

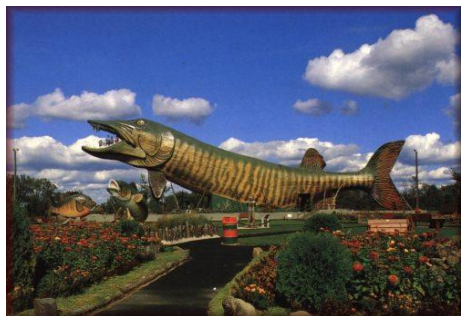
Western Swing 2025

Hello! I'm Charlie Chaplin, though most folks just call me Chaplin. My adventure begins as the camper is prepped, and my two companions are eager to hit the road. First, we'll head to Kathy's family's beautiful lake house in Stanton, MI, for several days with her family. From Stanton, we head to Michigan's Upper Peninsula to spend a few days at Picture Rock in Munising before continuing our journey to St. Cloud, MN, with a break stop at the KOA in Hayward, WI. St. Cloud, MN., is home to Aaron's family. From St. Cloud, join us on this unforgettable journey to the American West, where every stop promises new adventures and cherished memories for all three of us.

****July 20/21/22/23/24:**** Sometimes it is difficult to get my humans going; apparently, we were in no rush to leave Kathy's lakehouse and leisurely turned the truck north around for a seven-hour ride, checking into Musining KOA at 7:30 PM. My humans are getting good at camper set-up, as it took about an hour with my supervision. But, of course, I received no thanks as I was left in the truck when my humans went to dinner at the Dogpatch, a local Musining restaurant. Fortunately for me, the weather was cool and pleasant– the only problem was that I was lonely – and I went to sleep in my new bed, which was comfy and soft. We investigated the Musining/Picture Rock area in the next few days. Of particular interest to Mike was the setting for Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's epic poem, The Song of Hiawatha, where the Pictured Rocks area of Michigan, on the south shore of Lake Superior, makes a distinctive sandstone cliff into a prominent feature within Longfellow's narrative. The poem, published in 1855 and read by my human Mike when he was in middle school, recounts an oral tradition of the fictional adventures of an Ojibwe hero, Hiawatha. The Musing KOA park offered a lot of activities for all ages. Besides an excellent canopy of trees, the campgrounds had an obligatory pool, a giant water slide, and a big “jumping” ball for kids, but not for dogs (we did see a few adults jumping and jumping). My humans felt the camper spaces were a little narrow, as it seemed we were packed in like sardines, but it didn't bother me– I got to see and visit with many humans and their furry friends. The only negative was the lack of Internet streaming. Mike had to call TraviFi several times as the device wanted to connect to a tower several miles away; of course, it couldn't. Once that was figured out, we could stream. Still, the Internet continued to be slow and “buffeted” many times: the cell tower connection was not very good, and even the WIFI connection by the campsite was not very consistent.

- ****July 24/25/26:**** Again, I jumped into my bed in the back seat for some sleep. What do you do when my humans tell me we will be on a scenic drive? First, we stopped a couple of nights at the KOA in Hayward (WI) along the way to St. Cloud. So, what is so great about Hayward? Through our exploration, we found Hayward offers a wide range of activities, particularly for outdoor enthusiasts, which includes the Birkie Trail system-

for hiking and biking, ATV trail riding, the Lumberjack World Championship event, fishing, visiting the Fishing Hall of Fame with its iconic giant musky, and finally, exploring the numerous lakes and rivers in a kayak or canoe.

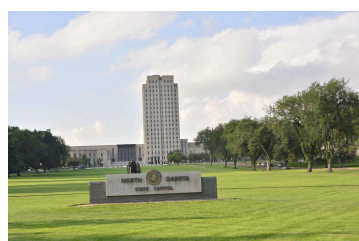


Since Mike has raced (skied) the Birkie, a few words about this fantastic ski race must be included: the 31-mile and 55 km American Birkebeiner, or Birkie, is North America's largest cross-country ski race, which debuted in 1973, making it a founding member of the Worldloppet federation of cross-country ski marathons. The Birkie consists of the 50 km (31 mi) skate, the 55 km (34 mi) classic race, the 29 km (18

mi) Kortelopet race, and a 15 km (9.3 mi) Prince Haakon race, contested between the towns of Cable and Hayward. Skiers from around the world invade this area of Wisconsin as the race has a reputation for attracting skiers of varying ability levels, from Olympians, national team members, foreign professionals, plus recreational skiers from all over the United States and Canada.

