

Airstreams at Work

By Tom Bentley, Becky Blanton, Jeff Romack, and Rich Luhr



"Mabel On The Move" combines comfort food with vintage colors and style. Owner Andrea DiMauro is ready to take food orders inside Mabel's easy-to-access order window. She's often the only healthy, organic sandwich, soup and snack vendor at many east coast events.

Airstreams are perennially the top choice of businesses that want to travel and have a distinctive look. Over the past six years, we've documented dozens of Airstreams working as shops, restaurants, meeting spaces, showcases, demo centers, medical facilities, hotel rooms, and video production facilities.

A shiny new Airstream shell can now be purchased through an authorized customizer (such as Timeless Travel Trailers) and built to a buyer's specifications. This undoubtedly has encouraged major brands such as Nintendo, Hello Kitty, Victorinox, Eddie Bauer, Autoweek, Mutual of Omaha, and Red Bull to choose Airstreams as their tour vehicles of choice.

But because Airstreams are so durable, there are plenty of vintage trailers to re-purpose for commercial use as well. This makes it possible for "the little guy" (small business) to benefit from the cool exterior of an Airstream as well, inside a tight budget. We've seen them wrapped in vinyl; festooned with giant fiberglass hotdogs, doughnuts, and toast; cut away as open-air bars; polished to a shine, to serve chili and coffee; and working as post offices.

We last documented Airstreams At Work in the Summer 2008 issue. But there seems to be no limit to the creative uses (and re-uses) of an Airstream for business purposes. Read on, for a look at just a



few of the recent adaptations of Airstreams that you might spot as you travel through the country.

Healthy Eating, By Mabel On The Move

Her Connecticut friends tell her she's going through a "tacky" phase with her red and white polka-dot Airstream-turned-organic soup, salad and hot-dog vendor wagon, but Andrea DiMauro doesn't care. She's having more fun than she's had in years and doing it all in an Airstream.

When culinary school beckoned more than a decade ago, she answered the call, then hung up right before she graduated to pluck the plum of all culinary jobs – head chef at a private estate.

"It's what every chef aspires to," she said. But seven years there, and three years at another, more challenging position at a different private estate convinced her it was time to switch jobs, although not her career. Then she met and married her husband. Together they bought and restored a 1779 gentleman's farm, planning to start a bed and breakfast.

Just before they were able to launch that dream, Andrea discovered she had Lyme disease. They sold the B&B and Andrea spent the next three years recovering from the late-diagnosed disease. When she was ready to work again she realized she didn't want to go back to being a private chef just yet. Catering and restaurant work didn't catch her eye, passion or attention either; but a neglected little Airstream begging for a polish and total renovation did.

"Mobile eateries are really big on the west coast," she said. "So I thought it would be fun to bring one to New York." She bought the Airstream, a 1962 Globetrotter, and got to work.

"While all my friends were off pursuing fabulous jobs I was wearing an apron and was attending, as they said, 'cooking school' which they thought was kind of matronly. A friend nicknamed me Mabel. I thought I could get rid of the name by passing it on to the Airstream." She did and turned a once-lemon of a name into lemonade, and the Airstream into a one-of-a-kind, healthy food and drink dispenser. She camps in a 2004, 22' Safari as well as towing Mabel. So she's all Airstream, all the time. And more and more people are recognizing the pint-sized Globetrotter.

"Mabel on the Move" is fast becoming a hit among those who prefer grass-fed beef hot dogs, organic salads and fresh vegetables, over the high-fat, high fructose food often found at fairs and festivals where Andrea and Mabel set up shop.

"We banned all corn syrup and only use organic foods in all we serve," Andrea said. "People like it. They don't like eating high fat, greasy food and feeling sick." From the drinks to the food fare — everything is in keeping with the "farm to table" philosophy Andrea embraces.

