

THE PACKED BAG...



A recent study of tourism to the USA revealed that 90% of foreigners who travel to the USA only visit four states – New York, Florida, California and Hawaii. In a mission to find out why the other 46 states are virtually ignored Linda Bentley, of “The Packed Bag”, planned a journey of discovery through the unknown America... visiting ALL of the United States of America.

Her journey began January 2 with plans of wrapping up the tour on December 24, 2013. With an adventurous spirit and ONE packed bag, she set out to spend one week in each state reviewing and writing every day. She will unveil her findings in a travelogue book she plans to publish shortly after her journey.

Through thepackedbag.com, she reveals what’s good, great and not so great – to save her readers precious vacation time and money.

During her year of discovery, she will write the book through her site – The Packed Bag – and continue her very popular contributions to TripAdvisor with its audience of over 100,000,000.

Linda can be found on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube and has currently racked up some sponsors on her journey including Samsonite, SCOTTEVEST, Invisible Zinc and The Scrubba.

Follow her one her journey at [facebook.com/ThePackedBag](https://www.facebook.com/ThePackedBag), you too might learn something new. Here are a few samples from her blog:

1 Aussie Girl, 50 States, 50 Weeks and 1 Packed Bag



State 2, Day 6 -

Los Poblanos Inn and Organic Farm Albuquerque, New Mexico

It was a long drive from Las Cruces and I was pretty weary when I pulled up to my home for the night in North Valley, Albuquerque – Los Poblanos Inn.

My spirits revived when I turn into the drive and arrived at reception...and they positively jumped to attention when I saw my room. (It's the one featured on the accommodations page of their website.)

A king-size four-poster bed, art deco-style white subway-tiled bathroom, fireplace (with fire ready to go), huge flat screen TV and galley kitchen. Lovely linens and towels, luscious toiletries and comfy

sofas. Frankly, I liked it so much I just wanted to hook it up to my car and travel with it.

With peacocks roaming the grounds it's a lovely place,

peaceful and elegant,

made even more so when it snowed, a rarity for Albuquerque.

Los Poblanos was a model experimental farm in the 1930s and 1940s and is so again today raising organic produce, organic lavender and honey bees. The lavender farming is part of a village and state driven sustainability initiative to create a high margin crop with very little water use.

Guests are encouraged (in warmer months) to interact with the farm animals and generally make themselves at home. There is a fabulous farm shop, selling their own lavender products, which are also the toiletries in the guest rooms.



State 30, Day 3 -

The other OZ, Kansas

In Kansas, halfway between Lawrence and Manhattan is the small town of Wamego. A population of 4,000 is overrun every year by probably five times that many people when it comes to visiting the biggest thing there, the OZ Museum.

Yes, a museum dedicated entirely to The Wizard of Oz. "There's no place like home." Appropriate words for a museum which was built by local people (with a major grant from the State

of Kansas) who had the brains of a small group of leaders, the heart for what L. Frank Baum began in 1900 as a simple children's book and the courage to take on the task of constructing a home for over 2,000 artefacts dating from 1900 to today.

It's a scream. There are little touches everywhere, which tell you that these people get this movie. You walk along and past the characters on the Yellow Brick Road. There are videos, artefacts, personal mementos from the stars, posters and the movie runs on a continuous loop in the little cinema.

The gift shop is well stocked and my favourite was the range of T-shirts with humorous sayings like, 'Keep calm and click your heels three times' and 'Don't make me break out

the flying monkeys.' As much as I enjoyed them, until they start stocking v-neck t-shirts I, and women like me, will never buy those round neck ones as they are so unflattering to anyone with a chest larger than a B cup.

Personally, I've never really understood the movie. If I had been Dorothy there was no way I would have come back to Auntie Em and the dirt farm...I would have stayed in OZ living the highlife.

I did point out that I was actually visiting from Oz, but I don't think they got it!



State 24, Day 7 -

Antelope Island & Great Salt Lake, Utah

Driving across the causeway that divides the Great Salt Lake and connects Antelope Island State Park to the mainland was like leaving the present behind. I was taking a horseback tour of this primal and barren island with R&G Horse and Wagons, a small family business owned by legendary movie horse wrangler Ron Brown.

The last time I had been on a horse was in State 4 -Texas, for about 15 minutes. Honestly, the poor cowboy spent more time saddling the horse than I spent on it. Before that it had been about 15 years since I'd been in the saddle.

A little worried about my rusty skills, Ron allayed my fears pretty quickly. Practically born in the saddle he sits one like he's on a sofa watching a game. I figured if he wasn't worried, I wouldn't be either.

My ride was called Kevin...I'm really not sure what to say about that. It's just not a dignified horse name. (I found out later his name is Star but Ron calls him Kevin to annoy his business partner.) Kevin was a sweetie and put up with the inexperienced rider on his back with calm and steadiness.

Scrubby and brown it's perfect grazing land for bison, mule deer and sheep. Heading up to the best lookout point on the island took a lovely hour or so. It was worth the effort as the view over the Salt Lake was impressive.

Heading back to the ranch, I relinquished my steed and hit the road...it was time to go out on the lake itself.

Gonzo Boat Rentals is run by Dave, a man living the dream. The brine flies were having a field day out there, so the decision was made to take a jet-boat to get away from the swarms.

Presented with a lake with 12% salinity and the ability to float without much effort I had to give it a try. It's really hard to swim in a traditional manner as my bum kept floating higher than my head, so side and backstroke were the order of the day.

I found it very easy to lie back, cross my feet and hold an imaginary cocktail. Just don't go in with a paper-cut or you'll know all about it!

All fun and fine until I got out of the water and realised that all the moisture had been sucked from my skin and that Dave had to pour a couple gallons of fresh water over me so I didn't crust up completely.

A fun and unusual day, I highly recommend you come and experience this special place.



Trip Stats So Far...

- 233-** days on the road
- 33-** states completed
- 17-** states to complete
- 31,820-** miles travelled
- 161-** hotels/B&Bs
- 6-** flights
- 18-** trains
- 24-** rental cars
- 4-** long-distance buses
- 7-** ferries/boat rides
- 1-** helicopter rides
- 4-** horse rides
- 5-** bicycle rides
- 8-** limousines
- 43-** taxis/shuttles/light rail
- 140-** museums/galleries
- 167-** attractions/activities
- 105-** tours
- 33-** natural wonders
- 10-** sports/sporting events
- 10-** concerts/theatre/fairs
- 9-** spas
- 21-** diners
- 17-** slices of pie