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MAGAZINE



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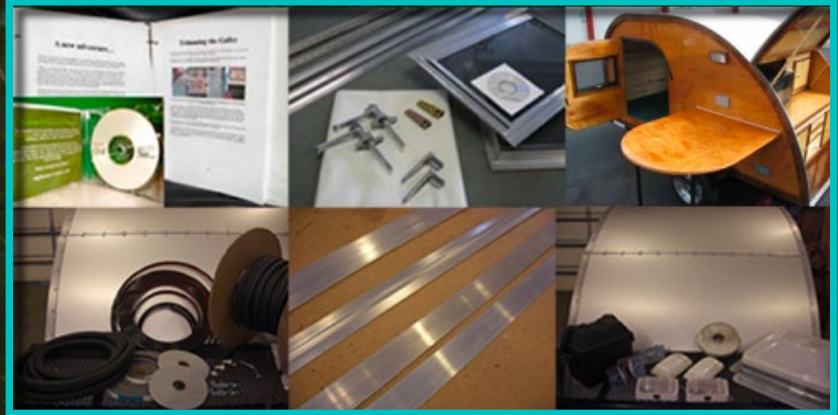
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COOL Tears™ and tiny campers MAGAZINE

Vol. 9 No. 1 March/April 20

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Letter from the Editor:



Tiny Camper Enthusiasts,

"You expected to be sad in the fall. Part of you died each year when the leaves fell from the trees and their branches were bare against the wind in the cold, wintry light. But you knew there would always be the spring, as you knew the river would flow again after it was frozen."
Ernest Hemingway

In my part of North America we have four distinct seasons. As our snow melts and the days become longer and warmer, we are making preparations for another season of adventures in our tiny teardrop camper. For us, spring is a season of renewed hope. Although I do enjoy working from home for my day job, we're hoping for a return to normalcy. We are hoping that we can travel safely throughout North America with our teardrop camper without restrictions and without fear of becoming ill or making anyone else ill.

This time of year also brings thoughts of spring cleaning. I think those of us who are campers enjoy our spring cleaning the most as we take our tiny campers out of the garage or uncover them to wash away the winter dust, air up the tires, put fresh bedding on the beds, and stock the galley. We are the lucky ones preparing for another season of adventure. We prepare our tiny oasis for another season of adventures. We are the lucky ones. The ones who will get to enjoy nature to its fullest by watching the seasons change. We will see the grass become green, we will watch the buds on the trees explode with leaves and flowers, we will hear the peepers begin their nightly chorus, and we will enjoy every last minute of sunlight of each day.

We are the lucky ones. The ones who will sleep in a comfortable bed out in nature. The ones who will cook in the open air in our galleys. We are the ones who will enjoy campfires at night with our friends and family as we make lasting memories.

Don't wait for everything to be perfect before embarking on your next adventure. Get out and enjoy nature and enjoy using your tiny, teardrop camper as much as possible.

Safe travels and stay safe

Live Tiny. Live Free.

Lisa Adams

Editor

Cool Tears Magazine™

Lisa@cooltears.com



A CUP OF COFFEE

Tiny camper fans

Thank you for your continued support over this past year as we continue to publish Cool Tears and Tiny Campers Magazine, the only digital magazine dedicated to teardrops, squaredrops, other tiny campers, and the tiny camper lifestyle. This last year has been a blast as we continue to learn the software systems and website management, while juggling other full time jobs, a global pandemic, etc.

The overall plan is to keep Cool Tears and Tiny Campers Magazine a free publication for all, but we want to offer our readers a way to give back to us if you feel compelled. We are launching our Patreon page this month. Patreon is a platform that helps to change the way that freelance work is valued, by letting our most passionate fans support our work via a small monthly contribution. Over 200k creators use Patreon as a way to help focus their time and energy for people that value their content the most. The added revenue stream means that creators can be more selective with brands and advertisers. Each week, we get new requests to review products or advertise in our magazine. Honestly, we don't believe in all of those products, so we are constantly weeding out what makes sense to share with you. We don't want to pump out content that isn't meaningful for our tiny camper fans, but by doing so, we're missing out on added revenue to keep the website/server up.

With that said, you can support us if you feel that we're providing content that you appreciate. There are two tiers set up, one for \$2/month and one for \$5/month. You can think of it as buying me a cup of coffee each month to create your magazine. For a \$5/month contribution, I'll buy our Food Editor, Anne, a cup too! Cool Tears and Tiny Campers Magazine does have some overall goals. When we reach \$500/month in contributions, we will pick one of our patrons and highlight them in each issue - so each issue will feature a tiny camper fan. You can be highlighted even if you don't own a teardrop or squaredrop yet. Afterall, you must have an interesting reason for reading the magazine and we'll write about it. This is a great way to help share your passion for the tiny camper community. When we reach \$2500/month, we plan to move the magazine back to a monthly magazine, which means more tiny camper and tiny camper lifestyle news for you!

If you'd like to help defray our costs of publishing this magazine dedicated to you, you can get to our Patreon page at www.patreon.com/cooltearsmagazine

Thank you for your support! We appreciate you! ■

Harvest Hosts is a membership program that provides access to a network of wineries, farms, breweries, museums and other unique attractions that invite self-contained RVers to visit and stay overnight. If you have a self contained teardrop or tiny camper (indoor cooking and toilet required), then consider a membership to Harvest Hosts. Click the logo below to get 15% off the regular yearly price.





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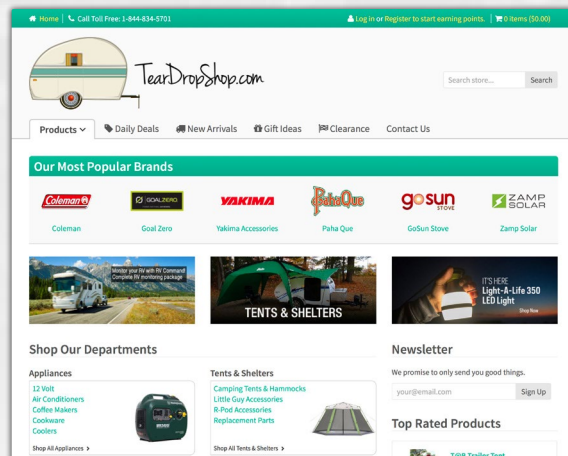
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LIVING LARGE IN A TINY CAMPER



By **Lisa Adams**
Angela Swiss

Have you ever thought about living full time in a RV? Do you think it's too difficult to live fulltime in a teardrop or other tiny camper? We recently connected with Angela, who has been living tiny for nearly a year in her tiny teardrop trailer. Here is her story.

Cool Tears: *Living in an RV is not an easy step for everyone. How did you downsize from your apartment, condo, home and move full-time into a teardrop trailer?*

Angela: The downsizing took several years. An initial huge cut took place in 2013 when I moved into a thirty foot Class A RV, with my car behind it. I later sold that and got an apartment where I accumulated again, immensely. In only a couple of years I found myself moving frequently because of bad situations, or places that just didn't work out. It was becoming very laborious to carry so much stuff around, constantly relocating. As if I was on the run from something, but I really wasn't. The teardrop camper was quickly becoming my home on and off anyway, so I kept staying in it longer and longer. Half of my things were in a storage unit, but I was robbed twice, and then had several more quick relocations in a short period. That led me to donating carloads to Goodwill and the dumpster. I figured if I couldn't trust my stuff in the storage units, then I didn't need to have "stuff" anymore.

From a Class A at 29 years old.....To 24 feet of simplicity at 36.5 years old.

The last purge was June 2020. I sold, gave away, and donated everything I owned because I was given a two week period to accept a job offer in Colorado. There was no money to be had in Florida, so I really didn't have much to get there on. I didn't have a good place lined up to live really, and I certainly didn't have time to be choosy. Much like how I'm hearing most people came to Colorado though, I came with only what fit in the car and camper. A couple of roommate situations did not work out, so I decided this would be a more predictable and affordable way of life. At least this was MY space and no

one could kick me out. I mean, they can...if I park somewhere I shouldn't!

