

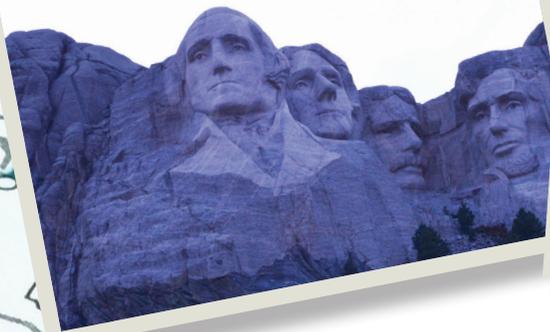
Road trip revelations



Marketing expert and founder of Sarsaparilla Marketing, **Kimberly Davis** takes us along for the ride on her recent road trip across the small business landscape of the US

I recently ticked another item off my bucket list when I went on a month-long road trip across America. It was just me, a Chevy Spark the size of a smart car, and the wide open road as I visited Chicago, Minneapolis, Mount Rushmore, Yellowstone Park, The Grand Canyon, Antelope Canyon, Horseshoe Canyon, Las Vegas, LA, and more. Not only did I see some amazing things, I also met some really amazing people along the way, who are running innovative and inspirational businesses. This month, I'd like to share some of their inspiring stories along with my observations and advice on what valuable business lessons you can learn from these businesses from across the pond.

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JIMMY JOHN'S
jimmyjohns.com
Chicago, Illinois

You never know where and when you are going to meet someone interesting. Like most travelers, I was tired and hungry when I landed in Chicago. The only thing to eat was McDonalds, and the dining area was tiny.

I politely asked a gentleman if I could join his table and he welcomed me kindly. We started chatting. The New Yorker in me had my guard up, and I didn't want to give him much personal information about who I was or what I did – especially after my experiences on *The Apprentice*. However, it wasn't long before we were calling one another 'friends', and he was introducing me to his lovely family.

As we went to part ways, habit led me to ask him for his business card so we could keep in touch. As I looked at his card, I asked, "Jimmy John's? What do you do?" He told me that he owns a chain of sandwich shops. I had never heard of them, so my initial thought was that he was a small local shop that I never expected to come across. But, over the next month, as I journeyed over 4,000 miles on my trip, I came to learn that Jimmy John's is a franchise almost as big as Subway. It was on nearly every service area sign, and on every block in every major city. I felt so embarrassed! My new friend was a great man with great importance and success, yet he was modest and genuinely kind.

MY ADVICE: Always be nice, always be prepared, and never make assumptions. You never know who you will meet and where.



SHURR ADVENTURES

www.yellowstoneareatours.com
Yellowstone National Park

Justin and Alli Shurr are a husband-and-wife scientific dynamic duo, who are living proof that if you know your stuff, you can start small and build your way up to success.

They started out with nothing but a kayak, giving alligator tours in the Florida Everglades. The business exploded and now they are running kayak, hiking, and photography tours from multiple landmark sites throughout the US.

What makes them so special? It's their unique understanding of wildlife, nature, photography, and more. They don't just take you on a typical tour that loads you on a bus and says, "To your left you'll see this." They actually offer an experience that allows you to fully appreciate the changing environment around you. They know everything about the animals, nature, geology, ecology, etc., that surrounds you, and are fully prepared to answer any question you might have. You can't stump them. Not to mention, they have some jaw dropping stories.

Thanks to Justin and Alli, I managed to safely navigate around a giant wild bison, and I captured some amazing photographs, including one of famous geyser, Old Faithful (with a rainbow), and I was able to see the best of the park in the limited time available.

MY ADVICE: The website and brand does not reflect the level of extreme quality and care that these folks have to offer. I've advised them to establish a brand, build a database of raving fan clients (like myself), and create a website that features the amazing photos they've taken, to show people what they can offer instead of just telling audiences via words, because there truly are no words to express the incredible experience they offer.

Images by Kimberly Davis



“They’ve a complete monopoly on the market but they just blend in and look like all the other companies out there”

ADVENTUROUS ANTELOPE CANYON PHOTO TOUR

www.navajoantelopecanyon.com
Page, Arizona

You may not know Antelope Canyon by name, but chances are, you've seen pictures of it and added it to your bucket list. In fact, a photographer named Peter Lik captured the most expensive photograph ever taken in the canyon, and it sold for \$6.5 million.

