

2022

NEW MODEL YEAR PREVIEW

By Darian Armer, Lisa Dicksteen, Mike Harbour, Rob Merwin, Ronnie Wendt and the RV PRO team

This year has been like no other, with the lingering effects of a pandemic, supply chain issues, challenges finding able-bodied workers and record demand for RVs.

One might think that, under such circumstances, manufacturers would be tempted to forgo introducing any new units for 2022 and simply focus on building what they were building last year and earlier this year. And yet, that's not what many OEMs have chosen to do.

Read on to learn about all of the new products, new floorplans and product upgrades and updates manufacturers have in store for dealers attending this year's Elkhart Open House Week, scheduled for Monday, Sept. 27, through Thursday, Sept. 30.

THOR INDUSTRIES



It should come as no surprise that THOR Industries has many new models and a plethora of product updates and upgrades to share with dealers during Elkhart Open House Week.

As always, dealers can find THOR's massive exhibit on the grounds of the RV/MH Hall of Fame, 21565 Executive Parkway in Elkhart (not far from the intersection of County Road 17 and County Road 6).

As of early August, THOR executives were still firming up any activities for dealers.

However, company representatives were happy to share some specifics as to what dealers can expect to see when it comes to new products, so be sure to read on for details and insights.

KZ RV

KZ will celebrate its 50-year anniversary at the Open House and has finessed its flagship product – the Sportsmen travel trailer – in honor of this event.

“We’ve changed all product lines, but nothing as big and hardcore as the changes we made to our Sportsmen brands,” says Marlene Snyder, vice president of sales and marketing.

Snyder adds the RV manufacturer looks forward to seeing industry leaders and dealers at the annual event, after the COVID-19 hiatus. She predicts the event will be bigger and busier than ever.

“Everybody has been burning the candle at both ends. I think they are ready for a few days off to see old friends and make new ones,” she says. “We expect a big turnout.”

She mentions the buzz could center on industry supply chain issues but notes that KZ has those conversations daily.

“We keep our dealers very well-informed,” she says. “We tell them why we’re shut down and explain that getting materials is a problem for everyone.”

Supply challenges aside, Snyder predicts a great year ahead.



Celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, KZ will honor that milestone by making some notable changes to its flagship Sportsmen travel trailer, including creating a modern farmhouse interior.



The Durango Gold rear patio model now includes a rear patio door in the back.

“We see no end in sight (for the growth of the industry),” she says. “The cliff could come at any time, but right now we need to build as many RVs as we can.”

In the KZ travel trailers segment, KZ will introduce new floorplans and modern interiors at the Open House, with the biggest change in the company’s Sportsmen brand.

The 50th anniversary package will feature a modern farmhouse interior, with white upper cabinets and dark lower cabinets throughout the coach, and a wood plank ceiling. Product Manager Nick Francis says, “The package also includes a heated, enclosed underbelly, a solar roof prep, and improved air conditioning.”

Meanwhile, the company has consolidated the Sportsmen LE and SE line.

“We eliminated the LE lineup to help dealers turn product,” Francis says. “By shrinking the lineup, we can build units faster. We took features from the LE lineup and moved them into the SE. One of those features was the heated enclosed underbelly, which our dealers were asking for.”

KZ also will introduce a new floorplan in its Escape line. The Escape 18 HATCH builds upon the HATCH lineup introduced in 2020, which added a large rear door that opens vertically and had a screen wall that comes down for open-air camping. KZ’s new floorplan offers a front dinette and adds a convertible L-shaped sofa in the rear.

“Users can move the sofa to the side to load gear like kayaks and bicycles,” he says. “Once you park at a campsite, you can move the sofa to look out the back door.”

KZ also added a single control switch panel to Connect models, adds Francis. The change moves away from standard switches to a nice, push-button switch panel.

“Our new panel just makes things cleaner,” says Francis. “Before we used old-school rocker switches with punch outs.”

The Connect also offers vinyl slide flooring instead of carpet and comes in an off-road package that allows people to go off-grid. “Our dealers are getting feedback that campers want an off-grid package,” Francis says.

The Connect and Sportsmen also received updated solar packages. The Sportsmen offers a 110-watt solar panel, a 30-amp solar

charge controller, and a 1,200-watt inverter that can power all GFI, and 110-volt outlets next to bed.

“That way, if somebody has a C-PAP machine or something, they can power it by their bedside,” Francis says. The Connect solar package delivers 210-watt, roof-mounted solar panels, a 30-amp solar charge controller with a remote panel on the inside, and a 1,200-watt inverter.

Dealers should also expect to see some changes in the KZ fifth wheel lineup.

“We didn’t change anything on the exterior of our KZ fifth wheels – we focused more on the interior,” says KZ General Manager Brent Froman.

He explains that although KZ has offered the modern farmhouse interior for 18 months, the RV maker refined the look on its fifth wheels, coming out with shaker-style cabinetry that offers a unique and contemporary feel.

“It helps us create a warm, cozy elegant feel on the inside,” he says. “We went with wider white glaze cabinets in the kitchen area, with black accents for pantry doors, fascia and other things. We also added a contrasting wood that is grayish brown.”

KZ Durango Gold and Venom luxury fifth wheels also have stainless-steel farmhouse sinks and bigger residential refrigerators.

“We’re offering residential refrigerators in our half-ton series, which is an 18-cubic-foot residential refrigerator,” Froman says. “Our Durango Gold offers a 23-cubic-foot residential refrigerator. The Durango Gold is a full-timers unit. Those owners want all the comforts of home.”

The units also offer smart TVs throughout the coach and outside and have a JVL soundbar with Bluetooth that ties directly to the TVs.

KZ’s new Durango Half Ton, the D274BHD, features a bath-and-a-half, four-bunk bunkhouse with a well-appointed living room slide holding a sofa and a dinette. Its bedroom has a wardrobe slide, and the unit also has a washer and dryer prep area, which Froman says is “unheard of in a half-ton.”

The unit also features an outside kitchen.

The Durango Series used to offer a bath-and-a-half. With the new model year, the series will offer two full baths. The full bath



in the bunkroom now features a shower, toilet, and sink.

“The kids can have their own bathroom,” he says. “They no longer have to use mom and dad’s bathroom to shower.”

In the Durango Gold series, Froman says the company added a dresser slide in the bedrooms to shift some models from three to four slides. The 391 rear kitchen model used to offer four slides.

“It now has a fifth slide,” he says. “We wanted to take a different approach in the bedroom and put the dresser in the slide to make the room larger.”

The Durango Gold rear patio model now includes a rear patio door in the back. “Now, you can sit on your patio when you’re parked at your campsite and enjoy nature,” Froman says.

He adds solar technology also received an upgrade in most units by adding more solar panels and a bigger battery. “If somebody wants to do dry camping or boondocking, they now can do it for an extended period,” he says.