Central Park
New York City, NY
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The Northeast
About This Blog

Hi! I’m Damon. I love to travel all around the Northeast with my parents and my brother, Dan, and then write this blog to tell all my friends about it. The Northeast is the smallest region in the U.S., but it has the biggest population. The Northeast includes the states of New England, New York, New Jersey, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and our nation’s capital—Washington, D.C. You’ll never guess how much there is to do in this part of the country. Join me, Dan, and my folks as we hit the road. I hope you like my Notes From the Northeast!
Chasing Waterfalls

Sunday, March 4, 2012

Out near Buffalo, New York, is Niagara Falls, one of the seven natural wonders of North America. Millions of people visit Niagara every year. I couldn’t believe the size of the falls. They are huge! They were nothing like ones we’ve seen on local hikes. Before this trip, the largest waterfall that I’d seen was the one in the Grand Canyon of Pennsylvania. That one is puny compared to Niagara! (You can read my post about that from last June.)

By far my favorite part of our trip to Niagara was taking a ride on the *Maid of the Mist*. I wanted to reach out and touch the water, but that wouldn’t be a good idea! But I totally understand how the boat got its name. The falls create a dense mist—like fog—so you have to wear a raincoat.
Niagara Falls has three parts: Horseshoe Falls, American Falls, and Bridal Veil Falls. The American Falls and Bridal Veil Falls are in New York. There are walkways by the falls that you can go down to explore. But they’re slippery, so we had to be really careful.

Did you know that people have gone over the falls...in barrels?! And other people have walked across the Niagara River and the falls on a tightrope. And some people have gone over by accident. They went too far into the rapids at the top of the falls and got swept over! Some people lived after their trips over the falls, but a lot of people didn’t. I’d never ride a barrel or walk on a tightrope over the waterfalls. But I’ll bet it’s something to see!

Niagara is definitely one of the most fantastic things I’ve ever seen.
I listened to the song “New York State of Mind” for days before we left on our trip to the Big Apple—New York City! It’s the biggest city in the whole U.S.A. We took the train into NYC, and once we were there, we took the subway and taxis everywhere. Everyone takes the subway because it’s so much cheaper than taxis, and Dad says it’s less frustrating than driving. Good thing Dad understood the subway map!

In New York, the first place we went was to the Empire State Building, an enormous skyscraper. I’ve never seen a building that tall! It is even bigger than the Statue of Liberty.
The Empire State Building is beautiful, especially lit up at night! But, speaking of lit up, let’s talk about Lady Liberty, otherwise known as the Statue of Liberty. She holds up her lamp to invite people from all over the world to come to the land of the free. She was a gift to the U.S. from France, but she’s all American. And she’s more than a hundred years old! It was fun to imagine all the people who saw her as their ships came here from other countries. Their ships docked at Ellis Island, which we also visited. It’s where immigrants registered before coming to New York. Dad told me our last name was shortened from four syllables to two when our ancestors emigrated. Who knew I could have had a longer last name?
Today the Port of New York and New Jersey in New York Harbor is a shipping hub for cargo going into and out of the United States.

I wish we’d had time to see more of New York, but it’s a big city. It has five boroughs (like little cities): Manhattan, Brooklyn, Queens, the Bronx, and Staten Island. And that’s just New York City. New York State is huge, and there’s so much more to do there. One of these days, we’ll go up to Canandaigua, New York, for some camping on the Finger Lakes. But that’s another blog entry, isn’t it?
Do any of you out there have anything to add about New York City?

2 COMMENTS:

Eileen | Sunday, April 23, 2012
I thought Broadway was the best. I went to a really funny play there! There are so many theaters there. You could never see every show, but I'll definitely try to see at least one every year.

Dylan | Monday, April 24, 2012
My uncle took me to see the New York Yankees. What a great day at the ballpark! Did you know New York has two professional baseball teams? The other team is the Mets.
Sometimes we don’t travel far, and this past Saturday was one of those times. Did you know that Delaware is called the Blue Hen State? Don’t ask me why because nobody knows! They do have a lot of chickens here, but not one of them is blue!

It was so nice out this weekend that Mom wanted to have a picnic in the gardens at Winterthur. Winterthur is a mansion right here in Delaware owned by the Du Pont family. They started one of the biggest chemical companies in the world. If you’ve ever seen the mansion and its grounds, it’s really hard to imagine anyone calling it home. It’s huge! Anyway, we grabbed some blankets, the picnic basket, and our backpacks, and we headed out.

