



# Airstream Express



## SPECIAL ISSUE

Vol. 10, no 9 April 16th 2021

### ***INTRODUCTION***

Michel Bédard #1013

Here is a new special issue of the Airstream Express « Hors-Série ». A beautiful chronicle by Margaret Robinson-Broad and David Broad.

And again, we offer you two versions of this exciting story: a French and English. Here is the English version.

Take the time to settle down comfortably and enjoy!

We look forward to your anecdotes, your hidden talents and tales of your life experiences.

So, don't hesitate to send them to the following address:

[michel.bdard3@sympatico.ca](mailto:michel.bdard3@sympatico.ca)

**Without your contribution, the publication of the “SPECIAL ISSUE” edition would not be possible.**

Above all, don't forget the photos, they embellish your words!

Warm thanks to François Martel for his generous work of correcting this « Special Issue» of Airstream Express.

See you soon,

Michel Bédard

## *Camping in the time of COVID*

Text by : David Braod et Margaret Robinson # 2381

Needless to say 2020 has been a most challenging year! We have traditionally been on the road for the best part of 8 months a year for the last five years.



*Margaret Robinson-Broad and David Broad*

### **Little did we know what was in store for us!**

Since March we have been in self-imposed isolation and yet managed to contrive several trips to brighten our spirits and prove that our Airstream Adventure is still alive and well!

Silver on the Street rally in Georgetown SC. We gathered as a group several times and hosted an afternoon open house session with dozen of folks in very close proximity inside our Flying Cloud 25. Arriving home in Virginia on March 10 the alarm bells were beginning to ring worldwide.



*The last days of innocence pre-Covid-19.  
Silver on the Street rally with an open house and crowds at Georgetown SC in early March 2020*

In early March we joined the South Carolina Coastal Airstream Club for a very successful rally. Our first action was to cancel our spring trip to China (the epicenter!), Japan, Indonesia and South Korea! Then we also cancelled our fall trip to Sicily and Andalusia. When the Canadian border closed, we cancelled our summer Airstream trip to Newfoundland.

Back to basics! Five years of deferred house maintenance and Airstream projects beckoned!

Our rigorous isolationism made full use of home delivery and curbside pickup, Walmart for basics, Wegmans for special treats, farmers' market and seafood market, along with deliveries from Amazon, Alaskan Wild Fish and our wine club. Anything coming into our household was either washed, wiped down with alcohol or left to age for a few days.

Local Covid outbreaks were reported from several retail and business locations but we rigorously avoided all public venues. After 3 months of this regime we were ready to breakout!

We assembled a rough list of the criteria for our trips: a single day six hour maximum travel distance, one fuel stop for the round trip, spacious and distanced campground layout, most likely dry camping location, allow contactless existence for a week to 10 days, be self-contained with all supplies, food and beverages for the entire trip, no restaurant visits, good cellular signal strength to maintain business connectivity, a location that is calm, beautiful and a fun place to enjoy and lift our spirits. Sounds like we had high expectations but we really did find a couple of perfect spots!

Two other important planning issues then became evident. Reservations for the best weather windows and pre trip food planning. With reasonable two-week weather forecasting window we could avoid high heat periods (for dry camping we would not have air conditioning) and multiple rain days, which needed a last minute opportunity to juggle reservations. Once our departure date had been set, we launched into curb side acquisition and kitchen prep mode.

We selected two locations that fit most of our wish list. Assateague National Seashore (not the State Park) in Maryland and the Outer Banks Hatteras National Seashore at Frisco, North Carolina.



