

New York Trip Diary Volume 5

NEW YORK TRIP – MARCH 20-23, 2009 – TAYLOR: 9 yrs, SAMMIE: 4 yrs, DISNEY: 2½ yrs, CHRISTOPHER: 8 mos

(continued from previous posts)

Monday, March 23 – We left the hotel for the Pittsburgh Zoo and promptly got lost. Many cities are situated on just one river, but some bank alongside 2 or 3 rivers, and that's where Pittsburgh lost me and we, in turn, got lost. Multiple rivers and all those hills – I have lots of trouble navigating my way through hills and mountains for some reason – probably because if you miss a turn, you can't just go a block and correct yourself because there's hills in the way. And Pittsburgh was also not lacking in what had become our nemesis (besides the ever-elusive Waterways bus) on this trip – construction zones. And we already talked about how Jill the GPS doesn't do detours. Lost as we were, we again got lucky and didn't wind up in any bad neighborhoods, but we did have to go without breakfast and almost without lunch. We stopped at a random police station for directions, and they were very nice (though they have some of the funkiest accents I've ever heard there in Pittsburgh – what IS that?), but the directions were very complicated, probably because of the rivers and hills to drive around, and we got lost again. Finally we found the zoo, and we picked up lunch at a little food stand on the river across from the zoo, and we refrained from making good on our threats to throw Jill the GPS in the river. Except now we were down to only getting to spend 2 hours at the zoo before they closed.

[The Pittsburgh Zoo](#) is nestled within some steep hills – like all the zoos we visited on this trip – and you had to take an elevator to get up the main hill and into the zoo. Once inside, we were very impressed. I'm having trouble deciding which zoo I like better between Pittsburgh and Akron –

Cleveland is not even on the same level as the other two. Pittsburgh has a thriving elephant herd – 2 calves born just weeks apart last July! Baby elephants are somewhat rare and difficult to come by in zoos – if a zoo can actually get elephants to breed (and I know the baby in Toledo was conceived via artificial insemination, so breeding might be somewhat difficult), they still have to wait through an extremely long gestation period (almost 2 years!) before seeing if they have a healthy calf. So the fact that Pittsburgh has 2 elephant calves that were born in the same month last year (also the same month as our baby boy!) is nothing short of amazing.

The Pittsburgh Zoo has an awesome aquarium with 3 types of penguin and a huge seahorse tank – next to manatees, seahorses are my favorite animal, and I have never before seen such a nice habitat for them or such huge seahorses! Also in the aquarium is an area where you can pet stingrays, and there's even a tunnel that runs underneath their pool that kids can crawl through and come up in the middle of the pool. Here is a picture of my daughter after she crawled through the tunnel:



And speaking of tunnels, Pittsburgh Zoo has a tunnel that goes *under* their polar bear pool! How cool is that? We didn't actually see it because we were there near closing time, and the bears were pacing by the door to go in for the night – we knew they wouldn't be swimming any more that day, so we skipped the tunnel. But I must go back some day to see that,

and also to spend more time in this awesome zoo – ok, I guess I just decided that I like Pittsburgh just a little bit more than Akron, but it was a tough call! Too bad Pittsburgh is almost 5 hours away, or I'd return in a heartbeat! And I forgot to mention how many fun things they have to kids to do, even beyond seeing the animals. They had a totally awesome looking playground, but we didn't go on that one because we weren't sure we'd have enough time. When we got to the end of the zoo, there was another playground, so we let them play on that until closing time. Our 2-year-old got "stuck" at the top of the playground – she was too scared to go down the slide and refused to come back out through the tunnels. I was worried that we'd get locked in the zoo like a couple of college kids I read about in Jack Hanna's hilarious book, *My Wild Life* – they got locked in the dark reptile house, where they could hear things splashing around all night! After we got my daughter to come down off the playground (thanks to her big sister who lured her away), the sea lions were putting on a little show right in the front of the underwater viewing window – which reminds me, we had also gotten to see an impromptu sea lion show earlier in the day – the zookeepers were training them and rewarding them with fish, it was really cool to watch!

On the way home, we stopped in Elyria, Ohio for dinner at a Golden Corral (always delicious) where my husband was a victim of racial discrimination by the steak griller, and we found what must be the last non-Super Walmart left in the world. Trying to save room in the car, we had neglected to pack enough diapers for our two children who still wear them, and we had to break into the new packs of diapers right there in the Walmart to change a double poopie from the baby and his big sister! It was interesting to be in a Walmart without groceries where the employees were actually preparing to close the store for the night – almost like time travel, but if I traveled in time, the last place I'd go is Walmart!

So anyway, now we had only 2 hours left of the drive home, and it passed uneventfully – the kids slept. We got home sweet home at about midnight, and the kids were really excited to see their pets and their room – they had trouble getting back to sleep. The pets were happy to see us, and my thanks goes to our great friend Carol who kept the pets healthy and happy during our absence. I was really surprised to see how big the rats got in just a few days though, Carol, what did you feed them?!? ☐

So, I had an amazing adventure with wonderful people. And this is the end of my diary. Well, not really, I will have one more entry to go back to the World Trade Center site visit, but I'm waiting for the right time to blog about that – it was a very moving experience. So thanks for reading, and I hope you had fun and maybe even learned a little something about places you may or may not want to visit some day!