

A Bus, A Bus, My Kingdom For A Bus

After our adventures on our own tour of Times Square, the time was near to get on the bus for our twilight tour. I had never gone on a guided tour of the area so I thought it would be kind of neat to sit back, ride around, and learn about the area. We got on top of the two-level bus in the back. There was a canopy that covered half of the bus that some of us had to be wary of or we could end up with a lump on the head. The vehicle took us from So-Ho to No-Ho (hehe), across the Brooklyn Bridge, to Greenwich Village, and pretty much all over. Some of the landmarks we were able to see included the Empire State Building, the Chrysler Building, the Washington Arch (which was constructed to commemorate the centennial of President Washington's inauguration). the Flatiron Building (which served as the facade for the Daily Bugle in the Spider-Man movies). The tour itself was awesome by starlight with the lights and atmosphere... even if it was below 40 degrees. I bundled up the little guy as best I could.

While the tour was enjoyable, the guide was not so enjoyable at times. Quite frequently, he would get carried away with his commentary and we would be at a new location when he was still lecturing about the previous one. He even quipped that the info would be beneficial if any of the passengers were ever going to be on Jeopardy!

Following the tour, we departed the bus. Then the real fun began! We had to find a Waterway bus to get us back to the Ferry to take us back across the Hudson to our Jersey hotel.

This turned into a comedy of errors. To quote Admiral Kirk, "We looked like a cadet review." Apparently, finding one of the buses required a bit of timely luck. We first had to find a location where we thought one would eventually arrive. So we asked police officers, hotel personnel, and

other people who looked like they would know. The most we got was some pointing and mumbling neither of which were extremely helpful. I thought about asking the Dark Knight himself who we saw earlier. Now if Spidey had been patrolling the area, I'm sure that he would have been more than happy to help us. He is from Queens after all.

We eventually got to the location for a bus arrival (I won't say that we were at one time a corner away from it). And we waited, and we waited, and we waited. Chris approached a horse-drawn carriage driver to see if he would take us to the pier (for not less than \$75). A taxi would have been just as bad. Finally, C decided that he would jump out in front of the first Waterway bus that came along. Finally, our hero came along. I think it was two hours after we began looking for one. So, another late night for all. Still no major meltdowns. I was really proud of the kids. However, this would not be the last encounter we would have with Waterway buses.

A Kangaroo And His Joey On The Sidewalks Of New York

I don't know if anyone has a picture of this or not, but it would be one for the ages. A grown man putting a baby carrier around another grown man (check you tube). I wish I could describe it but it was funny to just be part of. Holding my hands up in the air as we eventually got Beeber into the pouch. Sounds like the makings for a good B sci-fi movie. I was expecting to be weighed down considerably and be tired by night's end, but I barely noticed the extra baggage as we walked the sidewalks of Manhattan.

We signed up to take a night tour of part of the isle of Manhattan. Before the tour began, we took a tour of Times Square and the vicinity near the starting point of the tour. While walking, we ran into a real life celebrity. Morgan Freeman was standing in front of [Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum](#). Chris decided to get up close and personal for a photo op. After the picture, he admitted that the actor had a somewhat stiff personality. One would almost say... candle-like?

Close by was [Ripley's](#) house where a man swallowed a long air-filled balloon whole. He then began to attempt the old nail in the forehead trick. However, before he completed it, the performer informed us that the authorities were clearing the sidewalk so the show had to move inside but discount tickets would be waiting... moving on.

Anyone who knows anything about the sidewalks of New York knows about the street vendors, pan handlers, artists, musicians, and such out there trying to make a quick buck. We stopped at a caricature artist who drew a likeness of Goose. Next door, was a gentleman selling banners on which he would decoratively print names. Chris decided to get a Disney banner with (irony of ironies) Disney's name printed on it. The artist printed the name and said for a few dollars more, he would put it in a frame. Chris said "No frame." I think the man must have been a relative of the Soup Nazi but something was definitely lost in the translation because by the time he was finished, the banner was indeed inside a paper frame. The swindler's accent made me think of the Nazi also. "You said a no frame?" "Yes, I said no frame." Congratulations my friend! Wooly Sheep! He a sound like a long lost cousin of Morat. Sit Morat, sit! Good Morat.

