

Downers Grove, IL Troop 57

Summer High Adventure 2010 Journal

In June of 2010, 13 Scouts and 6 parents went on a High Adventure Trip down the Current River in Missouri. The following is a daily journal of that trip.

Sunday, June 6

We begin. Cars arrive at St. Paul's Church at 0730. A semi-organized attempt at loading gear begins. David had his dad here at 5:30 as he incorrectly read the notices about departure. A great way to start the day on his dad's birthday. We get the mandatory group photo and depart at 8:20. About an hour into the drive we realize there is one prominent feature of the Illinois landscape, which is it is repetitive. We press on to Springfield to tour Lincoln's home. We arrive at the Lincoln Home National Park site at 11:15 after circumnavigating a large street fair in downtown Springfield. Numerous streets were closed. GPS allows us to drive around aimlessly until randomly finding the parking lot. We have a nice tour of Lincoln's home and later found that everyone in the car had been there once before. We imagine what it was like as Abe Lincoln went through his daily routine. We opt for lunch at McDonalds and Subway instead of street food vendors as there would be better chances later for intestinal distress. Jacob waits a long time for a simple chicken sandwich and gets two free pies. Keith and Alex snarf down the pies. On to Montauk State Park. We stop for gas at a BP in Cuba, MO. This BP is obviously not being boycotted due to the recent oil spill. We freshen up in the facilities. The Scouts buy stuff like snacks and drinks. Alex buys a water gun. Mr. Camp notices they are selling something called River Beads. They look a lot like Mardi Gras beads. We can't imagine what they are used for. We do not have time to visit the nearby Vacuum Cleaner Museum. The boys are disappointed, yes I know it sucks but we have to move on. Cars arrive in staggered fashion at Montauk State Park and we set up camp. We conclude the GPS units now give you many more creative ways of getting lost. We dine Sunday night at Montauk Lodge. The Scouts are well mannered. Some hang out in the in small entrance area to watch the Blackhawks Stanley Cup game 5 in stunning 20" low def.

Monday, June 7

Monday morning weather is cool and clear. The Scouts muster up breakfast. We pack up camp and head out. Adventure awaits. We get to the Cedar Grove landing and unload our gear. I wait with the Scouts while other adults take the cars to Akers Ferry. As we wait, several groups of day paddlers come and go. The boys offer to help some older couples load up, they decline the offer but they still thank the boys. David catches a snake. We do not know what type. We photograph it for later reference and return it to the wild. As we wait for the canoes, the boys pass time by throwing rocks and singing Lady Gaga songs. The canoes arrive. We load up and are heading downstream at about 11:30. Paddling skills vary but most soon are able to perform basic navigation. However, the river became angry that day my friend. Like an old man sending soup back to a deli. We stopped for lunch at about 12:30. When almost packed up to resume the trip, a family of four paddles by, a mom and dad along with two pre-school age girls. They hit a large boulder and quickly swamp in the 60 degree water. The canoe rapidly fills; the adults and kids are dumped out. The adults are frantically trying to grab the now panicking kids. All their gear is floating downstream. This all takes place only 30 ft. downstream from our lunch site. Several Scouts and adults run to help the parents and kids get to shore. Water is 4 feet deep and fast moving making it very difficult for the people to get the kids and themselves to shore without help. We send two canoes of Scouts downstream and they get the lost gear which contained car keys and wallet. In the end all is well but it shows how quickly things can happen on the river. It also shows the importance of PFDs and tying down gear. The two small kids were wearing PFDs and if they had not been wearing them, this could have turned out much differently. About an hour later the river claims our own David and Billy. They swamp after getting stuck on a submerged log. David loses his fishing pole. We search for a while but no luck. We hold a brief memorial service for the pole as it was a good pole. We make a brief stop in civilization at Akers Ferry for snacks and to get anything from the cars people might have forgotten. We fill up water jugs. We pull out and make landfall later at about 5:00. Steaks for dinner. The ground is rocky and hard, the water cold. Still we swim.

Tuesday, June 8

Never before have I seen so much poison ivy. As soon as you move off the gravel bar into the woods it is everywhere. It must be the state plant of Missouri. Scouts prepare an outstanding breakfast. After an extensive service project clean up of our campsite, we head downstream at about 10:00. The river is a much friendlier creature today. We shortly arrive at Spring Cave where we enter by canoe and navigate further in by headlamp. All that enter eventually come out. At about 11:30 we stop at Pulltite for ice

cream and other assorted treats such as flush toilets. We paddle on for another hour and stop for lunch. The river flows at almost 2.5 mph and is spring fed. It is a smooth flowing stream with some class 1 and 2 rapids where the Scouts continuously improve their paddling skills. Being spring fed, the water remains a cool 60 degrees throughout its run. The air today is very humid and as our party strings out, canoes disappear in the fog. We make a brief stop at the site where the ill fated 2009 party was flooded out. Moving on, we stop at Sinking Creek and decide it is a good place to camp. This was also where the 2009 party was taken out. The Scouts walk up the creek which is much warmer than the river. They float down in PFDs. Billy gets his glasses knocked off into a deep water hole. Alex returns with goggles to try and find them. Keith puts them on and dives for mother pearl. They do not find the glasses but do find a hole full of large trout. David wants to return after dinner but later has no luck. Dinner of pasta goes over nicely. NOAA weather radio brought along this year reports 40% chance of rain and flash floods tonight. We get a good lighting show from storms north in Rolla but no rain and no flooding.

