RV Trends 2016 
from America’s Largest RV Show

Get Ready for Fall Camping

camping tips / maintenance tips / trip ideas

How To Back a Trailer the Easy Way

October 2015  
Volume 5  
Issue 10

RV Consumer e-Magazine

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In September we attended what is billed as “America’s Largest RV Show” in Hershey Pennsylvania. My goal was to look at the new RVs and RV trends for 2016. We did not see all of the new RV models during the three days we attended the show, but what we did see looks promising for next year’s camping season. Check out my “RV Trends 2016” feature article in this issue for more information.

Summer is over, but fall is a great time of the year to go camping, so I am including some cold weather camping and maintenance tips for those of you planning to take some fall camping trips.

Enjoy this issue of RV Consumer Magazine, and if you have RV friends and family tell them to subscribe, and to like us on Facebook.

Happy camping & stay safe,
~ Mark
Our digital RV Product Catalog puts all of our RV training products in one place, and we separate what products apply to what 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.

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Summer is over but that doesn’t mean you need to park the RV for the remainder of 2015. With lower gas prices and cooler temperatures this fall is a great time to plan and take some fun-filled RV trips.

When I was a child every fall my grandmother would load us kids in her Buick and go for a drive through the rolling hills of North Central Pennsylvania to enjoy the breathtaking fall foliage. Those memories of a road trip and a sea of beautiful vibrant colors have stayed with me my entire life, and contributed to my passion for fall camping.

Although I no longer live in the Northeast, where some of the most beautiful displays of fall foliage exist, we are fortunate to live just a few hours drive from the spectacular Blue Ridge Parkway fall foliage show.

Regardless of where you live it’s well worth taking a fun-filled fall camping trip to a location where you can witness and enjoy the brilliant display of fall colors on the trees. Keep in mind that timing is important, the impressive displays of color happen at different times in different parts of the country, dependent on elevations and other factors like temperature and rainfall. In North Central Pennsylvania it was usually around mid-October, and in the Appalachian Mountain range it is usually mid to late October.

Our plan is to load up the old 67 Yellowstone trailer we restored a few years ago and head to the Blue Ridge Parkway for several days later this month. We will probably start in the Asheville area and go north. As the elevation changes so will Mother Nature's display of fall foliage.

I am really looking forward to this RV trip and my grandmother will be with me in my thoughts and memories as we enjoy one of nature’s natural firework displays ~ RV101

You can do a quick Internet search to locate the best areas and the best time of year to see the leaves in full color.
We enjoy using our RV as much as possible throughout the year. Sometimes that means taking a cold weather camping trip in the RV. These trips can be lots of fun if you and the RV are prepared to deal with the colder temperatures.

The RV forced air furnace is your first line of defense for staying warm in the RV when temperatures plummet, so it’s important to make sure the furnace itself and everything related to it are in proper working order. The RV furnace needs electricity to operate, whether supplied directly from the RV batteries or through the converter when you are plugged into 120-volt AC power. The other component the furnace needs to operate is LP gas.

The first thing I do before a cold weather RV trip is make sure the LP gas cylinders or tank is full, and the battery is serviced and fully charged. The RV furnace will consume more LP gas and deplete the battery quicker than other appliances, so these simple steps are essential. Other furnace tips are to make sure the return air grill is not blocked and the heat ducts are open and clean. Some RVs use flexible heat ducting and it can get bent or crushed when packing supplies where the ducting is exposed, like under dinette seats, so be careful when loading supplies and periodically inspect the ducting for any damage.

To help supplement heat from the RV furnace we take a couple small thermostatically controlled electric heaters with us. Make sure you purchase heaters that pose no threat of a fire, and that will turn off automatically if accidentally tipped over. These small heaters work great and help save on LP gas when you are plugged into a 120-volt electrical source, or when using a generator.

Caution: Never use the range top burners, oven, or a portable fuel fired heater (propane, kerosene, butane) inside the RV for heat. Carbon monoxide gas is colorless, tasteless, invisible and deadly. Any source of heat not vented outside is extremely dangerous and can be deadly.

When you are camping in cold weather the key is to keep the heat in the RV. You can start by selecting a site where you get plenty of sun during the daytime and where the RV has some protection against any wind. Take extra clothing and blankets along on the trip. There is nothing like a pair of sweatpants, a sweatshirt, warm socks and a blanket to help stay warm when it’s cold outside. Don’t forget to pack the electric blanket too, it does wonders on a cold winter night in the RV. ~RV101

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Here are some simple maintenance procedures you can follow to not only help prepare your RV for cold temperatures, but to also help prevent untimely breakdowns as a result of the colder weather.

