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# COOL Tears™ and tiny campers MAGAZINE

VOL. 13 NO. 1 WINTER 2025

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# Letter from the Editor:



**AS ANOTHER CAMPING SEASON KICKS OFF**, I've been reflecting on the adventures we set out to have last year and how our bucket list stacked up against reality. Some dreams came true, some evolved along the way, and others - well, there's always next season.

First, let's celebrate the big wins! We witnessed the eclipse in all its glory - an experience that felt like pure magic. The northern lights danced across the sky for us, another bucket list checkmark we won't soon forget. We didn't even have to leave our own yard in southern Michigan, which was incredible! Our long, slow journey to the Canadian Maritimes was everything we'd hoped for, filled with stunning coastlines, small-town charm, and plenty of detours. We stood in awe of the extreme tidal swings at the Bay of Fundy and ate our way through lobster roll after lobster roll in Maine and Nova Scotia, making the most of every restaurant meal and seafood shack we could find.

While we didn't quite hit our goal of 75 nights in the teardrop, we still managed a solid 58 nights on the road - and every one of them was an adventure. We boondocked by the coast (a favorite), stocked up on fresh finds at local farmers markets, and though we didn't technically climb a very tall mountain, we did climb a named peak in Acadia National Park that tested our legs and our willpower!

Looking back, it wasn't just about checking off the boxes. It was about the experiences, the unexpected moments, and the people we met along the way. And speaking of milestones, we have another huge one to celebrate - 14,000 subscribers! In just the last year, we've seen this community grow in ways we never imagined. Your enthusiasm, support, and shared love of tiny campers keep this magazine going, and I can't thank you enough for being part of the journey.

So, what's on the bucket list for this year? I've got a few ideas - but I'd love to hear yours, too. Drop me a note and let's make this another unforgettable season!

Safe travels and happy camping! ■

Live Tiny. Live Free.

Lisa Adams

Editor

Cool Tears Magazine™

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# Federal Hiring Freeze & Mass Firings

It's impact on National Parks and Forests **BY LISA ADAMS**

## **THE RECENT FEDERAL HIRING FREEZE**

and buyout offers that allow federal workers to resign with the promise of pay through September, initiated by President Donald Trump, has raised significant concerns regarding its potential impact on the United States' national parks and forests. This measure, aimed at reducing the size of the federal government, has led to the rescission of thousands of job offers within the National Park Service (NPS), affecting both seasonal and permanent positions. As the peak tourist season approaches, the implications of this staffing shortage are becoming increasingly evident.

## **Understanding the Hiring Freeze**

On January 20, 2025, President Trump signed an executive order implementing a federal hiring freeze across various government agencies, including the NPS. This directive was part of a broader strategy to downsize federal operations and manage budgetary constraints. While certain exemptions were made for roles related to national security and public safety, many positions critical to the functioning of national parks were not initially exempted. Consequently, numerous job offers

extended to prospective NPS employees were rescinded, leading to concerns about the operational capacity of national parks during their busiest periods ([Washington Post]).

Adding to the impact of the hiring freeze, approximately 2,200 probationary employees from the Department of the Interior were terminated on February 14, 2025. This number includes workers from the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the U.S. Geological Survey. These agencies play a crucial role in land conservation, wildlife management, research, and public lands administration, making their loss particularly significant ([CNN]). Additionally, the U.S. Forest Service saw 3,400 probationary employees laid off, further straining the agency's ability to manage national forests, respond to wildfires, and maintain public lands. These employees were involved in essential duties

such as wildfire mitigation, reforestation, land restoration, and public safety enforcement. With fewer staff members available, fire preparedness and forest conservation efforts could be severely impacted.

## Impact on National Parks

National parks rely heavily on seasonal staff to manage the influx of visitors during peak seasons. These employees are essential for a range of duties, including maintenance, visitor services, educational programs, and law enforcement. With the hiring freeze in effect, parks are facing significant challenges in filling these roles. Seasonal Campground Hosts are affected by this hiring freeze which could lead to campground closures. Without other seasonal staff, visitor center closures are expected, guided tours might not be offered, and bathrooms will not be cleaned regularly.



