

AIRSTREAM *Life*

Editorial Guidelines

Revised April 2009

General Guidelines

Airstream Life is interested in articles, illustrations, and photographs that have to do with the Airstream lifestyle. The following document details what sort of articles we seek, how to contribute, and what to expect. But in summary, here are a few important points:

1. We don't accept unsolicited articles. **Please send a query letter first!**
2. Authors are paid for articles which are published. We pay \$0.10 per *published* word (after editing).
3. We buy "first rights" to publish articles, and also the right to reprint articles in our annual Special Edition magazine, custom reprints, or Online Edition.
4. You are much more likely to get published if you can also supply photography for your article, or point us to affordable photography that is available.
5. Because the magazine comes out quarterly, it can take 6-12 months for your article to appear in print.

Writer's Guidelines

Airstream Life is a lively, inspiring publication. For all the types of articles we accept, writing should be clear, accurate, entertaining, and engaging. We look for unique perspectives, interesting opinions, entertaining historical accounts, and useful knowledge about the traveling lifestyle. The writing should reflect a familiarity with RVs and the Airstream culture. Topical articles should have a long shelf life.

Feature articles should be free of overly technical and insider jargon, and generous with explanation, background, and character. They should also be rich with drama, personalities, or provide new insight into the Airstream experience.

Both historical and current topics are welcome. For example, lively interviews or profiles of interesting people in the Airstream community are very desirable. Such

people could be famous, infamous, unsung heroes, or merely representatives of the Airstream culture and current trends.

Travel articles should offer a unique perspective on some aspect of traveling with an Airstream. Rather than “here’s what we did on our trip,” or a re-hashing of well-known sights and stories, we look for articles that are a bit different and more in-depth.

Technical and informational articles should be informative, well-researched, and useful. Writers of technical articles should have specific research or knowledge behind what they are saying, and their articles should be focused specifically on Airstream owners.

Articles can range from 500 to 3,000 words, depending on the department they fit into. Feature articles (1,500 words or more) must include photos or illustrations. (See Photo guidelines, below.) We can assist with access to Airstream historical archive photos as appropriate. In some cases we can arrange freelance photography, and we often have access to relevant stock photography. We also have a large catalog of Airstream photography which may be useful.

We often develop story ideas ourselves and may assign them to freelancers. To be considered for such assignments, send 2-3 of your most relevant clips and a letter about your specialties or interests. (See Queries and Suggestions, below). Freelance authors should have more than a passing familiarity with RV’ing, and especially Airstream culture.

Authors will be asked to provide a list of sources used for their articles, including phone numbers and/or e-mail addresses for fact-checking and photography purposes.

What We Don’t Publish

We do occasionally publish stories about exotic caravans, but only those that can be considered quality travel writing. Our stories are driven by personalities, places, and interesting events. First-person is discouraged unless you can weave an exceptional story.

Because we are a quarterly periodical, we can’t do much with breaking news. We also normally do not publish poetry, fiction, product comparisons, **rally reports**, WBCCI news, press releases, and campground or dealership reviews.

Generally, if it’s identical to an article you could find in “Trailer Life” or “Blue Beret,” it’s not for us. Our feature style and orientation is closer to “Smithsonian,” “Life,” and “National Geographic Adventure.” It’s always best to send a query letter first.

Departments

Many departments have regular authors, such as eBay Watch, Great Ideas, Innovations, Interiors, Parks Showcase, and Old Aluminum. We seek contributions to the following departments of the magazine:

Rivet Bits: 500-800 words. These are brief articles on nearly any Airstreaming-relevant topic that does not rate a full feature. We publish 1-2 per issue. This is an appropriate department for very topical subjects.

People in the Headlights: 1,000-2,000 words. This is an occasional feature of the magazine, focused on the most intriguing people in the Airstream community. Examples include interesting people who travel with, work in, design, build, refurbish, or support Airstreams.

Articles for this department should be based on in-depth interviews and have considerable background and depth. Specifics can be discussed with the Editor. At least one sidebar is a “must” to add value and bring the story home to the reader. Sidebars can be in first-person by the author if appropriate.

Destinations: 1,000-1,500 words. Generic destination information is available everywhere. We seek focused destination information that speaks to the things Airstream travelers like to do, and the places they are likely to go. A key requirement of this department is that the destination tips be diverse and unusual.

