

TRAVEL TALK: WHAT TO DO ON THE ROAD

by Chase Binder

I've said it often—Bud and I love a road trip. This is a good thing, since our retirement life now includes traveling from Bow to/from our little winter home in Florida at least once each year. Of course, we could fly (Allegiant from Pease, multiple carriers from Manchester or Boston) but our two Standard Poodles, Maggie and Millie, are normally with us. So, drive it is!

On some trips we stop at favorite haunts like Savannah or Charleston. We've also taken diversions through Pennsylvania and Georgia. But most years we like to "shotgun" straight down I 95—1500 miles, door to door, which we divide into three 500-mile days. With stops for food, dog-walking and the occasional traffic snafu, we spend 9-10 hours/day in the car.

So, what do you do for 30 hours cooped up in a car with your spouse? We know lots of folks who make the same trip. Some chat, some listen to music, some follow public radio. Some subscribe to Sirius and listen to sports, news, or comedy shows.

Bud and I listen to audiobooks. We started on our first NH-FL road trip in 2010. We were renting in Key Largo and tried an audiobook by Stephen King set in the Florida Keys, "Duma Key." It was scary, long, and totally mesmerizing. We loved it! But this was before smart phone technology blossomed. We had loaded the book onto an iPod and, though we enjoyed listening, the iPod was frustrating and inconsistent.

We transitioned to audiobooks on CD—feeding them into our SUV's CD player. We soon learned to read the labels, detailing who actually reads the book (some are better than others – so listen to a clip before you buy) as well as the number of CD's and the hours of listening required. We got into Lee Child's Jack Reacher series as well as Carl Hiaison's hilarious Florida-based mysteries. But our library of CD's grew, and prices started edging from \$10 to \$15-17 per book. Once you listen to a



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book... what do you do with it?

Time for another transition! On one trip we discovered a kiosk of audiobooks at the ubiquitous Cracker Barrel restaurants. Rent an audiobook at any Cracker Barrel in the country—and return at any Cracker Barrel in the country. Prices vary depending upon the number of CD's, and rentals require a hefty deposit (\$30-50), but the deposit is immediately returned when you return the book—minus a small rental fee of \$3.50-5.00. We would pick up a book in NH, listen along our route, then find a Cracker Barrel to switch out for another book until we made it to Florida—and do the reverse on the way home. Last year Dan Brown's "Origin" got us all the way from the Cracker Barrel in Londonderry to the one in Fort Myers, Florida.

But the Cracker Barrel's selection is limited. We like to plan ahead, and a friend had been touting the free audiobooks available on web platforms via public libraries and accessed on smart phones, tablets and other devices. In October I popped into Bow's own Baker Free Library to explore the possibility.

It was one of those decisions that changed everything! The librarian explained the process. First, get a library card (free to Bow residents, employees of Bow businesses, and Dunbarton children who attend Bow schools, available to others for a fee—but all must apply in person). Then, download the

two main audiobook platforms, Hoopla and Libby (Overdrive) onto your smartphone. I pulled out my Samsung Galaxy S9, and the librarian took over with a smile. She helped download the two apps and set up my accounts once I had my library card—right then and there! She explained the differences—due dates vary and Libby concentrates on digital books, audio books and magazines while Hoopla offers e-books, audiobooks and movies, music and more. She showed me how to search and borrow and I selected a couple of books—easy! She finished with an explanation of Bluetooth and USB connections in most cars.

After my visit, I ran home and told Bud about my find. We went right out to the SUV, connected the app via my phone and Bluetooth and... it worked!! We borrowed Lee Child's "Past Tense," a Jack Reacher thriller set in

NH, for our November trip to Florida and the app worked perfectly. It kept exact track of where we left off, no matter if we stopped for a puppy pee break or an overnight. The sound was clear. We are converted!

Pending any technology apocalypse, we've made our last transition. Others are getting the message too. Bow Assistant Librarian Amy Bain tells me that Libby/Overdrive had 9,634 downloads in 2019—an 18% increase over 2018. Hoopla had a 23% increase to reach 3,124 downloads. There isn't room to detail all the available offerings and information (such as sources of free e-books on the Internet as well as an extensive in-library audiobook CD collection), but visit www.bow-bakerfreelibrary.org to start exploring your options. Then, stop by for a visit. Trust me, whether you're traveling across town or across the country it's worth it!

TRAVEL SHOW



North America's National Parks

Travel Show

Thursday
February 20
6:00pm

AAA Concord
48 Fort Eddy Rd.

AAA Member Choice
Vacations

Join Andrew Bessette from AAA Member Choice Vacations for an evening exploring the National Parks of North America. Behold the breathtaking views of the Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon National Park, or the sandstone cliffs of Zion National Park. Head north for an adventure of the expansive prairies, the soaring Canadian Rockies, and the brilliant Glacier National Park in Montana. This is your chance to make your dreams come true!

Space is limited. RSVP 800.222.3422 / rsvpne@nne.aaa.com