For instance, Yosemite National Park is experiencing considerable difficulties due to the staffing shortages resulting from the hiring freeze. The park is on the brink of its busiest season but remains highly understaffed, leading to concerns about its ability to manage visitor numbers and maintain essential services. The situation is further complicated by the resignation of Superintendent Cicely Muldoon, which has left a leadership vacuum during this critical time ([SFGate]).

Similarly, Grand Teton National Park is bracing for the effects of reduced staffing. The park typically employs a substantial number of seasonal workers to assist with backcountry safety, trail maintenance, and wildlife management. With the hiring freeze, these positions remain unfilled, potentially compromising visitor safety and resource protection ([Buckrail]).

## **Economic Implications for Gateway Communities**

The impact of the hiring freeze extends beyond the parks themselves, affecting the surrounding communities that depend on park tourism. These "gateway" communities, which include towns like Bryson City and Asheville near the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, rely heavily on the economic activity generated by park visitors. Services such as hotels, restaurants, and retail stores in these areas could face downturns if park operations are curtailed due to staffing shortages ([Citizen Times]). Western North Carolina was hard hit by Hurricane Helene in 2024, so the area has already suffered from lower tourism dollars in recent months.

## **Legislative Response and Advocacy**

In response to these challenges, a group of 22 U.S. senators, including Senator Mazie Hirono of Hawaii, have expressed their concerns to Interior Secretary Doug Burgum. They warn that the staffing cuts could lead to the closure of national parks and have urged the reversal of these measures to prevent adverse impacts on park operations and local economies ([West Hawaii Today]).

Additionally, organizations such as the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) have highlighted the critical role of seasonal employees in maintaining park operations. They emphasize that without adequate staffing, parks may struggle to provide essential services, manage visitor safety, and protect natural resources ([NPCA]).

## **Potential Mitigation Strategies**

To address the staffing shortages, some parks are exploring alternative solutions, such as increasing reliance on volunteer programs. However, while volunteers can provide valuable support, there are limitations to the roles they can perform, particularly in areas requiring specialized training or authority, such as law enforcement and emergency response ([WCNC]).

The NPS has also been granted permission to hire for certain positions previously affected by the hiring freeze. However, details regarding which positions are being prioritized and



the extent to which this will alleviate staffing shortages remain unclear ([National Parks Traveler]. While not publicly announced yet (as of February 13th, 2025), The Washington Post is reporting that there will be an exemption for seasonal law enforcement rangers and public safety dispatchers.

## Conclusion

The federal hiring freeze presents significant challenges for the National Park Service and the numerous stakeholders who rely on the effective operation of national parks. The layoffs of probationary employees



from key federal agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service and Department of the Interior, only exacerbate these concerns. As the situation evolves, it will be crucial to monitor the implementation of mitigation strategies and advocate for policies that ensure the preservation of these treasured natural resources and the economic vitality of the communities that surround them.

This situation evolves daily. Cool Tears Magazine (CTM) will work to summarize the impacts frequently since this may alter travel and camping plans for many of our readers.

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# Modern Buggy RV

The Michigan-based teardrop brand making waves **BY COOL TEARS STAFF**

**IN THE EVER-EVOLVING WORLD** of recreational vehicles (RVs), a new player has emerged, capturing the attention of outdoor enthusiasts and adventure seekers alike. Modern Buggy RV, based in Edwardsburg, Michigan, is making waves with its innovative approach to teardrop campers. Founded in late 2019 by Wally Holem, the company was acquired by industry veteran Earl Williams in February 2022. With over 30 years in the RV sector, including a decade-long executive role at Patrick Industries, Williams has steered Modern Buggy RV towards significant growth and innovation.

## A Vision for Accessible Adventure

Modern Buggy RV was born from a simple yet profound idea: to make recreational vehicles affordable and towable by almost any vehicle. Recognizing that the market was saturated with large pull-behind trailers that didn't cater to smaller families or midsize SUVs, the company set out to fill this gap. By offering smaller units that are lightweight and versatile, Modern Buggy RV has enabled more families to experience the great outdoors, fostering enduring memories along the way.

