

**WALK-THROUGH:** SPACE CRAFT V-390 FIFTH-WHEEL

# A No-Compromise RV

## Space Craft's Custom Trailers Offer Almost Unlimited Choices

**M**ost travel trailer and fifth-wheel builders offer customers a plethora of choices in floorplans, finishes, sizes and optional gadgetry, but there's usually some aspect of compromise for new owners. Buying a typical RV is analogous in some ways to buying a preexisting home instead of building one to suit your exact specifications.

At the west-central Missouri headquarters of Space Craft Manufactur-

ing, a custom trailer manufacturer that prides itself on an anything-is-possible attitude, the staff thoroughly interviews potential buyers about their road rambling lifestyle, walks them through all the available design and layout choices, discusses potential options and seeks to find out what, exactly, the customers are looking for — whether it be a front-kitchen fifth-wheel with an extra-tall rear master bedroom, an onboard office for conducting business

on the road, a personally designed kitchen or even a 6-foot-long steam shower. Within the confines of weight and price, just about anything is possible within a Space Craft custom trailer.

### Custom-Built Possibilities

Space Craft has been in business for more than 45 years, and got its start building slide-in truck campers and



PHOTOS BY SPACE CRAFT



**(Left)** Space Craft's trailers look and feel truly residential, and are built to owner's exact specifications. **(Right)** Fully ducted, molded fiberglass ceilings add function, durability and style — they're also easier to keep clean.

smaller travel trailers. Today, its diversified product mix includes fifth-wheels, bunkhouses and travel trailers, as well as custom-built semi-trailers and specialty units. With such custom-built possibilities, its trailers attract an unexpected mix of customers: full-time and weekend RVers, circus and carnival workers, contractors and movie production companies.

Beyond the basic floorplan, the customization options of the trailer are virtually infinite and the scope of possible upgrades are too numerous to list completely, but can include additional air-conditioning units, automatic hydraulic leveling jacks, heavy-duty surge protectors, automatic shades, surround sound speakers, built-in vacuum sweepers, dishwashers, king-size beds, solid surface counter tops and dual-pane windows with reflective glass.

Building a custom trailer can be as

hands-on or off as customers wish — the company is accustomed to translating ideas scratched on napkins into detailed blueprints, or guiding customers that do not have a specific design in mind through the process.

After a clear picture of what the customer is looking for in his or her rig has been developed, a plan is drawn up including length, height and the basic layout. Customer input on colors, materials, fabrics and interior details is gathered. Then once the build is finalized, Space Craft quotes the customer a price, a 25 percent deposit is secured, and then it's time to review the cabinet drawings and interior mockups.

When customers have signed off on

dimensions, they can visit Space Craft's office in Concordia, Mo. — an hour east of Kansas City — to browse the full selection of wall and floor coverings, window treatments, cabinetry wood (birch, maple, walnut, cherry and hickory are available) and stains, as well as carpeting, laminate flooring, tile, furniture upholstery and even cabinet pulls.

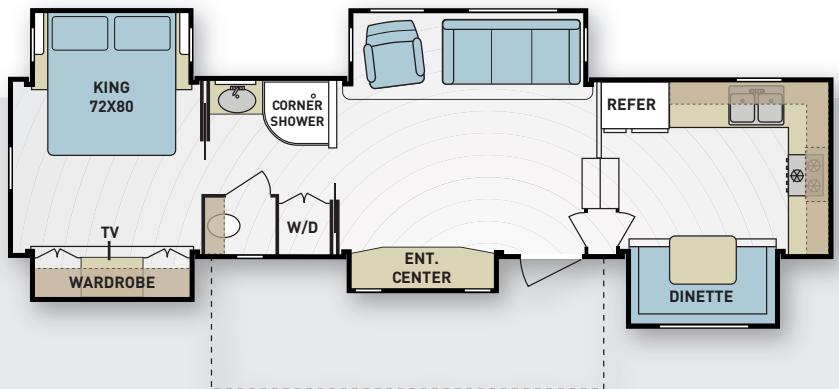
Far-flung customers can choose to see an abbreviated sampling of finishes and materials through the mail, without having to travel to Missouri. And, as company President Marsha Trautman tells us, some customers would rather not wade through a long list of options.

