

Destinations - Why Do We Travel!

What influences our choice of Airstream destinations? Do we even have to have a destination? There are so many reasons that drive us to the ends of the earth, well at least the ends of the North American continent, to satisfy our traveling wishes. Visiting family and friends comes very high on the list! Being close to nature in some of the most beautiful spots on earth in our National and State parks are a top priority, along with scenic hikes and the vast open beaches and seashores. Selecting a destination as an area headquarters for regional artistic, historical, and cultural merits depends on your interests and lifestyle. Our journeys have often been determined by interesting waypoints featuring historical, cultural or artistic events or attractions. At least once a trip we try to make a special advance reservation for an interesting dining experience. Sometimes for the sheer pleasure you just let the caravan leader take over and plan two months of destinations all of which feature joys you would never have discovered on your own, plus the camaraderie of a new bunch of Airstream friends.



Thor's Hammer hoodoo at Bryce Canyon, UT.

Let's take a journey through the last six years of our Airstream life and checkout what got us excited as we share some of those destinations.

National and State Parks:

National Parks have been the backbone of our list of awesome destinations. Five in particular stand out: Yellowstone NP, Wyoming, Grand Canyon North Rim, Arizona, Death Valley, California, Bryce Canyon, Utah and Organ Pipe, Arizona. Apart from Bryce Canyon, we have been lucky to camp within the park confines largely due to advance planning. Each campground allows immediate hiking and wilderness access straight out of the door. It's places like these that remind you of the foresight of the NPS preservation over many decades if not a century to keep this heritage intact for future generations.



Colorful Yellowstone NP Prismatic Lake is over 200 degrees hot!

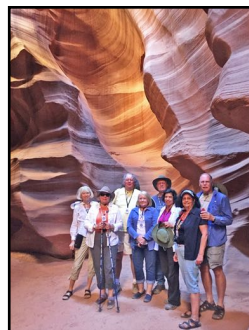


Metal sculptures are scattered across the Borrego desert.

Beautiful spots we have loved so much we have returned to multiple times include the State Park in the small town of Borrego Springs in southern California. We've returned to the perfect wintering hole climate, art shows, farmers markets, scenic desert surrounded by mountains, metal sculptures scattered around the desert, seasonal wild flowers, wild Borrego sheep, palm tree oasis, and Mexican influenced menus in the many local restaurants.

Traveling on the South West caravan introduced us to the Antelope Canyons around Page, Arizona. If you have an interest in photography these locations are a gift and will bless you with lifelong memories. Both Upper and Lower slot canyons are on Navajo land and the native guides are excellent at helping you enable your shutterbug skills to the highest level and capturing the moment! Good to reserve a tour near the middle of the day when the sun is overhead and infiltrates the narrow slots, or choose a special photo tour (more \$ of course!) that will give you extra time and smaller groups. The third Antelope

Canyon is accessible by cruise boat from Wahweap marina and navigates Lake Powell through the impossibly restrictive waterways of the red sandstone canyons. Colorado offers so much, but we were enchanted with Durango and the Silverton steam railway trip up the Animas River valley and the spectacular engineering built to access and service the silver mines. This ranks as one of the best rail and live steam experiences anywhere!



Upper Antelope Canyon with the South West Caravan group.



Durango and Silverton Railway lets off steam.



Spirit Island on Lake Maligne near Jasper - a classic iconic photo location.

Prince Edward Island, Canada, in the St Lawrence estuary is another of our favorite destinations with at least

six visits including pre-Airstream road trips. We love Cornwall and Cabot Beach but more than that we love oysters, mussels, and lobsters! Staying within Canada, Jasper national park in Alberta is well off the beaten track with great hikes, spectacular waterfalls, mountain cable cars and my special joy Spirit Island on Lake Maligne. Still in Canada in British Columbia, Vancouver Island is a unique region of unspoiled beauty with its wild seashore and old growth forests. Heading south since winter comes early in Canada, we highly rate Cottonwood and Sedona, Arizona, for stunning scenery, excellent cuisine and perfect climate.

History coming alive:

Our travels have revived our interest in history, both ancient and modern, confirming that the United States has a wealth of moment in history destinations that help us learn and understand our heritage. We were particularly impressed with the Reagan Presidential Library in Simi Valley, California, and we have visited several other Presidential libraries but none come close to the splendor and depth of Simi Valley. The location and spaciousness, along with the excellent narrative make this a memorable visit. The beginning of the audio/visual technology era coincides with his presidency so access to high quality media makes this library a superb cutting edge experience. The illustrious list of corporate sponsors may also be a contributing factor to the success of this library.



At the controls of the Spruce Goose and wearing Howard Hughes' hat!

Some of the very best aviation museums in the world are in the USA and the Smithsonian at Dulles Airport, Virginia, is top notch. Finally after many years my routing coincided with McMinnville, Oregon, and the Evergreen Museum, which houses Howard Hughes' Spruce Goose.

This exhibit is a testament to the sheer brilliance, perseverance, and vision of an American entrepreneur and overwhelms you with the state of the art technology of the early 1940's. I recommend the personal one-on-one tour (more \$ of course!) that takes you to parts of the aircraft unseen by many!

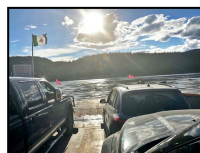
Some US history is more poignant, such as the battle of Little Big Horn and the endless named soldier markers scattered across the rolling grassland hills of Montana. Little Big Horn was part of the group of historical sites we explored based around Custer, South Dakota. An unbelievable number of day trips are possible from this base including Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse memorial,



Devil's Tower, WY, scene of Close Encounters of the Third Kind.

the amazing highways of Custer State Park, the Badlands, Minuteman silos, Wind Cave NP, Jewel Cave NP, and Devil's Tower, Wyoming.

