

INTERNATIONAL RALLY REPORT



Festive rally flags are flown on most Airstreams at the rally, including national, state, region, unit and anything else you feel the allegiance to, including sports teams!

What is there not to love about an Airstream International Rally? It's something you really have to do at least once in your Airstream life! There is great pleasure and satisfaction in checking out all those hundreds of owners who have made the same commitment about camping lifestyle. Traveling with your club or friends in convoy to the rally has the benefit of being grouped together at the rally and sharing the events onsite and tours in the area. If you have traveled on any past WBCCI caravans, you can easily connect with friends and plan reunions. If you are considering a future caravan, the leaders can be found

in the welcome area with photo albums and information about their trips. Check the schedule of events, regional get-togethers, local tours of the region, sign up for skill building sessions, partake in knowledge sharing, or just come and watch the pageantry. Most importantly embrace this unique gathering and have fun!

Getting there is half the fun! Salem Oregon is an awfully long stretch from Virginia, however our Airstream was already in San Francisco, so we planned a leisurely expedition up the northern California coast amongst the Redwoods and right on the coast in several stunning state parks in Oregon.

Register early for the International rally if you want utility hookups. You can arrive onsite within a wide window and stay for as long as ten days for the same fee. If you want to park near friends or in a group, make sure you arrive in the bull-pen together. We joined up with the LandMarks West caravan led by Phil Glassey and Margie Cunningham a day ahead on the Columbia River so that we could convoy together to Salem and be located in proximity to friends from past caravans. There is plenty to be in awe of observing the International rally organization, placing nearly 700 Airstreams, including ten from Virginia, into one of the 12 camp site locations, managing those arrivals over 5 days, supplying power and water, and providing a mid-week pump-out. Unfortunately Salem was suffering from a huge algae bloom, which made the water unhealthy to drink or even use in your tanks. Even Starbucks was not serving coffee!



Aerial shot of the Salem International Rally at the Oregon State Fairground, Salem, Oregon.

If you are new or coming alone, volunteering at the International Rally is a fun way to meet new friends. You don't have to know much about the committee to help, and if you see something that interests you, contact the committee chair. Some volunteer jobs may get you onsite early and get you a preferential location! One of many easy volunteer jobs is driving the shuttle between the Airstream park locations and the venue halls allowing you to meet lots of Airstreamers! Other opportunities include playing in the band or singing in the choir, helping out at the club store or at member services welcome center, parking planning and mark up, being a presentation helper or working in the signage shop.

A quick scan of the daily events on the five main days of the rally lists over a hundred sessions, events, meetings, presentations, technical seminars, round table discussions, and activities. With as many as ten parallel tracks running each day, making a choice is tough and often we split up to cover different tracks. On the positive side, many of the sessions publish their presentations online so you can later download the material you missed. Some of the



Learn How to Fly Drones seminar in the fairground. Unfortunately, most national and state parks ban the flight of drones which is a major disappointment to those of us who are photographers.

sessions we enjoyed were spouse caravanning skills, diesel engine care, living the full-time Airstream life, cooking on the road, smart phone apps for travelers, flying drones, future caravan meetings, vendor presentations for Airstream improvements and for electronics & communications, amateur radio exam review and exam – which I successfully passed to get my general ticket!

The rally week is of course a major platform for Airstream to present their latest designs and models to an already convinced audience, very much aware that folks will eventually be upgrading. Most of us are very comfortable with our Airstreams, but new features such as continuous hot water, combined inverter and shore power outlets, power awnings, multi-stage converters, improved electronic and electrical systems along with new smaller Basecamp and Sports models can be very convincing. To add icing to the cake, a local Oregonian outfit *Ultimate Airstream* brought in several conversions to show you how to turn your average camper into a customized luxury, high level Airstream. Prepare to open your checkbook and possibly take out a major loan! *Ultimate* offered lounge modifications with some 50 upholstery choices, Corian counter conversions, additional drawer and cabinet installations, washer / dryer / dishwasher installs, twin bed conversions, second entrance doors, recliner conversions, you name it – they can do it! Checkout ultimateairstreams.com.

Wally Byam loved to travel and organized Airstream caravans all over the world. In the early 1960s he organized an Around the World Caravan that followed the



Wally & Stella Byam's #1 Airstream was one of the four rigs at Salem that made the Around-the-World Caravan in 1963-64.

fascinated with the idea that they documented the journey and produced a television mini-series featuring the spooky voice of Vincent Price. Four of the 47 trailers from that caravan were on display during the rally at the Oregon State Fairgrounds, including the original #1

Airstream belonging to Wally Byam. We sat down with Christine Charles Ramos, daughter of Andy Charles a former President of Airstream, who traveled as a teenager on the 1963-64 Around the World Caravan. She showed us her photo albums and described the amazing journey – unfortunately not a journey one could replicate in today's world.

