



THE BUZZ ON BUNKHOUSES

As the market for family-friendly RVs heats up, here are a dozen bunkroom floorplans — from easy-towing ultralights to a triple-slide trailer

It took us two years and 50 nights in a pop-up camper to decide that, while we loved RVing, we needed something a bit more comfortable and a lot more spacious. Thus began our search for a travel trailer that could easily sleep a family of four and be safely towed by our half-ton pickup truck. Like so many other RV buyers, we ended up with a lightweight bunkhouse model that has served our needs beautifully, even as we welcomed another baby and a dog into the family.

We're not alone. The popularity of bunkhouse trailers has exploded lately, and the range of sizes, weights and floorplans can be daunting to the first-time buyer. The trick is to narrow the search by asking three important questions:

1. How much can I tow?

We knew the maximum towing capacity of our truck and limited our search to bunkhouses with a gross vehicle weight rating (GVWR) well beneath that. It wouldn't have done us any good to fall in love with a trailer

that we couldn't safely tow or use to transport our gear. Remember that the industry defines "light" and "ultralight" as RVs built with lighter-weight components, but not all lightweight trailers can be towed by the family SUV. If you are also thinking about buying a tow vehicle, it may be best to find your dream trailer first, then shop for a new vehicle that is rated to safely tow the rig and equipped to so.

2. How many people do I need to sleep?

After making and unmaking beds countless times in our pop-up camper,

we knew that dedicated beds were a high priority for a new travel trailer. We did not want to be converting the dinette or pulling out the jackknife sofa every night at the campground. Making sure everyone has a comfortable place to sleep is one of the most important components of a successful family vacation. Keep in mind that kids do grow, so if your little one is looking crammed on the couch now, imagine the scene next year. Also remember that while younger siblings might find it fun to share a double bed, tweens and teens will probably not be so flexible.

3. How much gear do I want to bring?

One of the best parts of RV travel is being able to take along all your gear. We travel with bikes, kayaks, cooking appliances, camp chairs and lots of other stuff that makes our time at the campground

Five years ago, Stephanie and Jeremy Puglisi shopped around for the perfect lightweight bunkhouse for their family of four. Since then, they've welcomed their third son and an Australian cattle dog. The selection of bunkhouse floorplans has grown as well, with more choices than ever.

more enjoyable. We also cook many of our meals in the RV, so ample food storage is a must. While shopping, we paid close attention to carrying capacity and interior and exterior storage, knowing that we would be frustrated if the new travel trailer couldn't handle our packing load.

Once you have answered these questions, it's time to start considering the pros and cons of individual floorplans. It is so easy to get swept away by kitchen islands and huge U-shaped dinettes, but often it's the less-noticeable features that have the biggest impact on your enjoyment of the family RV.

For example, few shoppers consider access to the RV when the slides are not open, but this is so important if you want to use the bathroom or prepare lunch at rest stops on the way to your destination. We never imagined that having curtains instead of doors on the bedrooms would end up driving us wild a few years into ownership, so we recommend thinking about noise and privacy concerns before purchasing. People who care deeply about keeping a trailer clean might shop for a bathroom with interior and exterior entrances, whereas people with young children might look for an exterior door that is far from the bunks.

Above all, think about livability. Can your whole family sit together and enjoy a meal or a movie? Can your kids fit comfortably in the bunks without invading each other's space? Is there a place to put the dog bed or crate? These are the things that will matter, much more than the size of the flat-screen TV or the color of the backsplash.

We have enjoyed our lightweight bunkhouse trailer for the past five years, and now there are more of them at RV shows and dealers' lots than ever. Here's a small sampling, from an easy-towing 20-footer to a 37½-foot, double-slideout floorplan with a bunk room where the kids can really stretch out. Have fun finding the perfect fit for your family.



Coachmen Freedom Express Liberty Edition ↗

The heaviest of our featured bunkhouses, the triple-slide **320BHDSLE** provides upscale features and privacy for all family members with wooden doors instead of curtains closing off the master bedroom and the bunk room. In the rear, climbing "rocks" lead to a double-wide bunk that is across from a slideout that houses a futon and a flip-up bunk. Another slide

creates more floor space in the kitchen but does limit the room outside under the 20-foot awning. Near the front, the bathroom allows access from the living area and the master bedroom. A step-in closet to the right of the entry door saves families from unsightly heaps of shoes and jackets. The outdoor kitchen is spacious, with plenty of storage. The nearly 37-foot length will limit campsite options, particularly at national and state parks, an important consideration for some families.

