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### Fall 2020, Road Trip Across America

Mike Merrill

*University of New Hampshire*

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UNH Global

## Road Trip Across America

Mike Merrill, Education Abroad Advisor/Program Manager (Global Education Center)

Tuesday, December 8, 2020



At the continental divide in Yellowstone National Park, Wyoming: (from top down) Bruno atop RV, Gabby and Lizzy on hood, Mike Merrill on bumper

This summer, I had the serendipitous crossing of two unlikely events. First, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, our office went fully remote for work. The other thing that happened was that my in-laws wanted to buy an RV. As a retiring couple among the more vulnerable population regarding COVID, they wanted to be able to get out of their house still, but in the safest way possible. They live in New Orleans, found an RV in California, and asked my fiancé Gabby and I to go get it for them.

What they saw as a burdensome task for us, we saw as a rare opportunity for adventure during what was otherwise a very bleak and disappointing summer. We understood the seriousness of COVID, but also saw this as a way to have the road trip of a lifetime in a primarily self-contained bubble. We got our good friends Lizzy and Bruno to join us, flew to Sacramento, and hit the road.

Being able to work remotely, we were able to take our time on our way from California to New Orleans, and we zigged and zagged from Lake Tahoe and the Redwood Forest in California to the mountains of Glacier Park in Montana to the high desert landscape at Arches in Utah. It was a classic road trip, with stops along the way to jump in rivers, run through fields, and throw snowballs.

Like any good road trip, there were some ups and downs. This RV was old, so it needed quite a bit of TLC along the way. When we broke down in the desert thirty miles from the closest town, we thought maybe we hadn't thought this through enough. But, like all problems in life, we remained calm, worked out a solution, and it too passed.



A view at a bend in the Middle Fork of the Flathead River at Glacier National Park in Montana



A view into Paintbrush Canyon in the Grand Tetons National Park in Wyoming

I struggled mentally a little with the idea of having so much fun when there was so much suffering going on around me. The pandemic impacted so many people in so many negative ways, and I felt guilty about where I was. One thing that I have learned however is that there will always be some circumstances to stop you from doing a thing. We're too busy, we're too broke, we're too tired. They are all legitimate concerns, so when an opportunity arises for us to do something that will really make us happy, we must take those opportunities. I am so glad

that I did, and so glad that I had the opportunity to see a lot of our beautiful country.

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