

Unit 4 A Sunshine Break

Wheels of Adventures

A month ago, I flew to San Francisco, feeling excited and a little scared that I was traveling without my parents. My only companions would be my best friend, Dan, and my wheelchair. I wasn't sure what kinds of challenges we would face, but Dan assured me that we would be the coolest travelers in Northern California. When we finally landed in San Francisco, the Golden Gate City, Dan shouted, "Let's get rolling!"

Known for its rolling hills, the city has an extensive public transportation system. I was disappointed to find out that the historic cable cars, which I had been looking forward to riding, do not accommodate wheelchair users. Therefore, we decided to take a city tour bus with wheelchair access. When Dan and I got on the bus, the friendly driver welcomed us aboard, and we were off.

Fisherman's Wharf is popular for its pretty shops and seafood restaurants. We were hungry, but it took almost an hour for us to look around and decide what to eat for lunch. We chose to eat a roasted crab and clam chowder soup. The sea lions peacefully lying on the floats near the pier looked like melting chocolate. They didn't smell pleasant up close, yet their cuteness delayed our visit to the Golden Gate Bridge, the famous spot that appears in most movies and TV shows filmed in San Francisco. We took a cruise, enjoying the view of the city. As we passed the bridge, the summer breeze blew slowly, and we watched the beautiful sunset.

The next day, we traveled to Yosemite National Park, a place four hours away from San Francisco and about five times bigger than Seoul. The park is famous for Northern California's natural scenery of grand waterfalls, valleys, and countless forests. Dan's uncle Roy, who lives in San Francisco, kindly gave us a ride to the park. While heading east in his car, we saw the scenery gradually changing from city to suburb, to forest, and finally, to mountain. By lunchtime, we arrived at the park, and each of us had a giant hamburger to fuel up for a hike.

While exploring a trail in Yosemite, we stopped frequently to appreciate the fresh air blowing through the giant sequoias. We passed some famous trees like the Grizzly Giant, which is about 63.7 meters tall and is almost 3,000 years old. It was massive, and I felt quite small in comparison.

Our hike took a dangerous turn at one point. As we made our way down a trail, we encountered a black bear. I was so excited that I took out my camera to take a picture. It must have smelled the cold cuts and chips we had packed because it began to approach us. Thinking quickly, Uncle Roy grabbed a stone and threw it, yelling and waving. After turning me around, Dan helped Uncle Roy push me back the way we came. Dan said, "I guess it's time to leave now." That wasn't a problem because I had gotten my picture!

Another memorable part of the trip was the bike ride. Dan found out that the National Park has a bike rental service and offers hand-crank bikes. Dan persuaded me to try one, and soon I was able to use the hand crank pretty well. We had a fun day riding along the trails in the park. The Tunnel View in Yosemite Valley was like a masterpiece painted by Mother Nature. The trail also led us to green fields and streams where we saw some wildlife. Watching people floating down the Merced River and hiking the Half Dome was cool. It was indeed a wonderful trip, with lots of laughter, joy, and sweat.

I am now in my room where I am organizing hundreds of photos, including one of the bottom half of a black bear to post on social media. Of course, I have valuable memories too. I was fortunate to have companions like Dan and Uncle Roy during the trip. There were obstacles to overcome and challenges to meet, but what adventure doesn't? I took a deep breath, dove into a new world, and faced challenges. All I needed to take with me was courage. I am already looking forward to my next trip in the future.