



THE BIG BENDER

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Presidents Message:



Paynes Prairie showcased a truly unique part of our state, reminding us just how much natural beauty Florida has to offer. Our state parks do an outstanding job of preserving these special places while giving us the opportunity to explore and enjoy them. Be sure to look later in this newsletter for more information on Florida State Parks and how

you can make the most of them.

We are well into our spring camping adventures, and it's been wonderful to see so many members out enjoying the season. It's always so much fun to visit, share stories from our adventures, and reminisce about past rallies. If you haven't attended a rally—or if it's been a while—you're truly missing out.

I'm especially looking forward to our upcoming "Off to the Races" Kentucky Derby rally—it promises to be a fun and festive event for all. I hope to see many of you there; there are still a few campsites available.

Safe travels, and happy camping!

See you at the Races!

Amy Waymire

President,
Big Bend Florida Airstream Club

Rally Recap

Camping on the Prairie
Paynes Prairie
April 10-12, 2026

Paynes Prairie Preserve State Park near Micanopy, Florida is a beautiful park. The park has so much to offer. The campground has all the plusses- wooded, spacious private sites. The Visitor Center is lovely with loads of information about the prairie, wetlands, wildlife.

The rally was scheduled from Friday , April 2026 through Saturday evening the 11th. But, most attendees arrived Thursday. We gathered at Site 42, Dave and Julie Ludlow at 4:30pm. Julie gave out bags filled with information of the local attractions and a happy alligator pen.

On Friday, the Preserve was enjoyed by many. There are several trails that took us to see the wildlife- alligators, wild horses, birds, and even bison. Some enjoyed nearby Pearls BBQ for lunch. It's also a store and a gas station. Truly, the brisket was excellent! Others visited the quaint historic Micanopy. That evening was a business meeting followed by a lovely soup and salad dinner.

Saturday morning our group gathered at 10am at the Visitor Center. We dispersed to more of the Preserve and some went into Gainesville. There was a wonderful Arts Festival at Santa Fe college. That evening Elwood McElhaney gave a veritable concert with his awesome voice and guitar playing.

At 9:00am there was a devotion and farewell. Rick and David Ludlow gave lovely devotions.

Birdie Gardner



Up Next...

<p style="text-align: center;">Off to the Races Eastbank COE Park May 1-3, 2026</p>	<p>Make your reservations at recreation.gov, choose Section C. Be sure to register on the jot form at airstreamclub.org</p>
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The first weekend of May is our Derby Rally as Saturday, the second, is the Kentucky Derby day.

The rally is at the Eastbank COE Campground along Lake Seminole just north of the FL/GA border and about 2 miles north of Chattahoochee, FL. The campground appears well maintained and the sites large. The lake is available for fishing and boating...just watch for alligators!

The town of Chattahoochee is quite small but does have a brewery and a few restaurants featuring mostly bar food such as burgers, wings, pizza, etc. There also appears to be a seafood restaurant.

Quincy is about 15 miles west and, if you enjoyed Bainbridge, GA, and wish to return, it is approximately half an hour away.



Whatever you decide to do, be sure to be at the campground Saturday afternoon for a “full blown” Derby party! Our president will be contacting you as to what part she wishes you to play. Be sure to wear your fancy Derby party clothes and hats. “A splendid time is guaranteed for all!”

David Ludlow



Off to the Races

May 1 - 3, 2026
Eastbank COE

Thursday -

1:00 pm - Tour Jim Woodruff Dam
Welcome - Dinner on your own
6:00 pm - Campfire (site TBD)

Friday -

3:00 pm Craft Hats and Horses
4:00 pm Happy Hour
5:00 pm Dinner followed by Game Night
Trivia
Bingo
Dominos
Left, Right, Center

Saturday -

9:30 am Breakfast

3:00 pm Let the Games Begin
5:00 pm Let the Party Begin
6:45 pm Get ready for the Derby/Old Kentucky Home
6.58 Kentucky Derby

An Interview with District 1 Bureau Chief by SammyStockstill

Greetings Big Benders,

Recently, I was able to meet with Division of Parks & Recreation District 1 Bureau Chief, Sasha Craft. Our conversations don't occur very often, but I like to check in with Sasha now and then because she is a former student of mine. We share a love for the wildlife and state parks in our area, so the most popular parks are usually discussed with enthusiasm, however she asked me if I had camped in some of the lesser known parks in her district. We had camped in most, but I

asked her if she would give a little glimpse of each for some of our members who may be new, or have never camped in some of these lesser known gems. She submitted the following:



