

To Wisconsin

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Wed Aug 19

Leave Kirkland 6:15 am on a beautiful summer morning. Cle Elum for groceries. 63° at 8:30 am.

Hiway 26 east from Vantage to Washtucna. Stop for early lunch at 11 at Sunflower Park at the Washtucna turnoff. The park was closed for Covid but we sat at the shaded picnic table anyway. Tuna salad on burger buns, hummus & veggies, homemade coleslaw. 84°.

Hiway 260 south to 261, along the blue snake river, past fields of wheat stubble, black basalt outcroppings, and a straw pulp plant. Scenic windy road through rolling hills. Hiway 12 E to Clarkston, through Pomeroy, with its cute old downtown, over a 2800' pass, and ~~into~~ across the river into Clarkston, Idaho, at 1 pm. 95°.

Hiway 12 E continues along the Clearwater River, through pine forest, rounded tawny hills climbing to either side. Many loaded logging trucks but no clearcuts visible. Parking pullouts with groups of people swimming, floating on rafts, or sliding down sand hills on anchored plastic sheets into the river.

Arrive at Wild Goose FS campground about 3:30. Beautiful spot on the river, with thick white sand and a handful of people swimming. \$14 (7 with pass). Cooler here though still warm.

Highway 12 Idaho

We're at about 1300'. Eggs & beans for dinner. The sun a hazy orange glow approaching the horizon a little after 6:30. Still quite warm & muggy. Crashed by 7:30 or 8 & slept til almost 6! Air cooled down & sleep temp was great. No biting insects here! A few bees only. Many a peep from others in camp. (Country radio guy turned off the tunes early.)
 Great CG, sites a bit sloped.

Thurs Aug 20

Up at 5:50. Lovely cool morning. On the road at 6:30. ouzels cavorting in the river.

Lowell ID has nice cabins on the Lochsa River. Wilderness Gate CG, a bit farther east, is at 2000 feet, and would probably be a bit cooler at night (for future reference. Wisps of cloud in the treetops, the clouds in the sky. There are many campgrounds & parking areas on hiway 12.

Cross into Montana at 5200' Lolo Pass, & into mountain time zone. Outcroppings of rock in piles of rounds, like cow pies or soft serve ice cream without the peak. 76° in the town of Lolo at 11 am.

The town of Rock Creek has a Testicle Festival whose motto is "Have a Ball."

Stop for lunch at a rest area on I-90. The sky is hazy. It looks like dust or smoke.

We won't have time for much (or any) sightseeing this time.

I'm sleepy today & my head feels heavy. Maybe I'm not adjusted to the driving yet, or maybe I'm just getting old!

Stopped for gas in Livingston & the ground was wet with puddles. Farther down the road we drove through a few squalls.

Dinner at a rest area in Hardin MT. Pesto chicken with potatoes. 90° at 6pm. Drove another two hours to a "parking area" near Buffalo WY.

The scenery today has been a bit drab. Hazy dust-colored sky, scrubby light brown hills & fields, the view obscured by the haze. No antelope.

I-90 east of Hardin is quiet & empty with few cars or towns. Stop for the night just after dark, at 8:30. It's quieter here than a rest area - no trucks idling - and dark - no light poles. No bugs.

Heavy wind in the night shook the van. We both woke up and wondered if the van could tip over!

Fri Aug 21

59° at 6:15. Three sage grouse feeding on grass seed. Grant saw a few stars last night but it's hazy again today. The sun is red. Stopped for gas and found out there's a large fire in Sheridan County.

Finally saw a few antelope! Lots of yellow balsam root blooming. One hour detour to Devil's Tower - yay. Such a spiritually charged place. Watched prairie dogs for a while. Hiked the 1.3 mile paved Devil's Tower Loop trail. Saw three groups of climbers halfway up. Lots of people at 9:30.

The walk takes about an hour. 75°. On the way out there was a long line to get in to the park. Felt so good to walk!

Hiway 14 to 85. ~~Green Valley~~ (The valley is lush with green hay. Lunch parked in the shade of a tree next to the Four Corners motel & post office. A woman came out to see if we needed anything and said it was fine to park there.

Hiway 16 to Custer State Park. \$20 entrance fee. Large herd of bison at west entrance to wildlife loop. Traffic jam. Lots of babies. The loop is 18 miles. Critters mostly snoozing at 1:30 pm. Only other traffic jam was people feeding the wild horses. We did see a few antelope. The park is surprisingly green in mid-

August. Saw safari-style jeeps run by a company called Buffalo.

