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Days of Wine & Roses ... and Apples

By Tom Palesch

...a boon for those who like uncrowded camping.

A fun part of Airstreaming is anticipating the end of your day on the road. The highway is behind you, and a peaceful camp lies ahead. Ideally it will treat you a lovely sunset where you enjoy a relaxing libation followed by a tasty dinner. If this is your style, consider a great new experience called “Harvest Hosts,” which allows free camping in bucolic settings that you otherwise might not get to enjoy overnight.

In 2010, avid RV travelers Kim and Don Greene launched Harvest Hosts to mimic similar networks that have existed in Europe for many years. For a modest annual fee, Harvest Hosts provides access to over 300 host member vineyards, wineries, farms, orchards and ranches scattered all over North America and Mexico. Since the membership of Harvest Hosts is just now approaching 1,000, it’s likely you’ll have most sites entirely to yourself—a boon for those who like uncrowded camping.

Harvest Hosts has an easy to navigate website (see www.harvesthosts.com), which lists hosts by geographical region. There is also a forum where members participate in discussions about trips and hosts they visited. Choosing a site is simply a matter of picking it from the regional map.



PHOTOS: TOM PALESCH

Members they must be self-contained (no tents), and are advised to call the host a day ahead to make arrangements. Since hosts are not running campgrounds, they don't offer hookups, and some have limitations about RV size, pets and visiting times.

Many of the vineyards and wineries are impressive commercial establishments with live musical events or other activities during their season and at certain times of the week. While your stay is limited to a single night, a Harvest Host can be a good destination for a special occasion, where you can enjoy entertainment, sample and purchase wines or farm products and tour the farm. Each farm host has an interesting and inspiring story and you can't help but notice that they are very family oriented and work as a family unit. In short, Harvest Hosts is a pleasant alternative to ordinary camping experiences.

Each host has a unique story about their business. Some were born into it, like the Hauser family of far north Bayfield, WI. The fifth generation is now working their orchards. Since founding in 1908, Hauser Superior View Orchards has expanded into retail sales of orchard products, and now own and operate Bayfield Wineries, which produces fruit wines and meads. Their facilities are on a high

A quiet night is ahead for this Airstream parked at the edge of the grass, at an orchard in Connecticut. Styled after European networks, Harvest Hosts opens up hundreds of new places for Airstreamers to camp in peace and solitude, alongside blooms and fresh produce.

hillside overlooking beautiful Lake Superior and their woodlot is laced with walking trails.

Amy Sterling and Howard Davies established Arché vineyard and winery less than a decade ago. Before that they had worked in the fast paced corporate world and owned a printing business. They restored their hunting property in Saint Jo, TX (north along the Red River and Oklahoma/Texas border) back to a vineyard and recently added wine making and bottling facilities. They have a lovely farm in rolling hills along the river with plenty of room to enjoy country style camping. You can sample their products and go to sleep serenaded by coyotes. They have walking trails and—being in Texas—an oil well too.

The Normans of Norman Vineyards have been in the grape and wine business for many years and enjoyed the RV life themselves. Lei Norman now runs the business and enjoys the camaraderie of visiting RVs at the vineyard and winery in Paso Robles, CA. Lei loves the concept of RV overnights at vineyards and wishes they had that opportunity when the family had time to travel.

RJ and Juanita Lint of Plum Hill Vineyards in Gaston, OR are enthusiastic supporters of Harvest Hosts and want to encourage visitors to come and enjoy their facilities. They are putting in a dog park for visiting canines and have a small picnic area and pond for their two-legged guests to enjoy. RV visitors thus far have left them with a very positive impression.

Country hosts offer you a friendly and inviting welcome to an entirely new camping genre. As members of Wally Byam's caravans in the 1950s discovered, spending the night off the busy highway and in the quiet of a farmer's field can yield unexpected and wonderful experiences—and great refreshments. 🗨️