"For most people it is fun, but for some, it gets overwhelming, and that's

## Building a custom trailer can be as hands-on or off as customers wish

### QUICK INFO

Ext. length	39'
Ext. width	8' 5"
Ext. height	13' 2"
Int. height	8' 4"/6' 4" (kitchen)
Freshwater cap	45 gal.
Black-/Gray-water Cap	45 gal. (each)
LP-gas cap	20 gal.
Hitch weight	4,800 lbs.
GVWR	22,500 lbs.
MSRP, as tested	\$145,000



Space Craft Mfg., Inc.: (660) 463-7520, [www.spacecraft.com](http://www.spacecraft.com) Circle 202 on Reader Service Card.

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when I step in," said Trautman. "By this point in the process, I usually know my customer pretty well, and sometimes people say 'don't give me too many choices.'"

Space Craft's catalog isn't the limit, as the company can attempt to get appliances, furniture or something the customer has seen at a home improvement or furniture store. The goal is to create a recreational vehicle as close to residential-grade as possible.

### Hand-Built Quality

Aside from infinite choices, Space Craft's custom-built process also offers RVers several standard features that distinguish its products from mass-produced units, and that, according to the company, offers higher quality, more functionality and comfort for the owners.

The first is molded fiberglass ceilings, which afford owners several benefits, including in-ceiling air ducts which help create easier cleaning on the areas above the stove, shower and near the

cold-air return. This design also allows higher ceilings — a towering 8-foot, 4 inches on standard fifth-wheel models.

Ceiling height, like anything else, is subject to change, as some buyers need a lower height for clearance, while other, taller folks desire higher ceilings — an easy modification for Space Craft.

Front kitchens are also common in its fifth-wheel models, which allow more spacious, rear-located bedrooms that inherently are much taller than the 6-foot, 4-inch ceilings in the front bedrooms of most fifth-wheels.

The trailers are built on custom Space Craft chassis, using laminated aluminum-framed sidewalls and 1 1/2-inch polystyrene insulation. The full-body basement storage is heated, carpeted and lighted. The 39-foot five-slide model pictured here includes 45 gallons of gray- and black-water capacity, a 12-gallon direct-spark-ignition water heater, two 31,000-Btu furnaces and dual 15,000-Btu air conditioner units. Its total dry weight is 18,000



pounds, and all new trailers include a 1-year warranty.

Painted interior walls, sturdy tongue-and-groove sub-flooring and fully insulated slides (and water lines) are other features you can expect to find standard in a typical Space Craft product.

Trailers with personalized designs, upgraded finishes and residential-style conveniences, of course, come at a premium over assembly line-produced vehicles and Space Craft's prices vary



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**(Left)** This demo unit features light finishes for an open feel, yet any wood and tone are available in the custom-build process. **(Right)** If weight allows, trim and cabinetry can be high-density solid wood, which adds to the residential feel.

wildly depending on features, length and the number of slide-outs.

A typical, 34-footer with three slide-outs will be around \$90,000, although a 39-foot demo unit with five slideouts and many extra features like four-point hydraulic leveling, full-body paint, multiple LED TVs and dual-pane windows sells for approximately \$145,000. At the top end, some Space Craft trailers have

been pushed close to \$300,000 with custom add-ons and ultra high-end surfaces and features.

### Taking Delivery

Once the custom trailer is finished, personalized service with a hands-on, two-to three-hour walk-through during which Space Craft personnel explain all the features, functions and maintenance

with clients — and encourages clients to set up the RV and stay for a few days to make sure they're comfortable with the unit is standard-operating-procedure.

For the RVer with high expectations and a budget to match, Space Craft offers a high level of choice and service that comes with a price — one that many of its customers seem to be happy to pay to get exactly what they want. 🚐

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