

Stay cool - go north and affiliate!

Much of our Airstream lifestyle takes full advantage of our ultimate freedom of mobility. As discussed in a previous December 2018 newsletter article, our goal is to keep within the 60 to 80 Fahrenheit temperature isotherm range whatever the season. Basically this means south to Florida for the winter and north to Canada for the summer. There are plenty of perfect temperature choices in spring or fall with the ability to move rapidly in any direction as weather conditions warrant it. We even return to our home in Tidewater Virginia for a few weeks for repairs and medical visits.



Following the Cajun Country Caravan we decided to explore the Louisiana coast & Grand Isle State Park, coincidentally meeting up with fellow caravan Airstreamers Joe & Ronnie Harris (R & L), members of the Southeastern Camping Unit 012 in Region3 who convinced us to affiliate with their unit for \$1 a year!

Spending serious chunks of time in the south and in the north gave us an incentive to seek out other Airstream clubs and affiliate with them. This did not happen intentionally. A chance meet up with caravanning friends in Grand Isle, Louisiana made us aware of the possibilities. For one crisp dollar bill exchanged over a grilled shrimp dinner we became affiliated with Southeastern Camping Unit (SECU) and got access to their newsletters, website, and very active Facebook group. We were amazed that we already were acquainted with at least two dozen SECU members through our prior caravans and rallies.

As we left Louisiana somewhat elated at our wider newfound connections, we looked forward to joining up with the many SECU events. Our winter season was coming to an end and we deferred to the following annual winter season in the south. However the possibilities of affiliation made us look at the wider picture and our summer trek north. Blue Beret coincidentally had photos of the Quebec unit caravan to Newfoundland and that inspired us to contact the Quebec unit 125 and request to affiliate with them. From our first contact with the President Michel Bédard, the treasurer, rally organizers and other members of the unit, we were overwhelmed with their communications, friendliness, and eagerness to involve us in their activities.

To be fair, both of us speak French and are very comfortable in the culture. I grew up in Normandy in France and Margaret was a French major at college. Quebecois dialect is French with two centuries of

diversion, however a week or two of immersion brought us up to speed!



Welcome banner for the Quebec Unit 125 annual rally on the Saguenay Fjord - hence the Fjordmidable Rally title.

Within a few days of affiliating we were in possession of the complete calendar of unit activities. Accordingly we changed our pre-existing Canadian reservations and rearranged our itinerary to fit in. The main event of the summer was the Rallye Fjordmidable - a play on words for the location on the fjord of the Saguenay River at the little village of Anse-St-Jean. With the help of Lynn Allard, rally organizer, we promptly made our reservation at the fjord campground!

We arrived a week early to acclimatize and familiarize ourselves with the area. Heading north in the Saguenay region, the discoverers of the early 1600's found it really hard work going up the Ashuapmushuan River encountering rapid after rapid and making portage necessary. The missionaries were really exhausted according to their journal! Chute à l'Ours provincial park translates to Bear Falls so that would be just one more obstacle! The first campground was a demanding initiation to the Saguenay area due to the intense mosquito activity and a lot of bug control resources were brought to bear including bug zapper lights, sprays, Thermacells, and copious amounts of clear silicone squeezed into upper and lower window arm slots and window lock spaces. The situation improved as we moved to the Anse St-Jean bay side campground and the brisk offshore breeze kept the bugs to a minimum.



Camped on the Saguenay River on the Anse-St-Jean cove for a week on 15 amp service. I was glad that I had fitted Micro Air to our AC unit as a couple of days heated up to uncharacteristically high temperature and our AC unit performed flawlessly.

We had signed up for four days of rally activities with about 20 other Airstream families. On the first day our unit organized a historical 2 mile walking tour of the village led by a local historian Eric Tremblay, a family name that dates back to the original 21 families that settled the Saguenay region in the 1700's. After an introductory presentation under the communal shelter we walked down to the village covered bridge and listened to how the early settlers lives evolved in the Saguenay region. This is a unique example of a covered bridge with art hung throughout the interior walls and features a dozen or more paintings illustrating local life through the seasons. The Quebec Airstream unit members got a well deserved

rest and took a shade break inside the covered bridge since it was one of the hottest days so far for the Quebec province this summer!



Left: Quebec Airstream Unit 125 takes advantage of the shade in the covered bridge to rest on our historical tour of the Anse-St-Jean village.



