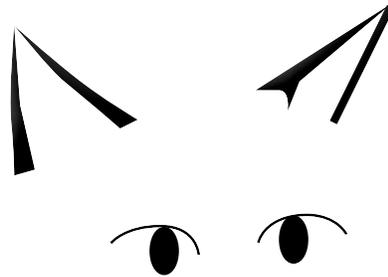


WALLY



BYAM

Cat Club International

Roxie the Cat, #24514

*Over the decades people have had so much advice and information from the Club, but how long have we cats waited for our experiences to be shared? If you are an Airstreaming cat, the wait is over!*

Hi, I'm Roxie, an eighteen year-old cat that used to be happy lounging around the house. We all like our habits and routines, so why change? Unfortunately, as you probably know, humans have an uncontrollable urge to go to places they don't know! I heard the Airstream trailer mentioned a lot but, like most of us, I didn't take much notice. "Living the dream" sounded interesting enough but I started to worry when the "To Let" sign appeared at front of the house. Would I be left behind? Would I be moved? Should I run away to find a house with no trailer? We've all considered retirement for an easier life, but do any of us really need more than eighteen hours of sleep a day?

The answers started to unfold one day when I was pushed into the hated black carrier. As you know, it's not the bag; it's the visit to the vet that it signals. I showed my disapproval as usual, but out the door and off down the street we went. I had another injection, apparently against rabies, a disease which kills animals and humans but not found in the UK. I hadn't heard of it, but I suppose they didn't want me bringing it back. For your information, there was passport paperwork at the vet, signed, dated and stamped. You get held upright for a photograph and you are not allowed to smile or wear a hat or sunglasses.

I've now been a retired Airstream full-timer cat for over three years, visited nine European countries and explored nearly fifty campgrounds, travelling on my British passport. Remember I was fifteen when this started. I had done nothing but hang out in my little back garden, popping through my flap, lounging on beds and sofas and being served with food and drink. Suddenly I was put through new stuff and I protested in the usual ways. Over the previous years, I had trained them quite well, but now they were training me for the human obsession with vehicles and unknown places! After a few days the car didn't seem so bad, but then came the engine noise and the trips round the block! Most of you will be younger and more able to adapt.

I still don't like it but always manage to relax half an hour into the journeys. It's best to resign yourself to it as soon as you're in the tow vehicle. Rear seats are comfortable but sometimes I like the box between the front seats where I can sniff the smell of different mouse environments from the vents in the dash. You will be able to find a spot somewhere. I would like to sit on the driver's lap or the dash but they click my lead into the rear seatbelt. Try to behave well from the first trip or you may end up travelling in a cage or basket. Sleep is difficult but I can relax with the music once cruising with the Airstream at around 65 mph. I prefer the blues - it just seems to go with the motion.

In the first days, there will be restrictions, or should I say lack of trust. Kept in the trailer for



twenty-four hours, it quickly became my safe place. When outside, they started me off with a long lead but I soon tied their camp chairs and table together so that idea didn't last long! When released, I ran into my first forest. They obviously worried and wanted me back (I could hear rattling of the food bowl and shaking of food wrappers!) but it was so exciting sniffing around in there. After a couple of hours with no luck, I had to get straight back to the food bowl and they shut the door. It's a good idea not to go out too long in the first days because you may be kept in the trailer for the rest of the trip! Not knowing if they would ever trust me again, the next stop was France.

At passport control I was scanned to make sure I was the cat in the picture and I was soon on my first ferry. I felt safe in my Airstream for over an hour but the strange noises sent me hiding under the bed. I was soon back in the car for the scary unloading. Try to stay calm as there is nothing to fear. I've now been on a lot of ferries and my Airstream even goes on trains. They are smooth, quiet and not so bad.

My first day in France was spent charting new hedges unknown to British cats. It was fun and so, when it was time to go back in the car next day, I recognised the procedure and made my escape. While a multi-national task force searched the campsite, I hid in the shadows. The local children searched their village and the aristocracy even gave permission for a search of the grounds of the chateaux but, of course, I wasn't there! I didn't risk going back to the food bowl until about 12.30 am when it was clear I'd made them stay an extra night.

Unfortunately, the next morning they had realised I was learning the signs. I was clicked into the car before the squeaky legs and nose jack were wound up and the ZipDee was rolled back. From that day I have had to watch the preparations from the car window. Packing to go is an anxious time so it's best to accept the stages, relax and settle in the vehicle when the time comes. Quite often there will be dogs passing and you can put your face up at the window without fear. I still don't like the first half hour in the car but the comforting is good if you make enough noise.



When arriving in a new campground, start your mental mapping immediately. It's always interesting and you will find that it's best to first check the RVs for dogs or children. My dog confidence has grown and I can now assess whether to just stand my ground, making myself big with bushy tail, or run them off my property. Their size isn't important but I wish some of them were more intelligent. You have to make up your own mind on this and do whatever you feel comfortable with. Once you feel safe, you can spend the whole day outside, adjusting to the seasons. The rewards are limitless. I don't like to brag, but I've been in deep mountain snow in France and by fjords in Norway, where I caught my first Arctic lemmings - they're too easy! I've caught mice by the canals of Amsterdam and hunted in King Louis XIV's forest near the palace of Versailles, Paris.

Teaching humans a vocabulary of sounds takes time and learning some of theirs is also useful, but remember, they like us to be a bit mysterious! Like me, you probably already know how to get the door open to go out and how to get back in – even when you don't really want to. We all know that after-dark walks can be safer, longer and further but I now understand that “no” means it's bedtime and the trailer door is about to be locked! My latest pleasure is a long walk with a human and I've managed to teach them the signals for when I want that to happen. Message me for more information on this.

Last but not least, another pleasure you may not know is visiting human friends with your trailer and you will like exploring their houses. The routine is basically the same, with a sleep on the sofa like old times and a few walks in the garden but, when I see the Airstream outside, I know where I would rather be!

