

Desert Discoveries, Part 1: Escaping the Farm

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Farming and Traveling A tall saguaro cacti with outstretched arms, welcomes Cherie's family to the Sonoran desert on a rare trip away from their Washington farm. Don't get me wrong – I love our farm.

But it's been too long since my family and I escaped the animal feeding, dog walking, manure scooping, garden tending, house cleaning, fence fixing, bill paying, and other duties that go with living in the same place day after day.

The itch to see someplace different, to bust out of our daily routines and shirk our responsibilities, to feel unfettered and free to roam, is almost unbearable. Besides, I really want to see my parents, who just happen to live in one of the loveliest spots in the country (in my biased opinion).

This area seems light years removed from our home in green, rainy western Washington, even though it's only a three hour plane ride away: the dry, Sonoran desert environs near Tucson, Arizona.

So now we're in the mad dash to leave, and it hits me again how incompatible these two passions are: hobby farming and traveling.

Although I'm lucky to have a trusted friend who I exchange farm-sitting duties with, preparing to leave the farm, whether it's for two days or two weeks, is always an ordeal.

In part because I feel like everything needs to be done before we leave, which is impossible. Also, at the last minute, escaping always seems like abandonment, but particularly so on this strange spring day, with snow flurrying down as I race through the stall cleaning and kiss the horses goodbye.

Driving away, all those "what-if?" monsters raise their ugly heads. What if Sophie colics? What if someone breaks into the house? What if dogs dig in and kill our sheep?

Part of me thinks: Maybe we should just stay home, as many farmers do, or else ditch the farm so it will be easier for us to travel.

The other part replies, But we love them both. And it's not like we jet set off every other weekend; only a couple of times a year.

As the plane takes off, the "what-if?" worry monsters retreat to their lairs. Nothing we can do now, so why worry?

Later, the plane sinks toward the earth, and the snowscape back home has become a mirage, while the desert below us turns real: sky a brilliant blue, sun gilding palm trees, tall saguaro cacti with outstretched arms, welcoming us back.

I'll tell you more about our desert trip next week.

~ Cherie

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