

Indoor Trailer Park



A campy little bit of Memphis on the American Dream Safari tour

by Zeke Loftin

BEING from the South, I have been in my share of trailer parks, but I can honestly say that never before have I encountered one tucked neatly into a warehouse. I had heard about this crazy place from various people in Memphis. Tad Pierson is the owner of American Dream Safari tours. He never intended to build an indoor park, but his semi-obsessive collection of Americana expanded into large objects like his vintage '55 Cadillac and Airstream travel trailers.

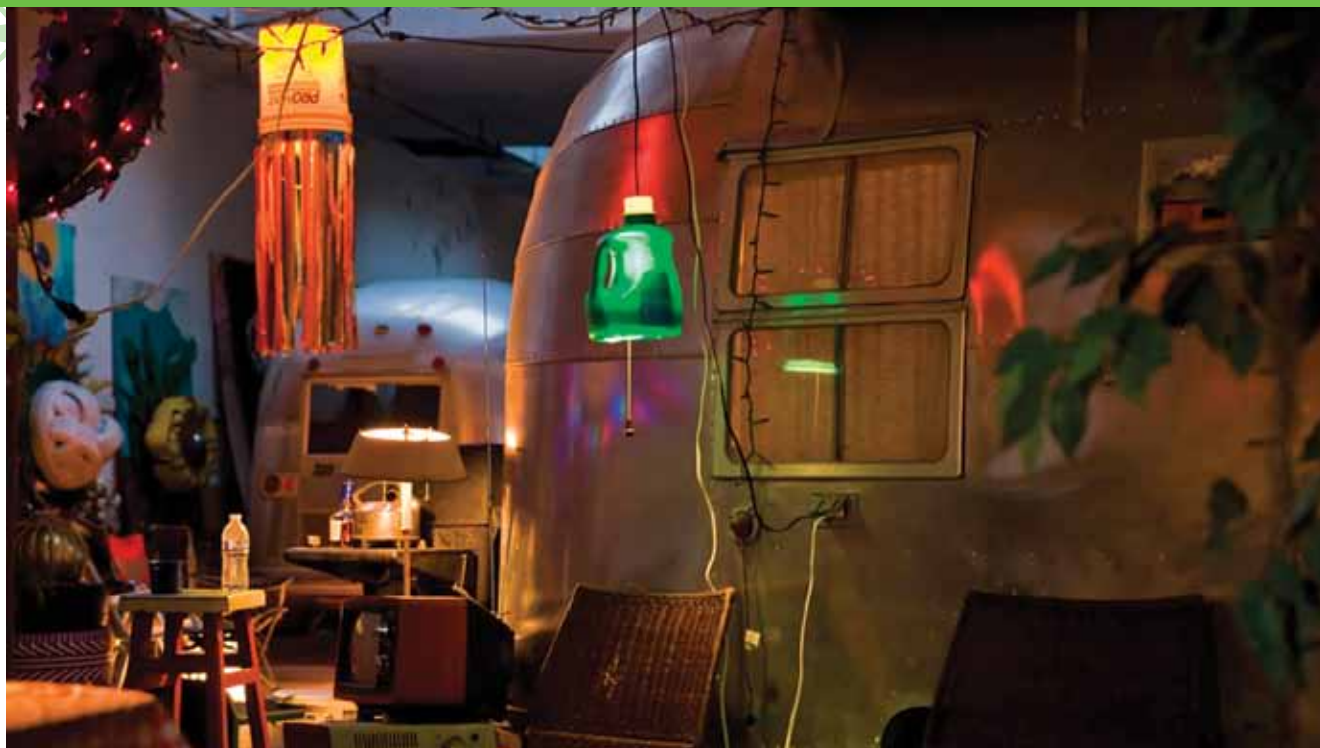
Upon hearing the place's name, I envisioned it with a white trash overtone. However, the cleverly illuminated space has more of a vintage campground vibe while at the same time being typical Memphis, and over the top. In this time-warped environment's picnic tables, vintage appliances, and 1950s memorabilia are reminiscent also of a time when family fun meant taking to the highways towards Florida or sunny California.

Many objects are circa '50s like the refrigerator fashioned into a home entertainment center. The entire space is a work of art held together with American objects, startling tire art, vintage appliances, and perfect lighting. This guy is a pretty cool cat. Pierson states, "Four years ago, I needed a place to put my things, so I moved everything to this warehouse in downtown Memphis. I soon realized with the trailers in here, I actually had a live-in environment."

Pierson even includes the trailer park as a stop on his popular excursions which include a walking tour he refers to as "Walking in Memphis," which starts in the lobby of elegant Peabody Hotel, a hybrid Mississippi/Memphis tour which takes you sliding through historic SUN Studio and the Mississippi Delta.

This is not a climate-controlled environment for the most part, though structures within may be, so some consideration might be given to the month you visit. At minimum,





you might want to adjust your clothing seasonally, just like in a real trailer park.

People are also now asking to overnight in his surreal digs. "People started dropping by and leaving fake palm trees, pink flamingos, and picnic tables. The space started creating itself." Friends have started showing up asking to stay in one of the four trailers, and the space often becomes a bit of a hostel. Though Pierson maintains he is not an official place of lodging, perhaps if you purchased a large enough tour you might get a 24+plus hour ending.

As I sit here sipping a beer and lounging, I find myself hankering for one of my own. I could definitely see a 24-hour stay in this place. It's kind of a man-cave of sorts, but cool enough that the ladies will dig it. I'm not sure if this is entirely a family destination; the place is connected to a nightclub, Memphis Mary's. It could go either way, but he does offer tours that I'm sure would be kid-friendly.

He'll also take you for a spin through neighboring blues-laden Mississippi, or across the mighty Mississippi River into neighboring Arkansas. One tour, 'Drive by Shooting,' is geared for photographers. If you've got the pompadour and a willing partner(s) as you are looking at the birthplace of rock and blues from Pierson's tan, pimping Cadillac, the other tourists will be looking at you. You'll look like you just fell out of SUN Studio, and if you want, American Dream Safari can make that happen. ■

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