## First-Hand Impressions

Despite living within an hour of the Modern Buggy RV factory, I haven't yet made the trip to see their operations up close. However, I

had the chance to see several of their models in person at the Grand Rapids RV Show. It was difficult to get a great look at the campers because of the crowd of people looking at them! Their diverse range of trailers immediately caught my attention - from traditional teardrops to larger campers similar in size to T@Bs, and even unique hybrids that blend features of teardrops and squaredrops. They also offer truck campers, expanding their appeal to a wider variety of camping styles. I'd like to check out their operation - and report back in the future.

## The Benefits of AZDEL Panels

One standout feature of Modern Buggy RV's campers is their use of AZDEL panels in construction. AZDEL is a composite material made from a blend of polypropylene and fiberglass, known for its durability, lightweight properties, and resistance to moisture. Unlike traditional wood panels, AZDEL doesn't absorb water, which significantly reduces the risk of mold, mildew, and rot - common issues in RVs exposed to varying weather conditions. Additionally, AZDEL provides superior insulation, helping to maintain comfortable interior temperatures regardless of the season. It's also an eco-friendly option,



as it's manufactured without formaldehyde and contributes to a quieter ride by dampening exterior noise. This combination of benefits makes AZDEL an excellent choice for RV construction, ensuring longevity and enhancing the overall camping experience.

## Diverse Model Lineup

Modern Buggy RV offers a range of models designed to meet various camping needs:

- **Little Buggy 10RK:** This compact model is perfect for those seeking a minimalist camping experience without sacrificing comfort.
- **Little Buggy 12LRK:** Built with industrial strength, this trailer features a high-quality custom aluminum frame, AZDEL walls, and a torsion axle. It's designed for off-road adventures, boasting 14 inches of ground clearance and all-terrain tires. The interior includes a convertible sofa-to-bed, HD TV, fireplace, and ample storage space.
- **Big Buggy 14:** For campers desiring more space, this model offers a wet bath, a dinette that converts to a bed, a front window, and a large refrigerator. It's designed to provide the comforts of home while on the road.

- **Big Buggy 16:** The largest in the lineup, this model accommodates up to five people, featuring a wet bath, front two side windows, and multiple sleeping arrangements.

## Key Features That Set Modern Buggy RV Apart

Several standout features make Modern Buggy RV's teardrop campers unique:

- **Lightweight and Towable:** Designed with





a high-quality custom aluminum frame and AZDEL walls, these campers are lightweight, making them towable by a wide range of vehicles, including midsize SUVs and even some cars. This accessibility opens up RVing to a broader audience.

- **Off-Road Capabilities:** With 14 inches of ground clearance, all-terrain tires, and 3,500 lb. torsion axle, these campers are built to handle off-road adventures, allowing users to explore remote locations with confidence.
- **Modern Amenities:** Despite their compact size, the campers are equipped with modern conveniences such as HD TVs, fireplaces, LED lighting, USB charging stations, and options for air conditioning. The inclusion of solar solutions like the LiteLeaf Solar system ensures that campers can enjoy off-grid experiences without sacrificing comfort.
- **Rugged Construction:** Built with industrial strength, including a custom aluminum frame and AZDEL walls, these campers are designed to withstand the rigors of off-road travel and harsh weather conditions. Features like heavy-duty fenders with convenient corner steps and a custom aluminum luggage rack capable of supporting over 600 lbs. add to their durability and functionality.
- **Affordability:** Modern Buggy RV positions itself as an affordable option in the overland market, with models like the Little Buggy priced under \$20,000USD and the Big Buggy under \$28,000USD. This pricing strategy makes them accessible to a wider range of customers seeking adventure without breaking the bank.

## Expanding Dealer Network

To reach more customers, Modern Buggy RV has been expanding its dealer network. The addition of major dealers like General RV and TravelCamp RV has extended the company's reach to states such as Utah, Tennessee, Florida, the Carolinas, and Texas. This growth reflects the increasing demand for their innovative campers and the company's commitment to making their products accessible nationwide.

## A Commitment to Quality and Community

Modern Buggy RV prides itself on valuing relationships, durable products, and the great outdoors. The company is dedicated to providing travel and adventure opportunities that bring families together, creating lasting memories. Their focus on quality construction and thoughtful design ensures that each camper is built to enhance the outdoor experience.

