



Deciding to Go

Now that you've thought through the pesky area of financing the trip and realize that it really can be done, it's time to address all the other issues involved in making the decision. While money is an important topic, it is far from the only criterion in deciding to live your dream. This chapter addresses such practical aspects as what to tell the family, what to do with the family pets, missing your support system and home, deciding how to travel, and the most often asked question: how to be with your traveling companion on a 24/7 basis without going crazy!

Breaking the news

Saying it makes it real. The sooner you start telling people you are planning to go on this adventure, the sooner you will start believing it and orienting your thought processes around the idea. Even if you are not 100 percent committed to the idea yet, it solidifies your own commitment to start "socializing" the idea with friends, family, and organizations with which you are involved.

Even a year ahead is not too soon to start. You will find that you need about six months of intensive planning time to get everything done without making yourself crazy or a complete slave to your schedule. So the sooner you pick a date to leave and begin telling people that you are going, the easier it will be when you begin doing your planning in earnest.

People's initial reaction may be to resist or dismiss the idea, and this is especially true for people who depend on you for support of some type (financial, emotional, social, and so on). As we mentioned in Chapter 2, the earlier you begin talking about

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the idea with them, the more time they will have to incorporate the plan into their thinking. A series of discussions that cover the "what, when, why, and how" of the trip will help your friends and loved ones understand the importance of the decision to you and how they can support your decision.

Those who depend on you most will need particular attention. You need to be considerate of what they are feeling. Most likely they are thinking, "What will happen to me while you are gone?" Have a plan ready to address those needs. Once they understand that they will be taken care of, they will usually be in full support of your trip. The table "Some Potential Scenarios" on page 24 addresses some of the questions that could come up and offers some ideas on how you might find a solution for each concern. Certainly this list is not exhaustive, but hopefully it will get your own ideas flowing for how to handle your family's issues.

The bottom line is to do everything you can to provide for your obligations, but be firm that you are going on this adventure. Your firm resolve will motivate people to rally around you and become part of the solution, not part of the problem.

Building support

Here is where your skills as a cheerleader and motivator will become handy. Your own enthusiasm for the project can be contagious, and most people will ultimately be excited for you and can help you build consensus in your circle of friends and family.

Some Potential Scenarios

Area to be addressed	Potential solution
<i>You pay the bills for your elderly father</i>	Put most of them on a bill-payment plan from his bank, the utility companies, etc. Have a friend or family member pay miscellaneous ones each month when visiting.
<i>Your disabled sister depends on you to mow her yard and grocery shop for her</i>	If there isn't a family member who can take over these duties while you are gone, hire someone to do the work and include the cost in your budget.
<i>You visit shut-ins at a local nursing home who have come to look forward to your visits</i>	Find a friend or recruit someone from your church to start going with you and integrate them into the facility before you leave on your trip. Get the folks excited about your trip and offer to send e-mail or postcards of what you are doing. They will love that idea.
<i>You have a three-year commitment to your community's planning commission, homeowner's board, etc.</i>	Turn in your resignation early so that they have time to replace you and you can help orient the newcomer. This happens all the time. Don't let your guilt become a deterrent to your trip!
<i>Your mother depends on you to manage her medications, get her to the doctor, etc.</i>	Again, this is one of the areas where you can ask someone in the family, her circle of friends, her church, and so on, to fill this void while you are gone.
<i>You baby-sit your granddaughter two days a week</i>	If your son/daughter can't make other arrangements on their own for new childcare (the best option), then you may have to offer to find and pay for the care while you are gone. This is another item to include in your budget.
<i>Your brother worries that you won't keep providing that extra income he counts on each month</i>	Assure him (if it is true!) that you will continue to take care of that, and then set it up on an automatic payment directly to him or to his checking account.
<i>Your business partner is concerned about what will happen to your clients while you are gone</i>	It will take some negotiation to plan for not only the workload but also the split of profits, payment of expenses, and so on. A weekly conference call could help keep an even keel, or completely turning the business over to her for a year may work. Don't overcommit to your involvement or neither of you will end up happy with the arrangement.

When we first told people we were thinking about doing this, no one believed us, especially the kids. "Parents don't just run away for a year!" they exclaimed. I'm sure they thought we would "get over" this crazy idea and life would go back to normal. But as time grew closer and we began involving them in the planning by asking their opinions and assigning them duties while we were gone, they soon realized that we were actually going to do this. They became very supportive, even though they initially felt that their support system would be diminished. Other than not being available to take the kids off their hands for an afternoon or evening with Grandma and Grandpa, they actually saw new benefits to the time away. The postcards arrived pretty regularly, their phone was always handy to give our cell phone a call, our website showed them fun pictures of what we were up to, and the learning opportunity on geography was undeniable.

