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## The Beatrice Years

Part 3

## 1970 & 1971 Airstreams

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This installment of the Beatrice Years series will address 1970 & 1971 Airstreams. Both could be considered years of refinement after the radical changes that were introduced in 1969. One thing they had in common was their serial number coding that was 10 characters in length (e.g. I31DJ09999) and is decoded as follows:

**NOTE:** You can find parts 1 and 2 of the Beatrice Years article series in the VAC Newsletter Nov/Dec 2015 and Mar/Apr 2016 issues on the VAC website.

Posi-	Purpose	Valid Values
1	Model (Trim Level)	"L" = Special or Deluxe Land Yacht (1970) or Land Yacht (1971), "I" = International Land Yacht, "E"=Excella 500 (1971 only)
2-3	Length (in feet)	"18", "21", "23", "25", "27", "29", & "31"
4	Floor Plan	"D" = Double Bed, "T"= Twin Beds
5	Assembly Plant	"J" = Jackson Center, OH, "S" = Cerritos, CA
6	Model Year	"0" = 1970, "1" = 1971
7-10	Sequential Serial Number	"0000" to "9999", tied to overall production, not specific to model and length

To keep article sizes manageable, from now on these articles will primarily highlight year to year changes and will not restate every detail that did not change from the prior year. With that said, let's begin the detailed review of 1970 and 1971 Airstreams.

1970: This was clearly a year of refinement. In general, the shell shape, construction, trailer lengths, and trim levels carried over from 1969, but a variety of visible and "beneath the skin" functional improvements were implemented to make 1970 Airstreams easier to pull and use in all weather conditions. All 1969 models and layouts carried over into 1970, but there were two new model offerings for 1970, a 23' Safari Special Land Yacht and a 25' Caravanner International Land Yacht. Let's begin with a discussion of these new models.

The new lower cost 1970 23' Safari Special Land Yacht models received the same streetside rear corner bathroom and curbside rear corner gaucho/bed as the shorter Special Land Yacht models, while the Deluxe Land Yacht models remained in production and retained the full width rear bath and mid-ship gaucho/bed across from the kitchen counter from 1969. This created a total of four 1970 Safari variants because both the Special and Deluxe Land Yacht models were available in double and twin bed configurations. Double bed variants of both models had a gaucho across the front of the trailer that pulled out into a double bed, while twin bed variants had a front dinette with two long benches that served as beds when the table was stowed.

The totally new 25' Caravanner International Land Yacht had more wardrobe space, larger "walk around" areas, and more creature comforts for long distance travel. The Caravanner floor plan had two gauchos at the front of the trailer, one across the front and one directly across from the door; with a larger kitchen and more wardrobe space in the center portion of the trailer and the bath at the rear. It also had more windows than the 25' Tradewind. Airstream introduced the Caravanner calling it a "sleep 2" model, because there was no permanent bedroom area, but in fact both gauchos could be converted to double beds to create sleeping space for up to 4 persons if necessary. The unique Caravanner kitchen was equipped with a 4-burner stove with



1970 Caravanner Street Side Windows

integral oven rearward of the sink on the curbside, while its refrigerator was located at the rear of a "c" shaped counter on the streetside. The Caravanner retained the large full width rear bath used on all 25' and longer Airstreams. Airstream had last offered a similar "sleep 2" floor plan in a variety of 22' and 26' models under various

model names in the late 1950s and early 1960s, however the previous model to use the Caravanner name was a 22-footer offered from 1956 through 1960 that had a different floor plan. It is interesting that today, the 1970s Caravanner model is sometimes referred to as the "party wagon" model because the two closely located gauchos and abundance of windows make for easier conversing and entertaining for up to 6 persons.