## Conclusion

In a market often dominated by large, cumbersome RVs, Modern Buggy RV offers a refreshing alternative with their lightweight, durable, and feature-rich teardrop campers. By focusing on accessibility, affordability, and off-road capabilities, they have carved out a niche that appeals to both novice campers and seasoned adventurers. As they continue to expand and innovate, Modern Buggy RV is poised to become a significant player in the RV industry, encouraging more families to embark on their own outdoor adventures. ■

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# Celebrating our winners

2025 Photo Contest Recap **BY ANNE COX**

**ANOTHER YEAR,** another incredible lineup of photos showcasing the beauty of tiny camping! We want to extend a huge thank you to everyone who entered last year's photo contest - your passion and creativity continue to inspire us.

The winning images in this year's calendar capture everything we love about the tiny camper lifestyle: stunning landscapes,

peaceful campsites, and the spirit of adventure. From the forests of the U.S. to the rolling hills of Poland and the wild beauty of Estonia, these photos prove that teardrops and squaredrops make the perfect travel companions no matter where in the world you roam.

This year's calendar also features two DIY teardrop builds, a true testament to the

dedication and ingenuity of their owners, as well as two squaredrop campers, showing off the versatility and rugged capability of these tiny rigs. Every winning shot tells a story—whether it’s a quiet sunrise over a campsite, an awe-inspiring mountain view, or a cozy moment by the fire.

We’re thrilled to share the winning photos with you and celebrate the talented photographers behind them. The 2025 wall calendar is still available for purchase, so grab your copy and keep the spirit of adventure alive all year long!

Now, let’s take a look at this year’s winning shots - congratulations to all the winners! ■

**Winners in order, photos below start with February:**

- Cover and January: Kaur Treimann
- February: Randall White
- March: K.C. Lee
- April: Michelle Chambliss
- May: Chanin Walsh
- June: Wolfgang Steudtel
- July: Lukasz Witkowski
- August: Nora Nilles
- September: Kyle Even
- October: Ann Atkinson
- November: Lorelei Vaughn
- December and back cover: Kristin Spaulding

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# The Ultimate Comfort

Teardrop and squaredrop campers with indoor toilets **BY COOL TEARS STAFF**

**WHEN IT COMES** to teardrop and squaredrop campers, simplicity is the name of the game—compact designs, efficient layouts, and just enough room for the essentials. But for some adventurers, there's one "luxury" that can make or break a trip: an indoor toilet. While it's not a standard feature in most tiny campers, a built-in bathroom can be a game-changer for travelers who prioritize privacy, convenience, and flexibility, especially when camping off-grid or in remote locations. Whether you're boondocking down a forest service road or parked at a busy campground, not having to rely on public restrooms or

midnight treks to the woods is a comfort many find worth the extra space and weight. In this article, we'll explore 11 teardrop and squaredrop campers that have managed to squeeze in an indoor toilet without sacrificing the charm and functionality that make these rigs so popular.

Let's take a look at some of the best options available!

## **T@B 320 by NuCamp RV**

The T@B 320 by NuCamp RV is one of the



most recognizable teardrop trailers on the market, blending iconic retro styling with modern conveniences - including an indoor wet bath. This compact camper features a clever floor plan that maximizes its 15-foot length, offering a cozy sleeping area, a functional kitchen, and, most notably, a bathroom that includes a cassette toilet and a combination sink/shower. The inclusion of a wet bath sets the T@B 320 apart from many other teardrops, providing an added layer of comfort for those who prefer not to rely on campground facilities or nature's call.

Despite its small footprint, the T@B 320 doesn't skimp on quality or amenities. The camper's Alde heating and hot water system ensures warm showers and a cozy interior, even in colder climates. The stylish, European-inspired interior design offers ample storage, while large windows and a skylight keep the space feeling bright and airy. For those looking for a teardrop that balances classic charm with practical features like an indoor toilet, the T@B 320 hits the sweet spot.