Exterior Length	36' 11"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	6' 9"
Exterior Height	11' 2"
Freshwater Cap.	49 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	33/33 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	10 gal.
UVW, Base	7,952 lbs.
Hitch Weight	879 lbs.
GVWR	10,500 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$42,898

Coachmen RV
800-353-7383, www.coachmenrv.com



Forest River R-Pod ↗

The R-Pod line of lightweight trailers feels young and fresh with head-turning exteriors and creative floorplans that can comfortably sleep families of four while maintaining a small footprint. The 20-foot **RP-182G** comes with a wet bath, two bunks and a U-shaped dinette that converts into a master bed. Some people may find it a nuisance to turn the dinette into a bed every night and restore it each morning in time for breakfast, but for others it will be a compromise worth

making. The nearly 6½-foot ceiling height and kitchen slideout make the interior feel more spacious. The rear garage becomes a well-appointed camp kitchen with a sink, a freestanding gas grill, a TV and a pair of external speakers, all standard, along with hanging wire baskets and cargo nets for holding supplies. With a GVWR of 3,885 pounds, this is a great option for those wishing to tow with an SUV (properly equipped, of course) or stay in snug campsites at national and state parks.

Exterior Length20'
 Exterior Width8'
 Interior Height6' 5"
 Exterior Height8' 8", 9' 7" with A/C
 Freshwater Cap36 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap 30/30 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap5 gal.
 UVW, Base2,836 lbs.
 Hitch Weight385 lbs.
 GVWR3,885 lbs.
 MSRP, Base\$24,419

Forest River
 866-837-6044
www.forestriverinc.com/r-pod

Heartland North Trail Ⓢ

The nearly 37-foot **NT KING 33BKSS** features a spacious and comfortable bunk room with two dedicated bunks (one in a slideout), a convertible futon, an entertainment center and ample storage. The rear window and two smaller ones keep the room bright and cheerful. Many families will appreciate the exterior bathroom door, which allows use of the facilities without tracking dirt through the main living area. Up front, the master bedroom has a walk-around bed with nightstands and reading lights, as well as an entertainment center that rotates from the living room. Some cooks will enjoy the double sink and pull-out faucet in the kitchen island, while others might prefer more island counter space. The kitchen slide creates a roomy interior but



limits space outside under the awning. The outdoor galley comes with a sink, a refrigerator and an optional grill.

Exterior Length36' 10"
 Exterior Width8'
 Interior Height6' 8"
 Exterior Height11' 6"
 Freshwater Cap52 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap 42/42 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap10 gal.
 UVW, Base7,595 lbs.
 Hitch Weight695 lbs.
 GVWR9,600 lbs.
 MSRP, Base\$39,500

Heartland Recreational Vehicles
 877-262-8032
www.heartlandrvs.com

Highland Ridge Open Range Ultra Lite Ⓢ

The **UT2802BH** stretches nearly 32 feet and offers a bunkhouse floorplan that is becoming increasingly popular for families. A curtained-off bunk room with double-over-double beds stands side by side with the bathroom at the rear of the trailer, and the private master bedroom is up front, separated by a sliding wooden door. An entry door next to the bunk room and a large slideout that holds the sofa and convertible U-shaped dinette allow

for an L-shaped kitchen that creates a wide-open living area. Families with young children and pets will particularly appreciate this spacious room (think Pack 'n Plays and dog crates). An exterior door gives direct access to the bathroom. While some people will love the extra entry to avoid tracked-in dirt, others will not appreciate the bathroom storage that is lost because of it. An exterior compartment door lifts to reveal a small refrigerator, a sink and a two-burner cooktop for easy outdoor meal prep.

Exterior Length31' 9"
 Exterior Width8' 1"
 Interior Height6' 10"
 Exterior Height10' 11"
 Freshwater Cap45 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap 29/58 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap15 gal.
 UVW, Base5,765 lbs.
 Hitch Weight510 lbs.
 GVWR7,450 lbs.
 MSRP, Base\$29,943

Highland Ridge RV
 866-583-7771, www.highlandridgerv.com



Jayco Jay Flight SLX

A small footprint, nimble weight and affordable price make the 21½-foot **174BH** a popular option for those seeking an easy-towing entry-level bunkhouse. There is no slideout, but the layout still manages to feel roomy, tucking twin bunks into the rear alongside the bathroom and placing a large window in the front over the queen-size bed. The kitchen offers plenty of counter space, a microwave and a two-burner cooktop but no oven. The dinette seats two adults comfortably, so families should bring a couple of chairs or plan to eat outside



under the 10-foot awning while at the campground. Other than that, the trailer is ideally suited for a family of four but can accommodate a fifth person, as the dinette converts into an additional bed.

