

Appalachian Springtime
by
David & Margaret Broad

As the one year anniversary of Covid isolation drew close we were determined to add some fun activities into our Airstream life, bring together some scheduled events, and gather together with friends in a series of diverse destinations.

Our Florida and Texas spring trip was curtailed by the urgent need to return to our Virginia domicile in order to secure a Covid vaccine shot, which we successfully received within three weeks of our return. Looking ahead for the rest of the year we helped organize a Silver in the Street rally in Abingdon Virginia with our local unit and decided to add a short four-day prequel trip with Airstream friends to Anchor Down in Tennessee. After the rally we took a couple of days of rest at Natural Bridge before heading on to the Spirit of Virginia (formerly Shenandoah Club) unit caravan to Frank Lloyd Wright's houses in Pennsylvania notably Fallingwater and Kentuck Knob.

Anchor Down is a purpose built state of the art RV site on the landscaped, perhaps even to say manicured side of Douglas Lake in the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee and features a beautifully laid out hillside with custom paved pads all with outstanding views. Most of the sites include a huge artisan built stone fireplace. Interesting that the 43 mile lake was created by the TVA in 1942 at the behest of the Manhattan project which needed huge amounts of electricity calculated to be about 10% of the US power output in the day. In order to process uranium at Oak Ridge facility in Tennessee, the lake and many others were built very rapidly to provide hydroelectric power and the Douglas Lake and dam were completed within one year of initiating the project.



Anchor Down RV Resort on Douglas Lake

Onwards to Abingdon for our Silver in the Street four day rally. Our Virginia Airstream Club unit 109 leadership including Jeff Cutright, Randy Rinehart and myself spent over a year planning and organizing this challenging project in the streets of Abingdon and it turned out to be a great success. Despite the threat of Covid and restrictions on public gatherings, we went ahead aware that we might have to cancel, but we certainly did not plan on hackers closing the East Coast fuel pipeline resulting in some of our attendees feeling very nervous about leaving home!

On the positive side we particularly enjoyed the Creeper Trail, rented mountain bikes in Damascus and started the trail at 3,500 feet at Whitetop Mountain in the freezing rain and emerged three hours later in brilliant sunshine in Damascus at 1,900 ft elevation. This remarkable trail was created on an abandoned mountain logging train rail track and is a highly rated ride by biking aficionados.



The Creeper biking trail created from an abandoned mountain logging train rail track and has a descent of 1,600 ft over 15 miles. The Creeper name comes from one of the ancient locomotives operated on this rail-



Local historian Michael Henningsen gave us a unique history of Abingdon seen through the voices and persona of six local historical characters. Jeff Cutright, Airstream Club of Virginia President, introduces Michael as the character he has adopted for this session



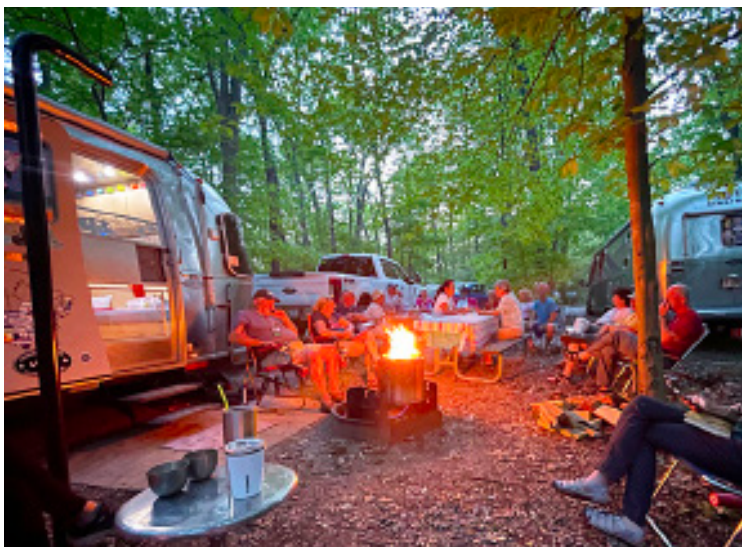
Several Airstreamers had solo wood stoves and competed on successive nights for the most attractive and spectacular blaze. Solo stoves are perfect for this event as there is no clean-up and no traces of fire

Our unit hired a local historian and story teller who visited us on two consecutive days, led tours around town, each time switching persona and featuring one of the six intriguing historical characters in his repertoire.

