

Tire Option - Follow Up

In a previous article, I discussed an experience with failed tires and outlined a tire upgrade. I highly recommended the LTX MS2 Michelin on a 16" rim. The details are in the last article. Some of you won't be able to fit that tire and wheel on your trailer because some of you have 14" and 15" wheels with smaller wheel wells. All you can do is get the best tire you can that will fit. More plies is a good thing in my opinion. The LT tire doesn't limit your cruising speed. Anything less may limit your cruising speed. SP tires (special purpose- such as the Goodyear Marathon ST tires) are limited to 65 MPH at 65 psi. And, that is the upper limit of their capability. A little lower would be wise. All tires come with a warranty, but they are not created equal. It is a good idea to review the warranty before you purchase tires so you can review all the scenarios for non-coverage.

For those of you who may want to take the tire/wheel arrangement a little further, you might want to consider Centramatic wheel balancers. Most of the truckers use them and they will also work on your trailer. The Centramatic wheel balancer just has to be matched for wheel size and lug hole spacing. They come with instructions. The Centramatic wheel balancer mounts between the wheel and the hub. The instructions say that the Centramatic wheel balancer, which has a ring on the outside partially filled with sand, will mount with the ring on the inside or the outside depending upon clearances. The ring has to clear all metal so there is no drag. When the tire shop mounts your tires and wheels they normally balance the tires before they put them on your trailer. The Centramatic mounts between the wheel and the hub. The Centramatic's just compensate for any variances. This is not a have-to item, maybe just a want-to.

Don't forget to have the wheel bearings checked periodically and re-lubed if necessary (newer models have Nev-R-Lube bearings). This is also a good time to have the brakes checked and repaired as necessary. I have my wheel bearings and brakes checked every two years. Depending upon your mileage (Airstream recommends at 10,000 miles), you might have to do it more often.

You still need to get a torque wrench of your own and check and set your lug nuts every time you put your trailer on the road. You will want to verify the torque specs for the wheels; if they are the original wheels, consult your owner's manual. If you have aftermarket wheels, verify the proper torque from the vendor. The current spec for 15" aluminum wheels on the 2016 Airstream trailers is 115 lbs.

Never tighten the lug nuts with an impact wrench. Always do your final tightening with the torque wrench. Use a "star" shaped pattern when tightening opposite nuts in order. Tighten all nuts to "close," then make a final pass with the final torque set. Then you will have to perform your periodic checks. What you will find is that you will have to continue to check the aluminum wheels forever (it took 2600 miles on mine to get them to settle down). Just in case you haven't seen it in the manual, you are supposed to check torque on aluminum wheels, once they have been mounted, after 25 miles, after 50 miles, after 100 miles, and every 200 miles thereafter. Steel wheels will settle down sooner (it took 1500 miles on mine) and hold longer. There is a different coefficient of expansion between steel and aluminum. That is why you get the variances. Even though you find that your lug nuts are not changing, you should still check them before you go mobile. Once you get your torque wrench set for your tires, it only takes 5 minutes to check all your lug nuts and reset them if necessary. I recommend a good mechanical "clicker" torque wrench. They have digital ones, but they require a battery, and that just requires more work. Airstreaming is supposed to be about less work and more fun! See you down the road.