

Your 5th Wheel RV “The Interior”



Finally, an illustrated guide
designed to make
understanding an RV simple,
fast and fun!

by Marlan Winter
the founder of rv52.com

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What is this book about?

An RV is a pretty formidable beast to understand.

Walking onto an RV dealer's lot to "learn" about RV's is a really bad plan.

But there is not a good resource available to anyone to start their learning process so that by the time they get to the RV dealer's lot, they'll be a lot more prepared.

Up until THIS book, the resources I've found about RV's were :

- * Too technical
- * Too wordy
- * Too advanced
- * Non existent

That is why I've created this book, "Your 5th Wheel RV - The Interior". When I wrote this book, I built in the following ideas to make learning about a new RV super easy.

Here are the ideas and concepts in this book :

- * Simple text articles for each part of the RV I'm introducing.
- * Each article has the things that I believe you may want to consider BEFORE choosing an RV, if appropriate.
- * Each article has a photograph highlighting the part of the RV
- * After reading the articles, you should feel comfortable that you know that part of the RV "good enough". Not an expert, but good enough to look at RV's and know what you are seeing.
- * You should be able to "flip" through this book and just view the pictures if that is all you wanted to do.

Please enjoy the book, and feel free to contact me to ask questions or provide feedback at <http://rv52.com/contact>

By the way, this isn't my first book. I have others located here -> <http://rv52.com/books-by-marlan-winter/>

<http://rv52.com/rv-antenna-crank-or-control-lever/>

RV Antenna Crank or Control Lever

Most RV's have a foldout antenna that you can locate on the exterior of the RV (put link in to the exterior article). One neat thing about that foldout antenna is that you can control it from inside using the [RV Antenna Crank](#) ([Amazon Disclosure](#)).

Before continuing, here are some other articles I've written that are RELATED to the subject:

- [Finding the RV Antenna on the exterior of the fifth wheel](#)
- [Example RV Entertainment System](#)
- [Shore TV connections – like hooking to RV park cable](#)
- [Large Connection of How To videos about RV Antenna's](#)
- [Large Pile of How To Videos about RV Satellite TV](#)

The RV antenna control, usually called an antenna crank, is located directly in the same spot in the interior that the antenna is located on the exterior. That is because it is a straight though mechanical connection.

Calling the device the RV antenna crank actually sells the device a little bit short. It is true that it's main function is to turn/crank the exterior antenna into an "up" or extended position or to retract it into its folded or travel position.

One of my FAVORITE things about the antenna crank is that you can also use it to turn the antenna 360 degrees so you can easily turn the antenna to get the best reception. Even better is that no ladder is required to turn it. You just reach up and grab the outside of the crank, not the lever, and turn the whole assembly.

On the assembly, you'll notice that there is a pointer of sorts. Before folding or stowing the antenna back into it's travel position, you will align the pointers, then turn the crank to stow the antenna. I'm not sure you could even operate the crank if the pointers aren't aligned – I've never tried it.

One thing I've noticed that makes me really like the antenna better than cable at most places is that the over the air local TV has really spectacular High Definition reception. Given it is so easy to swap between cable and over the air I would prefer to capture the over the air almost every time.



RV TV Antenna Crank Control Lever

<http://rv52.com/rv-light-switch/>

RV Light Switch – the lowly little on off thingy

The RV light switch is a pretty simple thing. Its different from the light switches you find in homes because instead of switching 120 Volts of AC power common in houses, it switches 12 Volt DC power which is common in RV's.

The other thing I've noticed is that the RV light switch is pretty boring. Whereas you'll find lots of decorative choices in household switches, and switch plates, the RV light switch is pretty boring.

When you DO use the switch, AND you aren't on "[shore power](#)", you will be taking power from the RV battery. That isn't a bad thing, but you need to be aware of that fact. That is one reason that I've written several [articles about RV lighting](#). If you put in an [LED light](#), when you turn on the RV light switch, you'll actually be able to reduce your lighting power by about 80% which is pretty incredible.

I've listed a few replacement switches for you here from Amazon ([Amazon Disclosure](#)):

- [JR Products 12015 White Double On/Off Switch Assembly with Bezel](#)
- [JR Products 12585 Labeled 12V White Switch](#)
- [JR Products 12005 White Single On/Off Switch Assembly with Bezel](#)
- [JR Products 12225 Black Single On/Off Switch Assembly with Bezel](#)



RV Light Switch

<http://rv52.com/rv-fireplace-insert/>

RV Fireplace – More charm than cheese

Our RV Fireplace is one of my favorite things in my RV. Yes, it chews up electric when it is running. Yes, it seems a little “rednecky”. But honestly, the mood it creates in the room, the clean convenient heat, and the instant heat really makes these things a great deal of fun. I’ve written previously about [how much I enjoyed the RV Fireplace](#).

The RV fireplace doesn’t take much room either. It is an insert that fits neatly underneath the cabinet space created for the TV and entertainment center.

I will say that our fireplace, the Dimplex BF8000 has failed 2x. It works OK after it has been off for awhile, then after a few minutes of operation the heating portion simply quits. We’ve replaced this one time already and are going to have to do it again. Our RV repairman tells us he doesn’t think much of these fireplace inserts. I don’t know if he was against the Dimplex or the fireplace inserts in general.

We have replaced the latest insert and it has worked all winter - mild Texas winter - without fail. So far so good.

I thought I would put a couple of Amazon links ([disclosure](#)) to help you get started finding these fireplaces if you like them. I don’t think that the inserts are specific to RV’s so I don’t limit to RV fireplace inserts.

- [Pleasant Hearth EA-5012 Easton Fireplace Glass Door, Midnight Black, Large](#)
- [Dimplex DFI2310 Electric Fireplace Deluxe 23-Inch Insert, Black](#)
- [Dimplex DFI2309 Electric Fireplace Insert](#)
- [Dimplex DFI23TRIMX Expandable Trim Kit for Electric Fireplace Insert](#)
- [Bonaire BFH5000-UM Electric Fireplace Heater with Remote Control](#)



RV Fireplace Insert

<http://rv52.com/rv-range-and-rv-oven-cooking-and-baking-on-the-run/>

RV Range and Oven

Even the most basic RV has an RV range. Whether it is one burner, two burners or three, the ability to boil water, cook eggs, cook bacon, or do any thing at all, is a step up from eating protein bars. That ability is a big step up in the camping experience.

If you've ever played with a [Coleman camping stove \(Amazon Disclosure\)](#), then you'll notice that the RV stoves aren't that much different. Even in the nicest RV's, you still have a pretty strong feeling of camping because of the stove.

