

2017 SPRING MAGAZINE

COAST TO COAST



The Incomparable Valley

John Muir's Yosemite

Locking Through

Lockport and the Erie Canal

SPRING DESTINATIONS

Black Canyon Ranch RV Resort
Black Canyon City, Arizona

Eagles Landing Resort and Recreation
Grove, Oklahoma

Saratoga Escape Lodges and RV Resort
Greenfield Center, New York

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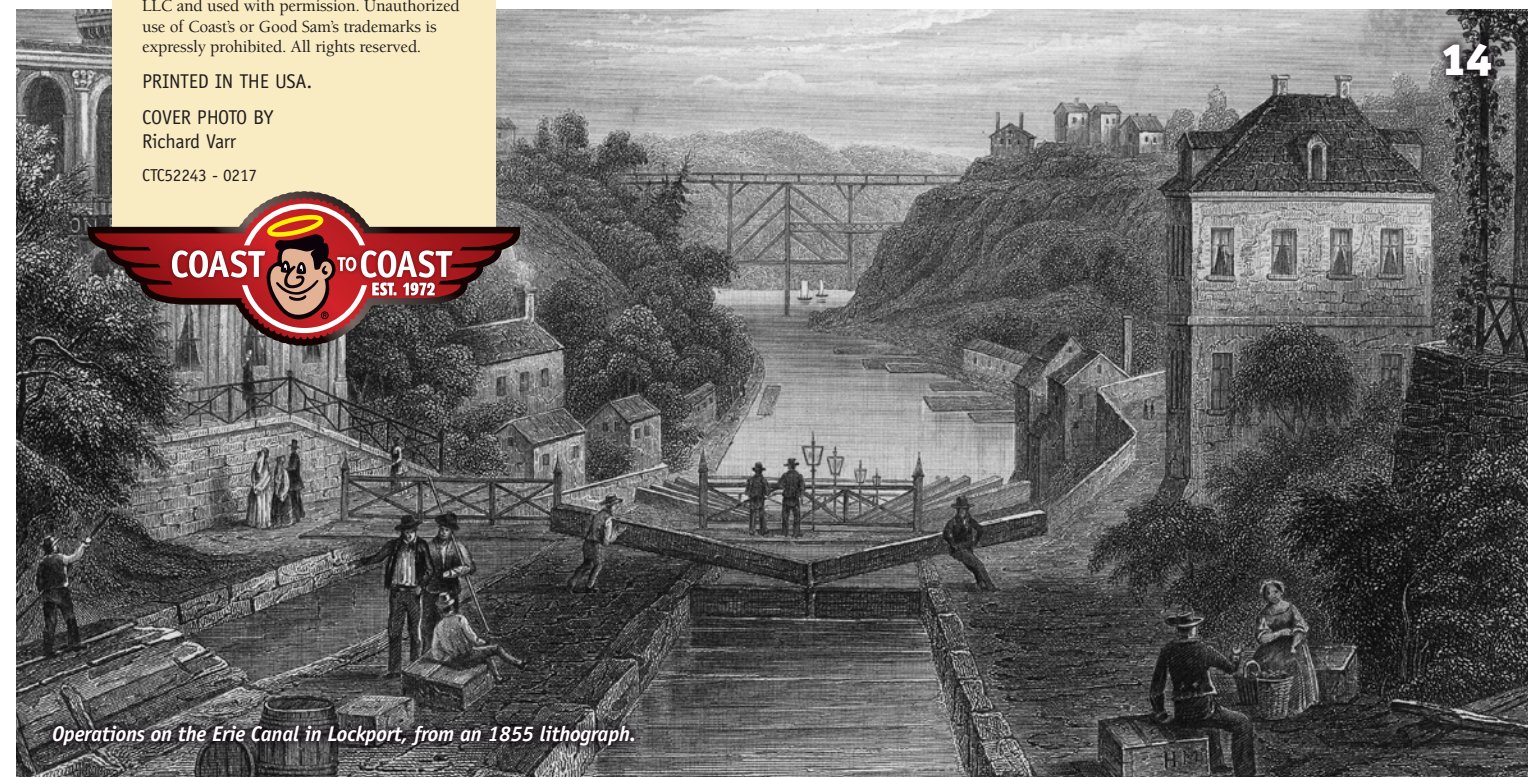
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Operations on the Erie Canal in Lockport, from an 1855 lithograph.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

PUTTING MEMBERS FIRST



Welcome to our Inaugural DIGITAL-ONLY Edition

As we announced throughout 2016, this issue of Coast Magazine is the first of our planned digital-only editions. Starting this year the spring, summer, and fall editions of Coast Magazine will be digital-only editions. The Coast Annual Directory, our winter issue, will continue to be a print edition.

Each digital-only edition will be available in two formats, as a true digital edition and as a PDF. If you prefer to read from a printed page, you have the option of printing the PDF. Or you can download and save the PDF and read it at your leisure either on a computer or tablet. The true digital edition is a “flipbook” with live links that will allow you to drill down to learn more about places and websites mentioned in each article. We have not changed the content of our magazine issue with the switch to digital editions, as you’ll still find Member Matters, resort profiles, feature travel stories, and RV reviews. As you read this issue we would appreciate any feedback you have. You can send your comments to CCRPresident@CoastResorts.com.

By now Coast members have received their printed copy of the 2017 Coast Annual Resort Directory. Believe it or not, we’ll start working on the 2018 directory in just a few short months. We have incorporated member suggestions over the years to improve the usability and readability of the annual directory for all members. So as you use the 2017 Coast Annual Resort Directory, if you have any feedback on ways we can improve this publication, please email CCRPresident@CoastResorts.com.

Our spring issue features a pretty diverse and informative selection of articles. Member Matters has exciting news of two new Good Neighbor Parks that we have added since publication of the 2017 directory. Richard Varr takes you on a journey to the many sites in Yosemite National Park,

and provides a history lesson on how a camping trip to this special place by naturalist John Muir and Teddy Roosevelt helped give birth to the network of U.S. National Parks. Neala McCarten explores the history of the Erie Canal, while taking readers on a tour of the current-day canal in and around the enchanting town of Lockport. Dave G. Houser explores a place few readers probably know about, the “Astronomy Trail” in Arizona where you can star gaze at several different observatories through some of the largest telescopes in the world. And Howard J. Elmer does his usual fine job providing us with an RV review, introducing us to Gulf Stream’s Vintage Cruiser which combines “the fun and style of the 1950s with the technology of the 21st century.”

We hope you’ll enjoy this inaugural digital-only edition of Coast Magazine. And wherever your wanderlust...and your Coast membership...take you this year, we wish you a safe and enjoyable journey.

