Getting to your RV Destination Safely

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WE CAN’T GUARANTEE
THE SUN WILL SHINE,
GEYSERS WILL SPOUT
OR LEAVES WILL TURN
GOLDEN-RED FOR YOU.

BUT IF YOUR RV BREAKS,
YOU WON’T PAY TO FIX IT.
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I have owned and camped in every type of RV there is, with the exception of a Class B motorhome and a truck camper. A few weeks ago I was looking on Craigslist and ran across an ad for a used Lance truck camper. After verifying the size and weight was compatible with my truck I decided to make the owner an offer. We agreed on a price and I brought the camper, pictured on this month’s cover, home.

Dawn’s niece was getting married in Colorado and I thought it would be fun to take the truck camper rather than flying or taking our motorhome. I did a quick PDI to check all the systems, and I fabricated some tie downs to secure the camper to the truck. It didn’t take long to discover that downsizing from a 35-foot motorhome to an 8 ½ -foot truck camper and traveling 3,500 miles with 2-adults and 3-dogs would be a challenge. Read the entire article in this issue of RV Consumer magazine.

Mark
www.rveducation101.com
www.rvconsumer.com

“At my age camping in a tent is okay, camping in a truck camper is better and camping in a self-contained 35-foot motorhome is best!” ~ Mark Polk

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And for all you car & truck enthusiasts we launched another great site, Auto Education 101. Learn about auto care & maintenance or follow the 71 Dodge Power Wagon project step-by-step.

Go where your RV takes you
I like to pride myself on the fact that I can do any type of camping imaginable. I have camped out under the stars, in pup tents with the boy scouts, in less than desirable conditions throughout my military career in the Army, in good and bad weather, and in almost every type of RV manufactured. But as we get older we tend to enjoy more creature comforts when it comes to camping.

When I was selling RVs I remember telling my customers that once they owned an RV with a slide-out it is hard to go back to one with no slide-outs. I should heed my own advice when it comes to downsizing RVs, especially when the entire RV could fit in the living room of your other RV!

Let me start from the beginning. I was looking for a camper I could use to film some upcoming video projects we are working on, and nobody I knew owned one equipped the way we needed it to be. So I started looking on Craigslist and ran across an ad for a used Lance truck camper. The owner wanted to get rid of it so it was priced right, and it was equipped with many of the features I needed for the upcoming video projects. The camper’s size, dry weight & estimated loaded weight worked for my truck so I drove the 3-hours and picked it up.

It just so happened that Dawn’s niece was getting married in Colorado, and between my sense of adventure and dislike for flying this day and age I convinced Dawn that it would be fun to take the truck camper to Colorado for the wedding.

I checked out all the systems on the camper, fabricated some tie downs to secure it to the truck, carefully loaded it as not to exceed any weight limitations and we headed out on our next RV adventure.
RV Downsizing Considerations:

One of the thoughts I had about taking the truck camper rather than the motorhome was saving some money on the cost of fuel. Our motorhome averages 7 ½ miles to a gallon. I thought it would be possible to nearly double that with the truck, but when all was said and done we averaged 11.7 miles to a gallon. We did use the truck’s air conditioner for most of the trip which had an impact on the mpg.

I definitely think it’s more difficult to adjust to a smaller RV after spending a good bit of time in a larger RV. I have always liked small RVs, but you need to seriously consider if a smaller RV will suit your specific needs. We usually travel with 2-adults, 1-teenager and 3-dogs. For our scenario we need a larger RV with the space required to accommodate all of the travelers.

In addition to interior space like the bathroom, sleeping arrangements, sitting space and kitchen area, with a smaller RV you also need to consider things like interior and exterior storage space, the size of the holding tanks, fresh water storage, and LP gas capacity.

We are also accustomed to having an onboard generator when we travel. When you dry camp or spend a night in a Wal-Mart parking lot a generator is a nice feature in an RV.

One of our friends saw a post on Facebook about the truck camper and said, “Nice, a traveling man cave!” When Dawn saw his response she said, that’s exactly what this is, your traveling man cave when you go to RV shows and business events by yourself.

We had a great trip and a fun adventure in the used Lance truck camper, but the moral to the story is to select an RV that is suited for you and how you travel. Trust me when I say it will make all your RV experiences the best they can be. The truck camper will be great for 1 or 2 adults, but not so much for 2-adults, 3-dogs and a 3,500 mile cross-country RV trip. ~ RV101
Question: Mark, can you tell me the correct pressure that you should inflate a tire to before taking a road trip. My trailer tires say max psi 70lbs. I can’t seem to get a straight answer from our local shops, and I want to make sure I don’t overheat them. I do know you check them first thing before driving and before the sun hits them. Thanks for any information you can provide!