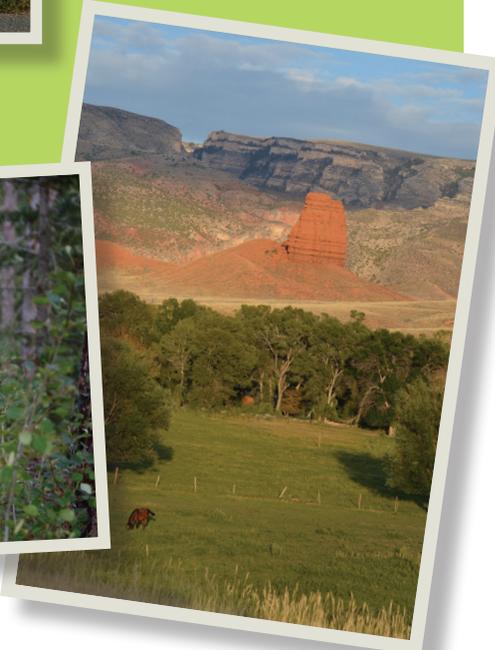
The canyon is truly a natural wonder of the world. It's incredible to think that it all started millions of years ago from a drop of water. Over the years, that water has carved its way through metres of soft sediment, and left the walls lined with mesmerizing lines and patterns.

Antelope Canyon is owned and run by native Navajo Indians. You cannot see or experience it without a Navajo tour guide present. I confess that, as an American, I thought I knew about the Navajos. However, it wasn't until I met Carol Bighthumb, Joshua Benally, and their family, that I truly came to appreciate their culture and traditions.



MARKETING TALK

“What impressed me most was that instead of charging you extra (or not at all) for Wi-Fi, they make a little deal with you”



KIMPTON HOTELS

www.kimptonhotels.com
Salt Lake City, Utah, Sedona, Arizona, and Beverly Hills, Los Angeles

Driving 4,000 miles can be exhausting. I misjudged all the timings, and there were days I ended up driving for nearly 16 hours. Needless to say, by the time I arrived in Sedona, Arizona, I was ready for some rest and relaxation.

When I arrived at the Amara Resort and Spa, it was the very definition of peace and tranquility. An infinity pool overlooked a perfectly framed red rock monolith. The room was modern, and equipped with your own personal hot tub. The food was exquisite. You truly want for nothing here. In fact, I never wanted to leave, so I extended my one night stay to four nights.

I was equally impressed by the Beverly Hills location, which allowed me to live like a movie star; dining on the rooftop by the pool, overlooking the famous Hollywood sign, and networking with VIPs.

But what impressed me so much about this forward-thinking boutique chain was that, instead of charging you extra (or not at all) for Wi-Fi, they make a little deal with you. You can either pay for Wi-Fi, or you can fill out a little survey and register with the chain for unlimited access for your stay.

The survey does not only ask you for your basic name and email, they ask market research questions that really help them to give you a more bespoke experience, now and in the future. For example, they ask if you have a pet and, if so, what its name is. Pets are welcome at Kimpton Hotels and they know that people connect to their pets like they are children, so they treat pets as extended family.

It's this attention to detail that made the Kimpton hotel beyond exceptional and impressive to me. Needless to say, I'm a raving fan and will certainly book again in the future.

MY ADVICE: If you run a small business, don't forget the importance of market research and giving your client the most amazing experience. It's this attention to detail that will be the difference between a forgettable experience and a raving fan. The Kimpton is very much a boutique hotel, and as long as it never stops putting the client first, I've no doubt it will continue to grow.

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Download Kimberly's free eBook '7 Deadly Marketing Mistakes You're Making Right Now (and don't know it)' now at www.sarsaparillamarketing.com

The canyon is in the middle of nowhere. You'd never know it was there if it wasn't for the brochure. Carol told fascinating historical stories about how the Navajos hid in these caves to protect themselves, and of how the Navajos still own, and live off, the land to this day.

Carol's company is the only Navajo company which has permission to enter all three of the canyons in the area, including the canyon where Lik took his famous photo. That means, if you want to see these canyons, Carol and her team are the only ones in the world who can take you there.

MY ADVICE: I was shocked to find that the company never promotes the fact that they have exclusivity to all of the canyons; it's not highlighted or promoted anywhere. They've a complete monopoly on the market, but they just blend in and look like all the other companies out there. In fact, I almost overlooked them when booking this part of my trip. I advised Carol and her team to focus on this powerful unique selling point, as it will greatly increase their credibility and give them a huge edge over the competition, from other members of the Navajo community.