*Super location at Assateague National Seashore on Ocean Loop  
Giving us bare feet access to dunes and ocean.*

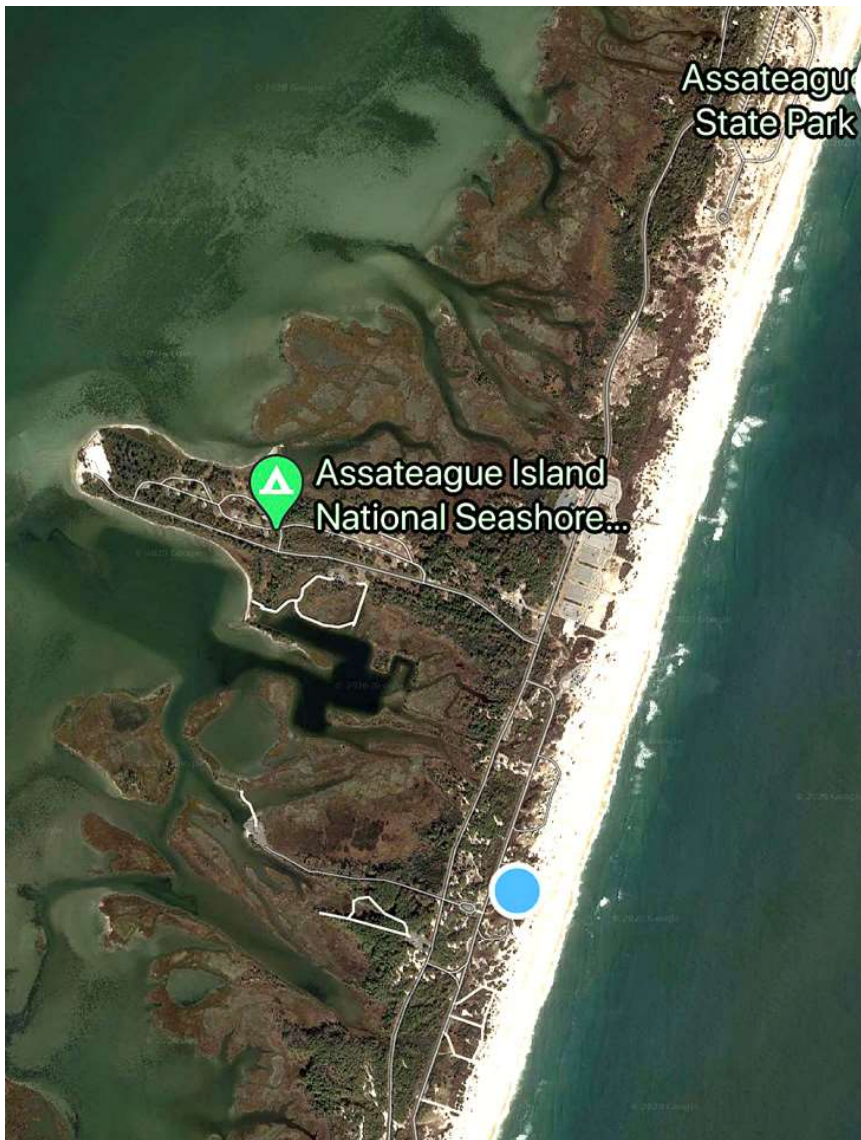


We loved Hatteras so much we went there again in the fall as temperatures were a good 10°F higher than at our Virginia home on the Rappahannock.



*A calm day at the Cape Hatteras beach  
- Fearsome storms regularly pass through this coastal region and give it the reputation as the  
Graveyard of the Atlantic with over 600 shipwrecks in the shifting sands offshore.*

The NPS reservation system is quite flexible and allows days to be added to an existing reservation providing there is availability and likewise excess days can be cancelled. We found this highly useful to avoid periodic stormy weather fronts common with the East Coast weather systems.



Careful use of Google Earth and campsite maps made it possible to select the most appealing sites throughout the campgrounds

***Google Earth is a valuable resource and tool for planning camping trips. High enough image resolution allows detailed examination of camping sites and avoiding unpleasant surprises!***

Golden age pass kept the nightly rate around \$18 so it's incredibly good value!

Pre-trip planning starts with a daily meal plan for the time away. We have always enjoyed eating at fine dining restaurants but that's no longer practical so we focus on gourmet cooking on the road.