### **T@B 360 by NuCamp RV**

Building on the success of the T@B 320, NuCamp's T@B 360 offers a roomier option for those seeking extra space without sacrificing the teardrop vibe. The T@B 360 was launched in mid 2024. The T@B 360 stretches out (taller, wider, and longer than the 320) to provide a larger interior, making it even more comfortable for extended trips. One of its standout features is the fully enclosed wet bath, which includes a cassette toilet and a combination sink/shower, offering all the conveniences of home in a compact form. This makes the T@B 360 an excellent choice for those who prioritize indoor facilities but

still want to keep things lightweight and manageable.

In addition to the expanded bathroom, the T@B 360 boasts a well-equipped kitchen with a two-burner stove, sink, and refrigerator, along with a versatile dinette that converts into a spacious sleeping area. The Alde heating and hot water system ensures comfort in all seasons, while the modern interior design, complete with sleek cabinetry and thoughtful storage solutions, adds a touch of sophistication. With its balance of space, functionality, and the luxury of an indoor toilet, the T@B 360 is perfect for adventurers who want a little more room to stretch out while enjoying the simplicity of teardrop camping.

### **T@B 360CS by NuCamp RV**

The T@B 360CS by NuCamp RV takes everything campers love about the T@B line and adds a unique twist with its rear kitchen layout. This model still includes the sought-after indoor wet bath, featuring a cassette toilet and a combination sink/shower, but it shifts the cooking area to the back of the trailer. Other than the T@G, which is a traditional teardrop aka "bed on wheels," this is the only other model in the NuCamp lineup with an outdoor, rear kitchen. This clever design maximizes interior living space, making the camper feel more open while providing a dedicated cooking area that's easily accessible from the outside - perfect for those who love to cook outdoors but want the option of indoor facilities.

Inside, the T@B 360CS offers a spacious dinette that converts into a comfortable sleeping area, along with thoughtful storage solutions throughout the cabin. The Alde

heating and hot water system ensures that both the shower and living space remain warm and inviting, no matter the weather. There is a 5 cubic foot 12-volt fridge inside the T@B, while the rear kitchen includes more cold storage space with a 45 liter 12-volt cooler. The rear kitchen is equipped with a two-burner stove, sink, and ample counter space, giving campers the flexibility to prepare meals with ease. With its combination of an indoor toilet, innovative layout, and high-quality craftsmanship, the T@B 360CS is a standout option for adventurers looking to blend comfort and functionality with a traditional teardrop style..

## Armor 7LT, 10LT, 12LT by Skinny Guy Campers

The Armor series from Skinny Guy Campers - including the 7LT, 10LT, and 12LT models - brings a rugged yet comfortable edge to the world of tiny camping. These campers are designed for off-road and off-grid adventures, offering durable construction and smart layouts that include the rare luxury of an indoor toilet. Unlike the enclosed wet baths found in T@B trailers, the Armor series features a more open design where the toilet is integrated into the living space without a separate enclosure. This setup is perfect for a single camper who prioritizes space efficiency and doesn't

mind a more minimalist approach to indoor facilities.

The Armor 7LT, 10LT, and 12LT differ mainly in length, accommodating various towing needs while maintaining the same robust build quality and practical features. Each model comes standard with a portable toilet, cabinets with ample storage, and a sleeping platform. Each of these campers are only about 3.5 feet (7LT) to 4 feet high inside the trailer and there isn't much room to use the portable toilet. The best way to accomplish having an indoor toilet would be to have a single bed (not a queen or full sized mattress) and use the toilet next to the bed. These campers work well for the solo adventurers who need a reliable and comfortable home base in challenging environments. Nearly



any traditional teardrop could be used in the same way, but you'd have to supply your own portable toilet.

## **Modern Buggy Big Buggy BB12**

The Modern Buggy Big Buggy BB12 is a teardrop camper that blends rugged aesthetics with modern amenities, making it a top choice for adventurers seeking both style and function. One of its standout features is the inclusion of a wet bath, a rare find in campers of this size. The BB12's thoughtfully designed interior manages to incorporate a cassette toilet without compromising the living or sleeping space, offering a practical solution for those who want the convenience of an onboard bathroom while exploring off the grid.

