Insider's Look at Grand Canyon

Webisode #26 – Interview with Candian Ranger Laurie Schwartz Transcript

Ranger Patrick Gamman: Welcome to another webisode of Insider's Look at Grand Canyon. You know, the great thing about this show is we're talking to anybody and everybody who has an effect or learning things from Grand Canyon, and today I'm joined by Laurie Schwartz, who is a communications officer, is that right?

Communications Officer Laurie Schwartz: That's right. In Banff National Park in Canada.

Patrick: Well, welcome to Grand Canyon National Park. As a communications officer, or as sort of our equivalent to an interpretive park ranger, which I am, why are you here at Grand Canyon?

Laurie: We're here- there's a delegation of Canadian Park officials at Grand Canyon today to take a look at what's going on in parks in the United States and see if we can get some great ideas for how to operate our parks in Canada better.

Patrick: Great a ranger exchange.

Laurie: It is, kind of.

Patrick: I like that. So, I have a question for you: you're here at Grand Canyon. I know you're going to other national parks. Is there maybe one or two ideas that you really think shine out from American parks that you'd like to take home and share with folks up in Canada?

Laurie: Some of the things that we really admire about the American National Park system, and in particular Grand Canyon and Zion that we visited so far, are the incredible transportation systems. I mean, you're dealing with such an enormous volume of people. And we have a bit of a parallel of that in Banff National Park and throughout the mountain parks and some sites in the east, as well. Because not only do we take care of our national park system we're also looking after 168 national historic sites across the country. So, we have an enormous amount of visitation to deal with within our own system. So what we really admire is the way that it's so easy for people to arrive at a park here, pay one user fee at the gate, and there's an incredible shuttle system. For example, in Zion, I know that it's kind of held up as an example across the system of the American National Park Service and we were thrilled with the service. It runs regularly, there's educational elements on that bus, and it's very convenient and gets you to all the places you really want to go. And the same thing here at Grand Canyon: you know, this incredible linkage of the three bus loops that can get you to pretty much anywhere you need to go. So you don't have to worry about where your car is going to be parked. You just park it at whatever stop is convenient when you arrive and then you can experience the park hassle-free. So we really admired that. As far as the programming goes, what we really admire is the Junior Ranger program, because part of our focus is to see how we can engage young new Canadians in our national parks and national historic sites and marine conservation areas. We look at the ranger program and see the *excitement* in the kids' faces when they complete their exercises, when they get a badge, when they get a reward, when they get a personal contact with a ranger. And that's a meaningful experience that those kids are going to take with them. They're going to grow up. They're going to have their own kids and they're going to remember how fun that was when they were young. And they're going to come back to the national parks and bring their children. That's something that we're looking for is that legacy. As park employees, we're really passionate about making sure these places are protected for all time. And we feel a real kinship with people like you who are also really passionate about these parks. And, you know,

you're not just here as a job, you're here exploring on your own time. And the Junior Ranger program is part of, sort of imparting, that knowledge to the next generation and making sure that people care about these places, are stewards of these places, forever.

Patrick: Well, I'm glad you're getting a lot of stuff from the parks here in the states and especially from Grand Canyon. But, you know, as a ranger exchange, it has to go both ways. You know, is there one, or maybe two, things from Canadian parks that you'd love to share with us folks about how you guys run things that we could learn from?

Laurie: Well, my personal area of expertise is I run the Mountain World Heritage Interpretive Theater in Banff and I was very excited to discover that there's an Artist in Residence program here at Grand Canyon. So, we were kind of talking with one of your cohorts about coming down here and maybe creating some interpretive theater about Grand Canyon. And you know, we went to the ranger talk last night and it's a great educational event, it's kind of a Powerpoint style and we thought, "Hey. I wonder what we could do with throwing in a little bit more theater, a little bit more drama into this." You know, throw in some comedy, some puppets, whatever, music, and just kind of cook things up that way.

Patrick: That sounds really wonderful! I can't wait to see if that happens.

Laurie: That'd be great!

Patrick: Well, one last thing before we go: what's one thing from Grand Canyon that you're just going to always remember here?

Laurie: The view. I mean, it's classic. It's an icon and there's a great reason for that.

Patrick: Well, Laurie, thanks so much for joining us on this show. I hope to maybe see you sometime up in Banff and we'll catch you next time here on Insider's Look at the Grand Canyon. Any last words, Laurie?

Laurie: Thank you very much, Ranger Patrick. Come to Canada and see our national parks, historic sites, and marine conservation areas.