Center: Eric Tremblay, local historian and descendant of the original 21 families to colonize the area, leads our tour.



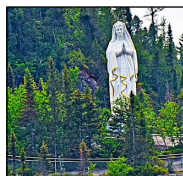
Right: Covered bridge features a dozen colorful paintings depicting scenes at different times of the year. We are very glad we visited in July!

Adjacent to the campground a fine microbrewery hosted our evening dinner on what happened to be our 4th of July celebration, and we got to meet and enjoy the company of many of the Quebec Airstream community.



The micro brewery closed down for the evening in order to host our rally. The campsite was 100 feet away, so driving back to the Airstream was unnecessary!

On day two we boarded a sleek fjord observation boat for an afternoon cruise around the headlands and down the Saguenay fjord to see the statue of Notre-Dame-du-Saguenay. Built some 500 ft above sea level on a rocky outcrop as a gesture of thankfulness by early settlers. The Virgin Mary statue weighs 3-1/2 tons and measures 23 feet high. After arriving by barge the local installers were forced to cut her into 14 pieces to accomplish the delivery by cable hoist from the boat to the fjord headland site. The statue is made out of local pine and covered in a thin lead sheeting.



Top: Sleek cruising and observation boat takes us up and around the fjord to admire the cliffs and scenery, including the Virgin Mary statue.

Bottom: A thankful early settler returned to the Saguenay with his gift to the community and installed this 3.5 ton and 23' tall Virgin Mary high on the cliff, but it proved to be a daunting installation.

The highlight of the unit activities was the "Souper Saguenéen", an elegant four-course local fare banquet prepared by folks from the village. The scenic and rustic outside shelter area was decorated and festively lit and a lot of time and effort by the Airstream rally team went into setting the scene as unit members brought elegant table cloths, matched sets of plates, sparkling cutlery, wine glasses, table decorations and of course many bottles of wine. First



The Quebecois banquet had plenty of style, matching place settings, napkins, glasses and enough wine for everyone. Lots of conversation, fellowship, an exciting 3-hour, 4-course local terroir dinner and animated story telling - in Quebecois!

course featured a delightful country pate, French bread, and raw vegetables. Next a bean Gourgane soup which after much Google research was found to be a broad bean - after much hilarity my table companions nicknamed me David Gourganes. The main course was a giant local game and potato pie dish named Tourtiere of which there was sufficiency for second helpings for most folks. In the interlude there was a rapid fire funny story telling by unit members. The speed of delivery in Quebecois left us a little puzzled but we got the gist of most of it and laughed our way through the evening. The last course of individual blueberry tarts made from local fruit completed the meal of the terroir - an authentic meal made completely from local products. This is how Quebecois enjoy themselves with a three-hour banquet of good food, great company and a spirit of togetherness.

On the next third day, after optional morning kayaking on the fjord, we all piled on to a rented school bus for an eight hour excursion to La Baie and the Théâtre du Palais Municipal, home for 6 weeks to the annual "Fabulous History of a Kingdom" put on by over 150 local family members who freely perform a continuing family tradition lasting over 30 years. We quickly understood that the show was composed of some two dozen action tableaux of the history of the Saguenay Lac St. Jean Kingdom, from 1603 to the present. It began with over 50 actors moving about, wearing first nation costumes and climbing upward through rock filled terrain. The immensity and logistics of



The Fabulous History of a Kingdom, Saguenay was a legendary nation with blond men, gold, and furs which got explorers really interested but in vain. The play in La Baie illustrates the historical legacy all the way up to current day.

the project were awesome, complex, and well executed. As scenes changed we saw the introduction of early explorers, French King's disinterest in Canada, early settlers, logging, trapping, priests and entrepreneurs, world wars, flooding, tourism, music influences, and showing off the beauty of the region in many tableaux. Another historical tableau was the arrival of the first families of settlers dubbed the 21, les vingt-et-un, whose family names still resound throughout the Saguenay. Forest fires later destroyed the community with live flames in many parts of the stage and within the theater - a somewhat scary stage production that made me look around and memorize the theater exits! What an exceptional and memorable show that we were lucky to visit on the very first night of the 2019 season and performed to a packed theater! As a footnote, the theatrical production is also performed in English on specific dates to accommodate cruise ships making a port of call in the Saguenay.

