

MY BEST TWEAKS v.5

It's been nearly five years since we bought our new Flying Cloud 25 and we have made some 100 upgrades or modifications to the Airstream either improving the mechanics, electrical or lifestyle character of the camper trailer or towing vehicle. These "tweaks" have all been documented at [Facebook.com/AirstreamTweaks](https://www.facebook.com/AirstreamTweaks) or check the tweak index at <http://www.db26.net/airstream>. Some tweaks of major proportion, kitchen cabinets and solar/inverter upgrades, have been the basis of two separate newsletter articles.

Looking back I have been asked what are the best modifications we have made to the Airstream? After five years of travel, it's easy to pick out a dozen tweaks that have made significant improvements to our camping life and travels and which I'd love to share with you. Warning: reading any further could make a serious dent in your budget!

As a reference, the tweak identification numbers are roughly in the order they were implemented and also identify the project with links to installation photos, additional comments and sourcing of products. These tweak projects are documented in a Facebook page [Facebook.com/AirstreamTweaks](https://www.facebook.com/AirstreamTweaks) so you will need a Facebook login to be able to access them. The tweaks have been split into six categories, which define topics in common areas of interest.

In the Comfort & Convenience Improvements category, we have added three items that I rate highly. The Heated Bathroom Towel Rail (#01) was my very first Airstream modification replacing the regular towel rail with a stainless steel electrically heated towel rail powered by 110 volt when on shorepower. Never again would I step out of the



tweaks-p04a-towel-rail-7959.jpg
Heated Bathroom Towel Rail (#01) is a source of pleasure after our shower in the morning.

shower and use a damp and cold towel! We use it occasionally to dry out clothing and it also adds a

low-level warmth to the toilet area. Power consumption is rated at 80 watts so basically low consumption at less than 1 amp. This tweak has been adopted by so many of my Airstream fellow travelers generally as soon as their wives see the installation! Our second comfort tweak is the Amaze Wall Panel Heater (#11) mounted on the wall at the



tweaks-p04b-Wall-Heater-7958.JPG
Amaze Wall Panel Heater (#11) maintains our bedroom area at perfect temperature in most climates.

foot of the main bed. The 600 watt panel measures approximately 24" by 36" and we have wired it via a mechanical thermostat mounted on the wall above the bed. The panel provides low-level heat and can be touched when under power. Through

the thermostat it maintains a comfortable mid-sixties when outside temperatures are in the 40's and 50's. Below that temperature we use a small space heater cube or if there is no shorepower we use a propane Gas Buddy or our furnace. We love the Amaze Panel because there is no fan noise, no on/off noisy cycling and perfect temperature control for a good night's sleep! Lastly in this category we installed a Television Sound Bar (#90) to improve the audio on the Samsung standard Airstream TV. The TV was relocated upwards a few inches to allow room to mount the 26" wide sound bar and a very convenient miniature digital audio cable made the connection. The



tweaks-p04c-sound-bar-6238.JPG
Television Sound Bar (#90) improves the audio quality of our Samsung Airstream TV well beyond expectation.

sound bar controls are built into the right end of the unit but by turning it upside down we can now

access the manual controls, however the remote takes care of most situations. The difference is night and day improvement! In this category our budget was \$300 for the towel rail, \$150 for the panel heater, and \$70 for the sound bar.

Our next category, Electrical and Energy Conservation, has the most scope for improvements. Fridge Fans Upgrade (#03) came fairly soon in our ownership. Within 6 months, we had experienced fan bearing failure causing noise and vibration that woke us up repetitively at night.



tweaks-p05a-fridge-fans-7967.jpg

Fridge Fans Upgrade (#03) with two side by side low wattage, low noise and low cost computer cooling fans.

We replaced the OEM Rodale fridge fan with two side by side low wattage, low noise and low cost computer cooling fans mounted on an aluminum frame with rubber bushes and housed in an aluminum shroud that draws the air directly through the cooling fins. Peace

and tranquility at last! Our next energy conservation project, our Honda Generator Propane Conversion (#28) involved removing the generator gas tank and carburetor and easily replacing them with the propane regulator and carb kit from Genconnex Direct which takes about a couple of hours. There is a slight loss of output power however not having to deal with smelly gas containers and constant refilling and protecting the carb between infrequent uses makes us very happy campers. Plugging in the 110 volt cable and the propane line to the Airstream quick connect, along with totally reliable start is a pleasure to experience. Our third miracle



tweaks-p05b-honda-propane-has 6649.JPG

Honda Generator Propane Conversion (#28) replacing the fuel tank and gas carb with propane regulator and propane carb kit from Genconnex Direct.

energy project is installing the Micro-Air AirCon Easy Start (#67), which permits AirCon on 15 amp campground circuits, on basic Honda generators, and on our 2.6 kW inverter (for a short burst!). The Easy Start overcomes the substantial AirCon start up power surge draw by up to 75% and allows cycling operation much to the amazement of fellow campers without this device.

tweaks-p05c-easy-start-7981.JPG

Micro-Air AirCon Easy Start (#67) which allows the Dometic Air Conditioning unit to run on 15 amp circuits.