Back In Room 911

So after a few hours of sleep (WHO SLEEPS ON A VACATION?), the troops went to breakfast in the hotel. Interesting experience... not because of something we did. After breakfast, we went to the pool before Big C had to go to work. The water was wonderful... the moment I stepped into the three feet section, it was heavenly warm. Usually, there is a need to get used to the temperature. C encouraged me to do a gold medal dive into an at most five foot pool...ok, sure. While I was doing a good job of keeping the three girls occupied, C&L took Beeber to meet the clients. It was quite fun... chasing Sammers as she made a lap of the entire pool while holding onto the edge. She still amazes me with her adventurous (if a bit mischievous) nature and very inquisitive mind.

After Sammie finally decided to come back to the dull shallow end, we played a game of Shark Attack (and guess who was the shark). We also became acquainted with a few young boys and their Canadian grandmother who have ties to our corner of the world. It seems that she had accompanied her son's family on a business trip to help take care of the children. Her son lives and works at a factory in the village of Hicksville where I just completed a run in *Meet Me in St. Louis*. Small world, indeed.

About this time, Dis noticed that Mom and Dad were nowhere to be found. So, it was time to make a dash back to the room to avoid a major melt down. By good fortune, Lis was in the room with Beeber so we went down to the riverfront to walk around and feed the seagulls and enjoy the Manhattan skyline. Being my first time to NYC since 9/11, it was a chilling experience to personally take in the empty space where once stood the World Trade Center towers. Yes, my room number was 911.

Kids In America

Upon accepting the invitation of again accepting the position of Manny, I was warned of problems that might present themselves on the 9-10 hour trip in the minivan. I am so happy that very few of these problems reared their ugly heads. Thank goodness for planned parental necessities. The three girls were equipped with their own bags of goodies for the long trip both to the East and back home again. We also had a large bag of DVD's to watch on the player in the car. I also brought a few kid-friendly Disney movies and Chitty Chitty Bang Bang (one of my favorite movies growing up; sad to say the transition to the stage did not go as well).

Basically, I only remember the occasional statements of "are we there yet" and the like. The extremely long voyage across Pennsylvania had to be broken up to prevent melt-downs and I'm sure the adults enjoyed our happening upon [Bellefonte](#). In the dark, it seemed to be deserted but as we approached downtown there were cars, and several restaurants, many of which were some variation of a pizza shop. Funny that it was close to State College, home of Penn State University. We decided to stop at Mama Lucretia's... pizza, pasta, cheesesteak all of which were very tasty (unless that was the hunger talking).

I must comment on the eating habits of one of the kids. "Goose" frequently made the comment that "Beeber" would have an order of paper with a side of plastic. The eight-month old will find anything to put in his mouth to indulge in: napkins, plastic bibs, straw wrappers, anything: typical. Just watch your plate; if he spies anything within reach, he will get it! After eating, most of the time a great majority of it ends up on the floor around him.

Back in the car for the remainder of the long jaunt, the kids all took naps. Taylhis also rested for a bit. I did my best to stay awake to ensure that C was still alert and going. Thank goodness we had some music going and comedy. Listening to some Miss Saigon and Assassins seemed to make the time go a bit faster. I also learned that one of the songs from Jekyll and Hyde was cut from the final show. I saw the musical in Toledo a few years ago and saw that Bring on the Men was missing. I thought perhaps touring companies might have cut the song, but it was taken out prior to the Broadway run.

Finally, after the less than an hour announcement turned into a bit longer, we arrived at our hotel around 1.30 AM. Constuction, police cars everywhere, drawbridge, lots of obstacles.... AH travelling!! I LOVE IT! Especially when I am not driving ☐

If I Could Talk To The Animals

I just returned from a marvelous trip with my wonderful friends to the NJ/NYC area. We also made a couple trips on the way and on the way back. Who would have thought I would be able to take two trips in less than a year's time? My role of "[Manny](#)" was once again very fun (even if there were a few slight moments in which I threatened to go into the back of the minivan, sit on any malefactors, and tickle them).

