

Breaking away

Outdoor Adventures offers challenging spring break alternative



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When I wrote the following passages, or rather the bulk of them, I was on my spring break, miles away from my studies, in the mountains of Arizona. At present, I am a sojourner in civilized life again.

I see young people, my fellow students, whose misfortunes it is to have remained in Lincoln for their whole spring break, gasping for breath under the labors of work or under the suffocation of their families.

I could not allow myself the same fate. Mortified at the notion of spending a week at my parents' house in Hastings, watching Oprah and getting fat off Chex Mix, I had to find an alternative.

In a flash of insight, I discovered the ideal solution — Outdoor Adventures, sponsored by the Campus Recreation Center; cheap, easy and fun. I had hoped to go white-water rafting down South, but the Fates decided I should instead go rock climbing in Arizona.

Which was fine by me — I just wanted to do something new and extreme, and to go somewhere where I could actually see the sun. I eagerly shelled out the \$295 — a nominal fee for our heroic quest — and began preparing for this exciting venture.

Day one: At dawn, we loaded up the van and left Lincoln behind us. We are now traveling along Interstate 80, our fates yet uncertain. There are 13 of us, including the four trip leaders. An unlucky number — but I am not a superstitious person. This will be a good adventure.

People in other cars keep staring at us. You'd think they've never seen a van full of students with a cage full of camping gear bolted to the top. Maybe they're just staring at the freak who dyed his hair blue for this trip. I think his name is Tim or Tom or something like that.

Day two: Morning. I think we've been stuck in this van for like 82 hours. I'm not even sure what day it is anymore. I haven't even brushed my teeth since Friday morning, and my toothbrush is packed with all my other shit up on top of the van. Some girl who brought her teddy bear on the trip is giving everyone Wet Ones.

We finally arrived in Prescott, Ariz., this morning.

Arizona. Instead of "The Grand Canyon State," their license plates ought to read "Where Old People Come to Die." I have never seen so many vintage Cadillacs all in one

place. As a place of retirement, only Florida and North Platte could rank higher.

I wonder if Prescott's hospital has anything other than a geriatric ward. And I honestly swear I saw a drive-in funeral home right next to the Pizza Hut on the highway strip.

After a fortifying breakfast at Denny's, we finally made our way to the campground. Good thing, too — some of us were chafing and getting bedsores from sitting in the van for so long.

I'm surprised by the scenery of our location. I honestly thought Arizona would look like a Roadrunner cartoon, with big cactuses and rock formations. But we're in the mountains. It's like the Black Hills here.

My tentmates and I pitched our tent on the best site of the whole camp. We had to fight hard for it, but we won.

Day three: Finally — we got to do some climbing today! I feel like a total stud in the climbing harness. The twelve labors of Hercules were trifling in comparison to those we have undertaken. To make the climbs more challenging, some of us tried it blindfolded, while the leaders threw rocks at us from below.



Day four: We made a campfire last night, which was really nice. Several of us slept outside. I fell asleep watching for shooting stars.

Some folks want to make s'mores at our next campfire, and the blue-haired dude and I are trying to figure out how to get alcohol to the campsite. Since we can't transport it in university vehicles, we're thinking about hitchhiking, or getting a pack mule.

After the Bataan Death March this morning, we finally arrived at our climbing site. Climbing was awesome. The view was incredible from the top — of the lake and valley below us. More sun — I've never been so happy to be sunburned.

Day five: Awakened by the morning thunder.

Made s'mores at the campfire last night and taunted the guy who gave up chocolate for Lent. Talk inevitably turned to sex and relationships, and eventually just sex.

I think the others are beginning to fear me.

We decided to take a break from climbing today and go swimming instead. The water was freezing. The first time I dived in, I stayed in the water for all of three seconds. Later I



braved it for maybe five minutes of splashing around — and I haven't seen a sign of my testicles since then. I'm wondering if they'll ever descend again.

We all just spent the afternoon sunning ourselves on boulders, like overfed lizards, arising only to eat or play Hacky Sack.

We actually got to take showers today! The place where we showered swore us to secrecy before we could see a drop of lukewarm water. Arizona seems to be having water shortages. Go figure.

The weather looks a little threatening tonight. I doubt anything will happen, but I think I'll sleep in the tent, just in case.

Day six: I was awakened by someone shouting "It snowed!" I crawled out of our tent to find everything plastered with cold, wet, sticky snow. I'm wearing every article of warm clothing I brought, with my rain-gear over the top of it.

I can't believe it snowed on spring break.

Since nobody really wanted to go climbing in the cold muck, we spent the day exploring Prescott's courthouse square and later goofing around at an indoor climbing wall.

The snow melted off rather quickly, and it just rained all day. So now everything is just wet.

The spot where we pitched our tent totally sucks! My tentmates and I returned to the campsite to find our tent in the center of a geographically assignable lake.