Member Get a Park and \$50

And it’s easy. In fact, a \$50 Camping World Gift Certificate has recently been mailed to one of our members who recommended a favorite resort, Tiki RV Park in St. Ignace, Michigan. Tiki RV Park is now one of the newest Good Neighbor Parks in our network.

To get your favorite non-Coast to Coast resort considered to become a new affiliate, here’s what to do. Coast members should have recently stayed at the facility and must provide the following:

- Name, address, phone number, and contact at facility
- Indicate whether facility is a membership resort (potential resort) or an open-to-the-public park (potential Good Neighbor Park).
- Member's name and Coast member number
- Date that member visited the park or resort
- Submit Member Get a Park referrals to:
Email: CCRPresident@CoastResorts.com
Mail: Coast to Coast, Member Get a Park,
PO Box 7028, Englewood, CO 80155-7028

All Coast members with active memberships are eligible to submit Member Get a Park referrals. In the case that Coast signs a new affiliate that is recommended by more than one member, only the first member recommending the new facility will be awarded the \$50 Camping World gift certificate.

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MEMBER matters

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR COAST TO COAST MEMBERSHIP

Two New Coast to Coast Good Neighbor Parks



Driftwood RV Resort and Campground – Sun RV Resorts

With a prime location in the Cape May area, Driftwood RV Resort and Campground in Clermont, New Jersey, offers a great combination of on-site entertainment, spacious accommodations, and local attractions for the ultimate getaway. Surrounded by 200 acres of lush grounds dominated by large shade trees, Driftwood features a host of amenities for guests to enjoy: private lake and sandy beach, arcade room, tennis, basketball, and planned activities and themed weekends throughout the season. Nearby are the beaches and boardwalks of Wildwood and Avalon.

Fine wines, outstanding restaurants, classic jazz festivals, and special events year-round. Some things just get better with age, and charming Cape May is no exception. This historic Victorian seaside gem is our nation's oldest resort town and one of the most beautiful spots in the country. The entire city is a National Historic District, with nearly 600 preserved Victorian buildings.

Amenities at Driftwood RV Resort and Campground include recreational hall, cable, outdoor pool, hot tub, playground, group activities, arcade, tennis, basketball, volleyball, shuffleboard, grocery store, fitness center, beach, fishing (catch & release), billiards, corn hole, pavilion, laundry and library. Nearby are a casino, tourist attractions, shopping, golf and fishing.

Tiki RV Park and Campground

This new Good Neighbor Park, nominated by a Coast to Coast member in our Member Get a Park program, can be a destination park for you or used as a base for day trips. Tiki RV Park, in St. Ignace, Michigan, can be described as relaxing, comfortable, family oriented and scenic. But if you want to wander from the beautiful grounds and friendly staff there are many nearby scenic attractions. Within short reach are Mackinac Island via the St. Ignace Ferry, Fort Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City, Mill Creek, The Soo Locks and Tahquamenon Falls. And if you’re feeling lucky or adventurous, there are free shuttles that will pick you up and bring you back from the Kewadin Casino, which is a north woods themed casino with restaurant.

When you step off the ferry that’s brought you from the Michigan mainland onto Mackinac Island, you will be in a living Victorian village. Limited to transportation by horse and buggy, bicycle or foot and surrounded by water, Mackinac Island has escaped the vast changes of time. The entire island is listed as a National Historic Landmark and more than 80 percent of the island is preserved as Mackinac Island State Park.

Tiki RV Park amenities include laundry, firewood, snack bar, pool table and hiking trails. Nearby are a casino, RV service, tourist attractions, shopping, golf and fishing.

RESORT UPDATES

ADDITIONS AND CHANGES TO THE 2017 DIRECTORY

The 2017 Coast to Coast Resort Directory is packed with everything you need to navigate the network of Coast to Coast Resorts and Coast Good Neighbor Parks. To keep members up-to-date, each issue of Coast magazine includes any updates that have occurred since the last issue.

GOOD NEIGHBOR PARKS

GOOD NEIGHBOR NEW MICHIGAN

Tiki RV Park & Campground, 200 S Airport Rd, St Ignace, MI 49781. Phone: 906- 643-7808. URL: tikirvpark.com
Directions: From northbound Jct of I-75 & Bus I-75/US 2 (exit 344A), N 3 mi on Bus I-75 (State St) to S Airport Rd, W 0.1 mi. Resort on L. Check-in: 1 p.m. Check-out: 11 a.m. Latitude: 45.88198; Longitude: -84.72785. Notations: Special discount rate for Coast members. Drive-ups not accepted.

NEW JERSEY

Driftwood RV Resort & Campground - Sun RV Resorts, 1955 Rte 9, Clermont, NJ, 08210. Phone: 248-234-6027. URL: sunrvresorts.com
Directions: From Jct US 9 & SR 83: S 0.1 mi on US 9. Resort on R. Check-in: Noon; Check-out: Noon. Latitude: 39.14919; Longitude: -74.76364. Notations: Special discount rate for Coast members. Rate includes 30/50 amp, full hook-up, picnic table, fire ring, cable. 2 adults /2 kids per site. Additional charges: Extra person (over 6 yrs) \$5/night. Tents, pop-ups, conversion vans accepted. Firewood must be purchased at resort. Drive-ups not accepted.

GOOD NEIGHBOR UPDATES MISSOURI

Lazy Day Campground, Montgomery City, 63361 to Danville, 63361

GOOD NEIGHBOR PARK TERMINATIONS TENNESSEE

Smoky Mountain Premier RV Resort, Cosby



RESORT TYPE
Good Neighbor Park

LOCATION
Black Canyon City, Arizona

SEASON
April 1-October 31

WEBSITE
blackcanyonranchrv.com

Black Canyon Ranch RV Resort

Come for the amenities; stay for the friendships

What do you have when you combine perfection—a perfect 10/10*/10 rating—breathtaking views, ample amenities, and friendly staff and members? You have Black Canyon Ranch RV Resort in Black Canyon City, Arizona.

The resort was so spectacular that fulltimers Raymond and Christine Dantes decided four years ago to hang up their keys and stay a while. Christine is now the manager and Raymond is the maintenance manager.

“We fell in love with the scenery and the proximity with everything in Arizona,” says Christine. “The first thing we did when we first visited was to come into the clubhouse and meet some of the people. From the minute we were there, we felt a sense of welcoming—that we were part of the group.”

In addition to being welcoming, the resort boasts beautiful desert-themed upgraded landscaping that includes historic wagons placed throughout the 11-acre park. Leafy

shade trees and citrus trees with fruit to pick are dotted throughout.

Facilities include a newly renovated, smoke-free clubhouse. The game room has a pool table, card tables, and a karaoke machine. The adjacent pool area has gas grill, deck with lounge chairs and umbrella tables. The pool and spa are heated year-round. Exercise on the new nature walk that’s located at the back of the park next to the doggie corral. Enjoy Chef Mat’s delicious food and excellent coffee choices at Nora Jean’s Koffee Kitchen.