Two other major projects that go well beyond the definition of an Airstream tweak merit an entire article in their own right since they are complex and expensive! You can read about our Solar panel Installation (#77) and the Inverter system upgrade (#79) in the March 2019 unit newsletters or on our website at <http://www.db26.net/airstream/>

Moving on to our next category, our best Organizational and Efficiency of Space resulted in a Kitchen Drawer Storage Unit (#75). This complex project was planned, built and installed during a short home stay between long trips and we immediately appreciated the benefits of the extra 6 cubic feet of kitchen storage! We sacrificed 2 feet off our port berth bunk and removed a small pull out bed and replaced it with a five-drawer, purpose designed cabinet. This took us into the realm of cooking rather than camping with an entire 24 x 24 drawer for cutlery and kitchen tools, a complete spice collection with cutting boards and blenders, a drawer of 15 pop-up containers for all the culinary staples, and two spare drawers with books and computers. Topped off with an exotic wood butcher block counter top, it totally transforms our Airstream function and appearance! Materials and parts for this project run around \$450 and that works out at less than 10% of the conversion offered by Ultimate Airstream. The article is in the February 2019 newsletter and at the above website.

Bathroom & Shower Improvements have many tweaks but my most loved project is the custom Teak Shower Grid (#92). We have always loved the

concept of a teak shower grid since our sailing days! We cut eight 29" strips 1" thick x 1.5" wide and realized I would need to elevate the grid to allow water to drain. I used remnants of ipe as a 7/16" spacer but extended them 1/2" below the grid to provide drainage clearance. Eight 5/16" stainless steel threaded rods hold the assembly together. Teak and ipe are installed untreated in their natural state. Love the feel of the tweak on my feet and not having my feet standing in a pool of dirty water! A very satisfying project for less than \$100 of materials!



tweaks-p08a-shower-grid-7966.jpg

Teak Shower Grid (#92) adds a superior level of luxury to an otherwise basic shower tub.

In the Towing and Rig Setup category my all time favorites are the Andersen Levelers (#18) and the Camco jumbo leveler and inclinometer (#23) at around \$120 total for the two products. The Andersen levelers are one of my most satisfying camping investments which allow one side of the Airstream to be lifted up to 4" and also can be used to raise one wheel of the Airstream when you need to change a flat on the other axle! The Camco jumbo leveler/inclinometer is highly visual and pretty accurate (after calibration) and helps this coordinated man and wife team get the Airstream camp set up to perfection!



tweaks-p09a-anderson-level-7974.JPG

Anderson Levelers (#18) are one of my most satisfying camping investments that allows one side of the Airstream to be lifted up as much as 4"



tweaks-p09b-inclinometer-4961.JPG

Camco jumbo leveler and inclinometer (#23) is highly visible and pretty accurate and makes for speedy campsite setup.

Our final category is Safety although, in reality, it should be first on the list! Our Tire Pressure Monitoring System (#20) has given us many warnings over the years and fortunately they have been mostly low pressure warnings which have diverted us to gas stations for air or caused us to halt and get the 12 volt air pump activated. Along with air pressure the wireless monitor in our towing vehicle displays tire temperature with alarms set for low pressure and high temperatures. One of the highest peace of mind tweaks has been the Tire and Rims 16" Upgrade (#34) to Michelin Defender tires and being able to dispose of the much maligned 15" Goodyear Marathons. The higher quality tire, higher E rating and heavier load carrying specification give us a lot of comfort cruising down the interstate. We softened the financial pain by selling off the five Marathons and rims on Craig's list.



tweaks-p10a-tire-pressure-7979.JPG

The Pressure Monitoring System (#20) has given us many urgent and appropriate low pressure tire warnings over the years.



tweaks-p10b-michelin-16-inch-6831.JPG

Tires and Rims 16" Upgrade (#34) Michelin Defender tires, a much higher quality tire, higher E rating and heavier load carrying specification.

As we know so well the quality of the Airstream is without question the highest in the RV trade however the quality of the OEM fixtures and fittings, which typically are RV industry standard items, can be just average. We understand that the Airstream factory to equip a camper trailer with high end quality appliances and fixtures would push the Airstream pricing beyond the already steep price point curve – but this gives us plenty of scope and opportunity to indulge and customize our pride and joy campers to our heart's desire!

Margaret & David Broad (WBCCI #2381) from Tappahannock Virginia, traveling 8 months of the year since July 2016 in their 2015 Flying Cloud 25 RB. You can email questions or comments to airstream@db26.net Their travel blog is at www.flyingcloud25.blogspot.com and David also publishes an Airstream improvement page at www.facebook.com/airstreamtweaks.