Our stay in Abingdon was rewarded with some exceptional dining and we particularly enjoyed making reservations in open air and historic settings, making our choices among several fine restaurants all within walking distance of our rally HQ on Remsburg Drive. After dinner we had no qualms about lighting Solo stoves in the middle of the street and gathering Airstreamers together for the evening. Saturday morning we were treated to an excellent Farmers' Market not more than 20 paces from the rally site.

One of the joys of joining a caravan is letting your Airstream friends and buddies know about the opportunity and inviting them to join in the fun with you. Out of the 15 rigs on the Fallingwater caravan we had six rigs with friends we had traveled with on previous caravans. It's like an Airstream reunion!

The Fallingwater caravan met in Waynesboro, VA, and we were delighted to meet old acquaintances over an excellent barbeque meal at a local smokehouse. We took advantage of the menu and ordered additional dishes for takeout for lunches and snacks over the rest of the trip. Never let a BBQ opportunity go wanting...



Fifteen Airstreams is an optimum number of folks needed to run a caravan and enjoy a cohesive group gathering in the wooded campground after dinner.

One of the caravan leaders tasks as defined in the WBAC caravan manual involves organizing the Get Acquainted Meetings (GAM) the first few evening of the caravan, making sure that the matrix creates a unique mix at each structured meeting so everyone gets the opportunity to meet every other person on the caravan. We hosted our first GAM at Waynesboro, and, although the GAM matrix should be flawless, we somehow managed to meet up with the same folks several times!

Making our way from Waynesboro to the Shenandoah River, we had a choice of independent routes. We chose to visit the Luray Caverns. As Virginians for over 40 years there are so many places we have not visited in our own back yard! Despite Covid restrictions and a healthy amount of separation, wearing masks, which fogged up my spectacles, we had a most enjoyable trek through the underground caverns culminating in a serenade from the stalactite organ. One of the Luray Caverns claims to fame in 1901 was the very first air-conditioned house in the world. Building over one of the ventilation shafts leading up from the caverns provided a stream of steady constant 54-degree temperature air all year round.



One of the Luray Caverns underground lakes provides a mirror surface that perfectly reflects stalactites and gives the illusion of identical stalagmites.

Shenandoah River State Park has a splendid campground as each of the sites is hidden from the adjacent sites allowing you to believe that you are camping in the woods alone. Situated on the Shenandoah River it was entertaining to watch kayakers and tubers enjoying drifting down the river in the bright sun, probably the best place to be is in the cool stream during the hot weather that week.

Unfortunately one of our caravan members had a very bad electric bicycle accident and had to be Medevacked to hospital suffering a dozen broken ribs, fractures, lacerations and a concussion – this placed a major change of role on our caravan leaders Greg and Linda Heuer to take care of the injured person and safeguard his Airstream. Jeff and I were previously tasked with the welcome arrival at Ohiopyle State Park and working together using our amateur VHF radio, GMRS and cell phones we coordinated the arrival of the rigs and successfully parked everybody in this beautiful and very large state park. Ohiopyle is definitely a Mecca for the outdoors with a very active flow of visitors enjoying kayaking, mountain biking, fishing, wildlife and hiking.

Our first activity at Ohio Pyle was to car pool drive to the Flight 93 National Memorial site near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. It felt like every destination we plugged into our Google maps in this part of western Pennsylvania was jinxed, gave us conflicting directions and led us astray on unpredictable routes.