We were fortunate to have not only family but also friends who could and would help us to make this a reality. We made them all part of the process of getting ready to go and part of the trip while we were gone. Finding ways to include them, get them excited, and bring new experiences into their lives all ended up being positive developments that couldn't have been predicted ahead of time.

Here are some ideas for ways to include people in your planning and your trip:

- Make an adult child responsible for your mail. Forward everything to them, have them review it all, throw away the junk, pay any miscellaneous bills, and occasionally forward anything important to you. Remember that they can call you on your cell phone with any questions.
- Add one person to your checking account to take care of unexpected issues and to do any banking business. This could also be important if something were to happen to you on the trip.

- Enlist a “techie” friend to help you build a website, learn e-mail, or consider the options for GPS systems.
- Secure e-mail addresses from everyone you talk to and build a list so that you can send out mass e-mails to keep them up with what’s going on while you are on the road.
- Ask someone with some spare space to be your “warehouse” while you travel so that you can ship treasures and out-of-season clothes to them along the way.
- Have someone be responsible for getting the local news and gossip to you each month—via e-mail, of course!
- If you do something involving children (i.e., volunteer at school, teach Sunday school, serve as a camp counselor, etc.) or have a teacher friend, set up part of your website for them to follow your adventure. Post geography questions, pictures, and other information that is appropriate to their age and to the area you are currently traveling through.
- Ask a marketing friend and/or a realtor to help you learn how to market and care for your home while you are gone.

The more committed you become to your trip, the more enthusiasm will build around you. We guarantee that your positive attitude will go a long way toward encouraging others to support you. Build a good plan, communicate it early and lovingly, keep a problem-solving can-do attitude, and never lose sight of your goal. You too will soon be on your way to your trip of a lifetime.

What about the pets?

We had pets in our lives when the kids were growing up. We have now chosen to consider each other our only pets! But for many folks this is a major consideration. We can tell you what we observed along the way.

Many people travel successfully with their pets, and there is no reason that you can’t take most dogs or cats with you. They seem to enjoy it as much as the adults do. Most RV parks and even many motels have “walking areas” for your friends. We also saw many kenneling opportunities at large attractions, so you don’t have to leave those companions in the car.

If you believe that taking your pets is not a good idea, for whatever reason, there are other solutions. The obvious one is to loan them to a loving family that either has pets or would like a “trial run” with yours. If your pet is a snake or some other exotic, this may be more difficult.

Another thought is to include the pet as part of the lease on your residence. This could either limit your potential caretakers or be seen as a bonus. We worked this strategy in reverse when we came home during the holidays. Since we had no home to come “home” to, we circulated an e-mail among our friends a month or so ahead of our arrival and offered to pet-sit for someone going on a trip during the holidays in exchange for a bed. Sure enough, friends of friends thought this was a terrific idea—no need to board the dog and someone reliable to watch over the house!

Children, grandchildren, and other support systems

This is just a short plea for sanity. The most common refrain we heard—and still hear—was, “I could never leave my grandchildren that long! How did you do it?” We also heard it in relation to children, dogs, neighbors, and parents, but most often it was about those darling little humans that grow way too fast.

We too love our grandchildren to death. We now have eight, and we see some portion of them almost every week. We wouldn’t miss their growing up for anything and continue to arrange our

lives to live close to them. But we also know that life is short, and we never know when our time here will be over. We were good parents. We prepared our children well for life. We did our jobs and more. We willingly and gleefully gave of our time and our talents and continue to do so. We never took long vacations away from them, and we now take the grandchildren with us from time to time and will do more as they get older and easier.

But at some point in life, don't you just want to scream, "*But what about me?*"

We decided *our* time had come. If we didn't grab it now, we might never get the chance. It was our turn to do something special for ourselves.