Florida State Parks are consistently ranked among the best in the country, with award-winning natural beauty, well-maintained campgrounds, and remarkable diversity from springs to pine flatwoods to beaches. Our parks offer incredible destinations for camping travelers. While many of us are familiar with the more popular spots such as St. Andrews and Topsail, some of the most memorable adventures can be found in the quieter, lesser-known parks waiting to be explored. Next time you are planning your camping trip, consider adding these hidden gems to your travel list:

Falling Waters State Park:

Home to Florida's tallest waterfall, this Panhandle treasure offers lush fern-covered sinkholes and shaded walking trails that feel worlds away from the typical Florida landscape. It's a peaceful stop with a small, charming campground that makes for a perfect weekend retreat. Bring your camera, the waterfall cascading into a 100-foot sinkhole is something you don't see every day in Florida!

Florida Caverns State Park:

Yes, caves in Florida! This unique park features guided tours through stunning limestone caverns filled with stalactites, stalagmites, and fascinating geological formations. Above ground, you'll find wooded campsites, biking trails, and kayaking opportunities along the Chipola River. It's a refreshing change of scenery and a wonderful place to gather with fellow Airstreamers.

Ochlockonee River State Park:

Nestled where pine flatwoods meet the winding Ochlockonee River, this quiet park is ideal for those who love paddling, fishing, birdwatching, and stargazing. The serene setting offers spacious campsites and a slower pace that invites you to truly unwind and connect with nature.

Challenge yourself this season to venture beyond the familiar and explore these special places. Hook up, roll out, and discover a new favorite stop. You might just find that the road less traveled leads to the most unforgettable memories. Happy camping!

Information about me:

I serve as the Bureau Chief for District 1, overseeing Florida State Parks from Tallahassee to Pensacola. I was born and raised in Panama City and have been with Florida State Parks since 2002. It is truly an honor to be a part of the Florida Park Service and to help carry out its mission to preserve, interpret, and restore Florida's natural and cultural resources.

2026 Rally Schedule

Dates	Campground	Where		Hosts	Reservation
May 1-3, 2026	EastBank COE	Chattahoochee, FL	Off to the Races	Everyone	Window is open www.recreation.gov
Aug 22-27, 2026		Minot, ND	International		
September 10-13, 2026	Windcreek State Park	Alexander City, AL	Lake Life	Craig & Monica Brinkley	Window is open www.alapark.com
October 9-11, 2026	Pensacola RV Park	Pensacola, FL	Angels & Airstreams	Namans & Andersons	Window is open 1-850-944-1734
October 11-18, 2026	<i>Club Caravan</i>	Natches, MS - Lynchburg, TN	Tracin' & Tastin' Caravan	Chad & Dolores Jones	Currently Full
November 13-15, 2026	Coastline RV Resort	Eastpoint, FL	Not So Forgotten Coast Rally	Sammy & Chris Stockstill Jason Friedrich	Window is open 1-850-799-1016

Reservations are open for all campgrounds!
After securing your spot, don't forget to fill out the rally registration form at airstreamclub.org so your hosts can plan for your arrival.



2027 Rally Schedule

DATES	CAMPGROUND	WHERE	HOST	RESERVATIONS
February 11-14, 2027	Suwannee River Music Park	Live Oak, FL		sites saved -instructions pending
March 19-21, 2027	Tallahassee Car Museum	Tallahassee, FL	Brinkleys	sites saved- instructions pending
April 7-11, 2027	Region 3	Sevierville, TN		
April 15-18, 2027	Lake Pines	Columbus, GA		706-561-9675
April 18-29, 2027	Brews with Views		Stockstills	details to follow
May 13-16, 2027	TH Stone Memorial Sp	Port St. Joe, FL		window open 6-13-2026
June 26-July 1, 2027	International Rally	Rock Springs, WY		details to follow
September 16-19, 2027	Crooked River SP	Kingsland, GA		window open 8-16-2026 GA state park
October 7-10, 2027	Topsail Hill Preserve SP	Santa Rosa Beach, FL		window open 11-7-2026
November 11-14, 2027	Reed Bingham SP	Adel, GA		window open 10-11-2026 GA state park

*Note to date change for the April

rally and Caravan



"Remember that although they may speak a different language, they are still the same kind of people as the folks you know at home, have the same mental processes, are just as kindly and just as friendly. Remember that, quit talking and start over again - in pantomime." ~ Wally Byam

Visit us on the Web <https://airstreamclub.org/big-bend-florida>

[Bend Florida Airstream Club \(Group\)](#)



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