Cool Tears: *I would imagine that family and friends have had opinions on your living arrangements, have they been supportive? What obstacles have you had to overcome?*

Angela: A lot of my friends and acquaintances are very supportive but they do worry as well. Lots of people check in frequently to make sure that I am ok and some have even donated things like a heated vest and a 12volt blanket! I know this chapter has been an extra stress to watch for them though, because I have never attempted living full-time through a Colorado winter. I also didn't have this many health complications, and was always living down south.

Cool Tears: *Colorado? You are living full time in a teardrop in Colorado and not seeking out warmer weather? Tell us about this, where you stay, expenses, etc.*

Angela: I have a strong passion for my place of employment, so Colorado is where I will be for a bit, happily! I'm not a fan of the winter and the cold has been hard on my mentality, but the job is worth it. I just got back here from being in the south for a few years, so I'm looking forward to spending some time reflecting and going back to my roots here in the Rockies. As for parking...I rotate places that I can park nearby work, at friends houses, certain streets, national forests, and campgrounds on some weekends. They also have a new program here in Denver where you can plug in at certain churches and they even serve meals!

I do a pretty in depth monthly spending/ income analysis and it's actually surprising how things have changed... but not really? I no longer have \$900-\$1200 mortgage or rent payments... But I now have insurance, hospital bills, car repairs, things like tires, registration, oil changes, front end work, and credit card payments ... it all adds up quickly

The difference now is that I can afford to eat good food and all of my money goes to me personally; to me, my dog, and my home on wheels. I couldn't afford food or car repairs when I was paying rent and mortgage. It was one or the other and I was always going hungry. With health concerns currently, I needed extra money fast, so into the camper we went. Now that things are much more simple, I am all around happier; all of my hard work goes straight to my comfort and health. My quality of life is far better this way than when I had every version of that cookie cutter life. My wings can actually take me to ANY opportunity now, at ANY time.....because the weight of all that "stuff" isn't holding me down.

Cool Tears: *I'm still processing full-time living in a Colorado winter. Is this the first time you've stayed in your teardrop over the winter?*

Angela: This is definitely not my first winter spent in the camper. I have been in Louisiana, Florida, Missouri, and some of Colorado before in the winter. Although not AS cold down south, it did get in the upper 20's sometimes. My current heating sources are a small Honeywell electric heater, a sunbeam heating blanket, and my dog. The heater and the blanket cannot run off the inverter, because it isn't big enough. Those types of

things would drain my battery faster than I could charge them at this point anyway. I also have 10 blankets total. I've always liked the "homey" feeling that the blankets give, compared to the sleeping bag/ camping feeling.

Cool Tears: *Describe what a normal day in your life looks like. Does it change with the seasons? If so, tell us how.*

Angela: Five days out of the week I am working full-time. If I'm not sleeping in a parking lot somewhere nearby, I'll visit friends. Daily or every other day trips to Planet Fitness for showers and massages is A MUST! A mere thirteen minute drive and twenty two dollars a month! (*Editorial note: Many full-time RVers have a gym membership at a national chain so they can stop in at any time for showers, use of their facilities, etc.*) As soon as things start warming up more, our days will change drastically. When Gypsy and I get off of work, we will hit the trails during the week and hit the road during the weekend! There are tons of things to see and do here in Colorado, including climbing, fishing, kayaking, camping, hiking, bow fishing, or just laying in a hammock somewhere in a national forest! As for the winter months...we try to plug-in where we can and stay warm. A lot of crocheting and daydreaming mostly. I make a lot of HOB0 hats for people who help me along the way.

Cool Tears: *A teardrop is tiny, do you ever wish you had more indoor space?*

Angela: You know...I really don't. The only reason I would need more room is if someone else joined us or I got another dog.



Cool Tears: *Do you have daily access to electricity, water, or a bathroom after your work day? If not, describe what "normal" is for you.*

Angela: I used to carry a little plastic toilet seat that had three foldable legs, but I can honestly say that I never used it. Some things just took up room and only added weight. Things are super simple these days. Less is more. Mostly... Less weight on the rig, means more longevity in mechanical parts. Showers and massages are had at Planet Fitness, or friends, and if I don't have access to a bathroom nearby or at work, I have a tennis ball can. Believe it or not! It's a lifesaver when it's ten degrees outside and you don't want to get out! It even has a lid! Just put it in a cabinet where it can't be knocked over, then dump it later, and sanitize it. Take special note... That this is not the answer for number two, and you will be making a HUGE mistake if you forget to dump it then drive off!

I only travel with water in the summer seasons and it's usually a 20 gallon container. I shower with that, wash dishes, boil food, and coffee, etc. As for electricity, I have a hundred foot extension cord that I can plug in with a multi port inside. A small crack in the window from the cord allows a nice flow of air in and the vent on the roof is cracked open as well. It's very important to have a carbon monoxide detector, and I really need to get a fire extinguisher! Eventually I would like to get solar and a bigger inverter as well.

Cool Tears: *It sounds like you have learned a lot from living in your teardrop over this last year. Tell us about some other items that you initially had when you started that you've gotten rid of, or things that you have purchased along the way to make things easier.*

Angela: Of course there are things you learn along the way. Things you end up not needing, and things you desperately must

have. I used to carry a lot of extra tackle, kayaking gear, and also a lot of fishing rods. I carry a two foot fishing pole now and a few of my favorite baits in a tiny Pelican tackle box. It all fits in a backpack. Oddly enough, I also got rid of the toilet and no longer carry the utility tent. I guess I traded that in for a scooter and a tennis ball can! Haha! An unbelievable amount of weight has been removed from the rig, which will allow Gypsy (my dog) and I to do this for much longer. If I get another kayak it will be extremely light weight! When you are a good enough angler, you don't need a \$5,000 boat.

There are definitely things I didn't have in the beginning that I have now, which have made this round much more comfortable. A heating blanket, a couple of good extension cords, a small heater, a good income, a heck of lot more patience, and of course the dog! The most important thing I have now that wasn't there before though....is experience and strong faith.

Cool Tears: *Describe what your teardrop is like. Do you have any special features that you can't live without? Likewise, do you have features that you don't use frequently?*

Angela: I couldn't live without the batteries, toolbox, propane tank, and Blackstone flat top cooker. I can't live without a mattress and I would die without the stereo and marine speakers. My little camper turns into a jukebox party and also a surround sound theater! It wouldn't be the same without a dog and having a rooftop vent is a necessity! I haven't really been using my galley or grills at this time, because it's too cold outside. I'm also not using my canopy or kayak. All of my seasonal items and clothing are in a storage unit for now, to keep my load light, and less

clutter while full-time living. There is some anxiety about having a storage unit again because of the robbery in Missouri, but I have to do what I have to do to make it through the winter. No need to carry more than I need.

Cool Tears: *Tell us more about your batteries. What type and how many do you have? How do you keep them charged?*

Angela: There are two 12volt deep cycle marine batteries on board and an inverter. The batteries run the lights, stereo, power for phones, computers, and camera batteries. Currently I will trickle charge the batteries while I'm at work when they get low. You can also drop them off one at a time to an auto parts store and they will charge them for free overnight. I will likely get solar along with some other accessories from my place of work this year.

Cool Tears: *Teardrop galleys are not huge, what do you do for food storage?*

Angela: I like to keep all of my dried goods in sealed containers and I also use the fridge and freezer at work. In the summer, I will be exchanging ice packs in the freezer, to run away for the weekend with my cooler. The only problem with using a work refrigerator is that I have had things disappear. Expensive things. I plan on buying a smaller fridge with a lock to keep at work. So definitely beware of using public refrigerators.

Cool Tears: *You mentioned earlier that you are in Colorado for work, so you're not a digital nomad like many full-time RVers. What do you do with Gypsy while you're at work?*

Angela: Gypsy comes to work with me and

is now the shop dog. Everyone loves her and she just stays in her chair all day in the lunchroom. I've had a rocky history with dogs, and having a good one for once is an extreme blessing. Being on the road with anything other than a good dog, could be very difficult!

