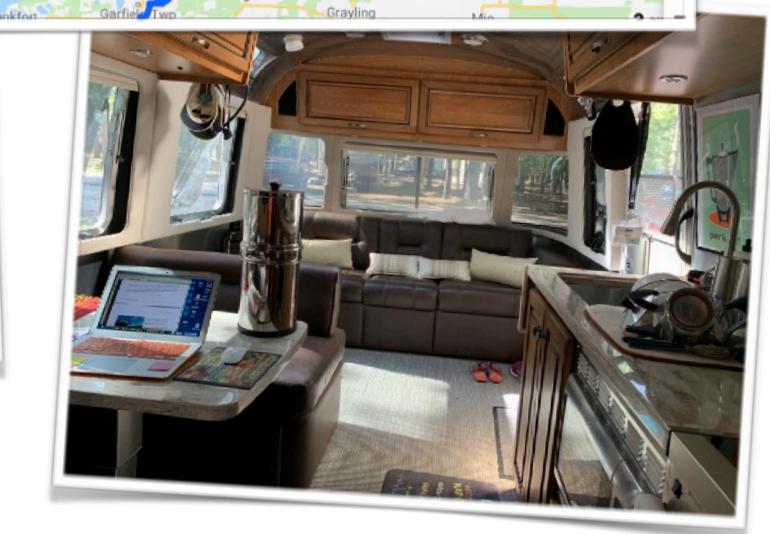
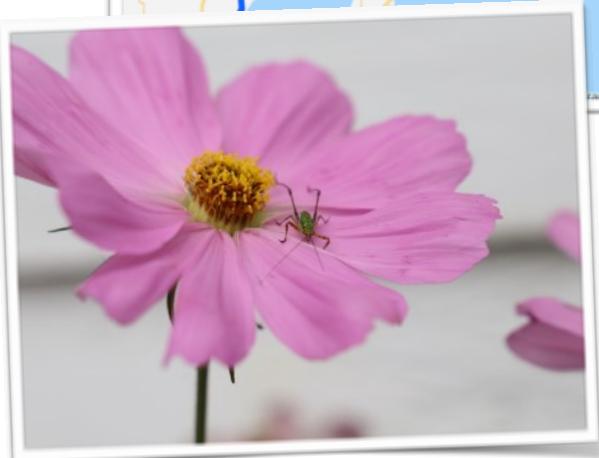
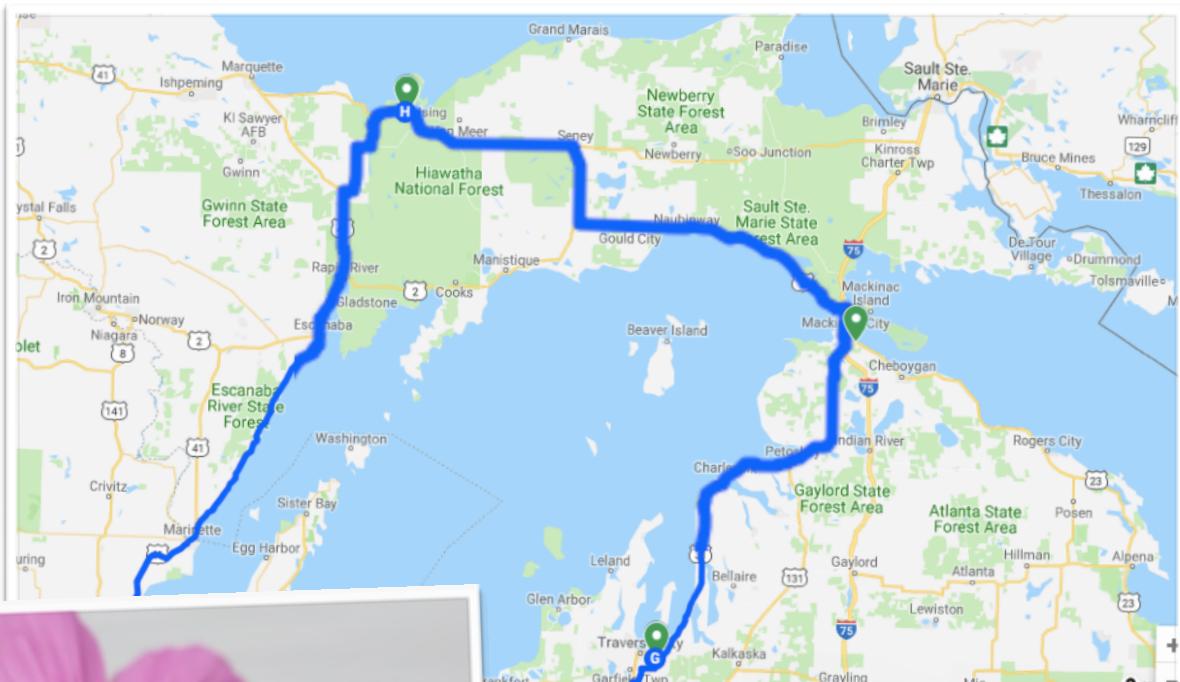


