

How To Plug The Oil Leak In The Gulf



Zoo Traveler

I really like to travel (NO FLYING THOUGH!), and we were fortunate enough to do lots of it – before we had so many little kids, of course. We still try to make a yearly trip to Florida, especially while we can still fit the entire family in one car – something that soon won't be easily accomplished as the kids grow older. At each travel destination, I have to admit that my favorite tourist attraction is always the local zoo. I made a list of all the zoos and/or wildlife parks I have visited, and I hope to add to it soon! Here is the list by state, country, or territory, followed by the city in which it's located. An asterisk following the zoo means it no longer exists. I put notes about some of the places in *italics* as sort of a guide in case you're interested in visiting one of those particular attractions and want some info straight from a tourist's mouth.

California:

Sea World San Diego

San Diego Zoo

Canada:

Bird Kingdom Niagara Falls Aviary, Niagara Falls, Ontario
Marineland, Niagara Falls, Ontario – *this place is very cool. You can hand-feed deer, Beluga Whales or even Orcas (Killer Whales). You can throw food down to bears who beg and do tricks. There are also a variety of amusement park rides for the whole family. Look at me petting the Orca!*

**Washington, DC**

National Zoo

Florida:

Wooten's Wilflife Park, Florida Everglades – *a cool, family owned place where you can see animals on display; including alligators, crocodiles, and Florida panthers. You can also hold and feed baby alligators! I wonder if they still exist; their website hasn't been updated since '06!*

Sea World, Orlando

Gatorland, Orlando
Animal Kingdom, Orlando

Idaho:

Zoo Boise, Boise

Illinois:

Brookfield Zoo, Brookfield – *this is the zoo I grew up going to. In the 80's when I was a frequent visitor, they had many 'celebrity' animals, with interesting stories to match.*

Shedd Aquarium, Chicago

Peoria Wildlife Park, Peoria

Cosley Zoo, Wheaton

Glen Oak Zoo, Peoria

Henson Robinson Zoo, Springfield

Miller Park Zoo, Bloomington – *yuck, not one of my favorite places. Their tiger exhibits consisted of teeny tiny cages, and they had a really scrawny, terrible looking tiger, at least in the late '90's when we lived in the area. Hopefully they've cleaned the place up.*

Scovill Zoo, Decatur

Indiana:

Ft Wayne Children's Zoo – *a perfectly sized zoo to visit with kids. They have a wide variety of animals and some nice exhibits. They just recently built a chair-lift type ride that will take you over the lion exhibit once it's finished – cool and scary at the same time!*

Potawatomi Zoo, South Bend

Fun Spot, Angola

Michigan:

Binder Park, Battle Creek

Minnesota:

Minneapolis Zoo, Minneapolis

Missouri:

St Louis Zoo, St. Louis

Nebraska:

Henry Doorly Zoo, Omaha – *I know they've since rebuilt it, but when I visited back in 2001-2002, they had a teeny-tiny exhibit for the gorillas, which made them none too happy. I actually witnessed a huge male gorilla charge a kid and beat on the glass from his small exhibit – scary!*

Henry Doorly safari park, Omaha

Folsom Children's Zoo, Lincoln – *a very nice little zoo located in the heart of Lincoln. It's so well-laid out that you can forget you're in the middle of a capital city, and they have lots of animals in a variety of nice exhibits.*

Ohio:

African Safari Wildlife Park, Port Clinton – *I love this place! You can feed deer, elands, huge buffalo and a variety of hoofed mammals from the comfort of your own vehicle. In season, they have pig races, animals shows, and camel and pony rides for the little ones.*

Akron Zoo, Akron – *I was really impressed with the layout, exhibits, and the happiness of the animals – a very impressive little zoo!*

Cincinnati Zoo, Cincinnati

Cleveland Metroparks Zoo, Cleveland

Columbus Zoo, Columbus – *a zoo no one had heard about until my favorite celebrity, Jack Hanna got ahold of it and made it a world-reknown facility. Huge zoo, and the only place to see my favorite animals, manatees in my home state of Ohio!*

**Sea World Ohio, Aurora – we actually lived in Illinois at the time we visited here, but I'm glad we got to see it before they sold it to Six Flags, who sold it to Cedar Fair. Any of the other Sea Worlds are quite a hike from IL or OH for that matter, especially for a non-flyer such as myself.*

Toledo Zoo, Toledo

Pennsylvania:

Pittsburgh Zoo – very impressive zoo! Lots of kid-friendly playgrounds and interactive areas. The polar bear habitat looked really cool – people go through a tunnel that the bears can swim over – but we didn't see it since the bears weren't in the pool. I NEED a second look at this zoo and will definitely allow more time when I get back there!

ZOOAMERICA North American Wildlife Park, Hershey – We did not care for this zoo at all. We visited in the late '90's, so maybe they've added more to it by now. But at that time, they only had animals indigenous to North America, and let's face it, those are easy to spot in most areas of the U.S. And let's face it, the real star tourist destination in Hershey is the chocolate factory!