Living Room - 1970 Caravanner International Land Yacht - Kitchen

The complete 1970 Airstream model lineup was as follows:

Length & Model	Suggested Retail Price	Hitch Wt.	Total Wt.
18' Caravel Special Land Yacht	\$4170	350 lbs.	2880 lbs.
21' Globe Trotter Special Land Yacht	\$4780	380 lbs.	3330 lbs.
23' Safari Special Land Yacht Twin Bed	\$5875	425 lbs.	3500 lbs.
23' Safari Special Land Yacht Double Bed	\$5875	415 lbs.	3460 lbs.
23' Safari Deluxe Land Yacht Twin Bed	\$6380	410 lbs.	3850 lbs.
23' Safari Deluxe Land Yacht Double Bed	\$6380	400 lbs.	3800 lbs.
25' Trade Wind Deluxe Land Yacht Twin Bed	\$7225	445 lbs.	4250 lbs.
25' Trade Wind Deluxe Land Yacht Double Bed	\$7225	455 lbs.	4290 lbs.
25' Caravanner International Land Yacht	\$7435	465 lbs.	4265 lbs.
27' Overlander Deluxe Land Yacht Twin Bed	\$7640	450 lbs.	4515 lbs.
27' Overlander Deluxe Land Yacht Double Bed	\$7640	460 lbs.	4565 lbs.
27' Overlander International Land Yacht Twin Bed	\$8320	455 lbs.	4525 lbs.
27' Overlander International Land Yacht Double Bed	\$8320	465 lbs.	4575 lbs.
29' Ambassador International Land Yacht Twin Bed	\$8910	445 lbs.	4665 lbs.
29' Ambassador International Land Yacht Double Bed	\$8910	450 lbs.	4715 lbs.
31' Sovereign International Land Yacht Twin Bed	\$9180	480 lbs.	4910 lbs.
31' Sovereign International Land Yacht Double Bed	\$9180	490 lbs.	4960 lbs.

A long list of option packages and individual options was available on these trailers at additional cost.

The length, width, height, ground clearance, and hitch ball height of each model remained the same as the 1969. All Airstreams 23' and shorter came standard with a single axle while all Airstreams 25' and longer had tandem axles. Tandem axles for the 23' Safari remained an unlisted option. All axles remained Dura-Torque thus continuing to provide double axle models with a fully independent suspension.

All models remained fully self contained as defined at the time, only missing the wash (gray) water tank that we now expect in a travel trailer. For the most part, the standard content for the Special Land Yacht, Deluxe Land Yacht, and International Land Yacht models remained the same as in 1969. Many features that were standard on higher trim levels were also available as extra cost options on lower trim levels.

The visible exterior changes for 1970 Airstreams were minimal. On all models the front wing window outer corners and rear window corners became rounded to match side windows providing a more unified appearance to the exterior. The main door handle and storage compartment handles changed to new flush designs eliminating protruding handles from the sides and rear of the trailer. On International Land Yachts, the rear bumper changed to an extruded aluminum piece that was bolted to the

frame. Special and Deluxe Land Yachts retained the stamped steel bumper from 1969 that was welded in place, although the aluminum bumper was optional. Other exterior details such as the side windows, main door large single hinge, taillight bezels, and model and trim level badges remained unchanged.



1970 Fresh Water Tank Location

below gauchos and beds.

There were some less obvious "beneath the skin" improvements made to 1970 Airstreams as well, including changes to improve trailer balance. Heavier items such as appliances and the fresh water tank were moved nearer the axles, a change that resulted in hitch weight reductions on all models, in some cases by more than 100 lbs. The fresh water tank itself was a major change. Its capacity was increased to 50 gallons from the prior 30 gallons and it was relocated to a new position beneath the floor just forward of the axles from its prior location above the floor at the front of the trailer. This change also created 4.5 cubic feet more interior storage space.

Other changes were made to 1970 Airstreams to improve cold weather performance. Insulation was changed to 100% fiberglass, in some places replacing plastic foam that had been used in prior years. Special Land Yachts got a circulating forced air furnace replacing their previous radiant heater. Furnace air ducts on all models moved from below the floor to above the floor and were routed next to water lines to keep them warmer. Furnace ducts were also extended into the black tank and rear storage compartment areas.

While the vinyl coated interior skin, wooden partition walls, and most cabinetry carried over, 1970 Airstream interiors also received a number of improvements. In the living room up front, the Central Control Panel moved to a new location above the front roof lockers rather than in between them and became standard on all models including the Special Land Yachts. Its electronics were now solid state and a humidity gauge was added.