Day one for me started about 6:30 AM. I had to be at C&Ls in time to leave by 8 and wanted to stop at Wal-Mart on my way. I stood on the front porch and knocked for about 5 minutes and decided to ring the doorbell butr apparently did not push it

right since no one heard it. I did not want to get the dogs going, anyway. So... shortly after 8, we were on our way. First major stop... The Cleveland Metroparks Zoo. Not much there to comment upon. Not one of the best I have seen; however, the next stop was one of the best.

We stopped at the Akron Zoo. Much better than Cleveland's offering. The exhibits were great. Outside the restaurant where we had lunch, there was a very friendly tamarin who was very active and liked to show off. There was also a very loud Sumatran Tiger. Not sure, but I think it was feeding time. Right next to the tiger was the animal that was the basis for the creation of Winnie the Pooh: the Malayan Sun Bear. We went into the animal hospital where a very informative and interesting volunteer informed us that a baboon was going to be brought in for a check up and we would be able to watch the procedure IF they could get the animal in the examining room. Unfortunately, he did not get there before our group decided that it was time to continue and see as much of the zoo as possible. Interestingly, there was a group of high school students who reminded me of my senior physics class trip to Cedar Point for Physics Day. Very fun zoo. Added to the enjoyment was [taylhis'](#) commentary which was very fun. I'm sure she will have even more to say and pictures to share.

Then it was back in the bus (OH... wait... that is ANOTHER post or two later on) for the L000000NG trek across Pennsylvania.

000PS! Apparently, my memory failed me. The problematic baboon was at Cleveland and not Akron. Thanks, Taylhis.

Coming Home

Thursday morning, I learned a very valuable lesson... ALWAYS BOOK A RETURN FLIGHT LATER THAN 8:30AM. Not only could this provide a few more hours to enjoy the area, but you don't have to be up at 5:30 to be at the airport at a decent hour. So... here I got up before dawn even cracked. After my final preparations, I left the two oldest a note in their autograph books thanking them for a fun time. Taylor was awake Wednesday night; however, Sammie was sleeping hours before I went to bed. I also left a note of thanks to Chris and Lisa.

At the airport, I had a few kids to buy a souvenir for. I had already purchased for most at a discount store the other night and on my flight over in Detroit at the NBC kiosk. I just had to get [The Office](#) game on my way because I had a longer wait going then coming back. I also bought myself my traditional t-shirt (although when I arrived back in Detroit, I almost wish it were a sweatshirt).

As for the flight, each of them was great. There was barely any turbulence, and the view from the window was cool. I love to fly. Thursday morning, the ear-popping was the worst about 30 minutes away from touchdown in Detroit. And as a certain character in Blue, Red, and Yellow has noted on more than one occasion: "Statistically speaking, it is still the safest form of travel."

But, the reality of late-October in Ohio soon reared its ugly head. Gone was the brilliant sunshine and 80 degree temperatures of the Sunshine State and replaced by barely 50 degree temps with wind and rain. I got absolutely NO sympathy from those I mentioned this to.

Once again Chris, Lisa, Taylor, Sammie, Disney, and Baby Christopher thank you all for asking me along and for a great time. Hopefully next time is even better.

“You Are Now Approaching Walt Disney’s Carousel of Progress”

All good things must come to an end. Wednesday was my final full day in Orlando and it was just as fun as the first. As we prepared to make our way to the Magic Kingdom, Taylor and Sammie asked me to help gather more of our slimy, shell enclosed friends. However, I decided to stay inside and help with baby Christopher. While waiting, I happened upon the old 1960s Batman movie. Yes, between seasons of the camp television classic, Adam West and company made the transition to the big screen; complete with one of the most hilariously bad moments in all of cinema: the shark repellent bat spray. Ok... enough on the caped crusader and his cinematic adventures.

After visiting Tomorrowland (and the droning voice announcing our approach to [Mr. Disney’s vision](#) of the 21st century and its catch tune “There’s a Great, Big, Beautiful Tomorrow”), it was decided that Big Chris was not going to survive the rest of the day on his feet. So, while he and Lisa took the two youngest with them to get a wheelchair, Taylor, Sammie, and I went to Fantasyland to ride [Peter Pan’s Flight](#). This is a ride I actually remember from Disney Land which I visited when I was 4 years-old. I don’t think the ride stopped in California. However, once again I was right in the middle of a malfunction (not the wardrobe type, either).