If you still don't believe you can do it, think about some of the things your grandchildren would miss:

- That phone call at the top of Bear Tooth Pass, 10,000-plus feet, and that little voice saying, "Hi Grandma, what'cha doing today? I love you," and you telling them about looking down on mountain lakes and glaciers and about the bears in Yellowstone Park—maybe we'll go there together one year.
- Those pictures of Grandpa in silly positions with his hands in Colorado and Utah and his feet in Arizona and New Mexico at Four Corners. "Where is that, Mom?" "Let's look on the map, honey, can it be true?" Another lesson learned.
- That meeting at the airport after six months away and the look on their little faces to finally see you again. Priceless!
- Arranging a little detour in your trip so you can join them on their vacation and they can see how you have been living. A day at the Smithsonian, a day at the park, or even dinner together can be memories they will never forget.
- If you really can't stand the thought of separation and if space allows, how about having them join you, one by one, for part of your trip? What a special time for both of you!

We know how important this factor is for many people, but we really plead with you to consider yourself first for a change. If extensive traveling is indeed of interest to you—or we assume you wouldn't be reading this book!—then take a deep breath, kiss the grandchildren, and plunge ahead with this crazy idea!

Missing important events

There is *never* the perfect time to take this trip. We missed class reunions, weddings, birthday parties, retirements, births, funerals, and many family get-togethers. These will all happen while you are gone. Life does go on around you. We finally decided that we have been very lucky to live around family and great friends all our lives and that this little "blip" of time wouldn't change that. We thought about all the people who spend their lives moving around or who live far from family, and again we counted our blessings that we would miss only a few events in the scope of things.

We made a conscious decision to do what we could to support those events we were missing and to include those people in our trip and thoughts to the fullest extent possible. We always sent e-cards or postcards to mark events. We sent presents when we would have bought presents at home. E-commerce certainly makes this easy these days. We made phone calls when appropriate. We encouraged people to visit our website, and we often posted greetings or special messages there. We received digital pictures in e-mail so that we could see what we had missed. In other words, we acted just like people who live far away from home.

If there is an event that you just can't miss, consider it as part of the trip experience and include a trip to the location as part of your budget. We knew that we wanted to "take a break" and come home for the holidays, so we included that in our plans. We left the van for a "checkup," hopped an airplane, and spent a wonderful four weeks with our families. Your break might be a class or

family reunion along the way or a trip home for the arrival of that new grandchild.

You can simply make the extra effort to stay in touch and to be a part of lives and events. Your trip will be over in the blink of an eye, and although you will undoubtedly miss some significant events, the enrichment that you experience on your trip can never be replaced.

Choosing your traveling home

There are scads of books that discuss this topic in excruciating detail, so we won't take up space explaining it all again. They cover every type of vehicle, the pros and cons, how to maintain them, how to buy them, where to store them, and everything else you can imagine. Once you've decided to go, we suggest that you buy one of these books to help you make your personal decision on what is right for you. What we will tell you here is how we decided that our Pleasure-Way, 19-foot, Class B van was the perfect vehicle for us.

Envision your adventure

The absolute first thing you have to consider is what your trip will be like.

- Do you want to go fewer places and stay for a while in each?
- Do you want to be on the move most every day?
- Will you explore the back roads of our country or stick mainly to the interstates?
- How much gear do you need for your adventures?
- How many personal items are essential for your comfort?
- What kinds of weather will your route cover? What does that mean for clothing requirements and vehicle comfort?
- Do you want to be able to sleep in your vehicle? How elaborate does it need to be?

Each of these items has an impact on what type of vehicle you decide on. Your “home on the road” decision will impact your flexibility, your comfort, your driving, your ease of setup/teardown, and your finances. You can do a yearlong trip in everything from a large car or SUV to the fanciest motorhome available. Your choice of vehicle all depends on what you want to do and what you are comfortable living in.

If you will be staying in motels every night, have little or no desire to make sandwiches along the way, and can travel with minimal “gear” and a couple of suitcases full of clothes, then a car makes great sense. Your gas mileage will be better and you will have complete flexibility in where you take your vehicle and when you move to your next destination/adventure.

If, on the other hand, your needs for a yearlong trip are more extensive, then the fun begins—because the choices are so broad.

How we decided

The choice of vehicle was one of the first items we tackled on our long list in order to get ready for the trip. Once we had a general outline of what we wanted our trip to look like (see Chapter 4), we knew that there were a lot of things we wanted to see. We knew that we wanted to spend time in each state, we wanted to do some “camping,” we wanted to have a comfortable amount of our “things” around us, and we wanted to stay off the interstates as much as possible. We also knew that neither of us had ever driven anything larger than a station wagon and didn't particularly want to add “big rig” training to our list!

We did Internet research, bought a couple of books, and started going to RV shows—something we'd *never* thought we would see ourselves doing! Because of our parameters, the more we looked, the more we became intrigued with the idea of either a Class C motorhome—generally defined as a “cab-over” design built on a regular truck chassis—or a conversion-van type of rig.

