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Flying Across the United States



When you board an airline and take off only for a couple of minutes can you see cars and houses then before you know it you are at 35,000 feet and the world becomes small and flat.

Flying in a small plane across the land at lower altitudes you start to notice things like how massive the United States really is. Speeding along at 200mph for 12 hours you cover a lot of terrain.

One of the most impressive sights to me is the number of farms there are as you cross the plains of the mid-west. Each farm is like its own self sufficient city and they are as far as you can see in all four directions. From 8,000 feet you really have

no idea of what is growing down there but you can see the tractors and people tending the fields.

Another interesting sight is the coal fields in north eastern Wyoming. Covering an area of a small state the mining companies remove about 100 feet of earth to get to the coal in a strip that measures 300 feet wide and a mile long. Once the coal is removed they put the earth back in and start the next strip. We could see the trains leaving the coal fields one after another with each train pulling 100 cars of coal each car carrying 10 times of what a semi would haul. It was a sight that lets you know that we have no concern about stopping global warming.

One thing I noticed is how much unused land there is in the United States especially in the western states. There are places in Utah, Wyoming, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado and South Dakota where you can fly 200 miles without seeing a house or a paved road. Not much comfort in that when you look forward at your oversized single VW motor and the lack of survival gear in the plane.

What is for sure is that America has so much infrastructure and resources that it gives one security in knowing that even if the economy goes into the drink for a while we have what we need out there across the states to recover.



Water World

In the middle of Wisconsin you will find “The Dells” which is a town on a lake and a river running through it that has some beautiful rock formations that the Dells name comes from. Somehow this town became a tourist spot for summer vacations of Chicago, Minneapolis and Milwaukee and because of the demand they kept building water parks. Now there are so many that the Wisconsin Dells is the water park capital of the world with over 20 outdoor water parks and almost the same number of indoor ones.

Our choice was simple – go to the largest water park in the world “Noah’s Ark”. The park does not seem like the largest when you get there because it is so spread out covering a lot of acreage with the terrain of

rolling hills with lots of trees.

We arrived first thing at 10:00 in the morning in Early September. The good news – everyone was back to school or work – the bad news the water is getting cold. After the first couple of slides you start to warm up a little. Noah’s Ark has basically one of everything in the water slide world even a water slide/roller coaster contraption called the Anaconda.

Lisa is not fond of water slides so I became the human guinea pig for Maddie’s amusement having to go on every slide in the park at running speed. I did however have to draw the line at “The Point of No Return” ride which is a 10 story almost vertical drop. Maddie got it together and took the drop on her own which was very brave.

All in all The Dells is a fun family oriented place and not that expensive.



Maddie and friends riding a tube at Noah’s Ark water park.



“Maddie riding the Misted Twister coaster at Cedar Point.”

Bigger is Better

Somewhere between Cleveland and Toledo you will find the town of Sandusky, Ohio and just north of it on a peninsula in Lake Erie is Cedar Point Amusement Park the roller coaster capital of the world. The park built a record breaking coaster in 1999 called the Millennium Force but a couple years later it was only number 2

so the park decided a few years ago to build an even bigger one called “Top Thrill Dragster”. We rode this behemoth that is 450 feet tall and goes 120 mph simulating an acceleration of a dragster. The coaster uses magnets to gain speed and also to slow down and for someone who has rode a lot of coasters this one is crazy!



Married with Child

Welcome to the “Windy City” but lucky for us on this sunny weekend in September the weather was absolutely perfect and on this perfect day we decided to rent bicycles

and tour the town. We started on the Miracle Mile of Michigan Avenue which is Chicago’s version of 5th Avenue in New York. Making our way to Navy pier the site of the first

Ferris wheel we rode south to Grant Park to visit the Jazz festival and then to Buckingham fountain. After that we headed back north to the Chicago River and road along the bank.

Madison got stuck on a bicycle trailer behind me so I took advantage of the situation by riding over speed bumps and off curbs but being a trooper she just laughed. Touring the city on the bikes was a very exciting way to see everything up close and we covered many times more than we would cover on foot.



“The girls posing in front of Buckingham Fountain in Grant Park.”

Corn Husker

Driving through the Midwest you see a lot of corn fields and from the distance of your air conditioned car you think of what fun it would be to run around in.

What you don’t see in Hollywood movies showing people running through corn is that the field is an entomologist dream with 1,000 bugs per square foot. After about 30 seconds upon entering the corn field both Maddie and myself had our fill of the giant

insectarium and decided that our field of dreams was not here.

We latter played in a soy

bean field and also discover that it is a place favored by 6 legged critters.





“What Lisa would look like as a Siamese twin.”

Creating Clouds

Driven by the water shed from four of the great lakes, Niagara Falls flows towards the fifth Lake Ontario. The falls are the largest in North America with almost 1 million gallons of water a second going over them. In fact they are so powerful clouds form from the mist created by the pounding of the water onto the rocks.

We took the full tour and rode the historic Maid of the Mist boats that take you right up to the center of Horseshoe Falls. They give you a cheap plastic parka for you to wear to help keep dry. From a distance the mist in the falls looks tame but as you enter the mist turns into a screaming violent storm and all you can do is look down and try to keep from

getting soaked. At this point water is blowing in all directions like you're in a hurricane and the boat captain is chugging away at full steam keeping the

boat in the fast current. What is 2 minutes but seems like 20 the captain pulls back the throttle and the boat slips out of the mist and all is well.



“Making friends with a Kangaroo.”

Mommy Can I Keep Him

As the end of the summer season fell on Wisconsin the local animal park we

traveled to also was coming to an end for the year. For us this meant

we could have the place to ourselves and one-on-one time with some really cool animals.



Our favorite – Mr. Giraffe who stood over 15 feet tall and was very excited to see us as long as we had some food. One problem though was Mrs. Giraffe being 2 feet shorted got bullied out of the food so we had to get creative and trick Mr. Giraffe in order to feed her.