

# The Hillbilly



Publication of Watchung NJ Airstream Club

[www.airstreamclub.org/watchung-nj](http://www.airstreamclub.org/watchung-nj) April 2025

## President's Message



The March Luncheon was a success with 18 people in attendance. Thank you to the Egan's for everything especially arranging the location and cohosting! Sorry Nancy could not make it she was missed and we are all wishing her a speedy recovery. The Nunn's and the Molenaar's are new and joined us for their first outing. The Nunn's are planning on attending the April rally if the Airstream arrives in time, let's keep our fingers crossed.

As the camping season is rapidly approaching I wanted to share a resource Frank and I enjoy. The Corps of Engineer

Campgrounds are beautiful with spacious sites and reasonable pricing. There is a directory on Amazon of the 942 campgrounds located in 35 states. If interested it is the Corps of Engineers Camping.

It is the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the WBCCI and I may be asking some of the members who have many years in the club to share some experiences. Our club has members with 25 years or more in the club, this is an amazing milestone. They are:

Fredrick Reinhardt  
Wilma Crawford  
Carolyn Hagman  
George and Linda Kiesel

Marian Wooding  
Valerie Nehlig  
Lea Plant

As promised, I am attaching a recipe (page 7). This month is Irish Soda Bread, I hope you enjoy it, it was shared with me.

Leslie

## Region 2 President's Message

April 2025



As we start the 2025 camping season WBCCI has reached a milestone! The Club is celebrating its 70<sup>th</sup> year. Founded in 1955 it is the largest and oldest single-brand RV club in existence.

Wally Byam, inventor of the iconic Airstream travel trailer, had been leading groups of intrepid travelers on international caravans in their beloved Airstream trailers for four years when the idea to incorporate a caravan club was born. On Aug. 3, 1955, during the Eastern Canada Caravan led by Wally's cousin, Helen Byam

Schwamborn, travelers gathered in Kentville, Nova Scotia, for the first Wally Byam Caravan Club membership meeting. This marked the beginning of a rich tradition, uniting generations of Airstream enthusiasts in our passion for adventure, camaraderie, and exploration.

An oral history project gathering current member stories and recollections about their family's history with the club has begun, with materials gathered to be donated to the soon-to-be established Airstream Club International Historical Center. I'm sending each Club President a list of WBCCI members who have been with the Club 25+ years. My hope is that they reach out to these members and send their recollections, family history and photos to the link below.



<https://blog.airstreamclub.org/how-to-participate-in-the-aci-oral-history-project/>

A historical retrospective campaign highlighting the history of the Club throughout the decades with archival photos, educational presentations by the Club Historian, Joe Peplinski, and personal stories from Dale "PeeWee" Schwamborn, Helen Byam Schwamborn's son, Wally Byam's cousin.

In that vein, I did a search of Region 2 members with greater than 25 years and asked their Club presidents to send me a photo and responses to the same questions. I will be including some of these interviews in my President newsletter.



Roy DeWitte is from the New York Finger Lakes Airstream Club with his home base in Webster, New York. Since he lives less than 5 minutes from my house, he was a logical choice for me to stop in and have a chat. Roy is retired from Eastman Kodak. He has been Airstreaming since 1988 making him a member of

## The Hillbilly

WBCCI for 37 years. He is on his 3<sup>rd</sup> Airstream. The first Airstream he used/borrowed was a 25ft. from his parents so Airstreaming is in his blood. He has had 3 different traveling companions: his wife Louise, Helen Lagasse, and now his daughter Ann.

Roy is a past President of the New York Finger Lakes Unit which was formed in 2003, and is now called the New York Finger Lakes Club. The following Units were combined to create this Unit: Niagara-Genesee, Greater Rochester, Upstate and Susque-Lawrence. Roy has been on many US-based caravans and hosted multiple rallies in the US and Canada. One of his prized possessions is his 46<sup>th</sup> International appreciation gift. One of his notable quotes is "I don't know how to travel without my Airstream."

- **What do you store underneath your dinette?** His response was that the table is foldable and does not have anything underneath.
- **What tools or gadgets have you found to be the most useful for doing on-the-road, DIY repairs?** His response was bring everything. Especially Duct Tape!
- **What do you seek out and stop for on every Airstream Trip?** Watching the scenery and conversation. When I'm driving, I focus on the road.