The Community of Anthem and Designer Outlets are just 14 miles south. Canyon Creek Dude Ranch with horse rides and cattle drives is located nearby. Grand Canyon, Flagstaff, Prescott, Sedona, Jerome, Cave Creek, Scottsdale, and Phoenix are all within a pleasant day’s drive.



RESORT TYPE
Premier

LOCATION
Grove, Oklahoma

SEASON
Year-Round

WEBSITE
eaglesresorts.net

Eagles Landing Resort and Recreation

New ownership completes upgrades throughout the resort

For 20 years Sandra Kyles, Member Services Director, has been welcoming members to Eagles Landing Resort, and she’s excited about what’s happening under new ownership.

“The new owner, Robert Nurnberg, is doing an awesome job of renovating,” she says. “There’s new landscaping. The showers and restrooms have been remodeled along with the cabins. There’s also a brand new swimming pool.”

In fact, the remodeled cabins are a home away from home. The new beach entry pool is one of the largest of its kind in the region. And that’s not all. Try out the mini golf, pickle ball, game room, theater room, and clubhouse. For water lovers, make time for kayaking, water trikes, fishing, and boating. Take advantage of the boat slips and ramp, heated fishing dock, fish cleaning station, and boat storage. Meet new friends playing basketball, volleyball, and badminton. Forgot the salt; shop at the Kountry Store.

During holiday weekends, the activities department organizes many family friendly activities and concerts.

One of the extra amenities is the proximity to the Grand Lake O’ the Cherokees—a big lake covering 46,500 acres with a lot to offer. There are five state parks around the winding, scenic shoreline, as well as all the privately operated commercial marinas, restaurants, and fishing guides. Native fish species found in the Grand Lake include large-mouth bass, white bass, channel catfish, blue catfish, spoonbills, crappie, and bluegill.

From Eagles Landing guests are treated to an enchanting view of the lighted 2,548-foot-long, 29-foot-wide, four lane “Sailboat Bridge.” The bridge deck curves upward in a parabolic arch about 40 feet higher at the center than at the ends. Tall sailboats could pass underneath. In 1939 the design received national recognition from the American Institute of Steel Construction





MIGHTY YOSEMITE

Mesmerizing Mountains, Meadows, and Memories

Story and Photos by RICHARD VARR



Tenaya Lake

The sounds of tumbling torrents echo louder and louder. I'm on a short hike and, with every step, looking upward for a clearing between the fluttering leaves. I cross a stone bridge over a rushing creek where, between fallen tree trunks, a patch of sunshine breaks through the dense forest. It's my first look at the towering waterfall shrouded in mist, shifting right and left at the mercy of pounding winds wailing across the mountaintop.

As my pace picks up, the roar gets louder. I maneuver along the path to the base of the mountainside where the blowing mist sprinkles down like a wall of cooling raindrops, coating sunglasses and camera lenses. The mist shifts for a few seconds creating an ethereal effect, drifting like a ghostly silhouette across the steep cliffs above.

Looking up at Bridalveil Fall is like peering up the side of a 62-story building—620 feet high, yet seemingly dwarfed by the gargantuan canyon walls within Yosemite Valley. I'm visiting in mid-June—the best time to view plunging waterfalls as winter snow melts and drains down the mountainsides. My visit, however, is a day after heaving rains, adding an even more dramatic touch to some of the most spectacular waterfalls in the Western United States.

Bridalveil is just a half-mile hike from the main road within Yosemite Valley, the heart of this 1,170 square-mile national park with its iconic granite massifs clustered above the Merced River as it meanders through the valley.

Across from Bridalveil stands El Capitán, the world's largest exposed rock rising 3,593 feet from the valley floor. The one-mile-high Half Dome—glacier-sheered seemingly in half—is considered Yosemite's most iconic feature. And in the valley's center, the world's fifth tallest waterfall, the 2,425-foot-high Yosemite Lower and Upper Falls, which combined are also North America's tallest.

"What makes Yosemite so special is there are so many different features all in one place," says John DeGrazio, whose touring company YExplore Yosemite Adventures leads tours and hikes including a day-long trek up the Half Dome. "You have giant granite cliffs, rounded domes and 2,000-foot waterfalls all in Yosemite Valley. There are 200-foot trees and different wildlife. It's really a very special place concentrated in such a small area. And when you explore the high country, you realize there's so much more."

Enveloped in the Sierra Nevada mountain range, Yosemite sits along central California's eastern edge with its varying topography of rugged peaks, forested mountains and flat meadows. Outside the valley, several stops including the so-called Tunnel View and Glacier Point lookouts offer dramatic views of sharp-edged and rounded mountain tops, as well as panoramas where alpine lakes skirt gentle meadows and thick forests.

Upon entering Yosemite Valley, a sign in the shadow of



Views atop Mammoth Mountain.



View of Mammoth Lakes from Mammoth Mountain.

towering El Capitán marks the spot of what might be considered the most important camping trip in American history. In 1903, naturalist John Muir convinced visiting President Theodore Roosevelt to add what was then two state parks, Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Tree (sequoias) Grove, to the surrounding federally-protected Yosemite National Park. That suggestion was finalized into law in 1906, ten years before the formation of the National Park Service that exists today, which celebrated its 100 year anniversary in 2016.

"John Muir called Yosemite Valley the 'incomparable valley,'" explains DeGrazio. "After that trip, Roosevelt was inspired and they did work on a deal to create one national park in Yosemite, and Roosevelt went on to protect more land than any other president at the time." Before then, word of gold strikes had brought thousands of miners and eventually tourists to the region in the mid-19th-century, prompting President Abraham Lincoln to protect the land by creating the Mariposa and Yosemite Valley state parks. Excessive numbers of sheep grazing in the high country prompted that area to become a national park in 1890.

I stop at Cathedral Beach along the Merced River's sandy shoreline with views of massive granite spires. Canoeists paddle under the so-called Swinging Bridge by Sentinel Beach, not far from the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center and Yosemite Museum with its Native American history displays and changing art exhibits. The Wilderness Center offers backpackers information on hikes, permits and other essentials, and tips to keep bears at bay. Bicycle and river raft rentals are also available.

The breathtaking dual Yosemite Falls is a 10-minute walk from the Visitor Center along a paved trail that loops. I feel a blast of chilled air as I approach the base of the Lower Falls—seeming colder than Bridalveil Fall. And maybe a 10-minute walk to a grassy meadow in the center of the valley leads to wide-angled views of the falls and a close-up view of Half Dome. Serious hikers can challenge themselves with a 16-mile, 12-hour round-trip hike ascending 5,000 feet to reach the top.

