



THE {FULL} LIFE

Touchmark in the West Hills Newsletter | Issue 3 • 2023



Embracing Adventure, Travel, and Learning

It's finally summer at Touchmark—the season of outdoor fun, travel, and road trips. Touchmark residents are an adventuresome bunch, both in retirement and throughout their lives. Please enjoy several examples of how getting out and about can inspire you to explore paths less traveled.

At Touchmark on South Hill, resident Bev Kuhn recently told us about the “van life” she and her husband enjoyed for nearly two decades before settling at Touchmark. It all started with a trip. Bev says, “We acquired a small RV and decided to go on a trip. We were gone 17 weeks, and as we were driving back into town, my husband asked me, ‘Are you happy to be home?’ I said, yes, but I could happily keep going, and my husband agreed. It took us about a year to sell our business and then we were on the road for the next 20 years.” They soon found themselves part of the nomad community, which they quite enjoyed. “One thing is that you would run into the same people over and over,” Bev says. “Everyone was very sharing because they didn’t have a community either so whoever you were parked next to was your neighbor. It might only be for four or five days, but then you’d run into them again somewhere else. We knew people from all over. It’s a freedom that you don’t understand unless you experience it.”

The sense of camaraderie Bev describes out on the road flourishes in Touchmark communities as well. For example, residents at Touchmark in the West Hills have been setting out for destinations all over Oregon and are driven by Touchmark Lead Driver Margaret Usher, who has 10-plus years of experience in the travel and tourism industry. Now in its fourth year, the ExpLOregon series is a favorite of residents. This summer

they are headed to Mount St. Helens, Hood River, Astoria, Lincoln City, white-water rafting in the Gorge, Newport, McMinnville, Sauvie Island, and more.

At Touchmark at The Ranch, residents have recently been on a helicopter tour as well as a Pink Jeep Tour in Sedona, Arizona. In Bismarck, North Dakota, residents at Touchmark on West Century are enjoying their small-towns tour with the most recent stop at Garrison Dam National Fish Hatchery in Riverdale. We encourage you to look at your community's calendar and sign up for an upcoming off-site adventure!

Resident Spotlight

Bill Dunn, Touchmark at The Ranch resident

You've been on several of the Touchmark Adventure Trips. Which ones have you attended? I did a Pink Jeep Tour as well as a helicopter tour, both in Sedona, Arizona, about four months apart. The weather was extremely cooperative for us. The jeep tour got done a little early, so they took us off-roading. The jeeps are tightly sprung, so we bounced around back there pretty good! It was educational and entertaining. You have to hang onto the roll bars and everything!

What made you want to go on these trips? It was something different. It was a small group, which I like because I'm not always the most social person. I'm fairly choosy when it comes to Life Enrichment/Wellness events. So I liked that you could sign up in advance to get out of town for a little while and do something different than the day-to-day calendar.

Do you plan to go on upcoming Adventure Trips in the future? Yes, I will keep an eye out for things that I haven't done before. I take them one at a time, which I prefer.

Before you moved to Touchmark, were you much of a traveler? Not so much. I've been on a couple of cruises, but I wouldn't call myself a traveler. Especially since the pandemic, you won't find me in an airport. I just don't enjoy the commercial flight



experience anymore, so I like that these day trips don't require that. I enjoy these local trips that show me something I haven't seen before.

What was your favorite Touchmark Adventure Trip? The helicopter ride was very interesting. I spent many years in the aviation industry, and this was a small Robinson helicopter, which piqued my interest. It wasn't a long flight, but you got to see things from a perspective you wouldn't have otherwise.

I graduated in 1965, which was in the middle of a military draft. In anticipation of losing the deferment if I had to drop a class or something, I joined the California Air Guard. When I graduated college, I left the Air Guard and joined the Air Force, and when I got out of the Air Force, I went to the FAA as an air-traffic controller. When I saw the helicopter trip, it was a natural attraction for me to take advantage of.

Community Highlights

Enriching lives through fun and vibrant community events!





Michelle Sue
Director of Wellness
Operations

The Benefits of Novel Experiences



“The world is a book, and those who do not travel read only one page.” – Saint Augustine

Not only is traveling or trying new things fun and exciting, doing so also has many benefits for our cognitive and physical health.

To keep our brains sharp, it's crucial to develop new brain cells. One of the best and most enjoyable ways to do this is to try new things, which creates different neural connections and pathways in the brain. These cells support lasting brain health, and the pathways formed serve as exercises for this important muscle.

Furthermore, trying new things is a powerful mood booster. “There is a connection between novelty and happiness,” Dr. Laurie Santos, a cognitive scientist who teaches the wildly popular “Psychology and the Good Life” course at Yale, says. She describes that novel stimuli tend to activate regions of our brain that are associated with rewards. “Novel things also capture our attention ... you're more likely to notice things and be present,” Santos says. “There's lots of evidence that simply being more present can improve our mood and happiness.”

Scientific research backs up the data. Just before the pandemic, a group of researchers enlisted subjects in two major U.S. cities and tracked GPS data on their phones. They then texted the subjects multiple times per week to ask about their mood. The study was published in Nature Neuroscience in May 2020. “What we found was that for every person, on days when they displayed greater exploration, greater ‘roaming entropy,’ they reported feeling happier. It's as simple as that,” said co-author Dr. Aaron Heller of the University of Miami.

Tangible ways in which this link can be observed include:

- **An increased rate of learning:** When you engage yourself with a new thing and consistently do so, the speed of understanding other things will improve. Have you ever studied a foreign language and found yourself able to pick up on other languages more easily?
- **Decreased boredom and isolation:** Those who are consistently striving to learn new things report less time feeling bored and more time connecting with others. Did you grow up playing the piano? If so, it could be fun to build on your musical knowledge base by picking up a new instrument. Even better if you can find a friend or neighbor to jam with on a regular basis!
- **Increased flexibility and ability to adapt to change:** If you've ever been on a trip, you know that things don't always go to plan. Though that can be frustrating at first, over time you likely find that you are better able to fly by the seat of your pants and make it work. Broadening your horizons can make many of life's challenges easier to manage.

Ready to get out there and try something new? Check out your Life Enrichment/Wellness calendar and ask your neighbors what they are up to this summer.

