



marketing mix

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My 'vacation trip' with propane

VERSATILITY AND PORTABILITY TAKE PROPANE EVERYWHERE

My recent trip to the Pacific Northwest included the exploration of parts of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, particularly their route along the Snake and Columbia rivers.

The expedition of 1804 to 1806 extended approximately 4,900 miles from Pittsburgh to the mouth of the Columbia River in Oregon.

This time, our group traveled from the Columbia River mouth to the Hells Canyon area of the Snake River by various types of watercraft ranging from a small cruise ship to an inflatable raft and a jet boat. Most of the way, we were following the fall salmon spawning migration. On the way back, our family group rode in a dependable old Chevy Suburban, crisscrossing back and forth between Washington and Oregon on roads along the river route.

The stunning scenery and interesting sites along the way offered lots of photo opportunities. It didn't take long for me to notice that the presence of propane was apparent in many of those pictures, no matter where we were on the trip. Propane tanks, cylinders and equipment were showing up everywhere. Here are some examples.

Propane on the dams – The mainstream Columbia River system has 14 dams, and we passed through the locks of eight of them on our trip. This series of dams provides approximately half of the Pacific Northwest's electricity supply. Propane showed up in every dam photo. Each dam had one or more propane-

powered forklift trucks and other material-handling equipment on-site. Propane for grilling and outdoor space heating was also present in the dam photos. I like the irony of propane partnering, in a small way, with hydropower to bring the dam energy to America.

Vine-to-wine glass journey with propane – Propane-powered irrigation systems showed up in photos of vineyards along the river. The dry climate here makes irrigation capability a necessity for grape growth and production. Propane-powered wind machines for frost prevention insurance also dotted vineyard photos.

Propane was a primary energy source for the wine production facilities we visited, too. Forklift trucks were powered by propane, and most locations were set up to refill their forklift cylinders on-site from a larger propane tank. The customer was providing the "big tank to the little tank" propane transfer journey.

Even in the land of inexpensive hydropower, many of the wineries and tasting rooms used propane for space heating, water heating, cooking and fireplace effects. Most photos taken at riverside vineyard and winery locations had 500-gallon and 1,000-gallon propane tanks somewhere in the background, providing clean, reliable gas energy in the land of hydropower.

Propane in the town and in the country – Photos of small towns included propane refill stations, propane cylinder exchange cabinets and propane tanks and cylinders on restaurants, outdoor heaters and food trucks. Most of the homes along the more remote parts of the river operated off of the electric grid, and propane provided most of their energy needs.

At the far reaches of our river exploration, near the entrance to Hells Canyon on the Snake River, sat a 2,000-gallon propane tank providing gas energy to the ranger station and small visitors center. This large propane tank was located at the very end of passable road systems in this part of eastern Oregon, so the propane provider didn't want to make this a frequent refill trip. With no cell service in the area, this would be a good location for the propane provider to incorporate satellite fuel level monitoring to show off technology advancements in the propane industry.

Propane opportunities – If you are in the retail propane business today, the sales opportunities seem endless, no matter where you are in the country.

Take a "vacation trip" in your marketing area and take photos of propane usage and opportunities for expansion. You will likely be surprised at what you discover. Remind residential and commercial energy users that propane is a clean, reliable, versatile and portable gas energy choice. Also, work with equipment and service-related companies to make sure their list of energy options includes propane, and you are there to provide it. Remember, our liquid gas energy goes when and wherever it is needed.

In summary, this vacation trip reminded me of some of the many ways propane connects with consumers and serves their energy needs, even in the most remote areas of America. Propane – energy for everyone ... everywhere. **LPG**

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