

Take your castle on the open highway

Northlands RV show highlights rolling homes for all tastes, budgets

Stories by JANE CARDILLO
Special to The Journal
EDMONTON

From a travel trailer light enough to be towed by a small car, to luxurious coaches with their own private decks, this year's RV show at Northlands AgriCom promises to deliver something for everyone.

"RVing has become so diverse," says Bill Burnett, chairman of the 29th annual Edmonton RV Exposition and Sale, which runs Feb. 5 to 8 at Northlands AgriCom.

"Whether it's quads or boating or golf or using it as a residence, there are so many different purposes that people buy an RV for now." Even a shaky economy and fluctuating gas prices are not deterring people from the lure of the open road, says Burnett. But those factors are influencing the designs of some new RV models.

Just as the auto industry has responded to demands for smaller, more fuel-efficient vehicles, manufacturers of recreation vehicles are doing the same, Burnett says.

"You're certainly going to see some changes in some smaller offerings by RV manufacturers, and that's to go in tune with what's happening in the automotive industry where we're probably going to see a few less full-size vehicles.

"It's really remarkable that they keep coming up with more and new segments, and certainly we will start to see more stuff for compact cars."

One holiday trailer that doesn't need a big tow vehicle is the R-Pod, a small unit that ArrKann Trailer and RV Centre will display at the show.

"It's a tear-drop design, the same shape as a Volkswagen Beetle, yet there's room for a toilet and a shower, and it's compatible with all the small cars," says ArrKann owner Ken Friedenberg.

ArrKann will show off other lightweight units, including travel trailers and tent trailers, says Friedenberg.

"Even though a barrel of oil is hitting ... lows right now, there is a finite supply and unfortunately we believe that the price will go up again and I think the average guy does too. So the theme this year for ArrKann is 'ArrKann Light.'"

Burnett, who is sales manager at Trailblazer RV Centre, says tent trailers are an economical and increasingly comfortable way to travel, and his dealership will have some at the show.

The tent trailer is a "really viable segment that's starting to percolate again," Burnett says. "We're seeing more slide-outs in the tent trailers, and even in some of the smaller models we're seeing a washroom and a shower."

Tent trailers with washrooms start at about \$13,000, Burnett says, making them as affordable as they are convenient.

Showgoers will see more than lightweights, says Burnett, who notes that bigger trailers and motorcoaches are still popular among RVers.

Trailblazer will be showing full-size travel trailers, fifth wheels and a park model RV — an oversize trailer that has the look and feel of a cottage inside and out.

The only time this type of RV moves down the road, though, is when it's being towed to a permanent or semi-per-



This R-Pod trailer at ArrKann Trailer and RV Centre can be pulled by a compact car.

PHOTOS BY WALTER TYCHNOWICZ



The Veranda 600 Country Coach, a big diesel bus at Carefree Coach and RV, has a flip-down veranda that you get to through sliding patio doors.



The Veranda, above and left, has a separate bedroom, spacious living and dining areas, heated floors, sumptuous bath and chef-inspired kitchen. It can come equipped with luxurious marble floors and a fireplace. Prices range from \$475,000 to \$900,000.

manent site, such as an RV resort.

"It has the pitched roof, it looks like a house," Burnett says of Trailblazer's park model, manufactured by Woodland Park. "It's a home."

Furnishings and amenities are included in the cost of park models, which are available in different sizes and designs, ranging from log and stone exteriors to one- and two-bedroom living spaces with lofts.

While many RVers still want full-size units, gas costs are altering how far they're travelling with them, says Burnett.

"There's an awful lot more (RV) parks coming on stream in the next two years in the Edmonton area where you can leave your RV and not pull," says Burnett. "You basically just drive to your RV and have your getaway there."

That's something Ross Hodgins, head of RV City in Morinville, hears from customers, too.

"Destination camping is becoming more and more of (a reality)," says Hodgins. "It's something that's developing as part of that lifestyle. We have seen an influx in the larger units that are sold that are designed for a destination-type of camping experience."



