

Goodbye, RV ... For Now

By Cindy Dashnaw

My experiment with living full-time in an RV is coming to an end.

Three years ago, my significant other and I left a two-story, paid-for house and the four lovely, distinct seasons of the Midwest for the great unknown expanse that is Texas. On the downside, I'd be far from my adult kids. On the upside, this was a chance to live in another state after 54 years in Indiana and get to know my quasi sister-in-law.

My SO was taking a job in Austin. We spent the first three months in the sister-in-law's guest room, then 10 months in a one-bedroom apartment with the requisite obnoxious neighbor. Writing a monthly check for something we don't own is anathema to my SO, however, so he went on a mission to find an alternative.

That's when we moved into a used, though well-cared-for, 35-foot RV.

We had divested ourselves of nearly all our belongings when we left Indiana. Adults sure can collect a lot of stuff, and boy, it's tough to let most of it go. But I digress. My point is, we had already jumped that particular mental hurdle and put what little we still possessed into storage.

For the record, our RV isn't like one of those tiny houses you see on TV, with all the clever hidden storage spaces and a cute loft. Nor is ours one of the six-figure super-deluxe models that feel like a regular home that happens to have wheels.

Looking backwards from the driver's seat, you see a straight line of living/kitchen, short hallway, bedroom. The toilet and shower are tucked in on either side of the hallway.

In the bedroom, we can't do much more than be on the bed since I insisted on bringing my queen-size mattress. The SO cleverly improvised shelving and drawers for my clothes around my side of the bed, so I literally do "crawl" into bed every night. He can get in from his side if he moves the laundry basket and doesn't bang his toes on the puppy crate.



Moving counterclockwise from the hallway: The living area has a dining table in the corner holding small appliances, a short-but-reclining sofa behind the driver's seat, and a TV he suspended above a catch-all table behind the passenger seat. There's the outer door, then the kitchen portion of the space, which consists of an L-shaped counter, an overhead cabinet and microwave, and a refrigerator.

It's pretty cozy. When the SO stretches out on his side of the couch while I do dishes, I can almost suds his toes.

Yes, there are bonuses to this simplified lifestyle. First, though, the drawbacks.

No dishwasher.

We can't have a cup of coffee without washing, drying and putting the cup away immediately unless you want to stare at what quickly becomes a small mountain of dishes on the small counter. Did you know doing dishes is the chore that most deflates women? Amen.

No oven.

Now, I'm no baker and not much of a cook. But once in a while, you want some crescent rolls, right? A take-and-bake pizza. Something broiled. This RV's answer to the oven is a microwave that is also a convection oven.

Somehow, convection allows me to put a metal rack inside the microwave without a fire breaking out. I've prepared a few things that way, but when you can't cook in a regular oven, I wasn't likely to excel with the convection process. We've learned to eat pasty-looking rolls and do most of our cooking on a portable burner.

No washer or dryer.

I hate doing laundry. Laundry makes my back hurt. Here in the Land of Never-Ending Heat, laundry makes me sweat. And laundry takes a big chunk of time I could use to do ... anything else. Dishes, for instance.

Our RV park has laundry facilities that are free, but limited, so sometimes you have to wait for access. However, hanging out at a laundromat ranks just slightly above being at the Department of Motor Vehicles on the last day of the month, so I do appreciate the on-site laundry room at the top of the hill in the windowless, lightless, air conditioned-less room. Really, I do.

Having said all that, I have loved living in this RV. I spend a lot of time here. Since moving to Texas, I've been freelancing from home, so this space is often all I see all day and all night. So the bonuses to this lifestyle stand out.

Bonus number one: My SO and I are in close contact with one another. Literally. We don't (can't) just pass each other in the hall. We must come face-to-face, which means we kiss, or hug, or laugh, or at least speak to and touch each other.

With just two rooms plus a bath, we always feel close. We sit cozily together on our short couch to watch TV because it's the only piece of living room furniture we have/can fit in there. And when one of us is in a huff, he can't spend hours in the garage (don't have one), and I can't slam doors (don't have any that'll slam). We talk it out.

Bonus number two: I can sweep and dust the whole place in under an hour. No hanging light fixtures, few knickknacks, few surfaces altogether, as a matter of fact, make housecleaning a breeze.

Bonus number three: We can take off and go just about anywhere at almost the drop of a hat. We've traveled to places out West I'd never been and am incredibly grateful I've seen: Garden of the Gods. The Grand Canyon. Roswell. And we're keeping the RV, so it's not over.

I'm excited to move into our house. (Still no dishwasher, though. I've ticked off Somebody somewhere.) We've pledged to keep living as simply as we have been in the RV. And we have no doubt that we'll be living the RV lifestyle again someday.

Tried-and-True Tips for Full-Time RV Sanity

1. **Talk it out.** The space is too small for grudges and chips on shoulders. If something's bugging you, sit down together and get it out in the open.
2. **Buy some lawn chairs.** Being outdoors can lift your mood and give both of you some space. And who doesn't feel romantic sitting under the moon and stars together?
3. **Live and learn.** There's rarely just one right way and one wrong way to do something. So she spilled a little sewage when draining the toilet tank – give her credit for trying!
4. **Have a sense of humor.** If you have sewage under your RV, there's not much you can do but get it cleaned up – and laugh about the god-awful smell. Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone does things differently. And no one deserves to be judged by someone who also says, "I love you." So have fun! That's what you bought the RV for.