

Scout troop travels in style in a Prevost

Boca Raton, Florida, September 28, 2007—Gulf Stream Council Troop 356 in Boca Raton, Florida, really lives up to the Boy Scout motto: Be Prepared. They're probably one of the only BSA troops to have its own motorcoach, a used Prevost Le Mirage XL. If you're wondering "since when did Boy Scouts travel in top-of-the-line motorcoaches?" Troop 356 has a wonderful story to tell.

Troop 356, a charter partner of Spanish River Church in Boca Raton, has grown tremendously over the last two years. Today it has over 50 members, about three times the size of the average troop of 12–18 year olds. Almost 40 adults are involved, too, including Scoutmaster Tom Ehrbar and 10 assistant scoutmasters, like Doug Paton. Ehrbar and Paton are enthusiastic, can-do guys with almost a quarter century of combined scouting experience plus a love of anything with wheels—including Prevost coaches.

Troop 356 travels up to 12,000 miles in a typical year, Ehrbar says, and spends over 40 nights camping. As an example this summer, there was a big trip to Montana, summer camp in Asheville, NC, and lots of weekend outings in Florida.

When the troop population soared, its leaders realized that hitting the road with over 60 people—whether for camping, hiking, backpacking trips, or council events—promised logistical nightmares not even scouts could handle. It's not easy coordinating 10 to 15 vehicles and drivers per trip, and hauling gear in a separate trailer. Many scout troops travel via rented school buses. But Ehrbar and Paton had grander ideas: Why not *buy* a bus? Better yet, why not buy a Prevost?

They reviewed finances and fundraising with the troop, then spoke to Prevost's representative only to conclude that a used coach would be kinder to their budget. With Paton leading the effort, they quickly became known to bus brokers up and down the east coast as "the Boy Scouts looking for a bus." They were offered any number of used buses, but these two self-avowed motorheads were determined to find a used Prevost. It took a bit of creativity, and in true Boy Scout fashion their perseverance paid off. Six months after the search began, they spoke with an operator of a large Prevost fleet who then decided to sell them one of his vehicles.

The good fortune continued the first time Troop 356 took its new pride and joy to a council event. Their arrival attracted the attention of an area fleet operator, who now provides their mechanical support and maintenance.

The Prevost has proven an ideal pack member. When asked what they like most besides its logistical practicality, Ehrbar is quick with a list: its safety features, air systems, the roominess, since hauling a typical group of scouts can require a lot of clothing and equipment. The on-board bathroom! And the DVD system is great not only for entertainment but also for showing training or other scout-related presentations.

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Owning the Prevost has enriched the troop in other ways, Ehrbar points out. Traveling with all the scouts in one vehicle fosters camaraderie. Typically the group's senior leaders use time on the road to confer among themselves, then circulate among fellow scouts to share information. The boys themselves help set the troop's travel schedule and are in charge of loading equipment on every trip. They also clean the bus monthly and after every outing. And their involvement has led some of the older boys to become interested in things like budgeting, maintenance, and engines.

Troop 356 is clearly proud of its wheels, which give it a special visibility on the road. With the back and sides of the coach proclaiming "Boy Scout Troop 356 – Strong Values, Strong Leaders," this is one group that's really going places.

About Prevost

Prevost is a leading North American manufacturer of premium intercity touring coaches and the undisputed world leader in the production of bus shells for high-end motorhome and specialty conversion. Prevost Car Inc. is owned by Volvo Bus Corporation, which gives it access to the financial strength, product development capabilities, and quality manufacturing technology of the world's second largest motorcoach and transit bus manufacturing group. Volvo Bus Corporation is part of the Volvo Group, the world's largest manufacturer of heavy-duty diesel engines. Prevost has its main manufacturing facilities in Sainte-Claire, Quebec, Canada. Prevost also has six Parts and Service Centers located strategically in Canada and the United States.

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