"Some of the words that describe the hike are, 'feeling on top of the world,'" says DeGrazio. "You have the chance of looking down from the highest peak in Yosemite Valley.



Tuolumne River

For many people, this is a bucket list accomplishment."

Heading out of Yosemite Valley, I stop at Tunnel View for a compact look at many of Yosemite's key natural wonders—Half Dome, El Capitán, Bridalveil Fall and the so-called Cathedral Rocks, all in a postcard-like view. A 30-minute drive leads to a more expansive view at Glacier Point.

"What makes Glacier Point unique is that you're seeing many of the features of Yosemite Valley from 3,000 feet above the valley, and you really get a full appreciation of Yosemite Falls, Half Dome, Vernal Fall and Nevada Fall," explains DeGrazio. "And all the while you're looking at all of Yosemite National Park like you're looking at a map."

A key attraction at the park's south Wawona entrance is the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias. With 500 or so giant trees, it's the largest of three sequoia clusters in the park, with the 209-foot-high Grizzly Giant being one of the world's largest.

"The giant sequoia trees are the largest living organisms in the world and can live up to 3,000 years," notes DeGrazio. Mariposa Grove is closed for restoration until the summer of 2017.

The Hetch Hetchy Valley is what John Muir called "a wonderful exact counterpart of the great Yosemite." Centered by an eight-mile long reservoir and the O'Shaughnessy Dam along the Tuolumne River, Hetch



Tioga Road in an RV is a delight.



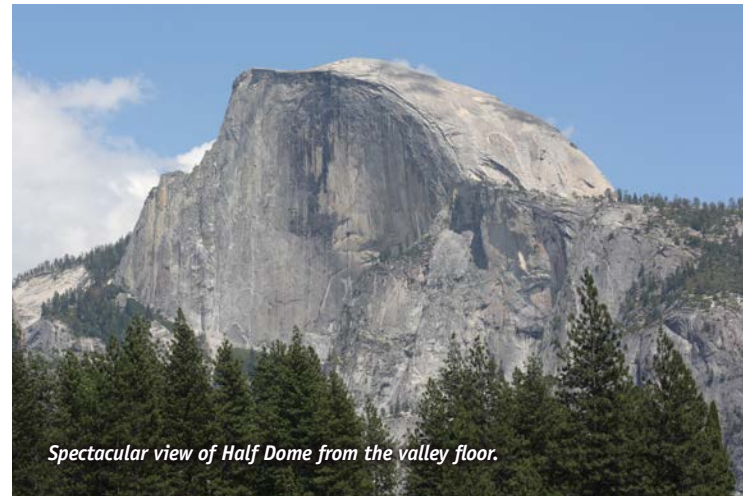
Easy walks within view of Half Dome.



Boats on the Tuolumne River with Lembert Dome in the distance.



The village in Mammoth Lakes.



Spectacular view of Half Dome from the valley floor.

Hetchy is a gateway to hiking trails snaking into the park's northwest wilderness area. Within their paths are the Wapama, Tueeulala, and Rancheria waterfalls.

I choose to explore Yosemite's so-called high country by heading north and then east along Tioga Road (SR 120), which eventually leads to the park's east entrance. SR 120 was once the Old Mono Trail along what was a Native American trade route leading from the desert to the sea. The road reaches 9,945-foot elevation at the park's entrance, becoming the Tioga Pass that winds down steep mountainsides to the town of Lee Vining and U.S. Route 395. It's California's highest highway pass and is closed in winter usually from November through late May.

The distance between the Yosemite Valley Visitor Center and panoramic Olmsted Point lookout is 45 miles and the drive can take more than an hour. It's nonetheless a scenic drive winding around thick pine forests, lakes, and mountainside waterfalls. Creeks parallel the roadway at times while passing through falling rock areas, camping and picnic grounds, and hiking trails, all surrounded by sturdy pines. At the Porcupine Creek trailhead, I notice backpackers taking a break.

When I reach Olmsted Point, the elevation has spiked to more than 8,000 feet compared to the Yosemite Valley's 4,000. From the lookout is yet another view of Half Dome framed between tree clumps—so many miles away, yet

dominating the mountainous view with its distinctive sheared shape. Below me are hiking paths where a yellow-bellied marmot scurries along the rocks.

Just ahead on SR 120 is scenic Tenaya Lake, its shoreline riddled with boulders and with surrounding mountains reflecting off the lake's still waters. The roadway continues past a series of bulbous granite domes: the two larger Fairview and Medlicott formations with their summits shooting above the tree line, followed by the flatter Pothole Dome where Tuolumne Meadows begins. I soon reach the rounded Lembert Dome, soaring 800 feet above the meadow at about 8,600-foot elevation, and alongside the meandering Tuolumne River that cuts through a pine forest. Reaching the domes' summits can be challenging for both rock climbers and hikers.

At Tuolumne Meadows, ducks glide atop trickling creeks zigzagging through flat grasslands, against a backdrop of snow-covered mountains.

"It's a very unique meadow system, one of the largest sub-alpine meadow systems in the world," says DeGrazio. "It was shaped by glaciers over a million years ago and you have this wide open, expansive area with high peaks all around you."

After exiting Yosemite's east entrance and descending the steep Tioga Pass, I'm anxious to see the twisting and contorted tufa rock formations along the shores of salty

Mono Lake next to the small town of Lee Vining.

"Some people say it looks like an alien landscape because it's not like anything else that we typically encounter in mountains, lakes and deserts," says tour guide Bartshé Miller. Tufas are limestone formations created by calcium from underwater springs mixing with carbonates in the dead-end, terminal lake, shooting them up from the lakebed as high as 30 feet.

As tributaries entering the lake have been diverted as a water source for Los Angeles, lake levels dropped and the salinity increased. Thus, brine shrimp thrive in the water and are a vital food supply for migratory birds. In recent years, lake levels are rising once again.

"As the City of Los Angeles takes less water, the lake will come up," says Miller. "The city is far more efficient in using, replacing, and recycling water, and storm-water capture. It's a new era we live in in California, and we continue to make progress at stretching our water supplies."

Maybe 15 miles north on US 395, and a right on SR 270 leads to Bodie, a ghost town that was once home to one of California's richest gold strikes. Dilapidated buildings—brick homes, saloons, wooden storefronts and even an old fire house and morgue—have been in a state of "arrested decay" since becoming a state park in 1962. That means buildings' roofs and foundations will be repaired to keep them standing, but interiors won't be refurbished.

Started in 1859, Bodie saw its heyday from 1877-81 when the town's 20-stamp mill crushed 50 tons of rocks from the gold mines, 24 hours a day, six days a week. "They say you'd hear the stamp mills three miles out," explains Catherine Jones, an interpreter with California State Parks. The mill remains today as one of about 200 structures that survived a massive 1932 fire, before which there were more than 2,000 buildings. Today, the 1878 Miners' Union Hall is a museum with everything from feathered hats, pianos, and hair rollers used there before the town went bust.