Roy is noted for his interesting lawn chair. He got the plans from his daughter Nancy's husband and he built one from those plans. He still has the plans if anyone wants to build one.

Wayne and Linda Moore. Joined WBCCI in January 1999 but was asked to be a charter member of a new unit, the Washington DC Unit, just before November 1999 and haven't looked back.



- **Current Airstream** – 1999 (coincidence?) 30' Classic.
- **Streaming Since** – Our very first outing was Nov 1999 to the first Installation Rally. We had to go without our rig because it wasn't finished yet. Our official first outing with our restored 1966 Tradewind was April 2000 to

the WDCU Cherry Blossom Rally in RFK Stadium complete with an armed guard. We also had our Airstreams on the road behind the Capital building with all of us in front of them for a photo op.

- **Number of Airstreams owned** - We have had many, but we didn't travel in all of them. Once we restored our 1966 Tradewind in 1999 we collected Airstreams from all over. The idea was to restore and sell them, but you can't restore anything if you are working then out rallying all the time. Those were the days you could find them in old campgrounds, on property along the highway and found out about others from folks stopping to talk to us and ask us "How do you keep it so shiny?" or "Do they still make those?"
- **Travel Companions** – Just Wayne and I. Kids old enough to stay home alone and no pets. When asked when making reservations if I have any pets my reply is usually, just my husband.
- **Home Base** – Wayne and I were born in New England both from Massachusetts and then moved to southern NH when we were young. In 2024 we sold our house in NH and moved to SC not far south of Greenville. There is no snow here!
- **Why did you decide to purchase an Airstream** – That's a funny story. We brought our kids up tenting and shortly after a pop-up camper. The pop-up had reached the end of its life cycle and I was planning on getting a new tent. Wayne showed me an ad from the newspaper for a 1966

24' Airstream. I gave it back to him without comment and thought, over my dead body! I agreed to go see it choosing my battle. Wayne gabbed all the way, I didn't say a word. A broom handle held the door closed, it was encased in ice and the inside was a disaster with squirrel nests in the drawers. Wayne gabbed all the way home, I didn't say a word. The next morning, I was researching Airstreams and WBCCI. A cup of coffee was placed in my hand, and I said, I don't know why but we have to buy this Airstream. It was flat-bedded home in January 1999 and Wayne started restoring it.

- **What do you seek out and stop for on every Airstream trip** – While we were both working it was mostly rallies and we would try to go see something. It was always a long drive from NH to the mid-atlantic area the rallies were usually in so I was determined to see and learn something. Since retirement we rally when we can but seek out trips south and west where we have never been before. National Parks, Monuments and Battlefields a must. Gotta collect those stamps! It's the only evidence we have been there!?
- **What do you store underneath the dinette and how do you keep things organized** – We don't have a dinette in our 1999 but when we did have a rig with a dinette anything could be found there, ice maker, back packs, computer bags while we were working etc. Organization was always soft bins for the upper lockers with the curve.
- **What tools or gadgets have you found to be the most useful for doing on-the -road, DIY repairs** – Wayne usually has a few bins of tools in the bed of the truck. Rivet guns, wrenches, aluminum stock etc. I can't talk to tools but the items I make sure we travel with is anything I can use to prepare food on the road. We quickly learned fast food on the road can take the excitement out of you. One of my favorite gadgets is my Hot Logic which is the size of a lunch box that plugs into the truck and heats/cooks like a slow cooker. I won't leave without it. I always have my computer, which is always on my lap while traveling to help me navigate when we are in a traffic slow down to find alternate routes, finding the next travel stop or fueling station. We recently added a CB radio for traffic issue information, communicating with others we may be traveling with or for serious weather issues.
- **How do you pass the time and stay motivated when you faced long stretches on the road** – Music, researching the area we are driving through on my laptop then sharing the findings. Wayne does most of the driving, but I share maybe 25%- 30% to be able to give him a break.

I recall telling Wayne, who is the one who signed us up with WBCCI, "Don't be signing us up to any of those blue hair groups!" Well, here we are 26 years later and still members of the WDCU, retired with gray hair. Both of us have participated as Unit Officers, VAC Officers and I am the unit newsletter editor. I hope we can rally and travel for many, many more years! We can't wait to go rallying with our Airstream family!

