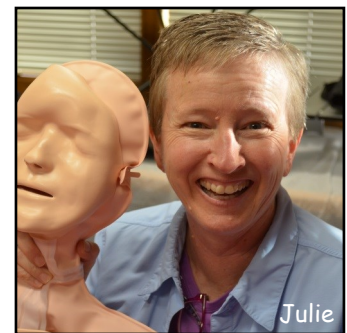


2020: The Year to Learn the True Meaning of PIVOT

By Marlene Pakish

Julie and I generally plan our coming year with the vacations we are going to take and where. The first weekend in April we were heading to New Orleans to watch the Women's Final Four tournament and meet up with friends from New York...pivot.



July, I was tentatively planning a trip back East to catch up with my family and coordinating with my sisters to also be there...pivot.

Julie, Leah Bornstein, Joe Findley and I had made plans to rent a houseboat on Lake Powell for five days. Not a club trip but a first-time trip for me or Julie to Lake Powell...pivot.

And then there was the Balloon Festival in Albuquerque, New Mexico that was planned with Julie's siblings. A yearly trip with her three siblings and significant others for five days, renting a VRBO...pivot.

So, here we sat...our vacation funds growing, as well as my vacation time, and no place to go. Until...Leah and Joe suggested a car trip to the Grand Tetons and Yellowstone National Parks. This would happen the same week we should have been on Lake Powell, but what a "grand" substitute! The dates for the trip were August 29th to September 5th, so we'd be getting out of there before the Labor Day weekend got started.

It was decided early on that none of us wanted to tent camp so Joe found small cabins at Headwaters Lodge and Cabins campground. I call them "bins" because all they had was a bunk bed, small dresser, table and two chairs. We were able to get two bins together so that we could share the picnic tables and fire pit.



We took two cars and headed to Wyoming with our kayaks and the "kitchen sink" because we were car camping, so why not bring everything!

So the adventure began....and so did the fiasco to get Wyoming permits. Here's how frustrating it was to get those permits:

- First, we had our kayaks inspected at a location right after the entrance to the Tetons. This, of course, had been closed on Saturday before 5:30 when we arrived so it was a trip back there on Sunday and yes, kayaks AND paddle boards had to get this inspection.
- But this inspection didn't give us the invasive species sticker, which we needed for Wyoming. We were told to fill out the form on-line and show the receipt to get that sticker. Since internet service was minimal, Julie spent an hour in a gift shop on her phone filling out this form AND she didn't even buy anything...that was my job.
- Besides the invasive species sticker, we also needed one for paddling on Jackson Lake and then would have to get yet another one for paddling in Yellowstone.

To make a very long and boring story short, we never got our invasive species sticker (can you say "run around") nor did we decide to paddle in Yellowstone. All this before we even got our boats wet!

Monday the weather report called for rain so we drove into Jackson Hole and walked around, had lunch, made an attempt to get that stupid sticker and then headed back to camp for a nice dinner.

The weather for this trip was ideal, Monday was the only day it rained; the nights and mornings were chilly but the days would bring plenty of sunshine and high temperatures.

Tuesday we paddled the Snake River, which is absolutely stunning. We had two cars so being able to do a shuttle allowed us to paddle 10 miles on this beautiful winding river. It started out cloudy but gave way to a hot, sunny day. The rapids were fun along the way although it took some trial and error to figure out the best way to maneuver them, and Joe's knowledge of reading the water also helped.



Going down the Snake River toward Jackson Lake



The view heading toward the lake

Yellowstone was our plan on Wednesday so we headed out about 9:00AM. It was only a mile and a half from our campground to the South entrance of Yellowstone NP but it took us 45 minutes just to get to the gate! The unexpected influx of tourists surprised the employees at Yellowstone so they only had one person at the entrance. We did check out Old Faithful, the geysers at the West Thumb and also the Grand Prismatic geyser. The amount of people and the question on where to get a permit to paddle in Yellowstone solidified our decision not to paddle there at all. Plus there were areas closed because of the fires i.e., Lewis Lake and Shoshone Lake.

Since we were all in agreement not to venture back to Yellowstone, on Thursday we drove to Jenny Lake for the day's paddle. What a beautiful lake! We had a day of effortless paddling with bald eagle sightings and a WiFi connection for Leah so that she could catch-up on work e-mails. This is the kind of home office I would like!



Leah keeping in touch with the office



Joe and Leah

We found a sunny lunch spot on the far side of the lake and, as you can see Leah and Joe had their umbrella with them, which tells you it was hot.

We got off the lake just as the wind was picking up and white caps were appearing. It amazes me how many people start their day mid-afternoon, because the conditions on Jenny Lake had definitely deteriorated by the time we were off, but a number of people were just getting on the lake.

Of course, when in the Tetons, one has to paddle Jackson Lake. Friday was our day for this paddle, with another nice day in store. Joe and Leah started paddling an hour and a half before Julie and I since we, unfortunately, had left our paddles in our car at the campground. As the saying goes, "up the creek without a paddle". Yup that was us! We did catch up to them because we had our handy VHF radios so we could let them know when we were finally on the water. It was another gorgeous day, although there were motorized boats on this lake so we had to be very watchful of them.

We headed back home on Saturday but only after Joe and I took an early morning trip to the Grand Prismatic geyser to get better photos of it from the upper view. The pictures I took didn't come out great but we did see buffalo when we were in the park.



Julie and Marlene on Jackson Lake



All-in-all it was a fabulous trip with good friends. And upon arriving home, those damn Wyoming invasive species stickers were in our pile of mail!