About an hour's drive south along US 395 leads to the upscale ski town of Mammoth Lakes with its trendy restaurants and many hotels—especially in and around the retail "Village." Named for its cluster of lakes surrounded by mountains, the town has many stores and serves as a



Tufas at Mono Lake.

convenient home base for visiting Yosemite, Mono Lake, and Bodie. It's also just a quick drive from Devils Postpile National Monument with its unusual basalt columns naturally strung together in the shapes of pentagons and hexagons.

A tram up Mammoth Mountain offers expansive views of the surrounding snowcapped High Sierras including the spire-like Minarets, pointed Mt. Ritter and the lakes themselves—Mamie, Mary, George, and Horseshoe.

The area has a ghost town of its own called the Mammoth Consolidated Gold Mine, in operation from 1927-33, with rundown shacks and piles of rubble that were once buildings.

"You can see they're just wood and tar paper with no running water or electricity, and a pot-bellied stove to keep warm," says guide Noelle Deinken during a tour. A quick hike up the mountainside offers yet another stunning view over the distant lakes, with a constant "whoosh" through the trees.

"When the wind blows through the Aspen trees it sounds like rushing water," notes tour guide Jay Deinken. "But through the pines, it just sounds like wind." As long as it just whooshes with the view in front of me, it's refreshing to me—whatever it sounds like.

MILES ON THE ERIE CANAL

*A stop in Lockport
along the way!*

In 1859, these tunnels used water as a power source.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY NEALA MCCARTEN



Locks opening.

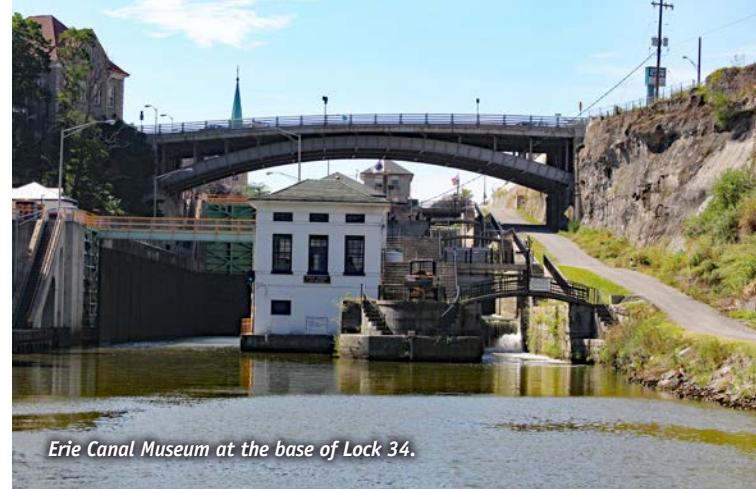
The tranquil town of Lockport derives its name from the locks constructed as part of the famous Erie Canal, and certainly celebrates that history. But the paths along the canal are perfect for hiking and biking, especially in the spring when the leaves decorate the trees, and fall when they turn red and gold. Further, Lockport's location near Niagara Falls makes it a double-header of enjoyment—see the town and explore the falls.

The Erie Canal was an engineering marvel when it was built, and a necessary one. Prior to its construction, people and goods had no easy route between the Great Lakes at the western end of New York and its more commercial eastern end. The canal dramatically reduced the cost of bringing goods across the country and brought commerce and economic growth along the canal itself.

Despite considerable problems and challenges, the canal, which opened in 1825, proved to be one of the country's most successful public works projects. Goods and people could now flow from the Great Lakes across New York State to the Hudson River then downstate to the port of New York and even the Atlantic Ocean.

History of the Canal

Building the canal, however, was a complex, long, and dangerous undertaking. Changes in elevation along the route necessitated a system of locks to raise and lower



vessels, all of which were constructed using only hand tools and animal and human labor. Workers hand-drilled holes and blasted through rock. The engineers confronted and learned from each obstacle—they even developed a form of cement that hardened under water.

New York Governor DeWitt Clinton relentlessly promoted building the canal despite opposition that derisively called it Clinton's Ditch. When it finally opened, the Erie Canal ran 425 miles and had 83 locks.

Symbolic of the connection, Governor Clinton was said to have emptied a barrel of water from Lake Erie into the Atlantic Ocean when the canal opened on October 26, 1825.

The construction didn't end with its opening. The success of the canal meant bigger boats with greater cargo capacity. Originally only 4-feet deep and 40-feet wide, the canal was broadened and deepened. Technological advances meant that in some cases the canal could be enlarged via a process called "canalization"—the rivers that had previously been avoided now became part of the canal.

Today, the canal is open from early May to November. Engineering improvements have reduced the number of locks to 35 and still allow boats to change elevation as they navigate the system. The biggest change is probably in the type of vessel that now cruises the canal—pleasure boats enjoying the scenery along upstate New York.

A side-product of the engineering marvel was the construction of one of the wider bridges in the world. Fondly named the Big Bridge, the canal-spanning bridge is 399 feet wide and was generally acknowledged as the widest in the world when it was built in 1914. Although the bridge still exists, some of its grandeur has been lost to a parking lot for the Lockport City Hall, on its northwest corner.

Exploring the Locks and the Canal

The town of Lockport owes its existence to the canal and locks that run through town, and exploring that engineering marvel is a highlight of a visit to Lockport. There are two experiences that are unique to that history.

Lockport Cave & Underground Boat Ride is a 70-minute guided tour through the history of the locks, including the Flight of Five—the five locks that were the original locks built in town.

Although crucial to commerce, the canal was also an important source of an early form of hydro-mechanical power. Birdsill Holly Jr. (1822-1894), a mechanical engineer and inventor, harnessed that energy and his achievement is the basis of one of the fascinating visitor attractions of the town.

While few have heard of him today, Holly is credited with 150 patents related to using water to power machinery and

steam-powered fire engines. In 1859, Holly founded Holly Manufacturing Company in Lockport and built a system of tunnels that used the water from the Erie Canal as the power source for the machinery below.

Although Holly had planned for four factories, only three were completed. With the coming of electric power, the more cumbersome water-powered system fell out of favor and the fourth factory was never built.

The guided tour takes visitors to the locks built along the Lockport section of the Erie Canal, then past the remains of Holly's tunnel system. Perhaps the most fascinating part is the walk and boat ride through one of the actual tunnels. Guides describe not only how the tunnels were built and used, but add a human dimension with stories about the workers who blasted out the tunnels.