The reason I say that is because just like the Coleman's you turn on the gas, then you have a clicker, match, or lighter to light the flame. The construction is very similar to the Coleman's – more akin to the Coleman than to your house cook range. This is primarily due to weight constraints.

Many RV's do not have ovens, but in the range in our Open Range, it has a small, very small oven as well. You could cook small casseroles, pizzas, and more. You could not do a turkey in the oven. You could probably not do a large ham either. When we try to light our RV oven, I can tell you its a bit of a trick – we have to light the pilot light, make sure it “took”, then we can turn on the oven. On a scale of 1-10, our oven rates about a 4 – mostly due to lighting convenience. Like I said though, it helps retain the camping feeling.

I did find a few RV Range items from Amazon that I list here for your convenience just in case you are looking:

- [Camco 43554 RV Black Universal Fit Stove Top Cover](#)
- [Suburban 2862A Black 17" 3 Range Burner with Piezo ignition](#)



RV Range and Oven

<http://rv52.com/rv-microwave/>

RV Microwave Overview

We use our RV Microwave more than we use our RV Range. When you are boondocking, you might not want to use your microwave as they will take lots of power. Many are not even connected to the DC anyway so you could not use them anyway.

A good way to think is like this: Portable=Propane and ShoreDocked=Electric. At least that is the way I think about it.

You might wonder if the RV microwave is special – compared to the standard microwave you might buy at any home appliance store. The short answer is not really. The longer answer is hidden in the photo in this article. The RV Microwave has mounting and venting attached to it so that its heat is better managed in a small space and vented to the inside of the RV.

I feel pretty confident you could use any old microwave, and probably even find regular microwaves with mounting brackets that would work perfectly fine.

Our RV Microwave is branded as a Dometic microwave, but it is manufactured for them by Samsung. I have a feeling that the Samsung is purchased or built on spec by Dometic having Samsung add the correct mounting equipment to a standard microwave, and then in turn can be a multiple component supplier to the RV manufacturers. It is probably more about convenience for the supply chain than any specialty item for an RV.

If you hear about RV Microwaves being manufactured differently to withstand more shock, I think that is a bunch of BUNK. Why? Because I worked on electronic components in an old job where we tried to pass UL listings – a requirement for a microwave. Those tests had plenty of shock testing and there is absolutely no need to do an extra test for an RV.

That being said, if you look on Amazon ([disclosure](#)) you will find many entries for RV microwaves. I've placed one here for your convenience. [Advent MW912BWDK Black Built-in Microwave Oven, 0.9 cu.ft. capacity, 900 watts of cooking power and 10 adjustable power levels let you boil, reheat, defrost and more, with Wide Trim Kit.](#)



RV Microwave

<http://rv52.com/rv-home-theater-system/>

RV Home Theater Entertainment System

In our Open Range, we have a RV Home Theater System. This system is kind of neat in that it can drive several speakers in a surround sound system AND the speakers that are located outside in the [RV basement](#). This system has a CD/DVD player, FM stereo, and has both audio and video controls to be a complete system. In other words, it was made to handle the TV, not just the audio.

Handling video, not just audio, is only for the higher end RV's really. Most RV's have a fairly nice RV Audio System. In fact, if you look, the eBay auctions will only show up searches for RV Stereos.

The RV manufacturers seem to get specialty systems that are hard to find for the common person for their units. If the system in our Open Range breaks, it would be hard to replace.

In some ways, a home theater system is too much system for many of us. But for you techie crazies out there I've put in [a much nicer system](#) which handles video better and has bunches of advantages. However, my system doesn't need a tuner for radio or TV, a DVD, or CD player because I have all that in my system already. All I would need is a surround sound amplifier only. I've looked all over but haven't found one yet.

When you are looking at these systems, your expectations about what to expect should be:

- Ability to drive primary speakers in living area
- Ability to play a CD
- Ability to play FM radio stations
- BONUS for AUDIO
 - Ability to play MP3 and other Audio files via USB or CD/DVD player slot
 - Ability to accept iPod's via iPod connector
 - Ability to play audio from MP3 players via auxiliary stereo input
- BONUS for VIDEO handling
 - DVD player
 - Blu-Ray would be a BIG bonus, but no reason not to now
 - Ability route HDMI
 - Ability to handle over the air and cable inputs

These are some things to think about.

I found a few RV stereos on Amazon ([disclosure](#)) in case you are looking for one. Maybe this will help you get started.

- [Jensen VM9224 Double DIN MultiMedia Receiver with 6.1-Inch Touch Screen](#)
- [Jensen AWM975 AM/FM/CD/DVD/USB/WB/iPOD Ready Wallmount Stereo with HDMI Video Output](#)
- [JENSEN AWM910 RV WALL MOUNT CD PLAYER AM/FM RADIO](#)

- [Jensen AWM965 AM/FMICDIDVDIMP3/USB Wallmount Stereo, DVD player, Front USB supports MP3, WMA, JPEG, Remote control included, 12 volt](#)



RV Home Theater System

<http://rv52.com/rv-tv-big-screen-is-built-in/>

RV TV – The Big Screen LCD TV

Most RV's now have LCD TV's that come with them. Honestly, the RV TV tends to be a lower end LCD TV. Ours is from a company called Sansui. You can buy a Sansui at some discount electronic stores, but I think there are brands that you can get for a modest adder in price at best.

I probably won't locate any Amazon links or eBay auctions for LCD TV's since they are "just LCD TV's" and not anything special for RV's.

But I think the point is that unless you are looking at a truck camper or camping trailer you should expect an LCD TV to come with the RV. Ours was hooked into our RV Home Entertainment system which provide surround sound for the RV.

Should you need a replacement TV, I'm pretty sure any old TV will do.

One of the neater things I've been seeing in travel trailers is having the LCD TV mounted on a swivel. The swivel is neat in that you can turn the TV to be showing in the bedroom OR showing in the living room depending upon where you are. That is pretty cool.



RV Big Screen Television

<http://rv52.com/rv-kitchen-sink-and-faucet/>

RV Kitchen Sink and Faucet

Most RV's, even the small camping trailers and truck campers, have a kitchen sink with a small faucet. In fact, the small campers will have a small sink OVER a bathroom if faced with having to make the choice.

These sinks are generally VERY small and designed from a lightweight plastic rather than a heavier material like would be in a sticks and frame house.

The faucets themselves are lightweight BUT they follow standard sizes so you can find replacements at your local Lowes or Home Depot. I know, I've [replaced a bathroom faucet](#) and the kitchen faucet both.

The hot water comes from the RV's hot water heater. The input to the hot water heater and the cold water for the kitchen faucet both come from EITHER the fresh water tank or [the shore water connection](#). Most of the time, unless [boondocking](#), your RV will be connected to shore facilities.

