

What's New: Update from Runaway Campers

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January/February
2016

COOLtears™

and tiny campers

COMANCHE COCOON



Strangers in a strange land

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COOL Tears™ and tiny campers

M A G A Z I N E

Vol. 4 No. 1

January/February 2016

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By Justin Preston

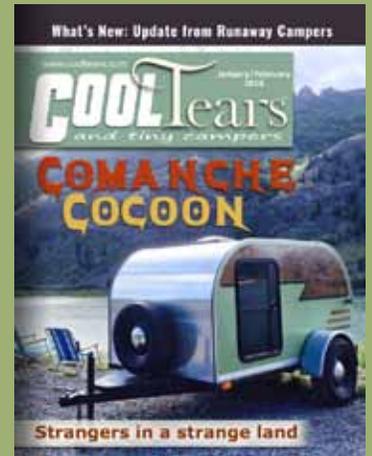
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Sarah Atkinson

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Jay Taylor

Stephen Shives

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Dreaming of camping

Well in spite of the fact we are smack in the middle of winter, here in the heartland the temperatures are soaring past 70 and thoughts of camping are flooding my mind. Although many of you brave the cold days to camp year around, my little family tends to wimp out and only camp in seasonable temps. Not much beats those early spring mornings, crawling out of the camper bed and stirring the campfire while brewing that first cup of coffee. I love watching the sun rise over a local lake from my camping chair with a cup of joe in hand.

The magazine has updated our website to try and accommodate some errors that were occurring when we made the big switch over here a few months back. We now have a calendar hosted by Google dedicated to teardrop gatherings across the United States. Please shoot me details of events you might be hosting or are aware of so we can keep the calendar up to date.

This issue also has a new product spotlight feature. The guys who own SIC Cups definitely impressed me with their product and customer service. We now will be offering 30 oz. stainless steel tumblers that are professionally etched with a teardrop logo for just \$30 on our website. I use this tumbler every day and LOVE every aspect of it. The lid seals on tightly and the double wall build allows ice to stay frozen for over 24 hours! Shoot me an email if you have product you would love to see featured in the magazine and be watching for giveaways of products in the near future!

Until next time...enjoy every sunrise!

SARAH TUCKER

Editor

Cool Tears and Tiny Campers Magazine™
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HOW Sweet Tea THIS LEARDROP IS!



LaurenVictoria Photography

 by Sarah Atkinson

Having a young family meant we wanted a bit of comfort when camping, which was what we did for our family vacations each year. We were not in a position to buy a recreational vehicle, and in fact, they didn't have what we wanted. We come from family who build, not buy.

After seeing some beautiful woody's online, we decided to design something with a deep rich color & plenty of room for our family. The name Sweet Tea has multiple meanings. For starters, the exterior is a beautiful brown sweet tea color, and Kris drank tons of it in the making. Also it is a play on words, how "SWEET this TEArdrop is."

The building process took approx 6 months. We acquired an old vintage canned ham that had been in the family for decades. It was beyond restoration, but would make for an amazing

foundation for a new design. Our first problem came when we realized almost all teardropers are 4'x8' & sleep only 2. We had to design one that was oversized. One that would sleep our family of 4 & 2 pets. We had been inspired by a show we saw on the Travel Channel many years back about teardrop campers. We started in January & worked on it every spare moment, including evenings after work, and every weekend. When we took the aluminum skin off the outside, it just fell apart!





A few neat facts: we made a scale model to start with. When we were determining the size & shape of the walls, we used 4'x8' sheets of 1/2" foam board. They were lightweight & we could cut & trim them easily & one person could hold it up so that you could get a visual determination of your overall shape. We did

3 coats of marine grade epoxy, followed by 3 coats of poly. Another 2 coats of poly were added the following year. Now she is barn kept & will be re poly'd every few years. The only salvageable item besides the frame/ axle was the water faucet.

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With Kris having construction experience & an AutoCAD degree, the design & building aspects came easy to him, however, there were few things he had never done. Welding was the first challenge we encountered. We borrowed a welder & he got busy, welding what amounted to a crazy abstract gnarly metal sculpture. With each weld he got better & better. Soon, he was confident enough to start on the frame, which needed welding in many spots. Our other main challenge has been the wooden roof.