Lockport Locks & Erie Canal Cruises takes visitors on a two-hour canal cruise "locking through"—being raised via the only still functioning double set of locks on the Erie Canal. These two original locks were restored to operating condition in 2014.

It's a unique experience and a clear highlight that puts the visitors into the heart of the Erie Canal experience. The narrated tour also describes the sights along the canal (including the upside down bridge that only looks like it's upside down), and presents lovely views of the city and the countryside from an unusual perspective. Cruises depart

daily from May to mid-October.

The locks were numbered and the town originally had locks 67 through 71—the historic "flight of five" locks. Advancements in technology allowed engineers to reduce the number of locks in the system. Two of these more powerful electric locks—E34 and 35 are open for use with the historic locks still next to them and visitors can see them side-by-side. A tiny free Erie Canal Museum sits in the middle, located in the former Barge Canal powerhouse.

The Erie Canal Discovery Center and Lockport Visitor Center is a must-stop for additional history of the locks, and to learn more about the town. The building itself has history as well, being part of a 19th century stone church.

The success of the locks contributed to the financial achievements of Lockport and resulted in its historic district. Surrounding the canal's Flight of Five Locks, the Heritage District also features the Historic Canal Street District, Old City Hall, and Erie Canal Discovery Center.

Riley's Way Walking Tour, named after the City Historian William H. Riley (1922-1990), highlights more than a dozen sites, with plaques telling their stories. Pick up the guide at the visitor center and follow the tour booklet to learn more about Lockport's history.

Although not canal-related history, the Niagara County Historical Society operates three sites focused on Lockport's



Beautiful fall reflections. Photo by Dennis Stierer



Large mural illustrates the city's history and the building of the Erie Canal.

early years. In addition to the Erie Canal Discovery Center, the Society operates the Outwater Memorial Building at 215 Niagara Street, which includes an 1863 brick home as well as an old law office and other outbuildings. The 1824 Bond House is another of the Society's furnished historic homes. It's located at 143 Ontario Street.

Located just over a mile from the historic district, the 1859 Kenan House is an example of late 19th-century Italianate design. The ladies' parlor was recreated based on a photo taken in 1913. The center also offers a gallery with rotating exhibits, special exhibits, and formal gardens.

Art in Lockport

The most striking art in the city is a beautifully intricate wall mural named Guardian of the Waters. When the city did a bit of sprucing up in 2012, knocking down a multi-story parking garage, it left a large blank wall in the center of town. Forty feet wide and 60 feet tall, and visible from the canal, the wall made a perfect canvas for a themed mural showing the history of the city and the engineering marvel that created it. Augustina Droze—an area muralist who has created these works of art all over the country—and artist Bruce Adams became the artists of Mural on Main Street.

The centerpiece of the mural is the Flight of Five locks and the people of the city in the form of a workman, a foreman, and a lady with a parasol. This community-funded public

art can be found on Main Street, near Pine, in the center of Lockport.

Market Street Art Studios is a rambling space in the 100-year-old former Western Block Company factory now filled with working artists. Stroll the corridors and peek in and enjoy the work of photographers, puppet-makers, watercolorists, and more. The studios are conveniently located across the street from Lockport Locks & Erie Canal Cruises.

Admirers of Tiffany glass are in for a treat when visiting Lockport. The First Presbyterian Church of Lockport offers tours of their Tiffany-stained glass windows. There are five full double windows and a half of another all designed by the master of glass, and installed in 1901. Several other windows were added in the 1950s. The church obtained the rare Tiffany glass and Payne Spires studio, also known for their beautiful stained glass, created the windows as funding was obtained. Individuals or groups are always welcome.

There's even a bit of movie history in Lockport. The historic Palace Theatre was built in 1925. It was restored and reopened in 1975 for live events and selected movies. It is owned and operated by a non-profit organization, Historic Palace Inc.

Perhaps even more exciting is the Transit Drive-In. If you have a fondness for these relics of decades gone by, the Transit Drive-In welcomes you with double features on four different screens.

After a day touring Lockport, consider treating yourself to some of the most unusual, but exceedingly delicious ice cream flavors. The front part of Lake Effect Artisan ice cream has the look of an old-fashioned ice cream parlor with tiny white ceramic tiles interspersed with blue snowflakes. The flavors range from old favorites to combinations that you may have never considered: frozen hot chocolate, mint chip, whiskey brown sugar, and chicken and waffle ice cream.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
eriecanalway.org • canals.ny.gov • discoverlockport.com

Story and photos by
DAVE G. HOUSER



GATEWAY TO THE GALAXIES

Southern Arizona's Astronomy Trail

Cactus and sagebrush aren't the only things sprouting up on the mountains around Tucson, Arizona. While this is a hot, arid, and generally inhospitable land, it is quite inviting to astronomers and astro-scientists from the world over.

Attracted by super-dark nighttime skies, low humidity, and high elevations, they've built four major mountaintop observatories here, forming the largest concentration of research telescopes in the world.

For visitors, these observatories offer a chance to experience something available nowhere else in America—a view of the stars and planets through a variety of telescopes—the biggest of their kind in the world.

On a recent trip, I looked for everybody's favorite planet, Saturn, through a huge 32-inch Schulman telescope during the popular SkyNights program at the University of Arizona's UA Science SkyCenter atop 9,157-foot Mt. Lemmon, located about an hour northwest of Tucson.

My guide to the ringed planet, and a host of other heavenly bodies scattered across the darkening sky, was Adam Block, SkyCenter program coordinator and noted astro-photographer.

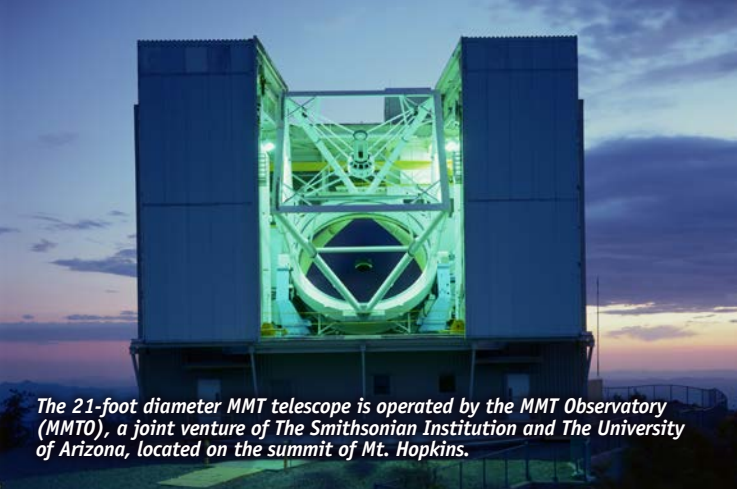
"Saturn is the hands-down winner among visitors to SkyCenter," Block says. "The image of it is breathtaking—quite literally. You'll actually hear people gasp."

