

From Hikes to Bleachers

Pathways – Jennifer Wright

“Adopt the pace of nature. Her secret is patience.” Ralph Waldo Emerson

I am honored to be part of the Old Pueblo Group and share a bit of my life through this article. The personal insight articles are one of the many reasons I was drawn to this team and a section of our website I always direct people to. Each day, we have an opportunity to build meaningful connections and relationships by listening and being present. Clients share memories and worries that matter most to them. The people are what I love most in my career, and I don't take the relationships for granted.

For those I have had the pleasure of meeting throughout my life know I tend to follow this quote by Emerson as a life philosophy. Very few things tend to get me worked up and when I start to feel overwhelmed by life I'll go outside and find something beautiful. We should all take time to breathe in the fresh air, look at the stars, spot a lizard doing push-ups, the peaceful moments are endless. Perhaps the 110-degree Arizona afternoons aren't the most fun time to find beauty, but majority of the year is perfect and one of the many reasons, I have stayed in the Southwest for over 18 years now.

My love for the outdoors started young and I am thankful to my family for building that foundation. I wanted to share some of my more memorable outdoor experiences that have helped shape me with the hope you'll know me a little bit better and maybe even add a place to visit.

Indiana – more than the average corn field

It takes time to appreciate your home state. Like most kids, I struggled with finding my place and never was great in being fully present. I started working part-time when I was 14 fully ready to be an adult and thought I knew best on most things. Often, I was reminded from my mom to enjoy being young there would be plenty of time to pay bills later. Looking back on my hometown of Cicero, Indiana, I was fortunate even if I didn't realize it to live in a small community. Growing up we didn't have the choice to stay inside we were told to go outside, and I am grateful. We would run around the neighborhood playing flashlight tag, walk to the gas station so my best friend could get her giant pickle and ride our bikes over the bridge to the community pool where only occasionally we would get attacked by the geese. There were big fourth of July celebrations with vendors and huge fireworks display over the lake. It was hard to stay out of trouble because everyone knew everything and of course people talk in a small town.

Indiana has beautiful state parks (i.e., Shades, Turkey Run, Mounds) with giant shade trees that turn into magic in the fall. As a family we would camp and have reunions at the state parks. My love for trails started here. So many amazing memories were made during these trips. My dad and I were usually paired up in the canoe together which of course I loved because he did most of the work. We would cool off in the river (Indiana's rivers always had water in them unlike the Rio Grande through El Paso, not so grand) and play games by lanterns at the campsite. We did mostly car camping where it is easy to cook fantastic meals, unless of course you have a racoon break into the car and steal an entire loaf of bread. I tried to warn my dad about the window being opened but he had doubts they were that smart. Dad had some choice words to the sneaky bandit, but we all had a laugh and I continue to smile every time it comes up.

Of course, there are a couple qualities of Indiana that I don't love but somehow my parents managed to create fond memories of those traits as well. First, the endless fields and flat land in Indiana. My grandparents' house was surrounded by cornfields. One of my best memories is playing capture the flag with extended family in the corn field. We had the chance for one quick peak from the tree in my grandparents' yard before being enclosed in tall corn stalks trying to remember which direction to go and hoping not to get caught. Second trait is the winters! I don't miss the winters by any stretch of the imagination. I only loved the fantastic snow forts and snow animals my dad would make. The perfect winter for me lasts only a couple hours just enough time to build a snow man, which is why I love Tucson.

New Mexico and Texas – The “World” after College

After college I decided to see the world and ended up in Las Cruces, New Mexico and El Paso, Texas. Yes, I know perhaps not the most popular world destination. However, it became home for 12 years, and I love pieces of the

community. It was here that I began my career at Morgan Stanley and met amazing colleagues who became work partners and dear friends. I had "A" mountain down the street from my apartment in Las Cruces which I loved to bring friends and family to for hikes when they visited. It was not a terrible hike and one that had such incredible views of the city. These hikes helped get me stronger for a new level of camping ... backpacking.

I was fortunate to make friendships with people that grew up in Pinos Altos (small town by Silver City) and knew the Gila Wilderness well. I took a few backpacking trips into the Gila which I would absolutely recommend. There are multiple trail types available from beginner to advance. My friends from the area led a group of us on a trail of about six miles that ended by a natural hot spring. I couldn't tell you how we got there, so many river crossings. This was a rare moment where all you could do was be grateful for the chance to be surrounded by such beauty.

Another place I was able to experience is Carlsbad Caverns. I know folks in Arizona are fortunate enough to have Kartchner Caverns close but take the trip to New Mexico you will not be disappointed. The size of the cave is perfect for those that don't love tight places and the incredible size and beauty of the stalactites (hold tight to the ceiling) and stalagmites (grow mighty from the ground) should not be missed. On the way there you can stop at the White Sands National Park which is the world's largest gypsum sand dune field. Bring a sled, the dunes are incredible.

Arizona – Home

Before Arizona became home in 2017, I already loved the state. We came to Tucson often to visit family and it was the Saguaro cacti that I loved most in the desert. Fun fact, saguaros are between 50 and 70 years old before they grow an arm... the stories they could share. The different landscapes of Arizona are incredible and of course it's home to the Grand Canyon. It was 13 years ago that I was able to take a trip to Havasu Falls with my



husband and his brothers. This hike requires permits but is absolutely worth it. The waterfalls, tremendous caverns, and views were incredible. I will be the first to admit this is an intense hike and one that you should go into really prepared. I thought my previous hiking experience would be enough to carry me through but alas my brother-in-law ended up carrying my pack out at the switchbacks. In my defense, we hiked at least 30 miles total in the three days. My husband was also forced to stay behind with me as the sun crept higher and higher in the sky. There was no turning back we were in it for the long haul.

My trips and hikes have slowed as my kids get older and more active in sports. Our occasional trips are centered around team roping jackpots or baseball tournaments. I wouldn't have it any other way. Some of the towns remind me of my hometown particularly Williams, Arizona. Many times, I have been reminded to enjoy this stage with my kids as it goes by too quickly. My parents set an incredible example of being fully present and left incredible childhood memories. I plan on doing the same. For now, I will be on the side-line cheering my kids on through every strike out, in field homerun, base hit and out. The lessons they are learning are important and I wouldn't change anything. The sun is still on my face and the sunsets are just as incredible.

I have been fortunate to experience great adventures and places. Again, one of my highlights is listening to clients share memories of places visited. In fact, I have added quite a few places to my travel list by information shared. Perhaps my article will inspire a place for your travel list.

Being present matters. Create memories. It's the little things that can have a lasting impression.

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