

Arkansas, the Foreign Country

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I have been to many different places in my life, and lived in many different places as well. I have seen the city of San Diego in California. I have been to South Dakota and seen all the pig farms. I have visited the Bahamas and watched all the locals trying to sell hair braiding and taxi rides. I have toured Mexico and seen the Mexican military at check points every fifteen miles on major roads. I have lived in Iraq, where I witnessed what a third world country really is. I have lived in Denver, Colorado, where the Rocky Mountains are always on the horizon. I have also lived in North Carolina, where the Atlantic Ocean was only a ten minute drive away. Out of all the places I have been, Arkansas is where I made my biggest discovery of all. Arkansas is significantly different from the rest of the world because of their wildlife, their people, and their school system.

Living in Colorado and moving to rural Arkansas was a major culture shock. Living in Arkansas was like living in a foreign country. Everything was so different from what I have ever seen or experienced before. One major difference is their wildlife. The forest is full of locusts that make extremely loud noises. The sound is a continuous chirping, like crickets echoing, and it never stops. There are wild boars that tear up fields using their tusks. There are twenty pound rats they call opossums. These hideous things are the rodent version of vultures and are full of disease. While living there, I also have seen flying squirrels, owls, and armadillos. Arkansas also has many different kinds of poisonous snakes. One summer afternoon, I decided to go fishing. After fishing for a while, I got a bite and reeled in my line. To my surprise, I pulled in a Cottonmouth Water Moccasin, which is a poisonous snake. It's always good practice to kill poisonous snakes to prevent them from biting people. After I killed the snake, I noticed its belly was still moving. Being the curious person that I am, I cut open the belly of the snake and found

a live catfish inside. I felt bad for the fish. So I pulled it out of the belly of the snake, put the fish in the water, and watched it swim away. Among all the places I have been, I have never seen nature like they have in Arkansas. While I was living in North Carolina, I didn't see anything except big mosquitoes. When I lived in Colorado, all I seen was mostly birds and squirrels. While I was living in Iraq, the only wildlife they had were scorpions and spiders. Since I have been in Minnesota, the only critters I have seen are rabbits, birds and squirrels. Arkansas' nature makes them extremely dissimilar from anywhere else.

Arkansas' wildlife is not the only thing that sets it apart from the rest of the world. The people who reside there are different from people everywhere else. They have no respect for animals. Using their vehicles to hit critters that are trying to cross the road is considered a game. There are many dead animals next to the road; probably a result of that sick game they play. People own excessive amounts of pets and don't care for them. The dogs are covered in ticks, and the cats are wild and mean from lack of attention. The pets they don't want are dropped off in the middle of nowhere to fend for themselves. While living in Arkansas, I was driving on a dirt road far from everything and saw a beer box in the ditch that appeared to be trash. It had been taped shut and I wondered why. I stopped and opened the box to discover a litter of kittens left for dead. I couldn't believe somebody would do such an awful thing. I brought them home and my family and I raised them ourselves. Anywhere else I have been there are laws that prohibit owning too many pets and protect animals against cruelty. Apparently, those laws must not apply in that state. Any other place in the world animals are loved and respected by people. Around the world there are non-profit animal rescue organizations, which rely strictly on the kindness of people to volunteer their time to help animals in need. While walking through my backyard in Minnesota, I found an abandoned litter of rabbits behind a bush. They were too

young to survive on their own. So I found an animal rescue organization in Minneapolis and brought the rabbits there. Everybody that worked there worked for free including the veterinarian. They took the rabbits and raised them until they could survive on their own. I didn't have to pay anything and the rabbits lived. I don't understand why people in Arkansas have the mentality towards animals that they don't matter. It really makes them a different kind of people.

Besides the people that live there, another major difference between Arkansas and the rest of the world is Arkansas' school system. The school system in Arkansas still uses corporal punishment. Corporal punishment is using physical abuse to rectify a student's bad behavior. Being tardy three times, being disruptive, or skipping class would mean that student would get swats. A swat is a spanking with a large wooden paddle, sometimes with holes for less wind resistance. Being a new student, I was unfamiliar with those facts. After my third time being tardy, the teacher called me out in to the hallway. She then asked me to take my wallet out of my pocket, hand it to her, and put my hands on the wall. I was very confused until I seen that paddle in her hand. I looked at her dead in the eyes and told her that she is not going to hit me with that paddle. Because I refused the swats, they sent me home. The fact they sent me home tells me they don't have an alternative punishment. Outside Arkansas, school systems are better. In Colorado, they have less barbaric tools for misbehaving students. If a student breaks the rules, that student could face a number of different consequences. That student might get in-school suspension, detention, or have to copy page-by-page from a dictionary until the student's hand is throbbing. While walking through the halls of a high school in Colorado, I had a piece of paper that was garbage. I crumbled it up and tried to shoot it, like a basketball, into the garbage can. I missed and didn't pick it up. A teacher saw what I did and made me go throw it away. I went back and picked it up, looked at the teacher, who I thought wasn't paying attention, and tried to

shoot it again. As I watched the crumbled paper miss the trash can again, the teacher came over and handed me a vacuum and told me I was going to spend my lunch period vacuuming the halls. I never tried to shoot crumbled paper in to the trash again after that. When I tell people about Arkansas' corporal punishment, they are amazed some schools in America still practice that type of discipline. Arkansas is a very unique place.

When I think about the places I have been and everything I have seen, Arkansas stands apart from the rest. I have seen Mt. Rushmore in South Dakota. I have been to Las Vegas, Nevada and seen the strip lit up at night. I have taken a four day cruise on the Atlantic Ocean. I have been to the Hoover Dam and the Grand Canyon. I have also toured Canada, Germany, and Kuwait. However, Arkansas is extremely different from anywhere else in the world because of their extensive nature, their abnormal lack of human compassion, and their behind-the-times school system.