- **July 26/27/28/29/30/31/Aug 1/2/3/4:** Arrive at St. Cloud Campgrounds, ready for exhilarating summer baseball with Jacob's team, the St. Cloud Chuts. I spent hours with my good furry friend, Asia, another doodle, but twice my size. However, I feel that I am much faster. We have lots of fun running, chasing, and enjoying each other. But when it's time for a nap, I am ready. Needless to say, I slept well all the nights I played with Asia.

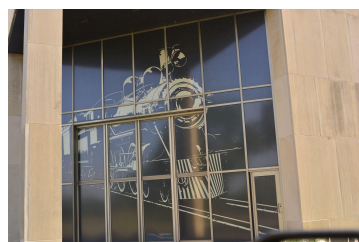
- **Aug 4-5:** I was still exhausted, but my humans got me up early and off for a 305-mile journey to Bismarck, ND, for a stopover on the way to Yellowstone. Of course, we spent the night at the Bismarck KOA after



investigating the and other state We found that after Fargo, is the most populous city in North Dakota. The Bismarck was



state capital buildings. Bismarck, second site where established

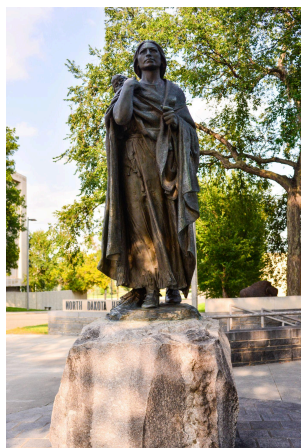


was selected as the point where the Northern Pacific Railroad would cross the Missouri River, and it was known for being an outlaw town with no laws and no limits. The city was formed in 1872 as "Edwinton" after Edwin Ferry Johnson, a chief engineer for the Northern Pacific Railway company, and the name was changed less than a year later to honor the



German chancellor, Otto von Bismarck, in a small attempt to attract German immigrants. Like many of the towns near and around the Black Hills, the discovery of gold in 1874 was the real impetus for its growth, and in 1883, Bismarck became the capital of the Dakota Territory, with statehood following in 1889. While Indigenous Americans left no written documents, only verbal stories, many of which have ceased being told. Little of the area is known from before

European contact, and the first well-documented inhabitants of what is now Bismarck were the Mandan Nation. In the city limits, there is a park where the historic remains of Chief Looking's Village stood. Bismarck and the Mandan area are part of the history of Meriwether Lewis and William Clark, along with their female guide, Sacagawea. In

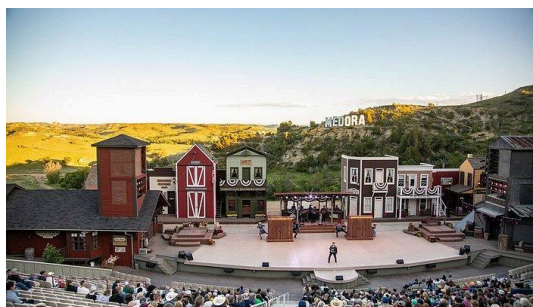


1804, Lewis and Clark, known as the Corps of Discovery, reached a Mandan village, where they built Fort Mandan for the winter of 1804 and 1805. Several trappers who might interpret or guide the expedition up the Missouri River were interviewed. They hired Toussaint Charbonneau in 1804, who claimed to speak several Native languages, plus one of many wives (Sacajawea) who spoke Shoshone. Sacagawea won further praise for her quick action in rescuing Lewis and Clark's journals and other vital records and items from a capsized flatboat. As the expedition continued from the Dakota Territory toward the Pacific coast,



Sacagawea's expertise as a guide and interpreter became integral as Lewis and Clark's expedition crossed into the Yellowstone River basin [now known as Bozeman Pass]. Not only has Sacagawea been depicted as a guide for the expedition, but her geographical insight also provided direction across the new territories.