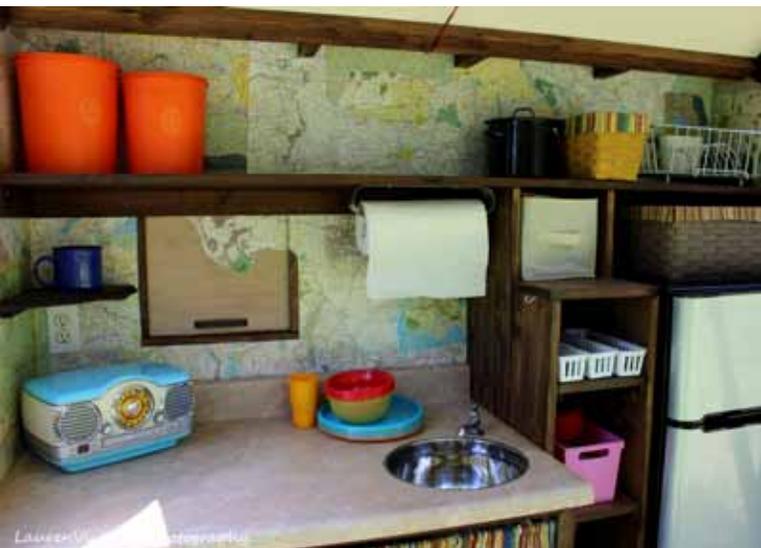
One thing that was invaluable was online forums. We did hours of searching & finding out about other peoples experiences. TNTTT.com was a great place to find tons of info and it helped tremendously.

After working hard all winter &

through spring, she was ready to go on our maiden voyage, a 330 mile trip to Garner State Park. Though the interior wasn't complete, she was road worthy and we took her to Texas' #1 most popular park in the state. We didn't have foam for comfy sleeping, but it was leaps & bounds better than the tent. During that trip, a bad storm hit the park, one so bad the park rangers came around and told us we could come to the lower part of the park where there are large safe buildings, if we would like to. If we would've been in our tents, we would've spent 3 days in the gift shop! But we felt safe & sound & dry in our baby!

After the maiden voyage, we realized that it leaked a bit. we pulled the slats off & sealed up the seams with fiberglass strips. We are considering replacing the wooden roof with some aluminum (possible copper colored or patina) however I (Sarah) don't want to change the roof, as I love the solid wood exterior. Our only other challenge I would have to say has been A/C. Living (and camping) in Texas in August means we need to stay cool. For the first 3 years, we have had no A/C & have depended on our exhaust fan & open windows, coupled with the shade of a 12'x12' canopy that our teardrop fits under. It's been bearable but we are planning to add the A/C this coming year.

In our 20 years of marriage, we have built many things together and we love being able to combine our passions for design and creativity. We make an amazing team and hope to build more teardrops in the future.



COMANCHE



COCON



by **Justin Preston**

My wife, Amber, and I both grew up tent camping in East Texas, so when we married in 2012, we knew camping was in our future. We're both teachers, so we have summer vacation each year, which makes for a lot of travel time. After a few tent camping trips, I realized that I was done sleeping on the ground and was ready for a camper.



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I began compiling a wish list for my new camper. I knew I wanted something more comfortable than a tent, but I didn't want to spend a fortune. I wanted to be able to take my camper into the backcountry. I also wanted to keep my tow vehicle, a 4 cylinder, bare bones, manual everything Toyota Tacoma 4x4. That meant the camper had to be comfortable, roomy, tough, and extremely lightweight.

I had never seen a teardrop, but once I found one on the internet I was hooked. As I began to research the history and origins of teardrops, I became obsessed. I found it interesting and inspiring that some of the first teardrops were made by returning soldiers from WWII with excess aircraft aluminum in the true age of DIY. I appreciated that the whole teardrop community is based on ingenuity, resourcefulness, and self-expression.

Teardrops are easy to tow, easy on the eyes, easy to get into remote campsites, and easy on the pocketbook. The only problem was the length of the bed as I'm too tall (6'5") to lay down comfortably in the commercially made teardrops. I began wondering if I had the skills to build my own teardrop.

I felt like I had a few decent skills, but I had never built anything like a camper that I was planning to tow across the United States. In the process of scouring the internet for tips and advice, I came across a design called the Rimple. I think this simple design with a small radius curve gives you the maximum amount of interior space possible in a teardrop, and I knew it would be enough space for my

plans. I found an old 5'x8' heavy-duty utility trailer for sale on Craigslist for 300 bucks and I pulled the trigger.