We started a Facebook group earlier this year called Gourmet Camping to share ideas (feel free to join us!), which has been very inspiring.

We're also fortunate to be able to harvest our crab pots in the Rappahannock River and have an inventory of frozen crab cakes to last all winter.

A selection of our main meals includes crab cakes, fresh Carolina shrimp, oysters, cod, halibut, shepherd's pie, moussaka, curry sauce to combine with shrimp or chicken, tenderloin steaks and duck breasts. For variety, we carry two grills, a Weber Q propane grill and a Yakatori charcoal and wood grill.

For our first venture out in early June, we agreed to meet up with our Raleigh NC Airstream friends (we had originally planned to travel to China together!) at a half way point at Davis Lakes campground in Suffolk, Virginia. We both trusted each other's pre trip two week quarantine but cautiously maintained our distance. We alternated hors d'oeuvres and dinner preparation spending many hours on opposite ends of the benches! For recreation we took long hikes around the former quarry lakes, maintaining distancing but close enough to easily carry on a conversation.

Encouraged by the success of our mobile camping bubble we next planned a week in Assateague National Seashore campground, just on the border of Virginia and Maryland. Check-in was safe and easy and the sites were spaced 100 to 150 ft. apart.



Using Google Earth satellite view, we selected a site on the Oceanside loop, which gave us direct access to the sand dunes and beach in our bare feet straight out of our camper door. Our daily exercise routine usually two to three miles brisk walking was perfect on the hard sand and the endless beach.

Mid-week, the beach was lightly populated with mainly fishermen and we felt very comfortable with our camping set up.



*Beach fishermen are always anticipating a great catch and sometimes they are lucky, as this five foot shark which was returned to the water.*



Assateague is renowned for free roaming wild ponies and sure enough during the day, the Airstream was from time to time surrounded by dozens of these gentle creatures as they moved through the grass and grazed!



*Assateague National Seashore is home to hundreds of wild ponies that roam in herds and continually forage for grass and brush.  
They are quite harmless and don't take any notice of campers.*

The low constant roar of the surf gave us a very tranquil and relaxing week and we were lucky with refreshing ocean breezes and moderate August temperatures making air conditioning unnecessary.

Moving into September, we wanted to take advantage of the higher temperatures in the Outer Banks, and Frisco campground provided all the elements of sun, beach, great camp sites, beach access by 4WD, secluded sites in the dunes located and selected using Google Earth, beautiful views of the ocean, no sounds except the ocean surf.



*The National Seashore in North Carolina offers Off-Road Vehicle permits that allows 4X4 access to the beach.*

*Mostly beach fishermen take advantage of these permits to move their gear to their favourite locations along some 50 miles of beach.*

Part of the magic of Frisco is purchasing an ORV (off road vehicle) permit which allows you to drive on as much as 80 miles of North Carolina ocean beaches. We packed all our beach gear into the truck: table, chairs, coolers, grill, awnings, and really installed ourselves on our own 100 ft. wide beach front space and make a day of it!



Lunch with a tablecloth, cutlery, salads, seafood and chilled wine makes for a special occasion as well as a good book and a short siesta under the awning!