North to I-90 at Rapid City. 91° at 4 pm. 42 miles of billboards for Wail Drug.

Dinner at rest area near milepost 220.

93° , breezy. Shady table. Biting flies (Picaridin worked). Eggs + potatoes.

Back on the road at 6:30 (central time now). Many fields of short yellow sunflowers. Insects sound like raindrops on the windshield.

Rest area at 9:30. Bright lights, mosquitoes, hot in car, 3-hour time limit.

Continue 60 miles to another rest area with no big "3 hour limit" sign (a tiny one posted on door), less-bright lights, and it's a few degrees cooler (77° at 10:30). Slept well, although we kept the windows closed due to bugs + too lazy to put on screens. Approx. exit 364. Next to a cornfield. Cow manure smell.

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Berlin WI

Sat Aug 22

Awake at 6:15 (it ~~is~~^{gets} a light later here on the western edge of a time zone). On the road at 7. 72° at 1 am, 66° at 7 am.

Mid-morning rest area stop had a Minnesota Tall Grass Prairie interpretive sign about how the roots of the plants can go 15 feet deep to survive drought & harsh winters. Nearby a lone doe, chest deep in a field of some green leafy crop, munching contentedly.

I-90 through here is rural - corn & soy fields in shades of blue- & yellow-green. Masses of light grey clouds.

Took exit 102 up to highway 30, an idyllic blue highway that parallels I-90 about 15 miles north. Proud-looking, prosperous farms. Unfortunately a detour shunted us back to I-90 too soon.

No visible irrigation in the fields here. Do they get enough summer rain to not need it?

Lunch at a rest area surrounded by green fields. 84°, breezy, and a table in the shade. A few hours of blue sky! Then clouds again.

Arrive in Berlin at 4:15. Bought 7 ears of "honey-dipped" variety sweet corn for \$4 at a roadside stand. Guess what we had for dinner? Delicious. 77° at 7pm, a few light sprinkles.

Wasps & flies feasting on the dead insects plastered to our bumper.

Kristin is gone at the lake cottage. She always leaves her house unlocked so we're hanging out there. It felt great to take a shower.

Sunday Aug 23

Up at 6. 72° at 9am. Walk around neighborhood & down to river. High-pitched whine of insects sound like loud hi-tension power lines.

Kristin came back about 1 and we chatted until heading over to Tim's warehouse about 2. Tim, Joan, Michael, Kristin & Tim, John & Sue, David & Mary, Greta & Joachim, Gretchen. Joachim just turned 1 at the end of June. He's very cute, with blue eyes, short blond curls, & stout little legs. He walks well & is big for his age. A lovely visit with lots of stories & Koch humor - subtle & dry.

Left at 4:30. Saw 2 sandhill cranes right next to the road in a field of stubble. 90° at 5 pm. It was quite pleasant in the shade. Puffy clouds. Arrive at Alex's in Schofield about 6:30. Corn, beans, eggs for dinner, nice flat parking lot. KwikTrip next door. Walked around neighborhood & to local park. It's pretty quiet & green. Houses are

on big lots.

A warm humid night in the van, although it did finally cool off a bit, and we slept pretty well, although uncovered all night.

Mon Aug 24

66° at 7 am, overcast. It rained last night.

Drove to the dog park in nearby Weston Village. 40 acres on an old landfill where dogs can run free. Then we drove to downtown Wausau and walked on the amazing river trail, with fabulous amenities like elaborate playgrounds, exercise equipment, seating areas (one with a gas fireplace), gardens, and cafes. The downtown is uber quaint, with brick sidewalks and old buildings. One street is shaded by dozens of hanging umbrellas.

We'd reserved a 5x8' cargo trailer, but when I checked in they only had a 6x12', way bigger than we wanted. We had to drive to Abbotsford, about 35 miles west. Our hitch was low, so we then drove to the U-Haul center in

Wausau and they flipped the hitch and reinstalled the ball for us. We were back at Alex's by 3, and by 5 the trailer was loaded. The only big things she has are a couch and a mattress. Then we cleaned and made sausage and eggs for dinner.

It's down to a lovely 73° at 7:30.

Alex is sleeping on an air mattress tonight. Rained off & on all night.

Tues Aug 25

Cooler in the van last night, though still warm & muggy. We both have many bug bites. 66° at 6:15. Finished packing & clearing & on the road at 8:30. Alex is feeling a bit overwhelmed, sad, and weepy about leaving.

