

Refinements from the RV Masters

Since experience is the best teacher, it is inevitable that people who have been Airstreaming a long time have discovered valuable "tricks of the trade". These RV masters always seem to do things that evidence a finesse and polish based on their years of experience. So let's take a look at some of these Refinements from the RV Masters!

Business Cards - When traveling for extended periods of time get into the habit of requesting a business card during registration at each campground. Print your site number on the card. Carry it in your pocket, purse, or money clip. If you subsequently get in an accident or any other situation where you are in shock or not thinking clearly, you can hand the card to those people willing to help. The card is also handy for obtaining the campground ZIP Code that is used to retrieve satellite television dish coordinates during setup.

Water Filtration -Use a water filter with sediment cartridge to filter all water coming into the RV. Perhaps your reason for not doing so already is that your rig comes with a standard drinking water filter under the sink, used for the water you drink. You may feel that is enough filtration. Since you never even once filter your water at home, why double filter your RV water? The response is that RVs use such a variety of qualities of water - untreated spring water, well water, chlorinated municipal water, and old water from your fresh water tank. This water contains an amazing amount of grit, calcium sediment, even parts of very small seashells if you have been camping near the ocean. If you are still not convinced, unscrew the drain plug on your water heater (after allowing the water to cool with the gas or electric turned off), open the hot water taps in the unit to break the vacuum, and allow the water to drain out of the drain plug. Shoot some fresh water in the drain plug hole through something the size of a large straw to stir the sediment and flush it out of the bottom of the tank. Collect all this water and take a close look at it. The grit that you see is ruining the o-rings in all of your RV plumbing faucets and clogging the bottom of your water heater. As a side benefit, the water heater should be flushed yearly anyway for maximum efficiency. For maximum filter efficiency use the sediment cartridge to protect a second-in-line higher quality taste and odor cartridge. Filters are available at Lowes or Home Depot builders' supply houses.

Sewer trap - Most of us arrive at a new campground and during the set up we attach the sewer hose to the RV and the sewer outlet, pulling the gray water dump valve to allow dish, shower, and wash water to flow out during our stay. If you don't put a P trap in the sewer hose line, you have granted sewer dwelling insects unlimited access to the exterior/interior of your rig. A P trap refers to positioning your sewer hose so that at some point between the rig and the place the hose empties into the ground it sags enough to allow water to fill the entire sewer hose, thus blocking bugs from entering your rig. Without a water block filling the entire sewer hose at one spot, these insects climb up the sewer hose, into the gray water tank, up the vent pipe to the roof and into the rig through ceiling, screen or refrigerator vents. Just a four-inch rock or a spare sewer connector under the sewer line will ensure a water block that stops these unhealthy pests. Ralph Jones, WBCCI # 17268, has also suggested that the lack of a P trap in the sewer hose allows sewer gas to find its way up to the roof of the RV and you continue to smell sewer gas around your rig, especially when other campers dump their tanks.

Wheel locks - Don Shafer, WBCCI # 134, recommends wheel locks instead of or in addition to wheel chocks to hold the trailer before unhitching on any level or non-level surface. He finds that wheel locks that use leverage to apply outward pressure to each of two side-by-side tires reliably lock down the trailer. On the other hand chocks have been known to skid if you do not preload some weight on them. If you have a single axle trailer, look for a pair of chocks with an adjustable bar between them. The chocks go on both sides of the wheel and the adjustable bar is tightened to firmly hold the rig.

Tires- The more you travel the more you realize your tires are an essential part of making it all happen. They need to be properly inflated and are especially at risk as the ambient temperature rises in the summer. Before beginning each day it is best to check all tire pressures with a gauge, since one may have developed a slow leak overnight. At every stop make it a practice to first walk around the rig and touch the sidewall of each tire. If you find one noticeably hotter than the other on the same axle find out why. Is it overloaded or underinflated? By avoiding a flapping tire on your tow vehicle, trailer, motorhome, or towed vehicle, you avoid the damage it can

inflict on your rig and make the roads safer for those traveling around you. If your motorhome has dual rear tires and one of them fails without your knowledge, you must buy two tires because the other has been overloaded to twice its capacity and sustained hidden damages.

Non-level campsites - If you can't find a level campsite, choose a back-in site that is slightly up hill or a pull-in site that is slightly down hill.

In the trailer the hitch end will be slightly lower in both instances. The trailer is easily leveled by raising the hitch end with the jack. If the jack can't go high enough, put an extra block of wood under it. Even if you finish with the hitch end a negligible amount low, you will be sleeping with your head at the back of the trailer, a small amount higher and an agreeable sleeping position. In the opposite situation where the hitch end is higher, you can only lower the hitch to the ground. What if that is not enough? The only solution then is to rehook the trailer to the tow vehicle and then roll all trailer tires up on blocks, unhook, and lower the hitch toward the ground, while hoping your estimate of thickness of blocks needed was enough. This opposite situation is way too much effort!

In the motorhome the front end will be slightly lower in both instances. The motorhome can be leveled with the leveling jacks because they can lift the front end up a significant amount, even to the point of lifting the front tires off the ground (not recommended). But this can't be done at the rear. Only a small tilt on one side at the rear can be accomplished. Since the parking brakes hold the rear tires, jacking the rear tires up a significant amount would defeat the parking brake and leave the coach unstable on an incline. If your motorhome does not have leveling jacks, driving up on boards under the front tires is easier than trying to put boards under all the rear tires.

Sewer Hose - Most of us would agree that dumping the black and gray water would not be high on our list of favorite RV activities. Typically we dump the black water first, then the gray water to "wash out" the hose. Then we unhook the hose from the RV and hold it high to rid it of water as we walk toward the sewer end. This dumps most of the residue water in the hose. Finally, we grab the sewer hose in the middle and hold it high as the liquid drops out of each end while we walk to store it. But as we put it in storage how do we keep the hose from dripping on us?

Wring out the sewer hose by starting at the end you unhook from the RV. Hold that end up in your left hand and accordion the sewer hose up into your left hand, allowing the top part to roll over and down to the ground. The left hand makes sure the hose gets momentarily accordioned as the right hand works the entire length of the hose through the process. When you get to the opposite end of the hose you will note a reasonable amount of liquid is expelled. It was trapped between the folds of the hose and the accordion wring-out forced it to exit. Now when you carry and store the hose it will not drip on you. In addition your storage area will dry out faster and will smell better.