The drain for your kitchen faucet then goes to a collection tank which is called the "gray tank". Its gray because it isn't clean water and it isn't from the toilet, called black water. You can't just dump gray water on the ground for many reasons so you'll send it to a legal place just like the black water.

I thought I would add a couple of Amazon listings ([disclosure](#)) for your convenience here.

- [RV White Utility Sink](#)
- [12-1/4" X 14-1/8" Stainless Steel RV Sink](#)
- [25" X 17" Stainless Steel Sink](#)
- [Moen 22246 Camelot 2 Hole Stainless Steel 20 Gauge Single Bowl Drop In Sink, Stainless](#)



RV Kitchen Sink and Faucet

<http://rv52.com/rv-air-conditioner-and-return-vent/>

RV Air Conditioner and Return Vent

In another article, I wrote about the [rv air conditioner and how you could locate it on the external part of the RV](#). I also had an article with a picture of the [roof with the air conditioner](#) clearly showing.

In this article, you can see the INSIDE of the RV, looking up at the ceiling, where the rv air conditioner is located along with its return vent.

On almost every RV with an air conditioner, you'll see a very large rectangular GRID on the ceiling of your RV. On every one of these, the air conditioner return vent is located there. Why? Well for one reason, it is the direct input to the air conditioner and the return vents are located so that the conditioners can get air. You can't very well get outside air since the air conditioner has to suck in and cool the air and the outside air would be too hot. The idea would be that you cool air that is already cooler so your air conditioner doesn't have to work so hard. Since the air conditioner blows air, it stands to reason that it has to suck in air from somewhere so that it has air to cool and blow out. So that is why you need a air return vent.

Some RV air conditioners will also just blow their chilled or cooled air out from a vent right next to the air return vent. The advantage to this is that is is cheap and simple – the RV manufacturer doesn't have to put in an ductwork. Another advantage is that the air conditioner has to work less since it doesn't have to push air into ductwork. The disadvantage is that the cool air is located mostly in one spot.

Our Open Range 399BHS has ductwork. Honestly, I would recommend against an RV with ductwork and encourage you to get one that has a straight dump out. In our Open Range, the ducts are very small and I think make it very difficult to route the air efficiently. With two \$20 fans from Walmart you could just as effectively get the cool air where you want it – with the added advantage that air would always be moving on those warm days.

I thought I would list just a small handful of RV air conditioners from Amazon ([disclosure](#)) for your convenience.

- [Brisk Air Dometic Duo Therm RV Air Conditioner Shroud \(New Style\)](#)
- [Dometic A/C Brisk Air Roof Top Air Conditioner 13,500 BTU Upper Unit Polar White 457915.XX1C0](#)
- [Dometic Brisk Air 457915 13,500 BTU Upper Unit Polar White RV Rooftop A/C Unit](#)
- [Dometic A/C Penguin II 13,500 BTU Roof Top Air Conditioner Upper Unit White 640315CXX1C0](#)
- [RV Motorhome Solar Battery 12-Volt Evaporative Swamp Air Conditioning Cooler](#)



RV Air Conditioner and Return Vent

<http://rv52.com/rv-central-vacuum-hose-receptacle/>

RV Central Vacuum Hose Receptacle

The RV Central Vacuum system could be one of the sillier ideas in an RV. Its also very easy to implement in an RV – comparatively easier than in a full size sticks and bricks home.

I would only expect such a feature in larger fifth wheels and motorhomes. Also, I would not let this be a factor in your RV buying decision at all.

In the [RV basement](#) area, there is usually located a central vacuum unit. Then that vacuum unit is attached to a PVC pipe which then is routed in the sub-flooring to a receptacle like the one shown in the picture. There are also a couple of wires that go with the PVC pipe so that when you plug in the vacuum hose the vacuum unit is turned on automatically.

On one hand, the RV central vac eliminates having to have a vacuum cleaner, which should save space. But you trade out the vacuum cleaner for a very large bunch of hose instead. My guess is that the space savings is a bit of a wash.

One very large advantage to the RV central vac is that when vacuuming, the vacuum unit is OUTSIDE the living space of the RV. I believe, but cannot prove, that it should help in reducing allergens in the RV living space. This is simply not true with a regular vacuum.

You introduce a few additional problems as well such as:

- Cleaning the filter requires getting into the RV basement which is an inconvenient thing to do.
- Cleaning the filter requires filters - which is a pain. You can [get filters on Amazon](#) though ([disclosure](#)).

If you are interested in an RV central vacuum system or replacement parts, I listed a few Amazon listings here:

- [Electrolux 016927 Central Vacuum Automatic Dustpan, White](#)
- [Dirt Devil RV Central Vacuum System](#)
- [Eureka CV140 Yellow Jacket Compact Central Vacuum Power Unit](#)
- [Compact and Powerful RV BUS Trailer Allegro Central Vacuum 30' hose Motor home](#)
- [HP Products 8233-LE Dirt Devil Central Cleaning System](#)
- [Dirt Devil Central Vacuum bags 7767-W – Genuine – 3 Pack](#)
- [HP Products 8799-BK Vacpan Automatic Dust Pan Kit](#)



RV Central Vacuum Inlet

<http://rv52.com/rv-thermostat/>

RV Thermostat

An RV Thermostat is not perfectly the same as a residential thermostat targeted for sticks and bricks houses.

The biggest differences are 1) the RV thermostat runs off of 12Volt DC power, the common power in RV's versus 24V which is the common power for home thermostats and 2) the RV systems have a high and low fan setting – versus on/off only in the traditional home thermostats.

Other than that, the RV thermostats work pretty much just like the home thermostats.

So the first thing to think about if you want to buy a thermostat from Lowes or Home Depot is if the thermostat can run off of its own batteries that you would supply OR 24Volt. You can use the battery operated thermostat, but not the 24Volt operated thermostat.

The second thing to think about is what fan speed you hook up to the thermostat. It should be the high setting. If you want to control the high/low fan speed, then you'll need an extra switch not normally on a regular home thermostat.

The thermostats in our Open Range were actually located in our roof mounted air conditioner, which was a Carrier Air 5 System from Carrier. You can't get the Air 5 anymore and you really can't get a decent replacement either. So we had our RV repair person replace our Air 5 air conditioner with a more normal air conditioner AND place the thermostat on the wall.

I would NOT locate a thermostat on an outside wall on an RV if I could help it due to radiated heat. But most don't do this so you'll probably always be OK.

