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MY SUMMER VACATION FROM HELL

BY LISA MILDON ([HTTP://COFFEEHOUSEWRITERS.COM/AUTHOR/LISA-MILDON/](http://coffeehousewriters.com/author/lisa-mildon/)) / SEPTEMBER 11, 2017 / 501 / 1

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Or: You Get What You Need, Not What You Want

I had big plans. So many things I wanted to see and do while on vacation. It's the usual routine. I figure out a destination, plot out a course on Roadtrippers.com (<https://roadtrippers.com/>), then see what activities pop up on their site. I've been doing this the last 3 years, since my husband and I decided to start doing road trips again. (Now that we can afford to.) This year's epic road trip destination would be Rapid City, South Dakota. I wanted to see Mount Rushmore and Crazy Horse now that I was an adult and could better appreciate the effort in the making of this monument. Plus, there are so many beautiful hiking trails in the area, I wanted to flex those hiking muscles as much as I could.

The first day of our trip arrived. I had all of my maps, vacation apps, and plans all lined up. Our reservations for our first stop and final destination were in place. What could go wrong?

“ *This is a service announcement. Never, and I mean NEVER ask that question. You are tempting fate, poking fun at the powers that be, waking up Mr. Murphy for a wild ride. Unless you love mayhem, stop now!*

The craziness started the first night we arrived at our temporary campgrounds. I had reserved a nice, full-hookups campsite so that we wouldn't sweat to death in the camper. When we arrived at our night's layover, I found that our reservation was nowhere to be seen and all that was available was a primitive site. Well, after 8+ hours of driving on "riveting" highways with nothing but cornfields to watch, my husband and I did not fancy another hour or more of this thrilling drive. So, we ambled onto our campsite but were pleasantly surprised by the cool breeze blowing off the lake. Our overnight stay wasn't so bad with the windows all open in the camper. Did we dodge a bullet? Yes, for the moment, but the saga continues.

Most of our drive into South Dakota was uneventful...that is until about 20 miles from our destination when a hail storm from Hell hit us. We started seeing some people pulled over taking pictures of the clouds. I giggled to myself that these folks must never see inclement weather like us Okies do. Oh boy, talk about a cocky comment! That's when we hit the storm. Golf ball sized hail began to pummel the camper and truck into oblivion. The hail was so heavy that it caused white-out conditions!! We had to pull over to keep safe. In the truck cabin, it sounded like World War II. The banging and crashing of hail was so loud and rapid that I kept envisioning machine guns hammering our poor truck. Our two pups chimed in with their own frightened song of whimpers and panting while I kept chanting to them, "You're alright, you're ok. We're right here." No amount of words or treats consoled our two rat terriers. They felt they were being shot at as well. I'm sure if anyone could see into our truck, the calamity they would witness would be very similar to a Looney Tunes cartoon. The truck rocking as I tried reaching back to calm them, all the while both my husband and I looking for tornadoes or any other nasty weather. I couldn't believe my eyes as I tried to look out the window at all the hail. I even tried to take a picture (Yes, I know...bad idea), but was getting pummeled by the hail as I quickly rolled the window back up. After a nerve-wracking 10 minutes, we decided to make a break for it as the hail was finally easing up.




Blurry photo from our truck of the hail storm

Shaken with adrenaline pumping in our veins, we arrived at the KOA only to finally see the damage. The truck hood and roof were dinged pretty good, and it also suffered a nearly foot-long crack in the windshield. As I hopped out of the passenger side of the truck, I couldn't see much damage to the side of the camper. Only when I looked up at the front did I see the front panel with what looked like hundreds of hammered dings from a ball ping hammer. The trim was obliterated but still intact. However, the driver's side panel and roof were another story altogether. The side looked like some Hammersmith decided to practice his craft on it. Chips of paint gone, siding severely warped in places and best yet, the bathroom air vent was shattered into a million pieces along with the fan. Oh, look! Another storm on the way! I quickly ran into the KOA office and explained my dilemma. The owner handed me a couple of repairmen's business cards that would come onsite to fix our poor camper's gaping hole. Whoosh! To our rescue, a lovely fellow put a new cap on our vent (we'd have to get the rest fixed once we got back home) and sealed up our poor little camper's ugly boo-boo just as it started to sprinkle. Surely, this was the last of our bad luck on our vacation??

Alas, that was not the case at all. After a day of recovery and rest, we went on a lovely hike. Both of us noticed that the front wheel of the truck sounded like the bearing was going out. Sigh...More money? My husband found a very nice mechanic just down the hill from our campsite. Would only take about an hour to fix the

wheel bearing and not be horribly expensive...yeah right! Ian takes the truck for what we thought would be a straightforward repair, when BANG...the brakes go out as he's going downhill! He deftly maneuvers the truck and gets it to stop before rolling out onto a busy highway, missing what could have been a nasty collision. After getting the truck towed to the repair shop, the damages are eventually learned. The wheel bearing did go out, along with the front brakes, rotors, and caliper on the driver's side. The time we would lose (3 days) was bad enough, but the nearly \$1300 repair bill was the icing on this proverbial shit sandwich.

So, despite all the plans of hikes and sightseeing every day, I spent the next few days reading, coloring, and lounging around. As I had just finished another semester of college, this restful break was warranted. Yes, I was shocked from these events and even more so stressed over the cost, but I always tend to overdo it on vacation. I try to cram as much into a week as I rarely have much time off between a full-time job, school and my writing gig. I usually end up exhausted and mentally frayed from all of the activity. I managed to relax and allow my mind to rest. Something very rare indeed for me! So perhaps all of this chaos was a good thing? Now that I reflect a bit on this calamitous vacation, it may not have been the vacation I wanted, but it was the one I needed.

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Quirky and offbeat geek girl who loves the magic that words and stories bring. I'm an experienced technical writer and IT professional that is finally reaching for the stars by getting my creative writing degree. I've been an avid reader since an early age. I love to play PC games and obsessed with traveling. My husband and I have two adorable rat terriers and 2 kitties (all rescues).

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[...] while looking for a more permanent place to live. Recently, however, we were in a hellish hailstorm that ended up totaling our feisty, little camper. Now the pressure is on to find a home by November [...]

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