Arriving at the Flight 93 site, we were very moved by the positioning and splendor of the architecture and meaningful layout memorializing the timeline of this tragic event. The museum exhibit featuring much memorabilia of the tragic flight was painful to absorb and in some cases one was inclined to move on and skip certain parts of the display since it felt like an invasion of the privacy of the hijack victims.

The sweeping wall of the main structure terminates with a gap that leads to an extended elevated walkway that comes to a balcony overlooking the final site of the crash. From the visitor center to the overlook, United flight 93 timeline and significant events are etched into the black granite walkway, coming to an end at 10:03:11.



Flight 93 memorial walkway follows the timeline of the flight path and ends with an overlook of the crash site. Each of the names of 40 passengers and crew are carved into white marble panels. A short distance away the Tower of Voices contains 40 wind chimes

Seven Springs lunch resort is probably more famous for its skiing and winter sports season. We had an excellent lunch overlooking the ski slopes and even in May there were still some patches of snow visible due to the high elevation.

Nothing can prepare you for the beauty and serenity of the Fallingwater location. A pleasant walk through the gardens from the reception building leads you to a waterfall on Bear Run Creek over which Frank Lloyd Wright designed this spectacular house to perfectly blend into the landscape.

Our group of six was led on a private tour giving us many behind-the-scenes views of the living quarters, guestrooms and utility areas. The building methods, reinforced concrete construction, cantilevered structures and elegant design were very advanced for the period of construction in 1935 to 1939. With the addition of personalized and purpose designed furnishings, the Fallingwater residence makes a magnificent and memorable impact. We enjoyed viewing the house particularly the way the structure harmonizes into the forest and creek environment from inside and outside, including the guesthouse and a short walk to a strategic viewing location down river - a totally mesmerizing experience.

We visited Kentuck Knob later the same day to tour the hexagonal house that Frank Lloyd Wright designed some 15 years later for a client on the crest of the Kentuck hill. The house is partly buried below ground, has living space with cantilevered balconies that are cleverly designed with overhanging wooden roofs and signature use of local sandstone, with lots of glass to integrate the interior and exterior views. The property also had an eclectic sculpture garden including a piece of the Berlin Wall.



Fallingwater is probably Frank Lloyd Wright's most famous design featuring a house over a waterfall in a lush forest – harmony of man and nature. We were very fortunate that the house reopened to visitors only a few weeks prior to our visit.

The last communal activity for the caravan was the final Gala Banquet at the Stone House Restaurant in Farmington, PA, a BBQ smokehouse with an upscale restaurant where we enjoyed local draft beer and lots of high stamina food to invigorate us for our next day journey home.

It was quite thrilling to be able to reunite with Airstream groups from previous caravans, some we had met on the Southwest Adventure in 2016 and the group we had bonded with on the lengthy Alaska caravan in 2018. We bade our goodbyes to our new and old friends and returned to our Virginia home on the Rappahannock River.

After 40 years living in Virginia and traveling to hundreds of out-of-state and overseas trips we really begun to appreciate the beauty and variety of our home state. Taking advantage of urban rallies, short regional caravans and adding a few higher end camping destinations to the mix made great use of our time on the road, provided us with many opportunities to cross paths with friends and helped usher all of us back into post Covid Airstream life.



Fallingwater interior design with carefully curated furnishings to reflect the original period and the lifestyle of the original owners. Many furniture pieces were specifically designed for Fallingwater



Kentucky Knob uses local sandstone and lots of glass. The copper roof is built over a wooden frame with multiple hexagonal skylights, in fact, the entire house is a hexagon



Kentucky Knob balcony faces south-east and offers views through its massive glass panels and skylights in perfect harmony with nature.



Fallingwater caravan provided a unique reunion for some 2018 Alaska caravan Airstreamers. From left to right: David & Margaret Broad, Greg & Linda Heuer (Fallingwater caravan leaders), John Sanders & Mary Beth Comer, Victoria & John Magnacca, and Connie & Phil Miller