Further off the beaten track, traveling the Alaska caravan took us to Dawson City, Yukon, one of the prominent cities of the Klondike Gold Rush era (the rush only lasted four years!) where Airstreams in pairs crossed the Yukon River on a small ferry. Dawson City was just full of interesting historical memorabilia as the region's mining gateway and main destinations on the paddle wheel steamer route up the Yukon. Old paddle steamers, huge mining dredges, gambling halls, theaters and banks of the era, all contribute to the incredible human drama of the Klondike Gold Rush.



Crossing the Yukon River at Dawson City on our way to Alaska.



Kennedy Space Center and the Airstream crew transfer vehicle.



Mesa Verde NP Ranger leads our tour through the cliff dwellings.

Another Airstream destination with much more recent historic significance is Cape Canaveral, Florida, with history still being made today! Jetty Park is convenient for the Kennedy Space Center and frequent launches (thank you Elon Musk!) and has one of the best walking beaches along the coast. Further west, in Mesa Verde, Colorado, we immersed ourselves in an ancient civilization that flourished a thousand years ago (late 1100's) but mysteriously disappeared (by 1300's) as we scrambled through Long House, Balcony House, and Cliff Palace dwellings led by an NPS guide.

Experiences:

Among our spectacular activities, the Albuquerque Balloon Festival must rank near the top of life's rich experiences. The South West Caravan had arranged for the first two rows of Airstreams offering coveted center location, and it is truly without doubt spectacular. The joy of getting up before 5 am to witness the first group of balloons lifting off to



Albuquerque pre-dawn ascension of the first flight of balloons.

check the higher level winds followed by the mass ascension of over 500 balloons as the dark sky starts to usher in dawn is pure joy! The static firing of the propane burners set to music in the evening is another awesome moment, and the whole event is repeated the next day. If there was ever one, this is a major bucket list activity.

Our travels along the Californian Pacific coast included two heritage destinations - the Paul Getty villa at the Pacific Palisades and the Hearst Castle at San Simeon - both offer glimpses into another world of fine art and reproduction of lifestyles from another era. Our Living History tour (more \$ of course!) of Hearst Castle featured docents in period dress and style to accentuate the feeling of a gilded age long ago! The Paul Getty villa recreates a Mediterranean atmosphere of the early Roman Empire in the theme of an elite Pompeiian coastal villa of the period along with the artifacts of the Greek civilization and earlier Etruscan culture.



Reenactors at Hearst Castle made each stop a pageant of past grandiose life.



Top of the World Highway in Yukon with a herd of caribou.

Some destinations fall into the category of Edmund Hillary's famous quote "Because it's there!". Alaska is certainly as far as our wheels will take us and what a magnificent journey up the Alcan Highway, then up the Top of the World Highway through Yukon to the US border near Chicken Alaska. That's as far off the beaten path as you will get! On a side trip to Eagle, we discovered that the route north comes to a complete end - beyond that is only the Arctic tundra and wilderness! Memorable destinations along the Alaskan highways that we loved include Homer and Seldovia on the Kenai Peninsula, Valdez and the Columbia glacier on Prince William Sound.

Food and wine, enhancing the experience:



I have to admit that there is a very strong attraction to certain culinary destinations! Every winter heading south from Virginia, our first night will be either in Savannah, Georgia, or Charleston, South Carolina - both

Left: Harvesting Crawfish in Cajun Country with Andre.

cities have a fine history of cuisine and unique selection of Southern / seafood restaurants suitable for any occasion and budget. Likewise New Orleans with its world famous reputation beckons eagerly as one hugs the Gulf traveling from Florida to Texas. Quebec City, Sedona, Arizona, San Antonio, Texas and Key West, Florida, are worth making a detour to try out regional specialties. Our Cajun Caravan experience was a perfect itinerary to hit the high points of Cajun cuisine!

In parallel with great food, we have put a few wine growing destinations in our trips specifically Paso Robles in California and the Kelowna Valley in British Columbia. There is a fine balance choosing down to earth wine destinations with ease of access and availability of campgrounds



Peaceful night in a Mississippi winery thanks to Harvest Hosts.

versus the Napa style overpriced and RV discouraged locations. Alternatively Harvest Hosts is a wonderful resource for experiencing unique one-on-one hosting and conversations with wine growers, especially the privilege of enjoying an evening in a vineyard after the winery has closed.

Finding tranquility:

Finding destinations that allow us just to put life on hold and relax is another way we enjoy Airstream camping. Virginia Highland Haven near Roanoke, Virginia, is an Airstream only park. It's beautifully located on the top of the Blue Ridge Mountains with distant views and relaxed informal and congenial membership. Hatteras on the Outer Banks sends the same relaxing vibes as does St George Island in the Florida panhandle and similarly Pismo Beach, California, where you can take your Airstream and overnight on the beach. Getting as close to nature, distancing yourself from crowds and man-made noise are our priorities!

These are some of the destinations and activities we've enjoyed in our six years of Airstreaming. We hope this will provide inspiration for you to stretch your travel goals and savor every element of our beautiful country.

Margaret & David Broad (WBCCI #2381) from Tappahannock, Virginia, traveling 8 months of the year since July 2016 in their 2015 Flying Cloud 25 RB Nuage Volant. 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 and created a Gourmet Camping group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gourmetcamping>