I cleaned and painted the utility trailer frame, and moved the axle back a little. I welded on a spare tire rack and rear receiver hitch (with a little help from my buddy JC). I added an old reclaimed wooden bumper with vintage taillights, and a front wooden platform seat on the tongue. I figured I could also use that platform to jump on top of the teardrop if the bears were chasing us! I found a set of full-sized hot rod wheels and tires with baby moon hubcaps on Craigslist



for cheap. I think full-sized tires are a must for traveling long distances and off road. I also found some nice galvanized wheel fenders at a trailer shop on sale. I framed out the floor with 1x3 lumber and a 4x8 sheet of exterior grade plywood and undercoated it with roofing tar and just like that the foundation of my camper was complete.

I used exterior grade 4x8 plywood for the walls and 1x2 poplar that I laminated together to create 2x2 poplar for the roof rafters and galley framing. The roof was insulated with the pink foam sheets of insulation and skinned with luan plywood. I left the sidewalls as uncovered plywood.





Then everything was sanded, primed, painted, and sealed. I painted a vintage canned ham inspired design on the sidewalls, leaving some of the natural wood grain exposed. Even though I painted and sealed the roof, I still decided to skin it with mill-finished aluminum for extra durability.

Big diamond plate rock guard was added to protect the aluminum from dings. I added a Fantastic Fan on

the roof, and it makes regulating the temperature a breeze. I ordered pre-made doors, and I'm glad I did because they are excellent. They don't leak, were easy to install, and they let in a whole bunch of light. The sliding windows, screens, and locks make life a lot easier at a campsite, too. It was actually starting to look like a teardrop. In fact, the whole project was coming together easier than I had anticipated!



...life by the 'Drop



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The teardrop was wired to have both AC and DC power. When plugged in to AC power, I can charge the battery and run everything. When not plugged in, I can run the lights, fan, and entertainment devices off the battery for several days. I wanted to have the flexibility to go off-grid and remote camping whenever we wanted and this setup allows us to do just that.

The galley was the trickiest part of the construction, but not nearly as tough as I thought it would be. I opted to keep it simple. I built in some storage for pots and pans, set aside an area for my battery and power control panel, and installed a vintage Coleman camp stove. An old piece of wood is used to hold the galley open, no hydraulic lifts here.

Since we live in Texas, we needed an air-conditioner, which can be tricky. I personally can't stand the look of a window unit hanging out of a camper, so I hid my AC in the galley. The drip pan is routed through the silverware drawer and out beneath the camper. The only drawback to this type of setup is that the galley door needs to be open in order to properly vent the AC, but so far that hasn't bothered us at all. I also relocated the thermostat away from the AC to keep the AC from cycling on and off. The AC works great and will freeze the place.

The interior was my biggest design challenge. I wanted a very long bed, with as much headroom as possible. I pushed the kitchen galley storage back as far as I could to allow for a longer bed. I ended up with a bed that was 83 inches long and 58 inches wide! I bought a California King memory foam mattress and cut it to fit, and my wife sewed a custom bed cover. It is the most comfortable camper bed I have ever slept in. Since I didn't insulate my floor, I put some foam

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foam locking tiles under the mattress and I've never had a problem with condensation, and we've camped near freezing several times. I put in some overhead storage and an entertainment system above the foot of the bed. I included an XBOX, flat screen TV, and speakers. I chose not to put anything over our heads to create more headroom. I put up white bead board paneling on the ceiling to give it an open feel. I stained the wood and added an accent stripe that echoed the exterior design.

Throughout the build I used rough or old lumber whenever I could. I also used a grinder to "rough up" the new lumber to give the overall trailer a vintage, hand-made look. I focused on a clean, simple overall design with a nod to the past. I added a few wooden pockets, shelves, Velcro curtains for privacy, magazine racks, cup holders, vintage stickers, and found objects to give it a bit of personalization. I named it the Comanche Cocoon. "Comanche" because we travel light,



clean, and close to the land in the spirit of Native Americans and "Cocoon" because it is a cozy, hand-made nest.

Total cost was about \$3000. It took me about 9 months to build working on weekends and when I was free. Most of that time was spent researching. It ended up weighing 1400lbs a little heavier than expected due to the heavy duty frame and thick plywood I used everywhere but plenty sturdy. If I build another teardrop, I will be able to make it cheaper, lighter, and faster now that I know what I'm doing. There were plenty of mistakes, frustration, and moments of doubt throughout the build but overall a very satisfying project. I think anyone with basic carpentry skills can build a teardrop with a little patience and perseverance.

