



# The Ultimate Family Road Trip



**THIS WASN'T JUST ANY ROAD TRIP.** Last year, the Bibas family of Rye, NY—**John**, **Yvonne**, **Cameron** (12), and **Ty** (10)—embarked on a true summer adventure when they explored the American West aboard a 25-foot RV. Sixteen days, 2,052 miles, and five national parks later, they discovered all the joys a four-wheel vacation can bring. Were there bumps in the road? A few, but they were no match for the thrilling hikes, cozy campfires, and sweet surprises along the way. Peek inside an excerpt from their travel journal to find out what life on these big rigs is really like.



DAY 1

*Mesa to Sedona, AZ*

We flew into Arizona and spent the night in Mesa. We'd arranged to pick up our RV at the Cruise America rental site at 1 p.m. the next day, but when we arrived, it still needed to be cleaned, so we had plenty of time to watch the video with RVing instructions. Once it was ready, we climbed on board and the kids were quick to check out all its nooks and crannies. They thought the little kitchen was cool, but they were most excited about the loft bed over the two front seats! First stop: Walmart, to get supplies. Then off to Sedona—we booked rooms at a hotel there to break up the long drive to our first park. We arrive at Enchantment Resort at 8:30 and park the RV.

*Yvonne*



DAY 2

*Sedona, AZ, to Zion National Park, UT*

After a morning of mountain biking (Yvonne), watercoloring (Cameron), and croquet (Ty and I), it was time to load into the RV and press on to Zion, where we planned to meet Yvonne's brother and his family. The roads were narrow, but by now I was comfortable behind the wheel. That wasn't the case the first hour driving this 25-foot box, and being on city streets in Mesa didn't help. I'm not exactly sure I endeared myself to my fellow drivers (unless short horn blasts are signs of approval?).

Today's drive was our first real glimpse of the West's incredible wide-open majesty. Up above there were crystal blue skies and giant fluffy clouds, but miles ahead we could see charcoal-gray clouds with rain pouring out of them! It was like we were storm chasing. Eventually our paths collided, and we had to slow down to manage the absolute deluge.

Finally, Zion! We arrived after dark—which had the added benefit of absolutely empty roads.

John



DAY 6

*Bryce Canyon National Park to Moab, UT*

Today was our canyon horseback-riding day, but we woke up to RAIN! Luckily it cleared up in time to ride and see the beautiful scenery. Hank, our authentic cowboy guide, was great and made it a very memorable way to end our Bryce stay.

En route to Moab, we stopped at these giant clay bluff-like outcroppings right by the road. There must have been six or seven in a row. Each one was 75 feet high, flat on top with room to roam, and valleys separating each plateau. We played Frisbee from plateau to plateau! One bad throw (and subsequent difficult retrieval) ended the game, and we were on our way.

We got to Moab, and it was hot as Hades! The Canyonlands RV Resort & Campground we booked was disappointing—just basically a parking lot off the main road! We ate and then shuffled off to bed under the roar of the absolutely necessary air-conditioning. (Dang, it was hot!)

John

DAY 3

*Zion National Park, UT*

I slept in the loft above the driver's seat and woke up late—and hungry. We tried to make pancakes on the RV stove, but they kept sticking to the pan.

Then we went hiking at The Narrows. I wore water shoes because we were literally hiking up the river in the water, which was really muddy and looked like chocolate. But it was fun to fight the current on the way up and then ride it on the way down! We went to dinner, and on the way home, Ty, my cousins, and I played the cup game around the RV table (it's fun, but really easy to lose the dice).

When we got to the campground, Ty cleaned the floor of the RV. (It was really dusty from going in and out!) I went to bed because I was sooo tired.

Cameron



DAY 7

*Dead Horse Point State Park, Moab, UT*

We drove the RV to Dead Horse Point State Park. When we got out, we went to the visitor center to look around. Mom and Dad signed us up for a junior ranger program; it was okay. We finished and got a plastic badge and took an oath to take care of the parks. Then we went back to the RV to change into clothes that can get wet and drove to Mill Creek. We hiked to waterfalls and jumped off rocks into the water! We also saw a hummingbird's nest.

Then we drove to Arches National Park to catch the sunset, and sat on a rock to eat our chicken-and-guacamole dinner. It was getting late, so we headed back to the campsite and went straight to bed.

Cameron

DAY 4

*Zion National Park to Bryce Canyon National Park, UT*

It was 6 A.M. when I woke up. I was as tired as Santa Claus after Christmas. We got ready for the hike to Angels Landing. It was six miles round-trip and really hard. I wasn't wearing my hiking shoes and there was some sand on the way up, so it was harder to climb, but luckily there's a chain bolted in the rock. I was really proud to make it to the top! Then we drove to Ruby's Inn RV Park & Campsite at Bryce Canyon and had a nice BBQ.