If you want to buy a true RV thermostat, here are a handful from Amazon ([disclosure](#)):

- [Camco 09231 RV Wall Thermostat – Heat Only](#)
- [Atwood 38453 Thermostat](#)
- [Atwood 38452 Thermostat](#)
- [Dometic 3109228.001 5 Button Comfort Control Center](#)
- [Suburban 161154 Thermostat Wall Heat](#)



RV Thermostat

<http://rv52.com/rv-refrigerator/>

RV Refrigerator

Even the very smallest RV's, even camping trailers, usually have a little refrigerator to keep your food cold over the weekend. For the ones that do not have even a small refrigerator, they at least have a cooler.

RV Refrigerators are truly different than a regular sticks and bricks home refrigerator. The way they are different has to do with the scientific method OR basic theory of operation of refrigerators.

The RV refrigerator uses a method of cooling called “gas absorption” to cool its insides and the normal sticks and bricks refrigerator uses a more straightforward compression type of cooling system. The RV system is probably a little bit less efficient, but it is substantially lighter in weight and can use propane gas to cool the unit. That means it is very very good for portability.

For the gas absorption refrigerator, the evaporation and cooling process is started by applying a little bit of heat. This heat can be supplied by the AC electrical system or the LP gas system, but in either case, the refrigeration method is gas absorption. I believe that the Norcold or Dometic 3-way refrigerators can also use the DC power to run the refrigerator.

The most important thing to remember about RV refrigerators is that they do not like to be out of level. So whenever possible, do not operate your refrigerator when not leveled. If you do, safety circuits are likely to engage and make your refrigerator inoperable.

The RV refrigerator is VERY effective at cooling things down. One thing I've noticed is that when you open your fridge, air with moisture gets in and it turns to ice very quickly. You need to remove that condensed ice pretty regularly or your fridge won't cool as efficiently and it will also make a watery mess as it melts inside your fridge.

Our fridge does have two sections – a freezer and a refrigerator so you can keep food cold AND you can keep food frozen depending upon your needs.

I thought I would list a few Amazon links (disclosure) here in case you are looking for rv refrigerator related items:

- [Dometic RM3762RB 2-Way Refrigerator – 7.0 Cubic Feet](#)
- [Norcold Inc. Refrigerators N841 2 Way 2 Door Gas Absorption Refrigerator](#)
- [Norcold Inc. Refrigerators 323T R/L 3 Way Refrigerator](#)
- [Norcold Inc. Refrigerators N641 2 Way 2 Door Gas Absorption Refrigerator](#)
- [Norcold Inc. Refrigerators N300 2 Way Gas Absorption Refrigerator](#)
- [Norcold Inc. Refrigerators N300.3 3 Way Refrigerator](#)



RV Refrigerator

<http://rv52.com/rv-bathroom-sink/>

RV Bathroom Sink

Most RV's that are travel trailer class or larger will have a bathroom. Inside of that bathroom, a set of very standard concepts will exist such as the rv bathroom sink.

The RV bathroom sink will usually be small and unless you get into million dollar rigs, you simply will not find a his and hers bathroom sink. Instead you'll find something that is just right for washing your hands, shaving and taking care of yourself in a style that is pretty decent.

The bathroom sink will have both hot and cold water, the hot supplied by a small RV hot water heater and the the water for both the hot side and cold side being ultimately supplied by shore water supply. If you are boondocking, you might get water from your onboard fresh water storage tank.

Most RV bathroom sinks are going to be a small standard size that you can find at Lowes or Home Depot.

Our bathroom sink in our Open Range 399BHS is pictured here and is really too fancy for the RV. But one nice thing about the larger glass bowl is the fact that it does make it easier to shave. Most RV's have a much more basic looking sink. Its just not worth getting too fancy here.

Most RV's have a little storage underneath the sink and a little storage above the sink.

Just in case you need to replace your bathroom sink, I've included a few Amazon links here ([disclosure](#)). Your faucet is most likely to need replacing first so I list a few links to faucets here as well – actually more faucets than sinks.

- [DF-PL700C-ORB – Classical RV Lavatory Faucet in Oil Rubbed Bronze – RV Bathroom Faucet For Travel Trailers, Campers, 5th Wheel](#)
- [DF-PL700C-SN – Classical RV Lavatory Faucet in Satin Nickel – RV Bathroom Faucet For Travel Trailers, Campers, 5th Wheel](#)
- [RV / Mobile Home Bathroom Sink Faucet – Chrome](#)
- [Corner Lavatory Sink White 10" x 10"](#)
- [DF-PL100-SN – Single Lever RV Lavatory Faucet in Satin Nickel – RV Bathroom Faucet for Modern 5th Wheels, Campers, Trailers](#)
- [Lavatory Sink – Bone – 17"W x 20"L](#)



RV Bathroom Sink

<http://rv52.com/rv-shower/>

RV Shower

The RV Shower, in many ways is what differentiates TRUE roughing it camping from a more gentele experience. The #1 thing I never liked about camping in a tent or in the wild was the inability to get clean. Usually after a weekend of camping, the number one thing I did when I got back to my home was to take a long shower or bath.

So most RV's, even many camping trailers try to figure out how to get you a hot shower. Even the camping trailers have a little bathroom that is also a shower. You can pull a curtain around the toilet on these little camping trailers and then they have a little shower handle and you can take a shower and not get water everywhere. This "toilet in shower" concept is called a wet bathroom. I think the idea of a camping trailer with a shower underscores how important this is to people.

In most RV's of any real size you'll get a normal shower. It will be smaller than a bricks and sticks shower, but still pretty darned nice compared to nothing. The shower head itself I've noticed is almost always mounted to 3 foot (approx) flexible hose which goes to a fitting which is pretty much like a bathroom sink faucet, except used in a shower.

I'm not exactly sure why the RVs seem to always use the flexible shower head except that I do believe it simplifies the behind the wall plumbing extensively. Also, I wonder if the target audience prefers this. I don't know, I'm only speculating.

One thing I can tell you is that if at all possible, try to get a shower where the shower itself – the plastic shell you step into – is a single piece design. Ours is not and it provides lots of opportunities for problems like mold, mildew, and leaks. So get a single piece if you can.

Here are some useful Amazon links ([disclosure](#)) if you need replacement parts of similar:

- [DF-SA130-WT – White RV Shower Head and Hose – Modern RV Shower Faucet Replacement Head and Hose](#)
- [Camco 43712 RV Off-White Shower Head with On/Off Switch](#)
- [DF-SA100S-WT – White RV Shower Faucet Valve Diverter – Smoked Acrylic Knobs – For: Recreational Vehicle, Motorhome, Travel Trailer, Camper, Fifth \(5th\) Wheel, Towable](#)
- [Oxygenics Body Spa Handheld Shower Kit, White](#)
- [Camco 43717 60" White Shower Flexible Hose](#)
- [Phoenix USA R0477-I 4" White Bath Faucet Shower Valve](#)



RV

Shower

<http://rv52.com/rv-bathroom-vent-and-fan-switch/>

RV Bathroom Vent

The RV bathroom vent is a great little thing to have for a number of reasons. Almost all RV's have one, except the very smallest camping trailers.

