

Considerations for your new/new-to-you Airstream. The suggestions are in my recommended priority order. If you have any additional questions or suggestions, you can contact me at [rayputnam@icloud.com](mailto:rayputnam@icloud.com). Our show-and-tell at the Newby rally will be at our trailer #7007, if weather allows. Bring your camera/cell phone and your questions. I will be available all weekend at #7007 and cell 503-936-0139.

1. Install new LT tires if they will fit your trailer. I prefer the Michelin LTX 215/85R 16E MS tires (the Defender, a 50K mile 10 ply tire). Les Schwab has a tire called an Open Range tire LT 215/85R 16E (a 60K mile 10 ply tire). I recommend you do not go wider than a 215 width tire for your Airstream. Some Airstreamers have had success with a 225 width tire and some haven't had success because of shock clearance. **Always look for load range E tires.** You will have to go to 6" x 16" zero offset wheels (I recommend steel wheels powder coated to match the aluminum Airstream) for these tires. The steel wheels will reduce the amount of torquing required as compared to aluminum wheels. A quick measurement on your trailer wheel well to the center of the wheel will tell you if this upgrade is possible. Some trimming on the aluminum fin around the wheel well can be done at the lower end. Your new wheels will have to match the bolt pattern of your trailer wheels. If the 16's won't fit Goodyear has a 15" ST Endurance load range "E" tire that might work. The Goodyear Endurance, has an N speed rating allowing for a max speed of 87 mph. Bottom line, put on the very best tires you can. Everything is riding on your tires! (Also see the tire article in the July Region 10 newsletter.)

2. If you have a single stage power converter (mostly pre-2017 owners) replace it with a three stage (Progressive Dynamics) or four stage (Boondocker) power converter. I prefer domestic power equipment. A single stage power converter will shorten your battery life. A multiple-stage power converter will charge and **maintain** your battery without shortening the battery life. If possible, always keep your battery charged, even if you take it out of the trailer and to your home, keep it charged. Use a "Battery Tender" (maintainer) charger if charging the battery out of the rig. PS: If your batteries are not lasting as long as they are warranted to last, and, they have been properly maintained, the problem might be your power converter. A good source for power converters is [bestconverter.com](http://bestconverter.com). I recommend AGM (non vented) or Lithium batteries for less required maintenance. Be sure your power converter will properly charge Lithium batteries if you decide to go to Lithium batteries.

3. Look at your weight distribution hitch. Is it set up right and does it work for you. Many Airstreamers have discovered the Anderson hitch (see also Airstream Forums). It is light and does not use torsion bars, which, if you have experienced it, can whack your shin if not handled correctly. Anti-sway is built-in to the hitch ball arrangement – no extra device is required. I have used this hitch up to 28' trailer length. It is rated at up to 10,500# towing weight. I mention this hitch because it is much lighter than the torsion bar style and might be easier for some of you to hook up. Longer trailers seem to fare well with the PullRite, Blue-OX, Pro-pride, or Hensley. If you decide to go to an Anderson you should also replace your Atwood coupler with a Bulldog coupler. See the related article in 2019 February Blue Beret.

4. Consider upgrading to absorbent glass mat (AGM) batteries or Lithium batteries. These could be the last battery you'll ever buy! Non-vented batteries can be installed inside your trailer. Inside batteries are happier than outside batteries. With AGM's and Lithium batteries you will not have to add water to your battery! Reduced maintenance is a good thing.

5. Convert to LED lights if you don't already have them. These conversions used to be very costly to consider, but prices have gone way down. The power draw of LEDs is impressively low! And LED lights last forever (almost). If you dry camp, LEDs are much easier on your batteries.

6. Consider adding a power surge protector. Surge protectors can either be permanently mounted in the trailer or plugged between the power pedestal and your trailer. Either way, RV parks are notorious for wildly fluctuating power, and a good surge protector will keep your trailer safe from power highs and lows. If there is any possibility of an electrical storm use a surge protector or unplug your trailer. FYI, I prefer the portable surge protector as I can use it in successive Airstreams! When you buy your surge protector buy a good one (normally indicated by price).

7. Get a quality portable electric heater. It will run quieter than your propane heater and saves propane. You might look for a "milk house style" heater ([www.Grainger.com](http://www.Grainger.com) or [www.Zoro.com](http://www.Zoro.com)). (My favorite brand is "Markel".) If you need heat anytime, it is always good to have **two** possible sources for heat. You can also get a catalytic heater, but you must provide proper ventilation.

8. Look at your mattress(es) in view of comfort. One of the main deterrents to happy camping is not being able to get a good night's sleep! This is fixable! Email me with your specific questions – I have been there and done that. On average, people spend 1/3 of their life in bed.

9. Water heater. If your water heater is gas/electric you are set. If you have gas only there are two electric conversion kits on AMAZON that will allow you to heat water electrically. Electric water heaters are much quieter than gas water heaters (mostly noticed at night). OR/if the gas water heater is inhibiting your sleeping turn it off at night and back on in the morning.

10. What is or has been bugging you about something in or on your trailer? What would you like to do about it? What are **your** ideas? Ask the *Blue Beret* tech help group and, if possible, send photos so they can look at your situation. They just might have some ideas how you could fix or change those items for the better. Your best sources for technical information are: 1 – your club members; 2 - *Blue Beret* tech help group; 3 - The Airstream Forums; 4 - Google.

11. Don't forget security for your coupler and batteries. I recommend a Mega Hitch lock or equal and a lock on the battery compartment.

Spend a little time now to make sure your adventures in the year to come are favorable ones! Happy trails to you, see you, safely, down the road.