

Arizona with my Cousin

The Covid-19 pandemic, as with a lot of people, was one of the most difficult times of my life thus far. It changed me in many ways, and also propelled many circumstances in my life that I am glad happened, but it also fostered many things that I wish had never happened.

Traveling is really important to me, it always has been since I was a child. The importance for me extends beyond leisure, to me it feels as if I am connecting to the world. Growing up, my parents never went anywhere, traveling did not matter to them. Traveling comes in many forms, and even the simplest traveling like to a beach town a few hours away, or traveling to a historic landmark for a weekend, was something that they did not value or make a part of our lives. I had a massive fear of missing out and wanderlost due to this growing up. I knew I just wanted to go, go, go when I grew up and became an adult. Luckily for me, I have realized this dream, but it did not come without difficulties, because the Covid- 19 pandemic hit eight months after I moved out on my own and had money to explore. Did that put a damper on things, the moment I feel as if I do not have to be trapped in my parents box of a life, is the moment the world is also trapping me in a box. Or so, this is how it felt to me. While of course I understood the importance of staying home and the gravity of the situation, this did not stop me from engaging in my own pity party about what I could not do now, with no foreseeable ending. It felt as if I went from one box to another.

I had lived in a secluded ocean town during this time, so we did go on trips to the surrounding areas during the pandemic, as everything to do was outdoors. Going to the beach, hiking and the sort. But I will never forget the first trip I took when travel restrictions were lifted and thus I could go on a plane. The first place that I went oddly enough, was a trip to Arizona to

see my cousin who lived there. It had been a couple of years since I had last seen her and she is one of the closest people to me and it was important to me to see her every couple of years. I was excited to see her, and excited to finally spend the extra money I had been earning as an “essential employee” and get out of my box. There were COVID restrictions still in place of course, this was 2021 and travel restrictions were just easing. I had to wear a mask the entire plane ride, had to be vaccinated just to get on the plane, and wear a mask into any restaurant, vehicle or establishment I was entering. It all felt really strange, especially wearing a mask on a plane for the entire flight. However, this trip was so special to me because I not only got to spend one on one time with one of the closest people to me, but we also created a lot of memories. I will never forget the long car ride we went on to the Grand Canyon and the conversations we had. It was my first time seeing the Grand Canyon and since the park is all outdoors, there were no mask requirements, which felt weird because of how long we had been masking up until that point. My cousin drove me to her college campus in Flagstaff, where she was a sophomore at Northern Arizona University. Then we took a trip to Tempe where I had been going to school at Arizona State University, but I was an online student and had never seen or been to the campus before. We stayed in an Airbnb and went shopping at the mall, and also went to a strange college student hotspot restaurant with unique servers and food that I won't forget. All the while we were still following COVID restrictions.

COVID is not really something I like to talk or think about, however I do love to reminisce on some of those trips I had taken once travel restrictions were lifted, because I could finally leave my box.