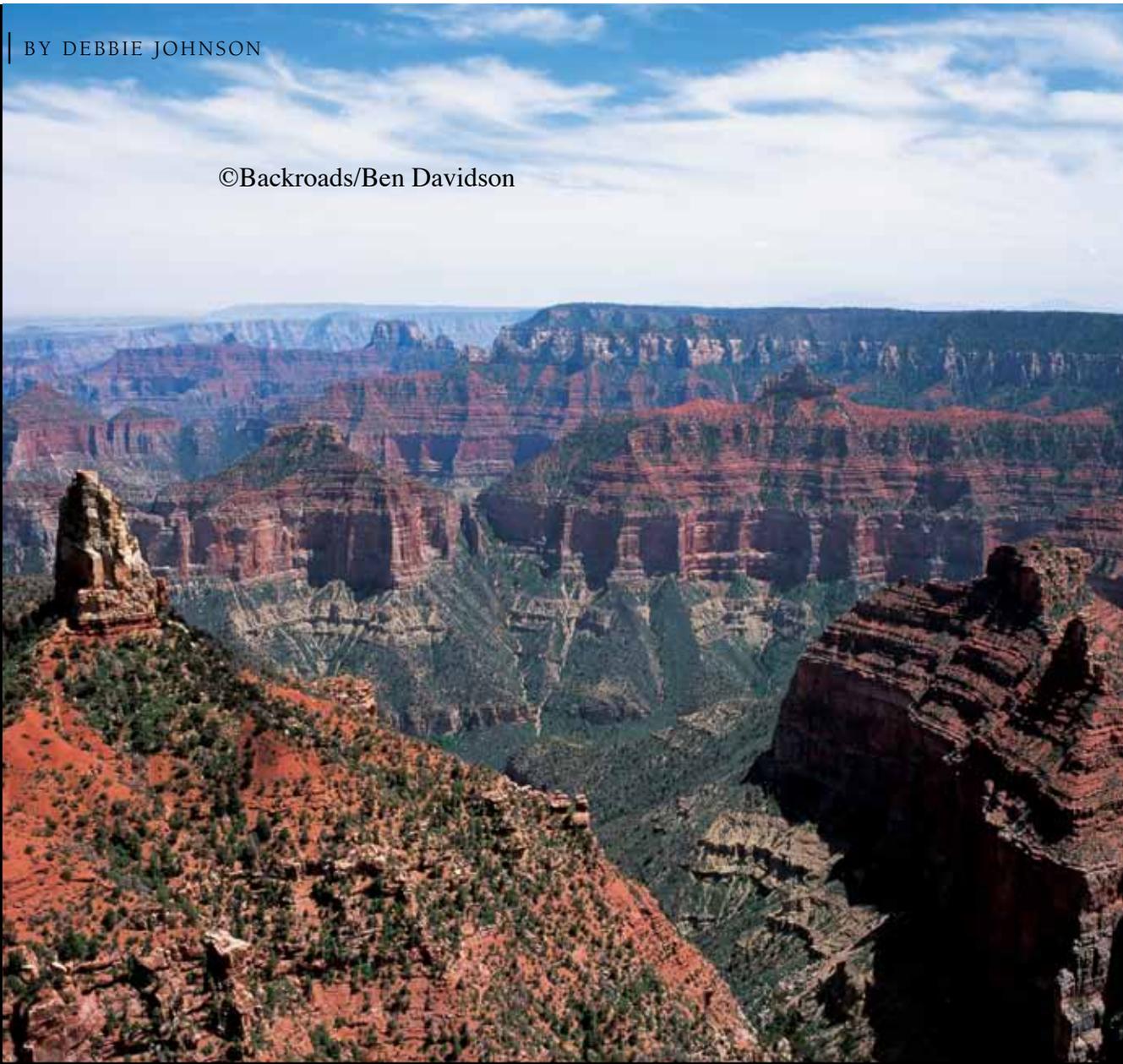


TRAVEL LOG | BY DEBBIE JOHNSON

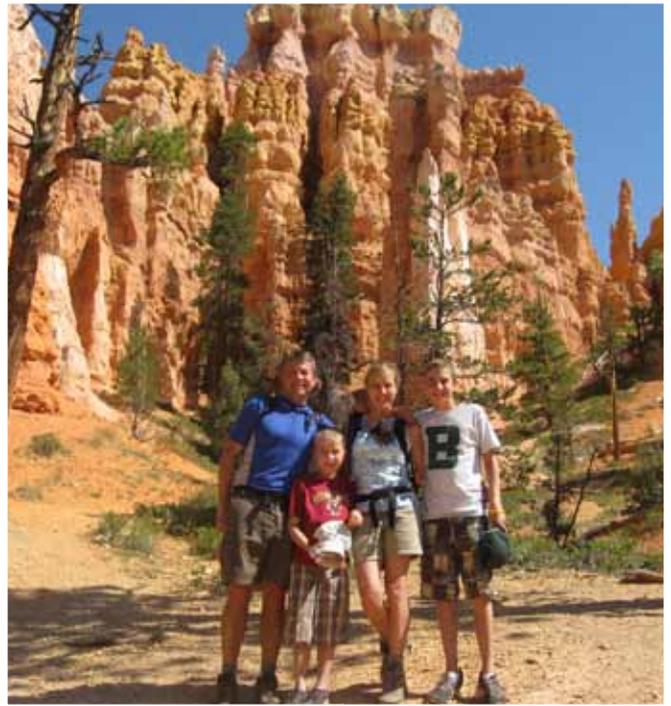
Photos clockwise from left to right:

