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Destinations and Sightseeing

GENEALOGY, ROCK hounding, race cars, nature, sightseeing—every RVer has a passion for something that takes him or her on the road. The destinations are many. Here are some terrific suggestions that will make pursuing your passions more pleasurable.

- ❑ Motorhoming genealogists know that their mobility affords them unique opportunities for family tree research. They can plan trips to research areas, taking photos of ancestral homesteads and church sites and cemetery tombstones, and gather “obits” and other pieces of family history from the pages of local newspapers. Contact local genealogical societies in your area and let them know your routes and destinations. You may find members, unable to travel themselves, who will pay you to act as a researcher/photographer for *their* family tree needs. Plan your trips so you arrive on a day when civic offices are open—not weekends.
—Bruce Allsen, Moreno Valley, CA
- ❑ Before photographing an old gravestone, wet it with water so the lettering will show up better.
- ❑ When planning a trip, leave some free time to see whatever museums or other places that interest you as you go along.
- ❑ Be alert for unusual wildlife, flowers, and scenic beauty. Enjoy nature—touch it, feel it, smell it, listen to it, and look at it.
- ❑ To see the Grand Tetons at their best on the eastern side, approach them from the north.
- ❑ The most dramatic way to see Sedona and the red rocks is to approach from the north. (From Flagstaff, take Exit 337 off I-17, turn left at the stop sign, and follow the signs to Route 89A. Turn left again to Sedona on 89A South. Travel 23 miles to Sedona on a two-lane, paved road through a forest of mostly pine trees. Descend a winding road along mountain rocky walls.)
- ❑ Check road maps for upcoming rest areas or picnic areas and welcome centers. (You may not think you want information at a welcome center as you approach it, but experience tells me that every time I pass one by, I later wish I had stopped either for a map of that state or for general information that would help me identify what I was seeing.)
- ❑ Pay close attention to the directions to your campground and orient yourself using a map. You may need to know later how to go into town and back.
- ❑ The Grand Balloon Ascension near Tucson, Arizona, is known as one of the 10 best hot-air balloon events in the nation. It’s worth a special trip.

- ❑ When you're heading for higher elevations, watch out for altitude sickness. Allow extra time to acclimate yourself to the thinner air. It's a good idea to stay at 5,000 feet for a day or two before going higher. At 5,000 feet, it's normal to notice a faster heartbeat and increased breathing rate due to lower oxygen levels. For the first two or three days, some people may experience dizziness, fatigue, headaches, nasal congestion, and difficulty sleeping. If the altitude starts to bother you, take deep breaths; avoid overexertion; eat high-carbohydrate foods; go easy on alcohol, caffeine, and salty foods; and drink more water than usual.
- ❑ You'll take more pictures if your camera is handy. Keep it beside the passenger seat and have a purse or fanny pack that's big enough to hold it.
- ❑ If you'd like to travel to a remote location such as Alaska but are not sure you can handle it on your own, consider an RV caravan. Touring by caravan has a lot of advantages. The sponsoring group plans the itinerary and makes advance reservations for campgrounds and group activities such as meals, ferries, sightseeing, and shows.

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Exploring on Our Own

IN THE ABSENCE of our hosts, we had decided to see the Monterey Bay Aquarium and Cannery Row on Saturday, visit the National Steinbeck Center followed by the 17-Mile Drive on Sunday, and take the Roaring Camp & Big Trees Narrow-Gauge

Railroad train ride into the redwoods on Monday. None of us had ever been to those places, but they all sounded interesting.

With no official wagonmaster, Mary Jo and Bill fell into the role by virtue of having arrived in the hosts' motorhome. I tried to help Mary Jo by doing some of the telephoning for information and reservations. She told me she needed a sidekick and I was glad to oblige.

John took on the role of navigator with Paul's help since John drove the tow car and Paul sat in front with a road map while Lib and I sat in back. The Wrigleys and Cornells preferred to follow in the Wrigleys' tow car. Since our cars did not have CBs through which we could talk back and forth as we traveled on the road, Bill and Paul each held one of the two-way communicators to use for that purpose.

On Saturday morning, we left the campground in the two tow cars and took Route 1 to Monterey. We soon stood outside in a fast-moving line for tickets to the aquarium. It was a clear day with a cool breeze but warm in the sunshine. A large modern building complex located on the rocky edge of Monterey Bay, the aquarium exhibits the flora and fauna of the bay. Inside the busy, noisy, cavernous lobby we joined hundreds of other visitors, many of them families with toddlers in strollers and young children.

Using a visitor map, we began to explore. We saw the Kelp Forest exhibit through the largest window on Earth, a million-gallon indoor replication of the ocean with fish weaving in and out among the underwater plants. Children enjoyed interactive touch pools where they could actually handle a sea star or touch a harmless bat ray. Various windows let us see unique marine life in their habitats from large sharks to tiny sardines. The graceful pulsing and drifting of beautiful jellyfish fascinated me. The highlight for me was the exhibit of black-footed penguins in the "Splash Zone" gallery. For some reason, penguins bring out a mirthful feeling in me. Maybe it's because they look and act so formal.