"I think we may sell Mabel one day to someone who wants to take it to vintage car festivals — since she's vintage and people love her. And I think I'll get another Airstream and make it into a boutique or who knows what. I just know I love my Airstreams. I love the possibilities of them."

Buckle Up Your Bags

Malia O'Brien knows the value of multiple-use technologies. After all, she is the marketing director of Harveys, which designs and sells fashionable handbags made out of



This Airstream is seatbelt-equipped (even if they are handbags). "The women go crazy for our handbags while the men drool over the Airstream," says Malia O'Brien.

automotive seatbelts. Thus, Malia was fully aware that Airstream trailers are not only a practical way for travelers to hit the road in comfort, but that the trailers can also make for eye-catching mobile promotions.

The Harveys trailer catches many an eye on its branded jaunts through California and other Western states, where its gleaming appeal wows potential customers. "We mainly use it as a large billboard, a backdrop for our booth at events or to generate excitement in front of our retail stores. While on location, it doubles as a cash-wrap [safe] and back bar for our back stock," says Malia.

The trailer is a 2007 23' International, which the company has owned for almost four years. They know all about Airstream's cachet: prior to buying the newer model, they had a 1966 International that they used for shows for five years.

Vintage objects figure into the company history—in 1997, founder Dana Harvey was installing seatbelts into his 1950 Buick, and decided to sew a handbag for his wife Melanie. According to Malia, "Everyone loved it so they made more, and more, and more. Now we have a large factory in Santa Ana, California, where each 'Seatbeltbag' is built and guaranteed tough, for life."

The company often sets up the Airstream at automotive-based venues, such as recent shows at the American Le Mans races at Laguna Seca CA, NASCAR races in Sonoma AZ, then back to Laguna Seca later this year, and after that, Utah and

Arizona. Though no one uses the trailer to sleep in during business tours, the Harveys and their kids camp up and down the California coast in their leisure hours. To this point, the company has not modified their trailer interior for the business, but after recently seeing the Swiss Army Victorinox Airstream (see Interiors, this issue), they are considering altering the interior to mimic a showroom.

Harveys obtains the seatbelts from automotive seatbelt manufacturers; some of the materials are available because they don't meet seatbelt safety standards, but they make for a pretty sturdy purse. Melanie and Dana Harvey are co-designers of the bags, which come in a surprising variety of designs and sizes. They've also collaborated with a number of well-known artists and designers. The company has recently finished a video of the International being covered with the advertising decals, editing the film for style and panache. It will soon be available on their website.

Malia explains that the Airstream is a source of interest on its own, though there may be a gender gap: "The women go crazy for our handbags while the men drool over the Airstream. It's a nice combination. And we are always more than happy to accommodate an impromptu tour," she says.

It's all part of that dual-purpose thing. As Malia says, "We love that it's classic yet modern at the same time. Which is exactly the same thing we offer in our handbags."

The Golden State Reflects Well Off An Airstream

With the economy still sporting big bandages, the concept of the "staycation" has a lot more appeal to wallet-weary travelers. And some states have such stunning scenery—such as California—that taking a trip or two not-so-far from home isn't a sacrifice, it's a pleasure.

For the Shasta Cascade Wonderland Association, their mission to promote California tourism to Californians isn't a hard sell—they've just made it easier to get a rich sampling of those statewide venues by hitting the road with a custom Airstream decorated inside and out with colorful images of many California goodies, and all the background info on how to get there and what you'll see to boot!

The Association's initial 2009 idea was taking the Airstream on a long interstate tour, showcasing the Airstream and its California imagery at a half-dozen of California's largest outdoor events. The success of that venture prompted an expanded tour for 2010—and they are making the rounds. Highlights have included the California Asparagus Festival in Stockton, Sunset Magazine's Celebration Weekend in Menlo Park, NASCAR races in Sonoma County, the Gilroy Garlic Festival, the California Avocado Festival near Santa

Barbara, and the Half Moon Bay Art and Pumpkin Festival.