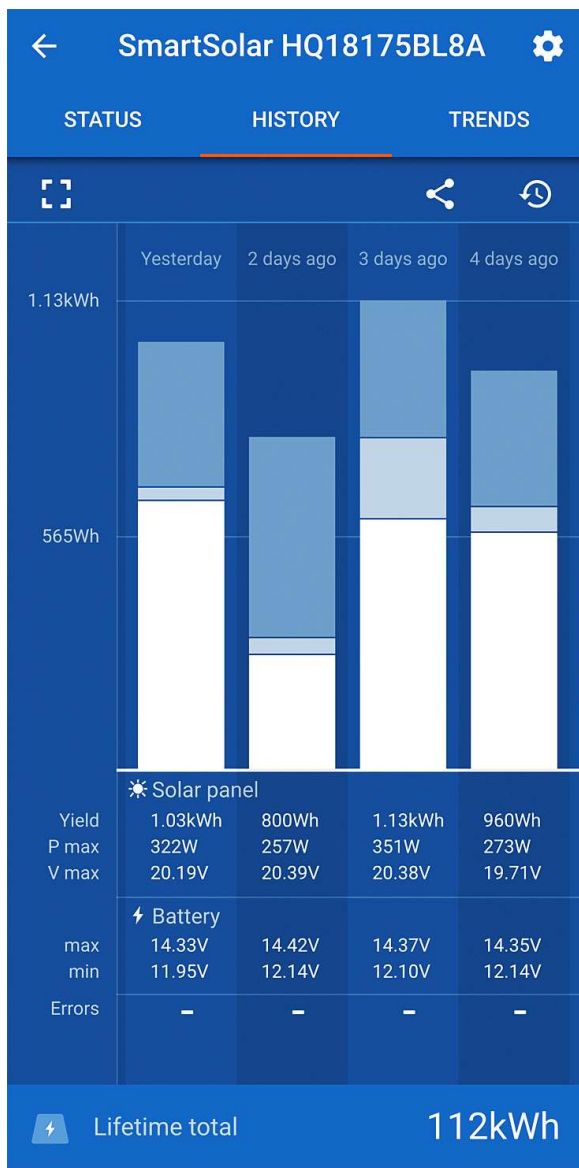


*Our favourite beach lifestyle is to relax under an awning and set up our chairs and lunch dining table and enjoy the sand and surf.*

We enjoyed it so much we found another weather window in October and returned for another week of bliss!

These National Park campgrounds had no services whatsoever so being prepared for a week to ten days means serious resource preparation.





Our rig has 400 watts of solar and a 2.5 Kw inverter which kept us powered with the exception of one rainy day when our propane converted Honda EU2000i boosted our reserves.

### *Solar energy production over four days*

*Showing a rainy day, which needed augmenting by Honda EU2000i generator.*

Water conservation is a top priority with 1½-gallon showers and washing up water being dispersed to the grass! The inverter kept our lives civilized by powering the microwave, espresso machine, computers, TV, DishTV receiver and DVD player.

Our most recent adventure lasted 3 months until the spring. Leaving Virginia mid-December we made reservations mostly in state parks, some national parks or Corps of Engineers parks, and a couple of commercial RV parks we were already familiar with. State parks have the luxury of almost always being well spaced out unlike commercial and independents who under their for-profit business models are obliged to pack you in tight in order to maximize revenue for their acreage.

As we wandered around Florida and Georgia, we steadfastly maintained our Covid protocol. Plan ahead, order curb side or online, keep our distance, resist temptation of a casual invitation or a tempting but risky activity, wear masks when in proximity with other folks, have a supply of latex gloves for gas pumps and picking up supplies, wait for crowds to dissipate before going into places of business, avoid groups of people by walking around them, come to a stop at least 10 feet away from a person you wish to engage, and yes wash hands and keep a spray dispenser of alcohol close at hand.

We keep reminding ourselves the best isolation quarantine bubble is an Airstream! After all NASA used them to seclude returning lunar astronauts!

Margaret & David Broad (WBCCI #2381) from Tappahannock, Virginia, traveling 8 months of the year since 2016 in their 2015 Flying Cloud 25 RB Nuage Volant.

We belong to the Virginia Airstream Club #109 and are affiliated with Club Airstream Québec #125 and with the South Eastern Camping Unit #010.

You can email questions or comments to: [airstream@db26.net](mailto:airstream@db26.net)

Our travel blog is at: [www.flyingcloud25.blogspot.com](http://www.flyingcloud25.blogspot.com)

David also publishes an Airstream improvement page at: [www.facebook.com/airstreamtweaks](https://www.facebook.com/airstreamtweaks)

And for fun created a Gourmet Camping group at: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/gourmetcamping>