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The largest celebration takes place in August at the Airstream Club International Rally in York, Pennsylvania. Taking advantage of the "Let's Make History" theme of this year's Rally, the club will host activities throughout the weeklong rally highlighting the rich history of the club.

Registrations for the Region 2 International Rally Luncheon at York, the Region 2 Rally at the Center County Grange Fairgrounds, and the joint Sampson State Park Rally, are now open. The links are below. There is limited space for seating at the International Luncheon in York so do not delay! Right now, we have 235 rigs signed up for the International. If everyone attends, that works out to approx. 425 people for the Luncheon. Mission BBQ is catering the meal, and we have quite the spread planned!

Region 2 International Rally Luncheon at York registration

<https://form.jotform.com/250156206580148>



## The Hillbilly

This year's Region 2 Rally is being sponsored by the Washington DC Unit. The theme is Kentucky Derby. We will be showing the race live at the Rally along with other activities.

Region 2 Rally at Center County Grange Fairgrounds registration

<https://form.jotform.com/243194535933159>

This is the 5<sup>th</sup> year for this Rally at Sampson. This year the Pennsylvania, New York Finger Lakes and Region 1 are the sponsors for this event. The theme is a Taste of New York and New England. Come join the Rally. There will be Wine and Craft Beer tasting at the Rally with charcuterie boards and gourmet popcorn, two catered dinners, and a Sunday Continental Breakfast. There is also a separate bus wine tour if you are so inclined.

Sampson State Park registration

<https://form.jotform.com/243194600769159>

**We currently have 10 sites left for this event in loop 4.**

Again, I want to remind people that headquarters will be sending out a notice searching for Executive Council candidates to fill the subsequent slate of nominee positions. If you are interested in becoming a candidate to help direct the Airstream club, I want to encourage you to fill out an application form. Even if you are not interested, your vote does count! Please take the time to read about the candidates, get acquainted with them, and reach out to their local Club President or the Region officers if you have any questions while making your voting decisions.

Why not YOU? The search is on. My term as Region 2 President comes to an end on July 31, 2025. The Region 2 team is looking for a 2<sup>nd</sup> VP. Region 2 covers the following areas: Ontario Canada, Pennsylvania, New York, New Jersey, Washington DC, Delaware, and Maryland. If you are interested in volunteering as a Region officer, please contact me, Patti Galupo or Matt Moore to join this dynamic team! Support positions at the International are still open. Tours Chair and Community Service both report to Sherrye McCabe. Sherrye works out of the Jackson Center office. Debbie Wood is also looking for people to support the Meals & Refreshments committee. Please contact Jackson Center if interested.

If you see an area of support that interests you, please step up.

1. Provide local information for International Club's Marketing/Communications including:
  - Identify several contributors to write articles for club publications about the rally locale,
  - Best routes to the rally site,
  - Camping suggestions for enroute to the rally through the region,
  - Staging areas near the rally site for members to meet up before entering rally site (for parking together),
  - Suggestions for local vendors to participate in the exhibitor show, and
  - Other local information specific to the region and rally site that is useful to members traveling in the area.
2. At the Sedalia Rally, the **Ambassador program** was started and well received. A signup list will be coming from Jackson Center.
  - Recruited volunteers from the local clubs in the region will act as **Ambassadors** at the rally which will involve:
    - Answering questions, providing directions to events in the park and being that enthusiastic presence ready to offer a smile and some assistance.

## The Hillbilly

- Attending an orientation session at the start of the rally to be briefed on the rally logistics and other information as needed, and to set up the rally event app and learn to use it.
- Wearing special vests provided by the rally that identifies them as Rally Ambassadors.
- Posting at strategic locations around the rally site to assist members with questions, directions, or local information.
- Manning the doors to the Exhibitor Hall before opening hours to allow only exhibitors to enter.

### 3. Identify

- Community Service programs
- Local tourist attractions

As you can see, we have multiple opportunities to help at the York Rally.

Please contact

4. Primary: Debbie Wood, 704-430-9196, [dwood@airstreamclub.org](mailto:dwood@airstreamclub.org) \
5. Secondary: Sherrye McCabe, 937-722-1436, [smccabe@airstreamclub.org](mailto:smccabe@airstreamclub.org)

Let's Make History at the 68<sup>th</sup> Airstream Club International Rally located in York, Pennsylvania: August 23-28, 2025. Registration is now open. Go to the Airstream Club website today and don't miss out seeing old friends and making new ones at the event. This event is in our Region -- let's show them how to have fun!!!

