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Women: Don't say you can't drive a big rig. You can!

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By Malia Lane

It bugs me a bit to hear other women say they *couldn't* do what I do - no way could they drive a giant motorhome around the country, especially towing a car. It's not that I can't relate to their fears, but I can also testify they really *can do* what I do if they really want to. Feeling fear doesn't automatically require a full stop. I remember how tiny I felt standing beside motor homes when I was looking for my RV home. I refused to even go inside of a Class A. For the first month I was looking at 24' class C's and wondering how I'd ever drive something that big -- I was intimidated driving vans, for goodness sake!



My rig may be big, but look where he takes me!

But the first time some sneaky salesman got me inside a 36' Class A, I was hooked -- mainly by the humongous windshield that lets me see the sights from a broader perspective than from a truck viewpoint. Once I decided I wanted one, then came getting it and, worse, learning to drive it. I swear, it struck me as almost criminal that they'd give someone as inexperienced as me a license to drive something this big on public streets with no proof at all of my ability other than driving a little car before. Really, shouldn't there be something more required than just dire warnings of "remember the wide turning radius rule?" Oh, yeah, and don't forget you can't stop as fast as you used to. But as scared as I was at first, and even though I warned my neighbors on all sides to watch their mailboxes, I managed to get in and out of my driveway without hitting any. I'd have never guessed then I could become a confident big rig momma.

An RV salesman I came to trust during my hunt told me the reason most people (especially those going fulltime) trade in their RVs is because they bought too small originally. Usually you'll take more of a financial hit by trading up quickly than you would have by buying bigger to begin with.

He also said the other really important thing is a slide -- that ones without them don't do as well on resale. On the forums, some RVers say they just don't trust them and don't think they're worth it because of leaks, mechanical failure, too much weight, whatever. All I know is that in the four years I've been fulltimeing, I've never felt cramped except when I had to have the slides closed when camping alongside the road or in another very temporary spot. In my opinion, those few feet of living space make a huge difference in livability. I don't think I'd ever buy another RV without one and wouldn't even mind having yet another slideout -- those dually living room ones I've seen are really cool.

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I was at the Seattle RV show last weekend and asked a couple of salespeople how it's different selling RVs to single women vs. couples. Glenn said that even with couples, the woman is usually still the decision maker. He said of motor homes, *"If you can get women behind the wheel, 90 percent of the selling is done."*

Debbie said she tells women *"now's not the time to be wimpy about size, ladies"* -- that's always good for a chuckle. She tells women it's *"so empowering to handle something that big so well."* Besides that, the big diesels have much more power, handle better, have a tighter turn ratio, better suspension, and gives a much quieter ride. Who can resist that whole "Mr. Wonderful" package?

I firmly believe that the female navigators of their rigs should learn how to drive them. It's a safety issue, if nothing else. If something happens to the pilot, the co-pilot should be able to take over the wheel and get them both home safely.

On an RV forum recently, one woman was encouraging another on her upcoming "maiden voyage." Her words were true, but also made me laugh at the picture painted of her "first time": *"It's scary the first time you drive these things. I had to keep telling myself...that somebody famous once said, 'It's okay to be scared, as long as you just go out and do it!' I must have said that to myself 20 times the first time. My mouth was dry and I had to chew gum to stop from chewing my lip to pieces. Others suck on a lollipop. I have this vision of roads full of gum smacking lollipop chewing old ladies driving their big rigs! More power to us!"*

So take the wheel by the horns, ladies! It may not always be easy, but believe me; it's worth the effort!

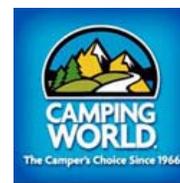
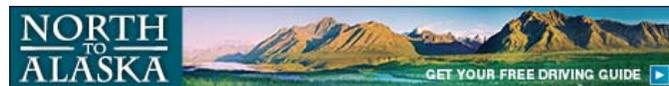
Girl Power



Let's go girls!

Malia Lane has traveled fulltime in her motor home for more than four years. She writes about her travels on her websites [Inspiration's Journey](#) and [Malia's Miles](#).

[Top of Page](#)



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