

## Truck campers: Versatile camping almost anywhere

By Julianne G. Crane, MOTOR MATTERS Published 12:00 am CDT, Saturday, June 15, 2019

What do you have when combining a 1-ton diesel 4x4 dually with a slide-in truck camper? You have the ability to tow almost any toy, almost anywhere, and camp until your supplies run out.

A truck camper is an extremely versatile Recreation Vehicle giving multiple camping options. Whether sliding the camper into a pickup bed or mounting on the chassis, the truck's bumper remains free to tow boats, ATVs or trailers.

Truck campers come in a variety of lengths and floor plans. Some are pop-ups, others are hard sided like full-time RVer Rob Hendershot's 10.5-foot Fleetwood Elkhorn ([fleetwoodrv.com](http://fleetwoodrv.com)).

mounted on his 2006 Dodge Ram 3500 dually and hauls his red 2015 Dodge Challenger R/T on a tow-behind cargo trailer. Once at a campsite, he unloads his car to explore the area.

"The best thing about my 3500 truck and camper," he said, "is that I have the extra power to take my Challenger with me."

Last autumn, the Michigan native circumnavigated the United States, traveling down 10,000 miles on mostly blue line highways.

Near the beginning of his extended RV trip last October, Hendershot encountered three days of unexpected snow along U.S. Highway 2 in Montana. "It was white knuckle time," he recalled, "however I just put my truck into 4-wheel drive and slowly kept making my way through 4 to 6 inches of snow."

For eight weeks, Hendershot visited relatives in the Midwest, Florida and California. He also volunteered at the Escapees RV Club's CARE Center ([escapeescare.org](http://escapeescare.org)) in Texas.

Along the way he dry-camped in the mountains, boondocked at rest stops, and parked overnight at Elk Lodges and RV campgrounds.

He easily adapted to different camping situations because his fully self-contained Elkhorn features a refrigerator/freezer, three-burner stove with oven, a booth dinette and queen bed. It comes with an air conditioner, outside ladder and stabilizer jacks.

The chink in the armor is that the camper's small wet bath is essentially a shower stall that contains a sink and toilet. "Taking a shower," said Henderson, "was very tight. I can get clean, but it is not very comfortable."

Hendershot's no-slide Elkhorn may lack the extra floor space of the slide-out models. However, on the plus side, it cost less and weighs a lot less.

The Elkhorn starts with a 2,910-pound dry weigh. Added on to that are 36 gallons of water, 40 pounds of propane and various supplies. "The wet weight is still well within

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foot NuWa (nuwa.com) Hitchhiker Discover America 327 LK fifth-wheel trailer that they pull with a 2011 Chevy Silverado 3500 diesel dually.

When parked at their home-base, the Van Westens use their cab-over Lance camper for short fishing trips, towing a drift boat. When not camping, they dismount the camper and have the use of their pickup truck.

They found their gently used 2016 10-foot Lance 1062 (lancecamper.com) last year. It is a hard-sided, double-slide camper built for a long bed truck.

With the touch of a button, the RV's side walls move outward creating a living area with a 4-foot 4-inch wide floor space between the dinette and the galley. The interior height is a remarkable 6 feet 6 inches.

"People who do not know what is included in a camper, are amazed," said Beverly Van Westen. It has everything that is in a house, but of course with a much smaller footprint.

"It is like having a guest cottage," she added. "My son came from Hawaii for a visit, and stayed in the camper for five nights. He loved it."

With the ease of loading and unloading, the Van Westens do not hesitate to take spontaneous overnight trips.

"Recently we were invited to a party more than a hundred miles away," said David Van Westen. "We knew we would not want to drive back in the dark. So, we made arrangements to stay at a nearby campground."

The Lance 1062's dry weight is about 3,600 pounds without options. The Van Westens' tricked-out camper leans more toward 4,115 pounds with the Ultra Deck Plus (basement pull-out tray) bumper, air conditioner, built-in Onan generator, awning and

four season package. Their Silverado 3500 has a maximum payload weight of 4,220 pounds, according to NADA Guides (nada.com).

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the MSRP for a standard build Lance 1062 was approximately \$37,625.

Go RVing (gorving.com), a recreation vehicle industry group, states that sizes of pickup campers range from 8 to 20 feet and can sleep up to six. Prices for new units run the gamut between \$6,000 and \$55,000.

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