Beyond the bathroom, the BB12 offers a spacious interior with a queen-size bed, a fully equipped kitchenette, and ample storage options. Its robust build and off-road capabilities (14 inch clearance) make it suitable for diverse terrains, while large windows and a skylight ensure the space feels bright and open. The combination of durability, comfort, and the luxury of an indoor toilet makes the Modern Buggy Big Buggy BB12 a compelling option for those looking to venture far from traditional campgrounds without sacrificing essential comforts. We've covered Modern Buggy Trailers in another article in this issue.

## **Encore Recreational Vehicles ROG 14RKB**

The Encore Recreational Vehicles ROG 14RKB is a unique hybrid that blends the best features of teardrop and squaredrop campers into a rugged, adventure-ready package. One

of its standout elements is the inclusion of a wet bath - but with a twist. Unlike traditional setups where the bathroom is accessible from inside the camper, the ROG 14RKB's wet bath is located at the rear and requires entry through a separate exterior door. This design keeps the interior space open and uncluttered, while still offering the convenience of a private bathroom.

The ROG 14RKB also features an outdoor cooking space designed for maximum convenience and functionality. The sink, counter, and stove are all accessed through a slide-out drawer, while the pantry and fridge are located behind doors at the passenger side rear of the camper. This external kitchen setup frees up interior space and allows campers to enjoy the outdoors while preparing meals.

Inside, the ROG 14RKB offers a simple yet functional layout with ample storage and a comfortable sleeping area. Unlike many other campers, it does not feature an interior dinette, which helps to maximize sleeping and storage space; however, the queen sized mattress does fold up into a couch so you can be inside, but not just on the bed. The camper's robust construction and off-road capabilities make it perfect for those looking to venture off the beaten path. While the exterior-access wet bath may not offer the same level of convenience as an indoor setup, it provides a practical solution for adventurers who prioritize interior space without sacrificing the luxury of a built-in bathroom. The ROG 14RKB strikes a perfect balance for those seeking both rugged exploration and essential comforts.





## Encore Venu 10RKS

The Encore Venu 10RKS stands out in the world of teardrop and squaredrop campers with its clever use of space and hidden amenities. One of the most unique features of this model is its hidden cassette toilet, discreetly tucked into the nightstand. This innovative design offers the convenience of an indoor toilet without taking up valuable living space, making it an excellent choice for campers who value both functionality and aesthetics.

Unlike many other campers this size, the Venu 10RKS features an indoor kitchen setup. The interior kitchen is equipped with a sink and a two-burner stove, providing all the essentials for meal preparation in a compact space. The dinette area easily converts into a comfortable sleeping space, maximizing the versatility of the

*Both photos this page of ROG 14RKB*

interior layout. With ample storage options and a sleek, modern design, the Venu 10RKS offers a perfect blend of style and practicality. The combination of a hidden toilet, efficient indoor kitchen, and convertible dinette makes the Encore Venu 10RKS a versatile and appealing option for adventurers looking for comfort in a compact package.

### **Vida Refuge 1102**

The Vida Refuge 1102 brings a practical, minimalist approach to teardrop camping while still offering the comfort of an indoor toilet. This model features a hide-a-way porta-potti, cleverly integrated into the camper's design to maximize interior space. When not in use, the porta-potti tucks away seamlessly, preserving the camper's clean, open layout. It's important to note, that you can add an optional wet bath to this camper in lieu of the porta-potti.

Despite its compact size, the Refuge 1102 offers a dinette that converts to a double bed and a functional kitchenette, making it a great option for weekend getaways or longer trips. The camper's thoughtful design ensures that all the essentials are within easy reach without feeling cramped. For those looking to maintain a minimalist camping experience without sacrificing basic comforts like an indoor toilet, the Vida Refuge 1102 is an excellent choice.

### **Winnebago Hike 100 series**

The Winnebago Hike 100 merges the rugged durability of an adventure-ready trailer with the comfort and convenience of home. Think of the Hike as a tall squaredrop, or the T@B

of squaredrops. One of its standout features is a fully enclosed wet bath, complete with a cassette toilet and shower, making it an attractive option for those who prioritize privacy and ease of use while on the road. This compact yet versatile trailer is designed for off-grid camping and comes equipped with solar panels and ample battery storage, ensuring you can venture far from traditional campgrounds without sacrificing essential comforts.

