Happy Campers

Recreational Vehicle (RV) travel is beyond a moving experience. The real magic happens when you’re standing still.

BY COLIN W. SARGENT

That’s it! I’ve had it. I’m renting an RV.
Tired of airport gropings and luggage searches by overzealous members of the TSA? The whole sense of air travel has lost its charm, its Chanel No. 5 fragrance. As a former Navy pilot, I used to love the miracle of flying so much...Eastern, TWA, Pan Am. Do you remember when Delta was Delta? Now that Southwest is the one herding us into the new economy, you’d better laugh when the flight attendants do their insult-comic routines, unless you want a Diet Coke spilled on your lap.

Well, I’m mad as hell, and I’m not going to take it anymore! Happily, I’m not alone.

As airports continue to tighten security, “Consumers cite the freedom and flexibility of recreational vehicles (RVs),” says Bill Baker of the Recreational Vehicle Industry Association, Reston, Virginia. “With an RV, you’re really the captain of your destination. You can stop where you want, change your itinerary. Airlines are costly, and the experience is a hassle. They’re oversold, overbooked. The trend toward luxury RVs has been building for a long time.”

**BEGINNINGS**

My new life takes off when I first start driving my rented Sunseeker 24. As I take a few spins around the parking lot of Seacoast RV on Route 1 in Saco to see what I’m in for, my preconceptions drop away. The amazing thing is, with every inch you drive, the size...
Above: Gray Homestead Oceanfront Camping, 21 Home- stead Rd., Southport, 633-4612. “We’re just across the bridge from Boothbay Harbor,” says Suzanne Gray. “We have a beach and a pier. It’s $50 a night to park right on the ocean.” Also, “we’re just eight miles from Coastal Maine Botanical Gardens.” Talk about a visual double whammy. * For our dinner-wine pairing, we recommend Maine free-range chicken with new potatoes and steamed chard from a farmer’s market. Open a bottle of Cloud Line pinot noir from Oregon and fire up the grill for the chicken.

of the vehicle—at first enormous in your mind, almost Grand Canyon large—gets smaller and smaller.

Behind me is a king-sized bed; a generous cherry kitchen with oven, microwave, gas burners, and refrigerator that’s open 24/7; and best of all, banquette dining beside luxury observation windows as large as an Amtrak dining car’s.

Exploring Maine’s coast during our week-long ($1,235) get-to-know-you session with our moving living room, we feel a thrill of freedom as we pull up to any number of incredible ocean views, a prelude to candlelit dinners (sirloin steak, mushrooms straight out of Mastering the
The Airstream Interstate arrives as the #1 selling Class B van in the U.S. for a reason... we listen intently and then create the incredible.
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Art of French Cooking, asparagus tips, and red wine, along with rashers of bacon and eggs and heavenly fried red tomatoes with orange juice), parked in front of astonishing vistas we’ve never really gotten to see before. Not like this. There’s seeing and then there’s really seeing—on our terms, not somebody else’s. Now this is more like it!

What’s the value of lavishing time on yourselves and letting your dreams just float over lakes and ocean views while you rediscover

Below: Moorings Oceanfront RV Resort, 191 Searsport Avenue, Belfast, 338-6860. “We have 8 oceanfront sites for $67 a night,” says Susan Varisco. “Ocean view is ten dollars less. The campground is also situated so you can go anywhere in Maine and come back in a day.” Special events occur on the campground as well as Papa J’s and the Lobster Bar restaurant on the grounds. There are lobster bakes and “every Friday from 5pm to 6pm we have happy hour with beer and wine for free!” Freshly caught and picked crab meat from the cold waters of Penobscot Bay can’t be beat—how do crab cakes with homemade tartar sauce and fresh picked sugar snap peas sound with a glass of Blanco Nieva Spanish verdejo?

TV in my Sunseeker isn’t connected to cable but instead has a loop antenna that pulls in a surprising amount of stations anywhere I drive, all for the reasonable monthly rate of zero.

Say you pull over to see Portland Head Light and want to watch a quick episode of Bewitched. You can receive Channels 6, 8, and 13, along with a sequenced array of Downton Abbey on various PBS stations. Try ME-TV on Channel 51-2 for That Girl at 8 a.m. on weekdays. Nonplussed? At many campgrounds there’s cable along with electric power, water, and wi-fi. It’s so easy to connect!

Take back your life. Take back nature (during this week we’ve seen at least 40 deer, multiple eagles, a coyote, eyes bright on a lonely road just after midnight). Please take a moment to consider the dreamy RV stops in Maine we recommend, along with our food/view pairings. If this seems too rosy a testimonial, here’s a big negative: You can’t take an RV to Bermuda*. (Actually, you can. Visit www.autoferry.com)

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