

## **I lived out of my Suburban for 70 days traveling to Colorado and Montana. Here is my story...**

Back in May, my internship was cancelled, and I really needed something to do for the summer. I could not find a job in town and I knew I was not going to sit at home during a pandemic. A lifelong buddy of mine, Richmond McDaniel (nick-named Catfish), joked about the idea of living out of our trucks and fly fishing everyday out West. I was quickly interested with the idea because I have never been west of the Mississippi River—other than to Alaska—and began to do some research to see if this road trip was possible. I found out that it was fairly simple to live out of a truck, and it became reality.

Most of my family and friends were somewhat skeptical of our idea to drive across the country to live out of our trucks in the woods. I tried to convince them that it wasn't that bad and that a lot of people truck camp across America. I was pretty confident that I could last most of my summer out there without civilization. Some were worried about the idea; some were on board; and I was ready for an adventure.

I asked Doc what he thought about the idea of the 2004 Chevy Suburban making its way to Colorado and he said, "I don't see why not." That was enough for me to really get the gears turning to make this trip happen. I made a couple of purchases on Amazon, bought lumber at Lowe's and started building my home in "Brownie;" now known as the "Brown Bomber." Richmond and I took two days designing and constructing a bed platform and a shelf for each of our rigs. After the living arrangements were completed, I took my truck to a family friend's shop. The Suburban had a steady oil leak and I would have to dump a quart of oil in the truck almost every week. After a few new oil seals, I was ready to hit the road. Richmond got his silver GMC truck tuned up and equipped with a red camper shell. Hence, the "Red Rocket."

The Red Rocket and Brownie the Brown Bomber left Virginia on Friday, May 29th, at 4 am and headed west to Colorado. I have never been more excited to drive in my life. The first day we drove eighteen hours which was about 1,000 miles to Kansas City on the Kansas side. Next day, we made it 800 miles to Salida, Colorado. On the fourth day, we were catching fish at Cebolla Creek near Lake City, Colorado and got Parker Jones (Peej) to meet us to camp for a couple days. Peej went to Woodberry then to Colorado Boulder and was a year above me.

Richmond and I would drive fifty to one hundred miles to a new spot that looked good on the map every two days to hike and fish.

We would spend one hundred to three hundred bucks a week on groceries, propane, beer, ice, and flies. The grocery store rations would last a solid week. There were times when a PB&J was enough, but we ate pretty dang well for using cast irons and a double-burner propane stove. We cooked a rotation of bacon cheeseburgers, turkey tacos, chicken thighs, chicken fajitas, pasta with sausage, and pork chops for dinner at Rich's kitchen and Dave's diner. We also had a four liter water filter that would give us four liters of clean water in twenty minutes.

We kept up with good hygiene by using a solar shower hung from a tree. Basically, it was just a five gallon plastic black bag with a shower head that Richmond or I would fill with creek water and we would just let it sit in the sun to absorb heat. It was a quick soapy rinse, but always felt quite refreshing.

After thirty-five days of being on the trout in Colorado we headed to Utah to see Will Slicer to make it to Montana. I have not seen Slicer since our Woodberry graduation in 2017. We caught up and stayed for the night then drove to Bozeman, Montana to celebrate the Fourth of July with Zach Ayotte. Zach Ayotte just graduated from Hampden Sydney and is living in Bozeman working at a fly shop. Rich and I hung around Bozeman and fished for a couple days with Ayotte. Then headed to Missoula and ran into

Walker Purvis (Purv), who was two years below me at Woodberry. Purv also camped with us and fished with us like Peej did.

Then on day 40, I found a half inch screw in my tire, put the spare tire on and got the tire patched for twenty-five bucks. The Brown Bomber was back on the road. Butler Bennett flew into Bozeman to see Ayotte. Then Butler rented a blue Kia that bottomed out way too many times and came to meet Rich and me to fish.

After fishing for a couple of days Butler and I drove north to Big Fork, Montana to see John Pittman. Pittman is working as a horse wrangler at a ranch and is doing great. During his interview for the job they asked, "On a scale of one to ten how good are you on a horse?" Pittman said, "A six." Pittman has never seen or been near a horse. For people who know John Pittman they will find this funny. The three of us stayed in an Air BnB for three nights and had a fantastic time.

After Big Fork, I stayed in Bozeman at Zach Ayotte's apartment then drove to Vail, Colorado to stay with Patrick Scruggs. I have not seen Scruggs since we graduated Woodberry. Rich and I stayed there for two nights and had a blast catching up with Pat.

On day 60, Richmond and I picked up Big Rich at the Gunnison airport. We drove south to Lake City and fished Big Blue and Cebolla Creek. I stayed with the father son duo for two nights in Lake City. Then I picked up Joel T from the Gunnison airport on Wednesday. Joel T and I drove south to Los Pinos Creek and camped there for two nights.

On day 64, Joel T and I were driving down a dirt road loaded with pot holes. I nailed one and it sounded expensive. Twenty minutes later an alarm starts to go off and the engine was overheating. We popped the hood and steam shot everywhere, coolant was everywhere, and I found a broken hose. I let Brownie cool off, zip tied the hose back and filled the coolant reservoir with water. We drove an hour and half hoping my handy-work would hold until we could get cell service. We found a mechanic shop and I

called Bo Cox where I took my truck back in May. Bo said it was a heater hose and that I did not need it at all, because you don't need heat in the summer. (I also cannot thank Bo enough for everything he did with getting the Suburban in good shape to make the trip West. Without Bo I don't know if the Suburban would have made it.) We took the broken hose off and tied the working hose back in to eliminate the heater. Brownie was back on the road in an hour.

Then we stayed at Billy's girlfriend's apartment in Crested Butte, Colorado for three nights to hike and fish. On Day 68, Joel T and I hit the road at 4 am and drove till 11:30 pm to Memphis, Tennessee—1,200 miles and a full day of driving. From Memphis I drove 700 miles to Danville, Virginia to drop Joel T off at his girlfriend's house and stayed the night.

On Day 70, I drove from Danville to Hampden-Sydney to check on my off-campus house, then to Fredericksburg—**9,900 miles later and 605 gallons of gas.**

I had quite the adventure during a pandemic and learned a lot about life. You do not need much to be happy and I learned one can live on very little. You cannot take anything for granted.