Mom likes to go in the mansion for tours, but I like the gardens enough to never go inside. On Saturday, we decided to picnic in the Enchanted Woods. Sounds magical, huh? Not to sound too corny, but it really is a special place. It has a grove of oak trees, which are my favorite trees. In the Enchanted Woods, there are trails to follow, bridges to cross, and a maze—or labyrinth—to conquer. Dan and I find something new every time we go. After working up an appetite in the treehouse, we were ready for lunch,
which we had right on the lawn. Did you know you could have such a great day right here in Delaware?

Our next trip near home, or a staycation as we call it, will be to the Wilmington and Western Railroad for a trip on the rails. Have any of you been? We love trains, so I’m sure it’ll be a blast!

Are there any other staycations I should tell my folks about so we can explore more of Delaware?

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2 COMMENTS:
Avery | Sunday, June 3, 2012
I’ve been on the train! It’s great. There are steam trains and diesel trains, and they are huge…and loud. Plus, you get to see the Red Clay Valley during the train ride. The trains used to take goods to the Port of Wilmington.

Greta | Monday, June 4, 2012
I love Winterthur! Have you been to Dover International Speedway? There are NASCAR races there twice a year. You’ve got to see how fast those cars go! What a rush!
No matter how many fantastic places we visit, my favorite vacation is always the beach. We spend a lot of time in Lewes, Delaware, where my grandpa lives. But this year, we decided to also drive up the coast a bit to the Jersey Shore. From Gramps’s house, we took the Cape May-Lewes ferry across the Delaware Bay into New Jersey. We drove our car right onto the boat. Pretty cool, huh? The Atlantic Ocean runs all the way up the coast of New Jersey.

We like to visit Wildwood, New Jersey, because there is a boardwalk with tons of rides. There are lots of motels there, so we stay for a night. Dan and I love the rollercoasters, and it’s a tradition to go on the swings with my mom. That’s pretty much the only ride she goes on. This year was no different. Boring!
The next day we headed north. We made a stop at the lighthouse outside of Wildwood. New Jersey has so many lighthouses that they hold a lighthouse challenge to see how many you can visit throughout the state. Lighthouses aren’t used that often anymore because of new technology that helps sailors navigate. They don’t need lights from one tower to show them the way. But lighthouses are really neat to see. Check out this lighthouse site to see some different ones.

There are a lot of little beach towns driving up the coast. We drove through Stone Harbor, Avalon, Sea Isle, and into Ocean City where we stayed for the rest of the week. Ocean City has a lot of beach houses, great beaches, and a long boardwalk with some rides and great food.
Every time we go to the shore, Dad takes us crabbing in Back Bay. It’s not as much fun as crabbing in the Chesapeake Bay, but we generally catch something for dinner. We also like going to the jetties and searching for starfish. This year, we found a lot of snails. Plus, we always see horseshoe crabs and dig for sand crabs next to the ocean’s edge.

We also took a drive to the New Jersey Pine Barrens, a huge area of undeveloped land. Dad told me a lot about the history of the Pine Barrens on the drive. Apparently, there are some lost villages within the trees in some places! There are a lot of legends about the Pine Barrens, including a story that some kind of monster lives in the forest there. We didn’t see lost villages or a monster, but we saw a lot of frogs, fish, and even a snake when we canoed. It was very different from the wildlife that we’d seen at the beach.
On our next trip through Jersey on our way to New York, Mom says we’ll stop in Edison, NJ. It’s named for none other than Thomas Edison. He had his laboratory in Menlo Park. It’s where he invented hundreds of things, like the phonograph and the lightbulb. Who knew that the greatest American inventor came from Jersey?

Lightbulb

Phonograph

1 COMMENT:

Magda  |  Monday, June 25, 2012
There is another great lighthouse in upstate New York called the Sandy Hook Lighthouse. It’s still in operation. New England has a ton of lighthouses too.
S’More Mountains

Tuesday, September 4, 2012

Just got back from an awesome camping trip. After learning so much history and seeing so many cities on our other trips, I was glad to just chill out with Dad and Dan in our tent.

We went to the Appalachian Trail and saw the Appalachian Mountains. The Appalachian Trail goes from Maine to Georgia, but we hopped on in Maryland and camped there too.

Since we went at the end of summer, it cooled off at night. We set up camp, built a small fire, and made s’mores. Yum!

The best thing about our trip was that Dad went to appalachiantrail.org and looked up games that we could play while we were on the trail. One game was called Fistful of Sounds. Basically, we had to be very, very quiet for a minute, and then tell each other what we heard. Do you think we heard buses, cars beeping, or people on the street? No way! Dan heard an owl! I heard crickets. Dad heard water somewhere nearby.
The next day, when we took a hike, we saw a mother deer with her fawn and a beaver by the water. They didn’t seem to mind us, but I didn’t want to bother them, so we kept on hiking. Dan and I had fun finding a bunch of different leaves to take home to Mom. She has a book that we can use to figure out what type of trees the leaves came from.