Wednesday, June 9

We get out a bit earlier today at about 9:45. Just before we get out, we see a family of three from Bloomington, IL heading out. They have two kayaks and one canoe. All their gear is piled up high on the canoe with a beagle in a pet PFD perched and tied atop all the gear barking happily as they head out. It looks like the Beverly Hillbillies going downstream. Later we all land at Round Springs landing. It is as busy as a toll way oasis on Thanksgiving Day. There was very little room to land all our canoes. The family from Bloomington ends their trip here. We meet another group led by a teacher that has been taking students on this river for 35 years. He tells us when he was in high school in about 1968, he was an Eagle Scout. He had a science teacher that told how much science you could learn on the Current River. He told the teacher that he could get the camping gear if the teacher would organize the trip. The trips started and the student later became a teacher leading the trips. He was now handing off the leadership to other teachers that were students of his years ago on this same trip. He has written a book based on the experience with the Current River as the setting. I make note of the author and title. (Rigby, Challenges) for later look up on Amazon.

http://www.amazon.com/Challenges-Trip-Remember-David-Rigby/dp/1933449365/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1276355174&sr=1-2

We opt not to visit Round Spring Caves as the only other tour is two hours from now. We travel onward humored by numerous water fights and games of Capture the Flag by boat. Adults force a stop for lunch after a futile search for shade. It is much hotter and more humid than yesterday. After lunch we of course find a nice shady spot at Williams

Landing downstream. Not on the map. We pass Bee Bluff for what I think is the most spectacular view of the entire trip. Cliffs rise up over 100 feet above the bend in the river. We stop at Twin Rocks, a spot where the Scouts can jump from rocks into a deep spot in the river. Moving on we start to see power boats travelling the river. They buzz by.... the sound that makes the Persian Gulf stand up and salute. Noting the varying depth of the river and the speed these boats go at, the business to be in here is prop repair. About a mile after Twin Rocks we spot a nice large gravel bar and make camp. We enjoy a fabulous dinner of Chicken C which was rescued by the adults before Alex could insist that 9 packs of onion soup mix get thrown into the pot. We would have had a lifetime's worth of sodium in one meal. After dark we can listen to WGN on a small portable short wave radio I brought. Tonight the excellent nightly guitar concert by Eric and Bill is suspended as adults and a few Scouts listen to game 6 of the Stanley Cup Playoffs. Most of the Scouts are around a camp fire and ask for the score periodically. When the game goes into overtime, everyone eventually is gathered around this little 6" X 6" radio lying on the gravel. In the dark they listen to the fading AM signals interrupted by the static from distant summer lightning. No HD screens here. Clusters of fire-flies travel up and down the river and through camp as they have done every night. Cheers erupt as the Blackhawks score the goal to win the Stanley Cup. Remember where you were I tell them. Scout head off to bed.

Thursday, June10

The campsite was a good spot as the morning sun is drying the tents from dew and very light rain from the night. We ready for the last river leg of the trip. Note, Mr. Windischman makes an excellent cup of coffee. He also seems to have extra of everything, even extra propane cans which came in handy. We depart camp at about 9:45. We make good time, generally over 4 mph by GPS. At 11:30 Billy opts to push on to the Owls Bend take out. This is so we only unpack once for lunch and final unloading. We get to Owls Bend a bit after 12:30. We have lunch and organize the gear for the bus trip back to Akers Ferry. The bus comes at 2:25 and Scouts load it in 15 minutes. Bus driver Paul, was a 35 plus year scout leader and Wood Badger. Mr. Camp promises to send him a DPVC strip and Paul promises to send an Ozark Council strip. Paul does a great job driving and seems to anticipate every curve and hill. Scouts pretend they are on a roller coaster ride. We get to Akers Ferry in about 50 minutes and quickly move gear to the cars. A fun two hours later we all make it to Meramec Caverns Campground. They have showers. Stew for dinner, hot humid night.

Friday, June 11

Friday morning we start to get up at about 6:30. Too bad we do not have a bugler for our camp ground neighbors who played music until after midnight. We eat a quick breakfast before touring Meramec Caverns led by our tour guide Lee. Lee was also a Scout and former science teacher and a very impressive guide. He has gone 16 miles back into the cave complex. Scouts thought this cave was better than Onadoga Cave last year. Not much is bought at the gift shop. All the Scouts make it out of the cave and into the cars by 10:35. We head for home. GPS works out for us recommending a detour around some construction west of St. Louis. We take time to stop for lunch at a McDonalds. They have TV. Alex runs to a BP and is disappointed they have no Cheese Whiz. After some radio sing along by Alex and Keith, the car grows quiet as we get into Illinois. We get to St. Paul's around 4:45. All cars arrive within a few minutes of each other. Gear is unloaded and sent home with scouts for cleaning.

Summary

A very good trip. Scouts were well mannered and carried out their duties. David caught snakes, tadpoles, and lizards but no fish. We did have one fish jump into a boat. No injuries and a lot of fun.

T Mohr