Answer: It can be a bit confusing, but I'll try and explain. Tire manufacturers publish tire load and inflation tables for tires they manufacture. In a perfect world you would know what the actual load being placed on the tires is and could go to the load and inflation tables for precise inflation pressure based on that load.

Since we know this isn't always practical there are a couple of ways to help determine tire inflation pressure. On the front left corner of the travel trailer you will find a Federal Certification Tag or label. This label displays information on tire inflation pressure, GVWR and GAWR. The tire inflation you see on the label is based on what the trailer weighed when it was manufactured. If no additional weight is placed on tires this inflation pressure is accurate, but we all add weight to the RV when we load it for a trip. The question is how much weight is added and the only answer to that is to have the RV weighed, preferably by individual wheel position.

The inflation pressure molded into the sidewall of the tire is the maximum amount of air pressure you would ever inflate the tire to, if a full load was placed on the tire. You can find the tires max load range on the sidewall too.
What this means is, if the trailer tires are not overloaded the inflation pressure (depending on actual weights) is somewhere between what is posted on the certification label and what is molded in the tire sidewall. In other words in some cases it is possible to increase tire load capacity by increasing the inflation pressure in your tires, but you cannot exceed the maximum pressure specified on the sidewall of the tire. You can usually find brand specific load and inflation tables on the internet.

It’s also important that you use the same inflation pressure on both ends of each axle. If you weigh the RV and the tire loads are different on each axle end the load tables might require different inflation pressures. When this happens you need to redistribute the load. If the load can not be redistributed you would inflate both of the tires on that axle to the inflation pressure required for the tire with the heaviest load. Keep in mind that it cannot exceed the max tire pressure molded in the sidewall.

Here are a few general rules for tire inflation I like to use:

- Never pull the trailer with tires inflated to less pressure than required for the load placed on the tires.
- Never pull the trailer with tires inflated to less pressure than what is on the certification tag, no matter what the load.
- Never inflate your tires above the maximum pressure shown on the tire sidewalls.

Check out our [19 minute RV Tire Care & Maintenance E-course](#).

This online e-course is packed with information on caring for and maintaining your RV tires. Video host Mark Polk explains tire inflation, tire inspection, overloading, tire maintenance, how to decipher the tire sidewall and much more in this informative online RV tire e-course. Total Run Time is 18 minutes 40 seconds.

This affordable online e-course is priced at **only $6.99**

**RV Videos on Demand Tip:** Replacing one tire on a motorized RV, due to lack of routine maintenance, can cost you **30 times** the price of this e-course.
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RV Roof Inspection Tips

RV Refrigerator Tips & Hints

RV Tire Care Tips

RV Holding Tank Tips
Q: It seems my house batteries have died and I need to get replacements.

My current setup in my RV is (2) 24-group Marine/Deep Cycle batteries for the coach/house batteries.

I had the RV in the shop for some body work, (it was there for about 6 weeks). Now that I have it back, the batteries do not seem to be taking a charge. I had the RV plugged in overnight and battery level still only shows 2 of the 4 lights on the Test Levels Panel. I disconnected the batteries and checked the voltages, which were 9.57 and 10.97. I was wondering about the pros and cons of switching from my current arrangement of (2) 12V batteries in parallel to (2) 6 volt batteries in series. You mentioned that many RVers switch to the latter configuration. Assuming both would fit in my battery well, which I believe they would, what would be the benefits and what would be the drawbacks? Also, if I switch, what type of 6V battery should I look at?

A: Not all RV converter battery chargers do a good job recharging batteries that extremely discharged or close to dead. Your battery readings indicate the batteries are dead. It could be a dead or weak cell, or that they remained in a discharged condition for too long. I would use a hydrometer and test each cell before discarding the batteries. If readings do indicate a bad cell they would need to be replaced.

I prefer two 6-volt batteries wired in series. I have used the Trojan brand for quite some time, but there are other reputable brands available. The biggest advantage of 6-volt batteries is they are true deep cycle batteries with larger and thicker plates that can be discharged and recharged over and over again. Marine/deep cycle batteries are designed as a starting and deep cycle combination and are not true deep cycle batteries.

Another option, if you decide to stay with 12-volt batteries is to go with a larger 27 Group or 31 Group series battery. They are larger than your current 24 Group batteries and have larger thicker plates. You would just need to make sure the battery box is large enough in either case.

