

Adventures by Disney: Jackson Hole, Wyoming

by Gincy Heins, PassPorter Guest Contributor

Does a fun family tour on a bus with strangers and their children sound like an impossible dream?

Then you haven't been on an Adventure By Disney! Last summer my family and I had the vacation of a lifetime when we joined strangers who are now friends on Disney's "Quest for the West" in Wyoming during the preview year.

In typical Disney fashion, this trip had nothing but the best food, hotels, activities and Adventure Guides. Even the motor coach in which we traveled was excellent with a "kneeling bear" feature that lowered the entrance of the bus to make it easier to step on board. Every desire was anticipated and before you could get hungry or thirsty, food and water were offered throughout the trip.

But don't think that just because this was a group event that everyone had to do the same thing. There were always options for those who did not want to participate in something. For example, one day we took a boat ride across Jenny Lake to hike up to Inspiration Point. People had the option of hiking all the way to Inspiration Point or completing a shorter hike. Later in the trip at the ranch, people could relax, learn to fly fish or go horseback riding.

The food, whether served in a restaurant or under the trees, was delicious! The accommodations, whether in a national park, western town, or on a ranch, were excellent, and the transportation, whether horse, bike, motor coach, or boat were unparalleled. Transportation ranged from the "A Ticket" boat ride across Jenny Lake to the "E Ticket" white water rafting trip!

On our first day, upon arriving at the airport in Jackson Hole (the only airport in the country to be located in a National Park) we were greeted by one of our Adventure Guides and our motor coach driver. They gathered us and our luggage onto what was to be our home on the road for the next week. We were taken directly to our room at the Wort Hotel in downtown Jackson Hole where we spent the first two nights. The rooms in this old, historic hotel were beautiful, yet rustically decorated to fit in with the history of the hotel. The first evening everyone in our group met in the lobby of the hotel for introductions, and then we walked down the street past the famous antler arches in downtown

Jackson Hole for a private catered dinner eaten outside accompanied by the sound of western music. Dinner was followed by a game, which gave people the opportunity to mix a little more and get to know each other. Our group consisted of four couples traveling without children and four couples traveling with children or grandchildren.

After a picnic lunch at String Lake, our first guide joined us. The guides know the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone inside and out and filled our heads with more information than we knew existed. Frequent stops were made along the way from the Grand Tetons to Yellowstone at places like the West Thumb Geyser Basin where each guest was supplied with headphones. Through the use of these headphones, the guide could be at the front of the group telling about the area, and everyone in the group could hear, despite a strong blowing wind. Laser thermometers were passed around among the children so everyone could see the actual temperature of the water in the thermal features.

A special evening was planned for the children. They had a wonderful time with the guides, playing games and participating in activities while eating some of their favorite foods. This also provided the parents with an "adults only" evening to spend socializing with the other guests on the trip.

Watching Old Faithful was an amazing spectacle! It's a sight that has to be seen in person to be fully understood. Everywhere you turn in Yellowstone, nature provides one surprise after another. Whether it's the wildlife such as moose, buffalo, deer, or bears, or the still standing trees burned in the fires of 1988, there are astonishing sights everywhere you turn.

Our last few nights were spent at the Spotted Horse Ranch. Every family had their own beautiful cabin. Each cabin had a breathtaking view and seemed isolated from the others although they were no more than a couple of minutes apart. From our cabin, we gazed over a meandering river to a beautiful house on a hill. Fresh cookies were always available for snacking, meals were family style in the main ranch building and on the last evening, dinner was under the stars by the campfire.

Early one morning, the group gathered in jackets, cups of coffee in hand, to watch as the ranch's horses were rounded up from the hills and driven across the bridge to the stables. We were all picking out the horse we wanted to ride later that day.

And by this time, we did feel a lot like a family! Everyone got along so well on the trip. Never once did the children whine or complain about anything. When our Adventure ended, addresses were exchanged and

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tears were shed as we said good-bye to new friends. A reunion trip is already planned for next summer at Walt Disney World!

For more information on this, or any of the other Adventures by Disney, please visit their web site at www.adventuresbydisney.com.

About The Author: Gincy is currently busy planning a trip to Walt Disney world with her family.

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