Some great reasons for having one is when you use the fan properly you show courtesy to the rest of the RV occupants - if you know what I mean. Just as important I think is the ability to vent humid warm air to the outside when showering keeping the RV much lower humidity. Whatever your reason, expect to have one.

The vent itself will have a manual method to raise and lower the vent. You would travel with it lowered of course and keep it closed for bad weather. For much of your time you can keep the vent open. DC power is routed to the vent and you'll usually find the motor and the switch to control it, right at the vent itself. If you are a little bit short this will be a problem, but most people can reach it.

I've listed a few RV Bathroom vents here from Amazon ([disclosure](#)) for your convenience.

- [12v Powered White Vent](#)
- [Broan Replacement Bath Ventilator Motor and blower wheel # 97012038, 50 CFM, .9 amps; 120 Volts](#)



RV Bathroom Vent Fan and Switch

<http://rv52.com/rv-toilet/>

RV Toilet

The RV Toilet is one of the important and differentiating attachments in an RV. Utilizing a toilet instead of digging a hole in the wild – never mind any local laws about that – is a pretty darned nice thing.

Unlike sticks and bricks toilets, which use water to “whoosh” your little package on its way to a better place, the RV toilet instead puts your little package into an onboard storage tank. The onboard storage tank is then emptied when it gets full. Of course it is only emptied into approved sewer or septic system.

I’ve written quite a few articles on managing the black tank on an RV. For every opinion on the subject you’ll find 4 more so it is a never ending subject.

One of the neat things about an RV toilet is that I truly believe it uses WAY less water than a regular toilet. So as an RVer you are a Green Machine!

You’ll find replacements that are both plastic and ceramic. We’re lucky in that ours is ceramic and I think that the ceramic is much better.

There are other technologies that would be perfectly suitable to a camper – but I’ve only seen them mentioned relative to some of the tiny houses that Tumbleweed Homes advertises. The other choices are 1) composting and 2) incinerating.

Here are some toilet related items from Amazon ([disclosure](#)) :

- [Thetford 31671 Aqua Magic V White High Foot Flush](#)
- [Thetford 31667 Aqua Magic V White High Hand Flush](#)
- [Dometic 210 Series White Standard height Toilet with Spray](#)
- [Thetford Bravura Toilet High](#)
- [Thetford 42058 Aqua Magic Style II White High China Bowl](#)
- [Walex TOI-91799 Porta-Pak Holding Tank Deodorizer, \(Pack of 10\)](#)
- [Walex BIO-11530 Bio-Pak Natural Holding Tank Deodorizer and Waste Digester, \(Pack of 10\)](#)



Toilet

RV

<http://rv52.com/rv-vent-powered/>

RV Vent – Powered RV Fan

Regardless of all other vent types, all RV's have an RV vent from the main body of the RV to the roof. Not all are powered though.

A vent is pretty nice, but a powered vent, that is something of beauty. This is a little different from the "baby" vent that has a "baby" electric motor that is typically found in the bathroom.

This is a true ventilation fan that is capable of moving big bunches of air at a time. They go by names such as super fan or fan-tastic fan.

We really like our high powered ventilation fan and it can lower the temperature of the RV very quickly, which then gets the RV a little bit easier to cool (or heat) with the normal built in systems. Our particular fan has its own electric remote opening system which also turns on and off the fan as well as opening and closing the vent.

You can find similar fans like this one on Amazon and eBay. Here are some representative Amazon listings to save you some time.

- [Fan – Tastic Vent® Model 4000](#)
- [Fan-Tastic Vent 8000 ABS LID Vent Create-A-Breeze 3-Speed Manual Crank ABS White Lid](#)
- [Vortex High Velocity RV Roof Vent Retrofit Kit](#)
- [Fan – Tastic Vent® Model 5000](#)
- [Maxxair 00-965001 Turbo/Maxx 3 Speed Fan with Thermostat](#)
- [MaxxAir 850 White Fan/Mate Rain Cover for High Powered Ceiling Fans](#)



RV Super Fan Kitchen Vent – unfortunately with small bits of insects and dirt shown.

<http://rv52.com/rv-vent-unpowered/>

RV Vent – Unpowered

In prior articles, I written about the powered RV Vent, but the more common vent is a simple RV vent that is unpowered.

While the powered ones are incredible, not having a vent at all would be terrible in an RV. Why? RV's suffer a little bit more from heat due to the added effect of radiated heat inside the RV. Most regular buildings have thicker insulation and walls and can knock down the radiated heat much better.

Therefore, since the insides of the RV can get super heated, it is really important to give the hot air a chance to escape and pull in cooler (relative of course) air from the outside.