Conversion vans are each custom-built inside using a “delivery” van or an automobile van as the starting point. We saw a wide variance in quality and found that the used market was pretty undefined, which would be a concern once we returned and wanted to sell the vehicle. But we were intrigued with the ease of handling, the gas mileage, and the cozy interiors.

We ultimately thought that most of the Class C’s were either underpowered for their size (too small of a truck body), top-heavy (high center of gravity)—think of a windstorm in Kansas!—or lacked design appeal (admittedly a personal preference). They do provide decent gas mileage and are generally roomy for their size.

We had eliminated the larger motorhomes early in our search strictly because we didn’t want to learn to drive one. And we really didn’t want to tow a car behind one, which is almost a requirement. Also, they are not easily maneuverable for exploring back roads, and they offer poor gas mileage. But they can’t be beat for overall creature comfort: lots of room, lots of storage, and lots of gadgets—which we just saw as more things to go wrong that we wouldn’t know how to fix! If you are doing a trip where you are planning to stay in your traveling home all or most of the time and you are not moving every day, you might want to seriously consider this type of vehicle.

The other choices include a trailer, a camper on the back of a pickup, or a fifth wheel—which is really a motorhome pulled by a truck or pickup. We didn’t think we wanted to ride in a pickup for a year, so we nixed those choices early on. We also didn’t like not being able to move back and forth between the cab and living area while moving down the road. And the choice of a fifth-wheel or trailer would also have entailed learning to maneuver a towed vehicle.

While we were at one of the RV shows, we spied a cute little unit way in the back. You could hardly see it for all the big rigs on the floor. We found out it was a Class B motorhome. We had not seen the Class B on the Internet, nor were they talked about in the

RV books. They were fairly new, and we were told that they had a limited market appeal. But we knew it was for us. They are built on a van chassis, are beautifully finished inside with everything you could need, have a standard resale market (dealers, etc.), and get decent gas mileage. They are cozy but very well laid out.

We found there are several large manufacturers of these products. Winnebago makes the Rialta, and Pleasure-Way and RoadTrek (both from Canada) make the ones you will most often see on the road. There are a few smaller players—and maybe new ones we don’t know about—but these are the ones we considered seriously. We felt that the Rialta, with its Volkswagen engine, wouldn’t provide the horsepower we wanted going over mountain ranges. It has a neat layout and seems more spacious than the others. It is also lower to the ground, which is nice for getting in and out, but we thought that could be a problem for road clearance.

Let us spend a little time telling you about our decision-making to buy a Class B, because there is not a lot of information out there on these units, and we think they are a pretty neat choice. We did our serious comparisons between the RoadTrek and Pleasure-Way. Both have substantial dealer networks, both hold their value about equally well, both have well-laid-out interiors and adequate headroom for a six-foot-two-inch husband, and both sell for about the same price. By the way, if you consider one of these, the pricing may initially take your breath away for their size. You can certainly buy any other size RV for less money per square foot than a Class B. But they are so cleverly built and so convenient to drive, they are really in a category by themselves. Also, they hold their value much better than a standard RV. That is at least partly because you can drive them like a regular automobile when not using them for traveling. They have seatbelts for four or more, get good gas mileage (we got

Class B RVs are so cleverly built and so convenient to drive, they are really in a category by themselves.

about 14 mpg on average over 35,000 miles), and can be parked with relative ease in a standard parking space. They are about the same length as a Suburban—just taller.

So how did we decide between the two? Part serendipity, part research, and part customer referral. We asked everyone we saw with one or the other brand (we often saw them at the grocery, downtown, at Wal-Mart, at sporting events, and so forth) and we found that the Pleasure-Way owners overall seemed more satisfied with their vehicle than RoadTrek owners. The Internet also proved to be fertile ground for reading about people’s experiences with one or the other. Just type the brand name in any search engine (such as Google) and you can read for days! The major complaint from the RoadTrek owners seems to be that they lack power. They are built on a smaller engine than the Pleasure-Way. I understand there have been some changes in both brands since we bought ours, so it is worth checking out again. Ours always had plenty of power. As long as we didn’t get behind a slow truck, we could whiz over the Rocky Mountains—which we did several times—at highway speed and were always comfortable passing on the highway. We also felt that the Pleasure-Way was laid out better inside—more usable storage, lighter and brighter (we had a white interior), a larger bed area, and a better-laid-out kitchen. Again, a lot of that is personal preference. We went to both dealers and talked to sales and service people. We felt, in our area, that the dealer representing Pleasure-Way was more informed and more interested in the product. We also found the Pleasure-Way dealers around the country to be very helpful and knowledgeable.

