

## Trip #6 – Episode 5: We're Hip

One of the organizations we discovered this year is called *Hipcamp*. People who have property that's big enough to accommodate an RV or a tent, or several of each, sign up and offer their space out to travellers. The prices are generally cheaper than regular campgrounds (especially in Florida!), and you can discover different communities that you normally wouldn't get to see. So far, it's worked out really well for us.

Our first Hipcamp experience was near Englewood, Florida. It was a fairly large property with a nice open view, and few horses.



There was also a hen named Bobo. Our host told us that Bobo was very friendly, liked crackers and would be happy to come inside our RV for a visit.

He was right. She came by pretty regularly to say hi.



She was quite beautiful, as chickens go. It was kind of calming to hear her clucking as she walked around Charles, and then up to the door.

She did like crackers, as our host predicted. But she was pretty picky. I gave her some crackers that turned out to be stale and she spit them out. Only the best for Bobo.



And although she clearly hoped to be invited in, when she pooped on our doormat outside, we decided maybe it wasn't such a great idea to let her in. Sorry. Bobo.





Our next Hipcamp was kind of odd. The address we were given was Spoonbill Rd., but when we followed the Google directions, we found ourselves in a gated community of what they call “Manufactured Homes”. Apparently, these communities were originally called RV Landominiums, because only people in RVs lived there. But since then, they’ve been replaced by prefabricated homes, which many people live in year-round.



So, when we drove into the community, with all these small homes on tiny lots, we weren't quite sure we were supposed to be there. There was a closed gate and we didn't have the code. It was a Saturday and the office wasn't open, so there was nobody to ask. But members of the community were very helpful. They gave us the code for the gates, and once we found Spoonbill Rd., someone helped us find our way to the site, beside one other RV amongst all the homes. So it seemed that we were allowed to be there.





And the spot was fine, although it felt a little weird, because we were definitely not part of the neighbourhood. We've heard about these communities where the basic mode of transportation is golf carts, and yup, that's so true. Literally a golf cart in every driveway.





Our neighbours across the way won the prize for the cutest golf cart of all. The Smiths were proud to tell the world that they *loved* tractors. As you can see, everything, including their golf cart was tractor themed. I suspect Mr. Smith worked for John Deere, but I could be leaping to conclusions. (See if you can find all the tractor references.)



So, it turned out to be an okay place to stay. Although, around dusk one day, it did get a little Hitchcock-ish.





Our next Hipcamp experience was okay, but not memorable. Except for some art that the host encouraged us to enjoy in the yard. So we did, as Jim points out.

There were two happy dogs on the property and at least a dozen balls scattered around the yard. At one point I thought maybe I'd play with the dogs. I picked up a ball and threw it for one of the dogs, and it couldn't have cared less. I threw a second ball for the other dog. He looked at me like I was insane. So, I guess the balls were for guest dogs. Nice touch.



There was also this curious sign in the neighbourhood. Fortunately, we never crossed paths with the killer butterfly.





Other Hipcamps were perfectly acceptable. This one was quite remote. We never met the host, and we had our “Opossum Post” all to ourselves.







This one was not too far from Dunedin. As you can see, it was pretty secure.

And Charles had lots and lots of room.



And yes, we did go to a Jays game in Dunedin. (Don't ask who won.)



This place was very near Homosassa Springs. More to come on that in a later blog. Again, it was comfortable and pleasant, and we took a nice walk in the neighbourhood.









This Hipcamp wasn't our favourite. The site was okay, but the neighbourhood, not so much....



But, our absolute favourite Hipcamp so far was in Edgewater, on Florida's east coast. Our hosts, Jay & Michelle were extremely helpful, giving us information about how to get to the beach, where to find information about tide levels, and how to find out which gates to the beach were open at what times.

The beach they were telling us about was New Smyrna Beach, about a twenty-minute drive from their property.





By now, it should go without saying that we knew nothing about New Smyrna Beach. But it turned out that this is one of those beaches that you can drive on! Even if you're in an RV like Charles! And so, of course, we did.



On the first day, it felt kind of strange to drive on the sand, but it was so hard and solid, we felt totally secure and had no fear of getting stuck.





The beach goes on for a couple of miles and there weren't that many people, so we easily found a spot.



Somebody was happy about that. (Frankly we both were.)





So, every day, we would leave our Hipcamp site, drive to the beach, find a spot and work, or have zoom calls, or go for walks, or just marvel at the view. It was pretty great.



And every day we went, the sights were different.











Some days were busier on the beach than others.



There was one guy that drove back and forth in their jeep, every single day, with Trump flags flapping in his wake.

The guy glared out his window each time he passed, as though daring us to react.

I did not take his picture.





One day, we were walking along and Jim noticed that everyone else on the beach was looking up in the sky. We asked one couple what was going on, and they told us there was about to be a launch from Cape Canaveral. (As usual, we had no idea and just happened upon this!) We turned in time to catch it.





When we left the beach each day, we drove back to our Hipcamp, which was also very pleasant. Jay & Michelle had 5 acres, with room for a few campers, all with hookups, so we had power and water. The grounds were lovely. There were all kinds of birds around and although they told us there were wild boars (!! ) we never did see them. Apparently, we would have had to stay up till the middle of the night to see them rooting around, searching for (and finding) mushrooms!



We enjoyed this Hipcamp so much, we returned two more times, and stayed there for a total of over two weeks.







Jay & Michelle had also created a space outside their home that was available to campers.



This was a nice spot to sip my morning latte.



We never used this kitchen, but it was so well set up and welcoming.



But we did use the hot tub a few times, which was just wonderful.

This was Valentine's Day!



The New Smyrna Beach area also had some nice surprises. Jay recommended this place, and it was great fun eating up in the tree.





As usual, there were signs and other things that made us scratch our heads. We knew religion was big in Florida, but is it possible things have just gone too far?



Some things were just fun.







Yes, sometimes Florida is just Florida. And when we made the decision to spend the winter there, we expected that.

But we didn't know about Hipcamp and we didn't expect we'd find so many great places through this organization.

When/if we do go back to Florida, we will definitely be back to this one in Edgewater. To visit Jay & Michelle (who was too busy to join us for this photo).

And to get more of this...

