



## Our Eyes and Legs at the Louisville Show

Every year the RV industry puts on a glitzy show in Louisville, Kentucky with enough bells and whistles to design a train. Volunteer members Roger Bassett and Paul Kalisz have been our eyes and legs at this show for a number of years. Here's a summary of their observations, along with some of Roger's fine photos:



Even with the increasing cost of fuel, big Class As and diesel pushers (including those that are built on an HDT chassis), along with SURVs, visually dominated the show. Although we are not sure if this feature is new for 2007, most of the larger motor homes had two bathrooms (image 1). (Editor's note: This trend does seem to be on the upswing). SURVs mostly had elaborate body paint jobs and a lot of diamond plate. One model even had opposing slideout garages for his and hers motorcycles (image 2).



Fifth wheels were not as prominent this year, although we checked a number of 40+-foot, 24,000-pound-GVWR models — impressive, but what would you use to tow these things?



Class Bs seem to be getting wider, more elaborate and more expensive. Most now have enclosed bathrooms, ultramodern decor and "low-profile" cabinetry that allows for lots of windows on both sides. In our opinion, the new Bs are not as cozy or private as some of the older models and, because of all the windows, they are probably not as safe. Of course, the Sprinter van chassis and Mercedes diesels dominated the Bs.



Many manufacturers now offer at least one lightweight "micro" trailer brand. In general, these were rated at well under 6,000 pounds GVWR, had rubber torsion axles, and appeared to be both bare-bones in design and constructed of extremely cheap materials.

Electronic gizmos were abundant, especially flat panel TV screens in all sizes, shapes and mounting locations. Some of the big units had elaborate outdoor entertainment systems built into basement compartments that opened outward for use (image 3). Some of the upscale RVs we looked at now have built-in vacuum cleaning systems (optional feature, of course).

A number of the units had electronically-controlled macerator pumps that replaced gravity-dump sewage systems. In some cases these systems had a single pump for both black and gray water and in other cases each type of waste had its own pump.

Columbia Northwest presented a new, strange-looking trailer called a "Retreat" in 22-foot and 32-foot models. When set up, these look like log cabin park models with decks. The deck folds up against the log cabin for travel (image 4).

If you enjoy a sauna, some brands have one built right into the RV as an option. Roger says, "Just think about having a sauna in your RV when you're on a winter outing. You can run outside and roll in the snow after enjoying a good, hot sauna bath. Don't worry — you can survive such an experience, as I did on one of my trips to Russia in wintertime." The guys were impressed with the sauna option, as well as an increase in the trend toward spare European styling and more European-made products than in previous years.

According to Roger and Paul, manufacturers' definitions of "new" this year were evidenced in either more and bolder graphics or the complete lack thereof, more and bigger TVs and other interior frills, and more sophisticated electronic gadgets. RVs are being made lighter and cheaper on the one hand, and bigger and heavier with more slideouts on the other. Several high-line class As now have between 50 and 60 feet of slideout length. We can't help but wonder where the train will stop.