The serendipitous part of the decision involved finding an absolutely immaculate, “gently” used Pleasure-Way sitting in the driveway next door to a friend’s house—for sale! We were already leaning in that direction, but this “find” sealed the deal for us.

Because Class B’s are built on a standard chassis (ours on a powerful Dodge 3500), you can get them serviced at any regular car

dealership. We didn’t realize the importance of this until we were on the trip and found that RV dealerships are always booked out well in advance, whereas you can call an auto dealership, tell them you are traveling, and get in the same or the next day—

Just a note about service:
Don’t skimp! This is not ***just your vehicle; this is your home and your special once-in-a-lifetime trip.***

without fail! Since we didn’t plan anything ahead (we never knew where we would be in two weeks in order to call and make an appointment!), that turned out to be a big advantage, because those 3,000-mile oil changes come around pretty often. Call the dealer, go have lunch, and you’ll be back on the road! When you travel over 30,000 miles in a year, all the servicing that you would do at home in several years is condensed into one year.

Even our most nerve-wracking experience was resolved without a hitch by a Dodge dealer. We broke a shock—that big heavy-duty kind—in Yellowstone Park. We came back to the “Rolling White House”—our van’s name—one day and saw something hanging down. “This does not look good,” I told Phil. A service station was nearby, and they confirmed it was indeed a broken shock, but they had nothing of that size to replace it with. After determining it was not critical, just serious, we simply drove carefully and enjoyed the rest of our park experience and limped into Billings, Montana, a couple of days later. We called the dealership late on the afternoon we arrived and explained the problem. The dealer did not have a replacement on hand, but he said, “Let me see what I can do and call you back.” He truly embodied the spirit of customer service. Near closing time, he called our cell phone and said he had found one and would have it there first thing in the morning: “See you then!”

Just a note about service: *Don’t skimp!* This is not *just* your vehicle; this is your home and your special once-in-a-lifetime trip. You do not want to break down. We followed the “heavy-duty” maintenance

schedule and never had a problem the entire year. Remember, our vehicle was not new—which was an even bigger incentive to keep it in tiptop shape. We always found the dealerships to be great. Everyone was interested in what we were doing and treated us royally at every stop. They made helpful suggestions, checked our records for what had been done previously, and generally made sure we went safely on our way each time. Congratulations are in order to the Dodge dealerships, large and small, around the country.

Our decision—post mortem

So would we pick that vehicle again? The answer is absolutely yes, but with one caveat. We loved the small size for handling, parking, gas, adequate storage, and driving. For 95 percent of the time, it was everything we could have needed or wanted. We did, however, find it a little confining in the evenings. Even though the seats both swivel around and there is a table between them, the interior is rather small for two good-sized people to move around in. When we camped and it was nice outside, we could hang out at the picnic table, take a walk, go swimming, have a barbeque, and so on, and it was perfect. But when the conditions were less than ideal, Phil, particularly, got a little claustrophobic inside the unit. This led us to camp less than we had anticipated. Sleeping was not the issue—in fact, he loved having the TV/VCR right at the foot of the bed; it was just the moving around inside during the evening hours. That was our only disappointment, and it may not be a factor for you. Rent one for a week before you buy if you have any concerns in this area.

We did find we used it in some ways that we hadn't originally anticipated and that were really handy. Having a bathroom on board can be a *real* lifesaver. Think of being stuck in the middle of nowhere while the road crew is working. Another fun option is firing up the stove by a beautiful waterfall and having a hot gourmet lunch with last night's leftovers. Easy as pie! Having cold water in the refrigerator at all times is wonderful. How about getting to

your motel late, being tired, and cooking your dinner right in the parking lot in front of your room and eating in your room in your 'jamas? It was a lifesaver more than once.

You may be thinking, "Tired? What's with that? They're on vacation!" Trust us, you will have many tired days; in fact, you will have to take "vacations" from your trip! We know that sounds ridiculous, but as much fun as all of this is, you do have to have some downtime—just like at home.

The novice view of RVs

Having never driven—or even ridden in—an RV, and neither of us being very mechanical, we were nervous about any decision involving this type of vehicle. We're here to tell you that if we can do it, anyone can do it. Once we got the hang of it, we could set it up in less than fifteen minutes and be having our cocktails!

