates that dealers are ready to make deals in order to get their inventory sold.

Shop around at multiple dealerships, and always ask for a discount off the listed price. If the dealer is unwilling to lower the price, check if there are other upgrades or service packages that could be included to sweeten the deal.

Pay Attention to Price vs Features

With the RV discontending trend that we discussed earlier, it is important for buyers to pay attention to the features included in a new RV. Affordable RV models may have lower-quality interior finishes or lack convenience features, such as auto leveling.

Many campers are fine with an RV that lacks nice-to-have features but is available at an affordable price. Buying one of these affordable RVs isn't necessarily a bad thing, shoppers just need to be informed about what they are really buying.

Shop Used RVs

While the used RV market has been somewhat volatile in the last few years, used RVs still generally provide the best deal. RVs depreciate quickly. In fact, most RV values will depreciate around 20% after just one year of ownership. If you are on a tight budget, you should consider buying a used RV which will get you more rig for your money.

However, buyers should be extra careful when buying used RVs. A used RV is worth significantly less than its book value if it has severe water damage or other major issues. Find a certified RV inspector at the [NRVIA's website](#) and have the RV thoroughly checked before buying.

In summary, in 2024 new RV prices are likely to be more generously discounted compared to the pandemic era. However, the used RV market continues to offer value, especially considering the depreciation of new RVs. Manufacturing trends are leaning towards more affordable, innovative and eco-friendly models. For buyers, the best strategies include considering older model-year RVs for new purchases, negotiating effectively and exploring the used RV market with due diligence.

Overall, the RV market in 2024 presents opportunities for both new and seasoned RV enthusiasts to find deals that align with their budget and lifestyle preferences.

Happy Camping!

2024 Camping Trends Outlook & Destination Index

The Year of the Calm-Cation

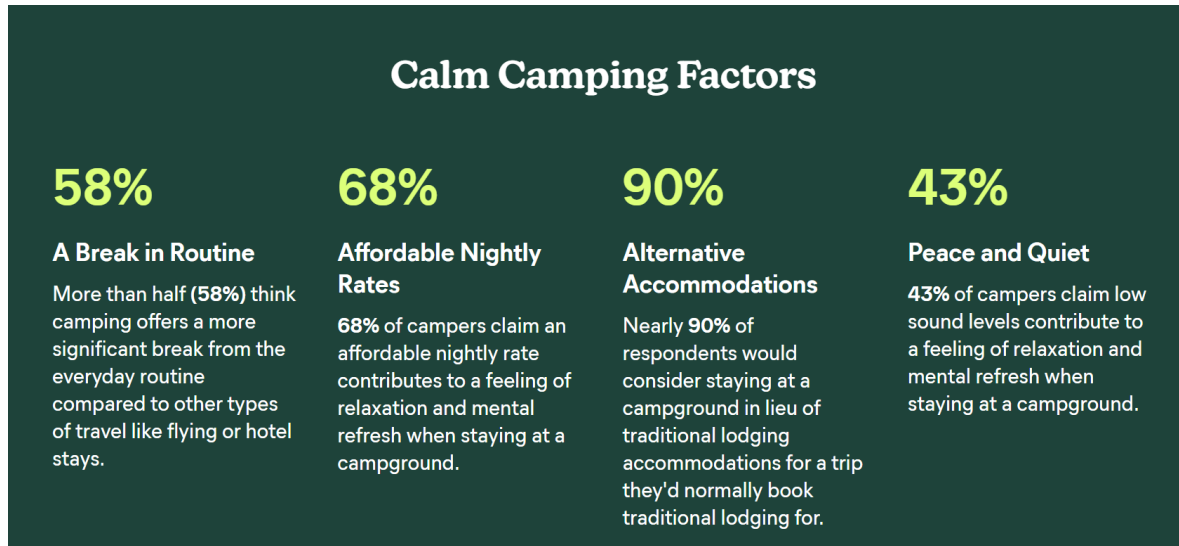
Campers are Saying *Serenity, Now!* In 2024

In a recent customer survey, we found that 93% of campers feel more relaxed or mentally refreshed after time spent camping versus other kinds of trips.

Which begs the question—What is it about camping that helps people unwind?

Methodology

In order to glean insights about the various aspects of people’s camping experiences, Campspot surveyed Campspot Marketplace customers in June 2023 with 2,851 respondents.