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# what I did on my SUMMER VACATION

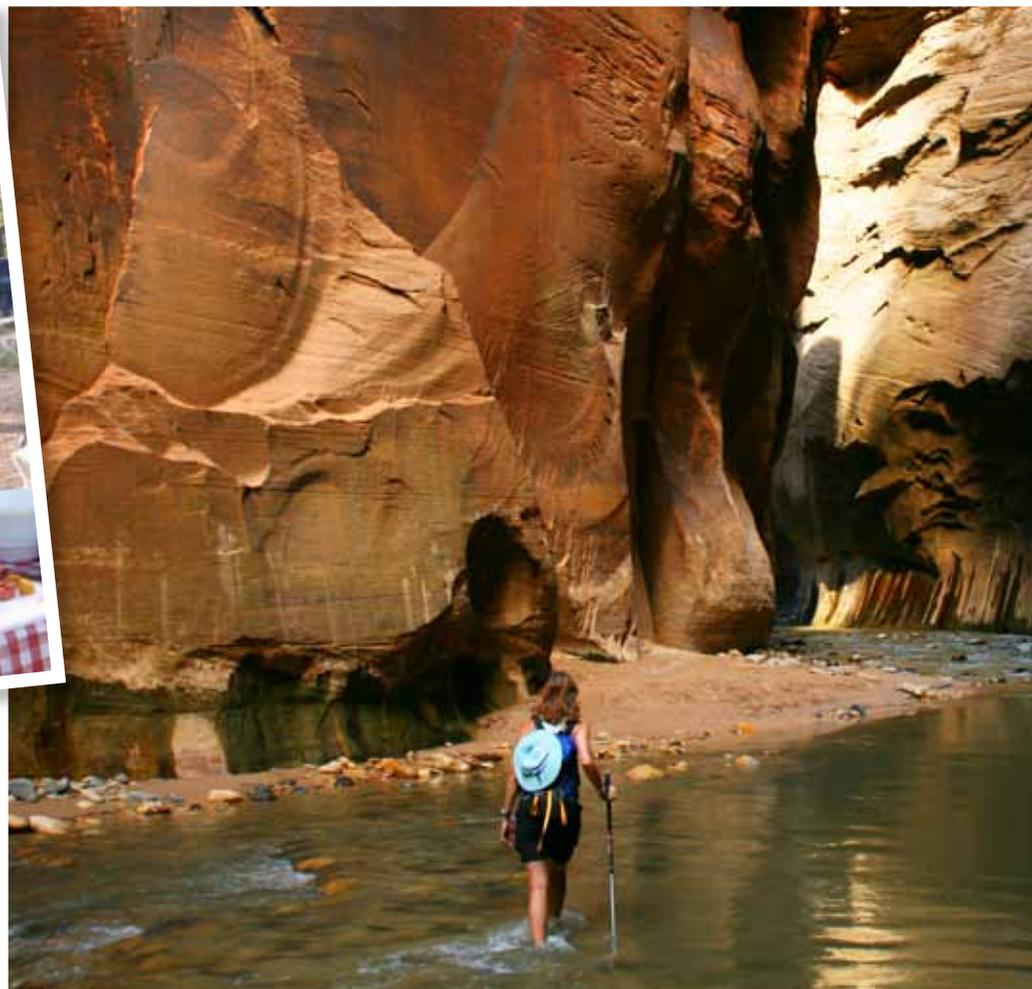
**LET BACKROADS DO THE  
WORK FOR YOU**

**H**eading out west to marvel and experience America's national parks has always been on the top of many families' vacation lists. But how you do it tends to be a challenge. Planning alone can be a major stumbling block and can take countless hours of research before you even leave home. ▶



Don't go here

photo above from Debbie/Backroads,



### TOO MANY DECISIONS

Do you drive? Well, we've all seen National Lampoon's *Vacation!* Do you fly and rent a camper? Do you camp? Or, do you consider El Cheapo Motel to be camping? Can you hike, bike, river raft, horseback, or mule ride? Yes, you can, but where do you keep your stuff and how do you get back to it after a long ride down river? How much stuff do you need to bring, and will it fit in the camper or the tent? What will the airlines charge to lug it all with you? How much will it cost to get out of your suit and suited up with all the needed gear? ARGH.

