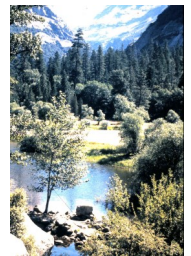


## AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL

I've always want to see more of the United States and especially our National Parks. There are many more than I expected and I discovered that there are unending monuments, memorials, parks and historic sites in almost every city and state in America. Washington D.C. alone has enough to fill a life's worth of vacation time. There are just too many to see but without having been to them all, I know that most are surely worth seeing and preserving for the next generation. I managed to visit many through my travels as a flight attendant for 38 years. But most of my visits were a long time ago. There are highlights I still remember and wonderful stories to tell of each place. Like Yosemite, perhaps my all time favorite place on earth. We used to go there every year when Aaron was young. We would tent and stay right in the valley. Our days were for hiking, or rafting down the river, or watching the kids jump off the bridge. Always in the background was the awe inspiring granite rock formations that demand respect and challenge many to climb. I actually did climb Half Dome, TWICE. Guess I was in my late 40's the first time....and scared to death of the last 900 feet....straight up with only ropes as hand rails. Not that the rest of the climb was easy. Expert climbers take 6-7 hours to make a round trip of it. The second time was on my 50th birthday trip. Aaron literally ran most of way up and all the way down. Good to be young!!! We older folks did quite well ourselves and made it home in time for dinner. Fireside stories always included who saw a bear that day. Everyone saw one "come right into camp" or "breaking into the parked cars last night". But not me, even sleeping outside by the river, didn't give me the opportunity to have a bear encounter. Guess it's time to go back and try again. But no matter how many times I've been there, I felt the peace and grandeur of nature at it's best.



Again another one of my favorite national parks, is Yellowstone. This unique park has something for everyone. Yellowstone is a vast landscape filled with wild animals, natural wonders of thermal activity and four seasons of distinct variety. I went there in the snow covered freeze of a winter season. I went with two other ladies and we cross country skied from one adventure to another. This is a hard time of year



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form most of the animals there. They often are starved for food and just stand still for lack of energy to move any further. We glided on our skies right past huge buffaloes and could see the look of defeat in their eyes. We saw wolves darting between ghost-like trees that were heavy with snow formations. We saw bear tracks and signs warned of avalanches. We got lost in an unending expanse of white and when weather took a turn for the worse, we were quickly aware at how a fun situation could easily become a dangerous one. But the best thing I remember about Yellowstone was when we saw the geysers. Thousands of gallons of boiling water

forced upward into the freezing air causing magic to happen. The hot water instantly freezes and tiny particles explode in all directions. The sunshine turns millions of these specks into falling prisms of color. The display is a brilliant wonder to see— only for those who dare the freezing winters. Still makes me smile. You can guess the spring and summer are when most visit. That's when the animals have their babies and a lot can be seen while wandering on a daily stroll. Of course that's the time when it's the most busy too! And I want to see more of all our parks. America is indeed a land of purple mountains, spacious skies and amber waves of grain. Love it. Love it.