

TRAVEL TALK - MAKING MEMORIES OR JUST SPENDING MONEY?

By Chase Binder

Bud and I sometimes chuckle when we see glossy marketing for high-end vacations. The hook is often “Making Memories!!” as if spending gazillions on a vacation, or even a part of a vacation like a fancy dinner, assures that your memories will be wonderful. In fact, we’ve found that many of the most memorable aspects of our travels emerge from just the opposite—an activity that was low-cost or even free, but somehow connected us with our destination on an intimate level. *These* are the memories that seem to stay with us.

We’ve felt this way for years, but got a recent reminder when a few sets of friends dropped by to see us here in Florida. They were all new to “this side” of Florida, the Southwest Gulf Coast, and had done some exploring before they arrived. One couple had celebrated their anniversary at the latest “in” bistro restaurant in a nearby city. They seemed to have enjoyed the food—but couldn’t mention a single item without commenting on the price and shaking their heads. Great memories? Maybe not so much.

A few days later another couple stopped by with tales of a wonderful afternoon spent at the Naples Botanical Garden. Admission price? Less than a tropical cocktail at an “in” bar. But they wandered among the exhibits and were clearly awed not only by the plants, but also by the displays of sculpture. They took scores of pictures and clearly will remember the hours spent in the warm sun just south of Naples.

Building experiences like this into your travel plans can take a bit of effort and thinking outside of the box. Try reading local newspapers, for example. Bud makes sure we have the local paper on delivery the minute we arrive here in Florida.

That’s how we found out about the Lee County Cracker Day Rodeo, an annual event that showcases young riders in barrel racing, roping and other dramatic and highly entertaining skill events.



Chase Binder

There’s lively country music, great comfort food (the best kettle corn on the planet!) and everyone from toddlers to granddaddies sport their finest western duds and cheer the contestants. All for \$15.



BULL RIDING

Talking to locals is another way to scout out interesting things. A few years ago we were visiting Jupiter, Florida friends who turned us onto the Loggerhead Marine Life Center, which concentrates on the research and the rehabilitation of sea turtles as well as conservation of the marine ecosystem. Admission is free and we spent a very moving afternoon watching the rehabilitation and treatment (even surgery!) of injured and ill sea turtles. I won’t soon forget the magnificent creatures or the devoted volunteers who work so

hard.

But back to food and drink. Instead of heading for the fanciest restaurant, why not try a local activity like one of the many “taste of...” events that seem to be popping up? These events showcase scores of local chefs and eateries in a festive atmosphere, often for the price of a single mid-range meal. Meet people, learn about local cuisine... have fun! Chili bake-offs, seafood festivals—it’s all out there. My guess is that you’ll come away with a memory or two. Just check the local papers.

Memories also can be made at parks and recreation areas. Sure, Disney World, Universal Studios and Busch Gardens have their place, but why not look for a less commercial and much more wallet-friendly experience like kayaking through the mangroves at Sanibel’s Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge. Our kids have been to Disney a few times, but our afternoon kayaking on Sanibel has a special place in their memories. Finding activities like these is as easy as googling state and national parks wherever you are. Pick an interest—hiking, wildlife, seashore, local history—



MOM AND GIRL

and take it from there.

Don’t get us wrong, though. We aren’t opposed to a very special destination or night out—luxury can be very compelling. We’re just saying don’t count on dollars alone to create the kind of memory that can bring a smile to your face a few years down the road.

Chamber of Commerce Announces Bow Members of Student Leadership Class of 2017

By Kristina Carlson

The Greater Concord Chamber of Commerce announces that 26 students have been selected to take part in the 2017 Capital Area Student Leadership (CASL) program, a leadership and civics program for high school sophomores in the Greater Concord area, offered annually by the Chamber.

The Bow students are:

Samuel Berube, Elisabeth Hunter and Andrew Ralston

CASL encourages students to become active and effective par-

ticipants and future leaders in their schools and communities through exposure to the historical, cultural, environmental and civic aspects of the Greater Concord area.

Beginning with an orientation in March, CASL is a series of four unique sessions focused on an important topic within the community. Using Concord as the “classroom,” these sessions offer firsthand knowledge and provide opportunities for dialogue with established leaders.

Through field trips, hands-on experiences and teacher-facilitated discussions, students gain special insights into the functions behind a working community.



BARREL RACING