After four years, the Comanche Cocoon has earned its supper. We've taken it from the southern tip of Texas in Big Bend National Park all the way to Waterton Lakes National Park in Canada! It's been to Oklahoma, Colorado, Wyoming, Idaho, Montana, and Arkansas. We've taken it deep in the woods, been off grid, spent time in national parks, stayed in big RV parks, and used it as a guest house at home. Everywhere we go it gets lots of attention and people always want to check it out. Several folks have even asked if I would build them one!

We've since had a son, and for now the teardrop still sleeps three comfortably. I will never sell the Comanche Cocoon, but I do already have a design in mind for a giant teardrop inspired camper for the whole family...so the obsession continues!

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STRANGERS

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LAND

***MAKING FRIENDS
WHILE CAMPING***



by Jay Taylor

Camping brings opportunities and provides many benefits. It can bring you close to nature and mend your soul, bring families together that are separated by miles, and even provide opportunities to make new friends.

One Man's Rambles

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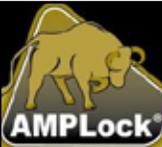
When I was a kid, we knew every family on our street and most on the next street or two over. Everyone looked out for each other, kids played together, we even camped together. This was fairly common way of life so many years ago. However, it seems like times have changed, people get so caught up in their daily lives that people often barely know their neighbors. You may have a friend across the country that you met on Facebook and know everything about them but you barely know the person 50 feet from your front door. You might give a friendly head nod as they pull in their driveway or wave as they are mowing their lawn but you may not really know much else about them. It shouldn't be this way, humans are social beings, it is part of our DNA. We band together because it makes us stronger and safer but also because it fills our need to have human contact and interaction.

Camping has a way of bringing people together. While camping, people tend to open up more, embracing human interaction. But how do you meet new people, strike up a conversation? Some people are just not good at making new friends, they find it hard to get engaged. Perhaps they are shy or just awkward in social situations, but we all need and crave human contact. I for one have never been much of a social butterfly...it's never been easy for me to engage strangers in a crowded room. However, I have discovered a way that works for me to meet people while camping. While I did not do this on purpose, one of the best ways I have found to meet new people while camping is to inadvertently leave something at home. Everyone does it,

the one item you forgot to pack, it might be a tool or lighter fluid for the coals, but there is always something.

In our case, it was a can opener. While on our maiden voyage with our trailer, we decided to celebrate our first night in our trailer with some steak, broccoli and ranch style beans. However, as





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we started to prepare dinner we realized we had no way to open the can of beans. So, we reached out to our nearest camp neighbors to borrow a can opener. It was the perfect icebreaker to start a conversation. As it turned out, it was their maiden voyage as well. We spent the entire weekend hanging with our camp neighbors and discovering that we had a lot in common. We enjoyed their company so much, we have stayed in contact with them and even went on other camping trips together.

We have been on both the borrowing end and the lending end. On yet another camping trip, one of our nearest neighbors was having trouble getting their coals lit due to rain the night before. As it so happened, I had an extra bag of coals that were dry. So, when they came over for some help, I was glad to provide some coals and help them get them started. In both cases, it turned out to be a great way to meet camp neighbors and make

new friends.

Getting to know your camp neighbors can not only be fun, but also provide useful. Just like at home, camp neighbors that know one another tend to look out for each other. While not common, thieves have targeted campgrounds in the past. They might steal chairs, generators or coolers and friendly camp neighbors can help deter strangers from lurking around your campsite while you might be away. Friendly camp neighbors help form a sort of neighborhood watch.

So, next time you are out camping, leave your can opener at home and take a moment and get to know your camp neighbors. You just might make a lifelong friend and make your camping trip much more enjoyable. Oh, as for the can opener? Well, we never did get the can open as our neighbors didn't have one either but I am still glad we forgot to pack ours.





WHAT'S NEW?

**Update on
Runaway Campers**



by **Stephen Shives**

*I*t's been a little over three years now since Runaway Campers officially stepped into full production with the goal to be “America’s Most Affordable Mini-Camper”. What started out as a backyard project, has since developed into a nationwide community, that not only enjoys and appreciates the simplicity of the Runaway product and business model; but even more, the sense of family that comes from meeting and developing friendships with other owners.



