

# Our Trip Takes Us

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By Becky Hirn

Dan and I always loved hosting parties. Besides our annual softball gathering in August, we used to invite people over quite a bit. We had family get-togethers and round table discussions on the weekends. I enjoyed hosting my book club once a year and last Christmas we held a big celebration at our house. One year while trying to break out of the winter blahs we held an impromptu Valentine's Day party, complete with red hots and conversation hearts.

We're party people. That's one of the worries Dan and I discussed while planning for our trip. We wondered if we'd really miss the camaraderie our gatherings brought. The truth is, we do.

Luckily for us, this fall has been rich with visitors on the road. Maybe it's because we've been in the Midwest. Maybe it's because we're inviting more people along and calling ahead to meet up. In any case, we're glad it's happening. When we connect with people for a day or a week, it gives us a very familiar feeling. It also makes our visitors part of our journey.

While in Chicago earlier this month, our nephew Ryan showed us around the city and took us to the best little pizza place in town. On top of that, we got some valuable one-on-one time with him that's so rare. Walking around the city, I learned more about Ryan, his career path and his interests than I had in the last couple years of holiday gatherings.

The following week in Kentucky, our good friend Tim joined us for two days. It was like no time had passed at all. We picked up laughing right where we left off months ago at the Beer Barrel in Lima. Tim camped with us, ate with us and joined in some sightseeing. The best part was he made us feel like we were entertaining again. It was a party.

In mid-October my brother Rob stayed with us for a whole week. Through all our adventures in the Great Smoky Mountains, Gatlinburg, Pigeon Forge, Knoxville and Nashville, Rob truly became part of the trip. As with Ryan, the time I spent with Rob around the campfire and riding along in his truck, was the best I've had with my brother in ages. We'll laugh for years about some of our inside jokes and the sights we saw together.

The same week we made stops to see a good friend from high school and Dan's Aunt Barb. Both were a wonderful treat. They invited us into their homes. They offered us all kinds of things like long hot showers and laundry facilities. And they fed us, dinner out, another rare treat.

What we relished the most in all our visits was the companionship of the people we know and love, the ones we have history with. We snapped photos of the fun we had. We'll document it all on our web site and in our daily journals. The whole time these people were becoming part of our trip.

But in another way we were becoming part of something special to them too- their vacation or day off, which I remember is precious time. I feel lucky to have friends and family who will share that time with us.

It's great to meet up while on the road, but space is so limited. When we get home for the holidays, I think we'll be feeling festive and up for a bigger party.

Becky Hirn is a Delphos resident traveling America with her family for a year. She documents the journey at [www.ourtriptakesus.com](http://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](mailto:beckyhirn@ourtriptakesus.com)