Have any of you been to the Appalachian Trail? What did you do there?

2 COMMENTS:

Trevon | Wednesday, September 5, 2012
I’ve never been, but camping sounds fun. Did you see any snakes or frogs like you saw in New Jersey?

Damon | Wednesday, September 5, 2012
I’m glad you asked, Trev! We saw a couple turtles and frogs, but no snakes. I have to say I was pretty happy we didn’t see rattlesnakes or copperheads because they live around the trail.
We took another great trip this weekend—to New England. But first, I wanted to make sure I knew which states are part of New England, so I looked it up online. They are: Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.

That’s a lot of states, so we didn’t get to them all. But I’ll tell you what I learned about the ones that we did visit. My teacher said that New England is the best place to see leaves changing color in the fall, so we went to Vermont on Friday, just so we could drive through the state and see all the trees. My teacher was right! Red, orange, yellow—the leaves were glowing!

We drove through New Hampshire on our way to Boston, and my dad challenged me to figure out the state slogan. That wasn’t hard because we saw lots of cars with New Hampshire plates, and the slogan was right on them. It’s “Live Free or Die.” That’s a pretty strong slogan, don’t you think?
When we got to Boston, my dad kept saying, “New England is a hotbed of American history.” I didn’t know what he was talking about then, but now I realize he must have meant that Boston has a TON of American history! My favorite parts:

• The Boston Tea Party, which started the American Revolutionary War. People were fighting about taxes back then, just the way they do today.

• The USS Constitution, or Old Ironsides, a ship that fought in the War of 1812 that you can visit in Boston. Take a look—doesn’t it look like a pirate ship?

• Old North Church. That’s where the patriots put lanterns to warn everyone that the British were coming—“One if by land, two if by sea.” Paul Revere lived next door!
Most of New England is near the Atlantic Ocean or big rivers, and you know what that means? It means that you can find lots of seafood: fish, clams, lobsters, and more. My favorite was lobster dipped in butter. It was wicked good! (That’s what they say in Boston.) The seafood business is huge in Boston and in Maine too.

I told my friends at school today all about New England. I think we’ll plan a longer trip up there sometime later because there is still a lot to see. I especially want to visit Plymouth Rock, where the Pilgrims landed, and learn what the Salem witch trials were all about.

2 COMMENTS:

Trevon | Tuesday, September 25, 2012
I can’t believe you went to Boston and didn’t see the Boston Common! It’s a big park, very cool. It has a monument to the African American soldiers who fought in the American Civil War!

Magda | Thursday, September 27, 2012
We went to Connecticut once. We saw whaling ships in a place called Old Mystic.

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It was a busy weekend in Baltimore. Dad kept saying it was a small city compared to New York, but there was a lot to do. Our first stop was the harbor to hop on the USS Constellation. The Constellation looks like a pirate ship. In fact, it looked a lot like the USS Constitution that we saw in Boston, but that didn’t matter because I love ships. I wish I could go sailing on a ship like that one day.

Immigrants used to come into the U.S. at Baltimore’s inner harbor, just like they did in New York City. Cargo ships don’t come into the inner harbor. Most shipping takes place in Canton and Fell’s Point, two neighborhoods nearby. The inner harbor is the main tourist draw in Baltimore because of the history, the shops, and the National Aquarium. That’s why we went there.

After lunch, we headed to Fort McHenry for some more history. The fort is shaped like a star, and during the War of 1812 the British tried to invade Baltimore. But we held them off! It was that battle that inspired Francis Scott Key to write the “Star Spangled Banner.” Did you know I had never thought about the lyrics to our National Anthem before, but our trip to Fort McHenry made me realize the importance of those words. Pretty cool.
And do you know another interesting fact about Fort McHenry? Whenever the United States designs a new flag, it flies over Fort McHenry first.

Edgar Allan Poe is Mom’s favorite poet, so she wanted to visit his house and grave, but they were closed. We still heard a lot about him while we were in B-More. He went to a lot of places that are still around and did a lot of his writing in Baltimore. One of his most famous poems is “The Raven,” and Baltimore’s football team is named after it. The team’s mascots are even named Edgar, Allan, and Poe! I read “The Raven” while we were in Baltimore, and if you ask me, it’s kind of spooky, but Poe was a spooky kind of guy.

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1 COMMENT:

**Trevon | Monday, October 8, 2012**

My dad and I went to Baltimore during Sailabration. It was held to celebrate the 200-year anniversary of the War of 1812. All these tall ships were in the harbor, and it felt like we went back in time. You could climb aboard some of them.
What is D.C.?