Following the ride, I got behind the wheelchair and started pushing. Not a problem at all... not only did it keep Chris off that toe, it probably did me some good, too. It also aided in the lines at the rides. With the added bonus of baby swap for

those attractions that did not allow lap holding, wheelchair access allowed us to move quicker to the ride. Not that I had wished for this to happen.

From there, we visited each and every attraction I make it a point to visit every time I visit the park. I LOVE [The Haunted Mansion](#) and its doom buggies in Liberty Square. Also never to be missed are [Splash Mountain](#) featuring the characters of Uncle Remus (I find it really strange that they have an attraction devoted to the stories but will never again release *Song of the South* on video) and [Big Thunder Mountain Railroad](#) both of which are in Frontierland. While riding BTMR, poor Sammie lost her bracelet and when we made a quick peek to see if it fell off in our car, it was nowhere to be seen.

One of my other favorites is in Adventureland (N0000, not Jungle Cruise). Pirates of the Caribbean has been updated since my last visit. It now features the voices and likenesses of Johnny Depp as Captain Jack Sparrow and Geoffrey Rush as Barbossa. We rode Pirates more than once and surprise, surprise... it happened again. Yo, ho; yo, ho/A Pirate's life for me

At the end of the day, I was rewarded for pushing the wheelchair (not that the reward was necessary) with an all-you-can-eat lobster buffet. Of course forgetting that Chris is allergic to shellfish. On the way back to our home, his voice was getting scratchy. After we got in and made arrangements for me to get to the airport by 7, C&L went out for a few hours to get away by themselves. I was seriously going to make them if they had not. Taylor and I played some Uno since the other three were sound asleep. After Uno, T wrote out the lyrics to a song she learned with motions in music class. I always loved learning new little songs in music class. So, I will reproduce them as best I can:

The Long-Legged Sailor

Have you ever, ever, ever in your long-legged life

Met a long-legged sailor with a long-legged wife?

No, I never, never, never in my long-legged life

Met a long-legged sailor with a long-legged wife.

For simplicity's sake I will supply the following: in each successive verse, you replace long-legged with short-legged, knock-kneed, bow-legged, and cross-legged, respectively. Did I remember all the verses, Dopey?

When C&L got back, the four of us played a final game of Uno then it was time to say goodbye to the last one's standing before going to bed.

Morat And The A Man Of Magic AND MORE PIZZA

Hello every people. My next night in Flor-ida was a spent in a [downside up](#) building. I a look up and I see the stairs on the ceiling. Wooly Sheep. It was a very strange building, I never seen anything a like that. We a go to the downside up building to see the magic man on stage. He was a very strange man. Little girl person, Taylor was a called on to the stage to do a magic trick. A few minutes later, Morat was a called up. Magic man thought Morat say Borat. I tell him my name is a MORAT Notboratnichkov from Liswathistan. Magic man say he a call me Timmy. T and I tie the hands of magic man together and pull hard on the a rope. I a think I pull little too hard because I pull the other end right out of T's hands. Some people in audience say Morat was a very funny. But they were

a three sheep to a the wind. A little bit later, Chris was a called to the a stage to do a magic trick. I a also see a weird man person who was a on stage and a showed a huge a stomach and a large a crack. Not a only did we a see the magic, we also a eat the pizza pie. WOOLY SHEEEP, more a pizza. I think we all were a sick of pizza. NO MORE A PIZZA PIE!!!! I a like a pizza pie but I a not like to so much so a many times. three nights in a row is a TOO MUCH!!! But, Morat enjoy the a magic man, he was a very funny.

The Amazing, Hulk-Outing, Drenching Adventure

I must say that the worst part of the Universal was the transition from the two parks. There was a huge mob of people resembling a herd of cattle waiting to be lead through the gate. The problem being... there were only 2 people taking tickets and we picked the SLOOOOOOOOW line. But we finally made it with plenty of time to enjoy what Islands of Adventure had to offer... LOTS.