1) **RV Tire Tips:** During the warmer months of the year I constantly remind folks not to check tire pressure when the tires are hot, meaning after the RV was moved or driven more than one mile. Hot weather and hot tire temperatures cause tire inflation to increase. But something seldom discussed is what happens to your tire pressure when the mercury plummets? The answer is, when it’s cold outside the air pressure in your tires drops 1 to 2 pounds for every 10 degree drop in temperature. This means if you have not checked the tire pressure in your RV tires since that trip you took in August your tire pressure could be dangerously underinflated when you head out for the holidays. The best advice I can offer is to get in a habit of checking and adjusting tire pressure monthly, so it is correct regardless of the outside temperature. This applies to your automobiles too.

2) **Automotive Antifreeze Tips:** When you talk about RVs and antifreeze most folks think about the RV antifreeze used to protect the RV water system from freezing. We will talk about that type of antifreeze in a minute, but first I want to talk about the automotive antifreeze used in the RV or tow vehicle’s engine coolant system. Glycol antifreeze does several things to help protect your engine:
   a. When it’s cold out it helps lower the freezing point of water.
   b. The corrosion inhibitors that are added to the antifreeze help prevent scale and rust build-up in the cooling system.
   c. It provides protection against boiling during the hot summer months.
   d. It helps keep the engine operating at its most efficient temperature regardless of operating conditions and outside temperatures.
Just like engine oil the antifreeze in your RV or tow vehicle automotive cooling system needs to be replaced at regular intervals. If you have not had this service performed in the last few years check your vehicle owner’s manual for the recommended intervals and schedule an appointment to have it done.

3) RV Battery Tips: Batteries are no different than tires and antifreeze when it comes to being affected by weather. In cold temperatures it’s important that both the starting battery and coach batteries remain fully charged. A discharged or partially charged battery will freeze much faster than a charged battery. Batteries in storage will lose a percentage of the charge while they sit idle. It’s not uncommon for a battery to discharge up to 10% a month when it is in storage. Cold temperatures slow this natural discharge process down and warmer temperatures speed the process up. You should test the stored battery state of charge every month and charge batteries that are at or below an 80% state of charge, which is 12.4 volts for a 12-volt battery.

If your RV converter charges the battery(s) at a constant rate, around 13.5 volts, this is too high for a float charge and it can deplete the electrolyte over a period of time. In this situation plug the RV in periodically during storage and allow the converter charger to charge the battery(s) for 8 to 12 hours. Some RV converter multi-stage chargers and aftermarket chargers are designed to maintain a float charge on the battery after the batteries are charged and will not deplete the electrolyte. Remember, for the converter charger to operate the RV needs to be plugged into electricity. The other option is to remove the batteries and store them in a cool dry place to prevent them from freezing, but you should still check and recharge batteries that drop below an 80% state of charge.

Tip: If you remove the batteries take a picture, or draw a diagram of how they are connected to assist with installing them again next spring.

4) RV Fuel System Tips: Number four on my list is adding a fuel preservative
to the fuel system, especially if you have an on-board generator. **Tip:** This applies to other gas powered engines too, like lawnmowers, weed eaters, and portable generators that tend to sit in storage for months at a time. The fuel that sits in the small needle valves of a carburetor can begin to breakdown and gum-up in a very short period of time. The result is the engine may not start or run properly next spring when you take it out of storage. A fuel preservative can prevent this from happening. Add the recommended amount of fuel preservative to the fuel tank and run the vehicle engine and generator long enough for the preservative to get through the entire fuel system.

Another good idea is to change the oil and oil filter on the vehicle engine and generator prior to storage. Acids accumulate in used engine oil and can corrode engine bearings, especially while sitting for long periods of time. I also recommend starting and running the generator every month for an hour or two with at least a half-rated load on it. Moisture build-up can cause damage to your generator. When you exercise the generator it heats up the generator windings and eliminates this moisture build-up. This monthly exercise regime also lubricates all of the engine seals and components and helps prevent carbon build-up. Consult your generator owner’s manual for generator load ratings.

5) **RV Winterizing Tips:** Last but certainly not least is winterizing the RV water system. The RV plumbing system is the most vulnerable system to damage from plummeting temperatures. To protect it from freezing you need to add non-toxic RV/marine antifreeze to all of the water lines in the RV. It’s not that difficult to winterize the water system yourself, or you can schedule an appointment with a RV repair facility to winterize the RV for you. The important thing is to have it done before temperatures drop below freezing.

