

About me

Hello.

My name is David. My wife and 2 kids (son, now 17 and daughter, 15) have enjoyed our camping trips. It all started in the spring of 2000 when my wife and I were trying to figure out what we were going to do for summer vacation that year. My wife and I had done some tent camping over the past 15 years while on some great motorcycle trips, but it was getting too uncomfortable for my wife due to problems with her back. When my wife and I would go off on our short trips, the kids loved staying with my folks. But now they were getting older, and the grandparents weren't as much fun as they used to be, so they wanted to go with us more often. No, we didn't leave them with my parents all of the time, just when my wife and I needed a little break.

To us, the next obvious step up from a tent on the ground was to a tent on wheels (a pop-up). At the time, we had a Dodge Grand Caravan without a tow package. The Coleman dealer said all he would feel comfortable selling us to tow behind the Caravan were a few trailers. A couple of them we felt would be an okay trailer, at least for sleeping in. Anything else like cooking or eating was going to be cozy, but we felt we could make it work.

Then one Saturday while looking through the newspaper, I saw an ad for a nearby RV dealer that had a small travel trailer on sale for about the same price as the Coleman we were looking at. I think it was around \$8,000. So I thought, hey, lets go see what this trailer looks like for comparison. Well, it looked pretty good, but it didn't have the sleeping capacity we needed. This led us to looking at other travel trailers and even some fifth wheel models. We knew that if we wanted one of these, we would have to get something else to tow it with.

So, off to the Ford, Chevy and Dodge dealers to see what they had that would pull a trailer. We hadn't decided on which trailer yet, so we looked at the SUV's and crew cab pickups knowing that our kids were still growing and would be going with us for a few more years. My wife liked the people capacity of her van, so that steered us towards the SUV's. We all sat in all of them to see what was most comfortable, and ended up choosing the Chevy Suburban.

Now, which one do we get? Which engine and rear axle do we need? Like most beginning RV'ers, we looked at the tow ratings and compared them to the trailers we were considering. As we would discover later, that was a mistake! We narrowed our trailer selection down to 2, a Prowler 27H and I forget what the other one was. The second one was a bit over the towing capacity weight of the Suburban we were considering, so we ended up getting the Prowler and a 2001 Suburban 4WD K1500 ½ ton LT package with a 5.3 liter engine and 3.73 rear end with a towing capacity of 7,600#. Exactly what the trailer GVWR was. Perfect fit! Yeah, right! (as I would find out later)

We picked up our new Suburban in February and the new trailer in March of 2001. It seemed to be a reasonable combination for the first year we had them. Due to work schedules, we weren't able to get away as much, or as far, as we wanted to that year. But we figured we could plan a great trip for the next summer, one my wife and I had talked about for a couple of years. It involved going from Seattle down to Arches National Park, over to Bryce and Zion, through Las Vegas to Disneyland, and home along the California and Oregon coasts. We figured it out and it was going to take 3 weeks and about 3,700 miles of driving to do what we wanted to do along the way, and that's just from one campground to the next.

It was a great trip, except for the heat. We knew it was going to be hot in late June and early July where we were going. But pulling the trailer up some of the hills along the way was another story. We had had some experience pulling the trailer up a few hills on the short trips we had taken already. Nothing real steep or long, but we noticed the Suburban had to work at it a little. And we had been along most of the same route before in different pieces, so we knew where most of the big hills were. I picked up a copy of Mountain Directory West, just to make sure. Yep, there were a couple we missed, and they were kind of steep! We planned to get an early start when we had some driving to do over those hills, and that probably helped some. But the poor Suburban had a hard time on a couple of them.

Eastbound on I-84 from Pendleton to La Grande, Oregon. Westbound on I-70 from Green River to Joseph, Utah. Northbound I-5 in northern California and southern Oregon. There were some steep hills along these roads that had us down to 35 miles per hour at some points. Didn't have any problems going down any hills, just put the tranny in second gear and it held the speed rather well.

When we got home, we figured we might need a bigger truck to pull this trailer of ours. We didn't want a smaller trailer because we had looked at so many that were smaller than what we had that just wouldn't be comfortable for us. It was too late to get a 2002 model the way we wanted, and the 2004's weren't out yet and we didn't want to pay a premium for a brand new model, so we waited. We knew we were not going to be taking any long trips like the summer trip we just did, so a few more months with the ½ ton would be okay.

By now, I had found out more information on the internet than I knew before. I found a couple of RV related forums and started reading everything I could to make sure my next truck would handle the load. We have the same trailer, but now have a 2003 Suburban ¾ ton 4WD K2500 LT package with an 8.1 liter engine and 3.73 rear end with a towing capacity of 10,100#. Sounds like plenty of truck, almost over-kill, doesn't it? Not really! See how the weights and tow rating worked out here.

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