Mobile Technology: 1,000-1,500 words. The latest in gadgetry, tools and tips to make it easier and more fun to stay connected and informed on the road. The key in this department is to bring it all together for the reader so they know how to evaluate and succeed with new technology.

We also accept general “feature” articles that don’t necessarily fall into any of the above categories, so don’t be dissuaded by this list. In the past we’ve run articles on Buckminster Fuller, how aluminum is made, bridges, old highways, US/Canada border procedures, sea turtles, and many other diverse topics that can be related to Airstream travel.

Fees & Deadlines

Because Airstream Life is a quarterly periodical, we may work as much as a year in advance in preparing articles for publication, a fact that contributors should bear in mind.

Payment for articles and photography is upon publication. You should expect to

submit a first draft and, in many cases, a second draft after receiving editorial notes. We try to work with authors to make them successful.

Our current text rates for all articles is \$0.10 per published word. In rare instances, additional fees may be available depending on the research involved in preparing the article, and for original photography. We may also trade advertising space for articles in certain situations.

We buy exclusive first-time print rights and all electronic rights to published pieces for 6 months, non-exclusive rights thereafter. Some articles may be selected for our annual Special Edition, or Online Edition, but no additional payment is made in such cases.

In order to pay you, we are required to collect your address and social security or Federal tax ID number.

Byline credit, photo credit, and a sometimes a brief bio is given.

Photographer Guidelines

Airstream Life uses primarily digital photos. We can accept original color transparencies (35mm slides and medium or larger format transparencies), black and white prints, scans of pictures at a minimum resolution of 300 dpi (600 dpi or higher preferred), and digital photos from cameras of at least 2 megapixels. **Sorry, we cannot accept color prints or transparencies made from prints or negatives.** Photographs should include date, location, and subject information.

Unretouched and unaltered JPG or TIF format images are best. Please don't re-size or Photoshop your photos. The best photos come straight from the camera without any modification. We can make any minor corrections or crops that may be needed, during the layout process.

We use photography extensively in support of feature articles. This photography may be supplied by the author, or in some cases the photography may be assigned to freelancers. To be considered for such assignments, send a non-returnable portfolio on CD-R or paper with a brief note about your experience, specialties, and interests. We also accept random photos of interest, so please feel free to inquire via our website.

When sending digital photography, please use CD-ROM or request information about our FTP site. Individual photos can be emailed.

Queries and Suggestions

We welcome article suggestions and queries. We don't accept unsolicited articles, so please send a query first. It's best to include some samples of your writing and include the following information: your full name, mailing address, **email address**, telephone number, and the best times/ways to reach you.

In your query letter, just describe the article you want to write in a paragraph or two. Let us know how you think it would fit into the magazine, and give us a brief idea of how you'd accomplish the article, or any special help you might need to research it.

We prefer queries submitted via email, but mailed inquiries are also welcome. A one-page proposal is best. Please describe the approach, the sources, and the possibilities for illustration or photography, as well as your credentials. Authors who can supply good quality photographs with their articles get priority.

If the suggestion is appropriate for Airstream Life, we will respond to queries within 30 days.

Send to: Editor, Airstream Life
411 Walnut St #4468
Green Cove Springs, FL 32043

Or (preferably) email to: editor@airstreamlife.com

Top 10 Mistakes Made By Would-Be Writers

If you've read all this, you're probably the kind of person who will succeed working with Airstream Life magazine. But if you are still wondering, check out this list of the most common (and most fatal) mistakes made by people who want to write for the magazine:

1. Sending an article already written, before sending a query letter.
2. Not being familiar with the magazine before sending a query letter. (It's amazing how many people think they can write for a magazine they've never seen. Sending a query that concludes, "Please send me a sample of your magazine," is a sure road to failure.) Subscribe or buy a copy at a bookstore before you start your query letter.
3. Asking for pre-payment, a higher rate than other authors get, or other special terms. Airstream Life is more of a "labor of love" than a way to pay your bills.
4. Suggesting a "generic" RV topic that could have been published in Trailer Life.
5. Suggesting an article about yourself, or "my first Airstream experience". We get that query every month.

6. Writing in the first person when it isn't absolutely necessary.
7. Being unwilling to accept editing or suggestions. Writers need to be flexible to be successful!
8. Failing to do good research or check your facts. (It shows in the finished product.)
9. Plagiarism, or drawing too heavily from other published sources.
10. **Being afraid to send a query!** Sure, this may all be intimidating and you may have no prior professional writing experience, but if you've got the right attitude and can write clearly, we want to hear from you!