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ZOOM **in on america**

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Bryce National Park

In this issue: Bryce NP

Zoom in on America

Breathtaking Bryce

Bryce Canyon National Park in southwestern Utah was established in the 1920s to preserve and protect outstanding scenic and scientific values. The main attraction of the park are the beautiful colored rock formations known as hoodoos.

Breathtaking, literally and metaphorically

When I got to Rainbow Point, at an elevation of 9,115 feet (2778m), on a particularly hot day in July, 2008, I was short of breath. Such elevations subject you to only about 70% of the oxygen you might be used to. Panting for breath I looked around in bewilderment. The view that spread below my feet and as far as my eyes could reach was one of the most spectacular sights I have ever seen. There I was, looking at one of the world's most amazing sights: Bryce Canyon. I took my camera out of the bag and did not put it back before leaving this enchanted place.

What does "hoodoo" mean?

While talking about Bryce the word "hoodoo"

is particularly important. The word has several meanings, but with regard to Bryce it simply denotes "a natural column of rock often in a fantastic form". Bryce Canyon is made up of hundreds of thousands of brilliantly colored hoodoos.

Birth of Bryce Canyon

Bryce Canyon's history dates back 65 million years, to the end of the earth's Cretaceous Period, a time when cataclysmic changes, including the extinction of the dinosaurs, were happening on our planet. Present day Utah was then covered by a large lake to which rivers and streams transported various sediments. Colorful minerals: red and yellow iron, as well as pink and violet manganese mixed with dissolved calcium carbonate, created the amazingly colored limestone we see today. Sometime later the water disap-



Hoodoos and forest in Bryce National Park

peared leaving the multicolored Claron Formation from which Bryce Canyon is carved. About 10-15 million years ago, tectonic shifts elevated the region of the Colorado Plateau. A series of smaller plateaus also were created as a result of these tectonic shifts. Table Cliff, east of Bryce, is the highest of these plateaus. Bryce Canyon was carved from the eastern rim of the Paunsaugunt Plateau, with its shape determined by powerful earthquakes, and the forces of weathering and erosion.

The Sculptor

The erosion process in Bryce Canyon is relatively fast and it is enhanced by the melting of snow and ice during the day, and re-freezing after sunset. Water expands up to 9% as it freezes and exerts a powerful force on the rocks. Moreover, rain water dissolves the limestone, rounding off rock edges. Small streams and rivers which run down Bryce's rim form so called gullies, which in turn are cut into narrower walls or rock fins. Holes, called windows appear in fins and col-

lapse as they grow bigger. In this way new hoodoos are born. Then they age and collapse, giving way to new ones.

Which hike to choose?

There are different hiking trails in Bryce Canyon. The easy ones take anywhere from 1 to 2 hours and include, among others, a streamside walk to a waterfall (Mossy Cave), the Rim Trail, which offers magnificent views of hoodoos from above, Bristlecone Loop (Rainbow Point), which leads through a spruce-fir forest to cliffs with panoramic vistas and a spur trail to Sunrise Point called Queens Garden. Moderate hikes, including Navajo Trail, Queens/Navajo Combination Loop, Tower Bridge and Hat Shop, can involve considerable elevation change (e.g. Hat Shop takes you down from 1336 to 407 feet which you then have to reverse on your return hike,) last between 3 and 4 hours. Strenuous hikes with multiple elevation changes require about 5 hours. Fairyland Loop takes tourists to the China Wall, Tower Bridge and tall hoodoos. The remaining trails:



A "window" forms in a rock, Bryce National Park

Peekaboo Loop, Navajo/Peekaboo Combination Loop and the “Figure 8” are also used by horses. On these paths, which can be very steep, horses have the right-of-way. A hiker has to stand on the uphill side of a trail to let horses pass. When I saw a group on horseback descend a narrow and steep trail, I felt shivers down my spine. Will they make it? Are they experienced enough? But I shouldn’t have worried. The groups are guided by professional wranglers and very experienced horses.

Rock falls and slides

The erosion that goes on silently but unavoidably causes risks and dangers. In May 2006, a huge rockfall took place in a section of the Navajo Loop Trail called Wall Street. About 500 tons of rock fell, covering an area approximately 60 feet long, 15 feet deep, and 15 feet wide. Though there were tourists in the area, fortunately no one was injured. A day of heavy rain following Hurricane Dean in 2007 caused a large mud and

rock slide that closed the Bryce Connecting Trail to the Peekaboo Loop.

Safe? Yes, but...

While Bryce Canyon reports less than 1 fatality per year, hundreds of accidents occur annually. The causes of accidents include unsafe driving, sliding down cliffs, dehydration, over-exertion, and bad choice of footwear. It is crucial to follow the Park’s safety measures and abide to speed limits (25, 35 or 45 mph). Wild animals frequently cross park roads. I saw it happen a few times during my short visit. Tourists must be aware of the fact that during their visit to the park, the temperature can change by up to 50 degrees Fahrenheit (10 degrees Celsius), especially during summer rain storms. It is essential to drink 1 quart (1 liter) of water every 1-2 hours to avoid dehydration. Knowing one’s own physical limitations is important, too. All trails start at the top which means that all returns are uphill. Foremost, however, it is important not to disturb



Wide panorama of Bryce National Park

the year-round inhabitants of Bryce Canyon: the Utah Prairie Dog (who is actually a member of the rodent family), the Pronghorn, the fastest land animal in the Western Hemisphere (and runner-up worldwide - only the African Cheetah

can run faster,) and other species that inhabit this enchantingly beautiful region.

*Text by Krakow AIRC
All photos in this issue © Bozena Pilat*



Hoodoos in Bryce National Park



Riders on a horse trail in Bryce National Park



Hoodoos, Bryce NP



Panorama of Bryce NP

ACTIVITY PAGE

EXERCISE 1: PREPOSITIONS

Read the text below and then put back the prepositions which were removed from it:

Hoodoos and forest mixed together

Bryce Canyon, famous ... (1) its worldly unique geology, consists ... (2) a series of horseshoe-shaped amphitheaters carved ... (3) the eastern edge ... (4) the Paunsaugunt Plateau. The erosional force ... (5) frost-wedging and the dissolving power ... (6) rainwater have shaped the colorful limestone rock of the Claron Formation ... (7) bizarre shapes, including slot canyons, windows, fins, and spires called "hoodoos".

(source: the website of the National Park Service)

EXERCISE 2: SPEAKING

Work with 2 other students. Each student should choose one picture. The pictures show the American National Parks which were described in *Zoom in on America*. Decide which park your photo shows (if you are not sure, ask others for help.)

1. Describe your photo to the students in your group;

2. Compare your pictures and the places they show. Take into consideration such factors as: location, climate, and landmarks;

3. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of traveling to places like national parks. Which ones would be on your list of places you would like to visit?



Win a Prize!

March 2013 CONTEST

What are characteristic rock formations which appear in Bryce Canyon called?

Send the answer (with your home address) to: zoom@usinfo.pl

Deadline: April 10

Win a Prize!

The answer to the February contest was:

Delicate Arch

Thank you for participating

The winners are: Ewelina from Tarnow, Gimnazjum in Nowy Sacz, and Paulina from Zawoja

CONGRATULATIONS
The prizes will be sent to you by mail

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Write to: zoom@usinfo.pl

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zoom@usinfo.pl

American Information
Resource Center
Krakow
Konsulat Generalny USA
ul. Stolarska 9,
31-043 Krakow
KrakowAIRC@state.gov

