A Cross-Country Adventure

A number of years ago my husband, two sons (aged 7 and 9), and I had the opportunity to **take a 5 week camping trip to the National Parks in the Wild West.**
It was an amazing experience. We had a pop up trailer that I called our Ship of the Highways. We left Vermont, spent about a week driving west, camping as we went, then we made our way from Park to Park, and finally headed back east for another marathon drive/camp back to Vermont. It was a
terrific way to spend time together as a family
, and I highly recommend it.

At every Park there were Junior Ranger programs. The kids learned to chisel granite at Mt. Rushmore. They learned about the cycle of a geyser at Yellowstone. At Grand Teton National Park they learned about the small critters that inhabit the wild. Mesa Verde National Park was an opportunity to learn about the Anasasi. We **hiked, swam, went rafting, rode horses, and met people from across the United States and the world.**
We cooked out over a camp fire, used the small stove in the camper, and towed our home behind our car. We learned that when you drive across the desert towing a camper and your car starts to overheat, the thing to do is to turn the heater on full blast. Whew! We watched thunderstorms come and go across the plains. We saw a Hawaii license plate pass an Alaska license plate in Wyoming. We saw bears, moose, elks, deer, buffalo and more.

The list goes on and on. **It was a summer of shared experiences, no phones ringing, no appointments to keep, no work** (we had both saved vacation time to make this possible), no baseball games for the kids, no friends (other than those we made along the way), no homework. There was
time to talk, to read, to sleep, to eat, and to explore.

As I wind up this reflection on traveling I have two recommendations I would make to any family:

First I want to recommend the National Park System in our vast country. The trip west was only one of many we took as the boys grew up. We also went to Maine, Florida, Massachusetts, Washington D.C., and Maryland. (Also, many states have wonderful park systems with camping facilities, ranger programs, swimming, and boating available.)

Second I want to recommend camping or traveling as a family. As the kids grew older the trips got more ambitious, but even when they were teens we took opportunities to travel together. **You get to know your kids again while you get to know your country**
and beyond. The memories last forever.

Happy Trails!