

Detours, adventures, and plenty of fun with our new, full-time RV life

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When Jeanne and I purged 90 percent of our possessions, ended our jobs, sold our house on the East Coast, and loaded ourselves and our Cavalier King Charles spaniel, Hershey, into our 30-foot Class A motorhome, we were both excited and downright scared. It was June 2020 when we waved farewell to our family and friends, in the midst of a global pandemic on Long Island, New York, and took to the road to travel full-time with no end date. Just maybe, we thought, we had lost our minds.

Surviving the first 6 months

Neither of us had traveled much before that. We had never even owned an RV, much less lived in one as our only home. We did buy the RV a couple of years earlier, so we had enough practice to believe we could actually live with one another in a 240-square-foot fiberglass box-on-wheels. At least we hoped so. But, would we miss our house? Would we be comfortable living 24/7 in such a small space? Would we be lonely out on the road, missing family and friends? Could we handle driving tens of thousands of miles? How would we deal with the inevitable mishaps and breakdowns?



Well, not only did we survive our first 6 months on the road, we thrived. Those first few months of travel took us through 14 states and eventually down into the Florida Panhandle. Enroute, Jeanne gained confidence driving our rig which is longer than 51 feet in total when towing our car. We spent a few months of the winter enjoying many days and evenings with friends and family members in Florida.

Along the way, we handled vehicle issues, canceled reservations, confusing pandemic restrictions, Canadian border closures, grocery shopping in new areas every week—it's amazing how long it can take to find peanut butter in a new store—a tropical storm, and keeping in touch with family and friends. We found that we didn't miss our old house, we enjoyed the scenic drives through ever-changing landscapes, and we were living less expensively than before.

Spring of 2021 arrived, and with our newly cultivated sense of road-worthy confidence and wanderlust, we embarked on the second leg of our westward journey. Our destination for the upcoming winter was Southwest Arizona, approximately 1,889 miles away. But we took the long way, adding another 7,439 miles to the trip.

We had "bucket list" items on our agenda, as well as meet-ups with family and friends, which created a crazy, zig-zagging route through 21 states from south to north to south—and back again.



Every mile brought new experiences

We encountered a severe storm at Meagher State Park near Mobile, Alabama, that obliterated a large tree near us with a lightning strike; we enjoyed beignets and a paddlewheel steamboat cruise in New Orleans; wonderful visits with family in Kansas City, Missouri; and saw the famous wood chipper that was used in the cult classic *Fargo* in North Dakota.

Early pioneer and Native American history amazed us throughout the Dakotas and gave us strong spiritual vibes at Devils Tower National Monument in Wyoming. We happily rendezvoused with family in Castle Rock, Colorado, and were blessed to have other family meet us there. A week at the famous Albuquerque, New Mexico, International Hot Air Balloon Fiesta was such a treat—as was a private hot-air balloon ride over the desert landscape in Moab, Utah. Long travel days in 106-degree heat through Nebraska and Oklahoma challenged us to keep our cool. Seeing the “space aliens” in Roswell, New Mexico, gave us a laugh—and made us ponder the existence of other life in the universe.



The mountain ranges of Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho presented magnificent vistas that we'd only seen in photographs. They also challenged us with tricky mountain pass driving, where steep uphill and downhill grades demanded an iron grip on the wheel, holding our

breath, and careful braking strategies. Overall, our motorhome hauled us and our tow vehicle with ease back and forth over the upper Continental Divide more than 10 times.

On this leg we also immersed ourselves at 15 national parks and monuments including Glacier, Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Badlands, Hot Springs, Grand Canyon, Utah's "Mighty Five" (Arches, Bryce Canyon, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef, and Zion), Mesa Verde, Petrified Forest, and Wind Cave national parks, as well as Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument. The wonder of nature in all of these places was astounding—unparalleled by anything we'd seen before.

Our dog Hershey had his share of meeting new friends on the road, too. He's quite well-known in RV-related social media groups, mainly because he's adorable and has adventures alongside us. He's met several fellow Cavalier King Charles spaniels around the country from the Camping Cavaliers Facebook group. And people recognize him wherever we go.



Hershey and I were once at an overlook in Bryce Canyon National Park when a woman behind us recognized Hershey and we took a selfie together. Prior to that, we were stopped on the street in Jackson, Wyoming, by a couple who wanted a selfie with Hershey—he loves the attention.

Lessons from the road

We're fortunate to have a mid-sized rooftop solar power system on our rig that enables us to spend weeks off-grid in boondocking locations. Two of our favorites have been Nomad View in [Buffalo Gap National Grassland](#), just outside Badlands National Park in South Dakota, and a 65-night marathon boondocking stay in the desert outside of Quartzsite, Arizona, this past winter.

Prior to this trip, we had only boondocked for short periods. The feeling of freedom, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance has also increased our confidence in full-time travel. Now, nearly 2 years after first hitting the road, we can say that we have zero regrets about our decision, or any of the experiences throughout our travels. Strong communication and respect has enabled us to grow our relationship even stronger, despite such close quarters in our rolling home.



We learned that, although we do miss our family and friends, there are many ways to stay connected and to plan visits. And we've made many wonderful and fun friends all over the country. We've even seen more of our family and friends and met new friends in 18 months on the road than we did in the 10-plus years living in our old home.

We've learned that we can handle pretty much anything thrown at us, while being self-reliant and flexible. And we're now convinced that the most fun between point A and point B is most definitely *not* in a straight line.

Erik and Jeanne's trip

Meet the Roadtripper



Erik Anderson

Erik and his wife Jeanne have been traveling full-time around the U.S. in their mid-size Class A motorhome since July 2020. They love hiking, biking, kayaking, and adventuring with their beloved Cavalier King Charles spaniel, "Hershey Pup."