

SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM MY COAST TO COAST AIRSTREAM TRIP

by Randy Grossmann

I departed Carson City, Nevada in the beginning of October 2006 on a solo one month trip to Jackson Center, Ohio and beyond with my 2005 25' Safari Airstream. What prompted the trip was the need for some warranty work which the factory was best equipped to do. But the trip also had the purposes of visiting friends and relatives at various places in the U.S. as well as making a coast to coast highway trip that I have been wanting to do since 1973. The route was Carson City, Nevada -- Jackson Center, Ohio (Airstream factory) -- Lynchburg, Virginia -- Elizabeth City, North Carolina -- Raleigh, North Carolina -- Tyler, Texas -- El Paso, Texas -- Carson City, Nevada. The total distance traveled was about 6,500 miles. Here are some thoughts that I have developed about such an extended Airstream trip.

But I must start by saying that my visit to the Airstream factory was wonderful. I had a number of warranty issues. Each one was gladly and properly addressed. I thought that one particular warranty issue involving a slanted rear overhead cabinet was going to involve major work. But the straightening of the cabinet was accomplished easily and quickly to my complete satisfaction. They even found and repaired a propane system problem that I did not know existed.



The service personnel provided me with maintenance advice, showed me how to check and test certain things, suggested certain products which they found best to use, and answered all of my questions. I also took a tour of the Airstream assembly process. The Airstream personnel are a great group of people. If any Airstream owner or prospective owner is in the vicinity of Jackson Center, Ohio, I suggest that they visit the Airstream campus, take a tour, and meet the people there.



I visited the WBCCI headquarters while in Jackson Center. It was nice to see Mountain Family RV flyers on their rack of Airstream sponsors. Mountain Family RV is also shown on a wall map in the Airstream Service Center lobby which shows all of the Airstream dealers in the U.S.

I have never made a road trip of this distance before because I always flew my airplane when traveling any distance in the U.S. What really impressed me on this trip is how slow road travel is. Even a slow airplane is many times faster than a road vehicle. It seemed as though I would drive and drive and drive and still not get anywhere.



Mt Family flyer
at WBCCI HQ

Thank goodness for the nice rest stops on the interstates. I spent as many days driving as I did not driving. It was always a rush to get to my next destination. I had to pass up many places where I would have liked to stop and visit. A leisurely (stop here and there) type of trip to the east coast would be nice, but unfortunately is beyond my range. I have determined that such a trip requires one month for each 1,000 miles out. This means that I would have to be away from home a minimum of three months for this type of trip to the east coast. That is too long for me to be away. So from a leisure standpoint, a trip 1,000 miles from home is about as far as I can go.

Speaking of the U.S. interstate highway system, it is great except for one major flaw. The interstates go through the cities where the traffic becomes far too congested and hectic. Many cities have built beltways around their city but the cities have grown out to the beltways. I believe that it would have been much better if the interstates completely bypassed all cities with feeder highways to and from the cities. This was a major infrastructure blunder in my opinion.

I found it quite a challenge to travel solo through the cities on the interstates. A navigator would have been so helpful. I had to read the road map, read the routing directions, read the road signs, take the proper Y's and turn-

offs, and be in the proper lanes while driving the rig and looking out for traffic. Then a heavy rain storm was thrown into the mix while going through Little Rock. These encounters with the cities made an otherwise relaxed driving experience one that was quite stressful. What is needed for a trip like this is a really good GPS navigation system. It would be nice to take the secondary roads and bypass the cities. But that would add even more driving time.

Too many fuel stops were required even with the increased fuel mileage of a diesel. For such long hauls enough fuel is needed to drive all day. Therefore, I am now looking for some type of auxiliary fuel tank. So far I have not found a user friendly one with which I would be happy.

Speaking of diesel, when I bought the Airstream a year and a half ago I also bought a diesel truck with which to pull it. The combination of the aerodynamic Airstream and diesel power made the driving a real pleasure. It was almost as though I was not pulling anything regardless of the altitude or grade. In fact, I had to keep reminding myself that there was something behind me.

While traveling, except for those times when I was parked on friends or relatives property, I spent the nights in Walmart parking lots. I basically traveled from Walmart to Walmart. These overnight stays worked out quite well. It is easy to find and get in and out of Walmarts, if any supplies are needed Walmart (and usually other stores) are right there, and the no cost overnight parking is quite nice. I stayed at only two RV parks during the entire month. One was in the middle of Wyoming because it was getting dark with inclement weather approaching and there was no Walmart nearby. The other was in Midland, Texas because I wanted to dump my tanks.



I learned that I should carry a saw and other limb/brush removal tools with me. The dirt driveway to my cousin's house in Elizabeth City is long, curving, rutted, and has close trees and brush on both sides. We had to do some limb and brush removal for me to get my rig through. After we got through I said "wow, we almost didn't make it." My cousin said there was no worry. He was prepared to break out the chain saw if need be. And need almost did be. It made the road to Obsidian Dome look like nothing. But I got through without so much as even a minor scratch!

I also learned that I should carry a ladder with me. My skylight cover blew off while eating lunch in Salt Lake City with rain threatening. I had no way of getting on top of the Airstream to seal off the opening. Luckily I was able to dismantle the skylight and seal off the opening with duct tape from inside the Airstream. It was a difficult job from inside, but the duct tape held and was water tight until I reached Jackson Center where they replaced the skylight cover. There are not many temporary repairs that cannot be made with duct tape. I would not be caught on the road without it.



Tyler Texas

This trip renewed my realization that we are so fortunate to live in the best part of the best country in the world. Other countries do not have the variety of terrain that we do. The U.S. east of the Rockies has historical sites which are unmatched in the western U.S. and it has some beautiful and interesting scenery. But there is so much sameness that the driving becomes boring much of the time. I found that driving in the west involves far more variety and interest. When I was halfway between Midland, Texas and El Paso I finally started seeing the welcome sight of mountains again. My favorite driving is in the mountains and deserts of the west.

In summary, I am really glad to have made this trip. It was a grand adventure. I am getting far more use out of my Airstream than I ever thought that I would. I consider it to be one of the best purchases I have ever made.

Check the Grossmann's travelogue for more pictures.

<http://sierranevadaairstreams.org/memories/travelogues/grossmann/index.html>