In 2013-14, Runaway® put all attention on producing their popular 4x8 CoolCamp and Navigator. In 2015, they introduced the 6x8 RangeRunner as an affordable alternative to individuals and small families in need of a little more room than a 4' could accommodate. By September, sales between the 4s and 6s were running neck and neck, with the RangeRunner continuing to build steam as orders increase even through the winter months.

So, what is in store for this company as it goes into the 4th year running? For starters, in just a few months, the 1,000th unit will roll out of their very modest factory in Ocala, Florida. "I believe 2016 is on track to be our most exciting year yet." states company owner Stephen Shives.

January got off to a running start with the introduction of the wAv, (pronounced "wave") a 6x12 camping trailer, with room to stand up inside for a 6' person; a full size bed; and a convertible dinette area for additional sleeping space.

The trailer has a dry weight of 1,720 lbs and stays true to the signature "arch design" of the smaller version Runaways. The standard price is \$8,995., and units will initially be available in four month cycles so that the company can continue to keep up the pace with their other production schedules.

Additionally, construction is set to begin next month on their new sales center, in the same corridor shared by numerous central Florida RV dealer-

ships. This strategic location will be convenient for travelers on U.S. Hwy 441/301/27 and also easily accessible from I-75. And later this year, the company plans to break ground on "Runaway Acres", a 9 acre complex with campground amenities, exclusively for use by Runaway Camper owners.

Stephen is very optimistic about the company's future; and excited to have added his son, Justin to the company staff this past year. Justin has been a technician for BMW the past 4 years, and has brought much of the organizational skills utilized by a high end automotive company, to the Runaway team.

"Nothing is 100% certain in life; but I have no doubt this business is a gift from God, for me to use my abilities in a way that honors Him. It will be whatever He (God) wants it to be. And as for me... I'm just glad to be a part of it."

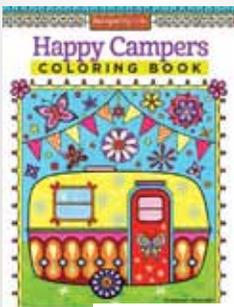
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Product Spotlight

Adult Camper Coloring Book



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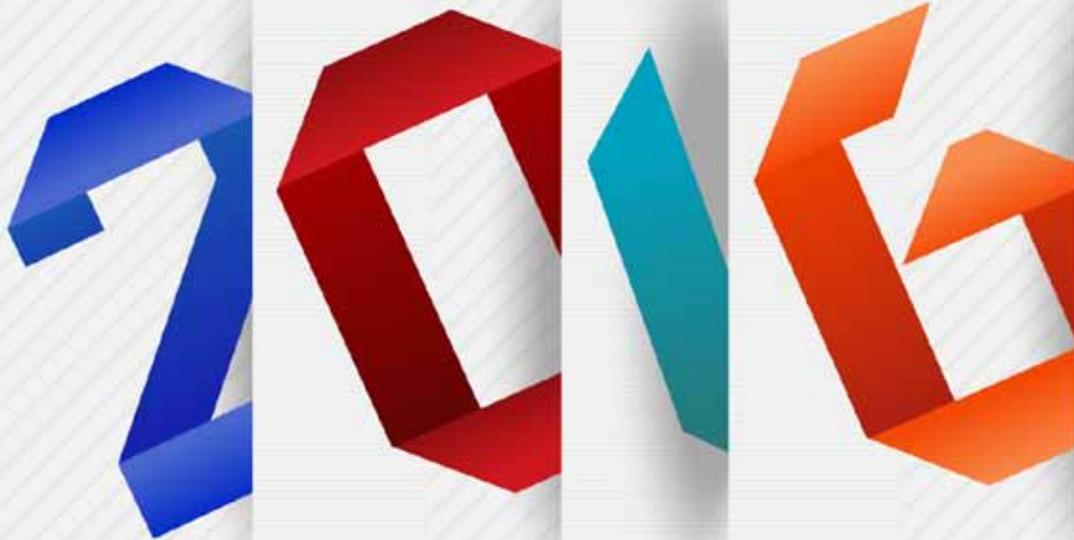
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TEARDROP GATHERINGS

Texas Runaway Rally
Sat, March 12 – Sun, March 13
Fairfield Lake State Park, Fairfield TX

Shasta Lake Gathering
Thu, April 28 – Sun, May 1
Antlers Campground, Lakehead, CA 96051