Cool Tears: You exemplify the Cool Tears motto of "Live Tiny - Live Free"! I'm inspired.

Angela: I am currently working full-time building teardrop campers for a living. An absolute dream come true! I have been friends with the Dean, the owner of Colorado Teardrops, since around when the company started over 6 years ago. It's an honor to be a part of building something that I believe in and something that has saved my life personally for many years. We have quite the



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team here, and it has become a great family to me, and huge support through all of this.

Cool Tears: *Thanks so much for sharing your journey with us. If anyone reading this is thinking about jumping into full-time living in their teardrop or tiny camper, what advice would you give them?*

Angela: Be prepared to think about anything and everything you do, at all times. Be prepared to be prepared in general. If you are not a minimalist, not responsible with your vehicle repairs, or keeping your camper maintenance up, you will encounter many problems on the road. It will be very expensive and much harder to keep it up. Helpful hints: Buy your blankets sizes up from your mattress. You will want the extra material to bundle up around the edges in the colder months. Check and treat any mold right away, and don't forget to pack your bearings with high heat grease!

Thanks to Angela for taking the time to answer our questions and for providing such great photos from Wolfhound Photography in Boulder, CO.

If you would like to follow Angela and Gypsy on their teardrop journey, you can follow her on Instagram - @swissarmielife

Her profile says it all. "Like a Swiss Army Knife, she does it all, in her Swiss Armie Life. Outdoors enthusiast, free spirit/adventurer." Later in this issue, you'll notice that the camping spotlight highlights some places known for great trout fishing...one look at her Instagram feed shows that she's no stranger to catching amazing fish! We should have picked her brain for that article too. ■







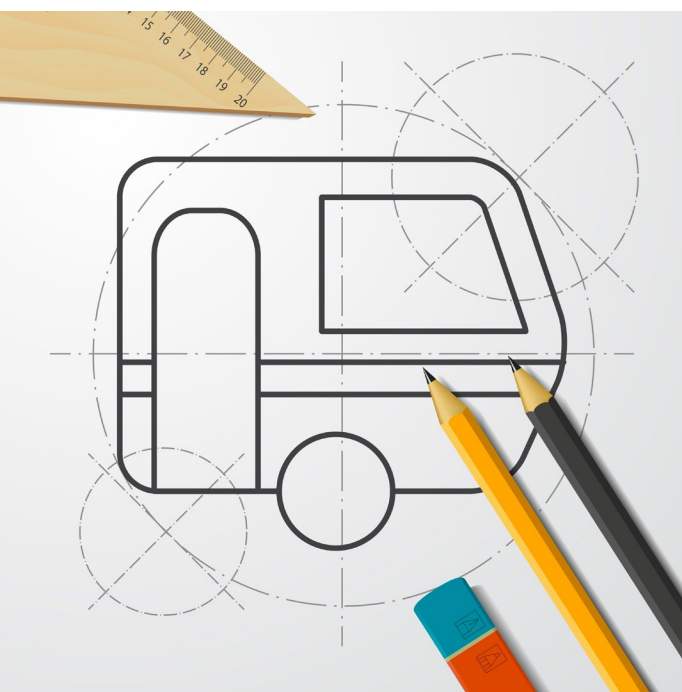
HOMEBUILT CAMPER: KITS

By **Lisa Adams**

If you are looking at this magazine, but do not own a tiny camper yet, then chances are high that you have dreamt of having your own teardrop or squaredrop camping trailer. There is nothing like driving down the road with a tiny camping trailer to an amazing destination like something you might see in an Instagram story. If you don't already have your teardrop or squaredrop and it's not on order with a manufacturer already, then your chances of having that feeling in the summer of 2021 are fading fast as many of the teardrop trailer manufacturers have lead times pushing one year. There is another way though to live this dream - you could build your own.

This is the second article in the series about teardrop kits that are available to help make your home build easier. As mentioned in the last article, many tiny camper manufacturers have a relatively long lead time since they are all built by hand and not on an assembly line like the larger RV manufacturers, so if you want a teardrop and have some basic DIY skills, then building from a kit may be just what you're looking for. A kit can give you a jump start on your build so you can enjoy the next camping season in style.

Building your own teardrop or squaredrop camper can be a rewarding experience for anyone; however, not everyone has the right tools and skills. Keep in mind these four basic questions before beginning your tiny camper build.



1. Do I have all of the necessary tools required for my tiny camper build?
2. Do I have good technical skills?
3. Do I have the space necessary to build a tiny camper?
4. Do I have the knowledge, energy and time to design a functional tiny camper?

If you answered, "no," to any of these questions, but still want to build a tiny camper on your own, then

building one from a kit may suit your needs. There are several companies that make kits so it is easier to build your own tiny camper from scratch. The products that these companies cover vary from just the blueprints all the way to everything cut and delivered to your door, so it is best for you to do your own research on which may suit you best.

This article will highlight two more kit builders. To reference other kits manufacturers, click this link to see the article in the January/February issue <insert link here>.

Wyoming Woody Teardrop Plans - information available globally

If you have access to the necessary tools for a home build trailer, then this website may help save you some design time. This website chronicles Ryan's build from start to finish and he has made all of his blueprints available for download. You can use his build journal (and over 1500 photos) along with his SketchUp plans to help recreate his design or it could help you get through a difficult spot in your own build.

This website is very thorough and includes many topics in the build journal tab including: planning and design, trailer assembly, building and sealing the deck, building the walls, cabinets, insulation, wiring, building the hatch, finishing touches, fitting with a tongue box, etc.

While this is not a "kit," this website can be used as a guide when designing and building your own teardrop camper.