Exterior Length	21' 6"
Exterior Width	7'
Interior Height	6' 1"
Exterior Height	8' 11"
Freshwater Cap	20 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	19.9/19.9 gal.
LP-Gas Cap	5 gal.
UVW, Base	2,945 lbs.
Hitch Weight	280 lbs.
GVWR	3,500 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$13,193

Jayco
574-825-5861, www.jayco.com

Keystone Bullet

At 37½ feet, the **330BHS** is one of the largest lightweight bunkhouses on the market, and Keystone has made the most of that, creating sleeping spaces that truly feel like separate wings. Up front, the master suite has a laundry chute for easily transferring dirty clothes into the pass-through storage area below, and a second door offers direct access to the full bathroom, which also has a door from the living area. The bunk room contains its own half-bath, double-over-double beds, a dresser, double wardrobes and an exterior door so the kids can come and go without messing up the rest of the trailer. A large slideout houses the sofa and dinette, and the entertainment center is nicely positioned for viewing from both. A smaller slide on the opposite side holds the refrigerator, range, microwave and cabinets. The kitchen island has a double sink and more storage space yet still allows plenty of counter space for food prep.



Exterior Length	37' 6"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	6' 6"
Exterior Height	10' 11"
Freshwater Cap	43 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	60/60 gal.
LP-Gas Cap	10 gal.
UVW, Base	6,850 lbs.
Hitch Weight	810 lbs.
GVWR	8,600 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$32,862

Keystone RV
 866-425-4369, www.keystonerv.com

K-Z Connect

The 36-foot-plus **C332BHK** keeps the popular double-over-double bunks with curtains in the rear but moves the bathroom toward the front, creating a more private master suite for the parents. A slideout in the master bedroom allows for more wardrobe and linen storage. The L-shaped kitchen counter makes room for appliances such as coffeemakers and toasters, and

provides a convenient spot by the door for keys, caps and leashes. The entertainment center is placed diagonally against the bunks, and this creates a bit more privacy in the kids' bedding area while offering better TV sight lines from the slideout-housed sofa and U-shaped dinette. The entry side has a 19-foot awning, storage space and an outdoor kitchen with a small fridge, a two-burner cooktop and a sink. With





a base unloaded vehicle weight (uvw) of 7,200 pounds (no options, water or propane) and a GVWR of 8,800 pounds, this trailer may not allow you to pack as much cargo as there is room for, so crunch the numbers on your gear.

Exterior Length36' 8"
 Exterior Width8'
 Interior Height6' 6"
 Exterior Height 10' 11" with A/C
 Freshwater Cap40 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap 32/64 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap 10 gal.
 UVW, Base 7,200 lbs.
 Hitch Weight 950 lbs.
 GVWR 8,800 lbs.
 MSRP, Base \$33,778

K-Z RV
 866-472-5460, www.kz-rv.com

Lance 2185 ➔

The 2185 offers something practically unheard of in the industry: three single bunks in a lightweight trailer that is well under 30 feet. Located in the rear, the bunks fold up for transporting bikes or other big gear. This model has a lot of the desirable features available in larger bunkhouses. For example, it has two exterior doors, one up by the master bedroom and one toward the rear. The bathroom has a good-size shower and a separate sink near the rear entry door. Some people will like being able to brush their teeth when the shower or toilet is occupied, but others may prefer doing so in private. Housed in the single slideout, the huge U-shaped dinette converts to a bed



for two. For those who miss having a couch, the walk-around queen bed can be exchanged for an optional sofa sleeper. The holding tanks are large for a trailer this size, making this a good fit for families looking to boondock.

Exterior Length25' 8"
 Exterior Width8' ¾"
 Interior Height6' 6"
 Exterior Height 10' 2"
 Freshwater Cap45 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap 45/45 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap 10 gal.
 UVW, Base 4,380 lbs.
 Hitch Weight 730 lbs.
 GVWR 6,000 lbs.
 MSRP, Base \$35,481

Lance Camper
 661-949-3322, www.lancecamper.com

Northwood Nash

The **25C** bunkhouse has a similar floorplan to the Lance 2185 but without the third bunk in the rear. Other differences include an extended kitchen counter, a lower price point and 3 more feet in length. As with the Lance, the sink is outside the bathroom, and the master bedroom is closed off from the main living area by a curtain. Again, like the Lance, there are two exterior doors, one toward the front and one toward the rear, and the U-shaped dinette is in a deep slideout and offers plenty of seating room. Note that it may be difficult to see the entertainment center from some of the seats, so keep that



in mind if TV-viewing is a priority. Both the master bedroom and bunk room have designated wardrobes, and the entire bunk and bathroom area can be curtained off for privacy. For camping year-round, the trailer comes with cold-weather insulation, heated and enclosed holding tanks, and optional thermal-pane windows.