Regards, Gary Russo



# Hillbilly Cooking

This month's recipe is for the crusty Irish soda bread Leslie baked for the March luncheon.

## *Equipment*

10" or larger iron skillet

Pastry brush

Optional: stand mixer with bread hook; the soda bread can be made by hand but requires more effort and is messier.

## *Ingredients*

4 cups flour

2 cups sugar

1 tsp baking soda

1 tsp salt

2 tbsp butter

8 oz currents or raisins

2 tbsp caraway seeds

1-3/4 cups buttermilk plus ¼ cup

## *Instructions*

1. Preheat the oven to 325.
2. Grease a 10-inch iron frying pan with butter. Other baking pans will work but the iron pan creates the best crust.
3. Add the dry ingredients to the mixing bowl and briefly mix together.
4. Melt the butter and add to the dry ingredients. Mix briefly to incorporate.
5. Add the buttermilk and mix using the dough hook on a low speed. The dough will slowly come together and form a ball.
6. Once the ball has formed turn it out of the mixing bowl into the iron skillet and shape the dough by hand to fit to the edge.
7. Cut a cross on the top of the loaf with a sharp knife and brush with the remaining buttermilk.
8. Bake 45-60 minutes until a toothpick comes out clean
9. Cool about 10 minutes in the pan then turn out onto a wire rack to continue cooling.



# Announcements

## Sunshine Report

The club sent a card to Nancy Egan.

*Would you like to have a card sent to another club member to wish them well or mark a milestone? Please send a note to Linda Kiesel our Sunshine Director at [lkiesel@ptd.net](mailto:lkiesel@ptd.net).*



### How to Find, Sign Up and Pay for an ACI Event Online

- Log on to <https://airstreamclub.org/>
- Click on the EVENTS tab
- A map of the US will be displayed containing pins for all the events for all the Airstream clubs. Just above the map on the right side of the screen is the Clubs box. Click on the down arrow to display the list of clubs then scroll down to **Watchung NJ Club**. Clicking on this will cause the map to display only Watchung club events.
- Find the event you wish to sign up for and click on the associated pin.
- A text box giving a brief description of the event will be displayed. Click on the arrow in the orange box that says **More**.
- A new page will be displayed. If a registration form has been created for the event this page will give you two options: online registration or mail-in registration using a download of the form. The online form allows payment via PayPal. If you prefer to pay via check download and print the form, which includes payment instructions. If there is no registration form available yet one will be at a later date.

## This Month's Birthdays

Chris Beddiges  
Jay McCarthy  
Andy Dunkinson  
Stayla Elacqua  
Derek Conley  
Ohilda Breen

### Items for the newsletter?

Send them by the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month to: ([dconley1810@gmail.com](mailto:dconley1810@gmail.com))

**Interested in joining the Watchung NJ Airstream club?**

Contact:

Membership: George Kiesel ([gkiesel861@gmail.com](mailto:gkiesel861@gmail.com))

President: Leslie DeHerde ([lesairstreaming@gmail.com](mailto:lesairstreaming@gmail.com))





# 2025 Watchung Airstream Club Rally and Luncheon Schedule

*From First VP Heidi Cullen:*

Just a quick reminder: we still need hosts for June and September. Please let me know if you are interested and we will help you all the way! reach out to me at 973-945-3406 (text or phone) or email at [heidi.watch.air@gmail.com](mailto:heidi.watch.air@gmail.com).

DATE	WHAT/WHEN	HOSTS	COHOSTS	VENUE
April 2025	Unbutton-your-rig rally and club business meeting/April 24-27	George and Linda Kiesel	Saskia Schmidt and Brian Stein	Holly Acres Campground, Egg Harbor, NJ
May 2025	Region 2 Rally/May 1-4	Washington DC Unit	NA	Centre County Grange Encampment & Fair, 169 Homan Lane, Centre Hall PA 16828
June 2025	Club Rally/	Host Needed	CoHost Needed	
July 2025	Club and Buddy Rally/July 11-14	Steve and Cynthia Germansky	Lois Wagner/Derek Conley	Croton Point Park, Croton-on-Hudson, New York
August 2025	International Aug 23-28 and club business meeting	WBCCI	N/A	York, PA
September 2025	Club Rally/	Host needed	CoHost Needed	
October 2025	Club Rally/Annual Business Meeting October 3-5	Pat and Florence Attanasio	CoHost needed	Kymer's Camping Resort, Branchville, NJ
November 2025	Luncheon/TBA	Barbara Taylor and Michael Koczwar	CoHost needed	TBA
December 2025	Installation Luncheon/TBA	Heidi and Brian Cullen	Leslie/ Frank DeHerde	TBA