Wisconsin is acres of corn, soy, and neatly mowed grass. There are many shades of green.

We're taking the I-94 route. 82° at 1pm and a stiff breeze. Hang onto your lunch plates

Alex is sleep-deprived and miserable but she is a trooper. Finally stopped for the day at 5:20 in Jamestown ND. We took her to the Two Rivers Inn (\$62 incl. tax & a \$10 pet fee). Grant and I parked in the lot & went for a short stroll. There's a lovely neighborhood behind the motel on

a small lake formed by a dam in the river.

Cheery yellow sunflowers with black centers growing in the interstate median today. Overcast, windy, sprinkling off & on.

There were many mosquitoes in the motel parking lot, so even after slathering ourselves with Picaridin we realized there was no way we could cook. Restaurant choices were limited: Dairy Queen or Taco Bell. We opted for the latter. My shredded chicken burrito was entirely edible, and I like that they tell you the calories. There was no place to eat except inside, which felt very weird due to covid. There were 7 other diners. 5 of these were a mom with 3 kids & grandma. The little 4-year-old boy had severe ADHD-like behavior, and it was unpleasant to be around him and the parent behavior.

It's still 81° and the motel road is loud, so we decided to spend the night at the rest area 3 miles west of town. It's much nicer here, with fewer mosquitoes and clean bathrooms. We're sweltering in the car, even with windows open, but it should cool off soon. We have many itchy, swollen mosquito bites. Benadryl for me tonight!

Yes, we're sitting in our lawn chairs in a rest area parking lot next to the interstate, but it's delightful. It's cool, breezy, there are no mosquitoes, the setting sun was ochre red, and the moon is half full. We are grateful to not be in that motel parking lot.

Another warm, sticky night, with a big truck idling next to us all night, but with earplugs and bug screens I slept pretty well.

Wed Aug 26

68° at 7 am. Moist, dewy morning with an otherworldly red sun. We told Alex to sleep as late as she wants, so we'll read and hang out until she texts. Saw just a couple of skeeters & a few flies. Sponge baths in the empty restroom, which had warm water!

Alex arrived at 9 and we hit the road. Many lakes near the road. Many white pelicans. Grey sky, feels ominous, looks like rain.

70° in Bismarck at 10:30. 91° in Billings at 5:30 pm (mountain time). Picnic lunch today at Painted Canyon rest area in Roosevelt National Park. Shady table with lovely view of the knobby mineral-hued hills.

Dropped Alex at Super 8 in Billings, in a depressing cluster of box hotels in a

Billings MT

light industrial zone. \$90 with taxes and pet fees.* We continued on 28 miles to a nice rest area at 3500'. Much cooler up here, nice breeze. Noisy trucks (must they run their motors for hours?) but you tune them out after a while.

Ready Rice (Wild + Brown) and hearty potato soup for dinner. They were yummy mixed together. Saw lightning in the distance. A few flies here but no skeeters, and it's not humid.

Aug 27

61° at 6 am. Quiet, cool night with lots of rain. I slept through the lightning and thunder.

On the road at 9. Stop for gas and groceries in Livingston. We are getting much lower gas mileage towing this trailer!

yummy picnic lunch with salad and watermelon. The grass in MT is much greener than I expected in late August.

* Lesson learned: Don't book the wrong date on Booking.com b/c you have to call them to change it. Also, the deal you get is no better than AAA discount. Luckily the hotel was able to cancel the wrong night I booked...

Stopped at Sprague Rest Area for dinner about 6:15 (7:15 to us, as we fell back an hour coming into Pacific Time).

Super loud trucks, I was hungry crabby, Alex was eager to get to a motel. So we aborted cooking, packed up table and stove, and drove 22 miles to the Top Hat motel in Ritzville. \$60 a night, no pet fee. The room was a bit dusty and smelly, but seemed to air out quickly. PB&J's for dinner. This is Trump and wheat country. Big silos across the street, trains and wheat trucks rumbling by, many empty storefronts and cheap motels. A few loud motorcycles zooming around, but now things are slowing down. 73° at 8pm, just getting dark. No bugs.

Fri Aug 28

48° at 6 am. Frequent trains with the loudest whistles I've ever heard. They ran all night but didn't bother me with earplugs. Walked the downtown area. Lovely old art deco buildings, most of them empty. Some beautiful old mansions, most in disrepair.

On the road at 8:30, home at noon. Stopped at Thorp fruit stand, took highway 10 to Cle Elum, missing an I-90 fire closure. Gorgeous sunny blue sky day.