Asparagus, garlic, avocados and pumpkins... California is a fertile place; travelers can eat their way across the state. There will be around 1.6 million attendees at the 31 event days on the schedule, so the Airstream will pull a lot of miles and host a lot of visitors.

The trailer is a 2009 27' Flying Cloud, towed by a 2011 Ford F-250 Super Crew Cab. Besides the complete vinyl wrap of California scenes on its exterior, there are a number of California maps and themes rendered in the interior as well. Karen Whitaker, a spokesperson for Shasta Cascade says that many viewers have responded specifically to the Airstream, "People mention that they have always wanted to see what an Airstream looks like inside. Most people are amazed how big they actually are inside and how great the quality is. We've seen a huge following of Airstream lovers, both owners and wannabes. It was the perfect choice for what we are doing. Its quality and history fits well with the California brand," she says.

One thing that Whitaker noted on the tour is that it was common for people to come in to the trailer and reminisce about camping in an Airstream with their grandparents, and how wonderful the experience was. One

effect of the Association tour will be to expose many Californians once again to the appeal and possibilities of hitting the road with an Airstream right behind. No one on the Association team has used the Airstream to sleep in on the tour, though it has made for some cozy napping by the crew between destinations.

Whitaker says that the success of this year's tour means that there's a likely third tour in the offing, and the Flying Cloud will be in the center of the action once again. Whitaker recognizes that the trailer is a good match for the Association's mission: "Airstream's a travel icon, it's very recognizable and it was invented in California—a perfect match!"

Solar-Powered Exhibition In An Airstream BaseCamp

Imagine hitting the open road with an Airstream BaseCamp that has its electrical components completely powered by solar energy. Then think of the eco-friendly impact such a concept would have on the environment.

When GM's Saturn division was looking for ecologically conscious ideas for its 2009 mobile marketing tour, it turned to Performance Marketing Group for green solutions. In response, the Indianapolis-based marketing company designed, constructed and activated three Airstream Basecamps that utilized solar-panel-generated electricity to power various elements of the display. The



The Shasta Cascade Airstream (a 27-foot Flying Cloud) displays what's best about California, inside and out. This trailer tours California each year, visiting half a dozen major events.





An Airstream BaseCamp was the first mobile marketing display to use solar power.

modified retro look of the Basecamp trailers combined with state-of-the-art energy producing technology was a tremendous hit at professional sporting events (including the Boston Marathon), state fairs, music festivals and air shows.

"The modified Basecamp trailers with the sunflower graphics and solar panels were definitely the hooks that drew people in," said Bill Bissmeyer, vice president of business development, Performance Marketing Group. "Saturn was looking for something completely different but they wanted to attract large crowds while being environmentally friendly."

The three BaseCamp trailers activated for the tour were affectionately referred to as Sunflower One, Two and Three, and each were pulled by the Saturn Outlook. Wireless networking and four 130-watt Kyocera solar panels were installed atop each BaseCamp. Two additional solar panels were designed to resemble potted plants and absorb solar energy on the ground.

Energy efficient Apple iMac computers were selected for their low-environmental impact characteristics, and low energy consumption. Flat-screen LED monitors were used to help extend the life of the battery cells.

Based on six hours of peak sunshine, an average of 4,600-watt hours could be banked per day for use on cloudy or rainy days, eliminating reliance on less eco-friendly gas or diesel generators typically used to provide power for electronics elements of the display.

The eco-friendly "Meet Saturn Tour" is believed to be the first mobile-marketing display in the country to utilize solar energy, and it was met with rave reviews from the thousands of visitors who experienced it during its 72-city North American tour. It was awarded a Silver Medal in the Best Green Event/Trade Show Campaign category at the 2010 EXAwards in Chicago.