In addition to the club and International rallies, ACI also offers National Event Rallies. Find the [complete list of National Event Rallies on AirstreamClub.org](#).

# Unbutton Your Rig, April 2025

Holly Acres Campground  
218 S. Frankfurt Ave. Egg Harbor City NJ 08215  
609-965-5055

**Hosts:** George & Linda Kiesel 908-930-0550    Brian Stein 609-992-7006

**When:** **Thursday April 24<sup>th</sup> through Sunday April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025** Hosted by George and Linda Kiesel.  
Cohost Saskia Schmidt and Brian Stein.

**Where:** Holly Acres Campground. Egg Harbor City NJ 08215

## Schedule

**Thursday:** arrivals, Official check in time is any time after 12pm.

**Friday:** Enjoy the day on your own. Many activities in the area. Happy hour 5pm. Hot dogs and Hamburgers 6pm. Bring your own plates and utensils to **all meals**. Campfire weather permitting

**Saturday:** Breakfast 8:30-9:30, Blueberry pancakes, sausage, coffee, juice. Enjoy day on your own. Many activities in and around the area, see activities list attached.  
Happy hour 5pm, Dinner 6pm, Catered dinner, Lasagna, Chicken Marsala, Green salad and dessert. Charitable auction/ collection for Covenant House following dinner. Campfire weather permitting. Executive board meeting 7:30 pm

**Sunday:** Continental Breakfast 8:30-9:30. Business meeting 10am.  
Cleanup and departure. Check-out time is 11am, but no later than 1pm.

**Please note that you are asked to not bring your pet to the pavilion during happy hour / mealtimes. Thank you.**

Please call the campground directly for reservations. If you pay for Friday and Saturday, the campground will give you Thursday for free!! Mention the Airstream Club to Hailey.

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Name\_\_\_\_\_ Email\_\_\_\_\_ Cell#\_\_\_\_\_

Rally Fee per adult; \$20.00 x number of adults = \$\_\_\_\_\_ (no fee for Kids)

Make checks payable to; Watchung NJ Airstream Club or pay online with PayPal.  
Mail checks to Lois Wagner 29 Colony Court New Providence NJ 07974

## Region 2 Rally: Kentucky Derby Days

**Sponsored by:** Washington DC Unit

**Location:** Centre County Grange Encampment & Fair, 169 Homan Lane, PO Box 271, Centre Hall, PA 16828

**Dates:** May 1-4, 2025

**Cost:** \$230 per trailer, plus \$60 per person rally fee (children under age 12 are free)

**Early Check-in:** 11:00 am, Wednesday, April 30th is the only available option due to other activities at the venue. If you plan on arriving April 30th the cost is \$48.30. This fee needs to be paid with your registration below.

**Check-in:** 11:00 am, Thursday, May 1st (parking volunteers arrive at 11:00 am)

**Departure:** 3:00 pm, Sunday, May 4th. There is no option of extending the departure date this year due to another event scheduled at the venue.

**Rally Reservation Limit:** unlimited sites available

**Additional Information:**

- All sites have electric and water service.
- Water pressure is HIGH so bring a pressure regulator.
- There is a waste station on the Fairgrounds.
- Coin operated shower facilities (\$2 for 4 minutes).
- Restroom facilities onsite.
- Each trailer will receive a welcome bag.
- If bringing a pet you must be able to present up-to-date valid immunization paperwork. Pets must on a leash at all times and owners are responsible solely for cleaning up after their pets.
- As with any campsite, you are responsible for securing all food, beverages and valuables.
- Link to park website <https://www.grangefair.com/>