To stay current with what’s happening in the world of RVs between magazine issues visit our Blog. We post informative RV tips and information a couple times per week.
The brakes on your motorhome or tow vehicle were designed to effectively stop a specific amount of weight. When you add more weight to the equation it not only affects your stopping distance, but the heat generated by stopping the additional weight can lead to overheated brakes and brake fade. When I was in the military, in charge of large fleet maintenance operations, one of my goals was to teach vehicle operators how to properly use their vehicle braking system.

**Brake fade is a reduction in the vehicle’s stopping power usually related to overusing the brakes when hauling a heavy load and/or when descending steep grades.**

Many vehicles are equipped with some type of auxiliary braking system that helps slow the vehicle down without overuse of the foot brake. These auxiliary braking systems are usually some type of exhaust brake or transmission retarder. **Note:** If your vehicle is equipped with a transmission retarder watch the transmission temperature gauge when using the retarder. The transmission fluid temperature can quickly start to rise resulting in other problems. If your vehicle is not equipped with an auxiliary braking system you can slow the vehicle down by shifting the transmission into a lower gear or by using the tow/haul mode if equipped.

We just returned from cross-country RV trip to Colorado with our truck and truck camper. The loaded weight was within 400 pounds of my vehicle’s Gross Vehicle Weight Rating, so I was cautious of my stopping distance and using my vehicle brakes to slow the truck and camper down when descending steep downgrades. My truck has a tow/haul mode that helped limit my speed when descending grades, and on particularly steep and long downgrades I would put the transmission in a lower gear.
As I have seen many times before, when we were descending a downgrade, somewhere in West Virginia, there was a truck that caught on fire because of the heat generated from overusing the vehicle's brakes.

Brake fade is a serious problem that can happen quickly in any vehicle equipped with a friction braking system. When you add more weight, as is the case with a motorhome towing a vehicle or a truck towing a trailer, brake fade is more apt to occur even with a supplemental braking system or trailer brakes.

The good news is dealing with brake fade, and vehicle fires resulting from overusing your vehicle brakes, is just a matter of being educated on what brake fade is and what you can do to prevent it from happening to you. ~RV101

For more information on RV safety check out our RV Safety DVD and RV Safety E-book and RV Safety Instant Download
How will you Remember your travels?

The laptop we would’ve used to keep in touch with the kids.

The guy from Ed’s Towing. Spent three hours with him.

Not all insurance is equal. Just because you have your RV insured, doesn’t mean your whole RV experience is covered. Things like personal effects coverage, vacation liability, and towing expenses are frequently left out of other carriers’ policies. But at Explorer RV, we believe it’s more than just your RV we’re covering. It’s the travels, the good times, the memories. Visit us online to learn more or to get a quote.

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RV toilets come in different shapes, sizes and quality. There are small toilets for small RVs and there are larger upgraded style toilets for larger and roomier RV bathrooms.

Maybe you want to upgrade your current RV toilet to a better design, say from a hand flush to a foot pedal flush, or you are remodeling or restoring an RV, or maybe you just need to replace the seal on your existing RV toilet.

Whatever your situation is, the good news is replacing an RV toilet is an easy DIY project for most folks. We recently produced some videos on Dometic’s line of RV toilets and consumable products, and a toilet installation video.

After viewing the videos, you will not only know what replacement toilets are available on the market, but you know how to install the toilet too.

Enjoy the videos,
The potable water system in your house is pretty much maintenance free. The potable water system in your RV, on the other hand, requires some maintenance to keep it trouble free. Something I’ve run into quite often is the complaint that there is a stale odor coming from the RV water system. When you return from a trip and you’re not going to use the RV for a while it’s a good idea to drain the entire water system. You can start by draining the water heater. Go to the outside compartment where the water heater is located. The drain plug, or petcock is located in the bottom left hand corner. Remove the plug and open the pressure relief valve on top of the water heater to assist in draining.

**Caution:** Never drain the water heater when it’s hot or under pressure. Next you need to locate the low point water line drains. It may take a while to find them, but I assure you they are there. There will be one for the hot and one for the cold water lines. This is the lowest point in the water system. Open these and let the water drain out. There’s one more thing left to do, find the drain for the fresh water holding tank and drain all of the water from it. At this point you can turn the water pump on for a moment to force any remaining water out. Do not let the pump continue to run once the water stops draining. Close all the drains.