South Dakota:

Great Plains Zoo and Museum, Sioux Falls – I visited here with my family when I was 15. This place was amusing to us because attached to the zoo is the museum, which has many taxidermied specimens. We joked that this zoo had more dead animals than live ones!

*Marineland, Rapid City – note the asterisk, this place doesn't exist anymore, thank goodness. When we visited in the summer of '93, they had dolphins and sea lions held in such tiny cages and pools, it was sickening. I haven't been able to find much info on this place, but I'm sure they were shut down because of poor treatment of their animals. I can only hope the animals found a better home.

Bear Country USA, Rapid City – a cool drive-thru bear habitat experience – keep those windows rolled up!!! And check out the baby bear nursery – so adorable!

Wisconsin:

Henry Vilas Zoo, Madison

*Serpent Safari, Wisconsin Dells

GRAND TOTAL AS OF 2009:

41 animal-themed places in 2 countries, 13 states, 1

district... and counting!

Burn After Reading

I'm not a huge Coen brothers fan, but I do find their movies interesting. Like many of the Coen's movies, [Burn After Reading](#) is about normal people who come across an illegal way to make lots of money, become obsessed with it, and consequently watch their lives unravel. [Frances McDormand](#), a Coen brothers movie regular (and I found out why – she's married to one of them), was great in this movie. She plays a woman named Linda Litzke, a gym employee who is obsessed with reinventing herself via plastic surgery. She, along with a gym co-worker played by [Brad Pitt](#), come across a CIA agent's (played by [John Malkovich](#)) disk at their gym and bumble through a scheme to use it as blackmail. They are truly a couple of idiots, and Brad Pitt's performance as the big doofus Chad is hilarious – might have been my favorite part of the movie, and this is not coming from a Brad Pitt fan or anything like that. Not that this movie is a comedy, don't get me wrong. I suppose it could be classified as a dark comedy, but I would say it's more of a suspense film with some comedic moments. As with any Coen brothers movie, there are numerous twists and turns, so I'm going to cut my synopsis short for fear of revealing any spoilers. Go see it, watch how the events unfold, and you'll be entertained. Besides Brad Pitt's character, my favorite part of the movie was how they told the story – as a case file being discussed by a couple of FBI agents. If you're a Coen brothers fan already, then I'm sure you'll love it – it is everything Coen: money, foiled scheme, setting – the Coens are famous for making the setting of their movies very integral in the plots, and this one is no exception. Washington, DC and the surrounding area

of Virginia is the locale of choice for this one, and it's all very important to the relation of the events and how they unfold. This movie features a few Coen movie regulars like Frances McDormand, [George Clooney](#), and Richard Jenkins (who also gives a great performance as the forlorn gym manager, by the way – they really make you feel sorry for his character). Better than [No Country for Old Men](#), [The Ladykillers](#), and [O Brother, Where Art Thou?](#), Burn After Reading is second only to [Fargo](#) when comparing it to other Coen brothers movies in my opinion. An entertaining 96 minutes at the movies – this one goes by fast. And make sure you pay attention; if you miss something, I could see where it would be difficult to catch up – a lot happens in those 96 minutes!

He Is Here!



After months of blogging about my pregnancy, it's finally over and with the best result possible – a healthy, beautiful baby boy! His name is Christopher Vincent and he was 8 lbs. 2

oz. and 20.7 inches long when he was born at 2:53 pm on July 11. He is named for his father (at my insistence because my

husband felt it was egotistical of him to duplicate his name – not when others do it, just him for some reason) and his middle name is after the baby's late grandfather, my husband's father who passed away from Lou Gehrig's disease when our oldest child was just one year old. So we've been waiting a long time for a namesake for Vincent, and now little Christopher Vincent is here. He is a perfect baby and rarely cries, although he does seem to have his days and nights mixed up. Today he slept for almost 5 hours until I woke him up to eat. But that's probably because last night he woke up every hour. I wish I had known he was going to sleep that long because I would have taken a nap! It's been difficult for me to sleep at night due to the extreme pain I'm feeling because of the emergency cesarean they had to do to bring little Christopher into the world.

Here's a warning – I'm going to get a little bit graphic medically here because I feel the need to explain what happened to me. That way, other moms searching for info about pregnancy,



cesareans, etc. can happen across my site, and maybe it will help educate them and ease their fears if they know some things they can expect. For the rest of you, I apologize, and I suggest just looking at the really cute pictures of the baby and moving on to my other posts.

So I went to the hospital Friday at 7 am to get induced... I was really excited, but also pretty nervous. It's ironic that I didn't allow myself to get as nervous as I was with my 3 previous pregnancies because my last birth went relatively smoothly, so I figured, why get all worked up when everything will probably be fine? But it wasn't. Well, in the end it was, but until I got to see Christopher, Friday was one of the worst days of my life. It all started when the nurse couldn't get my IV in. I always bruise like crazy from the IV, but they've never had trouble getting it in me before. In fact, I seem to remember writing a post in my blog about what good veins they always say I have. Anyway, the nurse was trying to "save me a poke" and get a blood sample at the same time she hooked up my IV. I ended up with two holes on my right hand that swelled up like balloons – and I still had to get the IV put into my left hand. All that and she STILL had to draw blood from the vein like a regular blood sample, thus not "saving me a poke" at all as she had promised. But it didn't matter because I never care too much about the blood draw since I'm used to it and my veins are so easy to find... but anyway, after all this, I had to make a stupid comment – I said to the nurse, "I hope this isn't an omen for how the rest of the day will go..." Idiot. Apparently I cursed myself because things were just going to get worse.