**Planned activities include:**

- Catered breakfast - Saturday morning
- Saturday catered buffet dinner followed by Run for the Roses, games and Derby Party!!!
- Music by our own Party Girl Dancing Patty G.
- Sunday continental breakfast

**RALLY REGISTRATION DEADLINE: April 20<sup>th</sup>.**

**Use this link to register:** <https://form.jotform.com/243194535933159>

**Refund policy:**

Before March 30th - 80% refund

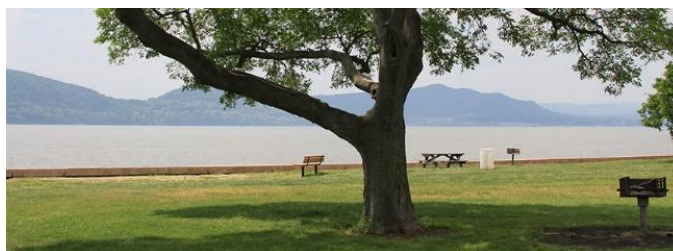
March 30th - April 20th - 50% refund

After April 20th - No refund

# July Rally

## Watchung Airstream Club July BUDDY Rally\* - Croton Point Park & Pleasantville Music Festival

Friday, July 11<sup>th</sup> – Monday, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2025



**Where:** Croton Point Park, Croton Point Ave, Croton-On-Hudson, NY 10520

**Details:** <https://parks.westchestergov.com/croton-point-park>  
[www.pleasantvillemusicfestival.com](http://www.pleasantvillemusicfestival.com)

**Location:** <https://maps.app.goo.gl/6W6GMwcGDP9hXSSz7>

**Hosts** Cynthia & Steve Germansky **Cohosts:** Lois Wagner & Derek Conley (sites #14 and #16)

Book your spot for the Croton Point & Pleasantville Music Festival Rally. Croton Point Park is a 508-acre park, the largest peninsula on the east shore of the Hudson River. Arrive Friday, stay until Monday if you desire. **Twenty sites are being held for Watchung AC until February 28<sup>th</sup>.** Currently eight sites are booked. **Available remaining sites reserved for Watchung AC through Feb 28:** 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, 21, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39

**Reservations by phone only, call 914-862-5290**

**ACI Website Link:** [Watchung July 2025 Rally | ACI](#)

RV Site – full hookups: \$60/night (see park website for map and be sure to read the park's rules and regulations. For example, no alcoholic beverages and no "ground fires". Solo stoves are apparently OK.)

Please email Steve Germansky your arrival/departure dates and site # [egerms@verizon.net](mailto:egerms@verizon.net) 973-495-1067

Group meals: To be collected at the rally, details to follow

\* Buddy Rallies allow Watchung members to invite non-Airstream owning friends to camp with the club.

# October Rally and General Meeting

**Hosts:** Pat & Florence Attanasio [pjattanasio@yahoo.com](mailto:pjattanasio@yahoo.com) [fcattanasio@yahoo.com](mailto:fcattanasio@yahoo.com) Cell: 201-859-7481

**When:** Friday, October 3rd – Sunday, October 5th. Early arrival, Thursday, October 2nd.

**Where:** Kymer's Camping Resort, 69 Kymer Road, Branchville, NJ 07826 **Office:** 973-875-3167  
<https://www.njcamping.com/kymers/index.htm> [kymers@NJcamping.com](mailto:kymers@NJcamping.com)

The October Rally brings us to rural Northern NJ and the last weeks of the Fall colors. Kymer's Camping Resort will be home base for daily excursions to surrounding parks, museums, antiques and adult beverage purveyors. Or simply stay on site and enjoy your Airstream. Kymer's will place us as close together as possible while optimizing their site-to-RV size placements. Your hosts will be in Oak-5. The campground will accept your reservation at any time, but to ensure optimal placement please reserve as soon as possible, preferably before March 1st. Refer to their web site (above) for current pricing.

## Site Fees:

- 30 amp, electric, water, cable TV (no sewer): \$70
- 30 amp, above plus sewer: \$80
- 50 amp, electric, water, cable TV and sewer: \$85

**Rally fees** include breakfast on Saturday and Sunday mornings as well as a catered dinner Saturday night. Please consider contributing a dessert to Saturday's dinner.

Rally fees will be calculated and collected on Sunday morning after we have totaled our actual expenses. We're estimating at least \$25 per person.

