



Our Great Big Backyard

Laura Bush , Jenna Bush Hager , Jacqueline Rogers (Illustrations)

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#1 New York Times bestselling authors former First Lady Laura Bush and her daughter Jenna Bush Hager have created an exuberant picture book tribute to our national parks and the importance and fun of connecting with nature.

Our Great Big Backyard follows Jane, whose plans of spending the summer playing video games with her friends are dashed when her parents announce that her family is going on a road trip to national parks around the country. Yet somewhere between the Everglades and Big Bend National Park, things begin to change.

Jane starts paying attention to the magnificent sights and spends less time looking at her screen. The stunning views open up her imagination as she and her brother see everything that nature has to offer.

And the more Jane discovers, the more she realizes how much there is to love about the outdoors—whether she's in a national park across the country or right in her own backyard.

Our Great Big Backyard Details

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Author : Laura Bush , Jenna Bush Hager , Jacqueline Rogers (Illustrations)

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From Reader Review Our Great Big Backyard for online ebook

Lynda says

Jane shares her adventures on a long family summer vacation road trip that stops at several widespread parks.

"I like the map with the red marker showing where they traveled. I like how they sang songs in the cars, I like that they ride a mule and a raft and see Old Faithful." - V, age 4

Papaphilly says

I loved this book. It is a throw back to times of simple travel and seeing the country with the modern twist of not having internet connectivity. Sometimes the old way is better and sometimes you have to experience it to understand. It is for young children, but I think older children will like this book also.

Pamela Powell says

Fun illustrations accompany this unabashed commercial for the U.S. National Park System. Jane is planning to spend the summer hanging out with her friends and is not happy when her parents decide on a road trip. However, while crossing the U.S. And visiting the parks, she begins to enjoy herself and even to appreciate the natural wonders. Well done.

wildct2003 says

Fun adventure story. Look for "hidden" initials and numbers in the book.

Jill says

LOVED this book! Great message for children about stepping back from the technology age and enjoying our natural wonders. Great illustrations! Liked the map of their travels and the list of national parks by state in the back. Nicely done by two ladies I admire!

Janina says

Great story. It has fun illustrations and is newer and relevant for kids today. It's about a girl who makes summer plans with her friends, but only to be squashed by her parents surprise summer road trip. At first she sticks to her tablet and parents phone to pass the time. soon she realizes just how much fun she can have

though without technology. With her little brother and imagination she ends up having the best summer ever and even has a camp out with her friends when she gets back. Great book to get kids in class motivated to leave the phones and computers behind to use their imagination to have fun.

Emilee says

The idea of this book is great and the illustrations are cool but I was hoping for a little more depth while still being appropriate for younger kids. I love the authors and will look for more kids books from them in the future.

Alice says

3 stars Celebrities (aka former First Lady and Daughter) are always getting book deals. Why, because celebrity sells. Are Laura Bush and Jenna Bush Hager particularly good authors...not really. did I like the attempt. YES! It is a great message, just anyone off of the street could have written it! The illustrations are perfect. The reason this book is any good is Jacqueline Rogers. She should have her name in large large print...but she isn't a celebrity so...it won't sell.... I Like that it promotes the national parks system at www.findyourpark.com

Katie Carter says

A great message for children about stepping back from the technology age and enjoying our natural wonders. I love that there is a list of National Parks in the back for reference.

Samantha says

Jane is initially disappointed by her family's plan to spend their summer on a road trip visiting National Parks, but she eventually sets down her tablets and connects with nature. By the time the trip is over, Jane is ready to share a piece of her summer with her friends back home by hosting a campfire sleepover.

I like the idea here (explore nature, visit America's parks) and the way that features of certain parks are highlighted, though the characterization of Jane and her friends is a bit over the top. The text is simple enough to be read aloud which is a great feature of this book.

The back matter is pretty useful and lists a few places to explore state by state in addition to some websites. The pen, ink, watercolor, gouache, and marker illustrations do a great job of creating interest in the famous features of a few National Parks and the map of the United States on the inside front and back cover is perfection.

Recommended summer read for families and grades K-3+.

Michelle Lancaster says

CHILDREN'S FICTION, AGES 4-8

Laura Bush and Jenna Bush Hager

Illustrated by Jacqueline Rogers

Our Great Big Backyard

HarperCollins

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May 10, 2016

Jane and her friends have their electronic summer all planned out—movies, YouTube, and video games—until Jane's parents ruin everything with their dorky Great American Road Trip. Disappointed, frustrated, Jane says goodbye to her friends on the last day of school. As the trip begins, Jane's nose is in her iPad. She fails to appreciate the manatees at Everglades National Park and the Mark Twain lookalike riverboat captain on the Mississippi.

The next stop, however, is Big Bend National Park, where Jane is impressed by the Texas night sky. A “meteor shower lit up the sky like fireworks,” Jane says, “brighter than any screen I had ever seen.” Jane and her family go on to play astronauts in the desert, tightrope walkers at Grand Canyon National Park, and cowboys at Yosemite National Park, where El Capitan makes Jane feel “really small but really great, too, like I was part of something big.”

Our Great Big Backyard by Laura Bush and Jenna Bush Hager is a sweet celebration of America's National Park Service, which observes its centennial anniversary in August 2016. This book encourages a love for, and pride in, the nation's most valuable assets, and inspires children to get out from behind their devices and explore the outdoors.

Jacqueline Rogers's pen, ink, watercolor, gouache, and marker illustrations are a cute accompaniment to the simple text. She includes playful elements that adults will appreciate as well, such as the “43” stenciled on dad's golf bag. Especially heartwarming are Baxter the beagle, who appears in every illustration, and the stowaway chipmunk who hitches a ride in the family's minivan. The front and back endpapers are a colorful map of the United States depicting the route of the family's road trip and the locations of the national park sites they visited.

Our Great Big Backyard includes a helpful appendix with a comprehensive list of National Park Service sites in the United States, listed by state or territory, proving that there are, indeed, “cool places in your own backyard.” For more information and to plan your own Great American Road Trip, please visit www.findyourpark.com and www.everykidinapark.gov. Happy summer, y'all!

Originally published by Lone Star Literary Life.

Elaine says

The epiphany happened in Texas.

Hapzydeco says

The Bush ladies show that here is a world beyond one's iPhone or iPad. Coupled with Jacqueline Rogers' outstanding illustrations, the authors present the essence of camping as a family adventure. But one wonders how many youngsters will experience a visit to a national park in their lifetime.

Julie Suzanne says

Very contemporary story about a kid who had grand plans of being on her iPad all summer long only to find out that her parents had planned the road trip of the century. She gradually realizes how awesome all of the national parks are after she wastes a few of the experiences being on her iPad instead of enjoying the sights. It's a great summer read with elementary kids.

Taylor says

Jane had the whole summer planned out, but then she got the news she was taking a road trip. she was disappointed she would not be watching tv with her friends. she did not like the idea at first and was very sad. they first went to Florida but she wouldn't let herself have fun. but that all changed at big bend national park. after that she had so much fun exploring different parks across the country. she still missed her crew but was having a blast with her family. she then started writing her friends and sending them post cards. when she got home she had all of her friends over to camp.

I love this book and how it encourages kids to enjoy camping and the outdoors.

I could use this book in my class to talk about state parks around the country and encourage my student to get outside more.