-**Aug 5-6:** My humans had me up early and out for the quick drive (about 134 miles)



to Medora and a full hookup at Medora Campground, just a stone's throw from Theodore Roosevelt National Park and, of course, my humans had to attend the Medora Musical and leave me in the camper. I really did not like this, but.... From what I heard, once they returned: the show was very entertaining and enjoyable. The seating was excellent as there is not a bad seat in a house with over two

thousand seats. The musical was very well-paced and fun to watch. Despite the day's heat, we followed the advice and took long sleeves and several blankets. By the time the sun shed its incredible streaks of sunlight, the temperatures were comfortable, and the scenery and the backdrop of the hills were terrific. Even the seating was ok, especially with the blanket we carried. On the second day, we took the scenic drive through Teddy Roosevelt National Park. Mike has been there several times, but knew we would love it. The stunning sights like the Scenic Loop Drive and Painted Canyon, Maah Daah Hey Trail (hike or bike), and Chateau de Mores historic site are much better in real life. Theodore Roosevelt National Park (TRNP), which is the only American



national park named after a single person, is in the badlands of western North Dakota, which comprises three geographically separate areas, covers 70,446 acres, and pays homage to the time TR spent in the Dakota Territories before they became states. History shows that Roosevelt first came to the North Dakota badlands to hunt bison in September 1883 and during that first short trip fell in love with the rugged lifestyle and the "perfect freedom" of the West. After the death of

both his wife and his mother, just hours apart on February 14, 1884, TR returned to his North Dakota ranch seeking solitude and time to heal. That summer, he started his second ranch, the Elkhorn Ranch, only 35 miles north of Medora. Roosevelt took great interest in his ranches and wrote many articles about his adventurous hunting trips throughout the West. These articles, centered on saving the West, were published in many eastern newspapers and magazines, influencing his pursuit of conservation policies as U.S. President (1901–1909). The night before leaving for Billings, MT, my humans picked up the outside chairs, tables, and "carpet," like most mornings, we were on the road around 9:30 AM.



Aug 7-9:** Billings Village RV Park, —Billings, MT, was just a drive from Medora, ND, to Cody, WY, but it turned out to be just a bit more than a stop. This campground had no security, and Mike's bike, which pulls my bugger, was stolen. We filed a police report with the Billings Police Department. The next day, as it was Friday and the battlefield is now only open on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, we were off for the whole day to see the Big Horn Battlefield, where Custer and the 7th

Cavalry were defeated and killed. With me in tow, my humans walked the battlefield and

attempted to visualize along the ridges, steep bluffs, and ravines of the Little Bighorn what had happened June 25-26, 1876. Most people, my human believes, feel the Battle of the Little Bighorn was a defeat of George Custer, the Crow and Arikara scouts, and the 7th Regiment of the US Cavalry. The combatants were the 7th Regiment. Yet, the Battle of the Little Bighorn symbolizes the clash of two vastly dissimilar cultures: the



northern plains tribes and the industrial-based culture of the United States. In 1868, after fierce fighting between U.S. Army personnel and Lakota and Cheyenne warriors, several Lakota leaders agreed to sign the Treaty of Fort Laramie, which created a large reservation for the Lakota in the western half of present-day South Dakota. However, many leaders, including Sitting Bull, rejected the reservation system. Finally, tension between the United States and the Lakota escalated in 1874, when Lt. Col. George Armstrong Custer was ordered to investigate and make an exploration of the Black Hills inside the boundary of the Great Sioux Reservation to map the area, locate a suitable site for a future military post, and make note of the natural resources. During this expedition, professional geologists discovered gold, which caused an invasion of miners and entrepreneurs to the Black Hills in

direct violation of the 1868 Treaty of Fort Laramie. The United States negotiated with the Lakota to purchase the Black Hills, but the offered price was rejected by the Lakota. The native Americans were labeled as "hostiles." The deadline came with virtually no response from the Indians, and matters were handed to the military. General Philip