Underway 2019

Counterclockwise around the country



Livin' by the Lakeshore

It's a Move Day, or it isn't



To quote my favorite philosopher, "The days are just packed!" A plan for high adventure and sitting in a tree with a pal & passing the time count as equally important experiences to fill our days. And I think we are beginning to get a hang of how that works, here on the shores of Lake Michigan and Lake Huron.

Traverse City State Park is a 47-acre park with a quarter mile of shoreline three miles east of an eclectic downtown. Begun in the 1920s, it is an older park with mature trees. The trees are a blessing and a curse. It is a lovely atmosphere, camping under the tall pines, but the snaking roads and shady campsites are a nail biting slalom course to navigate, and can be a very tight fit for today's modern campers. Even our thirty-foot rig had to suck in its waistline to pass thru one curve with a few inches to spare. Whew! Our thanks to the camp guest that volunteered to be an extra set of eyes spotting for us!

Site 83 is a comparatively large lot, with a well placed power pole (despite the poison ivy). The site does back up to the main road along the lake, which has a sister hotel strip in every tourist town in America. Including a defunct Hooters. During the day, the traffic is pretty noticeable, but luckily drops off significantly come nightfall. My stellar hearing means that the traffic sounds like wind in the tall trees! What a magic world I live in! Until the kids on the pedestrian bridge are successful in their attempts to elicit a horn salute from passing truckers and bikers. Practicing for Mardi Gras?!?

As soon as we are chocked and level, we scoot over the bridge to check out the beach and assess our chances for a colorful sunset. Sadly, there are no breaks in the clouds although the children shrieking their delight over monster-decimated sand castles see no disappointment in the evening sky.

Monday morning and Dave has some work calls to make. On the list of things to see and do, at the top of Dave's list is to show me Traverse City. He has visited the city a few times on business trips and is anxious to show me how much like Bozeman Montana, another favorite small town, Traverse City can be. A popular bike and walking trail is just out the back gate of the campground. At noon we set off on the 4.6 miles into town. Significant stretches of the black-top trail are exposed to the sun, so it feels hotter than it really is. Lots of cyclists enjoy the path. A group of two adults and fourteen young children glides by. Step by step we pass the Coast Guard Air Station and local airport.

One of the light poles up ahead appears to have an overly large globe on its head. Odd, it does not appear to be made of glass.... Ah! It is a planet! Uranus to be exact. Six miles of the 10+ mile TART trail has an interactive model of the solar system. Three-foot models of planets are placed according to scaled distance to each other, with descriptive pedestals placed near each model. Gee, it sure took awhile to get from Uranus to Saturn!



Eventually we reach the edge of town, marked by lovely homes. Many with red, white, and blue bunting. Most with lush gardens in full flower. Even the street corners have colorful plantings. A few blocks in we encounter a food court created by seven food trucks circled around a tented dining area. We order a tall, cold lemonade and perch in a corner of shade to people watch. The taco and bbq trucks are both doing great business. Everyone is here.

Business men in jackets. Moms with kids in strollers. Teenagers and forty-somethings working on their selfie skills.