All the water from the campsite flooded directly to our tent. Now my sleeping bag and everything I own is soaking wet. The only clothes of mine that aren't wet are those I've been wearing.

Day seven: Let me die. This is not an adventure anymore. This is hell. I have always said that hell is not a hot place, but cold and wet. This proves it.

I finally dozed off last night, only to awaken at four in the morning, freezing, wet and praying to false gods for the dawn to arrive. I'm waiting for the others to wake up so I can start bitching to them about my misery.

Someone said they got up to pee and saw a skunk rummaging through our stuff. I'm surprised the creature could stand the smell of us.

Later in the day: The weather hasn't been so bad today, and it's our last day here, so we went climbing. We started out rappelling into a mighty crevasse. That was fun. I could spend the whole day just rappelling.

I wanted to do some more serious

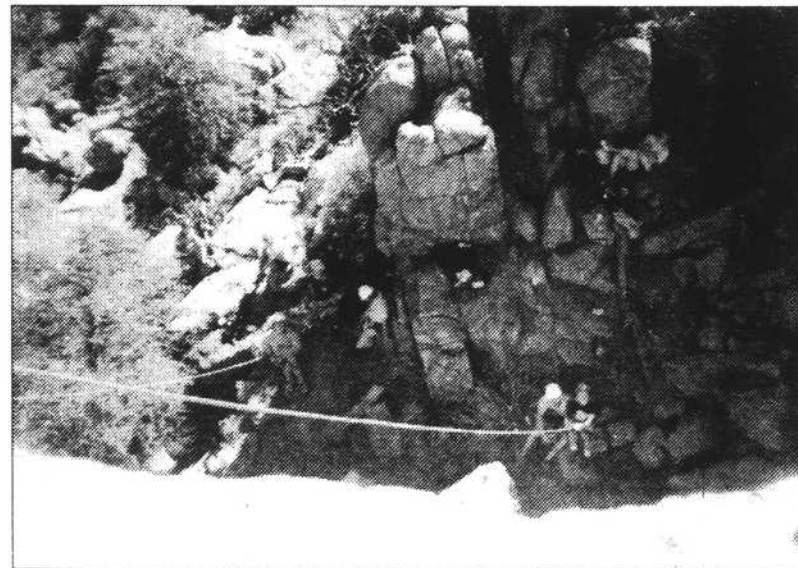
climbing, but I also sort of just wanted to get the hell out of there. So I mostly just belayed for other climbers or stood around shivering in the cold.

After climbing, we got to shower again. I've never been so happy for a lukewarm shower and cold shave in my whole life. It was better than sex. I was all cozy-sleepy afterward.

We then went back into town to have a big banquet and celebrate our adventures. We all ate too much, drank too much and generally had a good time. I'm now clean, well-fed and buzzed. Life is good.

Day eight: We got up early, decamped and managed to be on our way home before noon.

I never knew people could pass so much gas. We can't close the windows in this van for fear of asphyxiation. We've got 13 healthy college students in here producing more natural gas than Energy One. The folks



in the back seats are just playing pitch and farting. It's worse than a bunch of retirees on Metamucil. Morning thunder struck again on the way home.

It smells in here.

I figured this would be a good time to start on the homework I brought with me.

The one we call Moo-moo wanted to get a semi driver to honk his horn. But instead of the universally understood gesture of pulling an imaginary cord, she circled her fingers and made a jerk-off gesture at him. He taigated us all the way through New Mexico.

After driving all night, we stopped for breakfast in North Platte, the lousy hell-hole where I was forced to piss away my youth in closeted misery. I wondered if anyone I graduated from high school with would be working at the Burger King.

I was sort of disappointed that no one was — would've loved to rub it in. But the stop further proved that North Platte is just plain evil.

We returned to campus around noon, generally grateful to be home, and happy to find Lincoln sunny and warm.

We unloaded the van, cleaned up our equipment, bid our farewells and parted ways.

Deliverance. ...

Most have not delved 6 feet beneath the surface, nor leaped as many feet above it. We know not where we are. I'm really glad to have gone on this trip.

My hardships have, of course, been deeply exaggerated, but some extremes in life are necessary at times to remind us that we live and breathe. I felt more verily alive during this week of camping, hiking and climbing than I have in months.

The Outdoor Adventures pro-

gram provides students with excellent opportunities for fun and excitement.

However, the program's greater virtues may be how participants are challenged to draw upon their own strength and resourcefulness. Students are encouraged to examine themselves more thoroughly than they might ordinarily be inclined.

Outdoor Adventures gives students a great chance to really explore their own abilities, ambitions and humanity.

I got the hell out of Lincoln for the week, tried something fun and totally new, met some great people, got some new stories to tell and generally had a blast; all for \$295.

I'm hooked on Outdoor Adventures now and plan to go on a lot more trips in the future.

Why not? It's cheap, easy and fun. And it beats loafing around my parents' house.