Sheridan, commander of the Military Division of the Missouri, devised a strategy that required several thousand troops to find and engage the "hostile" Lakota and Cheyenne and force their return to the Great Sioux Reservation. The bulk of this force was the 7th Cavalry, commanded by Lt. Col. Custer. It was expected that any one of these three forces would be able to deal with the 800-1,500 warriors they were likely to encounter. The region containing

the Powder, Rosebud, Bighorn, and Yellowstone rivers was a productive hunting

ground, and the tribes regularly gathered in large numbers during early summer to celebrate their annual sun dance ceremony. This ceremony had occurred about two weeks earlier near present-day Lame Deer, Montana. During the ceremony, Sitting Bull received a vision of soldiers falling upside down into his village. He prophesied that there soon would be a great victory for his people. From Indian accounts, archeological finds, and positions of bodies, historians can piece together the Custer portion of the battle, although many answers remain elusive. Dismounting at the southern end of the ridge, companies C and L appear to have put up stiff resistance before being overwhelmed. Company I perished on the east side of the ridge. The survivors rushed toward the hill at the northwest end of the long ridge. Company F may have tried to fire at warriors on the flats below the National Cemetery before being driven to the Last Stand Site. About 40 men of the original 210 were cornered on the hill where the stone monument now stands. Hundreds of Lakota and Cheyenne warriors surrounded them. Toward the end of the fight, soldiers, some on foot, others on horseback, broke out in a desperate attempt to escape. All were pulled down and killed in a matter of minutes. The warriors quickly rushed to the top of the hill, dispatching the last wounded. The battle was a momentary victory for the Lakota and Cheyenne. The death of Custer and his troops became a rallying point for the United States to increase its efforts to force native peoples onto reservation lands. With more troops in the field, Lakota hunting grounds were invaded by powerful Army expeditionary forces determined to conquer the Northern Plains Indians. Most of the declared "hostiles" surrendered within one year of the fight, and the US government took the Black Hills without compensation to the Lakota. When we returned home, Mike's bike was gone.

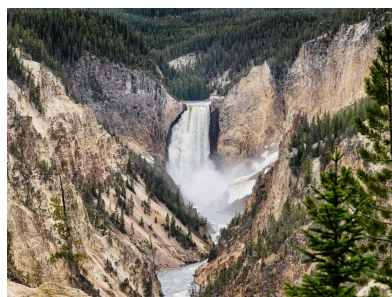
****Aug 9-15: Cody, WY,** a cowboy town with a real live rodeo each evening, is the eastern gateway to the breathtaking Yellowstone National Park and Grand Tetons;



unforgettable adventures awaited us, and new smells for me. The KOA campground was a well-run, secure campground. Our first trip was an 8-hour drive through Yellowstone. Old Faithful & Upper Geyser Basin-Grand Prismatic Spring-Yellowstone Lake-Lamar Valley (wildlife watching). I asked about the various entrances to Yellowstone. The East Entrance to Yellowstone is one of the least-used entrances because of its remoteness, lack of hotels by the entrance gate, and distance from the

Grand Loop Road (where most attractions are). However, it is one of the prettiest drives to enter the park, which we must remember for a different time. Also, the closest city to the entrance is Cody, Wyoming, which is why we chose it. A full-day truck tour took us. The Yellowstone River plunges a staggering 308 feet—nearly twice the height of Niagara Falls. The scenery between Yellowstone's East Entrance and Cody, Wyoming, doesn't disappoint.

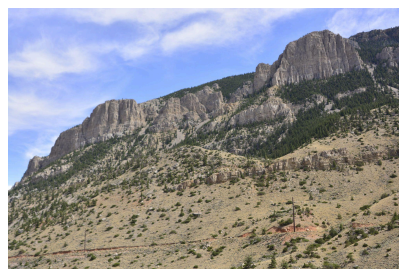
While many visitors, including us, enter Yellowstone through the East Entrance, this entrance is called the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone. We camped in Buffalo Bill's town, Cody, Wyoming, built with the foresight that tourism to Yellowstone would follow.



