

This isn't just a 1978 Airstream, it's a 25-foot-up-in-the-air Airstream, in Ohio.

A Treehouse

FOR ADULTS

By Tom Bentley
Photos courtesy of The Mohicans

If you were lucky, you had a treehouse as a kid, where you parked your slingshot and comic books and got away from it all—even if “it all” was your parents’ house 25 feet away. But even your most feverish leafy dreams couldn’t match the treehouses on Kevin and Laura Mooney’s property, called The Mohicans, in the Ohio woods...



That one of them is a splendidly refurbished vintage Airstream is silver icing on the cake.

The Mooneys decided to build a couple of rental cabins on their 75-acre property in 2011. Being near Amish country, they hired Amish carpenters, whose craftsmanship is renowned, and they've been working together ever since. But after Kevin Mooney read a book by the host of the Discovery Channel show "Treehouse Masters," he upped his game.

"I had a friend try to tell me about building a treehouse, and I looked at him like he had two heads," says Mooney. "I thought he meant you spend six months building a treehouse for your son, and he plays in it for six weeks. When I saw the book, I was like, 'OK, this is what my friend meant.' He meant bathrooms, bedrooms."

He contacted the "Treehouse Masters" host, and they built a treehouse for the show. Then he was off and running—for the trees. Now the property has three houses, three cabins, and nine treehouses, with more in the plans.

His treehouses would make a compatible setting for your fine wine as well as your comic books. The structures are beautiful. They are also designed with sustainability in mind: equipped with passive solar and radiant heating and built using many repurposed materials, such as windows, doors, and old barn siding.

The Airstream's interior has been finished with reclaimed woods, all cut and fitted by local Amish carpenters.

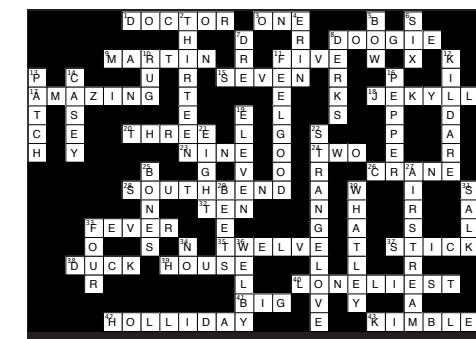


Not to mention a 1978 31-foot Airstream Sovereign. The trailer has been upgraded with indoor and outdoor showers, a sauna, and a skylight—all on a handsomely roofed platform 25 feet in the air.

“When we build these treehouses, we don’t have a budget. We just get the nicest things that we can get,” says Mooney. “The Airstream’s bathroom was attached [to the side], and it’s actually bigger than the bathroom in my house in Cleveland. The bathroom has a steam room and subway tile, and there are granite countertops in the kitchen. The dinner table is granite.” [We suspect that this trailer’s next towing will require a semi-truck.]

The Mohicans hosts many weddings, and though they are a moderate percentage of the property’s guest efforts, wedding parties seem to delight in the treehouses. “If I build ten more treehouses, I can have them booked every wedding season,” Mooney says. “I added three treehouses within the last year since wedding season, and I added two houses. In the summer months,

A household-style bathroom is attached to the side of the Airstream, including a sauna and granite countertops. The bedroom is outfitted with big pillows and bedding with casual, country-style fabrics.



Looking for answers, but have no clues? See page 35.