If you are interested in doing it yourself and saving some money we offer a [Winterizing & Storing DVD](#) or as an [instant download](#) to show you exactly how it’s done.

There you have it, my top 5 cold weather maintenance tips. If you are not comfortable doing any of these preventive maintenance procedures have the work done by a reputable RV repair facility. You will be glad you did next spring when the RV is ready for the first camping trip of the new year.

~**RV101**
A continuing trend I noticed at the Pennsylvania RV & Camping Show in Hershey, Pa. this year is lightweight and ultra-lightweight travel trailers. This makes sense because auto manufacturers continue to build and market vehicles with tow ratings in the 3,500 pound range. Let’s look at some of the areas RV manufacturers, like Lance Campers, concentrate on when building light-weight units. To hear how a light-weight travel trailer is constructed, watch my interview video with a Lance Camper Regional Sales Manager below.

- Aluminum frame super structure
- Light-weight Azdel composite material rather than Luan.
- Single LP gas cylinder
- Light-weight frame
- Lite-Ply interior construction
- Single axle used on some models. Independent torsion bar suspension
- Light-weight windows on some models

These are some examples of the construction techniques and products used by Lance Camper in their light-weight composite built travel trailers, ranging in length from 15 to 22 feet. For more information visit www.lancecamper.com

Watch Lance Camper Interview Video
I mentioned a moment ago that a continuing trend I see is lightweight and ultra-lightweight travel trailers.

This segment continues to grow for several reasons. Government mandated Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) regulations force auto and truck manufacturers to reduce energy consumption by increasing fuel economy, and consumers want economical daily driver vehicles.

When this spills over to the RV Industry the result is smaller and lighter towable RVs. First time RV buyers want an affordable RV that makes sense with their budget, and many of the SUVs and Crossover vehicles they are driving have tow capacities in the 3,500 pound range.

This dictates RV manufacturers design and build units to a specific price point and a specific weight. The weight goal being to keep the dry or unloaded weight at or below 3,000 pounds.

Another popular tow rating among SUVs and light-duty trucks is the 5,000 pound range.

This is of course why you see longer and larger ultra-light travel trailers models too. When you combine new composite construction material technology with modern day manufacturing today’s RV manufacturers can hit the target weight and price point they are seeking.

It is still the responsibility of the owner, and dealer, to ensure the tow vehicle and trailer are properly and safely matched. Just because a travel trailer has a dry weight of 4,600 pounds and you have a tow vehicle rated at 5,000 pounds does not mean it will work. You need to account for any weight added to the tow vehicle, the trailer and the hitch or tongue weight. You also need to look at other weight ratings like the Gross Combined Weight Rating (GCWR). This additional weight can quickly put you over the tow vehicle’s rated capacity. It is not a proper or safe match when any of the trailer or tow vehicle’s weight ratings are exceeded.
There is a lot to consider when it comes to weights, but a quick and simple towing formula I use is:

**The tow vehicle’s Maximum Loaded Trailer Weight Rating (MLTWR), or tow capacity, should be equal to or greater than the travel trailer’s Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (GVWR)**

The reason I recommend this is because the trailer’s GVWR is significantly higher than the trailer’s dry or unloaded weight. So, even if you load the trailer to its maximum rated capacity the tow vehicle is still rated to tow the weight, at least on paper!

The lightweight trailer market is going strong, but don’t worry if that is not the type of trailer for you. There are towable RVs built in every size, weight, and for every buyer.

In just a few short years these Sprinter based motorhomes were available in gas or diesel powered type A, B and C motorhomes. Now this smaller, lighter 26-foot and under motorized RV category continues to increase in sales and in popularity. Reasons for these increases can be contributed to several factors; these smaller, lighter RV models are more fuel efficient, easier to drive, roomy and they offer an appealing price point to prospective motorhome buyers.

