

Coming Home

St. George Island, Florida, U.S.

—

April 18, 2017 by [Scott Gilbertson](#)

I haven't accurately tallied it, but my guess is that we've spent nearly two months on St. George Island over the years. Enough time anyway, to make it feel a little like coming home when we get here.



This also feels a bit like coming home, or at least returning to the beginning, because this is where we were when we decided to do this trip two years ago. It's also where we were when Corrinne found the bus on Craigslist. Yes, Corrinne found it. And yes, it took two years to get it restored. Tip for anyone reading this who's thinking, "man, I really want to restore an older RV/Trailer": make a budget for time and money and then double both. Then, just to be safe, double the money budget again.

It took longer than we wanted, and there were some darker moments in those last two years when everything seemed impossible, but hey, we did it. We're here. Again.



Ironically not in the bus though. Through all our visits to St. George Island we've always stayed in the same place, which is owned by some friends of the family. I tried to talk the girls into camping at the very lovely state park down at the east end of the island, but they wouldn't hear of it. It had to be the pink beach house.



Fine with me actually. Gave me a chance to finish the last of the bus tasks I need to knock out to call it

finished. I don't know why my wife just laughs now when I say I'm done. But really I am. The only thing left is getting a new water tank. Oh and the solar panels. And the house battery. And the ladder. And the roof rack. And the new awning. Cough.



When we got here we were leaking transmission fluid pretty bad. I had my eye on a section of the transmission cooler hose that had been replaced with what looked like some cheap rubber hose. But I had promised the family I wouldn't spend the entire time on the island under the bus so I called around a bit and found a shop that was willing to take a look the following Monday. Good enough. I spent the next four days at the beach, hardly ever thinking about that hose, hardly ever having nightmares about failed gaskets that would require dropping the entire transmission.

Instead we played in the surf, climbed the lighthouse, ate shrimp, fried up Grouper cheeks, cooled off with shaved ice and frozen lemonades, and tried to find a cool Piggly Wiggly t-shirt. In other words, we did what you do at the beach — a whole lot of nothing.







Shaved ice and frozen lemonade in the shade.



Cooking at the beach requires sunglasses.



95 stairs and a 10 ft vertical ladder, she did it all. The woman selling tickets thought Lilah was too short to climb a lighthouse. I told her they'd climbed Half Dome, that shut her up.



Top of the lighthouse.

One day I spent the better part of an hour with the kids, digging up tiny little clams out of the wet sand behind receding waves. The Seashells of North America guide back up at the house told me later that the slightly larger, rainbow colored clams were Florida Coquinas, while the smaller, white ones were Gulf

Donax. Both pop themselves out of the sand when they feel the vibration of crashing waves so that they're carried up and down the beach, always remaining at the edge of the tidal zone where we were sitting, digging in the sand.

We dug up the Coquinas and Donax and dumped them on the surface of the sand to watch them suck themselves back down into the wet depth. Over and over we dug, then they dug. We started to root for different clams, trying to guess which one would disappear first. There was something hypnotic about watching them, something of the same appeal perhaps of things like frog races. I started to wonder what the clams must think, the ocean gone mad, surf pounding the shore and digging them up over and over again. Or maybe they're more seasoned than that, maybe they knew exactly what it is, fucking tourists. Or maybe they didn't need a why at all, maybe they just sucked themselves back down without a thought. Because it is there.

On Monday we drove the bus up to Port St. Joe, which had the only mechanic that had met my criteria: shop out of the way, huge bay doors in Google Street View and not fazed by my slow sell of, "I got a dodge 318, with a 727, that's leaking transmission fluid..." "Well, bring it in." "Okay. One thing, it's got a 27ft motorhome attached to it, is that okay?" "How many feet?" "27." Pause. "That should be alright."

Turn out to be... wait for it... transmission cooler hose. Sigh. But hey, it's fixed and I didn't miss any time with the kids at the beach.





We had a mailing address for a little while, so we went ahead and got the girls their birthday presents — pedal bikes.



Since the girls got new bikes, Elliott was more than happy to take one of their old ones.

2 Comments



G and G Weldon May 01, 2017 at 2:45 p.m.

Glad y'all enjoyed the pink house,Linda had told us the girls talked about it from time to time.It is a peaceful,restful place.Glad George's Grandfather had the wisdom to buy the lot before the bridge was built,wait 8-9 years until the bridge was built then he and his sons came over and built the house.He even cut the framing timber off his farm and stored it in a barn while he was waiting.What a gift to us the third generation to have it.Oh yes,George was glad to(big smile)to hear someone used reference books he put there.Enjoyed your blog almost as much as the one about the joys of an outdoor shower.



[Scott](#) May 02, 2017 at 9:07 a.m.

@G and G Weldon-

I didn't know he built it himself. I would like to have seen the island back then.

And I've read almost all the books there. A few years ago we met an older gentleman at the nature center in Eastpoint. He talked a bit about being a ferry captain years ago and some other things about the history of the Bay. Anyway later I was reading that Voices of Apalachicola book and he was in it. We sort of got the in-person version of what was in the book. Small world down there.