Let me put your mind at ease and explain how I was able to send a family to the Grand Canyon, Bryce, and Zion National Parks without exhausting them before they had even departed. After consulting with them as to their needs and desires for their vacation, I recommended that they take a Multi-Sport Deluxe Camping Family Trip led by the world's number-one active travel company, Backroads.

### VACATION WITHOUT THE HEADACHE

Off they went with just a bag each of cloth-

ing and a few incidentals! Their trip to the local outfitter's store did not break the bank. Backroads provided the necessary gear. On their seven-day trip they hiked, biked, and camped. Their bikes (provided for all ages and sizes) were reserved in advance and tuned up each night by their trip leaders, who led their small group of 16 throughout the trip. Their hikes, offering varying trails based on fitness and age levels, were arranged so that they would go from point A to point B and shuttle to the campground, making for longer hikes and less redundancy. Their tents had already been pitched prior to their arrival and furnished with comfortable sleeping arrangements. Freshly made, healthy, and delicious food was already being prepared, leaving plenty of leisure time in the evenings to laugh and share stories around the campfire while their trip leaders made preparations for the next day.

### FIRSTHAND FEEDBACK

Upon their return I was able to spend some time with my clients to get their feedback, which I will share with you.

*DJ: Did you find the information, which included pre-trip conditioning tips, suggested reading, and packing lists, provided before you left to be helpful?*

Yes. Backroads does a great job in giving you all the information you need to prepare for your trip. The brochure they sent us had a complete packing list, which took all the guesswork out of preparing. It also gave great detail of our day-to-day itinerary. We read that brochure cover to cover several times. Every time we read it our excitement grew.

*DJ: Were you happy with your trip leaders? Did you feel that they knew the area well and interacted well with you and your family? Were they cognizant of your needs and expectations?*

I can't say enough about our trip leaders. They were amazing. They seemed to know our needs sometimes before we did. They went above and beyond to make our experience very special. One example of this is at the top of a long, daunting hike in Zion, our leaders came around the corner with platters of fresh berries and gourmet chocolate! We were blown away by this.



## SOME GREAT BACKROADS TRAVEL GETAWAYS

Biking Trips

Family Trips

Multisport Trips

Deluxe Camping Trips

Walking Trips

Premiere Inn Trips



They each had the unique ability to really relate very well to both adults and children. Their knowledge of the area and genuine excitement to show it to us made the trip unforgettable.

DJ: *What sort of activities did you take part in? Was the activity level right for your family? Was there flexibility within these activities?*

Each evening the leaders would do a “Chalk Talk” after dinner in which they would write down the next day’s agenda on a chalkboard and discuss it with everyone. There was always a hike or a bike ride in the morning and then again after lunch. One of those hikes or rides would be just for the adults while the kids did a different activity. For example, one day at the Grand Canyon the adults hiked into the canyon while the kids explored the canyon on mules. We all met up for lunch and then did a ridge hike all together. It was a perfect balance of time as a family and time as a couple. All activities were optional and often there were shorter versions available for those ready to head back to camp and relax. ▶

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DJ: What was your favorite hike or bike ride?

We loved the Peek-A-Boo hike in Bryce. Around every corner was a picture-worthy sight. Angel's Landing in Zion was like no other hike we've ever done. It was exhilarating. The bike ride on the last day through Zion was stunning. I was taking pictures as I was riding!

DJ: What made the trip special?

Certainly the amazing sights we enjoyed while hiking and biking through the canyons made it beyond special. The memories we made are ones we'll treasure forever. I also have to mention the food! We were amazed by the delicious meals the cook created. We had salmon, a Thai night, a Mexican night, cakes, and beautiful salads, all cooked right at the campsite.

DJ: Did your children interact with others?

They immediately bonded to the other children. They moved around like a nine-cell amoeba! We were so fortunate to have three great families to share this experience with. Everyone really enjoyed one another's company.

DJ: Which trip would you consider taking next?

We loved asking the leaders about the other trips they have worked. They all sound wonderful. Costa Rica and New Zealand stand out. Their inn trip to Martha's Vineyard sounds great, too. Even though we've been before and know the area well, it would be so great to have Backroads plan all of the inn and restaurant reservations as well as the biking routes. I think any trip Backroads does would be outstanding.

If you would like to share a similar experience, please don't hesitate to contact me. My services and expertise are not limited just a Backroads trip but include your pre- and post-arrangements and tailoring your trip to your needs and desires. A \$100 gift certificate to be applied to your next active trip awaits you! 🎁

Debbie Johnson has been in the travel business for 25 years. She works as a travel consultant and provides personalized service and expertise in vacation planning.