

On the Road

"On the Road" is a well known phrase to baby boomers because it is the title of that famous novel by Jack Kerouac of youthful exploration and curiosity. And even though technically Kerouac represented the generation before the time of the boomers, that novel very much became a bible for the youth movement that exploded during the 1960s when the boomers went through their teen and college years. As a result, there is wanderlust and a yearning to get away from it all and travel that is deeply ingrained in the baby boomer mentality and way of viewing the world.

It isn't surprising then that baby boomers as adults have created a leisure and travel industry that has reached new levels of popularity in the last three decades. So nobody would be surprised either when we see boomers in their early retirement years begin to look into becoming the ultimate wanderers by hitting the road in their RVs and staying on the go virtually nonstop.

The spirit of adventure and desire not only to see and be part of the expanse of this glorious country has a lot to do with the yearning to travel that is so common in modern day baby boomers. But it is more than just wanting to see great sights and enjoy the huge variety of climate and landscapes that America has to offer that lures baby boomers out of their rocking chairs and out onto the highways. It is also the allure of meeting new people, becoming "citizens" not just of their local community but of the world and packing their retirement years with fun and new adventures that has a genuine appeal to baby boomers.

Baby boomers have always been people of adventure. This can be seen in the great literature that has been made popular by this generation. The Lord of the Rings is a great example of how baby boomers see the world as ordinary creatures, the hobbits, go on the road to do some great thing to save their world. No wonder that trilogy became an anthem of this generation who have always seen themselves as adventurers with a mission in life to do good for all mankind.

But hitting the road in their RV, as tame as that may seem to observers, also appeals to a sense of unrestrained life that helps boomers combat the feeling that the world is closing in around them. The popular song of the 60s, "Born to be Wild" was more than a catchy tune. It expressed a self-image boomers had as youth that they were only somewhat civilized and that there is a part of their nature that can never be tamed. The freedom of travel and the lack of restrictions is liberating to aging boomers who may have been boxed in by life's responsibilities, jobs and families for much of their adult lives.

In this way, boomers don't see retirement as a time to cut back on the adventure

of living. Quite the opposite, boomers see the chance to live on the road in their RVs as a chance to release that inner bohemian wanderer, that Jack Kerouac and Neil Cassidy that lives in every boomer and give those free spirits the chance to redefine the world in their own terms.

So as loved ones of boomers, let's not try to rein in these free spirits, even if those spirits live in an aging mom and dad or grandma and grandpa. Boomers can be an inspiration to generations to come that they can live a life of responsibility and maturity and still retain a little of that inner beatnik or hippy that truly was born to be wild.

PPPPP 621