LEFT: Reggie and Zach Crist, snowskiing icons and champions, slow down from their usual blur of motion on the slopes and relax outside their custom designed Airstream. Their Airstream is home, lab and workshop to the brothers who now design and test ski-wear for Eddie Bauer. BELOW: The "garage" of their 34-foot PanAmerican trailer carries all the gear.

"As we walked around the block the first thing we noticed was the sun shining off this silver trailer that looked like the old [trailers] from the '50s and '60s, only with a futuristic look to it," said a visitor in Memphis. "The BaseCamp had a laptop with a big-screen monitor and we actually sat down and designed our own car. When we found out that all the electrical needs of the display were provided by solar panels, I was totally blown away."

Airstreams On Ice Are Just As Nice

When Reggie and Zach Crist—icons in the world of downhill skiing—put together the ultimate road and ski trip, their goal was simple. "Ski as much powder as humanly possible," Reggie said. To do so they teamed up what Zach called "two of the greatest American icons of adventure": Airstream and Eddie Bauer. Then they added a third icon—a Ford F-450 diesel truck to pull it.

What the brothers say appealed to them about both Airstream and Eddie Bauer is that both companies represent products that are about "participation." Airstream and Eddie Bauer encourage the people who use their products to "get out and participate in the adventure," rather than simply owning the gear. The "cool factor" of the products doesn't hurt, and neither does the quality.

The Crist's Airstream has been home for the brothers for the past year as well as to snowmobiles, kayaks, camping gear, skis and more. Credit the luxurious "garage" inside the 34-foot PanAmerican triple-axle trailer for providing space to carry all that gear. The custom bunks and other kitchen features make the trailer efficient. Because the team was doing more boondocking at ski events than camping in public campgrounds,



Timeless Travel Trailers installed four solar panels, additional batteries and a 6Kw generator. But the boys relied on logs, campfires and propane too.

Reggie says the brothers worked with Airstream and Timeless Travel Trailers to design and build the trailer to make it ideal for chasing perfect powder and ski camping, as well as kayaking and summer sports around the western US—particularly in Utah and Colorado. A fold-down table in the garage lets them tune their skis, and gear lockers let them store all the stuff that goes with being so active.

Reggie, a US Ski Team member for 10 years, is one of the most accomplished skiers and X-Games athletes of all time. A retired World Cup downhiller, he is the only man to win the X-Games Ski competition twice. Zach was a member of the US Ski Team for seven years before turning to extreme skiing and the X-Games. Reggie and Zach are the first siblings to win X-Games titles the same year, snagging gold and silver respectively in 2005.

It's not all about chasing powder for personal pleasure though. The brothers do

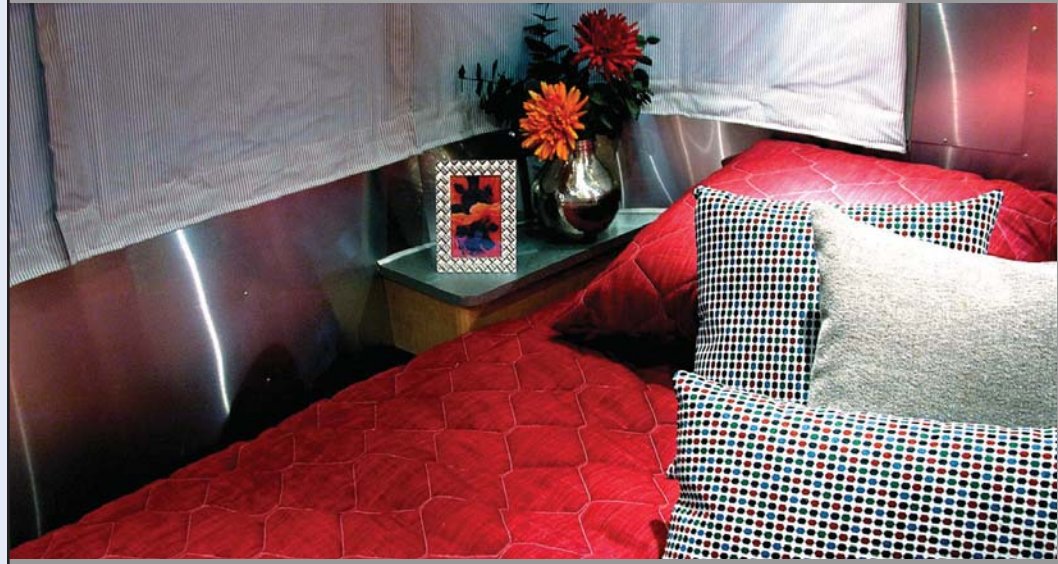
have a job to do. They're both big mountain skiers with film-production companies. They've been featured in several adventure films—claiming first descents on the polar ice cap of Greenland, the Himalayas of Nepal, the Alps of New Zealand, and the coastal giants of Alaska. When they're not skiing, they're surfing, kayaking and mountain climbing, and working with Eddie Bauer to design new gear. First Ascent's "guide-built philosophy" means that all their products must be tested in the most extreme outdoor conditions.