Exterior Length	28' 8"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	6' 6"
Exterior Height	11' 6" with A/C
Freshwater Cap	40 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap	35/42 gal.
LP-Gas Cap	14 gal.
UVW, Base	5,145 lbs.
Hitch Weight	555 lbs.
GVWR	8,000 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$29,712

Northwood Manufacturing
800-766-6274, www.northwoodmfg.com

Starcraft Autumn Ridge

Approaching 32 feet, the **289BHS** features one of the more popular bunkhouse floorplans. Curtained-off double-over-double bunks with a convenient ladder are in the rear, and a master bedroom is up front with an optional pocket door. The sofa and U-shaped dinette are housed in a slideout that creates a large, open area. Options are available for ordering a jackknife sleeper sofa or a trifold hide-a-bed to boost the sleeping space. An extending countertop is a nice feature, creating more working space in the kitchen, and the pantry and wardrobe provide ample storage. Outdoor living is enhanced by an 18-foot awning, and an exterior refrigerator keeps cold food and beverages at hand.





Venture RV Sonic Lite 

The **SL169VBH** comes with a convertible Murphy bed, a feature that is growing in popularity for good reason. The pull-down bed allows this 21-foot-plus bunkhouse trailer with no slideout to comfortably sleep a family of four and provide ample living and dining space during the daytime. In the morning, the 60-by-75-inch bed folds up into the trailer wall, converting the space into

Toward the rear, an exterior door offers access to the bathroom, a feature that will be appreciated by some parents but not by others.

Exterior Length31' 9"
 Exterior Width8'
 Interior Height6' 9"
 Exterior Height11' 3" with A/C

Freshwater Cap62.6 gal.
 Black-/Gray-Water Cap 32.5/32.5 gal.
 LP-Gas Cap 15 gal.
 UWW, Base 6,527 lbs.
 Hitch Weight675 lbs.
 GVWR 8,500 lbs.
 MSRP, Base Around \$38,000

Starcraft RV
800-945-4787, www.starcraftrv.com

THE BUZZ ON BUNKHOUSES



a flexible area with a couch, a couple of chairs and a freestanding table. The two bunks in the back stretch across the full width of the trailer, and a rear hatch allows for easy loading of cargo, including bikes, into the bunk area. The full bathroom with a tub is another family-friendly feature, along with ample wardrobe and pantry space for a trailer of this size. With a GVWR of 4,000 pounds, this is one of the lighter bunk models on the market.

Exterior Length	21' 4"
Exterior Width	7' 6"
Interior Height	6' 10"
Exterior Height	9' 5"
Freshwater Cap.	38 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	30/30 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	5 gal.
UVW, Base	2,990 lbs.
Hitch Weight	410 lbs.
GVWR	4,000 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$19,350

Venture RV
888-988-8440, www.venture-rv.com

Winnebago Minnie Plus

The 30½-foot 27BHSS boasts a bunkhouse floorplan, but the real story is its distinctive styling, inside and out. Winnebago has chosen to ignore industry standards and offer bold exterior color options like red, orange, yellow and green. Inside, the layout feels light and airy, thanks to a domed ceiling, light wood decor and neutral fabric choices. The master bedroom features a residential queen-size mattress, a standout feature in the lightweight trailer market. The layout also places the entertainment center directly across from the sleeper sofa and dinette for comfortable viewing. This single-slideout floorplan is similar to the Highland Ridge UT2802BH but without the exterior bathroom door, which gains storage and counter space. An outdoor kitchen and a large 20-foot awning contribute bonus living space.

Exterior Length	30' 7"
Exterior Width	8'
Interior Height	6' 8"
Exterior Height	10' 10"
Freshwater Cap.	50 gal.
Black-/Gray-Water Cap.	28/69 gal.
LP-Gas Cap.	15 gal.
UVW, Base	6,500 lbs.
Hitch Weight	640 lbs.
GVWR	8,800 lbs.
MSRP, Base	\$37,113

Winnebago Industries
574-825-5250, www.winnebagoind.com 