

Our Trip Takes Us

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By Becky Hirn

“How much space do I have?”

That’s what Dan usually calls out to me on our two-way radio when he is backing us out of some parking fiasco. So far, we’ve gotten into about one incident each week that makes for a stressful situation at the time and a great story later on.

One example is the blog Dan wrote for our web site last week called “No RV’s over 30 feet.”

Parking and driving in New England has really forced us to consider the concept of space. That could be because many of the New England towns were developed and the streets laid out before things like big RVs, delivery trucks and buses came along. The streets are narrow; the intersections tight, the buildings tall and their stairways steep. So many of these cities pack a lot into a little space. This is great for sightseeing. Since we’ve been on the East Coast, we really haven’t logged that many miles. We can drive 30 to 60 miles and be in a different landmark city like Salem, Boston, Plymouth or Cape Cod. That’s just in Massachusetts. Then there are Providence, Newport and New Haven in Rhode Island and Connecticut.

Consider this, with New York City at the center; you can drive 200 miles to visit Boston, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and many great places in between. Compared to the driving distances I’m expecting out west, this is quite a treat. So much in so little space.

In Groton, CT, we visited the Submarine Force Library and Museum. We even got to tour the first nuclear-powered submarine, the USS Nautilus. Talk about efficient use of space. The sub had offices, control rooms, sleeping quarters, a kitchen, a dining room and some engine areas we didn’t get to tour. While the sub is a huge vehicle for the number of people it carries and the length it could go out to sea, I was really surprised at all they fit on the ship. It kind of reminded me of our own tight quarters in the RV. While our land cruiser is much smaller than the Nautilus and we’re just a family of four, we still run into each other in the doorways and bump our knees and heads on cabinets. Compared to living in our house, there is not a lot of room to stretch out. At home, we all had a bedroom.

There was an attic, a basement, and a garage. We could all be on a different floor and not see each other for hours. Now in the RV, it puts us all in the same 300 square feet. We can all lie in one bed and laugh and wrestle and read together in the evenings. Limited space isn’t always such a bad thing.

All this has made me realize that it's not how much space that's important; it's how I use it. We get so concerned with how much space we have. How many bedrooms? How many bathrooms? Big yard?

Big car? How many cup holders? The bigger, the better.

While in Newport, RI, we walked the Cliff Walk for a couple miles. On one side was a stunning view of the Atlantic Ocean. On the other side, there were gated estates and mansions with more land and space than I'd know what to do with. The mansions were definitely elegant and historically relevant, but in one week's time, I had viewed these sprawling acres and gigantic mansions on the R.I. coast and then the extremely efficient use of space in the submarine on the Connecticut coast. Somewhere in between is probably the amount of space we really need to live comfortably.

I know I couldn't live in the RV indefinitely. I am beginning to learn to use the space I have and how small spaces can really bring people together.

Becky Hirn is a Delphos resident traveling America with her family for a year. She documents the journey at www.ourtriptakesus.com. Follow the Hirn family in photos, blogs, on Facebook and Twitter. Or learn how to partner with the trip as an advertiser. You may e-mail Becky at beckyhirn@ourtriptakesus.com