Larger motorized RVs are and will continue to be designed and built for consumers who want them, but it is my opinion that the smaller lighter Sprinter based A,B & C motorhomes will dominate the marketplace in the future.
Another trend I noticed is more and more RV manufacturers are using residential style refrigerators, as opposed to RV type refrigerators. What this means is instead of having a refrigerator that operates on LP gas or electricity you have an all-electric refrigerator. I first noticed this a couple years ago, but it was predominantly in motorized RVs. Now I am seeing it in more towable RVs as well. After speaking to some manufacturing reps about it the theory is you can get a larger capacity refrigerator that is much more efficient than a typical RV refrigerator. To make a residential refrigerator work in an RV application manufacturers are using a dedicated inverter just for the refrigerator. Inverters change 12-volt DC battery voltage into 120-volt AC voltage. This means when the RV is not plugged into a 120-volt power source the all-electric refrigerator will still operate off of the RV batteries. In this situation there is some concern about recharging the battery at some point. While you are driving or towing the RV the vehicle’s alternator will assist in charging the battery that the inverter is running on, and in a dry-camping scenario you could use solar panels or a generator to recharge the battery. And of course when you are plugged into a 120-volt power source the refrigerator operates the same as the one in your house does. My concern would be keeping an eye on water levels in lead-acid batteries as the inverter and charging process can deplete it sooner.

This next trend will only get more prevalent as time goes on. For lack of better words the trend I am talking about is technology in electronics. I’m not just talking about flat screen TVs and electric awnings.

A few years ago at the National RV Trade Show I noticed some RV manufacturers and vendors advertising portable tablet devices with touchpad controls that operate almost everything in and on an RV. You could operate the awning, window shades, slide-outs, lights, TV, stereo, monitor panel, heat & air and much more at the touch of a button.

Again this was more predominant in more expensive motorized RVs at the
Time. But as with all technology when time passes, and it becomes more affordable, it shows up in less expensive applications. The result is this type of touch-screen technology will eventually be available across the board. The RV you purchase will either come equipped with a portable device to control the onboard systems and components, or there will be an App available to control these functions using your Apple or Android smart phone.

It’s some people’s opinion that applying this kind of technology in RVs distracts from what camping is really all about, while others will argue it is the way of the future. If RV manufacturers are targeting Millennials and Generation X buyers, who were raised on video games and given a smart phone at age nine they will incorporate as much of this technology in RVs as possible.

When I was a kid we camped in tents and if you needed to use a phone you drove 15 or 20 miles from the campsite to the closest general store that had a pay phone. We didn’t take TVs or video games to keep us entertained. Our entertainment was collecting enough firewood to stay warm at night, fishing and hunting, and driving around on old logging trails in beat-up four-wheel drive pickup trucks.

After many more years of “tent camping” in the Army and as I get older I do find myself enjoying the amenities camping in RVs has to offer, but I personally don’t mind turning the furnace on at the thermostat, or turning a light on at the switch. But that’s just me.

Whether you think, or agree that high-tech gadgetry is good or bad for the RV industry, or society in general, one thing is certain technology is not going to slow down or go away.  ~RV101
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When we started RV Education 101 in 1999 we sold our RV training material on VHS tapes. We watched that evolve to DVDs, and nearly a decade ago we started experimenting with video download technology as we anticipated that would be the way of the future. Now the future is here!

Tablets and smart phones are forecast to be the majority platform for video by 2016 and we wanted to offer our customers a bulletproof method for instant video content delivery. Our goal was to perfect this technology, for both download and streamed video, so you can view the video content with or without an internet connection. It took us over eight years, but our new RV Education 101 video App perfected the instant video download process.

Apps are faster, more convenient and provide additional functionality, like the capability to download videos directly to a device for offline viewing, so it only made sense to concentrate our efforts on a video App.

Our new App is titled “RV Education 101” and it is available through both Apple and Android App Stores.

The Apple IOS App works on iPhone, iPad and iPod touch devices. The App is free to download and when you open the App’s main menu it lists all of the full-feature RV training titles that are currently available. You then have the option to purchase individual chapters that you are interested in, or entire videos. You also have the option to stream or download the video content. If you download the video you can view it whenever and wherever you like without the requirement for Internet access to view the video. And because it is an instant download with limited overhead we are able to pass the savings onto you.

We are currently in the process of updating some of our other RV training videos. As these videos are completed we will add the new titles to our video App. Our goal is to have all the pertinent information, for the whatever type of RV you own, available in one App so you can stream or download the content at the touch of a button. This will simplify speed up the delivery process so you can order, download and view the video content you that interests you in the matter of minutes. ~RV101
A problem I see at campgrounds, and that I get asked about frequently, is how to back a trailer into a campsite. Backing a trailer is perhaps the most nerve-racking part of owning a travel trailer or 5th wheel trailer. For some RV owners just the thought of backing the trailer prevents them from taking trips and enjoying their RV. Based on my observations at campgrounds backing a trailer has probably contributed to more than one failed marriage too.

