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Airstream: America's World Traveler



Synopsis

Iconic, aluminum-bodied Airstream trailers have been around for 85 years--get the full story in this photo-rich book. Airstream is America's best and oldest manufacturer of travel trailers, and those retro silver coaches are iconic on America's highways. Representative of the age-old desire to explore, these trailers are unmistakable in design with distinctive aerodynamic rounded lines and an aluminum outer skin. Airstream: America's World Traveler celebrates the eight decades since the first Airstream graced America's highways. Airstream chronicles the fascinating history of Airstream trailers through a detailed history, stories, and beautiful photography. Although its roots stretch back to 1926, the first Airstream-brand trailers were introduced in 1936, just as America was emerging from the dark days of the Great Depression. Of the 400 travel-trailer manufacturers of that era, only Airstream survived. Dubbed the "Airstream Clipper" after the first trans-Atlantic seaplane, the 1936 Airstream featured a unique lightweight aluminum body that cut down on wind resistance, improved fuel efficiency, and made for easier towing. It slept four, carried its own water supply, was fitted with electric lights, and cost \$1,200. The Airstream provided travelers with a way to see the world at their leisure and in solid comfort. It was the perfect vehicle for a country emerging from a long struggle. In the eight decades since that first Airstream, the company has produced some of the finest trailers in the world and gained a worldwide reputation as the Rolls-Royce of travel trailers. The Airstream story is one of travel, adventure, and memories that last a lifetime.

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Customer Reviews

Interesting read but it's a little overly-corporate in its delivery in my opinion. I would have liked to have seen more detail given to the design features of some of the trailer models (inspirations, creative process, etc) and the camping experience of an Airstream trailer. There's a lot more pages devoted towards corporate earnings, sales figures and CEOs than I cared for and very little on the actual camping experience. The early history on the founder and how the company started was interesting and there are a lot of great photos (mostly marketing materials) but I probably wouldn't recommend this book.

As a guide to the history of the Airstream company and its visionary founder, this is a superb compendium of words and pictures tracing how Airstream came to be not just the premiere travel trailer, but an aspirational lifestyle brand. Anyone who has owned an RV or grew up in a family with one always knew, deep down, that Airstreams were a breed apart. More than just a highly functional appliance for travel, Airstream represents classic design and a timeless statement of uncompromising quality and high adventure. This book tells how a simple camper came to embody those values, and how its founder's spirit of innovation and exploration still forms the brand's DNA. Read this, and ponder your fleeting memory of that cute girl you noticed just down the campground lane when you were 12, whose family campfire reflected exotically off the aluminum skin of their rounded silver trailer as the canyons around your temporary village disappeared every evening.

Airstream is as much a part of Americana as Apple Pie, GM, Chevrolet, The Corvette and Camaro and Firebird and Peterbilt, Kenworth and Mack and John Deere and Cat. To me it's what motoring and life is all about: the call of the Open road and exploring the unknown. Never mind the unnecessary beatnik-ism and Kerouac Clichés—this little jam-packed book right here is a perfect addition for the fan of the open road who likes to live his life free from the ever-present intrusions and distractions of our daily lives. The Beautiful Airstream is iconic and the author who has done such stellar histories on AMC, Jeep among others which I am lucky to own has done a great service doing a book on Airstream that is long overdue. Whether you own one or aspire to, the book is a Must.

Pat Foster takes you on a remarkable journey of discovery with this historic marque and its evolution from humble beginnings to the world stage. The story of Airstream's founder Wally Byam, adventurer/world traveler, documents the origins of Airstream and takes you to the present 85 years later. Airstream is still a player.

I'm not an Airstream owner, but I am a longtime fan of American popular culture and mid-century modern products. I just finished this book after checking it out as a new acquisition at the local public library and thoroughly enjoyed it. Although Foster focuses more on the company and its leadership than on the specific Airstream models and their specifications, it's still a fascinating book, and one that captures a time period in the twentieth century in which Americans, for one reason or another, wanted to take to the road. The book is filled with photos of Airstreams and their owners in all sorts of exotic (and non-exotic) locations around the globe, some from extensive caravan trips involving dozens of trailers. The book demonstrates the sense of community that these travelers have had, as well as showing why the Airstream is considered an American icon around the world. An excellent "coffee-table" book!

"Airstream, America's World Traveler," the new book by Patrick Foster, tells two stories. One is about the company's founder, Wally Byam, an American original who took his passion for the outdoors and his desire to make something of himself and built a useful and distinctive product that like-minded people wanted to have. The other story covers the development of a company and a brand, Airstream, from the germ of an idea to the pinnacle of the travel trailer industry, weathering war, economic turmoil, and turnover in management brought about by the untimely deaths of key people and changes in ownership. The book is written in a folksy style befitting the persona of Wally Byam himself, and is liberally illustrated with period photos. While my own experience as a highway traveler has never included having a travel trailer, I have for decades been fascinated by the eye-catching and aerodynamic Airstreams out on America's highways, their unpainted aluminum skins gleaming like nothing else other than the airplanes overhead. Who manufactures them? Where and how did they originate? What explains the passion behind owning them? Patrick Foster helps you understand and appreciate the enduring Airstream phenomenon.

It seems like so many successful manufacturers follow the same storyline: Energetic, innovative person creates an amazing product. That person dies, the company is eventually swallowed up by a large corporation. Airstream is no different. Patrick Foster has obviously done a lot of research on the company and its founder Wally Byam. Byam seems to have been a fascinating person. The book exhaustively covers the Byam era and his famous caravans during the nascent camper trailer period, then moves along throughout the corporate history and some of the famous models. Since I'm a neophyte when it comes to campers and RVs, I wish there had been more about the model

timelines, as I couldn't tell one Airstream from another. As is the case with many of these types of books, the pictures don't correspond with the text - models are mentioned and either not pictured or found elsewhere. If you're an Airstream fan, or are interested in how the company came to be and what it is now, this is the book for you.

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