Block helps guests capture cosmic images with a digital (CCD) camera as part of a reservation-only program. The evening begins with a light meal (sandwiches, chips, cookies, and drinks). Next, either Block or an assistant offers a lesson on star watching with binoculars. You'll be surprised how many stars and constellations, even passing satellites and meteors, you can see.

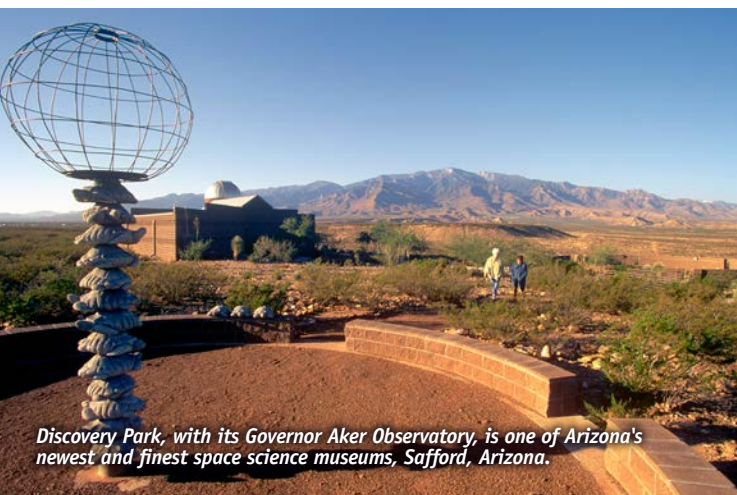
This intro added to the excitement as our group of 20 or so skywatchers was led into the observatory for an opportunity to peer through the formidable 5,000 pound, 12-foot tall Schulman telescope. It is the largest telescope dedicated to public viewing in the Southwest and what we saw with it was mind-boggling. That's not my impression alone—everyone in my group was dazzled. Star-struck you might say. Nearly all of them returned to the back of the line for another look.

"The fact that you can see galaxies millions of light years away seems to engage people's intellect and sense of cosmic place," says Block.

Not far away, 56 miles southwest of Tucson, is Kitt Peak National Observatory, home to the world's largest collection of optical telescopes (24), plus two radio telescopes, representing eight astronomical research institutions. The observatory offers guided tours daily—or you can pick up a self-guided walking tour map in the Visitor Center. You also can download a free audio tour, available in podcast



The 21-foot diameter MMT telescope is operated by the MMT Observatory (MMTO), a joint venture of The Smithsonian Institution and The University of Arizona, located on the summit of Mt. Hopkins.



Discovery Park, with its Governor Aker Observatory, is one of Arizona's newest and finest space science museums, Safford, Arizona.

The Visitor Center at the base of Mount Hopkins is home to Smithsonian-quality exhibits ranging from a three-dimensional model of galaxy distribution in the universe to a touchable topographical map of the Santa Rita Mountains. Also to be seen are models of several of the observatory's multiple-mirror telescopes. A 20-power telescope and wide-field binoculars are installed for visitor use on the Center's outdoor patio.

Those seeking a closer look at Whipple's seven telescopes can join a 6-hour bus tour to the summit of 8,550-foot Mount Hopkins. Tours require advance reservations.

A final stop along what could be coined Southern Arizona's Astronomy Trail finds us in Safford, a rugged little mining and agricultural community 127 miles northeast of Tucson, off Interstate 10. Here we'll check in at the Discovery Park Campus of Eastern Arizona College visitor center and official visitation agent for Mount Graham International Observatory (MGIO). On Friday and Saturday from May through October, guests assemble at the center to peruse exhibits at the Governor Aker Observatory and then join a seven-hour coach excursion to the towering 10,720-foot summit of Mt. Graham for a close-up look at MGIO's three giant telescopes.

MGIO is operated as the research arm of the Department of Astronomy at the University of Arizona and consists of the Heinrich Hertz Submillimeter (Radio) Telescope, the Large Binocular Telescope—the world's most powerful telescope—and the Vatican Advanced Technology Telescope. You read that correctly—the Holy See does indeed have its own observatory—the stated purpose of which is to help scientists learn how stars are born. One supposes it also could be useful to keep a closer eye on heaven.

When planning a visit to MGIO or other high-altitude observatories keep in mind that temperatures can drop dramatically, especially in the evenings, which suggests you bring warm clothes suitable to layering. Persons with cardiac, respiratory, or other altitude-related concerns are advised to take proper precautions.

Boasting such a stellar roster of observatories and astro-related educational facilities, there's no question the sky's the limit in Arizona.

Please check availability and prices of tours before going.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- UA Science SkyCenter:** skycenter.arizona.edu
- Kitt Peak National Observatory:** noao.edu/kpno/
- Fred Lawrence Whipple Observatory:** cfa.harvard.edu/flwo
- Mount Graham International Observatory:** mgio.arizona.edu

RV REVIEW



By Howard J. Elmer

Gulf Stream Vintage Cruiser 19ERD

It puts the "fun" in functional

RV reviews typically focus on the function, convenience, and value features of a unit; be it any kind of trailer or motorized RV. Certainly that is the critical eye I use to scan a new product when I'm doing a review. I am looking for what's done right, what's well designed, and I try to decipher how the manufacturer chose to spend its build money—sort of reverse engineering. This visual review process takes hundreds of features and their inter-relationships into account. Then I write about my impressions. In the end the best units are the ones where value, great design, and good workmanship gel together nicely. This then is the story model for a typical RV review.

However, occasionally, a fourth factor comes into play—fun. Sometimes a unit can simply be defined as first and foremost being fun. And that's what my first impression of Gulf Stream's Vintage Cruiser was when I took it out for a drive on a sunny afternoon in central Ontario's lake country.

Perhaps the best description of the Vintage Cruiser (one style

but three floorplans) is the line used in the brochure—"The fun and style of the 1950s and the technology of the 21st century." While this is certainly marketing-speak it's pretty accurate.

I first saw this travel trailer at last year's Louisville RV Show. It struck me then the same way it did the day I took it out for a test drive—fun. Put another way, the colour scheme, whimsical design cues, and overall look made me smile. And, it seems, I'm not the only one that's had this reaction. The dealer I borrowed the trailer from told me that an owner's club has already been organized in Ontario; and these units have only been available for a few months.

The colours and build cues are what strike you first when you look at this trailer. In truth much of what you react to comes from automotive design, starting with the two-tone colours—both bold single tints and aqua-hues. Inside, happy print curtains billow over rounded, pleated cushions that have that '57 Chevy front-seat look. Moulding edges, the



fridge front, and outside graphics all carry that “Happy Days” theme.

