

Our Trip Takes Us

By Becky Hirn

Climbing great mountains and passing through deep valleys, I was amazed by the New Mexico and Arizona landscape. Sometimes at the top of a mountain, we saw cities stretch out for miles and then another mountain range beyond that. At the bottom, after popping out ears, we were surrounded by the majestic giants. After awhile, I started to see this landscape from a new perspective. I imagined waking up everyday among mountains rather than Ohio cornfields. I saw homes up on the top and wondered how they get up and down their steep, winding roads every day. I took pictures from the RV as the sun set between clouds and mountains. I wondered if people in the valley have fewer hours of sun light since the horizon is obstructed.

I also couldn't help looking at the mountains of the Great Divide from a cowboy's point of view. Before asphalt roads, 200-horsepower vehicles and well before rest areas with snacks and hot coffee, these intrepid explorers took on a more dangerous journey than ours. I'm certain there were no grocery stores and state parks to serve as an oasis for food, water and electricity. I don't believe I would have survived the trip in a covered wagon through the mountains and desert.

In Tombstone, Arizona, we got acquainted with those tough cowboys and Western settlers. Tombstone was not only the site of the famous shootout at the O.K. Corral. We learned the town burnt down two times, was rebuilt and labeled "the town too tough to die." We met spur-wearing cowboys on the streets of Tombstone and we watched a performance of the big gun fight. We also learned tidbits about Wyatt Earp and the gang. We thought we already knew the story. But Hollywood saw the whole event in a different light. Many of our favorite scenes from "Tombstone" with Kurt Russell and Val Kilmer were debunked. Cowboys never wore red sashes and Doc Holliday couldn't have killed Johnny Ringo as the movie depicted. Still, it was a great Old West town to immerse ourselves in, buy a steak brander and dig up some history of one America's old mining towns.

At the same time the cowboys were exploring the New Frontier, right under their feet in Carlsbad, New Mexico, a subterranean exploration was going on too. Really, they were miners, taking tons of bat droppings, or guano, from the Carlsbad Caverns hundreds of feet below the desert surface. We walked for miles down in the dimly lit caves. Fifty-foot stalactites and stalagmites, huge columns and fairytale worlds of popcorn formations intrigued us. The formations had wonderful names like Rock of Ages, the Lion's Tail, and Whale's Mouth. It was also interesting to learn that the caves were formed over millions of years by water, something lacking in the world it above today. In Carlsbad, I was at the same geographical location but gained an absolutely new perspective.

I think new perspectives were one of the things I was after in taking this year-long trip. Thankfully, there's been no shortage of them. From landscape to language and museums to amusement parks, I'm able to pick out new points of view each day. I think even my perspective on temperatures has changed. It's hard for me to call home and complain about being chilly in 40-degree weather when it's 8 degrees in Delphos.

The way I see it, I'm lucky to be right where I am.

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