If by accident you forget to drain the water system and you get that notorious stale odor all is not lost. You just need to sanitize the water system. Start by draining all of the old water out, and then close all of the drains. Take a quarter cup of household bleach for every fifteen gallons of water that your fresh water tank holds. Mix the bleach into a one-gallon container and pour it into the fresh water holding tank. Fill the fresh water tank completely full of water. Turn the water pump on, open all hot and cold faucets and run the water until you smell the bleach at each faucet. Close the faucets and let it sit for at least 12 hours. Drain the entire system and re-fill the fresh water tank with water. Open all of the faucets and run the water until you no longer smell any bleach. It may be necessary to repeat this process again to eliminate all signs of bleach from the water system. Once this is done it is safe to use your water system.
Battery Charging Basics

It’s important to keep in mind that what you take out of your batteries must be put back in. If it’s not done in a timely manner the battery sulfates and can be permanently damaged. You need a three stage charger that can provide a bulk charge, an absorption charge and finally a float charge. Ideally the goal is to initially provide a bulk charge of about 14.4 volts to return the battery to 90 percent of full charge within the first couple hours. At this point the voltage drops to about 13.6 volts for the remaining 10 percent to prevent any battery gassing and water loss. When the battery is fully charged the voltage drops again to a float or maintenance charge of 13.2 volts to keep the battery topped off.

There are RV converter chargers on the market that will do this. If you purchase a multi-stage battery charger you need to know the charging current limitations of the battery being charged.

When selecting a charger, the charge rate should be between 10 and 13% of the battery’s 20-hour AH capacity.

Caution: For proper charging procedures always follow the instructions that come with the battery charger. Always match the charger voltage to the battery system. An undersized battery charger will never charge the battery regardless of how long you let it run. An oversized battery charger will cause excess gassing and heat and could result in the battery exploding or other damage.

Batteries should be charged as soon as possible after each period of use or whenever they reach an 80% state of charge or below. An 80% state of charge for a 12-volt battery is 12.5 volts, and 6.25 volts for a 6-volt battery. The batteries should only be charged in a well ventilated area and keep any sparks and open flames away from a battery being charged. Check the electrolyte levels before and after charging batteries.

If you put your RV in storage it’s a good idea to remove the batteries and put them in storage too. This is quite simple to do. When you remove a battery always remember to remove the negative terminal first. Clean the batteries with a 50/50 mixture of baking soda and water if necessary. Check the electrolyte level and add distilled water if necessary. Test the battery state of charge and charge any battery that is at or below 80%. A discharged or partially charged battery will freeze much faster than a charged battery. Store the batteries in a cool dry place but not where they could freeze.
RV Education 101 Product Catalog

Our new digital RV Product Catalog puts all of our RV training products in one place, and we separate which products apply to which type of RV. For example if you own a travel trailer you can browse through the single DVD titles or go directly to the DVD value sets that apply specifically to travel trailers.

This accomplishes two things; it eliminates the guess work as to which DVD titles go together, and it saves the RV consumer a significant amount of money with our DVD box set discounts. Our goal at RV Education 101 is simple, to help RV owners until they are comfortable operating and using their RV and to make your entire RV experience safe, fun and stress free. 

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Not sure an RV is right for you? Try renting one before you buy.

RV Rentals from El Monte RV

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Getting to your RV Destination Safely

Getting there can be half the fun, as the saying goes, if you take a few precautions to make your trip safe.

Here are my top 7 tips for getting to your destination safely:

1) The first step is to plan the trip you are taking. Travel guides, magazines, state tourism boards and Internet sites offer valuable information to help you plan your trip. Route your trip on a map or from an Internet trip planning site. Always keep an atlas or maps in the RV as well. Driving or towing an RV can be stressful, especially if you don’t know the route you will be traveling. Using a Global Positioning System (GPS) designed for RVs can make trip planning and traveling much less stressful.

2) Complete a “Pre-Trip Checklist” before you head out on the road. Simple checks like checking your tires, lights, fluid levels, tow bar set-up and other items all contribute to a safer trip. You should make these checks everyday before traveling.

3) Take plenty of breaks when you’re traveling. Stopping, stretching out and taking brief walks can revitalize you. Do not rush to get to your vacation destination. Driving too fast and for long periods of time can result in fatigue and falling asleep at the wheel. If you feel tired you should pull over and rest or change drivers. It’s a good idea to switch drivers every few hours.

