

Our Trip Takes Us

Our Trip Takes Us

By Becky Hirn

As soon as we pulled into the parking lot at the Sleeping Bear National Lakeshore to climb the sand dunes, my mind zipped back 20 years. It was a family vacation. My brothers raced through the parking lot to take on the 110-foot high mass of sand, simply called the Dune Climb. At the time we didn't understand this whole area had been formed first by glaciers and then wind. That day the dune was simply a mountain to climb, a challenge to face. This test was more exciting for my adolescent bothers than for me, a teenager at the time. I'm sure I acted completely bored with the whole idea of the family vacation in Michigan. But despite my attitude, I did remember the trip. I remembered my brothers climbing like crazy on one of the hottest days of the summer and I remembered how the sun looks as it sets behind that sand mountain.

So as we got out of our RV in the parking lot and I watched as my own children ran ahead to take on the huge dune, I got out my phone and snapped a picture and sent it to my brothers with the text: "Remember this dune?" Of course, they did. They remembered even more about it than I did.

Besides the fascination of setting my eyes on New Hampshire's White Mountains for the very first time or finding a secluded beach to build a fire, our trip has given us the chance to relive some great experiences. Every once in a while, Dan or I will say something like, "Hey, I've been here!" Sometimes, like in Washington DC or New York City, it's expected. Other times, like at Sleeping Bear or just riding down the highway in Pennsylvania, it just comes over me like a letter from an old friend, "Remember me?" There's nostalgia in going back to a place where you camped as a kid. There's also some curiosity as to what has changed.

The biggest change, I think, is my perspective. Sadly, shops and restaurants come and go. Even the little diner on the lake in Maine, the Boom Chain, where Dan and I ate lunch while on our honeymoon, was gone when we tried to take the kids there this year. Times change, and so do we. Fortunately, things like giant mountains of sand, big blue oceans, and Niagara Falls aren't going anywhere. These are things we can go back to, natural wonders.

Carter told me last week that when he gets older he's going to buy an RV and travel in it with his family. He said he might have six children. If he does travel when he's older, I know his perspective will be very different from his four-year old view today. But I do hope that he can hold on to some of the memories we're making. I hope he can see the sun set into the ocean, take a picture of it and text Abby, "Remember this?"

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