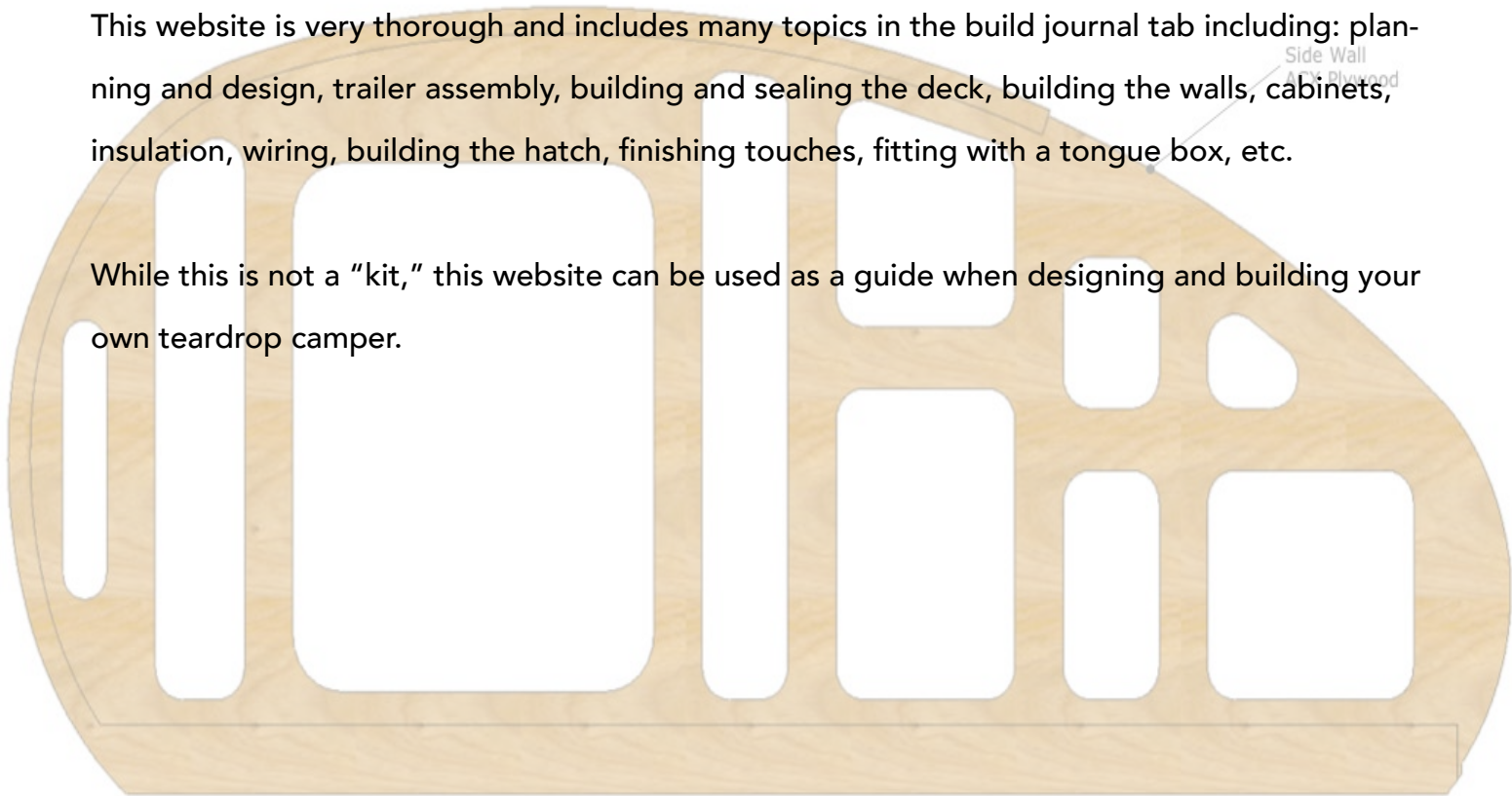


Photo on page 21

TeardropsNW - available in North America

This Salem, OR company has been in business since 2009 building fantastic teardrop trailers. TeardropsNW offers their basic kit which is a fully manufactured teardrop shell on their ready to roll frame. You can also upgrade to an off-road model which includes Timbren 3500HD axles and brakes, 15" steel rims with off-road tires, and a Max Coupler receiver.

The off-road upgrade is just under \$2000USD. TeardropsNW offers an electrical kit and trim package which includes everything you need to wire your teardrop the way that TeardropsNW does. This kit includes interior and exterior lighting, a 13 speed Fantastic Fan, 110V outlets, USB outlets, battery charger, fuse block, and more. The trim kit includes all of the corner, flat, and hatching moldings, trim for the galley floor and hatch. All of this molding is pre-cut to fit to help the homebuilder.

For under \$8300, you can have the basic shell (which is manufactured for you) and the electrical and trim kit.

At this point, you can choose to make your own interior cabinets and create the galley of your dreams or you can choose to continue with the kit build by buying different kits to deck out the interior and galley of your teardrop. There are several kits available for the galley so you can customize your teardrop by continuing to use pre-made kits, if you choose.

One thing to note, at the time this article was written, TeardropsNW does not ship any kits, so it would be necessary to make arrangements with them to pick up at their factory location in Salem, Oregon.





This type of kit seems ideal for a home builder who is limited on tools and technical knowledge because everything is pre-cut for you and it's only necessary to follow the steps to have the trailer of your dreams.

Photo courtesy of Teardrops NW

At the time of this writing, a few kit builders in North America, Australia, and Europe have stopped taking orders until further notice. While we received no comments back, we surmise that this is due to low order volume as a result of Covid. Cool Tears will keep this article series going as long as we can as we learn of new kit builders. If you are aware of others anywhere in the world that we have missed, please let us know at Anne@cooltears.com ■



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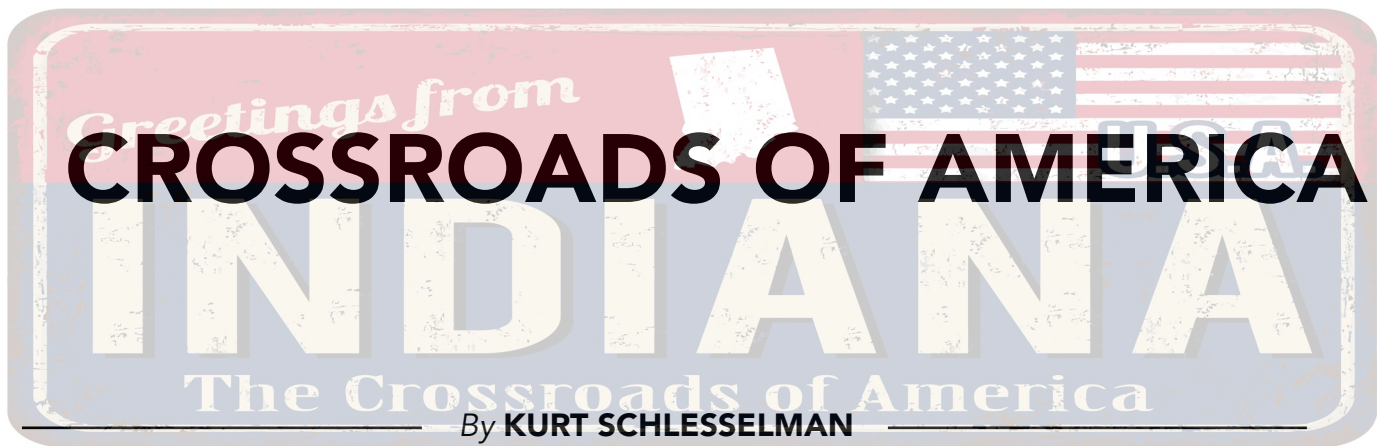
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"Crossroads of America" is a name associated with many places in the middle of the country but to "us" [the Hoosier Chapter of Tearjerkers] it has a special meaning.

This event is sponsored by the "Camping and RV community" as well as the help from other Tearjerkers Chapters such as Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, West Virginia, Southern Appalachian and Illinois. Also keeping the event manageable are dedicated helpers from other chapters all in an effort to make the gathering a fun and memorable event.

In 2011 the inaugural event of the "Crossroads of America Gathering" [CRA] event took place at McCormick's Creek State Park in Spencer, Indiana.

A great turnout of campers began signing up for one of the biggest Teardrop trailer gathering in the nation. The excitement was amazing and the 146 registrations added to the fun with 26 states and 2 countries represented.

So far we have had 5 very successful biennial events which means, of course that CRA2021 will be our sixth gathering.

This year we have decided to move the gathering to a new venue and a new date. We are hoping to fight back against the mid-summer heat that has plagued us in past events. Only time will tell if our decision was a good thing.

Instead of McCormick's Creek SP, the venue for CRA2021 will be at:

Whitewater State Park in Liberty, IN.

September 9-12, 2021

We are attracting Sponsors to help us successfully fund the event and will be offering Registration forms [on our web site] for the attendees. Details can be found at: CRA2021.com

Special thanks to "Cool Tears" magazine for publishing this notice and helping us spread the word.

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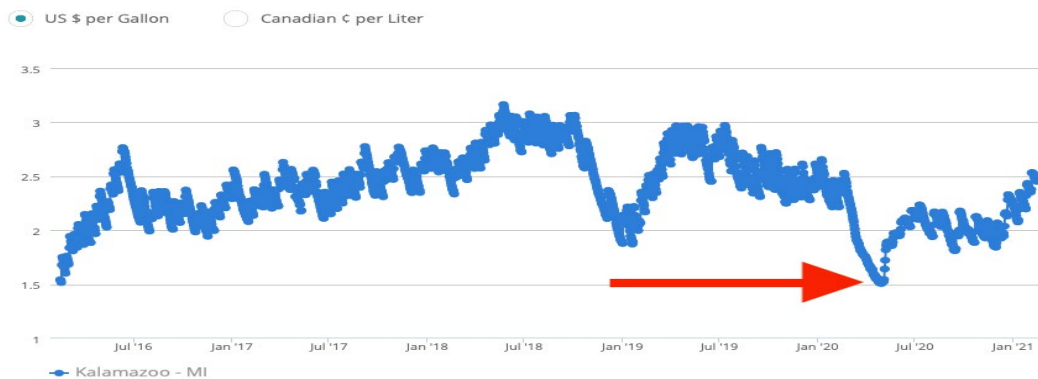
HOW TO USE GASBUDDY TO SAVE \$ AT THE PUMP

By **COOL TEARS STAFF**

I drive a lot. Fourteen years ago, I started a job that was 55 miles away. I liked my house and the city I was living in and had no desire to move closer to work. Driving 110 miles each day for work had its advantages to be honest, but spending more money on gas was not one of them. I wanted to spend less money at the fuel pump. So I did two things. First, I bought a car that got better gas mileage and second, I started paying attention to gas prices where I lived vs where I worked. This was made easier by using GasBuddy. I've saved several hundred dollars in gas money in just a few years. Keep reading to find out how GasBuddy can help with trip planning and saving money at the pump. (Note: I am not receiving any money from GasBuddy for this article, nor will I receive anything if you sign up for GasBuddy).