Right around the corner are more creative shops. "Peace, Love, & Donuts" was next door to a clothing boutique called "Lakes and Grapes," catering to those living life's wave and vine adventures. Then an art gallery of Michigan artists. On the next block is everyone's nostalgic favorite, the State Theatre complete with fully functioning neon and Edison bulb marquee. Even the multi-story parking garage has bright windows showing off art installations in

the stairwells. Volunteers in the Michigan State University Extension Master Gardener's program cultivate massive colorful plantings along the sidewalks of downtown.

The stores are a wonderful mix of local and tourist shops. Shoes, hats, and even a hardware store hold their own next to the gourmet kitchen shops and eateries. On the west side of town, the Warehouse District is in the early stages of a makeover. Some empty lots. Some very modern and upscale furniture showrooms. A European style hotel. Along the river/creek a block of condos is being welded together. A few distilleries and wine tasting rooms are here. There is a company that will happily take you on bike or kayak tours of breweries.



Turning back to the main downtown we pass Cousin Jenny's Pasties. Apparently the English (Cornish?) mining tradition exported their favorite food to the US too. We mark it in our minds as a place to come back to for a meal – Dave and I love the pasties we had in London and Cornwall. Round trip for this walk, ten to eleven miles, 5 hours. We are bushed!

On Tuesday we take a ride up the peninsula that divides Traverse Bay into two smaller bays. At its head is a light house and some hiking trails. 37 miles long and about a mile wide, the peninsula has a very diverse population. The first mile or so reminds us of Seventeen Mile Drive, the uber-rich section of Carmel and Pebble Beach in California, with large mansions and expansive manicured lawns. Just past the high school the terrain begins to roll with vineyards and orchards stretching from shore to shore. Clustered around small intersections are small towns, almost more of a wide spot in the road, the 'welcome to our town' signs proudly stand in well tended flower beds along the roadside.

Where the two lane road wanders closer to one shore or the other, we can see modest cottages of the type that must have lined the water before the massive hotels took over near town. A small dock stretches from the back door, not far from the fire pit and lounge chairs of the summer living space at many cottages. There are old barns, and new barns. Several have lovely quilts painted at the peak. If gardens were fruit baskets they would be overflowing with ripe selections of every color, spilling from window boxes, front



porch urns, under mailboxes and laundry lines, around the house, rolling down the front walkway, and piling up in heaps along the property line hedgerows.

Eventually the road runs out in the parking area for the light house. Lots of other folks have the same idea to visit that we do, making the building as crowded as a Tokyo subway. To escape, we decide to walk some of the hiking trails, and for the next hour we see not another soul. This wood is largely paper birch and oak. From the size and number of holes in the trees, I would say the woodpeckers have hit the meal ticket jackpot here. Oddly, we hear only two birds the whole time – it is eerily quiet.

Our last full day and Dave goes for a bike ride downtown to pick up a few things, especially beef & cheddar pasties for dinner from Cousin Jenny. Yum!



It is becoming obvious to me that I need to write faster!
Already, Traverse City seems a million years ago. Travel does pack a lot of experiences into a short time and space!

For our last night, Dave takes me on a date – there is a pirate themed putt-putt golf course just down the way from the campground. Lots of families there are having a blast. It is a lot of fun people watching too. And nothing tops off a fun summer evening than walking home, slurping on a Dairy Queen soft ice cream cone!



Thursday is a move day and we head north for Macinaw City. Our route takes us right past our favorite Friske Farm Market. It is lunch time, so naturally we stop to stock up on fresh fruit and veggies, and maybe a slice of pie. We pull around back to park our fifty foot train, and see another Airstream!

Someone else had the same idea. We chat for a bit, they head on their way and we go foraging. While the kitchen is making my sandwich, I peek out the back window to see what seating may be available outside. To my shock and delight, there are two more airstreams parked next to us!

Dave goes down to chat while I wait on the kitchen. He meets two couples that met ten years ago at Jackson Center and love traveling together. When we climb into the truck to get underway, we discover that one of the visitors tucked two Airstream logo soda cozies under our windshield wipers. How cool is that?!! We have no names so we post a Thank You on the Airstream Addicts Facebook page and hope they see it.



