

Canyonlands National Park Spring Break Trip, March 7 – 13, 2009.

We left early the first Saturday morning of Spring Break. This trip was lead by Albert Mitugo and Monti Bultz who are SMU Outdoor Adventures Staff. The participants were Rebecca Lovelace, Jamila Benkato, Stefanie Tracy, Douglas Graham, Sydni Hagens, Katrina Josephson, Reagan Myers, Briana Savage and Will Knapp. We were a group of strangers looking for a new adventure. We drove eight hours the first day through fierce winds until we reached Santa Rosa in New Mexico. In Santa Rosa we went across the street to eat a group dinner. The trip was off to a good start! The next morning we woke up and drove eight more hours to reach the beautiful canyonlands. The more we drove the more beautiful the scenery became. When we entered Canyonlands National Park the entire van got silent; everyone was captivated by the beauty of the desert in contrast with the snow-covered mountain tops. In fact, I think that it is the only time the van was silent the entire trip.

The first night we camped, we had an awesome fire and amazing s'mores! It was a good night for the group to get to know one another and just relax after a long day of driving. The next morning we woke up bright and early and Albert taught us how to pack our backpacks and drove to the sqaw flats road head. Then we set out on the *lost canyon* trail! We hike for a while and then branched off to the *peekaboo trail*. The first day was the most challenging and most rewarding. We hiked 8.5 miles up over the canyon until we got down into it to camp. At one point we were standing on a giant rock and all we could see is nature all around us; it was the most breathtaking 360 degree view that I have ever seen. By the end of the day we were physically exhausted, some of us had faced our fears, and all of us had experienced something new together. As a group, we decided to change the plans. We decided that we would camp and enjoy the world around us, rather than be so exhausted we were miserable. That night it snowed; some people even woke up with ice in their hair. It was a snow covered desert; cacti were covered in snow. We then went on a really enjoyable day hike to Paul Bunyan's potty that included animal tracking and print interpretation. Paul Bunyan's potty is a massive rock formation with a hole in the middle. The National Park had a sense of humor because they put an outhouse right next to it. We then walked back to camp and relaxed, read, had a yoga class led by Katrina, and had personal reflection time for the rest of the day. Then on Wednesday we woke up and strapped our backpacks on for the hike to a new campsite. We hiked 3 miles that day and found great camping right inside the park boundaries. We enjoyed a good meal and the company of one another and learnt how to read and interpret topographic maps, while a runner team of four people hiked five more miles to retrieve the van. Thursday morning we all headed to the van early after hiking a short 1.5 miles. We drove the eight hours back to Santa Rosa and were all SO thrilled to get hot showers and good meal! We all slept great that night.

We all learned a lot about the outdoors and had to be flexible with the elements. Living out of a back pack for those days was a quite an experience. Nature is the one thing people can never dictate. It was a week of new experiences, triumphs, exhaustion, and struggles. The pictures cannot even begin to do the trip and the beauty of it all justice. We all returned safe and that is all we could have asked for!

Rebecca Lovelace.