More than just an adventure on wheels, the Airstream is really a "mobile lab," providing a base camp for testing and developing ski, snowboarding and winter mountain clothing and gear. But it's also used for kicking back and relaxing, planning their next venture and just as what it was designed for—a home.

Although the Airstream was designed for work, the brothers got all the toys they wanted. "We had our dream list," Reggie said. Among those things was a 10-channel mixing board on their sound system. Sound and audio were important, so a custom rack

AIRSTREAM

CUSTOM-DESIGNED SHEETS AND MATTRESS PADS



Crème Brulée

Dove White

Tuscan Sand

Windsor Blue

600 THREAD COUNT
100% Egyptian Cotton Sateen

Cocoa Latte

Champagne Mist

Satin White

Saffron Gold

Antique Sage

350 THREAD COUNT
100% Combed Pima Cotton

French Vanilla

Pearl White

Powder Blue

Sapphire Blue

Burgundy Wine

Hunter Green

Espresso

Green Tea

350 THREAD COUNT
50/50 Cotton/Polyester Blend

Made exclusively for Airstream, these bedroom linens offer the perfect fit and function for the discriminating traveler.

- Sheet colors to match nearly ever décor
- Thread counts to accommodate your personal level of luxury
- Sheet and mattress pad sizes to ensure proper fit and comfort

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was created to store an HDTV, which they can operate on a mount on the curb side of the trailer. The specially designed case for the TV allows it to operate in any weather conditions and at a temperature range of -40F to +150F. Not that the Crists encountered that—but if they did, they were ready. It's not just the television screen that stayed warm. 120-volt AC/12 volt DC tank heating pads were installed on all three holding tanks.

From pulling the full-size bed out to create an area for four bunk beds for the Crists and their other two occasional team members, to adding extra insulation, the crews were able to pack in the whole team and still have plenty of room for skis, camping gear and food.