Those units now come standard with many luxuries that elevate camping to a whole new level, says Hodgins, who will have some of them at the show.

"Slide-outs that are remote controlled, TVs that come out of a cabinet, flat-screen TV/DVD players, electric awnings.

"The kind of things so when you get to your destination, you're ready within half an hour to start enjoying why you went there for."

Imagine arriving at your camping spot and within minutes relaxing on the private deck of your home on wheels. One dealer at the show will be encouraging just that.

Carefree Coach and RV has a big diesel pusher bus that puts a high-end condo to shame. Besides a separate bedroom,

spacious living and dining areas, heated floors, sumptuous bath and chef-inspired kitchen, the unit has a fold-down deck.

"The side of the bus flips down and it has your balcony," says sales representative Dennis Elkow. "There are sliding patio doors and you walk out just as if you're on your own veranda."

The Country Coach bus starts at about \$475,000 and tops out at \$900,000.

There will likely be some good prices at the show, as dealers look at selling existing stock to make room for new models, says Dan Merkwosky, executive vice-president of the Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association of Alberta, which puts on the show.

"Come and get the best deals of the year," Merkwosky says.

Prizes worth \$100,000 each toward RV buy

Visitors at next week's RV show and sale in Edmonton will have a chance to win one of four prizes worth \$100,000 each toward the purchase of a recreation vehicle.

"It's called the ultimate visible vault program," says Dan Merkwosky, executive vice-president of the Recreation Vehicle Dealers Association of Alberta, which produces the show.

"We have four vaults in different locations.

"You can punch in your phone number and if it works, you win \$100,000 towards the purchase of a new or used RV."

Showgoers can also win a door prize for a \$5,000 shopping spree redeemable with any dealer participating in the show.

Nearly 100 small booth exhibitors will join 15 RV dealerships at the show, which runs Feb. 5 to 8 at Northlands AgriCom.

“There will be a ton of tourist and travel bureaus (represented). We've approached the RV world to provide a lot more information to people.”

Dan Merkwosky, executive vice-president, RV Dealers Association of Alberta

Unlike past years when some dealers were in the Sportex building, everyone is under one roof, with the opening this year of a new hall in the AgriCom, says Merkwosky. More than 400 units will be on display.

Three shuttles will ferry showgoers from the parking lot to the building, and for the first time, drivers of private vehicles will be able to drop off passengers at the entrance.

"Northlands provided for a drop-off in front of the building this year, so anybody that's handicapped we can get you right to the building," Merkwosky says.

The popular RV Lifestyles Theatre seminar program is back again this year. Topics include RV towing vehicles and hitch; RV lifestyle tips; RV safety; customs information; and RV insurance.

"There will be a ton of tourist and travel bureaus (represented)," says Merkwosky.

"We've approached the RV world to provide a lot more information to people."

Show hours are: Thursday, Feb. 5, from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m.; Friday and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m.; and Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Admissions: Adult \$12; family \$27; senior \$7; youth (12-17) \$5; children under 12 are admitted free.

Tickets are available at the door or through Ticketmaster.



Over 2,000 road tests. 1 automotive authority.

Trust the opinions of the auto experts with over 2,000 written road tests online at your disposal. Visit driving.ca before you buy.

EDMONTON JOURNAL

driving.ca
Smarter Buyer. Better Car

NEW CAR DEALER DIRECTORY

Acura

SOUTHVIEW ACURA
34 Avenue at 99 Street, Auto Row
Edmonton, Alberta
780-989-8888
1-866-220-5922
www.southviewacura.com

WEST SIDE ACURA
17456 - 102 Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta
780-484-5444

Audi

SOUTHGATE AUDI
1235 - 101 Street S.W.
Edmonton, Alberta
780-435-2834

B.M.W.