Not only were there rides drawing from Dr. Seuss, cartoons from days gone by (Popeye and Dudley-Do-Right on which I will elaborate further), but also Marvel Superheros. While C & L went The TRUELY AMAZING SPIDER-MAN ride, I waited with the kids to take my turn (thank heaven for baby swap). While waiting a parade of heroes riding motorized bikes came zooming in. I saw Captain America, Wolverine (in the traditional yellow and blue comic outfit), and Spidey himself. This was cool not only to see them, but it also made little Dis stop and look... this was before Lis introduced me to the secret weapon.

I had a very hard time figuring out which my favorite ride was: definitely a toss up. [The Amazing Spider-Man](#) is a 3-D marvel that puts you right in the middle of a comic-book starring everyone's favorite web-slinging neighborhood do-gooder as he battles some of his most sinister villains: Hobgoblin, Hydro Man (not REAALY familiar with him), Electro, and Spidey's arch-nemesis, Dr. Otto Octavius.

What theme park visit is complete with out some wet fun. The first was definitely the worst. You have read the disclaimer: YOU WILL GET WET ON THIS RIDE. On [Popeye and Blutto's Bilge-Rat Barges](#), you not only get wet, if you sit in the wrong spot... guess who... you may not neet to shower for a day.

The second water soaker featured the melodramatic adventures of Dudley-Do-Right on Ripsaw Falls. Along the way the villainous Snidely Whiplash once again had the virtuous Nell tied to the tracks. Nowhere near as drenching as P&B's, but good. Not so good for Chris who was suffering from an in-grown toenail. As I was entering the log I heard a loud howl from behind me. I had stepped on his toe. OMG... THE PAIN!!!! More on that later, but I KNOW how he felt. I felt awful.

The last thrill was one we had by-passed and said we would do if we had time remaining. Not only am I glad that we made it just to ride, it helped in the drying process. [The Hulk](#) is a good old-fashioned green steel monster with corkscrews, loops, tunnels, and blinding smoke. While Chris took the girls to Seuss land, Lisa and I conquered the monster twice... fast pass is great. What a rush and it never stopped. totally awesome.

Being led by people who know the park is a great way to see the best and by-pass the rest.

The Whole Universe at Your Feet

Following Tuesday's adventures, our band went to a park I have never been to (unless you count California's version of 30 years ago... ITHASN'T BEEN THAT LONG). All I can say is OH, MY GOODNESS. Universal Studios Florida features 2 worlds and something for everyone that is even cheaper than going to Disney (but I love Disney, too). The first ride we caught was [Jimmy Newtron's Nicktoon Blast](#). If you have young kids who enjoy watching the cartoon characters on Nickelodeon this is a must stop area. Not only was the ride fun but in the shop following the ride, I saw Spongebob Squarepants. Outside (not Nicktoon characters but still...) we saw Scooby-Doo, Shaggy, and the Mystery Machine. Unfortunately, they were on their way out before we could get a photo.

Next ride was one that has been hyped since I was invited to go in late August-early September. Let me tell you, if you enjoy the thrill of a roller coaster and the chills of a haunted house... you must ride [Revenge of the Mummy](#). The only problem being... and this is not the last time it happened... I was the jinx who caused the coaster to malfunction. I'm not sure which ride started it off... maybe [taylhis](#) will be able to remind me... but it seemed that if there was a chance that a ride would stop, there I was in the middle. This was even more memorable because Chris and I were trapped in the hot room. But we eventually came to the ride's climax. It is a doozy.

The third highlight (not that I did not love ALL OF THE ATTRACTIONS... I could spend hours elaborating), was based on one of my favorite animated series. The entire area surrounding the [Simpson's Ride](#) is devoted to Springfield. Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa... don't think we saw Maggie were all there. There is also a Quik-E-Mart featuring Squishees that

we had to have. We have been trying to figure out in which episode of the series Mr. Burns proclaims that his lunch consists of "One boullion cube." Anyone? But the simulated roller coaster is just a blast too. It actually creates the sensation (however slight) of being on a coaster while being immersed in an animated adventure with the cast. Animated thrill rides have come along way since even Star Tours was introduced at the now named Hollywood Studios at Disney World.