GasBuddy is an award winning travel and navigation app that helps you save money on gas at over 150,000 gas stations throughout North America. GasBuddy is one of the highest rated apps in the Apple App and Google Play stores, amassing over 1 million reviews between the two. Over 90 million people have downloaded this app and GasBuddy has helped these people save more than \$3 billion in fuel since their founding in 2000, according to their website.

GasBuddy was founded in 2000 and their mission was to help people save money on gas. At that time, GasBuddy was a website only that allowed users to share gas prices so their fellow drivers could decide where it was best to fill up. In 2001, they released the first historic gas price database to everyone so we could better understand fuel price trends. It is now possible to view the fuel price trends in up to 3 locations in North America and you can select your time frame as well, ranging from one month up to five years. For example, by looking at the graphs they provide, you may be able to pinpoint world events and see the effect they have on gas prices. It also makes the seasonal gas fluctuations visible. The dip in gas prices caused by lower demand due to Covid-19 is extremely visible on the graphs.



In 2006, GasBuddy released their gas price heat maps which showed the real time gas prices across the United States. If you're thinking about planning that summer trip,

if money is tight, use this map to help steer you where you can purchase more gas for your hard earned dollar. In 2008, they made trip planning easier. They launched their Trip Cost Calculator which helps you to plan your road trips, know where to fill up at the best prices, and know how much money you're likely to spend on your entire trip. They took the guesswork out of understanding your fuel costs since their fuel price database, which is user entered, is constantly updated.

To use the Trip Cost Calculator, enter your start and end locations along with your vehicle information. Once you click the "calculate my trip" button, GasBuddy will show you the total distance of your trip, the total fuel cost of your trip, and even where it's best to fill up, even if you're not running near empty yet. For example, if I wanted to make a trip from southwest Michigan to Savannah, GA the website says I will spend \$102.50 in diesel, I will use 41 gallons of fuel, and that I can save nearly \$21 if I fuel up where they recommend. Here is a snapshot of where it's recommending to purchase fuel, estimating how many gallons are needed, and at

what price. This tool is absolutely brilliant for planning that trip! In order to best use it with your tiny camper, enter in your tow vehicle details, but adjust the city and highway MPG to what you typically get while towing. If you're not 100% sure of the mileage your vehicle gets while towing, know that GasBuddy can help with that

Fill 1	Minit Mart 2297 Thunderstick Rd Lexington, KY	2.45 \$/gal	16.43 gal	\$40.26
Fill 2	Marathon 9080 SC-11 Campobello, SC	2.25 \$/gal	13.47 gal	\$30.30
Fill 3	BP 502 W BAY ST Savannah, GA	2.85 \$/gal	11.21 gal	\$31.94

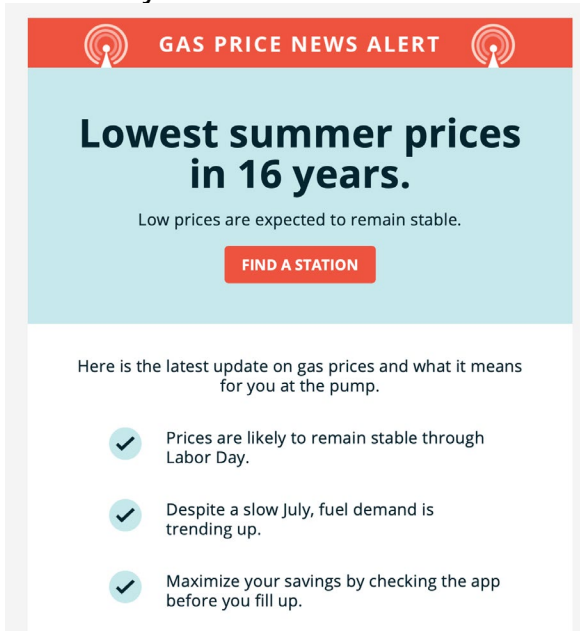
Savannah, GA, USA

Destination

Total Trip Cost: \$102.50 too.

In 2010, GasBuddy finally released an app! (For reference, the iPhone launched in 2007 and the first android phone in 2008). This is when it became extremely useful to me on my 110 mile round trip commute. Where I lived versus where I worked could vary drastically in fuel prices. I used to just look on their website maybe once a week when I needed to fill up to see where it might be best to purchase fuel. But the app helped provide near real time information. As I write this, the gas price near where I work is \$2.45, while the price at the station near my old house is \$2.24. Plus, that \$2.24 price was updated by a driver just seventeen minutes ago. By using this app, I would save nearly \$4.20 per twenty gallon fill up. Multiply that savings by a fill up every five days and this app would save me over \$300 per year. The app is free too!

Along with the release of their app, they launched "Price Hike Alerts" to notify users that gas prices are increasing in their neighborhoods. This is extremely helpful and I'm able to notify family members quickly to let them know to get gas now/today and at what stations in order to still get in on the lower price. Some stations are the first to increase their prices, while others are slower - it helps to know which stations are slower to respond to pending increases. Gas prices can and do jump drastically. I received this email in July 2020, letting me know that gas prices were the lowest in sixteen years. This email came at the end of July 2020, it was the height of the summer lockdowns due to the pandemic. Lower demand = lower prices, basic Economy 101.



Can you tell that I'm a GasBuddy fan yet? Again, note that I am not receiving anything from GasBuddy for this article (except knowledge of where to buy gas), nor will I receive anything if you choose to download the app and start using it.

A few minutes ago, I mentioned that if you don't know your current gas mileage while towing your tiny trailer, GasBuddy can help. In the app, you can enter your vehicle details and at each fill up, enter the price paid, gallons purchased, current mileage and GasBuddy will do the rest. It will calculate the gas mileage and keep the historical data for you to review. So to figure out your mileage while towing, start with a full fuel tank and then use the app the first few times you need to get fuel. This will give

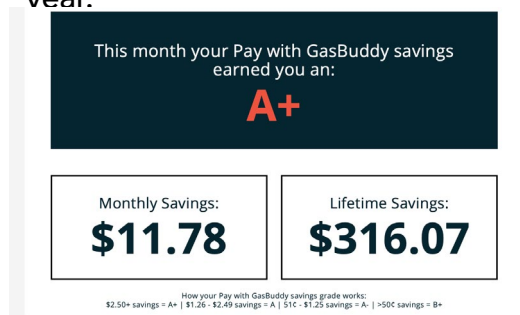
you a better understanding of your tow vehicle performance on trips. If you use this feature all of the time, you may even notice the effect that putting snow tires on has on your gas mileage. You can also download this information if you'd like to keep it in a spreadsheet for later reference. I have used the data to make graphs of miles driven, price paid per gallon, etc so I could visually see my spend, miles driven over time. I am a nerd and like data.

The last three features that I'll discuss are "Pay with GasBuddy" which launched in 2017, "GasBack" which launched in 2019, and "Deal Alerts" which launched in 2020.