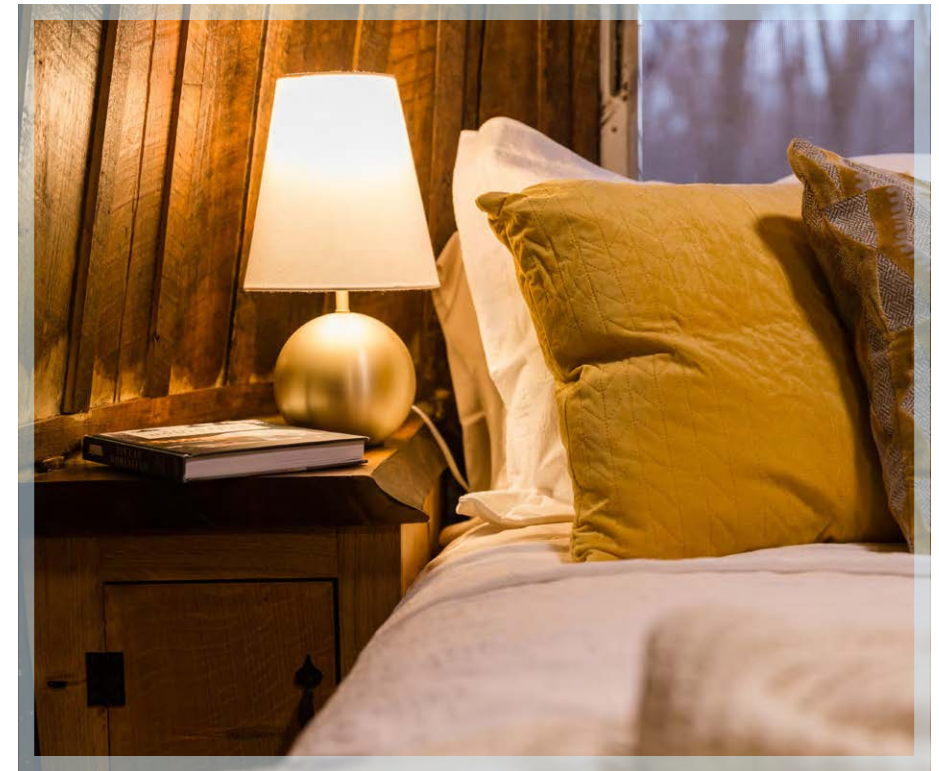


I know I could get a lot more bookings because of people that are coming to weddings.”

At busy times, Mooney has even had to shuttle guests looking for a friendly roof to other lodging venues in the area, but when he builds out the property to his full vision, he should be able to house 90 to 100 people without trouble.

However, the coronavirus has affected businesses all over the world, and The Mohicans is no different. Bookings are down, but Mooney is making sure that the property is sanitized and safe.

“I put my general manager in charge of housekeeping—and before she worked for me, she was a registered nurse,” he says. “I told her that I wanted to overreact because of this virus. I said, ‘No employee is going to be under any risk, and if they feel that they are at risk, go home and I’ll pay you to stay home.’ As far as my customers coming, we change all the sheets every day, we sanitize the hell out of these places.”



A homey, rustic interior appeals to customers who also love the shiny aluminum exterior.

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The Sovereign's dining nook looks out on the quiet forests surrounding The Mohicans.

The treehouses are over 100 yards apart, so guests can have minimal contact with other guests. Some are reached by a 25-foot staircase, and getting to one of them involves crossing a 100-foot suspension bridge. "Oh, it's exciting," says Mooney. "It's one of my most-booked treehouses. More people want to sleep in there than just about any other treehouse."


The Airstream treehouse, a recent addition to the property, almost didn't happen. When the trailer was being lifted onto the platform by crane, the front end dipped so much it appeared to be on the verge of falling. But gravity was overcome with the help of some Amish ingenuity, and early clients of the treehouse trailer have loved it.

Mooney admires it as well. "I've always loved them. I grew up pretty poor. It's always been the one where if money was no object, that's what I would buy. Now, if I was going across country, I'd buy one."

Besides the treehouse tent he's currently working on, Mooney has big expansion plans that are going full-speed ahead, as fast as restrictions due to coronavirus permit. "I could see four or five more treehouses," he says.


"If I had two more carpenters, the Airstream would've been up for rent last year. I just can't get the treehouses done fast enough—or the other things I have planned."


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Renters of this Airstream won't have the pleasure of hearing the patter of rain on the aluminum Airstream roof, but the Airstream will be very well protected for many years in its lofty shelter.





Among the planned projects is another Airstream, a 1972 31-foot Sovereign that, he says, is in pristine shape because it wasn't used by its original owners. He's setting up a unique spot on the property now and ordering plaid upholstery to retrofit all the fabric in the spirit of the original.

Like the other rentals at The Mohicans, the Airstream will be named for a local river. And if it also continues the trend of combining Mooney's artistic vision with fine Amish craftsmanship, it will entertain guests with its clean plaids and woodsy views for years to come.

See more of The Mohicans' treehouse marvels at themohicans.net. Some of the units aren't yet listed on the website because of slow permitting during the pandemic, but they'll be there soon. 

Modern versions of a vintage Crosley record player and Magic Chef refrigerator are harmonious with the retro feel of the treehouse trailer.

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