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# TRAVEL With Expat Grandson

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TRAVEL: Expat grandson's first encounter with American wildlife



BY SANDY BORNSTEIN

As I looked through a glass window at our newborn grandson in a Mumbai hospital nursery, I was uncertain how our long distance grandparent relationship would develop. While I realized that married adult children oftentimes live far from their parents' home, living almost 10,000 miles away seemed like a totally different scenario. FaceTime and Skype would allow us to see some of our grandson's milestones in real time, but these fleeting glimpses would never compare to frequent face-to-face visits. The hugs, kisses, and together time would be delegated to set times that were few and far between.

While a great distance or an expat scenario may minimize the number of occasions when grandparents can physically be with their children and grandchildren, it shouldn't affect the overall quality of the relationship. In fact, well-planned get-togethers will strengthen family ties, especially when concerted efforts are made to take advantage of the limited time together. A multigenerational vacation offers a more intense encounter than a couple of hours a few times a month.

After our first [intergenerational trip to Goa, India](#), I began planning our next vacation. Our son, daughter-in-law, and grandson were coming to the United States in the fall. They would be dividing their time between suburban Chicago to see the extended family, including great-grandparents, and an additional week in Colorado. Most of our time in Chicago would be with family and friends. However, I was put in charge of planning two half-day outings. I had to select age appropriate activities that would maintain our grandson's interest.

### *Our grandson was hooked on the aquarium experience and loved everything that moved in the tanks.*

With our grandson's limited attention span and a love of animals, I knew that the [Chicago's Shedd Aquarium](#) would be a big hit. He stood right against the clear partitions and was mesmerized. He pointed at his favorite fish and sea mammals, vocalized a few oohs and ahs, and clapped his hands. I didn't have to worry about a fussy grandchild. With an occasional sip of water and a small snack, he remained content for hours. Our grandson was hooked on the aquarium experience and loved everything that moved in the tanks.

After observing his reaction to the aquarium, we decided the next morning to drive north to [Lambs Farm in Libertyville](#). When our four sons were growing up in nearby Northbrook, we occasionally took them to this unique petting zoo. Back in the 1960s, W. Clement Stone donated a 70-acre farm to support Bob Terese and Corinne Owen's vision to have developmentally disabled employees run a small petting zoo. Decades later, we brought our grandson to this special place. This kid friendly attraction had remained a favorite destination for decades.

In the small farmyard, our grandson wandered among the goats and sheep and their droppings. He didn't hesitate to stroke the animals and was comfortable while we were in the pen. Standing near the gated areas, he could easily see llamas, horses, pigs, and miniature cattle. As I snapped photos of our happy grandson, my mind shifted back to when my own children were preschoolers. Time had marched ahead a few decades. What I once shared with my children, I was now experiencing with my grandson.

Back in Colorado, I opted to plan a short road trip to Estes Park/Rocky Mountain



*Lambs Farm in Libertyville was another big hit with grandson.*

National Park. By choosing a location that was within a couple of hours of our home, we could maximize our time at the destination and minimize our travel time. My son and daughter-in-law have always had America's state and national parks on their travel wish list. Now, they were eager to introduce their young son to a popular mountain destination.

Mother Nature didn't cooperate with our plans. The first snowfall of the season was predicted to coincide with our travel. We seriously considered cancelling our condo reservations and rebooking for a later date. We vacillated back and forth with our options and eventually chose to go ahead with our plans. If you're going to explore the outdoors, you need to be

prepared for inclement weather. However, when young children are part of the journey and especially one who lives in a tropical climate, the decision making process becomes more complicated.

I borrowed outerwear and warmer clothing from a slightly older grandson who lives in Denver. We purchased gym shoes at a nearby store. Our grandson's everyday sandals and lightweight outfits would not be appropriate for our wintery adventure.

Raindrops cascaded down on our windshield. By the time we reached the condo, the rain had turned into an icy mix of snow and rain. We were optimistically hoping that the front would pass soon so we took a short break for lunch. Despite our heartfelt wishes, the precipitation continued.

We stopped at the information booth near the park's entrance. The ranger told us that Trail Ridge Road had been closed and to avoid the backlog of people circling back. He also recommended shorter trails that would be easier to navigate in unpredictable weather conditions.

Our bundled grandson was placed in a carrier before we made our way to Horseshoe Park. We carefully walked along the muddy and rock filled Fall River path to a small waterfall. Despite the pelting sleet, our grandson was unperturbed by the cold or the wetness.

*After everyone has returned home, I create a Shutterfly album that revolves around a simple story that includes photo images.*

To take a break from trekking, we drove to an area where the elk clustered. In the September-October mating season, the bull elk serenaded the females in a few open fields just before dusk and dawn. Cars parked wherever it was permissible. Several

rangers controlled the traffic and the safety of the pedestrians. The multi-tone mating call resonated through the valley as cameras clicked away. Herds of elk congregated nearby. During our visits, our young grandson was able to locate the source of the sound and track the elk bearing enormous antlers.



*Herds of elk congregated nearby and the bull elk serenaded the females*

The next morning, we awoke to a fine layer of snow. We hiked on the trail that led to Nymph Lake, Dream Lake, and Emerald Lake. A supply of nutritional snacks made it possible to explore for an extended period of time. Shortly before dusk, we returned to historic Moraine Park to listen to, and watch, the elk. Once again, our grandson was engaged.

I accept the fact that it's impossible to make up for the lost time between our grandson's visits to the U.S. and our trips to Asia. To bridge this physical gap, I plan memorable, age appropriate excursions when we are together in the U.S. After everyone has returned home, I create a Shutterfly album that revolves around a simple story that includes photo images and a sentence or two on each page. These albums reinforce the wonderful memories that we shared and will hopefully become a treasured keepsake for decades to come.

**FEATURED IMAGE:** A day with our grandson and his parents at Chicago's Shedd Aquarium

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR – SANDY BORNSTEIN

**TRAVEL** [Intergenerational Travel Expat Grandson's 1st Encounter with American Wildlife](#)



Sandy has visited more than 40 countries and lived as an international teacher in Bangalore, India. Sandy's award-winning book, [May This Be the Best Year of Your Life](#), is a resource for people contemplating an expat lifestyle and living outside their comfort zone. [Sandy](#) writes about historical sites, Jewish culture and history, family, intergenerational, and active midlife adventures highlighting land and water experiences. You can follow Sandy on [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#).