In the kitchen and bedroom areas, new roll-away tambour doors made their first limited appearance in 1970 Airstreams. Tambour doors with a wood grained appearance were used for all roof lockers on the sides of the Airstream although the front overhead cabinets retained hard paneled doors. The tambour doors disappeared when open eliminating shadows and creating easy access to the contents of the roof lockers while also eliminating the possibility of hitting one's head on the open door for taller people. Hard panel wooden doors were retained for floor cabinets and

Kitchens in Special and Deluxe Land Yachts were mostly unchanged and continued to use stoves with integral ovens. All International Land Yachts, except for the new 25' Caravanner, now received a 4-burner cook top to replace the 3burner cook top used in 1969, while the separate oven was relocated to the opposite side of the trailer from its 1969 position. This new eye level Magic Chef Chateau oven was located next to the kitchen sink in the partition wall between 1970 Magic Chef Oven & Tambour Doors



the kitchen and bedroom areas, which caused its housing to extend over the foot of the bed. As in 1969, the stove and sink were on the curbside and the refrigerator was on the streetside for all 27' to 31' International Land Yachts, except for the 27' twin bed model which had the sides reversed.



1970 Special Land Yacht Bathroom Sink Location

The large full width bathroom was basically unchanged in the Deluxe and International Land Yachts. Special Land Yacht bathrooms were revised by moving the sink to a new location in the night stand below the rear window from its prior location inside the wet bath. A fold down seat was provided in the wet bath in the corner that previously held the sink.

In closing our discussion of 1970 Airstreams, we can summarize them by noting that inside their classic aluminum shell, they hold a nice "one year only" mix of traditional wood surfaces and modern fiberglass and tambour doors making them both unusual and desirable.

1971: This was a year of model consolidation and floor plan updates for models 27' and shorter, but one new top of the line 31' model was introduced midyear. Most significantly, the previous Special Land Yacht and Deluxe Land Yacht series were consolidated to a single Land Yacht series, with content closely matching that of the prior Deluxe Land Yacht. The content of the International Land Yachts was mostly unchanged for 1971.

There were two primary changes that affected all 1971 models in comparison to 1970 models. First was a change to Perma-Tech furniture and cabinets that utilized anodized aluminum frames that were stronger, yet lighter than the previous wooden frames, a concept borrowed from the airline industry. High pressure laminate panels that looked and felt like wood but were impervious to just about everything were used inside the Perma-Tech aluminum frames, replacing the previous wood paneling.

The second change was the proliferation of "roll-away" tambour doors to more locations than just the roof lockers. For 1971, horizontally opening tambour doors replaced the hinged solid panel doors on the front overhead cabinets and on the kitchen cabinet below the sink. Vertically opening tambour doors replaced the hinged doors below gauchos and beds. These were the primary changes on the International Land Yacht models. Changes to the other model series were more numerous.





**Living Room - 1971 Tambour Doors - Kitchen** 

1971 Perma-Tech Furniture Framing

The 27' Overlander Deluxe Land Yacht was eliminated and all models 25' and shorter, with the exception of the 25' Caravanner, were now just Land Yachts and received a new trailer wide wet bath. This wet bath was made of contoured

fiberglass like the larger bathroom in the International Land Yachts, but featured a stand-up shower instead of a bathtub. It had the sink and storage cabinets in the curbside rear corner, the toilet in the streetside rear corner, and the stand-up shower in the middle.

Land Yacht interior layouts were reconfigured to support this new bathroom. The 18' Caravel and 21' Globe Trotter had their aft gauchos moved out of the curbside corner to a new position across the aisle from the kitchen counter with the refrigerator, single basin sink and stove on the curbside and the gaucho on the streetside. The Caravel had a small dinette across the front of the trailer while the 21' Globe Trotter had a gaucho.

