SOFTWARE & TECH

1987 Allegro Motorhome

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Introduction: A Classic on the Road – The 1987 Allegro Motorhome

In the golden era of recreational vehicles, the 1980s produced a number of memorable motorhomes, but few have maintained the loyal following of the **1987 Allegro Motorhome**. Built by Tiffin Motorhomes, the Allegro line became synonymous with reliable construction, comfortable interiors, and a driving experience that appealed to both weekend adventurers and full-time travelers. The 1987 model year represents a sweet spot in the company's history—a time when Tiffin had refined its production process but still retained the handcrafted quality that made earlier Allegros so sought after. Whether you are a vintage RV enthusiast, a first-time buyer looking for a budget-friendly classic, or simply curious about a piece of automotive history, the 1987 Allegro Motorhome offers a compelling story of durability, design, and the open road.

Over the years, this motorhome has become a favorite among collectors because of its steel frame construction, a feature that set it apart from many competitors that relied on wood structures. The 1987 Allegro Motorhome also benefited from a series of thoughtful innovations, including aerodynamic styling, efficient floor plans, and a robust powertrain. In this article, we will explore every facet of this classic RV—from its mechanical foundation to the interior amenities, from common purchasing considerations to restoration ideas. By the end, you will understand why the 1987 Allegro Motorhome remains a beloved choice for those who value longevity and character over flashy modern features.

Overview of the 1987 Allegro Motorhome

Before diving into specifics, it helps to place this model within the broader context of the RV industry in the mid-1980s. Tiffin Motorhomes, founded by Bob Tiffin in 1972, had earned a reputation for building motorhomes that were both affordable and dependable. The Allegro series, first introduced in the late 1970s, quickly became the company's flagship. By 1987, the Allegro lineup included several models ranging from 28 to 34 feet in length. The 1987 Allegro Motorhome typically rode on a Chevrolet P30 chassis, a heavy-duty platform that was widely used by other manufacturers as well. This chassis choice meant parts were readily available and the driving dynamics were well understood by mechanics across the country.

One of the defining characteristics of the 1987 Allegro Motorhome is its all-aluminum exterior skin over a steel cage. While many RVs of the era were wood-framed, the steel construction greatly reduced the risk of water damage and rot—a common problem in older motorhomes. This durability is a major reason why so many 1987 Allegros are still on the road today. Owners often remark that the coach feels solid, with fewer squeaks and rattles than comparable wood-framed units. Additionally, the fiberglass front cap and molded rear cap gave the Allegro a clean, modern look for its time, with a sloping hood that improved fuel efficiency compared to the boxy designs of earlier decades.

Design and Layout Options

The 1987 Allegro Motorhome was offered in multiple floor plans to suit different travel styles. The most common configurations included a rear kitchen, a side bath, and either a queen or twin bed arrangement. One popular layout was the “28B” model, which featured a dinette slide-out that expanded the living space—a rare luxury in the mid-1980s. Another sought-after floor plan was the “34” model, which offered a separate bedroom with a door, providing privacy for extended trips. Despite its length, the 34-foot version was maneuverable thanks to the Chevrolet chassis’s tight turning radius.

Inside, the 1987 Allegro Motorhome provided a warm, residential feel. The cabinetry was constructed from oak veneer, and the countertops were laminate in earth-tone colors typical of the decade. Most units came with a three-burner range, a combination microwave and convection oven, and a large double-door refrigerator that ran on either propane or electricity. The bathrooms were compact but functional, featuring a shower, toilet, and sink. One detail that owners appreciate is the attention to storage: overhead cabinets, wardrobe closets, and under-bed compartments were generous by 1980s standards. The overall layout prioritized comfort and practicality, making the 1987 Allegro Motorhome a comfortable home away from home.

Interior Features and Amenities

When it was new, the 1987 Allegro Motorhome was considered well-equipped. Standard features included a rooftop air conditioner (typically a 13,500 BTU unit), a forced-air furnace with a thermostat, and a water heater with both electric and propane modes. The electrical system consisted of a 50-amp service with a converter that charged the house batteries while plugged into shore power. Many units also came with a generator, often an Onan 4.0 kW model that could power all appliances while boondocking. Entertainingly, the Allegro came with a stereo system and a TV antenna booster, though the television itself was usually a small CRT set that owners have since upgraded to modern flatscreens.

One notable aspect of the 1987 Allegro Motorhome is the insulation package. The steel frame and aluminum skin were combined with block foam insulation in the walls and ceiling, which made the coach more comfortable in extreme weather compared to many fiberglass-only RVs. This insulation also helped reduce road noise, something that early reviewers praised. For long-term travel, the fresh water tank held 40 gallons, the gray and black tanks each held 30 gallons, and the propane tank capacity was typically 14 gallons. These specifications mean the 1987 Allegro Motorhome can be used for boondocking, although careful management of water and propane is needed for extended off-grid stays.

Mechanical Specifications and Performance

Under the hood, the 1987 Allegro Motorhome was equipped with Chevrolet’s 454 cubic inch (7.4 liter) V8 engine, which produced around 230 horsepower and 360 lb-ft of torque. This engine was paired with a three-speed automatic transmission, the Turbo-Hydramatic 400 (TH400), renowned for its reliability. While the powertrain is not exactly nimble by modern standards—0 to 60 mph takes about 20 seconds—it delivers steady, consistent power for cruising at highway speeds (typically 55–65 mph). The engine is fuel-injected on later models, but the 1987 version used a carburetor, which can require more frequent maintenance but is simpler for DIY owners to work on.