Here, I think Gulf Stream is on to something. This look is certainly meant to evoke nostalgia—however these images have and continue to be used in pop culture of all kinds—so folks of every age react to them. You didn’t have to live through the ‘50s to be smitten. Frankly it’s better if you didn’t; nostalgia is more about the heart than the head after all.

Alright, so the fun factor certainly overshadows the fact that this is a very conventional trailer. A single axle, one-box design can be considered a light-weight. It has a GVWR of 4,133 pounds so it can be towed by a variety of vehicles, minivans, even the new Honda Ridgeline.

At 22 feet 11 inches long, it uses a spread-out-the-sleepers design, with a large bedroom in the front and the fold-down booth dinette across the full width of the trailer at the back. Toilet, shower, refrigerator, and stove are set amidships right over the single axle. This centralizes the weight and it shows in how stable it feels going down the road. That fold-down dinette table will sleep two and the bed in front is a queen-size with an aisle on both sides and soft door for privacy. A second privacy mode in this central hall design works with the toilet door left open to block the hallway to the kitchen/dinette area. With that door open the toilet, sink, vanity and shower across the hallway become part of the bedroom space with its built-in wardrobes. Lots of room and privacy for anyone’s morning or nightly routine.

In fact, I noted right away that the size of the shower and the separate toilet enclosure in this unit is very modern to say the least and a good example of Gulf Stream’s product tagline—“technology of the 21st century.” A true ‘50s trailer design put much less emphasis on bathroom size.

Having thought about that last phrase a bit I looked around for what else buyers can enjoy in this 2016 travel trailer that they never would have in 1956. Think about it; we often wax poetic about the “good old days”—but consider what you’d have never found in a trailer of this size in the ‘50s (or ‘60s and even ‘70s).

For instance: air conditioning, thermostatically controlled propane heating, microwave oven, LED lighting (inside and out), powered awning, lightweight design incorporating aluminum and high-strength steel, radial tires, undercoating, powder-coated frame, powered tongue jack, checker plate stone guard, polyurethane battery and LP gas tank cover, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, flat screen TVs, prewired cable and satellite hookups, double sinks, AM/FM/CD radio, large capacity 3-way refrigerator/freezer, 30AMP (or greater) shore power hookup, seamless, smooth exterior surfaces. That’s just a partial list as I looked around and through the unit. This is what you have to love about modern nostalgia—all the aahhh moments without the bother of last century technology.

Overall the trailer shows good balance, space-wise. The design gives the kitchen area just enough importance to



make it compact and usable. It features a twin-burner stove, deep double sink with gooseneck faucet, a powered range hood and sufficient cupboard and drawer space. The flooring is hard-wearing vinyl in a dark wood board motif. There is no carpet and that’s good in a small trailer—much easier to keep things tidy without it. The rear dinette also gets some love with enough space for four “real” people to sit at—when this doubles as a bed it’s also bigger than some. As for storage, there is a single pass-thru at the front and a few other inside spots—but it’s not a lot. Outside hookups, fill nozzles and dump valves are well positioned and clearly marked. In many ways if this trailer wasn’t being called “Vintage” it would simply be a well-built, decent, small trailer that suits a small family or a couple with friends who visit occasionally.

Here is where Gulf Stream’s idea will pay dividends. Say you’re looking for a decent smaller trailer, the Cruiser is that. Now why not have a trailer that is fun too! It has this sense of whimsy with its cute design motifs—after all camping is supposed to be fun, so why not?

On the road the unit tows easily—feeling light overall. My tow vehicle for this test was a 2016 Ram R/T pickup. It’s a regular cab, short bed 2WD truck that in some ways is also displaying a nostalgic look—yet with all the modern automotive conveniences including a 5.7L Hemi V8 with an eight-speed transmission. To set off the powerful stance of the truck, Ram has put 22-inch factory chrome wheels on the truck. This model also has the Ramboxes built into its flanks, these offer easily accessed lockable storage. A factory tonneau cover also creates lots of storage for the stuff that won’t fit in the trailer. Towing with this rig was effortless—another reason why I mention that many less powerful vehicles will also manage the Vintage Cruiser competently.

A fun trailer hooked to a very eye-catching fun truck.

Some days I love my job.



RESORT PREVIEW



RESORT TYPE
Deluxe

LOCATION
Greenfield Center, New York

SEASON
May 15-October 15

WEBSITE
saratogaescape.com

Saratoga Escape Lodges and RV Resort

A quarter-century of family pride

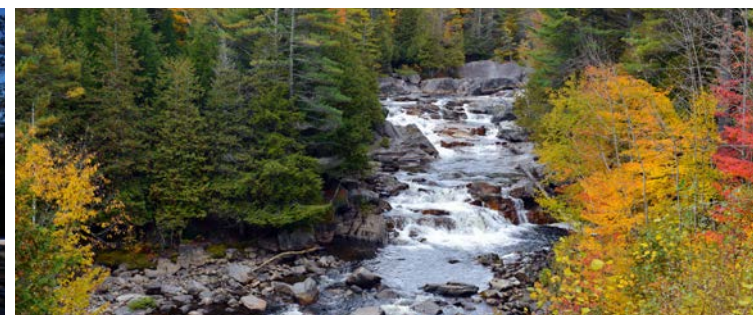
For more than 25 years, Saratoga Escape Lodges and RV Resort in Greenfield Center, New York, has been in the capable and caring hands of owner Shauna Shepard’s family. She’s continuing that tradition by working alongside daughter Shasta, park manager, and son Ray Shepard III, sales associate. All this adds up to a great experience when you pull your rig into the beautiful grounds of the resort.

“We are in such an amazing area,” says Shepard. “The resort is just miles from the famous Saratoga Race Track, the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, and fantastic shopping and restaurants downtown on Broadway. We are a short 20 minutes to beautiful Lake George, named ‘The Queen of the American Lakes.’ This spectacular lake, set at the base of the Adirondack Mountains, is more than 32 miles long and boasts over 170 islands in its pristine water. There are boat cruises hourly in the south basin, or for those craving a quieter experience, there are paddleboard, kayak, and

boat rentals as well as gorgeous lakeside restaurants. The Adirondack Mountains have inspired generations to hike, river and lake fish, boat, paddle, ski, raft and play outdoors in nature.”

But you don’t have to leave the resort to find great amenities. The resort boasts a pool, miniature golf, aqua playground, ice cream parlor, store, and walking trails. There’s also a 15-acre private spring-fed lake with beach area, fishing, paddle boards, canoes, and paddleboats. You can also take horseback riding lessons at nearby Lookingback Farm. With future plans to extend their season year-round, winter activities include snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, downhill skiing, and ice skating.

If you travel without your RV, rent one of the beautiful cabins or a large Adirondack home. RV sites include your choice of waterfront or standard hook-up sites, and pull throughs.



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