

Our Trip Takes Us

By Becky Hirn

For the past six months we've been such nomads. We go, go, go. Our average stop in one place is two days. We've made a couple longer stops but never more than a week. I guess that's how we cruised through 26 states in half a year.

Looking back, we've spent the most days in Florida, who could blame us? We spent the fewest days in New Hampshire. We were able to fit the Atlantic Ocean into the schedule in nine different states. And we visited with family and friends in 12 states. We also met new people in every state we visited. All of this keeps us moving.

Coming home for the holidays, it's been quite a change to live in one place for 15 days, even if it is my own home. From clothes to dishes to food in the refrigerator, we basically moved everything back into the house. It's just too cold to sleep in the RV.

Plus, we've been entertaining almost every day. We're visiting with family, friends and neighbors constantly. This is not a luxury we enjoy on the road. I've noticed that one question always surfaces over dinner or drinks. "What's your favorite place so far?"

This is probably the most difficult question for me to answer. We've been to so many stunning, engaging and sobering places over the past six months. It's too hard for me to narrow it down to one favorite. So in the spirit of year-end reviews, I'm attempting to share some of my best memories of our trip, in no particular order.

1. Day One – Dan and I left our home in Delphos not knowing anything for sure. But we had a whole year ahead of us to find our way.
2. The Wisconsin Fish Boil – This exciting and explosive dinner out represents so much about what the trip means to me. It's about trying something completely new, in a completely new place and learning all about it.
3. Tennessee – We spent a week traveling with my older brother. I don't think I've spent that much time with Rob since we were kids. I learned a lot about him, and laughed a bunch too.
4. Fourth of July in Boston – We got up super early, rode three forms of public transportation into the city and spent 10+ hours anticipating the most moving July 4th show I've ever experienced.
5. The Florida Keys – There's nothing like the relaxing swish of the ocean on your feet and the heat of the tropical sun on your face in December. We were forced to stay an extra day in the Keys.
6. New York City – Here's a city I can keep going back to and always find something fresh. I'd been two times before without the kids and was worried they'd get tired of our 3-day marathon tour of the city. When Abby told me NYC was like heaven, I started planning our next trip there together.
7. Early American History – From Philadelphia to Gettysburg to Washington DC, we covered a lot of historical ground. I feel so enlightened about our Founding Fathers and the true American Way.

8. Becoming Abby's learning coach – I had always imagined that I could teach my children. Then with the help of the Ohio Virtual Academy and the K12 curriculum, it was clear that I actually could. Learning with Abby has really changed our relationship in an astounding way.
9. The beach fire at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Park – The sunset was perfect just like the fire Dan built. After hiking dunes and roasting hot dogs on the beach, we watched the sun go down on Lake Michigan. This was the kind of day we had held in our minds for so many months as we planned a year-long trip across the country.
10. The Everglades Alligators – As much as I hated seeing them or being 10 feet from their powerful jaws and pointy teeth, the experience of facing that fear will always be memorable for me.

This top ten list will invariably change as we head out next week to explore 22 more states. I welcome our next series of adventures. I will also miss the family, friends and neighbors that I've been so connected with these past couple weeks. I might even miss everyone's second favorite question, "So where are you headed next?" The only genuine answer I can come up with is "Someplace warmer than here."

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