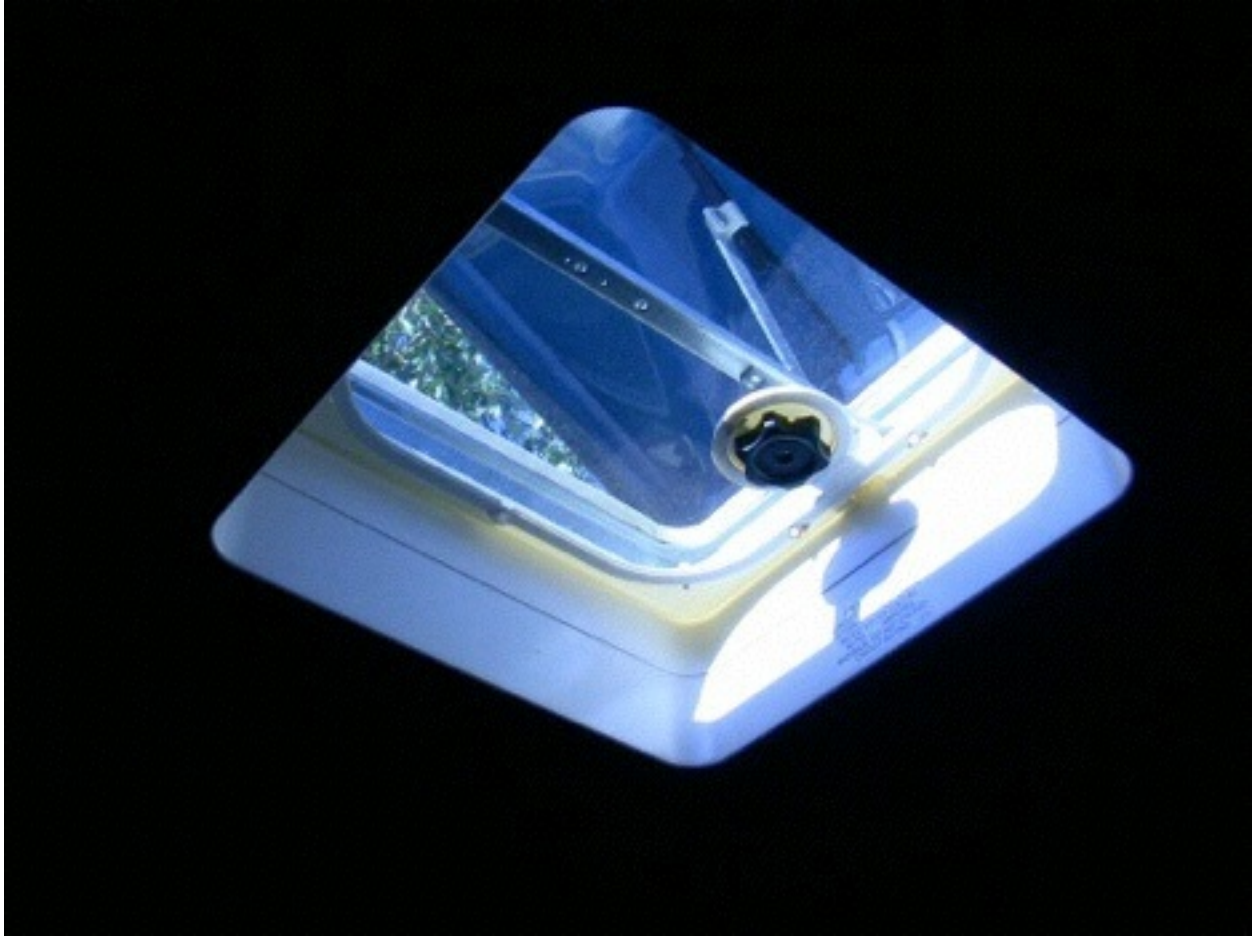
These unpowered RV Vents are actually very good at doing just that.

I know that when I open our vent, even though it is unpowered, I can definitely feel the hot air escape and the room get instant temperature relief.

We always make sure to check the vents throughout the day when we are coming and going – not because they are unreliable, but because we use them and they are very easy to forget to close when rain or other bad weather comes along.

I went ahead and listed some representative vents from Amazon ([disclosure](#)) that might help you on your search if you're looking for vents for your own RV.

- [Ventline V2092SP-28 14" Radius White Vent with Pop Out Screen and Garnish Boxed](#)
- [Camco 40431 RV Roof Vent Cover – White](#)
- [Heng's 71111-1G1 14" White Universal Vent](#)
- [Ventline V2092-503-00 Blue/Gray 14" Radius Corner Vent with Pop Up Screen](#)
- [Camco 40152 RV Polypropylene Replacement Vent Lid – New Jensen for Metal Vent](#)
- [Maxxair 00-933066 Translucent White Vent Cover](#)
- [Ventline V2094-501-00 Birch White 14" 12V Radius Corner Vent with Pop Up Screen](#)
- [Camco 40148 RV Replacement Vent Lid for Ventline/Elixir Smoke Tint](#)
- ... and many more – these are just ideas for you to get started if you need such a vent.



RV Vent – Unpowered

<http://rv52.com/rv-air-conditioner-vent/>

RV Air Conditioner Vent

The RV Air Conditioner Vent will only show up apart and separate from the RV air conditioner if your RV has air conditioning ducts built into the RV.

If you look at the ceiling and see vents, then you have air conditioner ductwork in your RV. I can provide some really good RV buying tips to make sure the ductwork is what you want it to be.

One of the first things I can think of is to make sure that you have plenty of ducts, distributed approximately in the correct number for a given space. What I mean by that is that if you have TWO ducts in your bathroom, which is the smallest area in the RV, then only have TWO in your living space, then I would question that design. You should have 2 in the bathroom to at least 3 or more in the living space.

The next thing is that if the vents can be controlled to be closed and opened that is even better – now you can direct the cool air. However, that ONLY works if there are an abundance of vents. If there are not very many and you plug one to put more air in another room, it could actually spell trouble for the air conditioner – causing it to freeze up or work too hard. Air flow is important for the air conditioner.

Most importantly, if you will have your RV in 105 degree temperatures and are hoping for an internal 70 degree temperature, you're going to have to make sure that the AC can maintain a 30-35 degree differential between the outside and the inside of the RV. I'm not sure the best way to do this other than to crank the AC on full blast and see what happens while you are in the dealer lot. If the RV you are testing can maintain the differential, then chances are even if you order one it probably has properly functioning vents and AC design.

I know in our Open Range 399BHS, I think the BEST we can achieve is about a 20 degree differential. That isn't too bad, except in the middle of the Texas summer. We believe the ducts in the OR 399BHS are 1) too small in cross section area, 2) arranged in such a way that the air cannot cool the central room in the 399BHS. I think larger ductwork could have helped. I'm not criticizing, I'm just saying I think it could have been done better.



RV Air Conditioning Outlet Vent

<http://rv52.com/rv-antenna-and-cable-switch/>

RV Antenna and Cable Switch

Usually inside the RV there will be a number of places to connect your TV, switch between cable and satellite, and provide power for 12 Volt DC powered TV's.

In our Open Range 399BHS you can see our TV connections in the front closet of the RV. It is a little messy because this closet is where we put the 802.11 WiFi Router, 2 channel IPTV tuners and our Clear Channel modem.

On the left hand side, you'll see the switch which usually switches the outlet on the left between the external TV antenna and the external cable connection. The really big circle thingy is a 12VDC automotive style outlet for powering a 12VDC powered TV.

The thing on the right is a wiring loop which takes a normal signal and boosts it so all TV's in the RV can run off of the same signal which is labeled "main" throughout the RV. I don't know if other RV's are wired this way so be careful about applying this paragraph to other RV's.

The main point is that you'll usually find the switch as described with the 12VDC power supply.

If you have trouble with yours, you might find a replacement on Amazon or eBay ([disclosure](#)). I've included some auctions and Amazon listings here for your convenience.