Underway again we pass through a few short rain squalls. The towns are all quaint, with lush gardens and lively downtowns decorated with enormous pink and purple baskets of summer petunias. Dave did a great job navigating some super narrow construction zones through the center of a town riotously celebrating side walk sales under intense blue skies.

Our home for the next several nights is the Mill Creek Campground near Mackinaw City. It is a massive property – I walked past campsite numbers in the 2,000s! Site 361 is a back-in site, facing the lake, and has a view of the Mackinac Bridge, and the famous Mackinac Island. It is the narrowest we've slid into – just 20 feet wide (although I am tempted to get out the tape measure!) which gives more folks a chance to camp with this view. The open awning is just one foot from the neighbor's slide out. But there are shrubs strategically placed to help with the sense of privacy. No complaints here! (Dave says we are very easy check-in guests for the campground folks: No kids, No pets, No slide-outs. Just 30' please.)



As dusk falls we stroll east along the lake road just to see what more of the campground looks like. There is a protected cove here, with a sandy beach and a small playground. Further along there is a blue heron hunting in the shallows. The camp's evening attraction is to ride their pet fire engine – which naturally announces its presence with a little whirl of the siren – and surprisingly doesn't turn a feather on the heron.





On Friday we take a camp shuttle into town and catch a tour boat over to Mackinac Island – the island that has no cars. Folks get around with shoe leather, bicycle rubber, or equine steel, a.k.a. horse drawn carriages. Dave brings his bike and I rent one on the island and ride the perimeter road – with the rest of the lemmings, I mean salmon, I mean tourists. Except for the marina and the few blocks of ‘downtown’, the bike path runs along the water, so you can stop and wade or picnic anywhere you want. Dave attaches a GoPro camera to his bike handlebars to record the ride. Unfortunately, the battery gives out in front of the famous Grand Hotel. They charge you \$10 just to walk around – so that isn’t gonna happen! They chase him off when he tries changing the battery!

Dave does some more trail exploring by bike while I wander around gawking at the gardens in front of Disney perfect Victorian cottages and mansions. Horse teams plod by carrying luggage carts, trash carts, and rafts of tourists. A cinnamon colored team drags a motorized road-apple cleaner down the street. Hotel bellboys whizz from the ferry to hotels or the hotels down to the ferry with guest luggage piled in their bike basket almost as high as their noses! The heat of the day and the crush of the wandering crowds finally gets to us and we head to the ferry.



Sitting on the couch that evening, catching up on e-mail and reading (I am rereading (for the third time) an eight-book series in preparations for volume nine’s release this fall) we hear pounding, and ignore it. Packed this close together, there seems to always be someone hammering something, chopping something, stacking wood, or general

banging around. It turns out that the city is shooting a fireworks display! I catch the last few rockets reflected in the waters of the lake. It brings back warm childhood memories of sitting on a rock outcropping along the Hudson River, and watching several towns up and down the river celebrate their Fourth of July, and waiting for the sounds to travel to us across the water. Flash, wait for it, boom. What fun!



In the middle of the night, a deluge wakes us up. No leaks, just an amazing amount of water, so solid, that we can not hear rain drops on the aluminum skin of the Airstream. Just a roar. Fortunately, the site drains very well! The morning remains overcast and showery for several hours (so I try to catch up on some writing). And wow, when the storm passes and the clouds blow over, does Lake Huron sparkle! Like dish soap on a dirty plate, the clouds scatter fast for the edges of the sky, revealing a royal blue sky. The lake's topography reveals itself in a colorful map. The depths color themselves an opaque near-black marine blue, rising thru more translucent blues and spreading across the shallows in greens of fern, seafoam and pale mint.



All of this stained glass splendor is even clearer from the top of the Mackinac Bridge, crossing over to the "UP" – the Upper Peninsula. We are heading to Sault Ste Marie to visit the



Soo Locks and watch great lakes freighters (we hope!) pass through the locks. Not quite train-spotting, but close!