Types of Calm-Cations

With **1 in 3** campers feeling stressed or very stressed about economic uncertainty in the year ahead and nearly **70%** of campers specifically craving a sense of calm and relaxation on their trips in 2024, it’s clear relaxation is something we’re all plenty craving.

But what’s the best type of calm-cation? Beyond what camping has to offer as a means of travel and leisure activity, how are campers achieving that coveted mental refresh?

Water-lust Wellness

Water has long been known for its healing properties, and it seems campers take to water like catfish to a muddy creek.

64%

of campers claim nearby natural water features such as beaches, rivers, or lakes contribute to their feeling of relaxation when spending time outdoors. Specifically, nearly **3 in 4** campers feel the most relaxed when in a lake landscape, compared to other landscapes types.

63%

Water recreation amenities were listed as the **TOP amenity category** for 2024 camping. Specifically, **63%** of respondents were interested in water activities like going to the beach, boating, kayaking, fishing, and paddle boating. **50%** were interested in swimming, hot tubs and saunas, pools, and water parks.

Fresh Air, Clear Sky Sanctuaries

Recent reporting from the American Lung Association revealed a staggering **1 in 4** people in the U.S. (aka over 119 million people) live with exposure to health-altering air pollution. It's no wonder that camping, often an activity that takes place in a more rural setting, offers so many a literal safe haven.

77%

of campers claimed fresh air contributes to their feeling of relaxation when spending time outdoors.

63%

of campers are looking for amazing views as part of their 2024 camping trips.

54%

of campers claim a clear view of the night sky and stars contributes to their feeling of relaxation when spending time outdoors.

High-Speed Relaxation

In today's world, campers feel most able to disconnect, when they are in fact...connected.

64%

of campers feel most relaxed with high-speed internet availability, similar to what they have at home or work.

40%

of campers say they are very interested in tech-based campground amenities like Wi-Fi or cable TV for camping trips in 2024.

91%

of campers wanted access to the internet of some kind, aka only **9%** felt more relaxed when they were completely unplugged.

1 in 3

campers said internet access at a campground is a contributing factor to a feeling of relaxation.

Best Destinations for Water-lust Wellness

#1: Ashland, New Hampshire

Ashland is renowned as the gateway to the Lakes Region in NH, bordered on the west by the Pemigewasset River and on the east by Little Squam Lake.

Ames Brook Campground

Ames Brook Campground has fishing, a pool, and access to a nearby water park.

#2: Auburn, Maine

North of Portland in the Maine Lakes and Mountains Region, campers can experience Auburn's nearby river walk along Androscoggin River and its Great Falls. You can also fish at Lake Auburn!

Two Lakes Camping Area

Two Lakes Camping Area is located in nearby Oxford Maine, on 177 acre Hogan Pond with access to 147 acre Whitney Pond. Enjoy swimming, the beach, kayaking and canoeing.

#3: Grand Rapids, Michigan

Dubbed “Beer City,” this Michigan destination is located on the Grand River, a convenient hour from Lake Michigan’s shoreline.

Steamboat Park Campground

Steamboat Park Campground is located right on the Grand River banks, where you can enjoy their boat launch, fishing, pool, and the sandy shoreline.

#4: Rehoboth Beach, Delaware

Rehoboth Beach is an Atlantic coast town known for being the nation’s “summer capital”.

Sun Outdoors Rehoboth Bay

Sun Outdoors Rehoboth Bay is a luxury waterfront campground right on the shores of Rehoboth Bay. Enjoy a swim up bar, a private beach, kayaking, paddleboarding, or canoe.

#5: Knoxville, Tennessee

This city is located on the Tennessee River and offers close proximity to picturesque lakes, quarries, rivers, and mountain streams galore.

Yarberry Campground

Yarberry Campground is in Loudoun County, which is referred to as “The Lakeway to the Smokies.” Enjoy the shores of Fort Loudoun Lake with stunning views, and access to the beach/waterfront, canoeing and kayaking.

#6: Port Aransas, Texas

This city you might not have heard of is located on stunning Mustang Island on the coast of Texas close to Corpus Christi.

Aloha Beach RV Resort

Aloha Beach RV Resort has dedicated Wifi at each space, and is close to beaches, fishing, and also has a pool.