"Pay with GasBuddy" has just under 1 million members and is a gasoline savings program in the United States which gives drivers a discount on every gallon of gas pumped. It is absolutely free to join, takes only a few minutes to set up, and you can save money on gas purchases at thousands of gas stations in the United States. You will not need to drive to specific gas stations to use this service. Over 95% of the gas stations nationwide accept this payment method. I have only not been able to use Pay with GasBuddy a handful of times in the 4 years I've been using it. This free membership can save you up to 25cents per gallon on every fill-up, although that much is rare. It is not a credit card, no credit check is required, and it's not a prepaid gas card. They do have two other levels of membership as well that are paid. They offer a Pay with GasBuddy Plus which costs \$7.99/month or \$89/year and this guarantees 20 cents off each gallon up to 50 gallons per month and then 5 cents per gallon on every fill after that. This is what I've used since it launched. The Pay with GasBuddy Premium is \$9.99/month or \$99/year and has the same great features as Plus, but also offers 24/7 roadside assistance. With both paid memberships, if you pair them with deal alerts, you can easily save 50 cents or more per gallon at a fill up.



Each month, GasBuddy sends me an email on how I did saving money at the fuel pump, and here is a snapshot of my year-end email. Note: I no longer drive 110 miles per day for work and for the last year I have been working remotely due to Covid-19. So I am pleased with my overall savings for the year considering how little I drove. Here is a snapshot of the money saved since I joined GasBuddy Plus. One thing to note, the first few years (maybe two) of the program, it only cost me \$49 for the year.



GasBack is a feature that offers the user free gas from everyday purchases. You read that right. Get GasBack from brands that you know and trust. For example, do you purchase clothes at Old Navy? Get 4% of your purchase in GasBack. Dick's Sporting Goods, 2% GasBack. Are you building a tiny trailer and buying wood at Home Depot? Get 3% GasBack. It's tax time in the United States, if you use TurboTax, get \$6 GasBack. These are just a few of the deals that earn you free gas based on things that you currently buy.

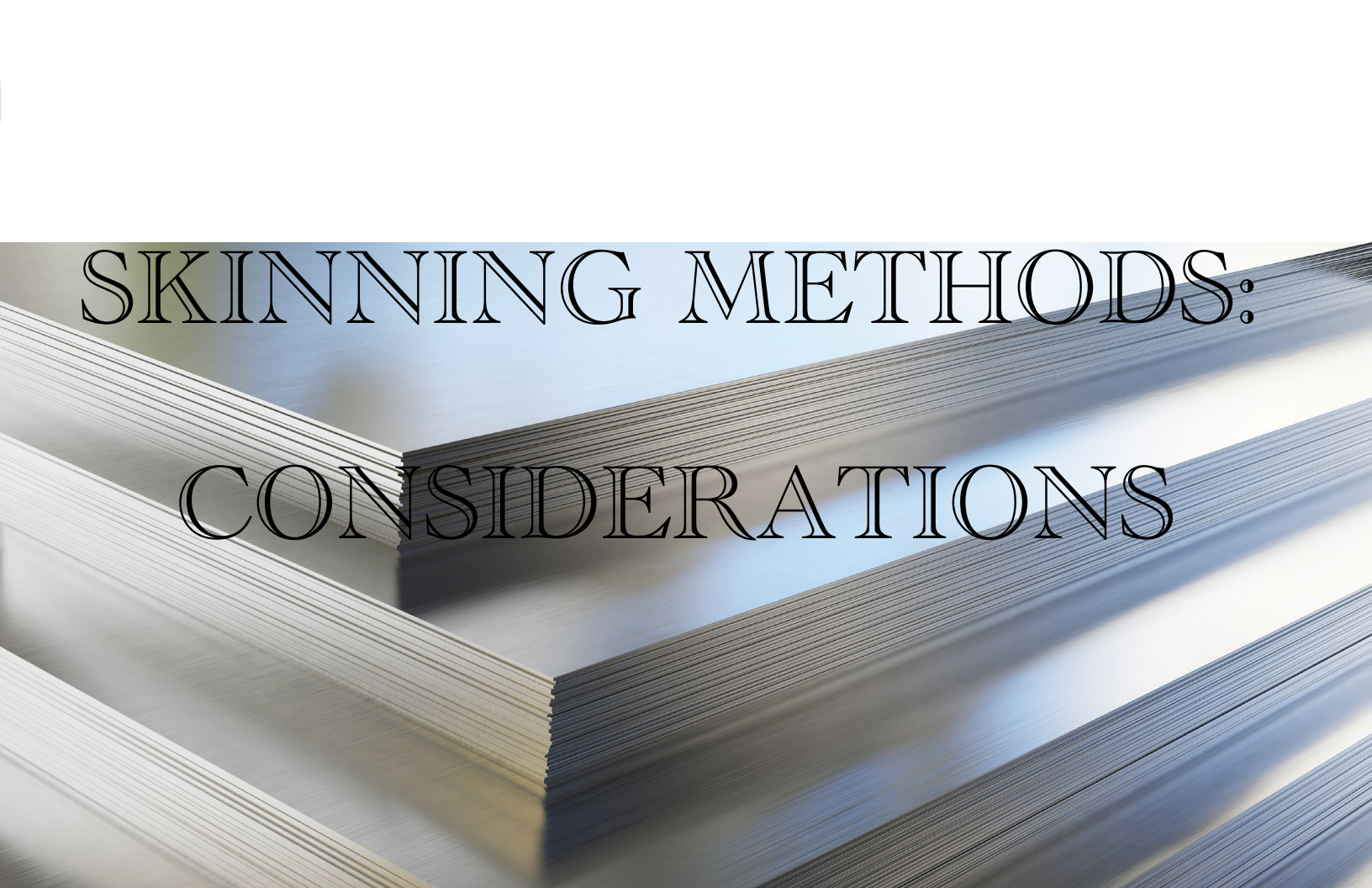
"Deal Alerts" show up in the app and they require you to activate the alert and then purchase your fuel within a certain amount of time. Currently, as I write this a gas station about 12 miles away from me is offering 23 cents off each gallon of diesel or I could drive one mile further to a gas station 13 miles away and save 30 cents on each gallon if I activate the "Deal Alert." Since I normally earn 20 cents off with my Pay with GasBuddy Plus membership, this would help save me some extra money as well.

As you can see, GasBuddy is a fully featured app that can help save any driver money. I encourage you to check out GasBuddy.com to see all of the tools available. This app review only covers ways to save money, but they do have other great features as well such as a fuel insights page, a blog that discusses everything related to gas, how to save money, oil prices, and driving techniques for better gas mileage, etc. If you log in your vehicle details, GasBuddy will also keep you informed of any vehicle recalls that you should be aware of. If you want to save some money, download the GasBuddy app on your smartphone and start to take advantage of their several ways for you to save money at the gas station. The money you save at the pump could be money you spend on your teardrop or other tiny camper. ■

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We appreciate your support. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to contact either of us at Lisa@cooltears.com or Anne@cooltears.com



SKINNING METHODS: CONSIDERATIONS

By **LISA ADAMS**

Poor man's fiberglass, also known as PMF. What is it and should you use it in your tiny camper? In a future issue, Cool Tears will deep dive into the process of poor man's fiberglass; but in this article, we will lay out the pros and cons in order to help you decide if it's right for your next build.

Poor man's fiberglass (PMF) is a technique where an adhesive, typically Titebond 2, and a material like canvas or bedsheets are adhered to the surface to provide a protective barrier. Once dried, it is then painted with outdoor paint. If you look at teardrop forums or Facebook groups, you will often see people asking the question if they should use PMF, aluminum, fiberglass, or FRP (fiberglass reinforced panels).

This article will focus on three main topics:

1. Cost
2. Materials readily available
3. Ease of application - can it be done with one person

COST

The first comparison is the cost. Using PMF on a teardrop or other similarly sized tiny camper is inexpensive. One gallon of [Titebond II Premium Wood Glue](#) is selling for just under \$30USD at the time of this publication. It's also possible to use bed sheets or canvas that you may already have, the color doesn't make a difference since the outer surface still needs to be painted. If you do need to purchase sheets, stick with just ordering the flat sheet, not a set with a fitted sheet so you avoid wasting some of the material when cutting off the elastic. [This 6 pack of twin flat sheets](#) for under \$50USD should work for nearly all tiny campers. Each sheet measures 66" x 104" and one should easily cover a side of your tiny camper. The last cost to consider in using PMF is the cost of an exterior paint. This is completely dependent upon each person's taste. It is possible to do this very inexpensively if you're willing to use a mistinted gallon of paint from your local DIY store. These can usually be purchased for under \$10USD for each gallon. If you choose your own color, prices will vary by brand, but a gallon of exterior paint should not run more than \$50USD. It is possible to use PMF on a teardrop or other tiny camper for under \$150USD in materials.

