

Ah, Summer! Never has the end of the school year been so exciting for our whole family. While teaching the kids on the road has been an amazing, new family experience, there's nothing like the feeling of summer break. Both Abby and Carter worked hard all school year. So did their teachers. We covered a lot of ground, literally and educationally. Carter is reading and doing addition flashcards. Abby made a water filtration system in science and created three self-portraits in art class. We read classic stories out loud and all together the kids earned nearly 20 Junior Ranger badges. So in celebration of a successful educational year and the start of summer vacation, we did something the kids never thought possible once we bought the RV last winter. We stayed in a hotel.

The lure of the hotel tempted everyone in the family. The kids had their bathing suits on 10 miles before we arrived. Dan looked forward to some Baseball Tonight on ESPN and I couldn't wait for a long hot shower. We were all anxious for the "always on" electricity and the continental breakfast. It was to be a great start to our summer vacation, within our vacation. Well, all except for the tornados.

It's so weird how things work out. I've learned this so many times in our trip. It might be the timing of an event, the weather, or the people we meet. Most times things work out in our favor, sometimes they don't. I think it has more to do with the way we look at the circumstances.

Being in a tornado in an RV would be a very scary thing, I imagine. So when the alarms started sounding when we were in our hotel room, I was grateful for the concrete walls surrounding us. The manager ushered the guests into the hallway. We saw this massive tank-style vehicle outside. The hotel clerk told us the guys from the Discovery Channel's Storm Chasers were staying at our hotel tonight. I didn't know if that was a good sign or a bad one.

After we were given the all clear signal, we headed back to our room, relieved that the tornado blew by east of us. Ten minutes later, all the power went off. No more TV, no more swimming pool. It was lights out. Some people might think this was just back luck, because the one night in a whole year we opt for the luxury accommodations of a hotel over our ordinary RV lodging, Kansas blows a tornado our way. But I didn't see it that way. I felt like we got really lucky. We were safe; we still got to enjoy a good night's rest and breakfast in the morning. The kids still got to swim and watch TV when they woke up too. On top of that, I felt like we were more equipped than most people to handle a night without electricity. I listened to a book on an MP3 player. Dan read his book by flashlight. The kids jumped on the bed, still happy to be in a hotel.

We left the next day, heading east. But we only drove about 15 miles. The high winds were threatening to shove us off the road. We took the hint and spent the day at a rest area. Watching the weather we realized we'd moved ourselves out of the path of another strong storm system and possible twister. Lucky us.

So we didn't get carried away in a Kansas tornado like Dorothy and Toto. But we experienced plenty of change after leaving our hometown last year. We've broadened our horizons, stared down plenty of wicked things and met lifelong friends along the road. We've seen things and learned lessons that we'll never forget. And it looks like we'll have to wake up soon too. There are just 25 more days until we return to the place we call home.

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