#7: New Braunfels, Texas

Known for the Comal and Guadalupe Rivers, New Braunfels is an 1800s German-inspired town.

Rio Guadalupe Resort

Rio Guadalupe Resort is located on 25 acres along the Guadalupe River. Enjoy a river-side cabin and easy access to tubing, rafting, fishing, kayaking, and a pool.

#8: Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin

Fondly nicknamed the “Waterpark Capital of the World,” Wisconsin Dells has more water parks per capita than anywhere else in the world. It’s also right near Lake Delton, the Wisconsin River, and is just a half hour drive from Wisconsin’s most popular state park—Devil’s Lake.

Yogi Bear’s Jellystone Park™ Camp-Resort: Wisconsin Dells

Yogi Bear’s Jellystone Park™ Camp-Resort: Wisconsin Dells is a 2023 Campspot Award winner and has it all—beach, boat launch, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, pool, waterfront, and a waterpark.

#9: Lake George, New York

Located in New York’s protected Adirondack Region, Lake George is known for... Lake George! Nicknamed the Queen of America’s Lakes, the lake is 32 miles long, offers stunning views and access to water sports, and is even known for tales of its alleged lake monster “Georgie”.

Schroon River Escape Lodges and RV Resort

Schroon River Escape Lodges RV Resort offers nearly a mile of river frontage on the nearby Schroon River, with access to fishing, a pool, and just 15 mins from Lake George.

#10: Navarre, Florida

Located right between Pensacola and Destin Florida on the panhandle coast, Navarre has stunning beaches, white sands, and crystal clear waters.

The Hideaway Retreat

Schroon River Escape Lodges RV Resort offers nearly a mile of river frontage on the nearby Schroon River, with access to fishing, a pool, and just 15 mins from Lake George.

Horse Trailer Myth – Asking The Experts Gooseneck Vs. Tag-Along Interview

BY USRIDER WITH TOM SCHEVE 3/8/11

USR: Tom and his wife, Neva Scheve, have been advocating horse trailer safety since 1984. Both have written numerous articles for Dressage Today, Horse Illustrated, Equus, Horse and Rider, Trail Blazer, Southeast Horse Journal, and have been to safety clinics around the country. Neva has written three books on horse trailers including “The Complete Guide to Buying, Maintaining, and Servicing a Horse Trailers.”

We asked Tom some questions about the differences and advantages of different styles of trailers.

USR: Is a gooseneck horse trailer safer than a bumper pull trailer?

Tom: We prefer to call them “tag-along” trailers rather than “bumper pulls”. It’s just semantics, but the idea is that you should never hook a horse trailer to the actual bumper of a tow vehicle. So, the term “bumper pull” makes people believe it’s OK to use a ball installed on the bumper, but it’s important to always use a frame mounted hitch, usually with a weight distribution system. That being said, we use the term “bumper pull” on our website since it is the “common term.”

USR: Good point. So, is a gooseneck safer than a tag-along trailer?

Tom: Great Question. It’s a common misconception that gooseneck trailers are always safer, and that myth needs to be dispelled. But it gets tricky.

USR: How so?

Tom: Well, first of all, I always recommend a gooseneck trailer for 3 or more horses, whether it's a slant or a straight load. But for a two-horse trailer, a tag-along (bumper pull) can be just as safe, and tow just as well if hitched up with the right equipment. The tricky part is the word "safer." There are so many variables with towing that just calling the trailer itself "safer" doesn't take in all the other parts, such as using the proper tow vehicle with the proper hitch. And, of course, the operator's driving expertise is also a factor.

USR: Okay. I get it. So why would one choose a tag-along trailer over a gooseneck?

Tom: The benefits of a tag-along, or bumper pull, over a gooseneck is that it's cheaper, shorter, tracks closer to the path of the tow vehicle when turning, can be pulled with a properly rated SUV or a truck, and it's lighter so you don't need such a big tow vehicle. If you don't have a lot of storage space for the trailer, it doesn't take up as much room in the yard. Unless the gooseneck area is needed for sleeping or storage, it doesn't make sense to spend the extra money, unless one just prefers to have a gooseneck because they like it better.

USR: And the gooseneck?