All 23' Safaris and 25' Tradewinds finally received a dedicated bedroom forward of the bathroom like the longer models, with either





Curb Side - 1971 Land Yacht Wet Bath - Street Side

twin beds or a curbside double bed and streetside vanity. The kitchen in these models had the refrigerator on the curbside while the double basin sink and stove were on the streetside. These models both featured a gaucho across the front of the trailer in the living area as the default and most common layout, although a front dinette was optional.

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Within the International Land Yacht series, from the 25' Caravanner to the 31' Sovereign, floor plans were mostly unchanged from 1970 except for the 27' Overlander Twin that had its kitchen layout reversed. This model now had a similar kitchen layout to all other 27' to 31' International Land Yachts, with the stove and double basin kitchen sink now on the curbside and the refrigerator and storage cupboards on the streetside.

The other big news for 1971, was the January 1971 introduction of the 31' Excella 500. Some today might consider the Excella 500 just another trim level for the 31' Sovereign, but Airstream called it a separate model and did not use the word Sovereign as part of the name. This new top of the line model shared common twin and double bed floor plans with the 31' Sovereign, but differentiated itself by the quality and type of materials and systems used inside it. The name was partially derived from the plan to limit production to 500 examples per year. Given the late introduction, it is likely that far fewer 1971 Excella 500s were actually built. Used 1971 Excella 500s rarely come up for sale, which reinforces this idea. Airstream introduced the Excella 500 stating that the goal was to produce the finest travel trailer possible, without regard to price. Unfortunately, at the current time, we cannot confirm the original suggested retail price, nor the weight of the Excella 500, but it had the content in the following paragraphs in addition to or as an upgrade from all of the standard content of a 31' Sovereign International Land Yacht.



1971 Excella 500 Exterior

On the exterior, the most notable difference was a wide blue stripe running the length of the trailer at waist level, with Excella 500 badges at the front of the stripe. This was the first application of a colored stripe to the exterior of an Airstream. Additionally, the Excella 500 windows were coated with the 3M company's "Scotchtint", making them look like mirrors from the outside, reflecting 81% of ultraviolet light, 82% of glare, and 75% of heat from the sun, yet being almost transparent from inside. The wheels received simulated spoke wheel covers and Michelin steel-belted tires. An electric hitch jack was standard along with two Reese hydraulic stabilizing jacks at the rear of the trailer. A 12,000 BTU Bay Breeze air condi-

tioner was standard on the roof of the Excella 500. Both LP tanks came standard with gauges so their levels could be easily checked. At the entry door was a button for a 12V doorbell as well as an entrance light over the door. A couple of completely new innovations were also provided. First, the 50' long 110V "shore power" cord and 50' long water hose were coiled on special reels in the rear streetside compartment to make them easier to deploy and retract at campgrounds. Second, fiber optic taillight and turn signal indicators were provided on the front sides of the trailer to allow the driver to easily confirm operation of the rear lights on the trailer.

On the inside, the upgrades were just as numerous. The standard Vista View windows let in more natural light in the living room area which was equipped with standard twin "L" lounges for increased seating. The Perma-Tech surfaces utilized a laminate modeled after the wood from the exotic Hawaiian koa tree. Decorator fabrics were used on the soft surfaces and high density, all-wool, shag carpeting was provided on the floor. The cathedral style curtains for the front windows opened and closed by use of pull cords. A dramatic new hanging lamp was provided in the living area. New contemporary styled ceiling lamps were used throughout the trailer.

The standard TV antenna was motorized and could be raised, lowered, and rotated 360 degrees at the touch of a button. An AM/FM radio with 8-track stereo tape player was standard, with two speakers at the front of the trailer and two more in the bedroom. A telephone jack was even provided so that a telephone could be installed in the trailer for those that stayed put long enough to make it worthwhile. The kitchen was equipped with an Imperial III Dishmaster water-powered hand scrubber to make dishwashing easier while still conserving water. The kitchen counter stepped out using gentle curves to become wider in front of the sink just before meeting the partition wall that held the oven and separated the kitchen from the bedroom. This change would not appear on other models until 1972.



