

AMERICAN SPIRIT WEST

4-H TRAVEL EXPERIENCE

In June 2016, thirty-two youth in 9th grade and up, accompanied by four adult advisors, participated in an eleven day educational experience that focused on outdoor adventures in seven National Park Service units.



National Park Units:

Ice Age National Scenic Trail

St. Croix National Scenic
Riverway

Badlands National Park

Mt. Rushmore National
Memorial

Yellowstone National Park

Grand Teton National Park

Devil's Tower National
Monument



Evaluation Methods:

Journals written during the
experience

Verbal de-briefing responses
during the experience

Facebook group posts during
and after the experience

Post-experience online
evaluation (to be repeated six
months after the experience)

Intended Outcomes and Evaluation Results:

Outcome: Youth learn how to work as a team and get to know themselves better.

- The concept "I learned to work as a team with others I didn't know well and built leadership and teamwork skills" was mentioned in 46.2% of reflection pieces.
- The concept "I pushed my limits/exceeded my own expectations/met challenges/operated outside of my comfort zone" was mentioned in 15.4% of reflection pieces.
- The concept "I created new friendships while sharing adventures and experiencing new things" was mentioned in 46.2% of reflection pieces.

Outcome: Youth gain outdoor skills, including hiking & camping.

- 100% of youth respondents strongly agree or agree with the statement "I am confident choosing a hike that is appropriate for me." (increase of 23.5%)
- 100% of youth respondents strongly agree or agree with the statement "I understand how to plan and prepare for a hike." (increase of 64.7%)
- 94% of youth respondents strongly agree or agree with the statement "I am comfortable camping in a tent." (increase of 11.6%)

Outcome: Youth gain an appreciation of natural resources.

- 100% of youth respondents strongly agree or agree with the statement “I have an appreciation for the lands set aside for future generations.” (increase of 17.7%)
- The concept “I learned to appreciate the beauty of our country and the beauty of the national parks” was mentioned in 28.8% of reflection pieces.

Outcome: Youth learn about the foundation of the National Parks.

- 100% of youth respondents strongly agree or agree with the statement “I understand the mission of the National Park Service.” (increase of 58.8%)
- 100% of youth respondents strongly agree or agree with the statement “I understand the complexity of managing National Park lands for many uses.” (increase of 29.4%)
- The concept “I learned the importance of preserving the national parks and am inspired to get more involved in the parks” was mentioned in 32.7% of reflection pieces.

Other Evaluation Results

88% of youth respondents reported they were very satisfied with their experience; 12% were satisfied.

Youth participants appreciated the amount of “unstructured” time provided during the experience, during which they could make their own choices about how to spend that time (within safe parameters!)

100% of youth respondents would recommend the experience to other youth!



Direct Quotes from Youth Participants:

“The trip required a lot of teamwork, so it helped build communication skills and how to interact with others.”

“The most valuable experience was learning about the different parks and how they are working to preserve these places for future generations.”

“I realized my goal in life should be to seek inner serenity first, and whether I change the world or not would not be as important.”

“The Adventure of a Lifetime!”