Tom: Well, if you want a place to sleep or extra room for tack, the gooseneck area gives you plenty of extra room. If you want living quarters a gooseneck is usually mandatory. Also, it's easier to pick the right tow vehicle and hitch because it's obvious a full-sized truck is needed and the hitch only installs in the bed.

One of the reasons people believe a tag-along (bumper pull) trailer is not as stable is because it's so easy to make a mistake when putting the tow vehicle/hitch combination together. And we often see people tow with some scary combinations. For instance, as I mentioned earlier, by towing directly on the bumper, the trailer would be susceptible to sway and other problems. There are also so many tow vehicles to choose from, it's easy to choose a less capable tow vehicle.

USR: Which is easier to hook up?

Tom: Now remember, we're talking about a two-horse gooseneck vs. a two-horse tag-along. The tag-along tongue weight is lighter maybe by 1,000 lbs. or more, so if the jack is in good working order it can be easier to jack up and down. And you don't have to crawl up into the truck bed as you do for a gooseneck to fasten the safety chains, or in some cases, secure the coupler onto the ball.

USR: How about backing up to line up the coupler and ball?

Tom: Both are tricky but can be mastered with practice. If you don't have a built-in tool chest in your truck you can see the ball from the cab when lining up. Because you can't see the coupler or ball on a tag-along, you might need someone to guide you or do a "hit and miss." With experience, it's possible to hitch a tag-along alone with no problems. There are, however some innovative devices on the market that can help, and some tricks I've learned that can help with either style trailer that don't cost anything.

USR: I'm sure our readers would like to know the tricks. Are they secret?

Tom: Not at all. With a gooseneck, the trick is to put your tailgate down, of course, and then place a small stone or piece of tape at the tip of the rear of the tailgate where you can see it from the driver's seat. This stone or tape should be placed directly in line with the ball in the truck. Then, you back straight under the trailer, making sure that the coupler goes right over the stone. If you are driving in a straight line, the coupler should then end up right over the ball.

USR: And for the tag-along?

Tom: With the trailer hitched up to the vehicle, take a piece of visible tape and put it up high on the nose of the trailer directly up from the coupler so you can see it from the driver's seat. If you have a truck or tail gate on your SUV, put another piece on the end of the tailgate to line up with the tape of the trailer. When you next hitch up, just align the two pieces of tape again.

USR: What about length? Do some like to pull the tag-along because it's not as long or big?

Tom: Actually, a two-horse tag-along with a dressing room is an average of 17 ½ feet including the tongue. So, you are pulling 17 ½ feet behind your truck. An average length for a gooseneck with dressing room is 21 ½ feet, but the gooseneck area, which is usually around 7 ½ feet, is over the truck. So, you really only have about 14 feet, give or take, that you're pulling behind your truck. So, the gooseneck can be a bit shorter. Of course, a tag-along without a dressing room is really the shortest option.

USR: Which do you think would fare best in an accident?

Tom: There are a lot of opinions on this, but I'd say it would depend on the type of accident.

USR: How so?

Tom: If it's a major accident, let's say a head on collision, there's a chance the gooseneck could pop off the ball, and if the safety chains break, the trailer is heading straight for the cab where you are sitting. By the way, this is why you always want to use safety chains.

In a minor accident, where you might have to do a severe swerve to avoid hitting something, the heavier gooseneck would be a bit more stable than being hitched behind the vehicle like a bumper pull. That's why it's important to have the proper hitch. A weight distribution system on a bumper pull adds quite a bit to the safety factor.

So, a lot of it depends on the circumstances and the quality of the trailer. I think either type of trailer should be strong enough to hold up as well as possible in an accident. There are no requirements for trailer strength, and no crash testing is done, so we only have to go on the information we get from examining accidents after they happen to see which type of construction holds up better. In my many years of experience, steel and steel framed trailers hold up much better in accidents.

USR: Any other insight you might want to add about gooseneck vs. tag-along?

Tom: The best choice is a trailer that makes one feel comfortable. Over the years, many of my customers like to see the horses in the trailer while they are traveling. So, a tag-along with big windows gives them that ability which results in a feeling of comfort. Others just like the feeling of a gooseneck because they feel safer or more secure. In that case, a gooseneck is the best choice. The point I've tried to make today is that, for a two-horse trailer, one doesn't need to buy a gooseneck trailer "just because."