

INTRODUCTION

Our trip described in the summary below was an amazing educational and inspirational adventure. I am currently sharing my video presentation of the trip (produced by G-Star School of Arts, Film, and Animation) in my school author presentations, along with my seven books (Luke's Adventure Series) which are currently in the 112 Palm Beach County elementary school libraries.

My video presentation and future book called "Luke's Eastern Seaboard Trip" is in keeping with my mission (and Luke's) to teach compassion, responsibility for domestic animals, protection of wildlife and their habitats, the conservation of earth's natural beauty, preservation of history, a love for adventure, and the importance of making a difference by leaving a positive footprint and/or paw print for all to follow.

We can't wait to share our video presentation, "Luke's Eastern Seaboard Trip" with the readers of "Luke's Adventure Series." Please call to book Susan and Luke for speaking engagements in schools and organizations

LUKE'S EASTERN SEABOARD TRIP Susan Beattie

The best way to tell a story and do the research to write a non-fiction children's book, about the beginning of our country, the efforts being made to conserve its natural beauty, and preserve its history, is by exploring the places firsthand. I started by plotting a map of the places we wanted to experience on our four month long, 5000 + mile road trip, from Palm Beach, Florida along the East Coast of the United States, through the original 13 colonies, and to the furthest tip of Nova Scotia, Canada and back home.



To make our trip comfortable, I designed a special interior layout, and began the work to customize an all black Mercedes Sprinter van with white paw print interior. It's been dubbed the "Luke-Mobile" and was designed for solar power, it's own hot and cold water system and battery stored power that enabled us to park on the edge of the ocean, marsh, lakes, and in forests. The van was transformed inside so that Luke had a custom built raised seat right behind me to enjoy a 360 degree view of everywhere we explored. He also had his own bed with all the conveniences of a "tricked out dog house on wheels".

We set out on the road in the beginning of July. Luke and I experienced many firsts on our journey... including searching for fairy holes in Nova Scotia...combing the beach for prehistoric shark teeth on the shores of Charleston...digging for Cape May diamonds on the Jersey Shore...and clamming in Chatham on Cape Cod. We hiked along the Charles River...on The Cliff Walk that winds between the edge of the ocean and the beautifully restored Newport historical cottages...along Lake Champlain...and climbed up through Acadia National Park. We rode on a gondola to the top of a mountain near Stowe... on ferries to Shelter Island, the Hamptons, and Nantucket... on a lobster boat off Cape Breton and on a coal-fired steamboat down the Mystic River. We had lunch at the dog friendly historic Bannister's Wharf and were invited for a sail in Newport Harbor. The smells, sights, and sounds were all new to Luke and some were new to me. As the sun set one evening, Luke perked up to the sound of a fog horn and we saw the flashing beam of Castle Hill Lighthouse.

We visited the towns of St Augustine, Plymouth, Mystic Seaport, and Jamestown to see their reenactments and learn about the first explorers, traders, settlers, colonists, artists, authors, song writers, whalers, and ship builders who came to America and their impact on history. We saw the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia...and when seeing the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island in New York, it made us wonder about Luke's own heritage as people often asked what breed he is when they'd meet him. I'd usually get about 5 guesses of breeds and because Luke is black, the most common assumption was that he's a labrador. This led us to do research about the origin of Labrador Retrievers and what they were bred to do. We decided to do a DNA test on Luke and ordered the packet to do so.

Along our trip, we encountered Native Americans and First Nations who have a grateful, respectful, and protective tie to the land. The nature of this tie is one of stewardship more than ownership. They feel they have a responsibility for the land, the sea, and all of the creatures that inhabit the land with them.

We observed how present day communities along the coast are working hard on the restoration of eco systems such as the Charles and Hudson rivers, Delaware and Savannah estuaries, Boston and New York harbors, and ocean clean-ups. We witnessed the importance of conservation and preservation of wildlife and their habitats, as well as the restoration and preservation of historical monuments, forts, and buildings, especially in Washington, DC. We received special permission to have Luke accompany me to museums, aquariums, and wildlife sanctuaries where we came close to whales, seals, puffins, and other wildlife.

In Nova Scotia, we toured a sustainable seaweed harvesting and processing operation and learned that farmers, for centuries, have used seaweed to organically fertilize their crops and that it has nutritional values as food for animals and humans. We visited the Halifax Maritime Museum and concluded that shipwrecks, often caused by hurricanes, are important time capsules of history when their artifacts are retrieved, studied, and displayed for all to see. We were fascinated to learn that there are so many outer i

lands along the eastern seaboard (Sable Island, NS, Assateague Island, Maryland, Georgia's Cumberland Island) where wild horses from Spanish shipwrecks continue to survive in their protected habitat. It was such an exciting experience to wake up on Assateague Island's National Seashore with Luke peering out of the van surrounded by wild ponies.

As summer turned into fall, and the leaves began changing, we visited a cranberry bog, pumpkin patch, corn field, and picked apples and pears from an orchard. We returned to one of our favorite towns, Newport, Rhode Island and we attended a Fall festival at the Norman Bird Sanctuary.

Upon our arrival back home in Florida, we went to the mailbox to get the DNA results of the ancestry test we did for Luke. We opened the envelope and found out what breeds are in his genetic heritage. We can finally answer the question when asked, "What breed is Luke?" Of course the results will be revealed in this new book scheduled to be released in 2019.

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