We didn't hit all the sites and left many for another time, such as the Buffalo Bill Center of the West—five museums in one—or the nightly rodeo full of thrilling fun. After a long day of Yellowstone sightseeing, we returned to Cody. The drive back hugs the North Fork of the Shoshone River, which is flanked by jagged cliffs and fantastical rock formations. This is Big Sky Country—the wild West in full glory. Yellowstone National Park was established on March 1, 1872, after President Grant



signed the Yellowstone National Park Protection Act into law. The national park is located in the northwest corner of Wyoming, with smaller portions in Montana and Idaho. Yellowstone was the



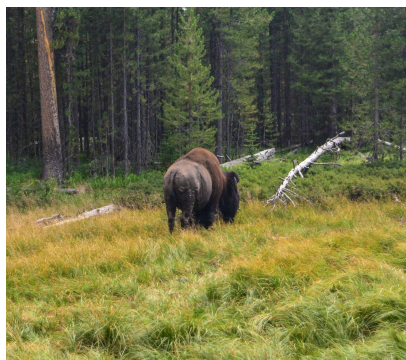
first national park in the US, and is also widely understood to be the first national park in the world. The park is known for its wildlife and its many geothermal features (especially the Old Faithful geyser). While Native Americans have lived in the Yellowstone region for thousands of years, organized exploration did not begin until the late 1860s. In 1917, the administration of the park was transferred from the management of the Army to the National Park Service, which had been created the previous year to



protect architecturally and historically significant structures and archaeological sites. Yellowstone National Park spans an area of 3,468.4 sq mi with lakes, canyons, rivers, and mountain ranges. Yellowstone Lake is one of the largest high-elevation lakes in North America. One of the must-see events is the geysers, which are fueled by ongoing volcanism. Yellowstone happens to be the centerpiece of the ecosystem.

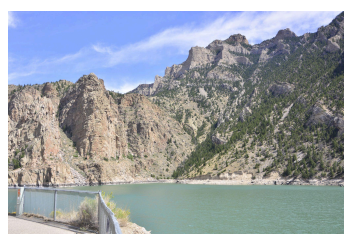


During World War II, tourist travel fell sharply, staffing was cut, and many facilities fell into disrepair. By the 1950s, visitation in Yellowstone and other national parks had increased tremendously. Park officials implemented Mission 66 to modernize and expand park service facilities to accommodate the increased visitation. Planned to be



completed by 1966, in honor of the 50th anniversary of the founding of the National Park Service, Mission 66 construction diverged from the traditional log cabin style with design features of a modern style. During the late 1980s, most construction styles in Yellowstone reverted to the more conventional designs. After the enormous forest fires of 1988 damaged much of Grant Village, structures were rebuilt in the traditional style. The visitor center at Canyon Village, which opened in 2006, also incorporates a more conventional design. In 1963, after several years of public controversy regarding the forced

reduction of the elk population in Yellowstone, the United States Secretary of the Interior Stewart Udall appointed an advisory board to collect scientific data to inform future wildlife management of the national parks. The wildfires during the summer of 1988 were the largest in the park's history. The fires impacted approximately 793,880 acres (3,210 km²; 1,240 sq mi) or 36% of the parkland, leading to a systematic re-evaluation of fire management policies. The fire season 1988 was considered normal until a combination of drought and heat by mid-July contributed to an extreme fire danger. On “Black Saturday (Aug. 20, 1988), strong winds expanded the fires rapidly, and more than 150,000 acres (610 km²; 230 sq mi) burned. In 1898, the naturalist John Muir



described the park as follows: “However orderly your excursions or aimless, again and again amid the calmest, stillest scenery, you will be brought to a standstill, hushed and awe-stricken before phenomena wholly new to you. Boiling springs and huge deep



pools of purest green and azure water, thousands of them, are plashing and heaving in these high, incredible mountains as if a fierce furnace fire



were burning beneath each one of them; and a hundred geysers, white torrents of boiling water and steam, like inverted waterfalls, are ever and anon rushing up out of the hot, black underworld.”

The western rodeo is one event we didn’t attend, but will on the next trip. Yellowstone is a wonderful place to explore, and

Cody is one of those places worth making camp. But it's only when you feel a geyser's spray and see the fabulous landscape that Yellowstone makes its way into your heart. We thought that no matter how long one takes, there is always room for more Yellowstone. The park rewards wanderers, as one will leave not just with photographs, but something far more lasting: wonder. Perhaps we will make our HQs in the park on another Yellowstone tour.

