

## Winnebago Nation: The RV in American Culture

*James Twitchell*

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# Winnebago Nation

James B.  
Twitchell



The peculiar place of the RV in American Culture

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#1022987 in Books James B Twitchell 2014-04-08Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.75 x 6.00 x .501, 1.00 #File Name: 0231167784192 pagesWinnebago Nation The RV in American Culture | File size: 58.Mb

**James Twitchell : Winnebago Nation: The RV in American Culture** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Winnebago Nation: The RV in American Culture:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Finally! A sophisticated book on RV culture that rises above the restBy VailmacIn Winnebago Nation: The RV in American Culture, author James B. Twitchell delivers a long overdue, academically grounded, and literate explanation of the social and historical role recreational vehicles have played for nearly 100 years in American road culture. What elevates Winnebago Nation above the slim shelf of RV books is its elegance of prose, college academicians intellectual heft, and a robust storytellers sense of timing.Most RV books are rooted in the authors desire to share his or her travel and living experiences with the passion of an

evangelical convert. Twitchell writes with the first hand experience of someone who owns and travels in an RV (a Winnebago View) and to a veterans eye his sketches and observations are crisply drawn and sharply true. The first chapter quickly establishes that the book will not be a, and then we went there and did that journal. Twitchell goes convincingly further than ill-fated Everest mountain climber George Mallorys because its there answer to why he climbed mountains, and does the best job yet in describing to non-RVers the lure and satisfaction that RV owners derive from the experience. He does this by connecting rational evolutionarily and anthropological behaviors with the advance of the automotive age. And if that sounds like tough sledding, Twitchells light touch, humorous asides, and fluid writing style greases the skids for a lively read. Accompanied by a liberal smattering of vintage ads and photos, the second chapter is a fascinating tour through the early days of road camping. In his third chapter, Twitchell takes on the role of sociologist as he globally explains the various micro-communities and cultures that coalesce, intersect, and disperse throughout the American RV world. Its here that non-RVers will find surprising revelations about the swirl of incomes, backgrounds, and interests that paints RV life in a far more positive and accurate color than our current popular culture seems to. And where do RVs go to sleep? Chapter four is a mid-altitude survey of camping options. Twitchell enjoyably spends a little entomological and philosophical time considering the appropriateness of the word camping. For some, thats an apt description, but many others dont see it that way as the words mobile living might better describes their experience. From Wal-Mart parking lots to tony RV-only resorts, the reader happily rides along in the copilot seat next to Twitchell. Finally, in the fifth chapter, Twitchell asks, and to a reasonable degree explains, why the RV has gone from a position of coveted aspirational desire up through the 1950s to the butt of cultural jokes today. Its here that he accurately chronicles the change of tone and perception of the RV experience and quite fairly points to the intellectual snobbery of critics who have formed an opinion devoid of first-hand experience. Unsaid in the book is the theory that somewhere in the cultural sweep of the 60s the pleasurable values of RV life got ransacked by cultural elites while the industry sat on its hands, ignorant of the fact that they had lost control of the narrative. RV travelers will find both insight and affirmation in Winnebago Nation. For those contemplating jumping into the RV life, this book should be at the top of the required reading pile. But, most importantly, existing RV owners should have a hard copy of the book to tuck under their arms like a Bible as they go forth in the world to evangelize the virtues of a nomadic life. For, in Winnebago Nation, James Twitchell stands proudly atop the roof of his Winnebago View and elegantly proclaims the nobility of this vastly misunderstood and under appreciated lifestyle. Don Cohen, Editor WinnebagoLife.com 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Must read for RV enthusiasts By Shelby Coleman If you have an RV, are you thinking about buying an RV, or you took an RV trip when you were a kid with your parents, this book is for you. I loved every bit of it. Mr. Twitchell is a very good writer. I loved learning so many things about this subject. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By C. O'Connor Nice in-depth book, likely will re-read this one.

In Winnebago Nation, popular critic James B. Twitchell takes a light-hearted look at the culture and industry behind the yearning to spend the night in one's car. For the young the roadtrip is a coming-of-age ceremony; for those later in life it is the realization of a lifelong desire to be spontaneous, nomadic, and free. Informed by his own experiences on the road, Twitchell recounts the RV's origins and evolution over the twentieth century; its rise, fall, and rebirth as a cultural icon; its growing mechanical complexity as it evolved from an estate wagon to a converted bus to a mobile home; and its role in bolstering and challenging conceptions of American identity. Mechanical yet dreamy, independent yet needful, solitary yet clubby, adventurous yet homebound, life in a mobile home is a distillation of the American character and an important embodiment of American exceptionalism, (Richie Rich and Hobo Hank spend time in essentially the same rig at the same campground, albeit for different reasons and in different levels of comfort.) The frontier may be tapped out but we still yearn for the exploratory life. Twitchell concludes with his thoughts on the future of RV communities and the possibility of mobile cities becoming a real part of the American landscape.

Winnebago Nation draws on James B. Twitchell's own experiences as well as historical and sociological sources to explain the tremendous appeal of the RV for its aficionados, the disdain many Americans feel toward it, and the paradoxical qualities of a population of motorized nomads who seem to seek both individualistic escape and communitarian society. Twitchell locates his interpretation of these questions in the enduring mythos of the road and the frontier; in a lingering Puritanism that demands accountability along with freedom; and in the RV's ability to reconcile autonomy and belonging, wilderness and domesticity. (Cathy Stanton, Tufts University) This engagingly written book looks deeply into the American character, concluding that for a nation of folks who came from elsewhere and have never stopped moving, the recreation vehicle is the artifact that best explains the American character. A mighty good read. (Michael Aaron Rockland, author of Homes on Wheels) With a winning combination of Bill Bryson's dry wit and Mary Roach's eye for the absurd, Winnebago Nation is a historical, psychological, and cultural romp through the quirky landscape of RVing in America. Through it all, Twitchell never loses an educator's fascination with his subject, while maintaining his RV enthusiast's sense of adventure as he explores this uniquely American lifestyle. (Doreen Orion, author of Queen of the Road: The True Tale of 47 States, 22,000 Miles, 200 Shoes,

2 Cats, 1 Poodle, a Husband, and a Bus with a Will of Its Own) Twitchell brings his knowledge of history and literature to bear on the American love affair with the RV, in all its incarnations. RVing in America looks to be a never-ending story, and Twitchell tells it well. An amusing, entertaining, and informative read. (David Counts, author of *Over the Next Hill: An Ethnography of RVing Seniors in North America*) Twitchell has unpacked a complex and often misunderstood culture, looking at it in a way that recognizes that it is about so much more than a means of transport. *Winnebago Nation* is an evocative and factual, well-written and well-illustrated exploration of RV culture in the United States. Any reader will want to take to the open road after putting the book down. (Kate Trant, author of *Home Away from Home: The World of Camper Vans and Motorhomes*) An interesting and informative read that covers a very wide catalog of personal experiences from which every RVer can find parallels to his own travels. (Al Hesselbart, RV/MH Hall of Fame, author of *The Dumb Things Sold... Just Like That!: A History of the Recreational Vehicle Industry in America*) This work will make even the most skeptical reader appreciate the importance of the RV in American history no mean feat. (Library Journal) About the Author James B. Twitchell taught English and advertising at the University of Florida for many years and is the author of *Adcult USA*, *Lead Us Into Temptation*, and *Where Men Hide*. He has traveled up and down the Eastern Seaboard in a small RV with his wife and driven across the Deep South, up to Newfoundland, and all the way to Alaska.