

“For I heard them say, ‘Let us go to Dothan.’” — Genesis 37:17

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Thursday, June 18, 2026

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Economic woes hit RV industry



CARLO ALLEGRI, REUTERS

People look at an RV for sale at a dealership in Dover, Fla., on June 20, 2019.

Gas prices, interest rates, inflation curb big purchases

TIMOTHY AEPPEL
Reuters

Coley Brady in late March cut production from five days a week to four on most of the assembly lines at his sprawling complex of five recreational vehicle factories in Elkhart, Indiana, after it became apparent spring sales were fizzling.

The U.S.-Israeli war on Iran was barely a month old at the time, but the disruptions it caused to global energy markets had already sent American gasoline and diesel fuel prices up by 33% and 43%, respectively.

“Clearly the war and higher gas prices are the easiest things to point to,” said Brady, co-founder of Alliance RV, which makes high-end fifth-wheel trailers and motorhomes.

The RV industry — which produces more than 80% of the rigs sold in the U.S. in northern Indiana — can often signal the direction of the nation’s economy. Inflation-adjusted consumer outlays on recreational goods and vehicles fell in April for a fifth straight month, according to Commerce Department data, the longest slump in real spending on the category since the height of the Great Recession in 2008.

RVs are expensive discretionary purchases easily put off when uncertainty grows over the economic outlook. U.S. consumer sentiment fell to a record low in May before picking up slightly in early June, according to the University of Michigan’s Surveys of Consumers, and inflation running at its hottest in three years continues to pick away at household budgets. It

doesn’t help that interest rates remain elevated. Most consumers finance purchases of RVs and the average rate on those loans is 7.53%, according to LendingTree.

Jeff Hirsch, CEO of Campers Inn, which runs a network of 50 RV dealerships in 22 states, said more-affluent baby boomers are still buying, but many other more cost-conscious consumers “just don’t feel this is the right time to make an investment.”

Sales of RVs usually perk up in the spring, as consumers plan summer outings to national parks and other far-flung attractions. But a key metric — registrations of RVs by consumers — has been on the decline since last summer, according to

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Public invited to grand opening of Forever Wild Dog Park

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A dog park on the west side of Dothan will celebrate its grand opening on Wednesday, and the public is invited.

The Forever Wild Dog Park at 384 Narcisse Drive grand opening and ribbon cutting is at 9 a.m., said Dothan Leisure Services Department Director Billy Powell.

“Seeing the Forever Wild Dog Park become a reality is incredibly rewarding,” said Dothan City Commissioner Gantt Pierce. “This project began with

community interest and became possible through the support of residents, city leaders, staff and our partners at Forever Wild.

“I’m proud to have helped bring it to life and look forward to seeing people and their pets enjoy it for years to come,” Pierce added.

The new dog park provides a dedicated space for dogs to exercise, play and socialize while offering owners a place to



Powell



Pierce

enjoy the outdoors, said Powell. “The project was made possible through a partnership between the City of Dothan and the Alabama Forever Wild Land Trust, with both organizations working together to create a recreational amenity that complements the property’s conservation mission.

“Forever Wild Dog Park gives residents

another place to enjoy the outdoors with their pets while helping us meet the recreational needs of our growing community,” Powell said. “We are thankful for the opportunity to provide dog owners with another dog park on the west side of town to complement the dog park at Eastgate Park.”

For more information about Dothan Leisure Services programs and facilities, call 334-615-3700, visit www.dothan-leisureservices.org or Like and Follow Dothan Leisure Services Facebook and Instagram.

Weather
Tropical rainstorm; humid
High: 80 Low: 74
Forecast: A8

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