The day before we left Cody, we journeyed to Heart Mountain. Shortly after the attack on December 7, 1941, FDR issued Executive Order 9066, which authorized military commanders to create zones from which Japanese Americans, Italian Americans, and German Americans were to be excluded from everyday American life. Soon after, the



War Department initiated the removal of over 110,000 Japanese Americans from these areas, forcing them into temporary "assembly centers" run by the Wartime Civil Control Administration. In May of 42, the War Department announced that one of the camps for displaced Japanese Americans would be located in Wyoming, and several communities, hoping to capitalize on internee labor for irrigation and land development projects, vied for the site. Heart Mountain was chosen because it was remote yet convenient, isolated from the nearest towns but close to fresh water and adjacent to a railroad spur and depot where Japanese Americans and food and supplies could be offloaded. Within this perimeter of 740 acres, 650 military-style barracks were laid out in a street grid, with administrative, hospital, educational, and utility facilities, and 468 residential dormitories to house the internees. All

of the buildings were electrified, which was, at the time, a rarity in Wyoming, but due to time constraints and a largely unskilled workforce, the majority of these "buildings" were poorly constructed. Army higher-ups gave the site's chief engineer only sixty days to complete the project, and newspaper ads recruiting laborers promised jobs "if you can drive a nail". At the same time, workers boasted that building an apartment barracks took them only 58 minutes. Thousands of acres of surrounding land were designated for agricultural purposes, as the center was expected for the most part to be self-sufficient. The first inmates arrived in Heart Mountain on August 12, 1942: 6,448 from Los Angeles County; 2,572 from Santa Clara County; 678 from San Francisco; and 843 from Yakima County in Washington. After being assigned a barracks based on the size of their families, they began making minor improvements on their new "apartments," hanging bed sheets to create extra "rooms," and stuffing newspaper and rags into cracks in the shoddily constructed walls and floors to keep out dust and cold. Some inmates went so

far as to order tools from Sears & Roebuck catalogs to make repairs. Each barracks unit contained one light, a wood-burning stove, an army cot, and two blankets for each family member. Bathrooms and laundry facilities were in shared utility halls, and meals were served in communal mess halls, both assigned by block. Armed military police manned the nine guard towers surrounding the camp. The night before we left Cody, my humans were afraid of the rain and strong winds. The carpet and chairs were picked up and loaded into the back of the truck. The morning after vacuuming the camper's floor and breakdown, I was, once again, sitting on the truck's console giving directions on our 277 trip to Rock Springs/Green River KOA Journey, Wyoming.

****Aug 15-17:**** Getting to Rock Springs/Green River KOA was an experience as we drove through the Grand Tetons. While the campground is nothing special, the surrounding raw beauty of the landscape is breathtaking.

****Aug 16-18:**** Springville (KOA Journey), UT, for two nights of relaxation. (280 miles (2 nights)- just south of Provo, UT. We didn't have far to drive on the 18th, so my humans were taking their time picking up outside when, around 5 P.M., Kathy noticed smoke on the mountainside. What we were watching was a wildfire in the Buckley Draw Canyon. According to the U.S. Forest Service, the Buckley Draw fire burned nearly 400 acres. Provo Fire and Utah County Fire worked to extinguish the fire, including helicopters and airplane tankers dumping water and pink fire retardant. Authorities did not feel it necessary to order any evacuations as the light winds pushed the fire up the mountain, burning through the dry grass and brush. Many people at the campgrounds gathered to watch the tankers and helicopters fly back and forth, dropping water and fire retardant. From the standpoint of the campgrounds, the firefighters seem to be getting it under control. At morning's first light, still some smoke.



****Aug 19:**** Beaver (KOA Journey), UT, for a brief overnight.

It didn't take long to drive to Beaver—I left at 10, arrived, and set up by 1:40 p.m.

