

Amelia's Journal - Yosemite



Yosemite National Park, California

Yosemite National Park was one of the first wilderness parks in the United States. It's well known for its waterfalls, meadows, deep valleys and giant granite rock formations. In 1984, Yosemite was named as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations, which listed it as a place of outstanding universal value. This will be my first trip to the park and I'm really excited!

Julia Park, Master Basket Weaver
Yosemite National Park, California

We started our adventure at the Yosemite Museum where my mom had arranged to meet and film Julia Parker, a Native American who is a master basket weaver. Samples of Julia's baskets can be found in the Collection of the Queen of England and the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C.



Native American people have lived in the Yosemite Valley for more than 4,000 years, but over time, many of the traditional ways have gotten lost or forgotten. Julia is always working to learn and pass on the traditions of her people. She gives basket weaving demonstrations at the Museum and shares her knowledge of her Native American heritage with visitors.



Baskets on display in the Yosemite Museum

Julia believes that by teaching students to weave baskets she is also teaching them about the environment. Basket weavers need to know where the land is healthiest so they can gather materials without destroying the balance of nature. They must also have a great appreciation of nature as their baskets are made of all natural materials!

Julia has a strong appreciation of nature. Her personal philosophy is to always take with a 'Please' and give back with a 'Thank You'. I felt honored to have met her; she is truly a remarkable woman!

While Julia Parker works to preserve the traditions of Native Americans of the Yosemite Valley, Shelton Johnson is a Park Ranger who works to preserve and honor the memory of another group of people who had a strong influence on the park - the Buffalo Soldiers.



Shelton Johnson, Park Ranger
Yosemite National Park

Not much was known about Buffalo Soldiers in the Yosemite Valley until the day that Shelton Johnson, a Park Ranger, wandered into Yosemite's Research Library and found an old photograph. He learned that nearly

400 African-Americans traveled from San Francisco to Yosemite at the turn of the last century to help protect the National Parks of California.

As Shelton began uncovering information and learning more, he has become dedicated to making sure that these amazing men and their contributions to our parks are not forgotten.

Shelton has a great website to share information on these men. If you want to learn more, visit:
<http://shadowsoldier.wilderness.net/>



This is the photo that Shelton found.

Yosemite Falls Yosemite National Park

After filming both Julia Parker and Shelton Johnson, my mom, dad, and I went for a hike to Yosemite Falls. This is the tallest waterfall in North America!

The hike was nice and pretty easy. As we got closer to the falls, I began to notice moss on the rocks and everything started to look greener. That was because the amount of moisture in the air was rising. So was the sound of the waterfall in the distance!



Yosemite Falls

The weather actually began to change. Even though it was a sunny day, everything turned gray. I realized that this was because of the mist put off by the falls. When water falls a half mile down and meets the ground, it creates its own weather pattern and unique environment. Even when we were still a quarter of a mile away, we were getting wet from the spray of water!

The next morning, we went up to Glacier Point to get a full view of the entire Yosemite Valley. Even though it's springtime, there was still snow up here! Before leaving, I had a snowball fight with my parents.



Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks

We left Yosemite and drove to Kings Canyon and Sequoia National Parks, about 3 hours away. We walked through a place called the Giant Forest, which was filled with sequoia trees. I had never seen a sequoia tree, or any tree as big as these!

I couldn't believe that trees could grow so tall. While we were filming, I got the chance to see some sequoia seeds and, guess what? They're tiny!! They looked like miniature coffee beans. It was pretty amazing to think that these giant trees start as little bitty seeds.

My dad found a small meadow stream where we could film a fishing segment for the show. I watched him dangle his fishing rod just over the surface of the water. These must have been hungry fish, because they jumped out of the water over and over again to grab the fly at the end of my dad's fishing rod. This looked like a lot of fun, so my dad let me try, too!



Giant Sequoia Tree



Crystal Cave

The trees around here are so big, you spend most of your time looking up. But, there's a lot going on underground, as well. We'd made arrangements to tour and film Crystal Cave in the park. The entrance to this cave was a very cool gate designed to look like a spider web. This protected the cave from intruders, while leaving room for bats to fly in and out. I love bats!

The Park Ranger showed us all kinds of cave formations, but my favorite were "cave pearls". These are formed exactly like pearls are formed in oysters. They begin with a tiny grain of sand that gets coated with calcite over a period of time.



Cave Pearls

Black Bears

When your parents are in the business of filming nature, they want to film ALL of nature—in this case, my parents wanted to find and film some of the black bears that live in the area.

This is what I know about bears:

- 1) You may want to see them, but they don't particularly want to see you, unless you have food for them.
- 2) You should NEVER, EVER try to feed a bear.
- 3) They can be VERY BIG.
- 4) They are UNPREDICTABLE.

We took a hike and discovered a tree with fresh bear claw markings on it (bears do this to mark their territory). Not too long afterwards, we saw the bear that had been marking the tree. My dad used a special lens to film the bear so he wouldn't get too close and upset the animal.



This is what I learned about black bears:

- 1) Not all black bears are black. Their colors can range from black to cinnamon to blond.
- 2) Not all bears hibernate; some stay active all winter.
- 3) They are omnivores, which means they eat both meat and vegetation. Most of their diet includes berries, acorns, nuts, seeds and grasses.
- 4) They are beautiful animals that should be treated with respect.

I felt very lucky to have been able to watch this incredible animal. As our population grows and cities get bigger and bigger, it's becoming rarer and rarer to see animals like this in the wild. It really makes me appreciate our National Parks and the habitat and protection they give wild animals!

'Til next time,

Amelia