The Hike 100 offers multiple layouts to choose from to suit your needs. A functional kitchen equipped with a one burner portable induction cooktop, sink, microwave, and refrigerator. Large windows and a bright interior design keep the space feeling open. With its robust construction, modern amenities, and the inclusion of an indoor toilet, the Winnebago Hike 100 is perfect for adventurers looking to blend off-road capability with the comforts of home.

### **Braxton Creek Bushwacker Plus/ Bontrager Outdoors**

The Braxton Creek Bushwacker Plus, (now known as the 15RE or 15FK Bontrager Outdoor model names,) is a versatile teardrop camper that manages to pack in a surprising number of features, including an indoor wet bath. This model includes a combination shower and cassette toilet, providing a level of comfort and convenience that's rare in campers of its size. The inclusion of a wet bath makes the Bushwacker Plus an appealing option for travelers who want to avoid the hassle of shared campground facilities.

Inside, the Bushwacker Plus offers a cozy sleeping area that can easily convert into a



dinette, along with a compact yet functional kitchenette featuring a two-burner stove, sink, and refrigerator. The camper's smart design maximizes space without feeling cramped, and its lightweight build makes it easy to tow with a variety of vehicles. With its combination of comfort, convenience, and portability, the Braxton Creek Bushwacker Plus is perfect for adventurers who want to explore the great outdoors without sacrificing essential amenities.

Note: Braxton Creek campers will be rebranded to Bontrager Outdoors with the 2025 model year.

## **Rustic Trail Teardrops Grizzly, Kodiak, Polar, and Black Bear**

Rustic Trail Teardrops offers four models—the Grizzly, Kodiak, Polar, and Black Bear—that provide a simple yet functional solution for campers seeking the convenience of an indoor toilet. The Grizzly, Kodiak, and Polar models are designed to fit a Thetford Porta Potti under the seat, offering an easy-to-access, space-saving bathroom option without compromising the camper's interior layout. The Black Bear model takes it a step further, offering an optional Dometic toilet for those looking for an upgraded, more integrated solution.

All four models feature a cozy sleeping area, ample storage, and a compact kitchenette, making them ideal for weekend getaways or extended road trips. The Grizzly, Kodiak, Polar, and Black Bear are built with durability in mind, ensuring they can handle a variety of terrains while keeping you comfortable on the inside. For those looking for a no-fuss, practical camper with the added convenience

of an indoor toilet, Rustic Trail Teardrops' lineup offers a compelling option.

## **Conclusion**

Indoor toilets in teardrop and squaredrop campers might have once seemed like an unattainable luxury, but as manufacturers continue to innovate, this feature has become more accessible without compromising the compact charm of these tiny homes on wheels. Whether it's a full wet bath, a hidden cassette toilet, or a cleverly tucked-away porta-potti, today's campers can enjoy the convenience of private facilities even in the most remote locations. From rugged off-road models to sleek, modern designs, these campers cater to a wide range of needs, ensuring that adventurers no longer have to choose between comfort and mobility.

For those who value flexibility, privacy, and the ability to camp off-grid without sacrificing essential comforts, these models provide excellent options. Whether you're a weekend warrior looking for quick getaways or a long-term traveler seeking extended adventures, the availability of indoor toilets in these compact campers proves that you can have the best of both worlds - compact design and modern convenience. With thoughtful layouts and efficient use of space, these campers redefine what's possible in the world of tiny camping. ■



# Discover Hidden Gems

Why you should attend a local RV show **BY LISA ADAMS**

**EARLIER THIS MONTH**, I attended the Grand Rapids RV Show in Michigan. It's definitely not on par with the Florida RV SuperShow near Tampa that was also held last month. While the spotlight was largely on towering fifth wheels, expansive travel trailers, and luxurious (super expensive) motorhomes, there was a delightful surprise tucked into the corners of the showroom: a small but mighty selection of teardrop and squaredrop trailers. Some of these tiny campers were brands and models I'd never encountered before, proving that even at larger RV shows, there's always room for the little guys.

But beyond just the campers themselves, the show offered so much more. If you've never considered attending an RV show - big or small - here's why you might want to add one to your calendar this year.