****Aug 19-22:**** Las Vegas, NV - indulge in three nights of excitement in this vibrant city. (3 nights) -291 miles

****Final stretches:****

****Aug 22-26:**** Williams, AZ - staying at the Grand Canyon Railway RV Park with train reservations for an unforgettable ride on August 24. Grand Canyon Railway RV Park 601

West Franklin Ave. Williams, AZ 86046 800-843-8724. The train is booked 8/24. Res# 34324748 RV Park phone # 928-635-4010 ext 3300

****Aug 26-27:**** Gallup, NM for a night at USA RV Park. (1 night) USA RV Park # ROOO183027.

****Aug 27-30:**** South Fork, CO—Enjoy three nights at Aspen Ridge RV Park. 0700 Hwy 149,

****Aug 30-Sept 2:**** Denver, CO, where we'll spend three wonderful nights with Joanne.

****Sept 2-3:**** Douglas, WY for a night at the KOA. #19762556

****Sept 3-9:**** Rapid City, SD, exploring Mt. Rushmore and the quaint towns of Spearfish and Deadwood, with a six-night stay at Palmer Gulch KOA.Mt Rushmore (KOA) @ Palmer Gulch #19363134““““

****Sept 13-17:**** Finally, we'll decide on our final destination and head back to St. Cloud, MN, to see a few soccer games.

NOTE: Fuel & Supplies: Plan fuel stops accordingly, as some stretches between towns can be remote.

Sept 9/10/11: → Wall, SD Wall Drug & Badlands National Park (85 miles) (2 nights) **Campground:** Sleepy Hollow Campground (Full hookups, walk to Wall Drug)-- #182298 Site #1.

Sept 11/12 → Mitchell, SD— Corn Palace 1 night: Campground & RV Park [Good Sam Verified Campground](#) 1700 S Burr St., Mitchell, SD **57301** 605-996-8895

Sept 12/13 → Sioux Falls, SD 1 night –the final night of our epic western swing.

Trip Overview				
Date	City	Campground	Stay	Notes
July 21-24	Picture Rock, Munising, MI	KOA	3	KO-#18773980
July 24-27	Hayward, WI	KOA	3	KOA-#20072782
July 27-Aug 4	St. Cloud, MN	GS		St Cloud Campgrounds
Aug 4/5	Bismarck, ND	KOA	1	KOA-#19270445
Aug 5/7	Medora, ND	Medora Campground	1	(3370 Pool Drive, Medora 58645 800-633-6721
Aug 7/8/9	Billings, MT	Billings Village RV Park	2	Site #35 406 248-8685
Aug 9/10/11/12/13/ 14	Cody, WY	KOA	5	#192755629
Aug 14/15/16	Rock Springs/Green River KOA	KOA	2	#19394277
Aug. 16/17/18	Springville (Provo), UT	KOA	2	#19391850
Aug 18/19	Beaver, UT	KOA	1	#19391779
Aug 19/20/21/22	Las Vegas, NV	KOA	3	#19473828 LV KOA @ Sam's Town
Aug 22/23/24/25/26	Grand Canyon/Williams	Grand Canyon Railroad RV Park	4	Grand Canyon Railway Itinerary # 34324748
Aug 26/27	Gallup, NM	USA RV Park	1	#R000183027 [note Bar S RV Park]
Aug 27/28/29/30	South Fork, CO	Aspen Ridge RV Park 0700 Hwy 149, South Fork, CO 811254	3	Conf # 84395 (Joanne in Cabin 20 @ Creede (Cottonwood Canyon)

Trip Overview				
Date	City	Campground	Stay	Notes
July 21-24	Picture Rock, Munising, MI	KOA	3	KO-#18773980
Aug 30/31/ Sept 1 Sept 2	Denver, CO	Joanne	2	Joanne's
Sept 2/3	Douglas, WY	KOA #19762556	1	245 from Denver--Pull-through.
Sept 3/4/5/6/7/8/9	Rushmore KOA	KOA	6	#19363134 (245 from Douglas, WY)
Sept 9/10/11	Wall, SD	GS	2	SITE#1-#182298
Sept 11/12	Mitchell, SD	Corn Palace	1	Site#3-Betts Campground (605) 96-8983 25473 403rd Ave.
Sept 12/13	Sioux Falls, SD		1	