

RIDING THE DOG – by Susan Carlyle

Today, our travel impacts our environment. The most detrimental to our environment are the single occupancy vehicle and the airplane. The most efficient is the bicycle. For long distances, the Union of Concerned Scientists gives busses like the Greyhound high marks.

So- what's it like to travel on the Greyhound bus?

- It's **relaxing** because someone else is jockeying with the tractor trailers.
- It's **interesting** because you observe and interact with all kinds of people.
- It's **cheap**. No motel fees, no gas pump sticker shock, no canceled flights, no long layovers, no parking fees and no restaurant charges.
- You can **sleep and keep traveling** at the same time.
- It's **about as fast** as the train or a car (and today- almost as fast as the air travel experience).
- There's **no smoking** anywhere in the terminals or on board the busses.

Now- what do you need to know to survive a bus ride?

- You can compare time schedules on the greyhound.com website. This tells you all of the routes for a 24 hour period. It tells you the total time for the trip and the number of transfers you'll make en route. Pick the shortest duration with the fewest transfers.
- You can purchase your ticket on line or over the phone. Your ticket can be mailed to you in advance.
- There are opportunities for discounts for advance purchases and for senior citizens.
- If more than one person is traveling to the same place, utilize the companion fare discount to get two tickets for the price of one.
- Bring a pillow on board. It makes sleeping more comfortable and restful. The inflatable neck pillows make for compact luggage.
- Bring your own food and water. Although rest stops are made every two hours, often your choices are limited to fast foods.
- Sit near the front of the bus if you can. It gives the feeling of spaciousness.
- Bring earplugs or a radio with head phones. You can be in your own world if you want to. Some folks use eye covers to block out light as well.
- Bring reading material to pass the time and engage your mind.
- Travel light. If you can avoid checking your luggage at the side of the bus, you can board earlier and stow your things overhead or under your seat.
- At rest stops, get off the bus and walk or run around. Do some jumping jacks or yogic stretches. Go inside a terminal or food store to use the bathroom or get a drink of water.
- If you do need to change buses, make sure that you learn which gate inside the terminal will be used for your re-boarding and departure. Place your luggage in that line to save a space and be prepared to stay in that line with your luggage for up to an hour before your departure.
- It often helps to make a friend while waiting. One person can stand with the luggage while the other can go to the bathroom. Both of you can listen for the announcements, or go to ask for clarification.
- Sit back and relax and leave the driving to someone else!

Our first trip on Greyhound wasn't that great because we were neophytes. We had four bus changes between Asheville, NC and Philadelphia, PA. After that trip, we conferred with Eric and Corinne Joy who are veteran bus travelers. They gave us much of the advice that you are reading now.