1971 Excella 500 Kitchen

The Excella 500 bedroom could be closed off from the kitchen and living area using a new folding wooden door, an upgrade from the vinyl curtain provided on less expensive models. Color coded wall padding, comfort covers, and bedding were standard. A bedroom TV shelf was standard and double bed models received a slide-out vanity desk. A large fold-down "space locker" was provided below the roof locker for additional storage and newly designed extra-large drawers were provided in all appropriate cabinet areas.

In the bathroom, a new "arch-of-water" faucet was provided, that with a twist of the wrist, could convert the faucet into a drinking fountain. The deluxe telephone shower head had an automatic temperature control valve to prevent scalding. Two ingenious folding towel racks were provided along with a fold-down bathroom scale for those that wanted to watch their weight while traveling. Finally, the Excella 500 also provided a fire-resistant safe in a secret location. The Excella 500 was luxurious trailering at its best.

The complete 1971 Airstream model lineup was as follows:

The 1971 Airstreams

Length & Model	Suggested Re-	Hitch Wt.	Total Wt.
18' Caravel Land Yacht	\$4475	360 lbs.	3290 lbs.
21' Globe Trotter Land Yacht	\$5120	420 lbs.	3460 lbs.
23' Safari Land Yacht Twin Bed	\$5990	440 lbs.	3530 lbs.
23' Safari Land Yacht Double Bed	\$5990	445 lbs.	3680 lbs.
25' Trade Wind Land Yacht Twin Bed	\$6780	450 lbs.	4140 lbs.
25' Trade Wind Land Yacht Double Bed	\$6780	455 lbs.	4240 lbs.
25' Caravanner International Land Yacht	\$7895	450 lbs.	4250 lbs.
27' Overlander International Land Yacht Twin Bed	\$8695	430 lbs.	4450 lbs.
27' Overlander International Land Yacht Double Bed	\$8695	435 lbs.	4480 lbs.
29' Ambassador International Land Yacht Twin Bed	\$9290	445 lbs.	4650 lbs.
29' Ambassador International Land Yacht Double Bed	\$9290	450 lbs.	4690 lbs.
31' Sovereign International Land Yacht Twin Bed	\$9595	480 lbs.	4840 lbs.
31' Sovereign International Land Yacht Double Bed	\$9595	490 lbs.	4910 lbs.
31' Excella 500 Twin Bed	\$TBD	TBD lbs.	TBD lbs.
31' Excella 500 Double Bed	\$TBD	TBD lbs.	TBD lbs.

A long list of option packages and individual options was available on these trailers at additional cost. Many features that were standard on higher trim levels were also available as extra cost options on lower trim levels.

The length, width, height, ground clearance, and hitch ball height of each model remained the same as the 1970. All Airstreams 23' and shorter came standard with a single axle while all Airstreams 25' and longer had tandem axles. Tandem axles for the 23' Safari finally became an official option. A wash (gray) water tank was still not available. Exterior trim and badging were unchanged, except for the Excella 500 model, as were bumpers, and tank locations.

1971 might be remembered as the year that completed the transition from the Wally Byam inspired Airstreams of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s to the Art Costello inspired Airstreams of the Beatrice era. Certainly, the conversion to Perma-Tech aluminum framed furniture and the propagation of tambour doors to all parts of the interior make 1971 Airstreams feel more like their counterparts from the remainder of the 1970s. The elimination of the Special Land Yacht model series and the addition of the Excella 500 also better align the 1971 model lineup with the later Beatrice years. In 1971, the future had finally fully arrived at Airstream.

Joyce and I hope you will enjoy the "Special Edition" newsletter. Thank you to Joe Peplinski our VAC Historian for his research and dedication to the history of our club. We don't know how often Special Edition Newsletters will be published. It all depends on what we receive from you the readers and members of the VAC. We are open for ideas and suggestions.

Keep in mind that the 20th of every other month is a good time to get information and articles to us. For example, if you would like to have something in the January/February newsletter, then your information should be to us by January 20th.

The July/August newsletter may be in question, since we will be attending International in Salem and will be on the road for sometime before and after the International Rally in 2018. Please send us information on your rallies for 2018.

Joyce and I hope you have a Happy Holiday Season.

Lee Cantrell