If you tow a trailer you more-than-likely have heard different versions of the “best” or “easiest” method for backing a trailer, like:

1) Put your hand at the bottom of the steering wheel and turn the wheel in the direction you want the trailer to go.
2) Use walkie-talkies.
3) Look out the window, over your shoulder, and back-up.
4) Just use your mirrors.
5) Use a spotter at the rear of the trailer and watch their directions in the mirrors.

These backing techniques might work for some people, but the fact of the matter is they don’t work for most.

To be proficient at almost anything, like backing a trailer, requires practice but all the practice in the world won’t help if you don’t have a basic understanding of how it is done in the first place.

I learned to back trailers in the military, but working for an RV dealership is where I became proficient at backing trailers. We rearranged the entire sales lot about twice a month, moving and backing trailer after trailer. Eventually I was put in charge of organizing and setting up numerous RV shows where travel trailers and fifth-wheel trailers had to be backed within inches of walls, obstacles, and other RVs.

To do this successfully, time and again, required a bullet-proof backing technique and a few general guidelines. Let’s start with the basics.

• First my technique requires two people, and the person driving must listen to and follow all directions given by the person spotting. This is why I always say it is important to discuss who should drive and who should spot. The spotter is the eyes and ears for the driver.

• Another important consideration is for the spotter to understand where the
pivot-point is on the trailer. The pivot-point is a fixed point on the trailer that the trailer rotates around when making a turn. On a two-axle trailer the pivot-point is the center point between the two axles. The pivot-point is important because it lets the spotter know when to instruct the driver to start turning the steering wheel in the direction you want the trailer to go.

- The next step is to discuss and agree on some basic hand signals you both understand. At a minimum this includes hand signals for a left turn, right turn, straight back, and stop.

With the preliminaries out of the way let's get to the part that makes my backing technique so easy.

I am convinced the reason people have a difficult time backing a trailer is because the trailer turns in the opposite direction you turn the steering wheel. My technique eliminates all of the confusion.

Position the spotter towards the front of the tow vehicle where the driver can see and hear them. Roll the window down and turn the radio off. Here’s the easy part. If the spotter wants the back of the trailer to turn to the their left, they tell the driver to turn the steering wheel to the left. There is no confusion whatsoever. If the spotter wants the back of the trailer to turn to their right, they tell the driver to turn the steering wheel to the right. The direction the spotter wants the rear of the trailer to go is the same direction they tell the driver to turn the steering wheel. It’s that easy!

This is where the practice comes in. After this easy backing technique is understood by both the spotter and the driver you simply need to practice. It’s a good idea to go to a large empty parking lot to practice. Take some orange traffic cones with you and set up different backing scenarios. Practice as a team until you are proficient at backing the trailer.

Here are some other important backing tips to always remember:

1) Always inspect the area behind the RV prior to backing a trailer. If there are small children or pets in the area ask somebody to watch behind the trailer as you back. If it is just you and the spotter stop frequently and look behind the trailer.

2) Always check for overhead obstacles and any obstacles at the campground like picnic tables and utility hook-ups prior to backing into a site.

3) Backing from the driver’s side is always preferable. Backing from the passenger side is your blind side and it makes the maneuver more difficult to do.

4) It is easier to start a backing maneuver if the tow vehicle and trailer are in a straight line. Pull up far enough to get the tow vehicle and trailer straight.
straight if possible.

5) If you need additional assistance with the backing maneuver place some orange traffic cones along the path you are backing in. Place the cones at locations where turning is required to help the spotter see when the pivot point is approaching the cone so you can start making the turn.

6) The spotter needs to watch the pivot-point in anticipation of making a turn, and then must tell the driver when to turn in the opposite direction to recover from the turn.

7) Two of the biggest mistakes made when backing a trailer are turning the steering wheel too quickly and holding it in the turned position too long. Both of these mistakes can result in the trailer starting to jack-knife.

8) Do not be afraid to pull up and start the backing maneuver again. It is better to start over than it is to continue backing when the trailer if off course.

With the right technique and with practice you will be backing like the pros in no time. ～RV101
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.

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Getting to

Campground Tips for Better RV Trips

Enjoyable RV trips start at the campground. A bad experience while setting-up, or during your stay can quickly ruin a trip you have looked forward to taking for a long time. In this informative RV how-to video Mark offers some excellent tips to make all of your campground experiences the best they can be.
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RV Education 101 Learning RVs the Easy Way

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 18 and Josh 24, both avid RVers and two dogs, Roxie and Gracie. If you would like to learn more about us and about RV Education 101 please visit www.rveducation101.com

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