Ty

DAY 5

*Bryce Canyon National Park, UT*

Most campgrounds inside the national parks don't have a lot of facilities. The one we stayed at in Zion didn't have showers, only restrooms, and no water hookup (only electrical). Luckily there's a shower in the RV, but it's small and you can only heat up six gallons of water at a time without a hookup. Still, we managed to get four quick ones in.

Ruby's Inn, right outside Bryce Canyon, is the opposite! The campground has a pool, laundry facilities, showers, and full hookups. Overall, we're finding the RV spacious enough for our family of four. But there's not quite enough storage space for our stuff, so already we're leaving most of our clothes in our suitcases.

Today we took the shuttle into the park so we could leave our RV at the campground. We hiked the Navajo Loop/Queens Garden Trail, which takes you down into an amphitheater and along incredible red-rock formations. That night we built a fire right outside the RV, and we could still see the dying flames as we cozied up in bed for the night.

Yvonne



DAY 9

*Moab to Lake Powell, UT*

We decided to hike early in the morning to see the sunrise at Delicate Arch in Arches National Park. To be on time, we had to get up at 4 A.M.!!! The kids continued to sleep until we got there at 5. (There were trillions of stars.)

We had an hour hike to get to Delicate Arch, in the dark, with flashlights. This wasn't easy, because the path was rocky and we got a little lost. But we eventually made it on time for an amazing sunrise.

After a quick swim at the campground, we started our drive to Lake Powell. One disadvantage of driving in an RV is that every time you're on the move again you have to make sure everything is secure or stowed away or things will start flying around! So far, we've done a pretty good job with it despite the hassle of doing this even for quick runs to the grocery store.

We stopped at various points along the way, including a "small" detour to one on Ty's bucket list: the "Four Corners," where Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona come together. We finally got to Wahweap RV & Campground in Lake Powell around 6:30.

Yvonne

DAY 10

Lake Powell, AZ

We arrived at Lake Powell last night, just past dark, so it wasn't until morning that its majesty presented itself. Whoa! Beautiful landscape coupled with a gorgeous lake. The Utah/Arizona border is a five-minute walk from our campsite, and each state is in a different time zone!

Today we made use of this man-made wonder by renting a 19-foot motorboat with water skis and a giant inflatable lounge chair for "tubing." Pretty wild, no captain's license or experience necessary. It was a BLAST! We all skied and tubed up a storm (literally, one blew in for about 30 minutes) and mixed that with exploring the shorelines, finding cool places to jump off rocks and discovering a deserted beach, where we had a picnic lunch. We returned the boat right at closing time. Not a second sooner!

John



DAY 11

Lake Powell, AZ

I woke up at 7 A.M. not knowing that it was actually 6 A.M. Everyone rushed because we thought we were late. But when Mom went to my uncle's camper to see if they were ready, he told her it was an hour earlier. Phew!

We drove 30 minutes to Antelope Canyon. We had to wait in a long line but finally met our guide. It was a short walk to get down into the canyon, which was very narrow but cool. The guides helped us take fun pictures at the bottom. After, we were so hot we wanted to go on a boat again, but they were all rented out. So instead we went to a beach.

Then we went home. While Mom was cooking, the smoke detector went off again! This happens every time she cooks mushrooms on the stove.

Cameron



DAY 12

Lake Powell to Grand Canyon National Park, North Rim, AZ

In the morning, we went for a swim in the lake and a hike before driving to the Grand Canyon. When we got there, we had a bonfire, and my mom and uncle played guitar. Three women walked by and said, "Can we join you, because we have a bongo?" We let them join, and they were really funny. I played the bongos, too, and one of the women made cool animal sounds.

Ty

DAY 13

Grand Canyon, North Rim, AZ

After enduring temperatures of around 100°F in Lake Powell, it was refreshing to wake up with a chill in the air. North Rim Campground is so beautiful. I love it! Since we all liked it so much—and since the drive to the South Rim is three and a half hours—we were thinking of staying put. One of the women we met last night offered us one of their five sites (they were in a big group), so we canceled our South Rim reservation.

We went for a scenic drive to Cape Royal. We did a short, paved walk that bored us to pieces! We also met someone who told us the South Rim was much more impressive—which made us regret our hasty decision to cancel. When we went back to the registration office, luckily our spots were still available, so everyone was happy.