- [Winegard RV-7042 White Wall Plate Power Supply](#)
- [Winegard ANWI8700 Winegard AP Signal Amplifier](#)
- [Winegard RV-7542 White Wall Plate Power Supply](#)
-



RV Antenna Cable Switch and RV Antenna amplifier

<http://rv52.com/rv-stereo-speakers/>

RV Stereo Speakers

Since most RV's have built in entertainment systems, the RV is usually prewired. The great thing is that you'll find RV Stereo Speakers usually mounted in the ceiling and sometimes in spare bunkhouse or the rv basement.

What you would look for is to see what is prewired. Look for the little flush mount speakers in the ceiling. In the picture below the speakers are not flushmount speakers, but they are builtin and prewired into the ceiling. That is a real nicety. So look for all the speakers in the RV and then see if there are "controls" in the audio system to manage those speakers. That will give you a good idea of the capability of the system.

If you want to try to get replacement speakers for your RV, I've put a few listings from Amazon in this article ([disclosure](#)) for your convenience.

- [Pyramid MDC6 5.25-Inch Marine 100 Watts Dual Cone Waterproof Stereo Speakers](#)
- [JBL MS6200 6.5-Inch 2-Way Marine Speakers](#)
- [Boss Audio MR50B 5.25-Inch 2-Way Marine Speaker \(Pair\)](#)
- [Boss Audio MR60W 6.5-Inch 2-Way Marine Speaker](#)
- [Magnadyne WR692W Pair White 6 x 9" Coaxial Waterproof Marine Speakers](#)
- [Yamaha NS-IW280CWH 6.5" 3-Way In-Ceiling Speaker System \(White\)](#)



RV Stereo Speakers with RV Home Theater System

<http://rv52.com/extra-tv-connections/>

Extra TV Connections

If your RV has any extra rooms in it, perhaps in your bedroom or a bunkhouse, or even the external areas, you might want to check around to see if there is coaxial cable routed into those areas. Since an RV is really tough to modify compared to a sticks and bricks house having it prewired in the factory is much easier.

Its easy to find these connections, just walk around and look for coaxial cables.

Our RV is a little odd in that for every extra TV connection you'll see TWO coaxial connectors?

Why?

Because one is a wire straight through from the external convenience center and that is marked satellite.

The other is for a master "whole RV" TV connection, usually the over the air antenna and marked "main" or "cable".



RV Television Antenna Connections for Extra TV

<http://rv52.com/rv-slide-out-inside-view/>

RV Slide Out – Inside View

The RV slide out makes the RV's really special. They convert the RV from a constricting 8 foot wide (sorry Airstream) to around 14 feet wide give or take. If you walk into an RV blindfolded and then take off your blindfold, you really think you are in a cozy little apartment with decent sized – albeit still small – rooms.

RV Slide outs can take an RV which has around a maximum of 320 square feet and get it up to 400 square feet. That 80 square feet is quite a bit as a percentage increase and RV owners notice it. I've wrote about the slide basics [here](#) and also collected how to videos [here](#).

When you are looking for an RV, you might wonder what the inside of the RV looks like around the slide. Check out the pictures below. You'll see a ridge or lip of wood which goes up against the sides of the walls and makes a flush air-tight (usually not as air-tight as you want it to be) seal.

On the floor you'll usually see a carpet which is attached to the slide. This carpet slides with the slide and covers up the seam between the slide and the fixed floor of the RV.

The slides are controlled by switches in the interior command center.

I'll give a word to the wise when putting the slide out. Have a second person on the outside guiding the slide out and making sure there are no obstructions. Even when you KNOW there aren't – just do it anyway.

When bringing the slide in, double, triple, and quadruple check that there are no obstructions. Because if you think there are not, there are. On our single slide travel trailer ([Puma](#)) we made sure to tear up a kitchen cabinet door – more than once. You think we would have known better. But the door wouldn't latch either and it would inconspicuously flip open. Then when we extended the slide the slide would simply tear off the door. I might add, it did it with little effort. The slides are stronger than you think.

One thing. You'd think bringing the slides in and out is super cool – and it is. But also, in a strange way, it is super anti-climactic. You are almost let down when you do it. Maybe that is just me.

But we love having the extra space. Now you know something about how the slides look on the inside before you go shopping.



RV Slideout with Upper lip showing



RV Flooring and RV Slideout with Seam Showing

<http://rv52.com/rv-storage/>

RV Storage Overhead Bins

Most RV's have some overhead bins for storage. You'll find storage in different areas such as:

- kitchen cabinets
- under bed
- small closets
- under seating

One such area is in overhead bins like the one shown below. You should expect, in most travel trailers and fifth wheels but probably not smaller camping trailers, an overhead bin or two.

I thought that ours was interesting in that to keep the bins securely closed or opened – both very useful ideas – that Open Range used gas cylinders. Those are the black things in the picture at the far end of the bin.

The biggest thing is that when closing, if you don't guide the door closed, they close with a "bang".

Probably the most important thing to know about storage in an RV is that storage is a GREAT way to get your RV overweight. Chances are if you carry much more than clothes, your RV probably is overweight and that is a very likely safety problem.

So ladies... storage really is a bad thing. Fight fight fight the urge to let it be an important buying criteria - especially if you plan on moving your RV often.



RV Overhead Storage Bins with Gas Lifts Showing

<http://rv52.com/rv-window-treatments/>

RV Window Treatments

RV Window Treatments are one of those eye-candy things that the makers LOVE to have inside the RV. But honestly, we always want to take ours down. You'll see all sorts of things in the RV's, most guilty of bad style.

Our window treatments serve to collect dust and reduce the brightness of the interior. So we're not big fans.

However, one of the treatments is important – and that is the blinds. Maybe “important” isn't the right word – but how about really useful.

The blinds are a GREAT way to get privacy at night, which you'll want, especially if you are in an RV park which has RV's entirely too close together. Also during the day, if the day is very hot, the blinds can keep the heat down on the inside of the RV. We always find that we are putting shades up, down, and partially open to control light and glare too.

The blinds we have are a single sheet of corrugated plastic-clothy material that are kept in whatever position you put them in by a friction method connected together by a couple of long strings. We have wore out several of these so I can't say that the ones we received from the factory are very high quality.

That being said, RV52 will soon probably put up new, after market friction blinds (called pleated shades) so we'll let you know how that goes and who we buy from. I don't know if they pleated shades for home use will work well for RV use or not. When you are traveling you can just put them in the down position so it's not like you have to have them hold in position.

Here are some Amazon links ([disclosure](#)) for rv blind/shade related items.