Now let's look at the alternatives to PMF and their related costs.

Aluminum

A 4'x10' x .040 sheet of aluminum varies, but we have found prices ranging from \$75USD to \$300+USD. If the entire teardrop is covered, then usually 4 sheets would be needed at a minimum. This adds up quickly and can be two to three times the cost of using PMF, ranging from \$300USD on the low end to over

\$1200USD on the high end.

Fiberglass

A teardrop or tiny camper that is fiberglassed using 6 ounce cloth and UV stable epoxy resin should cost less than the aluminum sheets, but will cost a little more than PMF. Assuming that you would need [two 10 yard rolls of material, the cost of the fiberglass cloth](#) would be nearly \$200USD. A minimum of one gallon of epoxy resin would be needed for the project and it's recommended to use a marine grade epoxy that can be used for wooden boat-building, such as [TotalBoat 5:1 Epoxy Resin](#). The cost of this resin at the time of publication is \$127USD/gallon. After the fiberglass/resin is completed, it is necessary to use a UV protection such as varnish on top, as the resin is not UV resistant. This would add another \$30-\$40USD, for a total of roughly \$370USD to fiberglass your homebuilt tiny camper.

FRP (fiberglass reinforced panels)

FRP is commonly used on public bathroom walls due to the ease of cleaning. These walls can be found in many campground bathrooms and showers. The material often used in commercial applications has texture, but it is possible to buy non-textured sheets as well from your home improvement stores. FRP is sold in 4'x8' sheets and usually is less than \$25USD per panel. Assuming that 4 sheets are needed, this is an inexpensive way to cover our teardrop or tiny camper. One gallon of FRP adhesive should cost less than \$40USD.

Estimated cost for a tiny camper
PMF - \$150USD
Aluminum - \$300 - \$1200USD
Fiberglass - \$370USD
FRP - \$150USD

MATERIALS READILY AVAILABLE or EASY TO PROCURE

PMF and fiberglass win this category hands down. PMF is made up of sheets or canvas, glue, and paint. Each of these items are readily available through Amazon or at a local retailer. Fiberglass components can easily be purchased through Amazon or at a local auto parts store. Both of these are readily available.

Aluminum

This is typically sold in sheets that are 4' x 8' - 12'. If you are able to purchase your aluminum sheets locally, it is most cost effective to do that, as freight costs can easily add another \$400 to your order. For example, to ship four sheets of 4' x 8' from Minnesota to Michigan adds over \$400 to my order and the freight company would like a receiving dock on my end, which I do not have. Finding aluminum sheets in the size and color that you need is not easy depending on your location.

FRP (fiberglass reinforced panels)

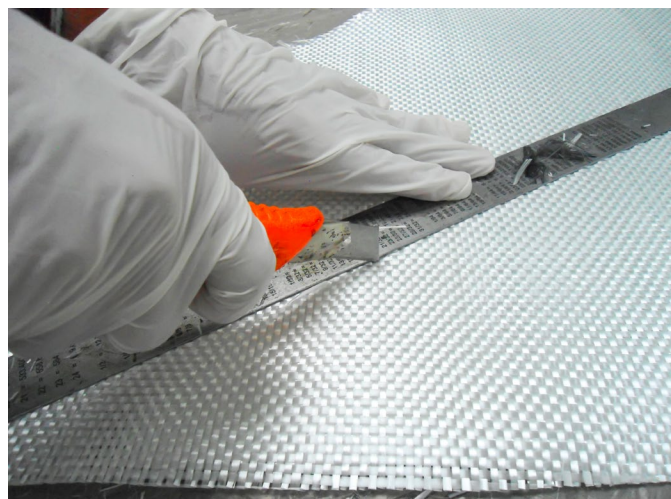
This material is easily found at your local DIY store as it's a common material for people to build showers with or to cover a wall in public bathroom settings.

EASE OF APPLICATION - CAN IT BE DONE WITH ONE PERSON

This category is more subjective as what is easy for one may be difficult for another person. Due to this, we'll highlight some of the factors to consider when using the different skinning methods.

One major thing to consider when thinking about ease of application is whether or not you will need an extra set of hands to help

you properly place the material. A second thing to consider with the material is whether you will need to purchase new cutting tools. Obviously, using a bed sheet or fiberglass mat is lighter in weight than aluminum or FRP and the material can be cut by scissors, but there are other things to consider, such as can I apply it and then remove the wrinkles before the glue or resin sets. There are techniques to help with this, so it's likely possible for one person to skin their teardrop with poor man's fiberglass or fiberglass.



A sheet of 4' x 10' aluminum is just under 23 pounds or 10.4kg. While this is likely a safe weight for many people to work with, the size of it can be challenging for just one person to place it correctly. The FRP panels, for the same size sheet are slightly heavier than the aluminum, so this might be challenging for one person. Both of these materials will require special cutting tools.

As you can see from the comparisons above, there is no right or wrong way to skin your teardrop or tiny camper and each method (if applied correctly) should last many years.

Cool Tears will continue discussing skinning options in future issues. Please reach out to us to let us know what methods you've used and why. We'd love to highlight our reader's builds and would like to share your feedback on how durable your chosen skinning method has been if you've used something other than aluminum. Send an email to Anne@cooltears.com. ■

[Social distancing items available on the Cool Tears Teespring Store](#)



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5th Annual uCamp Teardrop Rally Sells Out – in Two Hours

Sugarcreek, Ohio. February 23, 2021– nuCamp RV, a major manufacturer of campers and teardrop trailers, announces the 5th annual Teardrop Rally sold out its main campground within two hours of the sale. Each year, nuCamp hosts uCamp, a week-long event that allows members of the community to connect with each other at a private campground just down the road from the nuCamp factory.

Slated for June 14-18, this event brings nuCamp teardrop enthusiasts together in the heart of Ohio's Amish Country in Sugarcreek, Ohio. This year's festivities include a Wine & Cheese Welcome Party, nuCamp Q&A Sessions, Plant Tours, Movie Night, and a taste of local favorites such as Bahler Street Pizza.

uCamp offers three different types of event packages: Winklepleck, Boondocking, and a Welcome Pack. The primary campground, Winklepleck, sold out in less than two hours. Just a few days after registration opened, boondocking also sold out. nuCamp enthusiasts still hoping to attend the event can by purchasing a Welcome Pack. This option gives two people admittance into all activities including meals. The Welcome Pack does not include a campsite, and Welcome Pack recipients will need to make their own accommodations.

