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Popular among boat owners, Infinity’s specialized vinyl floor covering is making strides in the RV industry. It looks stylish, cleans easily, resists fading and stands up to heavy use.

Nice flooring can make or break the decor aesthetics in any RV. In the past few years, tile and faux-wood floors have pretty much displaced traditional carpet fabrics and patterns, and for good reasons. Carpeting may feel good on our feet, but the reality of living in a home with limited square footage and materials that might not meet residential quality standards frequently leads to soiling that may not clean easily, as well as early signs of wear. Compound the effort — and labor costs — to maneuver around slideouts when it comes time to replace the carpeting, and it only makes sense that alternatives have become so popular.

The flooring of choice these days is overwhelmingly hard surfaces, but a company that specializes in marine-trade decor, Infinity Luxury Woven Vinyl, has introduced a unique product to the RV industry that transforms floors into a look that rivals expensive yachts and extravagant homes.

As the name suggests, the product is made of vinyl and constructed in such a way as to provide long-term durability in high-traffic areas. The material is 100 percent recyclable and Certified Green, but that will probably be a moot point for most RV owners, since the flooring is guaranteed to perform without failure for 10 years.

What caught our attention is the material’s inherent resistance to elements that typically soil carpet in an RV, especially if the owners are social and entertain frequently or have pets. Without question, hard-surface flooring is easy to clean up, but Luxury Woven Vinyl (LWV) provides close to the same convenience, without having to drag out a mop or carpet cleaner, and offers a softer, warmer surface that is comfortable on your feet.

Infinity’s LWV repels fuel, grease, motor oil, spills [think red wine] and pet stains. It is designed not to fade and is virtually unaffected by ultraviolet rays and sun exposure. Another key feature is its antimicrobial properties that resist mold and mildew, which can be problematic in RVs that are stored — or even used — in areas with high heat and humidity. Bacteria will not grow in the vinyl, so there’s little chance for unwanted odors.

For these very reasons, LWV has become popular among boat owners, and the vinyl flooring is also used in the aviation industry and other high-traffic commercial areas like fitness centers, restaurants and retail stores. Airstream now uses LWV, and a number of other RV manufacturers are looking at the product’s feasibility.

Beyond the fact that LWV has a clean look and lies nicely on any floor, we were enamored by the simplicity...
of the cleanup. We’ve ruined plenty of carpet over the years, and being pet-friendly RVers, the inevitable stains required constant attention. We found LWV easy to clean with common household products, especially those with oxy formulations, and really liked the way Roadmaster Voom RV Cleaner worked for most stains. Heavy stains, like tracked-in grease, can be removed with acetone or even carburetor cleaner, although expect the chemical odor to linger for a while.

To test the practicality of replacing existing carpet, we chose a rig with carpet in the slideout, under a free-standing table, four chairs and dual theater seating. This provided a good sampling of what an installer would face in the real world. Dealing with the slideout is usually a tough assignment for any installer, and frankly, the part of any RV installation dreaded by those who specialize in laying floor covering. The level of difficulty is always compounded when the slideout is not removed before the project; removing the slideout should be done only by trained technicians and will lift the labor costs substantially. Our installation was completed by Advanced Canvas in Oxnard, California, experts in marine and automotive interior renovation.

Similar to choosing flooring for a stationary home, the process for finding the right LWV for your RV requires patience. There are 17 collections and 160 colors to choose from, and you’ll likely have to rely on viewing the sample images on the company’s website. We spent hours combing the collections online and settled on what we thought was a good match for the test RV. In the end, the material turned out to be too light and somewhat different from the online image. It’s obviously better to view the collections in a live showroom, but until the flooring becomes more commonplace in the market, that might be difficult. To eliminate surprises, it’s best to request swatches from the local RV or marine dealer, or an upholstery or canvas shop that carries the Infinity line.

LWV comes in 8½- and 10-foot widths and two cushion-backing thicknesses. The thinner backing works best around corners and where sharp bends are necessary; it also may be best for use under the leading edge of the slideout. For our installation, measurements were sent to the company, which figured out the final cut size, but that process might be better left to professional carpet people who understand exactly what it takes to cover any given area.

Once the original carpet was removed — which took some finesse to keep key sections intact so they could be used as a pattern — the area was prepped for the new LWV. Overall, the installation went without many hiccups, although it turned out to be more time-consuming than projected. The section of vinyl that was tucked under the slideout was installed first, using staples, and then the main floor was stapled in place. Judicious use of staples that were concealed by the furniture allowed the vinyl to lay flat and smooth.

Wood-edge trim was used to finish the installation, which turned out better than expected. The leading edges of the vinyl were trimmed with a fabric binding, which wound up being too light and picked up dirt almost immediately. In retrospect, a darker binding should have been used, and a darker-style LWV would have been even better. A matching “throw rug” was cut to match the vinyl in the slideout, which really enhanced the look in the living room. However, since LWV is virtually indestructible, it can also be used as a patio mat, which will move the aesthetics up a notch.