The contractions started getting pretty painful and I called for the epidural, which if you don't know, is a pain elimination procedure (supposedly) administered directly into the spine. It's very uncomfortable to receive one, although it's nothing compared to the pain of the contractions it relieves, provided someone poking around in your spine doesn't bother you. Except that mine didn't work, which I'm told is rare, so don't worry,

just research other options before you go... But for me, this is where things go from bad to worse. Once we've all determined that the epidural didn't take, they make a call for the anesthesiologist to come back and discuss options. Except that, lucky for me (sarcasm), there was a shift change, so the person who messed up my first epidural was no longer around to mess up a second one. And, of course the new anesthesiologist didn't want to do one on a patient who had been done by someone else. And I should note that every time they call the anesthesiologist, it takes forever and a day for them to come because they're usually doing other patients in the hospital or who knows what. I wonder if it's like that at larger hospitals... Our hospital is quite small, and I've often wondered if there are certain aspects of care that could be better as a result. Anyway, so the 2nd anesthesiologist is explaining my options to me, and she is talking so slowly, I swear I was close to kicking her – I could still feel my legs, after all, and that was their fault, not mine. As she's explaining my options to me (not that there were many left), the nurse decided to check me and that's when she discovered we didn't have time to do *anything* – the baby was coming! The anesthesiologist was shooed away and the doctor was called, but of course with the way things had been going that day, she had gone home and so we had to wait for her to get back to the hospital. She got there and I was finally able to start pushing, except the baby wouldn't budge. I think the pain was worse than it's ever been, and I could tell the baby wasn't being pushed, and then the worst news yet – the baby's heart rate started dropping. Everyone started running around, honestly, it was total chaos, but I couldn't even think straight through all the pain. They wheeled me into the surgery room where there were like 10 people wearing surgery masks all doing different things. I was actually in favor of them knocking me out – the sooner, the better. Of course because of the epidural not working, I felt them cut me open, but in retrospect I don't know if it hurt more than I was freaked out about being able to feel them

cut me open. My arms and legs were tied down and I will be honest – it was a horrible experience – I couldn't sleep my first night in the hospital because right when I'd fall asleep, I'd have a flashback of the experience and jolt awake. Then, I smelled something funny in my oxygen mask and the next thing I know, I'm being wheeled out of the room – it was over! They had gassed me after all – lucky for everyone involved! But now I'm stuck with the awful recovery process of a c-section. One of the worst things about it besides the pain is the fact that I can't lift heavy objects – including kids. The second I got home, my 21-month-old reached her arms out and said "Mommy!" with a big smile, and promptly started crying when I couldn't pick her up. Between the lack of sleep, the hormone changes, and me missing her, I started crying, but luckily grandma saw me lose it and stepped in to rescue us; giving my daughter ice cream to feed me that made it all better for both of us. Now, only 2 days later, my daughter seems used to not being picked up, and the pain seems to be getting better, finally. Yesterday the pain was getting worse instead of better; when I woke up, every square inch of my body throbbed with pain, and I couldn't move at all – it was awful and totally discouraging. But, I had forgotten that the doctor said to also use ibuprofen along with my pain meds, so ever since I've been trying that, it's been working for me. But believe it or not, another pain remedy is baby-smelling. You just sniff the head of the newborn baby and give him kisses and it makes the pain better too! The worst part of the whole thing is that I had really wanted more kids, but after Friday, I just don't know if I have it in me to go through something like that (or worse!) again... But for now, I am enjoying mommyhood immensely, and the girls LOVE their new little brother. Taylor and Sammie want to hold him all the time, and Sammie especially can't keep her hands off him. She's always petting his head or touching his hands, or softly kissing him... she is so gentle; it's very sweet. And Disney, being almost 2, is getting her own ideas on how to care for Christopher as well. Yesterday she tried to insist that he be

put into his car seat and of course she threw a tantrum when it didn't go her way... But overall, things are going great and will be even better once we unmix Christopher's days and nights and get some more sleep!

Oh, and one more hint that will give you a fun momento for the baby book. If you mail a birth announcement to the White House, they will send you a congrats card from the President! Signed by an intern, of course, but hey, for some people in the '90's, that would have been Monica Lewinsky! Here is the address you send it to, you can also do this for wedding invitations, though I'm not sure the address is the same. I would just do a google search for "white house wedding announcement" or something like that.

Send your baby's name, birthdate and address to:

White House Greetings Office
Room 39
Washington, DC 20500