## To attend this event,

- Call the campground, tell them you're with this group and reserve your site
- Email [pjattanasio@yahoo.com](mailto:pjattanasio@yahoo.com) with your BRN, site number, days attending and number attending. Please note any dietary restrictions or accommodations so that we can plan appropriate menus.

**Check-in:** 2:00pm

**Check-out:** 2:00pm

## Tentative Agenda:

- Thursday: Arrivals and Free-range activities, 1:00pm-5:00pm
- Friday: Breakfast, 8:00am-9:30am
- Arrivals and Free-range activities, 9:30am-5:00pm
- Happy hour, 5:00pm-6:00pm, dinner on your own, campfire
- Saturday: Breakfast, 8:00am-9:30am
- Free range activities, 9:30am-5:00pm
- Happy hour, 5:00pm-6:00pm, dinner to follow, campfire
- Sunday: Breakfast, 8:30am-10:00am
- Club Exec/Business Meeting – 10:00am-12:00pm
- Pack out, hit the road (2:00pm checkout), 12:00pm -



Spring trip part 6

## Black Hills, Deadwood, and Badlands National Park

*In the spring of 2024, we took an 8,267-mile trip from New Jersey to the Oregon pacific coast and back. This article picks up where we left off in last month's issue: headed south from Theodore Roosevelt National Park for the Black Hills of South Dakota and Badlands National Park.*

*Text and photos by Lois Wagner and Derek Conley*

Leaving Theodore Roosevelt National Park we headed 200 miles south on US 85 for a visit to the [Black Hills](#) of South Dakota. Named for the pine forests that cover the mountains in contrast to the surrounding treeless Great Plains, the Black Hills are the easternmost expression of the [geological forces](#) that created the Rocky Mountains but sit by themselves in a nearly circular formation over 100 miles east of the nearest outcropping of the Rockies. Best known as the home of [Mount Rushmore](#), the Black Hills also feature other tourist attractions such as [Devils Tower National Monument](#) (across the state line in Wyoming), [Wind Cave National Park](#), [Jewel Cave National Monument](#), [Custer State Park](#) with its [Needles Highway](#), the town of Sturgis, famous for its annual [motorcycle rally](#), and our first destination, the former gold rush town of [Deadwood](#).

Although we had hoped to stay near Deadwood at the Deadwood/Black Hills KOA, it, along with several other nearby campgrounds did not open until May 1 or May 15, and as it was the third week in April, we stayed a few miles away at the Spearfish KOA, which opened April 1.

Founded in the frenzy that followed George Armstrong Custer's 1874 announcement of finding gold in the Black Hills, within two years Deadwood went from not existing to a town of about 25,000 people that was well known for its lawlessness (it was an illegal town in Native American territory and thus outside the laws of any government) and violence: [Wild Bill Hickock](#) was murdered while playing cards



*Looking south on Main Street, Deadwood South Dakota, Sunday morning.*

in a saloon at 624 Lower Main Street. In 1879 much of the town burned down and by then most of the gold was played out, although the Homestake Mine, in the nearby town of Lead, continued operating until 2002 and is now a tourist attraction. The first official US census of the town, in 1880, enumerated only

## The Hillbilly

3,777 residents.

Deadwood burned again in 1959. The relatively few original buildings that remained after the two fires led it to be designated, in 1961, as a National Historical Landmark for its frontier architecture. Fortune finally began to favor the town in 1989 when the South Dakota Legislature authorized limited gambling in Deadwood. At the time, the only places in the US (aside from tribal casinos) where gambling was legal were Las Vegas, Atlantic City, and Deadwood.

Today the brick main street of Deadwood (current population about 1,350) is lined with [saloons](#) that host poker and blackjack tables with five-dollar minimum bets. Two or three establishments offer roulette and craps. Although cars are allowed on the street, it mostly serves as a pedestrian walkway as the sidewalks can't accommodate the volume of people who throng the town beginning in the late afternoon. We met up with friends, blackjack enthusiasts, who visit Deadwood once a year, and saloon-hopped with them for an evening.

