

# Going to the Sun Road at the West Glacier National Park Montana

The sky is the limit and it is very true about Montana, the Big Sky Country, home to some of America's most beautiful skyline drives and an unobstructed skyline.

We took a trip to Glacier National Park last September. After a good night's sleep, we woke up with the bright light peeping through our cabin's window. We were unbelievably lucky to be waking up to such a spectacular sunrise. The blue sky and its reflection on the water turned the whole atmosphere azure. The clouds were playing hide and seek with the sun and the swans were creating ripples in the water by dipping their heads up and down.

Watching this panorama was a thing of beauty. We spent some time by the lake and after breakfast we were getting ready for a Mountain Majesty Tour. This tour starts at West Glacier, travels along Lake McDonald, and hugs the cliffs up to where it crosses the Continental Divide at Logan Pass and then heads down to St Mary Valley.

This scenic bus tour was a day-long trip. The bus carried 8-10 people and it was moving through the mountains and the higher the altitude the more breath-taking the scenery became. The bus was moving up with wide curved turns at every corner and stopped regularly at lookout points so we could take some pictures and stretch our legs a little bit and just enjoy every bit of the scenery.

Our hearts seemed to stop when the bus came close to the U-shaped Hanging Valley where glacial ice leaves a distinctive signature on the landscape and beautiful waterfalls follow the patterns of the nature of the glacier. The journey reached its highest point when we crossed the Continental Divide at Logan Pass.

We stopped at the Continental Divide, where the tourist centre was bustling with visitors and the mountains stood around us all tall and grand. It was windy and chilly, and my fingers were getting numb, making it hard to take pictures. We were about 7000 feet high and it was scary and heart-stopping to look below and around.

When we stood at the edge of the mountain-top, the big blue sky and the mountains were all we could see. Some mountain peaks were still covered with snow. The Mountain Majesty Tour really captures the beauty and grandeur of this landscape.

After the stop at the Continental Divide, the bus headed down into the cirques of the St Mary Valley for a lunchbreak. Along the ride, we saw some goats and a grizzly bear up on the mountains. The grizzly bear was so high up that it looked like a black dot, even with binoculars.

The National Park Service celebrates its centenary on August 25, 2016.

By Aeman Tehseen Rasul

# Unsocial by choice

I am not an unsocial woman, trust me, but my mental peace is important to me, so important that I can easily shun individuals who leave me sad and irate. I do not attend large, boisterous 'desi' parties anymore. I carefully choose my company. My conclusion from three years of attending such parties is that most people arrange and attend these get-togethers to gossip about other people's failures and inadequacies, to flaunt their own culinary accomplishments, and to flash their new wardrobes, of course.

I have realised over time that I am a complete misfit at these 'desi' parties. I do not fit into the stifling status quo - I am not a great cook, I wear very casual clothes, and I am not an expert gossipmonger.

Also, I enjoy talking about world politics, technology, climate change, and healthy eating more than I like to talk about divorce, infertility, break-ups, extra-marital affairs, clothes, jewellery, and the latest Bollywood flicks.

If I am not a misfit, then who is?

I also do not know how to handle certain situations. I do not know how to react when someone older than me lectures about the right age to have a baby. What do you really say to a person who tells you indirectly that your biological clock is ticking? But now that I am a mother, you would think that the likelihood of having to listen to such a lecture is slim, but no! If I still hung out with those people, they perhaps would now be making long statements about how lonely my daughter must be without a sibling.

Once at a 'desi' party, I stared in dismay at one woman when she sneered at another woman for not having a child. The woman who was sneered at actually failed to conceive after years of

trying. Glum cast across the poor woman's face; her entire weekend was perhaps ruined by that one incident.

I have heard stories about childless couples, and how some Bangladeshi parents do not allow their children to go near them lest they bring misfortune upon the children. Unimaginable as it may sound, but such incidents do happen among Bangladeshis here in the U.S. too. Even after having lived and studied in the West for years and decades, many of us possess minds that are heavily cramped with irrational beliefs and superstitions.

I like to stay away from toxic people. So, I do not feel bad at all about my present situation, where I mingle with only a handful of families. Except for one, none of these families are from Bangladesh. And that is fine by me.