2nd Annual Gathering of Southwest Teardrops &
Vintage trailers
Fri, March 18 – Sun, March 20
Tyler State Park - Texas Parks and Wildlife
789 Park Road 16, Tyler, Texas 75706

Tennessee Volunteers' "Rills and Hills Gathering"
Thu, April 28 – Sun, May 1
Hornsby Hollow Campground, 379 Hornsby Hol-
low Campground Ln, Ten Mile, TN 37880

Dixie Chapter "Spring Gathering"
Thu, March 31 – Sun, April 3
Smith Lake Park, 416 Co Rd 385, Cullman, AL

Buckeye Chapter "Spring Gathering"
Fri, April 29 – Sun, May 1
Dillon State Park, 5265 Dillon Hills Dr, Nashport,
OH 43830

Old Dominion Chapter "First Landing State Park"
Thu, April 14 – Sun, April 17
First Landing State Park, 2500 Shore Dr, Virginia
Beach, VA 23451

Land of Lincoln Chapter's LAKE-LE-AQUA-NA S.P.
Thu, May 12 – Sun, May 15
Lake Le-Aqua-Na State Park, 8542 N Lake Rd,
Lena, IL 61048

Runaway Rally
Fri, April 22 – Sun, April 24
Buccaneer State Park, Waveland Mississippi

Great Lakes Chapter "Spring Gathering"
Fri, May 13 – Sun, May 15
Wilson State Park, Harrison, MI 48625
Liberty Bell Chapter "Keystone State Park"
Fri, May 13 – Sun, May 15

"Cooler Near the Lake" Gathering
Thu, April 28 – Sun, May 1
Kohler-Andrae State Park, 1020 Beach Park Ln,
Sheboygan, WI 53081

Keystone State Park, 1150 Keystone Park Rd,
Derry Township, PA 15627

Southern Appalachian Chapter "Spring Fling"
Thu, May 19 – Sun, May 22

Moonshine Creek Campground, 2486 Dark Ridge
Rd, Sylva, NC 28779

May 2016 Krause Springs Gathering
Fri, May 20 – Sun, May 22

404 Krause Spring Road Spicewood, TX 78669

Gorge Gathering

Fri, May 27 – Mon, May 30
Stevenson, Washington

Liberty Bell Chapter's "Memorial Day @ French
Creek"

Fri, May 27 – Mon, May 30

French Creek State Park, 843 Park Rd, Elverson,
PA 19520

Southern Ontario Chapter Luau

Fri, May 27 – Sun, May 29

Point Farms Provincial Park, 82491 Bluewater
Hwy, Goderich, ON N7A 3X9, Canada

Chesapeake Bay Chapter "OBX Blast"

Sat, May 28 – Sat, June 4, 2016

41133 S Ocean View Ct, Avon, NC 27915

New York Chapter Summer Gathering

Fri, June 24, 2016 – Sun, June 26, 2016

Lake Erie State Park, Brocton, NY

Garden State Chapter "July 4th Campout"

Thu, July 7, 2016 – Sun, July 10, 2016

Dingmans Campground, 1006 US-209, Dingmans
Ferry, PA 18328

Teardrop City Multi-Chapter Gathering

Wed, July 20, 2016 – Sun, July 24, 2016

Fort Chiswell RV Park, 312 Fort Chiswell Rd, Max
Meadows, VA 24360

Comal River Gathering of Southwest Teardrops &
Vintage Trailers

Fri, August 5, 2016 – Sun, August 7, 2016

Landa RV Park & Campgrounds 565 N Market St,
New Braunfels, Texas 78130

Land of Lincoln Chapter @ Livingston County
4-H

Thu, August 11, 2016 – Sun, August 14, 2016

Livingston County 4-H Park, 18142 4h Park Rd,
Pontiac, IL 61764

Liberty Bell Chapter "Raccoon Creek State Park"

Fri, August 12, 2016 – Sun, August 14, 2016

Raccoon Creek State Park, 3000 PA-18, Hook-
stown, PA 15050

Southwest Teardrop & Vintage Trailer

Fri, September 23, 2016 – Sun, September 25,
2016

341 State Park Road 2117, Hwy. 21 S. Pittsburg,
TX 75686

Smoky Mountain Runaway Rally

Fri, September 30, 2016 – Mon, October 3, 2016

Smoky Mountain Runaway Rally

**Be sure to check out the
website for more details
on these gatherings.**

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