After living with LWV for more than a month, we found the material comfortable to walk on and pleasant to look at. Beyond the enhancement to the interior decor, we really liked how easily the dining chairs moved around, and although indentations were created by the legs, they went away quickly once the weight was taken off the chairs.

LWV is not inexpensive and sells for from $6 to $12 a square foot, depending on the collection. Installation labor must be added into the price structure. Since the vinyl is self-contained, it requires no additional padding.

Here’s how the carpet teardown and installation of Infinity’s Luxury Woven Vinyl went in the test RV.

1) The process starts by unscrewing and removing the theater chairs and dining table in the slideout area. 2) It took a few minutes to figure out how the original carpet was attached to the floor. Scissors were then used to make the first cuts. 3) A flat-blade screwdriver was used to free the corners to give the installer a good grip for pulling out the carpet. 4) Commercial-grade scissors made it easy to cut around a good portion of the carpet.
5) After the cuts were made, a razor knife was needed to free the carpet at the walls. 6) A power cutting tool was used to free sections of the carpet, which saved the installer’s back and hands — and quite a bit of time. 7) Extra care was taken in removing the carpet without damaging the wood slideout structure at the transition points. 8, 9, 10) As an experienced installer in the marine trade, the technician strategically marked the old carpet so it could be used as a template when cutting the new LWV. Locations were also marked for the screws used to secure the furniture, especially since repositioning was critical to accommodate the clearance between the table and island galley counter when the slide is retracted.

11) Once the carpet was completely free and marked, it was rolled up carefully for transporting to the Advanced Canvas shop where the LWV was cut. 12) LWV comes in rolls that are 8½- or 10-feet wide. For the test installation, 10-foot sections were cut, after the area was carefully measured. This is where the installer’s expertise can make a big difference in ordering the proper amount of LWV with limited waste and additional expense. 13) Once the carpet was removed, the old staples were pulled, and any ends that broke off were hammered flat. This is an important step to prevent any sharp protrusions through the new flooring. 14) The carpet was installed by the RV manufacturer before the slideout was mounted; to prevent a labor-intensive project, the exposed carpet when the slideout was extended was carefully cut away. 15) Removing the carpet from the main floor is a painstaking task, requiring a great amount of finesse to maintain the integrity of the section so it can be used as a template. 16) Hanging fibers must be removed from under the lip of the slideout to make room for the LWV and prevent binding.
17) Expect to collect a lot of these fibers during the process. 18) After cutting the LWV to match the templates and sewing on the edge binding, the first step was to install the vinyl on the main floor. 19) The material was carefully trimmed for placement under the slideout. This is a one-shot process; overcutting will require starting over. 20) Location markings were made to ensure placement accuracy and 21) the LWV was first stapled to the floor. 22) The contours of the LWV were carefully cut in around the corners of the slideout using scissors.

23) A water-based glue was applied to sandwich the two pieces of vinyl needed to fill the gap under the slideout. Using water-based glue eliminated any chemical odors inside the RV. 24) The edges were then tucked in between the slideout and main floor. Once completed, the LWV was neatly stapled to the main floor with no signs of buckling. 25) Cutting the LWV from a template made the section fit like a glove. 26) The edges were neatly tucked in along the walls and 27) any excess material was carefully trimmed for a perfect fit. This is another area where experience counts; making wrong cuts can be costly and create long delays. 28) A staple gun was used to attach the LWV to the slideout floor. It’s important to use the right staples to prevent unsightly distractions in the final look.
29) Wood edging was used to enhance the look of the LWV. This is not a necessary step, since the vinyl can be cut and the ends will not unravel, but it makes for a much more finished look — and compensates for walls that are not perfectly straight. 30) It took a little doing to find edging that would match the overall look of the RV, but the material was located at a local store that specializes in home-remodeling supplies. The edging is difficult to find in RV stores. 31, 32, 33, 34) The hardest part of fitting the LWV to the slideout floor was cutting in the material around the wide moldings that frame the room. This took quite a bit of time and careful cutting. Again, a wrong cut here can send the installer back to the shop.

35) With the furniture back in place in the extended slideout, it was time to step back and enjoy the finished product. The LWV adds a handsome — and much more luxurious — look to the interior and is light years more attractive than the original carpet. The “throw rug” with sewn-on bindings is a nice complement to the installation. 36) Roadmaster Voom RV Cleaner, available from Camping World and other RV dealers, worked the best when removing stains from the light-color LWV. 37) A simple application of the all-purpose Voom and wiping with a microfiber towel restored the look of the LWV; the light-color binding was harder to clean, but much of the dirt came out. 38) The vinyl material is very flexible and has a cushioned backing that is available in two sizes to accommodate installation requirements. Infinity Fabrics
706-529-2241, www.infinitylwv.com