The following day we drove south through the Black Hills and toured Mount Rushmore National Memorial. Visiting it for the first time we could easily see, looking left to right, the money running out by



*Crazy Horse Memorial, April 2024*

the time the carvers got to Lincoln in the late 1930s and we were surprised that the original plan for the monument called for all four presidents to be depicted to the waist. We could only imagine how much more time and money that would have taken. Speaking of time and money we passed on Needles Parkway as we were pressed for time and South Dakota wants \$20 for 14 miles of road, way worse than the Jersey Turnpike. (Okay yes, the Needles is more scenic but still.)

On the way back to our trailer we passed the [Crazy Horse Memorial](#) which is only a few miles from Mount Rushmore (both memorials are controversial among Native Americans, who view the sculptures as desecrating the Black Hills, which are sacred to the Sioux). Under construction since 1948, the face and left

hand are said to be finished, with the arm, shoulder, hairline and the top of the horse's head scheduled to be completed by 2032. Comparing what has been done since 1948 with the plan, we wonder if, like Mount Rushmore, the final version will be anything resembling the vision. Carving mountains is a bold proposition indeed.

Saying goodbye to our blackjack friends, we drove 100 miles east on I-90 to our next stop, the unearthly landscape of Badlands National Park. Passing through Rapid City, on the eastern edge of the Black Hills, we noticed that the new car dealers next to the



*Model of the planned Crazy Horse Memorial when complete. Photo Wikipedia.*

## The Hillbilly

interstate had their inventory parked under steel covers, something we'd never seen before (you can see the shelters on the Google Maps satellite view by searching for Rapid City Car Dealers). Why? Hail. Hail big enough to badly damage vehicles and frequent enough to warrant the expense of steel shelters for car dealers is a growing problem in many parts of the US. The most recent statistics we could find listed [4,437 hailstorms](#) during 2022 in the US with 40% of them in Texas, Nebraska, Minnesota, Kansas and (ta-dah!) South Dakota with an average repair cost of [\\$5,000 per car](#). A few days later in our trip we would meet a couple in an Ohio campground who were on their way to have their Airstream's hail damage repaired at the factory in Jackson Center, Ohio. Fortunately for our trip, we were pretty safe from encountering a hailstorm, [which surge in frequency](#) and damage between May 15 and July 15 with peak activity in June. Trying to put visions of hail aside, we pressed on to the Badlands.

The [badlands of South Dakota](#) look nothing like the badlands of North Dakota (covered in last month's issue). In our experience they look like nothing else on Earth. We'd call them a moonscape but they look nothing like pictures we've seen of the moon. These badlands started to erode about 500,000 years ago and they erode at the rate of about one inch per year (in contrast, the hard granites of the Black Hills erode roughly 1 inch per 10,000 years). The badlands are forecast to disappear, completely eroded away, in another 500,000 years. As the National Park Service advertises: "see them while you can!"

We camped in the heart of the park's North Unit at the [Cedar Pass RV and Campground](#), a private concession that has a contract with the National Park Service. The campground consists of two large ovals with parking for 96 RVs and, unusually for a national park, each space has electric service. The North Unit has an excellent scenic drive, Sage Creek Rim Road, that gives visitors a good view of many of the park's geological highlights. Some of these stops include boardwalks and ramps that make venturing into the rock formations accessible to everyone. For the more ambitious there are extensive hiking trails and back-country camping. Unlike Theodore Roosevelt Park's North and South units, which are about 70 miles apart, the north and south units of Badlands National Park are contiguous with the North Unit being the most visited while the South Unit is larger and more remote.

Unfortunately, we will have to return for a more thorough exploration as our schedule limited us to just a day and a night at Badlands National Park before we had to resume our trip back to New Jersey. In the meantime, we have a lot of great photos to remember it by.



*A view of the RV campground at Badlands National Park looking north towards the Badlands Wall, which separates the lower southern prairie from the higher northern prairie and is the most prominent feature of the South Dakota Badlands. These badlands are an island of eroded rock in a vast sea of grassy plains—the largest undisturbed mixed-grass prairie in the US. The grass grows wherever the soil contains sufficient nutrients while the badlands areas consist of soils that contain insufficient nutrients and thus are exposed to weathering.*



*The Hillbilly*











*Left and right: Swallow's nests under a bathroom eave, Badlands National Park.*



*View from Sage Creek Rim road, the park's scenic drive.*



*Paleosol "yellow mounds": shale seabed from the Western Interior Seaway that eroded into soil and then reformed into rock.*



*Castle formation at sunset.*



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