We hiked right along the Canyon's rim to the lodge for dinner and then decided to have a campfire and play guitar. One of the women from last night came over and asked if we wanted to join her group. They had a huge bonfire. The night ended with all of us listening and laughing to this crazy song about TOAST!!

Yvonne



What to Know Before You Go

We asked Kevin Broom, spokesman for GoRVing.com, and John and Yvonne Bibas for their been-there-done-that tips.

- **Budget for the extras.** A typical RV rental costs between \$80 and \$200 a night. But that's just the RV. You'll also need to pay for gas (the Bibas family spent \$521.28 on fuel during their trip), campground sites, activities, meals, and national park passes.
- **Book at least six months in advance.** The campsites in and around national parks are super popular—especially the nicer ones during peak season.
- **Some sites are more luxe than others.** Those in the national parks tend to be the ones without hookups or pools. If you're traveling with kids, you may want to find the camps right outside the parks with better facilities, like swimming pools, hot water, and laundry. (For a list of campsites, check out GoRVing.com, RoverPass.com, or KOA.com.)
- **Size matters.** If you're going to be covering long distances, a 25-foot RV may be more economical than a larger one because they tend to get better gas mileage. (Some campgrounds also restrict RV size.)
- **Don't get too ambitious.** Most of the fun of RVing is having outdoor adventures and reliving them around the campfire at night. So plan your days to limit driving to three to four hours, tops (not eight to ten). Yvonne also suggests you consider spending more time at each park, instead of moving around as much as they did.
- **Watch the how-to-drive video.** You don't get special training to drive an RV, so it's worth getting some intel beforehand—especially if you've never driven a vehicle bigger than an SUV. You might also do a lap in the parking lot before hitting the streets.
- **Check out your motor home carefully.** You pay for every scratch you make on the vehicle, so inspect it thoroughly for dings—and snap some shots for evidence.
- **Don't freak out if you forget some facts.** Your rental agent will show you the hookups and how the RV works. If you can't remember at the campsite, your neighbors or site personnel will be happy to give you pointers.

DAY 14

North Rim to South Rim, Grand Canyon, AZ

Up nice and early. Yvonne and I crept over to a small outcropping of rocks just outside the campsite. It jutted about 40 feet straight into the canyon, and was probably about 1,000 feet high. It was so gorgeous and peaceful, especially that early. Yvonne sketched the incredible landscape while I brewed coffee on a little camping stove I'd brought. It was heavenly!

Before we left for the South Rim, we went to empty our wastewater. We pulled up next to the RV of an older couple. The man was grumbling because his toilet-water tank had spilled all over the ground. He was trying to hose away the mess when he splashed the back of our RV. Yuck!

After that "pleasant" experience, we were off. Crazy, gorgeous vistas, and before we knew it we were at the South Rim. We made it in time for a pretty nice sunset and had a good look around, but overall it felt a bit too touristy and busy for us.

That night, the kids roasted marshmallows, but it was more about charring and burning than actually eating them. By bedtime, the whole campsite reeked of burnt sugar. Well, as they say, sweet dreams!

John

DAY 15

South Rim to Sedona, AZ

I was the last one to wake up, AGAIN. After breakfast, we were on the road again for two seconds. We did a hike called Bright Angel Trail, but it was just a regular trail with no scrambling the whole way down. Unfair!

We got back to the RV and drove a long way to Slide Rock State Park. We couldn't wait to get there because it was so hot in the back of the RV. The water was cold, but it was still super-duper fun sliding down the smooth slippery rocks. Then it was back to Enchantment Resort.

Cameron

DAY 16

Sedona to Mesa, AZ

When I woke up, Mom and Dad went mountain biking, so it was just me and my sister. First, we took a bubble bath at the hotel. After, we played croquet and saw a beautiful butterfly. Then we went to the pool for an hour!

After Mom and Dad showed up, we ate breakfast, had another swim, and then drove to return the RV. The man looked at the RV, but there were no scratches. There was another couple doing the same thing as us but with a baby. We wanted to help them, so we gave them stuff we didn't need.

The next morning we flew five hours to New York.

Ty

HOME

Rye, NY

Looking back on it, best of all was simply being on the road and spending so much time together outdoors. We knew to manage our expectations. In fact, it's often the unexpected things that make our family adventures most memorable. Luckily, on this journey, we got exactly what we hoped for: plenty of eye-widening, mind-broadening moments for the kids, with lots of fun and adventure and love and laughter all mixed in. After all, those are the things that make our little family go 'round.

Next stop? Norway...maybe in an RV!

Yvonne

