

## Our Family Winter Road-trip

In January 2023, my husband and I embarked on a cross-country journey to Albuquerque, New Mexico with our ten-month-old daughter and three-year-old son. We routed our winter road trip through Idaho and Utah, beginning the day before Christmas 2022. My mom and her boyfriend secured an Airbnb for the family gathering. Given the length of the drive with young children, we opted for an overnight stay in Boise. Our departure from Moses Lake, WA, following my Boys and Girls Club training and Christmas party.

The family reunion proved delightful. We immersed ourselves in Ogden's local traditions, particularly the Christmas Village festivities. My twin joined us for an extended visit, and we reconnected with cousins. Our journey continued to Orem for visits with old friends, followed by several days with my husband's Aunt Mary in Heber, UT. Her hospitality was remarkable, and I valued the opportunity to strengthen connections with rarely-seen family members. The mutual joy of watching them bond with our children was evident. The purpose of our Albuquerque leg was my attendance at the biannual Phi Alpha Theta history honors program conference. This segment presented several challenges: we were traveling in a rental due to an accident in Boise, and that vehicle developed concerning sounds after leaving Heber, necessitating an exchange. The situation grew more complex when severe weather stranded us, along with numerous other vehicles, in the middle of the night. Despite the significant ice accumulation, our well-equipped vehicle kept us comfortable while waiting for road crews to salt the highway. Upon arrival, our Hyatt loyalty membership proved invaluable, facilitating early check-in and showcasing their excellent rewards program.

The trip exceeded expectations. Beyond delivering my panel presentation and attending several compelling sessions, we explored the city thoroughly. Our itinerary included two zoo visits and various museums, much to the children's delight. The Indigenous Cultural Center stood out as particularly significant, offering insights into my grandfather's tribal heritage - knowledge that deeply resonated with my mother. While I attended conference sessions, my husband took the children to explore the dinosaur exhibits. The weather was ideal, and our return journey through Delta's arches included stops for family-friendly hiking in surprisingly mild conditions.

This journey initiated a year of diverse travel experiences. We made three trips to the Seattle area, combining zoo visits with my daughter's Cinderella Pageant appearances in Tacoma. My independent travels included a restorative stay at Suncadia's spa. Our family regularly explores Wenatchee and Spokane on day trips, and I managed solo trips to Tampa in July and Scotland in June.

Our DC trip in 2022: While COVID protocols remained in effect, they had evolved beyond universal masking to more nuanced precautions. We carefully evaluated the safety measures before traveling with our young children. The experience left a lasting impression - my son frequently reminisces about the zoo. Months earlier, we'd accompanied my grandmother to the Richard III Society conference under stricter protocols. The fact that my grandmother, husband, and I contracted COVID during that visit validated the necessity of such measures.

The restrictions were a bit more in place and required meticulous planning. Many places were appointment-only or limited the number of people who could visit at any one time.

Several sites remained inaccessible. This prevented a White House visit, which I wish I could have done. However, I look forward to doing this at the Phi Alpha Theta 2025 biannual in January.