I think when I mingle with people different from me, it widens my horizons. Association with people from different cultures, races, ages, and lifestyles enriches a person. From an hour-long conversation, you can actually learn something that you had never known before. You come to know about a new recipe, a word, an idiom, a custom, or a ritual. It also helps dissolve prejudices and stereotypes that people may have about certain culture, country or religion.

When you hang out with people from other cultures, you also do not have to use terms like 'bhai' or 'bhabi' to address people. People do not mind when you call them by their names. You cannot do that with Bangladeshis.

Funnily enough, in a foreign country, even a man old enough to be my uncle becomes my 'bhai,' and a middle-aged woman my 'bhabi.' I am allergic to the word 'bhabi,' by the way. It has been overused to the extent that it has lost all

its past charm!

So, when someone tries to call me 'bhabi,' I politely ask him or her to either call me 'apu' or just by my name.

I have seen and heard many unpleasant things during my life abroad, which have led me to believe that I would be much better off without negative people, people who make me feel low, bitter, unproductive, and angry.

Shafia (not her real name) is a homemaker and mother of two. She lives in Toronto, Canada. In an online conversation with her, she was telling me that at an Eid party a few weeks ago, a woman said to her, "You look like someone who controls her husband all the time!"

When an upset and astonished Shafia asked the woman why she thought so, the reply was, "Just a gut feeling!"

The incident left Shafia agitated, and she was asking me if I thought the same of her.

These small incidents happen all the time in the Bangladeshi community abroad; people pass comments without a second thought. I think some women derive sadistic pleasure from hurling abusive remarks at other women, the targets generally being calm creatures of soft nature.

There is no denying that there are kind, courteous, and sensible people in the immigrant Bangladeshi community, it is just that most of the people I have come across belong to the other end of the spectrum. Or who knows, maybe my luck has disfavoured me!

In the end, I think I would rather spend my time alone or with my family than mingle with people who fill me with negative feelings. In a life away from home, unwanted emotional stress is the last thing I want to deal with.

By Wara Karim

# Has Najibeh married an Ajibeh?

These were just catty comments from jealous colleagues who could not get married soon enough like her. She married her cousin from South India. It's just that he was a simple young man and did not know his drawing room manners well enough. Add the twins and the situation just wasn't helped. You had to have two mangoes instead of one each on the table.

She was dressed in silver and white, many times over, "She's been for Hajj thrice," according to the mother of Mariam and her brother, Imaad, ever busy with business ideas. How is the marketing manager, she asks with a laugh, as she tosses her new set of clothes towards me.

But the years have passed and much has happened. The daughters have grown up and finally gotten out of the idea of not sleeping at night. One of them had won a coveted prize in photography.

Complicating matters further was the fact that the girls had been twins, born from one egg, and the boy who followed them in the family looked like some Middle-Eastern personality, and did well in business and he had dyslexia to start with.

He often got belted as a boy, because the mother did not realise it. She beat the child as she was frustrated and did not understand that he had a problem. The family knew better, especially Amineh, the head of the family and respected by all who knew her and her family.

The boy, Najibeh's husband, got a diamond necklace on getting married to the family, to keep for their son. The girl, Najibeh, felt like dancing all through the broken engagement. She was so happy with the prospect, of the new experiment. Maybe she was plain giddy with the new adventure—what ever that maybe.

She had expensive bags to give away to

friends like me. Before she left for Pakistan, they sold their property and were well equipped. After that, her boyfriend had money enough to come and see the house where they were getting married. Amineh Ispahani did not approve of this idea. I was thick as thieves with Najibeh and her parents. They told me stories of their courtship and details of knowing each other. I even put "mehendi" on my hands.

Najibeh took money from her friends, when he was in trouble, when she was in Rawalpindi, and she thought little of it. She was a happy go lucky girl, basically. She meant no harm. Once she nearly married a Maulvi, I believe, according to reports in Dhaka. She was simply a Pollyanna. But she was loveable and caring. And her story, while now fragmented, still holds a ton of significance.

By Fayza Haq