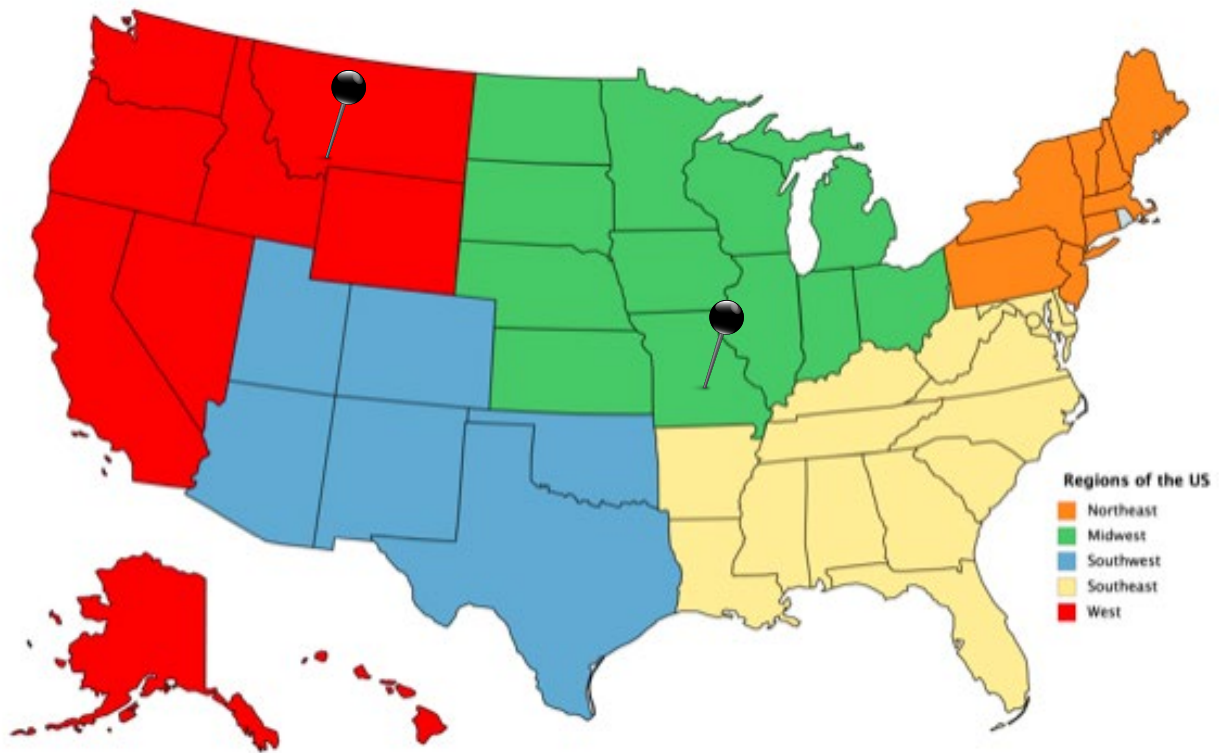
As nuCamp continues to develop the event over the years, they have also funded upgrades to the Winklepleck campground. In 2020, nuCamp worked with the City of Sugarcreek to fund additional power poles within the campground. This not only allows greater participation, but a better overall experience.

Scott Hubble, nuCamp CEO, stated, "While we were disappointed that the 2020 event had to be canceled, we are thrilled as we look towards gathering again this year. The opportunity to come together and embrace the community is something that brings excitement to us all."

About nuCamp RV

nuCamp RV manufactures the highest quality teardrop trailers, teardrop campers and truck campers available on the American market. Our recreational vehicle and trailer products are the result of extensive research and development, customer feedback, and the fusion of technology and old-world craftsmanship. The dedicated craftsmen and women who work at the nuCamp RV facility in Sugarcreek, Ohio, are committed to the principles of simplistic design, high-quality fabrication and fanatical customer support. nuCamp is the world's largest manufacturer of teardrop trailers.

REGIONAL CAMPING SPOTLIGHT



Created with mapchartlet ©

"Many go fishing all their lives without knowing that it is not fish they are after." ~ Henry David Thoreau

While many may pick up a fishing rod from time to time, different life events can get in the way. Family commitments, work priorities, global pandemics and other priorities may prevent our usual fishing outings. Henry David Thoreau teaches us that the accomplishment is not found in catching the fish, but in the splendor of the venture.

These two campgrounds have trout fishing in common; however, both have plenty to offer for non-fishers, as well. Thoreau's quote can be interpreted in many ways. Despite everything going on in our lives, keep casting, keep using your tiny campers, because the beauty lies in our efforts and time spent outdoors.

Location: Montauk State Park

**345 County Road 6670
Salem, MO 65560**

Getting There:

GPS Info (Latitude, Longitude):

37.4419, 91.690

37°26'31.19"N, -91°41'26.99"W

Montauk State Park is located at the headwaters of the Current River, just fifteen miles southwest of Salem, Missouri and is the northernmost part of the Ozark National Scenic Riverways. This state park contains a fish hatchery and is noted for its brown and rainbow trout fishing. There are many cold water springs in the park that combine with Pigeon Creek to supply more than 40 million gallons of water to the river each day. This cool spring water is perfect for rainbow trout and it's what makes this Missouri state park shine.

Montauk State Park is roughly a two and a half hour drive southwest of St Louis and about the same distance east from Springfield, MO. While the state park is relatively small, only containing 3000 acres (1214 ha) with less than five miles of hiking trails, the nearby Mark Twain National Forest encompasses 1.5 million acres (over 60,000 ha) and over 750 miles (over 1200 km) of trails.

On "opening day" on March 1, 2021, there were 1793 anglers that visited this state park. Mike Sutherland, the director of Missouri State Parks said, "Opening day of Missouri trout season is always exciting. When so many family, friends, and fellow anglers gather at our parks to share their passion for trout fishing, it creates a unique energy unlike any other season or event. I absolutely love getting to watch lifelong memories being created and our state parks are privileged to host this very special annual event."

All campsites are available to be reserved up to twelve months in advance.

Number of Sites: 146, in 4 loops

Pets: yes

Water: yes

Electric: yes

Price per night: \$ - \$\$ (\$13 primitive - \$23 with electric)

Fire Rings: yes

Picnic Tables: yes

Restrooms/Shower: yes

Campground is ADA accessible.

Primary activities within the park:

trout fishing, tour the historic Montauk Mill, which was built in 1896 to make use of the waters of Montauk Spring. Much of the original machinery is still intact.

Pro Tip: If you are an avid trout angler, then now is the time to reserve your campsite for next season. Missouri's catch-and-keep trout fishing season begins on March 1st each year at three state parks - Bennett Spring, Roaring River, and Montauk State Parks

For a unique view of the Current River, check out River Kings on YouTube. Pete and his friends are currently in MO on a weeklong kayak camping trip. Here is a link to his YouTube page - he'll have more videos on the trip once he returns. <https://www.youtube.com/c/RiverKingsKayak/featured>



Above: Opening day, Montauk State Park, photo courtesy of MO State Parks

Location: Red Cliff Campground
41120 US 191
Gallatin Gateway, MT 59730

Getting There:

GPS Info (Latitude, Longitude):

45.17417, -111.24167

45°10'27"N, 111°14'30"W

Red Cliff Campground is located in the scenic Gallatin Canyon, within the Custer Gallatin National Forest. The park is equally distanced from Bozeman, MT to the north and West Yellowstone to the south, both only 45 miles (72 km) away. The Custer Gallatin National Forest is a 3.1 million acre (1.2 million ha) tract of land that has something to appeal to everyone, but fishing shines in this park as well.

The campground sits next to the Gallatin River, at an elevation of 6,200 feet. Note this as your body may take a little bit of time to acclimate to the elevation if you do not live at elevation. Most campsites are situated among scattered pine and fir trees along the river. This area offers thousands of miles of fishable streams and rivers if you wish to venture from the campground. There are small tributary streams, high alpine lakes, and reservoirs where anglers can cast for rainbow, brown, brook and cutthroat trout as well as whitefish and Arctic grayling on the Gallatin River. The river is one of the best wade fishing rivers in Montana.



Fly fishing - Gallatin River, MT

A variety of wildlife makes its home in this scenic canyon. Visitors can often glimpse bald eagles, bighorn sheep, moose, elk, mountain goats, deer and coyotes. Black and grizzly bears also live in the canyon and it is required that your food be stored in bear proof containers or your locked, hard sided vehicle (not Jeep soft tops).

Other Nearby Attractions

The west entrance to Yellowstone National Park is located 45 miles (72 km) south of the campground, in the town of West Yellowstone so it's an easy day trip to the park

Number of Sites: 65 (sites 1 - 26 have electric)

Pets: yes

Water: yes

Electric: yes

Price per night: \$ - \$\$ (\$13 - \$25) \$13 primitive, \$25 with electric

Fire Rings: yes

Picnic Tables: yes

Restrooms/Shower: vault toilet only

Campground is ADA accessible.

Primary activities within the park: Fishing, fly fishing, hiking, canoeing, horseback riding, kayaking, river rafting, hiking, bird watching, and wildlife viewing

Pro Tip: Visit the Grizzly and Wolf Discovery Center in the town of West Yellowstone. It showcases live grizzly bears, gray wolves and various birds of prey, and has a variety of exhibits and educational programs.



West Yellowstone visitor center - photo courtesy of Karen Foley

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