Tuesday, October 30, 2012

Dad was working today, but Mom took us to Washington, D.C. Since he couldn’t come, Dad gave us a mission: What does D.C. stand for and why?

Well, I knew D.C. stood for District of Columbia, but when Dad asked why, I had no idea! My best guess is that at one time, people used “Columbia” to talk about the United States. If anybody knows, please reply in the comments section.

Another confusing thing about Washington, D.C. is that Mom said we were going to the National Mall. I thought it was a long way to go to shop. But guess what? The National Mall isn’t where you shop. It’s full of monuments and museums.
First, we went to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, which is a long wall filled with names. Mom took a piece of paper and a crayon with her to the wall. She rubbed Dad’s grandfather’s name from the wall onto the paper. I thought that was awesome because I’m named after him. Mom’s going to frame it for my room.

Next, we went to the Washington Monument. It’s like a huge tower, but it’s called an obelisk. People could go inside it before, but it’s damaged now, so we looked at it from the outside. The monument is in honor of George Washington, our first president. It stands near the reflecting pool in the National Mall.

At the other end of the reflecting pool is the Lincoln Memorial. Abraham Lincoln played a huge role in our nation’s history. Lincoln believed that all men were created equal. I think this is what I’ll remember most about Washington, D.C. That’s what we’re all about, right? Well, I believe that anyway.
D.C. isn’t all monuments and memorials. It’s where a lot of work gets done for our country. We visited the White House, where the president lives and works out of the Oval Office. We also went to the Capitol where Congress works. It must be cool to be a senator or representative and to work in a building where laws have been made for more than 200 years. We ran out of time, but next time we visit, we’ll visit the U.S. Supreme Court, another important part of our country.
My parents told me and my brother to stop arguing in the car on our next trip because we were headed to the City of Brotherly Love—Philadelphia. Our aunt was getting married there. She e-mailed us a picture of her and her fiancée in front of a statue that spelled love. It was in a place called Love Park in Philly. Pretty cool.

America’s founding fathers did lots of their work in this city, so before the wedding, we went to Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence was approved. That’s when the United States became its own country. George Washington, Thomas Jefferson…all those guys were in Philadelphia. That’s what we celebrate on July 4 every year. That’s right, folks! It’s not just about fireworks.
We also went to see the Liberty Bell. That is one enormous bell, with a big crack too! It used to be in Independence Hall, but now it’s in a big glass building nearby. The crack is cool, but the main thing about the big bell is that it’s a symbol of freedom, like the flag or the American bald eagle. It’s pretty cool—and did I mention it’s huge?

Philly isn’t just about our independence though. I had heard of Benjamin Franklin before we went, but I didn’t know just how many things that guy did! He’s considered one of the Founding Fathers of our country. He was really smart and studied just about everything, including electricity. He invented the lightning rod. My mom said Ben Franklin also invented the type of glasses that my grandmother wears. They’re called bifocals. She uses them to see up close and far away. Ben Franklin was such a huge part of our history that he’s on the hundred dollar bill! I hope to have one of those in my wallet one day.
Don’t let the name, the City of Brotherly Love, fool you though. It wasn’t just men who did important things in Philly. While I was there, I also learned about an important lady who lived there. Her name was Betsy Ross. Do you know what she did? She made the first American flag—by hand! That’s right. I visited her house where she made the first flag. Look at all the different flags we’ve had.

Where have you all been in Philly?

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**2 COMMENTS:**

**Colton | Tuesday, December 11, 2012**

I went to a Sixers game in Philly with my dad! Did you know the Sixers, the 76ers, got their name because the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1776? Even the basketball team celebrates the Founding Fathers!

**Magda | Tuesday, December 11, 2012**

Don’t forget the Philadelphia Art Museum! We ran up the steps like Rocky. Then we looked out over all of Fairmount Park where all the rowers race down the Schuylkill River.

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GLOSSARY

borough: A small part of a city.
cargo: Load, goods, freight.
commemorate: To honor.
dense: Thick.
enormous: Big, huge.
ferry: Boat that moves people and vehicles across water.
imigrants: People who move to another country.
independence: Freedom.
influenced: Motivated, encouraged.
jetty: Wall of stones that goes into the ocean.
local: Part of a specific location.
mission: Job, task.
monument: Memorial, statue.
operation: Working.
puny: Tiny, very small.
registered: Signed up.
slogan: Phrase, motto.
tourism: The act of sightseeing.
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The Franklin D. Roosevelt Memorial
Washington, D.C.
Look at all my pictures and blog entries from my Northeast trip!

Thanks, Damon