We read all the material, which was pretty confusing, but then we enlisted a friend with an RV to take us out in ours to practice. We went to a nearby RV park and told them that we wanted to practice. They laughed and let us play around to our heart's content. We hooked everything up, ran some water, turned everything on and off, flushed the toilet, unhooked everything, went to the dump station, saw how that worked, and then went back and did it all again by ourselves while our friend watched. We had it down—kind of. Before we left on our "real trip," we tried a weeklong trip—just to be sure. On that trip we learned a lot more. But there were no horrible disasters, only silly things that made us laugh. Read more about that in Chapter 11.

You just have to think of it like a house. It has a plumbing system, a heating system (actually two), a water system (also two), an electrical system (well, actually three), an air-conditioning system (two), and a septic system. Just like a house! Once you learn the basics, it all makes sense. We had a laminated card with setup and breakdown checklists (see Appendix). We needed this for about

three weeks, and then it was all automatic. Also in the Appendix is a chart of the systems. This chart would have made our learning a lot easier! Each manufacturer varies a bit, but this is the general idea. Don't let this fear stop you from buying a "rig" if that is the most appropriate choice for your trip. Just keep your sense of humor and patience handy.

The great 24/7 "getting along" issue

Speaking of "humor" and "patience," if you don't take those along with you in large doses, you will be heading home in the first month. Guaranteed.

Nothing seems to strike fear into the hearts of couples faster than the idea of being together on a 24/7 basis for even a week, much less a year! This is unequivocally the *most* important issue to face before you decide to go.

Actually liking your spouse (or traveling companion) is probably a prerequisite for attempting to do this. If you can look that other person in the eye and say, "You know, I really do like spending time with you," then keep reading. If not, find a new companion for the trip, or read the rest of this book just for its entertainment value!

We never even gave this a thought as we made up our mind, as we genuinely enjoy each other's company and like to do many of the same things. We just naturally spend a lot of time together, so we really thought nothing of it. However, 24/7 does have its challenges, even for the most "together" of couples.

Support, support, support. If you don't do this and be sensitive to each other's needs, moods, and quirks, you could be really miserable on the road. Think about your current day-to-day relationship. Do you like spending time together even if life doesn't let you do it often? Do you enjoy the same activities? Do you have fun together on vacation? Do you find it relatively easy to help

each other out and plan for things together? If you can answer yes to most of these, then you already have the foundation for a successful year together on the road.

That's not to naively say you will always get along. You will both have

bad days and good days, but it is really your frame of mind that says, "We are going to support each other through those times, and this too shall pass! We have a lot of fun and interesting times still ahead of us, and we'll have great memories to take home." And if you don't keep a positive outlook, you are surely headed home.

Arranging some space within the space is also helpful. If each person has even just a drawer or shelf that is all theirs, or a time of day when the other one just leaves them alone, then togetherness becomes more inviting.

We'd also put in a plug for exercise. We all know that it is good for us, both mentally and physically, and now you have the time to do it. We found that an hour of yoga—by a beautiful river, near a stream, viewing the mountains—was very calming. We also took a walk almost every day at the end of the day to reflect and to recharge our batteries. Whatever works for you, just make sure it becomes part of your routine. Having that daily bit of structure will go a long way toward mitigating the "too much togetherness" that we've been discussing. Each of you can do it alone if that works better for you.

So what do you do when those bad days come, when you've just had it "up to here" with the other one and you want to run screaming from the campground? Just separate for a while and go do something individually. It may mean that one of you reads while the other golfs. One of you goes to a museum while the other one goes to a sporting event. You lie out in the sun and send him to get groceries (yeah, right!). Just do something to put distance between the two of you for a day. When we went home at the holidays—six

Make exercise a part of your routine. We took a walk almost every day at the end of the day to reflect and to recharge our batteries.

months into our adventure—we figured out that we had been apart only nine hours in those six months and we still liked each other!

If you are not currently a “cozy couple,” talking about it and setting some boundaries and routines ahead of time could help ease the transition to more togetherness. Taking time to discuss it and practice it could definitely make the difference between success and failure. This trip should not be another chore to live through but rather a life-changing, exhilarating experience to cherish forever.

When you return to your home, you will be a changed couple. We found we were closer than when we left, and our experiences continue to enrich our lives and conversations in a way that no other event could possibly have done. It could be the spark that keeps you together for the next fifty years of your life!