BAVARIA AUTOHAUS
17250 Stony Plain Road
Edmonton, Alberta
780-484-0000

EDMONTON BMW
7450 Roper Road
Edmonton, Alberta
780-490-5269

Chrysler Plymouth Dodge Jeep Eagle

CAPITAL AUTO CENTRE
1311 - 101 Street S.W.
Edmonton, Alberta
780-435-4711
www.capitaljeep.com

CROSSTOWN MOTORS (1982) LTD.
10405 - 120 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
780-488-4881
www.crosstownmotors.com

CRYSTAL CHRYSLER
11116-88 Avenue, Fort Saskatchewan
780-998-0900 • 1-800-525-0900
www.denhamscrystalchrysler.ca

DERRICK DODGE
6211 - 104 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
780-435-3611
www.derrickdodge.com

GREAT WEST CHRYSLER JEEP
17817 Stony Plain Road
Edmonton, Alberta
780-669-2024 1-888-284-9027

LEDUC CHRYSLER/JEEP
6102 - 46A Street
Leduc, Alberta
780-986-2051

LONDONDERRY CHRYSLER JEEP
13333 Fort Road
Edmonton, Alberta
780-473-6388
www.londonderrydodge.com

PIONEER CHRYSLER JEEP
Wetaskiwin, Alberta
780-424-2277/780-423-2277

Chevrolet/ Oldsmobile

STEDELBAUER CHEV/OLDS
13145 - 97 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
780-476-6221

Ford

DENNY ANDREWS FORD
18208 Stony Plain Road
Edmonton, Alberta
780-489-9999

ZENDER FORD MERCURY SALES
Spruce Grove, Alberta
780-962-3000
www.zenderford.com

Honda

ALBERTA HONDA
9670-125A Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta
780-474-8595

MILLWOODS HONDA
9688 34 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
780-463-7888
www.millwoods-honda.com

SHERWOOD HONDA
30 Automall Road
Sherwood Park, Alberta
780-429-4611
www.sherwoodhonda.ca

Infiniti

ERICKSEN INFINITI NISSAN
101 Street & 110 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
780-429-4611

Kia

SOUTHTOWN KIA
3545 - 98 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
780-465-3535 • 1-888-465-3535
www.southtownkia.ca

Mazda

SUNDANCE MAZDA
180 Street & 102 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
780-454-0422

WEBER MOTORS LTD.
5455 Calgary Trail South
Edmonton, Alberta
780-436-9970

Mercedes Benz

WEBER MOTORS LTD.
5611 - 104 St.
Edmonton, Alberta
780-486-9970

Nissan

MILLS NISSAN
1275 - 101 St. SW
Edmonton, Alberta
780-463-5700

WESTEND NISSAN
10152 - 179 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
780-486-1780

Pontiac/Buick/ GMC

GROVE PONTIAC BUICK GMC LTD.
200 St. Mathews Ave. Highway
16A West
Spruce Grove, Alberta
780-962-2929
www.grovepontiac.com

RON HODGSON PONTIAC BUICK
5 Galameau Place
St. Albert, Alberta
780-458-7100
www.ronhodgson.com

Porsche

NORDEN AUTOHAUS
17820 Stony Plain Road
Edmonton, Alberta
780-484-3000
FAX: 481-0092
norden.porschedealer.co

Subaru

RALLY SUBARU
9404 - 34 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
780-989-0700

SUBARU CITY
17708 - 111 Ave
Edmonton, Alberta
780-484-7733

Suzuki

MILLWOODS SUZUKI
3403-93 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
780-450-4500
1-866-897-4500
millwoodssuzuki.com

WESTEND SUZUKI
17431 - 102 Ave.
Edmonton, Alberta
780-484-0561
FAX: 484-9674
www.westendsuzuki.com

Toyota

KINGSWAY TOYOTA
12820 - 97 St.
Edmonton, Alberta
780-478-830

Volkswagen

NORDEN AUTOHAUS
17820 Stony Plain Road
Edmonton, Alberta
780-484-3000
FAX: 481-0092

SOUTHGATE VOLKSWAGEN
5220 Gateway Blvd.
Edmonton, Alberta
780-438-888

Volvo

VOLVO OF EDMONTON
1205 - 101 Street
Edmonton, Alberta
780-486-5100