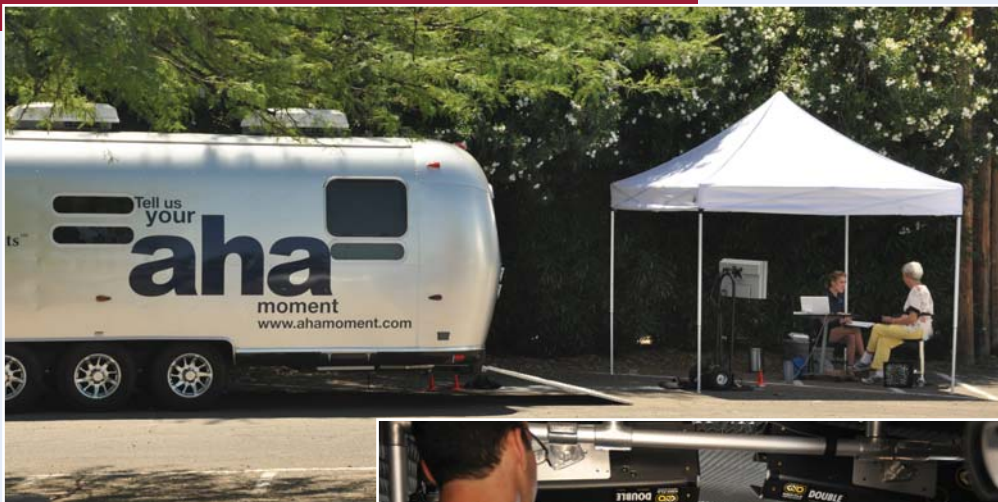
While Reggie and Zach did return to the X-Games in 2010, for Zach it was as a commentator for ESPN, not as a competitor. But whether they're skiing, kayaking, climbing or working, the Airstream fulfills its promise: proving adventure is out there. You just have to go participate in it.

A Road Trip to Record "Aha Moments"

For some lucky souls, there's a moment in their lives when it all comes together: a realization, reflection or insight that seems to crystallize a universal truth, or point the way to their life's fulfillment. Some luckier souls get to recount that moment on video, for a chance at television commercial stardom. And a fabulously equipped Airstream is the rolling center of this memory collection.

Mutual of Omaha is the sponsor behind the 25-city "Aha Moments" tour, which boasts a full video studio in a 34-foot Airstream Pan American. This is the second version of the tour (and the second round for the Pan American), going to new cities. The inaugural tour videos were used as the basis for television ads that debuted at the 2010 Olympics.

The declarations of clarifying moments truly run the gamut: according to Kaitlin Ebinger, one of the tour employees, "Talking with so many people every day, we certainly hear some funny and



The Aha Moments Airstream captures revelations from real life in a 34-foot PanAmerican trailer. Interviewees are screened outside, then come inside to tell their stories.



unusual stories. For instance, we had a man who came in today whose artistic medium is the paper napkin. He does some really cool little pieces, and he found that it was a great way to connect with his daughters."

The Pan American is designed with a rear hatch for gear, but was customized by Airstream and a company called DTC Grip and Electric. The trailer is towed by a Chevy Silverado 2500 HD. All of the Airstream's standard living quarters and plumbing were removed to install a broad range of electronic equipment and resources, such as LED studio lights, backdrop and multiple video cameras. The rear section holds the monitors and computers.

"The Airstream works GREAT as a studio. It looks small from the outside, but it packs a lot of punch. We were able to accommodate a full lighting system for our needs as well as a camera mount and microphone tracks. We are a very small crew and conduct each interview one-on-one, so the Airstream allows for a more comfortable, intimate experience," says Ebinger.

The 2010 tour ran from early May through mid-August, hitting diverse, mid-sized cities from coast to coast. Contestants signed up in advance on the Aha site to set up the 30-second recording. Ebinger and the other crew members blogged about the tour and the recorded moments on the site. The tour team was forced to stay in hotels, since the Pan American is bereft of beds.

Ebinger says that the custom trailer received a lot of positive response, including that of Airstream aficionados who want to tour the inside. Apparently, the custom confines of a gleaming, technically outfitted trailer aren't intimidating to the tour participants: "Getting people's Aha Moments brings a lot of feelings to mind. Some are funny, some are sad, but it's always inspiring to see people come out and really divulge some of their private moments. It has re-instilled my faith in people and community—it's been wonderful," says Ebinger. ●●●

Where to Find Them

See the Harveys handbag selection and read their blog at <http://www.seatbeltbags.com/>

Get a tour of the First Ascent Airstream at <http://blog.firstascent.com/2010/03/19/behind-the-scenes-designing-the-first-ascent-airstream-for-the-ultimate-road-trip/>

See peoples' "Aha Moments" at <http://ahamoment.com>