

KHS Field Experience: An Experience of a Lifetime!

By Ross Henry

Three weeks, three days, 16 hours, 8,373 miles driven, 65+ miles hiked, four showers and 40 strangers to friends made, is the Kenston Out West Trip 2010 in conclusion.

When I wrote the previous *Spirit* article, I covered a meager three days of the trip, and since then we have lived a tent-and-Coleman lifestyle for three weeks non-stop. The expectation was that we were to keep up a schoolwork philosophy as well as a rugged lifestyle, all under the grading eye of a counselor, but unlike school our textbooks became alive; the dangers and wonders of the world were not read, but rather experienced.

During the three-week interval, we accomplished more than what was thought possible. Plus the diversity was abundant, from exploring the underground depths of Wind Cave with all its mystery, to standing on the white-capped mountains of the Rockies, that look out at the vast countryside. Just like that we as a group had our high moments as well as our low ones. Some of our greatest high moments were when everyone interacted with one another, and this occurred in no better of a place than on long hikes. When we were in Glacier National Park, we hiked a grand 10 miles. This hike was out to Iceberg Lake, which resembles the name quite well, and along the way people who hiked relatively close to one another would begin to strike up conversations with each other and almost instantly become friends. The hike itself was a little less than strenuous, and when we were at our halfway point we soon began to think, "What is everyone else doing at home? What could ever compare to what we were doing/seeing right here and now!"

From Glacier National Park, all 40 of us boarder-jumped to Canada. At first reaction everyone seemed a little less than impressed, because all name-brand material for the US was different for the Canadians, and everything bought in US dollars was not currency exchanged for its Canadian worth, so in essence everything cost more.

While taking our stay in Canada we saw every aspect of dinosaurs there is, from where the dinosaurs are excavated to where they are displayed in the Tyrrell Museum, and not to mention seeing the world's largest dinosaur ever in a park nearby the museum.

By far one of the highlights of the trip was our first annual KFE glacier hike on Athabasca Glacier. No one knew what to expect, so when we started everyone was taken to a new chilling world. Somehow, unexpectedly, we were part of the "exhibit" of the glacier, in that whenever a bus on monster wheels rolled tourists by where we were hiking, we became an attraction. Because we had our pictures taken by who knows how many other tourists on all the buses that rolled by, I guess one could call us legit.

Crossing back into the United States created a pretty big deal, in that when our bus came up to the line we were all hustled out of the bus by border patrol and bunched into the confines of the security building. One at a time we had to go up to the desk and be stamped back into our country. Intimidation must be what they're trained to do, and without a doubt they performed flawlessly.

We spent some time along the coast, and, to some, this rejuvenated their dwindling spirits. Appropriately this signified a halfway point for the trip.

Olympic National Park, Mt. Rainier and Mt. St. Helens went by without too much excitement, for most of it was shrouded in fog. Then came the big climax of the trip, a national park that is revered as "the Mirror of Heaven," Crater Lake. When our bus turned the final corner to Crater Lake, the bus was silent and then as if on cue everyone was awed. The magnitude of the place couldn't possibly be summed up by picture, print or pronouncement. To give a visual, all of Bainbridge, in square mileage, could fit inside the caldera of Crater Lake.

I think one memory every single person will take from Crater Lake was the ironic moment when everyone on the trip went sledding down on their butts into a still-active volcano, on Wizard Island, one of the most famous landmarks in the world, in the middle of July. By the end of all the sledding, many were bloodied up, cold and tired—but never looking happier in their lives. The memory of hiking to the top of this volcano and sliding down the snow will stick with each of us for the rest of our lives.

With everyone in good spirits, the rest of the trip flew by in one seemingly consolidated day. Traveling to the Tetons we hiked our grandest hike yet, a 19-mile hike to Lake Solitude.

Traveling next door to Yellowstone, we watched all the geysers blow and hot springs bubble. At Yellowstone our bus broke down, so we were stuck at our campsite all the following day---and enjoyed the day off.

An adrenaline rush, uncontrolled speed, daring conditions, and loads of fun summed up whitewater rafting on the Snake River. Even though the rapids only reached Class 3, they still provided the surge of intensity we needed before the long bus ride home. The ride down the river lasted nearly two hours, but felt like a mere 20 minutes. Once done, we were treated to a night in downtown Jackson Hole by ourselves. It was definitely considered one of the best days of the trip.

The ride home took two days and a night to traverse from Wyoming to Northeast Ohio. During the ride home, the trip was not over. The bus buzzed with conversation by day, and at night it bounced with music as a rave took over, glow sticks and all.

Arriving home felt good; being met by family whom I hadn't seen in weeks settled just right in the heart. As they should, every person on the trip dispersed from their one family to another. The Kenston Field Experience trip created such a camaraderie with one another that can be matched by none other. Arriving at home and reuniting with simple household luxuries felt as natural as home itself, but it goes without saying, that after a few short hours I was ready to embark on the next big adventure that awaited.

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Kenston Field Experience: The Photos Show Amazement!

We can only guess at the wonder and adventure that Kenston student experienced on the Outwest Trek! From setting up camp at the base of mountains, to sliding down a snow mountainside, climbing steps up rock formations and even sending a bit of “sign language back to the Buckeye State, these pictures exemplify “happy campers.”



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