The first locks here were opened in 1855. Eventually there would be four parallel to each other, but only three are currently operating. The locks are run by the Army Corps of Engineers. Access was free, requiring only that



my purse be searched. We are in luck! There is a ship in a lock – AND there is a three storied viewing platform. We head straight for the top. For the next several hours we have fun watching the operations of both the crew and the lock personnel as well as the management of the water gates and crossing arms. We take still photos, short videos, and even try a few time lapse clips on various cameras.

Dave found an app (of course!) that identifies which ships are in route for the locks, names, tonnage, speed, etc. There are a few more in the queue out of sight. One a sailing vessel, making only one knot. Some weekend sailor on a very slow cruise? It is after four o'clock. Let's go. As we watch the fifth ship depart, a Canadian woman next to me says "The best one of the day is coming next!" nodding toward the west. I lean over the rail to see what

is coming. Well, that would be the sailing vessel wouldn't it?! A tall ship is coming!! The woman next to me was v-e-r-y into her locks, lock names, lock locations, lock groups, ... and where tall ships are stationed. I thought she was going to faint when I told her I had been on Governor's Island for the 1976 Op-Sail. But she is shocked to learn that just because we live in Pennsylvania, we are unaware that the Niagara, the ship coming around the river bend, is based out of Erie, and how many locks she had to navigate to get here!



She left us in our ignorance and went down to ground level to waive at crewmen – apparently known to her. The Niagara, a replica of Commodore Perry's flagship from the War of 1812 and the battles in the Great Lakes, slows into her assigned spot. A boat tourists can sail to experience the view of the locks from the inside ties up a short distance behind her. The captain of the massive freighter in the next lock over comes out on his flying bridge to take some snaps on his phone of the Niagara. No one looks twice at the tour vessel.



The Niagara, according to the internet, is part of a museum as well as a tall ship sailing program. You can learn to sail her!! She is also the official flagship of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania! Many crew members are lined up, straddling the rails and adjusting the tender balloons dangling over the side to cushion the wooden walls of the ship from the walls of the lock. Lines are made secure fore and aft, and with the blare of a warning horn, the pumps engage and lower the Niagara twenty-one feet to the level of Lake Huron. I also leave the viewing platform and walk to Lake Superior ground level – the entire hull of the Niagara now hidden, and much of the lower part of her masts! A very odd view to be sure. I go further down to Lake Huron ground level to see her motor out, hoping to catch it in a little movie. Time lapse clips without a tripod

are a big challenge!!

Now, it is time to go home. We finally make camp and have dinner around 8pm. Dave sets up our little table and chairs with a view of the water. It also happens to be front row center for the parade of kids on bikes, dog walkers, post dinner strollers, joggers, guests driving their trash to the bin, late arrivals, and other assorted amusements. At sunset I try and capture a few shots of the sky. Dave starts a nice campfire for us, and so we sit enjoying the breeze and the sounds of the lake waves splashing on the rocks until the last red ember fades to black.



Sunday is our last day in this port with full hook-ups. So a nice hot shower in the campground facilities is a good start. Then I head into town for laundry. Brings me back to my college days. The dryer seems to put out a lot of heat – but it couldn't dry a towel if its life

depended on it! Fortunately, it is nice and windy back at camp, and that will take care of it in no time! For groceries we need to head fifteen miles south to the Walmart in Cheboygan. High times I am telling you!



So, we have the outside gear gathered. We won't have too much on the departure checklist to do in the morning. The weather forecast promises that the winds will drop enough that we will not need a bridge escort and will be able to cross the Mackinac Bridge tomorrow. Next up is a week of boon docking – beginning with two nights at the Bay Furnace National Forest. We'll have one day to explore the Painted Rocks area, before we have to get serious about making westward progress – South Dakota will be our jumping off point for Coulter Bay in the Grand Tetons.

And we still need to figure out what that slow water leak under the trailer is all about. "It's always somethin'! If it's not one thing, it's another!" No truer words Roseanne Roseannadonna!



Underway: Shift Colors

Airstream Trip, Page 13

Week 3
Sunday, August 18, 2019