## More Than Just Big Rigs

While it's true that large RV shows often feature an array of big rigs designed for full-time RVers or large families, they're also fantastic places to discover smaller, more niche campers like teardrops and squaredrops. At the Grand Rapids RV Show, I was able to see a variety of unique models up close, many of which I've not seen before. Seeing these campers in person allows you to get a feel for the craftsmanship, layout, and features that photos or online descriptions simply can't capture. For example, some of the teardrop campers that we saw had nearly unusable galley kitchens for someone that is average height for an American woman (5'3").

If you're on the hunt for a tiny camper, don't be deterred by a show's focus on larger



rigs. Even a small contingent of teardrops, squaredrops, or overlanding rigs can be worth the trip, offering the chance to compare models side by side and chat with manufacturers or dealers directly.

high-quality gear at a lower price. Whether you're outfitting a new teardrop or just looking to upgrade your current setup, the variety of products available is impressive.



## Discover New Campgrounds

Another highlight of RV shows is the presence of campground representatives. Many booths were set up by campgrounds from across Michigan and beyond, offering brochures, maps, and even exclusive deals for attendees. This is a fantastic way to discover new destinations you might not have considered. We typically prefer to camp in the middle of nowhere, but it was

nice to see different places where we can meet up with friends and family for a weekend of camping where there are nice amenities.

Talking directly with campground staff allows you to get insider tips on the best sites, amenities, and local attractions. If you prefer to camp off the beaten path, you might even stumble across lesser-known spots that aren't heavily advertised online.

## Learn from the Pros

Many RV shows, including the one in Grand Rapids, host seminars on a range of topics.

## Gear Galore

One of the best-kept secrets of RV shows is the abundance of vendors selling camping gear. Whether you're looking for solar panels, portable grills, camp furniture, spare parts, or even the latest in outdoor tech gadgets, RV shows are a treasure trove. At Grand Rapids, I found booths with everything from compact campfire solutions to innovative storage hacks perfect for tiny living.

Plus, many vendors offer show-only discounts, making it a great opportunity to snag some

From RV Solar 101 to camp cooking demonstrations, there's a wealth of knowledge to be gained. While I did not attend any seminars, there was a couple that restored and updated a 1957 15 foot "canned ham" style trailer and set off to explore the US and Canada. You can find them across social media and YouTube at "Freedom in a Can."

Camp cooking seminars were another highlight. Watching seasoned pros whip up delicious meals using minimal equipment was both inspiring and educational.

There were also seminars on reducing RV travels costs, how to size a solar system for your RV and camping style, and Tips and Tricks for Exploring America's National Parks.

## Community Connection

Perhaps the most underrated aspect of attending an RV show is the sense of community. Walking through the aisles, it's easy to strike up conversations with fellow campers (or Detroit Lions fans - it was a playoff game day), whether they're seasoned RVers or newcomers curious about tiny trailers. Sharing stories, tips, and experiences with like-minded individuals is a big part of what makes these events so enjoyable.

At Grand Rapids, I met several teardrop owners who shared their favorite camping spots and modifications they'd made to their rigs. It's always refreshing to connect with people who share the same passion for tiny





camping, and these interactions often lead to lasting friendships.

I also stumbled upon the Cedar Skeeter! We highlighted Scott and Susan's build in the March/April 2024 issue of Cool Tears. It was nice to meet them face to face and to see what their next project is. While it doesn't qualify for coverage in Cool Tears Magazine (it's too big), it's a headturner. With Scott's restoration skills and Susan's eye for design their new/remodeled camper deserves to be highlighted at the next Grand Rapids RV Show!

Have you ever watched Josh the RV Nerd on YouTube? Chances are high that you have since he has over 300k subscribers. Bish's RV was one of the dealerships showing their RVs and Josh was there too!

## Final Thoughts

Even if a local RV show near you seems focused on larger rigs, don't overlook the potential to discover hidden gems in the world of tiny campers. The chance to see a variety of trailers in person, score deals on gear, learn from experts, and connect with fellow campers makes attending these shows a worthwhile experience. There are two more RV shows within an hour drive of me in the next six weeks that I might attend.

So, whether you're an experienced teardrop or squaredrop owner or just starting to explore the world of tiny trailers, consider checking out an RV show near you. You never know what new adventures - or campers - you might find. ■



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