The chassis featured independent front suspension with coil springs, and the rear used leaf springs with a solid axle. Braking was handled by front disc brakes and rear drums, which are adequate for the weight (approximately 12,000 to 14,000 pounds GVWR, depending on the model). Many owners upgrade to newer braking components, such as upgraded brake pads or a hydroboost system, to improve stopping power. The fuel tank capacity was around 40 gallons, giving a range of about 200–250 miles per fill-up, depending on driving conditions and load. For its time, the 1987 Allegro Motorhome offered respectable handling and ride comfort, especially when compared to other Class A motorhomes of the same era.

Popular Models in the 1987 Allegro Lineup

While Tiffin produced several variations, three models stand out among enthusiasts: the 28-foot “Cruiser”, the

30-foot “Wide Body”, and the 34-foot “Chaparral”. The 28-foot Cruiser was the entry-level option, featuring a rear bed and a dinette slide. It was ideal for couples or small families who wanted a light, easy-to-handle motorhome. The 30-foot Wide Body offered extra interior width (102 inches instead of the standard 96 inches), providing a more spacious living area. This was a very popular configuration because it allowed for a larger kitchen and bathroom. The 34-foot Chaparral was the top-of-the-line model, often equipped with enhancements like a built-in entertainment center, larger refrigerator, and power slide-out for the sofa. Among collectors, the 34-foot Chaparral is considered the most desirable 1987 Allegro Motorhome due to its premium features and roominess.

All models shared the same drivetrain and chassis, so the choice came down to length, floor plan preferences, and budget. Notably, the 1987 model year saw the introduction of Tiffin’s “Solid Structure” warranty, which covered the steel frame for 5 years—a testament to the company’s confidence in its construction. This warranty, combined with the reliability of the Chevrolet chassis, contributed to the Allegro’s reputation as a low-maintenance classic RV.

Buying a Used 1987 Allegro Motorhome

For those considering purchasing a 1987 Allegro Motorhome today, there are several important factors to evaluate. The first is the condition of the roof. The original rubber roof (typically EPDM) can develop cracks and leaks after 30+ years. A well-maintained unit will have either a replaced roof or a history of regular sealant maintenance. The second critical area is water damage. Despite the steel frame, water can still infiltrate through windows, vents, and seams, leading to delamination of the aluminum skin or rot in the subfloor. Prospective buyers should thoroughly inspect the exterior for soft spots, discoloration, or bubbling. A moisture meter can be helpful in assessing delamination.

Mechanical condition is equally important. The engine and transmission are robust, but the carburetor, fuel system, and brake components may need rebuilding. Look for service records that show regular oil changes, coolant flushes, and transmission fluid changes. Tires should be no more than 6 years old, regardless of tread depth—a crucial safety point for any motorhome. Also check the generator operation, all appliance functions, and the condition of the plumbing system. With careful inspection, you can find a well-preserved 1987 Allegro Motorhome for between \$8,000 and \$20,000, depending on location and condition. Prices have been rising in recent years as interest in vintage RVs grows, so now is a good time to invest if you are handy and patient.

Restoration and Upgrades for a 1987 Allegro Motorhome

Many owners choose to restore or upgrade their 1987 Allegro Motorhome to bring it closer to modern standards. Common upgrades include replacing the original vinyl flooring with luxury vinyl planks, swapping the laminate countertops for solid surface materials, and installing a lithium battery system for better off-grid capability. The wood cabinetry can be refinished or painted, and new LED lighting dramatically improves the interior ambiance. For the tech-savvy traveler, adding a solar panel system (200–400 watts) and a modern inverter can make the Allegro more independent from shore power. The old CRT TV can be replaced with a lightweight flat screen mounted on an articulating arm. Some owners also upgrade the chassis with aftermarket sway bars and steering stabilizers to improve handling on the highway.

Engine and drivetrain upgrades are also possible. Installing a Holley Sniper fuel injection system can replace the temperamental carburetor, offering better fuel economy, easier cold starts, and improved drivability. The transmission can be rebuilt with overdrive gears (like a GearVendors unit) to reduce engine RPMs at highway speeds. These modifications can extend the life of the 1987 Allegro Motorhome by decades, making it a viable long-term home or travel vehicle. Given the steel frame construction, the underlying bones remain excellent, so restoration is often a worthwhile investment.

Conclusion: Enduring Appeal of the 1987 Allegro Motorhome

In a world of mass-produced, disposable RVs, the 1987 Allegro Motorhome represents a different philosophy:

build it tough, design it smart, and let the owners enjoy it for years. Its steel frame construction, comfortable floor plans, and dependable Chevrolet powertrain have ensured that many of these motorhomes are still traversing highways today. Whether you chance upon one at a vintage RV show, buy one as a project, or inherit a family rig, the 1987 Allegro Motorhome offers a tangible link to an era when RVing was about simplicity and adventure. With proper care and selective upgrades, this classic coach can provide many more miles of memories. For those who appreciate craftsmanship and character over fancy electronics, the 1987 Allegro Motorhome remains a wise and rewarding choice for exploring the open road.

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