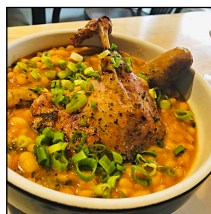
On the morning of the last day, we met for a Viennoiserie farewell breakfast of croissant, sweet rolls, fruit, coffee and juice. It was a good opportunity to catch up with all the unit members that made us feel very welcome, exchange contact information, and make plans for next year. It was also a moment to say thank you and goodbye to our wonderful rally organizers Lynn Allard and Sylvie Turcotte. Many of these folks we will see again and some unit members are lucky enough to regularly snowbird in a Punta Gorda RV park in Florida!

Our onward journey took us back for a walkabout in Quebec City! Must be our fifth visit in 40 years! We love getting back into the French culture, lifestyle, and food of this town. Our campground was south of town across the river so we walked on to

the boat ferry and used the funicular to reach the Chateau Frontenac terrace, Place d'Armes, and then revisit the artists in the Rue du Tresor where we purchased marine watercolors in the 80's. We walked to the Augustines convent and the Ursulines chapel and museum, got lunch in lower town, checked out the craft fair, and visited the Fort Museum with its diorama and movie of the history of French and English struggle for Quebec. Memories from childhood or adolescence came flooding back as I



Quebec streets become colorful with suspended umbrellas with the famous Chateau Frontenac in the background.



French food in Quebec - one of my favorites from my French upbringing - duck leg and Toulouse sausage, cassoulet in white beans.

indulged in a black pudding lunch at Rioux & Pettigrew in Quebec old city. Boudin noir is not approved by the FDA as I discovered recently on the Louisiana Cajun Caravan! It was served with mushy peas and real peas, fingerlings, and a nettle family vegetable! Another day we lunched at the Bistro Saint-Malo and enjoyed fish soup with mussels and croutons followed with a hearty duck leg and Toulouse sausage cassoulet!

For the rest of the trip we explored the north bank of the St Lawrence Seaway, spending a week at Paradis Marin or Marine Heaven. Whale watching from our campsite with plenty of hikes along the coast and over the rocks, visits to local parks, museums, artisan stores and local seafood restaurants. We then switched to the southern shore of the river and settled in to the Capitaine Homard campground, which translates to Captain Lobster! Inevitably over the next few days we indulged in lobster in all its culinary forms - at US\$10 a pound for live lobster and \$15 a lb for cooked it's hard to say no! Notable places to visit along the coast are the famous micro-climate gardens of Métis once the home of the Canadian Pacific railroad and shipping magnate. The rare and hard to grow Mongolian blue poppies were a highlight of our two-hour ramble through the gardens. Nearby the museum in St-Pere-la-Pointe lighthouse park features the Canadian Navy submarine HMCS Onondaga, an exciting and claustrophobia inducing stern to stern walk through, and the remains of the biggest Canadian shipping tragedy the Empress of Ireland which sank 10 miles out from our campground location.



Left: Regional ritual is incomplete without several lobsters meeting their fate - choice of steamed, grilled and thermidor.. We perfected live lobster on the grill.



Center: Rare blue Mongolian poppies thrive in the Metis Gardens - a micro climate bay on the estuary of the St Lawrence.



Right: The beach came alive at night as nearly every camper backed up to the beach lit a bonfire using flotsam and some purchased timber. As many as twenty bonfires at the weekend when Montreal and Quebec campers joined the party.

Our journey continues in the comfortable 60 to 80 F range with visits to Cabot Beach Provincial Park on Prince Edward Island and Murphy's on the Ocean in Nova Scotia. A quick stop with friends in Maine followed by two nights in Salem, Massachusetts, and a day at the Kennedy Presidential Library in Boston will complete our delightfully cool summer itinerary

On reflection, if you do travel in certain north American regions extensively or on a repetitive basis, then affiliation with another Airstream unit is a great proposition. Generally it doesn't cost much to join, it introduces you to a great Airstream minded community who will likely befriend you, helps you understand their native region, encourages you to participate in activities and events that are not always possible on your own, and offers suggestions of some of the best campsites known only to locals. Covering our winter southern bases with SECU and our summer northern travels with the Quebec unit gives us lots of future occasions to look forward to. There is so much to share, appreciate and enjoy within our extended Airstream community.

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