- [Camco 42913 RV Cream Retractable Lights Out Vent Shade](#)
- [Coolaroo Shade Fabric Heavy 84% to 90% UV Block 6 Feet by 15 Feet Wheat](#)
- [Pleated Shade First Aid Kit](#)
- [RV Designer Collection A303 – 10" Mini-Blind Clear Replacement Wand](#)
- [JR Products 81635 Post-Style Mini Blind Hold-Down – Pack of 2](#)
- [RV Designer Collection A301 Mini-Blind Hold-Down](#)
- [RV Designer Collection A285 Side Curtain Hold Down](#)
- [RV Windsheild Curtains 130" to 170" x 32" Tan](#)
- [Airstream Drape Carriers](#)



RV Window and Window Treatments particularly the blinds

<http://rv52.com/rv-door-and-door-latch/>

RV Door, Door latch and handle

Of all the things in an RV, you'll use the RV Door and the RV Door latch and handle every day, probably multiple times in a day.

Almost every RV Door handle I've ever seen looks completely different than the sticks and bricks door knobs and handles. I don't know why but I ASSUME or PRESUME that it has to do with the fact that RV's are regulated by the US national Highway safety administration or whatever that agency is called.

That being said, from the inside you can only control the deadbolt. There is also a key latch control that you can control from the outside – in addition to the deadbolt which can be controlled from the outside too.

Our door does not have an integral screen door built into it. We wished it did. We do have the full length window which we can open for some ventilation. It's not as nice as the screen door for ventilation, but its what we have now.

I put some potential replacement door handles here is you need one. These are from Amazon ([disclosure](#)).

- [Travel Trailer Lock, White](#)
- [JR Products 10765 Right Hand Screen Door Latch](#)
- [Trimark 60-650 Black RV Entry Door Lock w/Dead Bolt](#)
- [RV Travel Trailer Flush Mount Lock w/Deadbolt/Keys-Colonial White](#)
- [Travel Trailer Lock, Chrome](#)
- [Philips RV Screen Door Lever Latch](#)



RV Door showing Inside handle and deadbolt

<http://rv52.com/rv-control-panel/>

RV Control Panel

Almost every RV has an RV Control Panel. You might hear it called rv command center or any one of 20 other names.

The RV Control Panel is a central location where all the RV-centric switches and buttons go that are unique to RVing and the RV.

Your RV control panel might be as simple as an on/off switch for the hot water heater OR it might be incredibly complex and sophisticated like the control panel on a [Newell](#), [Prevost](#), or high end [Monaco](#).

If you have small children in/around your RV, I might HIGHLY RECOMMEND that you put a lock or other safety mechanism on the door. Otherwise, things could get pretty exciting.

Typical items you'll find in the RV Control Panel are:

- Hot Water Heater Controls (on/off for electric – on/off for gas)
- Different lighting controls (porch, hall, other- such as accent lights)
- Fresh Water Pump – provides pressure for water system when operating with self contained fresh water only
- RV Slide out controls
- Tank Fluid Level monitoring system – black tank, gray tank, and fresh water tank
- Battery Monitoring and control system – can be simple monitoring or much more
- Awning Controls
- Super Fan or Fantastic Fan Controls
- Air Conditioning Control – for example on/off for the circuits for the 2nd air conditioner so you don't blow 30 amp circuits

There are so much more that can go in these control panels, I only listed what was in our 5th wheel's control panel, but I think this gives you an idea of what to expect.

Inspecting this control panel actually gives you an idea of what kinds of systems you would have in your RV. One thing right off the top of my mind you might find extra is the generator controls in this panel. But I think you get the point.

For some fun, I thought I could list some Amazon listings ([disclosure](#)) that are related to the subject.

- [Intellisense Rv One Touch Control Panel](#)
- [Sunforce 60032 30 Amp Digital Charge Controller](#)
- [Ramsond SunShield 12V 12 Volt 8A 8 Amp Solar Charge Controller Regulator](#)
- [Xantrex System Control Panel – Use With Freedom SW 3000 Watt Inverter \(Item# 456072\), Model# 809-0910](#)

- [“Watt’s Up” RC Watt Meter & Power Analyzer WU100 Version 2 — SALE!](#)
- [MEAN WELL IRC2 INVERTER REMOTE CONTROL PANEL](#)
- [Atwood 85441 Remote Control Kit](#)
- [Flush Mnt Solar Charge Control](#)
- [MAGNUM ME-RC50 REMOTE PANEL](#)
- [XANTREX AGS AUTOMATIC GENERATOR START for SW2012 SW3012 \(NEEDS SCP\) \(16523\)](#)

RV Command Center showing controls for slideouts, lights, hot water heater, water pressure pump, super fans, and monitoring system.



RV Command Center showing 2nd air conditioner control switch and awning control

Concluding your 5th Wheel's Tour of the Interior

I sincerely hope that this small tour was worth the time and expense.

By this time, you should be able to go to a dealer, walk around ANY fifth wheel and be able to identify almost every item on the inside of the RV.

Additionally, you should now know some of the questions you might like to ask and features you believe are important.

It is my hope that you can sit back and say "I'm glad Marlan wrote this small ebook and paying him a tiny sum for this ebook probably will save us from making a \$500 dollar mistake by not getting what we wanted."

If you really do feel that way, why not go to where you bought it and give me a review or a rating so that I can help other people too!

Thanks.

Happy RVing!

About the Author

I live in an RV fulltime.

This is not due to necessity, but due to personal choice.

At first my wife and I did it as a lark.

But then we decided we liked it.

Oddly, my kids decided they liked the idea too. I can't explain it, but they did. We upgraded to a much larger RV with separate living spaces for each kid.

Each kid has a small closet, a bed, a couch and they share a desk area. They also have a set of drawers and some additional storage.

We then decided to purchase some land for many reasons, but at least one of which was that we wanted a permanent address that the schools would recognize. We purchased 5 acres of unimproved land inside the kids school district. We had to be very careful about restrictions since most municipalities are not pro-RV.

We moved the RV out to the land and started living on the land as soon as possible. We could probably not have afforded to do this without an RV so the RV gave us a "power" we would not otherwise have had.

Assuming rent is \$1200/month in Austin, Texas, every month we use the RV and not an apartment, we accumulate over \$500 of savings. While I would not call the RV an investment, it is making possible an investment in our land which we are improving all the time.

We'll eventually build a small house on the property, but we won't make a monstrosity.

By living in the RV, we've built stronger family bonds than I ever thought possible and taught my children that you don't have to give into society's pressure to live a consumer lifestyle - driven by impressing other people and wanting "the next thing". For this idea and this idea alone, the RV has changed my life and the life of the people closest to me for the better.

Please visit me on <http://rv52.com> to see all of my crazy RV work.

If you'd like to hear from me monthly, I send out a newsletter with exclusive content. You can subscribe to it for free here -> <http://rv52.com/subscribe?from=book>

Cheers,

Marlan

THE END