One of the joys of the International is checking out WBCCI caravans. Part of the welcome center is devoted



Each WBCCI Caravan has its own unique sticker with which owners proudly decorate the rear window. Along with more stickers from special places they visited the rear window can become pretty cluttered!

to a dozen or more booths staffed by caravan leaders. Answering your many questions, checking out the photo albums of past caravans and future itineraries is fun. Signing up is even better! One thing we can recommend is signing up as soon as you have an inkling that you want to take part. Most caravans are booked up well ahead with lots of folks on standby, even some two or three years ahead. We are joining the Alaska caravan this year, and it only runs every other year. We have been on the list since 2016. Similarly, we made a reservation in 2016 for the Cajun Country Caravan and will be joining that caravan in March 2019. We have also reserved for Vikings 2019 and Route 61 in 2020, so it's necessary to think and plan ahead. The main aspect to remember is you can always drop off the list without penalty if you change your mind up to the point that a deposit is needed, but you certainly can't jump on to the list at short notice. Our very first caravan, South West Adventure in 2016, had sufficient members present at Salem to organize a reunion on the Willamette Queen for a dinner cruise. Great to catch up with some 20 past travelers, some we see on a regular basis as our vagabond paths cross. On our last day the Alaska 2018 leaders organized a session to pick up our drivers' manuals, the Alaskan Highway Milepost Guide book, and answer tons of questions from the 20 Airstream couples present. That gives us 2 weeks to digest a lot of information and prepare for our adventure.

Every WBCCI region holds a meeting or hosts a gathering, and, in the case of Region 3, we had a lunch hosted by Region President John Frerking. The highlight

of the luncheon was John honoring the years of service by Junior and Betty Patton who were in charge of the Galax Virginia Oldtime Fiddler's Convention Rally for years. They hosted this rally and faithfully served as its ambassadors. They had a historical display with lots of pictures of the Rally, welcomed all who came, prepared a watermelon get together and party on the Blue Ridge Parkway, introduced and showed everyone the unique Galax clover, brought the Junior Appalachian Musicians in to play for the rally, brought everyone to see the house and museum and interpreted the whole event. We joined Unit 109 President, Randy Rinehart and his wife Xan, and the Pattons to represent our unit. Randy Rinehart, president of unit 109, commented during the regional lunch, "It's always exciting getting together with folks who have a strong common interest and who enjoy sharing their experiences. There is so much great Airstream information to share and exchange! I'm also encouraged with the info I have gathered for hosting next summer's WBCCI International at Doswell, Virginia. We can help develop a practical plan for volunteers and showcase our splendid heritage and amazing sights and activities!"



Region 3 Luncheon at Salem. Representing Unit 109 from L to R: Randy Rinehart, Junior Patton, Xan Rinehart, Betty Patton, David and Margaret Broad.

At Salem, there was much to enjoy including on-site entertainment featuring bands Kathy Boyd and Phoenix Rising, Johnny Limbo and the Lugnuts, Patrick Henry singer songwriter and Patrick Lamb and the Hit Factory. Further afield tours were organized to Portland Forest Park, the Chinese Park, Mt. Hood, the Tillamook cheese factory and air museum, Oregon wineries, and the *Ultimate Airstream* conversion plant. Our caravan, LandMarks West, made its own trip out to McMinnville to check out Howard Hughes' Spruce Goose. Salem is a great setting for kayaking, golfing, fishing, cycling,

boating, outdoor recreation, culinary experiences and historic landmarks – definitely something for everyone!

No international is complete without its pageantry particularly the Vintage Airstream Parade, the Unit costume parade, the pomp and circumstance of flag bearing and Airstream berets, and the official handover between WBCCI Presidents – it is after all a celebration of Wally Byam's birthday!



WBCCI President Jim Cocke N5RTG & David Broad W7BRO during the amateur radio session. Both of us are licensed HAMS!

As the rally came to an end, plans were being made for the next three international rallies. There is really no excuse for missing the next rally since it is right on our doorstep at Doswell State Fairground in Virginia on July 20-27, 2019. Make sure to get hook up reservations and get your AC checked! Reservations have already opened so don't dally! Go to wbcci.org to register now! Future sites are: 2020, Loveland, Colorado on June 20-27, and for 2021, Lebanon, Tennessee July 11-24. Plan ahead and get involved. That's the Airstream spirit!

Margaret & David Broad (WBCCI #2381) from Tappahannock Virginia, traveling 8 months of the year since July 2016 in their 2015 Flying Cloud 25 RB. Their travel blog is at www.flyingcloud25.blogspot.com and David also publishes an Airstream improvement discussion at www.facebook.com/airstreamtweaks.



BRIGHT IDEAS!

Whenever you stop for the night and don't un-hitch, you usually (at least) unplug the umbilical cord and drop the jack post. As a reminder that something must be reversed before hitting the road, loop the driver's seatbelt over the steering wheel. In the morning, seeing the seatbelt looped like that will remind you to reverse the steps you took the previous night before departing for the day.