4) Avoid driving or towing your RV during inclement weather and in high winds. Because of the size and mass of many RVs it can be extremely dangerous to travel during periods of high winds. It’s better to get to your destination one day later than risk traveling in bad weather conditions.

5) Limit your driving time to 5 or 6 hours a day (300 to 350 miles). Not only will you be more alert, but you will arrive at the campground with plenty of day light to get set up and settled in before it gets dark outside. This gives you a chance to unwind and get rested for another day of travel, and to enjoy some of the amenities the campground has to offer.
6) Always leave plenty of room between you and the vehicle in front of you. An RV is much heavier than an automobile and requires more braking distance to come to a stop. This alone can prevent accidents, especially during emergency braking situations. Driving at a safe speed also lowers your braking distance. Always use a supplemental braking system on the vehicle you are towing behind a motorhome.

7) Drive defensively! Stay alert and monitor what is going on around you at all times. Adjust and use your mirrors. If you’re pulling a trailer it may be necessary to add mirror extensions so you can see along the sides of the trailer.

**Note:** Cell phones are nice to have for emergencies, but they can distract the driver. Do not use a cell phone if you are driving. If you must make a call have someone that is not driving do it for you.

Never text while driving and never drink and drive!

Plan your trip, travel safe and smart and enjoy your RV experiences. Remember, getting there is half the fun! ~ **RV 101**

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**Play Video**

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Safe RV Driving Tips, RV Mirrors

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# STEAK MARINADE
(Makes 3/4 cup)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredient</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lemon juice</td>
<td>2 tablespoons (30 mL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garlic</td>
<td>4 cloves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>light soy sauce</td>
<td>1/4 cup (60 mL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mustard</td>
<td>2 tablespoons (30 mL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hot sauce</td>
<td>1/2 teaspoon (2.5 mL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worcestershire sauce</td>
<td>1 tablespoon (15 mL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>black peppercorns</td>
<td>1 teaspoon (5 mL)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extra-virgin olive oil</td>
<td>1/4 cup (60 mL)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Combine the lemon juice, garlic, soy sauce, mustard, hot sauce, Worcestershire sauce, and peppercorns in a bowl. Mix well.

Slowly whisk the olive oil into the mixture. Continue to whisk to combine all the ingredients. Place steaks in a container with a lid. Pour the marinade over the steaks. Turn the steaks in order to completely coat them with marinade. Cover.

Refrigerate for 8 hours or overnight. Turn the steaks in the marinade once or twice while marinating. Cook steaks to individual preference.

Please visit The Cooking Ladies’ website at [www.thecookingladies.com](http://www.thecookingladies.com)

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Happy Hour Recipes PDF E-book
This #1 best selling e-book is the first in The Cooking Ladies' Favorite series. And to make this cookbook even more outstanding, The Cooking Ladies have included a photo of each finished dish. Recipe ingredients are given in both Imperial and metric measurements.
New Fastway® Product Keeps Trailer Ball Greased

Fastway Trailer Products introduces a tethered ball cover that keeps grease on the ball and off of clothes. Unlike other ball covers, the Fastway tethered ball cover conveniently stays with the hitch ball while towing and is ready to use when it’s time to store the trailer.

The Fastway tethered ball cover makes storing a trailer faster and easier. Two different models are available: one for a 2" ball, and one for a 2-5/16" ball.

The new Fastway Tethered Ball Cover is currently available through dealerships serving the towing industry throughout the United States and Canada.
RV Product Spotlight

Dicor Metal RV Roof Coating

In this informative RV 101 TV video Mark Polk with RV Education 101 demonstrates how to coat a metal RV roof using Dicor’s Metal Roof Coating products. This coating protects and beautifies metal, aluminum, steel, and previously coated RV roofs.

PLAY VIDEO

Tired of dead batteries?
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RV Education 101 Learning RVs the Easy Way

2013 Media Kit
Our goal with RV Consumer E-Magazine is to provide you with helpful information to make all of your RV experiences more enjoyable. I left my position as an RV Sales and F&I manager in 2000 to start RV Education 101.

We produce RV educational videos & DVDs and publish books and e-books on how to safely & properly use and maintain your RV. The reason I left my job was because of my concern about the lack of educational and safety awareness material available to the RV consumer, in other words you.

My wife Dawn left her position in RV sales to help start the company, and is our Sales and Marketing Director. We currently have a 35-foot Class A motor home. We have two boys, Tyler 16 and Josh 22, both avid RVers and three dogs, Roxie, Gracie and Buck. If you would like to learn more about us and about RV Education 101 please visit www.rveducation101.com

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