

Tuesday - January 20, 2009

A not so typical day at Alpine Adventures...and why we only offer guided snowmobile tours.

When Paul & Amy Malla from Maryland showed up for their 9am, 3-hour snowmobile tour it was a typical sunny (but cold) day up here in the beautiful White Mountains of NH. Everyone was talking about the inauguration of our new President happening later that day (the Malla's were actually up here escaping the crowds of the big event in their hometown of Washington, D.C.). There were 4 other people on the tour with them and after a safety briefing and a bit of practice time, their guides Pat and Jesse let the group into Franconia Notch State Park on freshly groomed trails; the conditions were ideal.

The group made its way along the Pemigewasset River past the basin, the spectacular views of Mt. Lafayette and Canon Cliff and up to the viewing area for the former Old Man of the Mountain, stopping along the way to make snow angels and take pictures of the scenery. At one of the stops Pat and Jesse discussed the possibility of Jesse heading back to the trailhead and letting Pat finish the tour himself (we typically only have 1 guide with 4 snowmobiles or less), but since there was a max of experienced riders and first time riders on the tour, they decided that it would be best for him to stay, just in case they needed to split up into 2 groups. At this point though, everyone was riding well and after reaching the halfway point of the tour, the group started making its way back to the trailhead – with Jesse bringing up the rear. About 2/3rds of the way back this typical tour took a turn (or should we say missed a turn), for the worst when Amy (with husband Paul on the back) didn't quite negotiate a turn all the way and went off the trail into a stream. Paul, who is a motorcycle driving instructor and Amy, who also has a motorcycle license, fell off the snowmobile and into the river with Amy pinned underneath the machine in freezing cold water. Paul immediately tried to get the snowmobile off of Amy, but could not lift it himself. Luckily Jesse was there in a matter of moments and the two of them were able to pull Amy out of the stream. Thankfully, she was ok, but very cold and shaken up. After determining that Amy did not need an ambulance, Jesse had to quickly decide the fastest way to get Amy to a warm, dry environment – he put her on his snowmobile and drove to the nearest parking area on the road only a few minutes away where she could be picked up in a vehicle by one of our staff who had been called and was on the way. Before that could happen though, Jesse flagged down another motorist who was kind enough to take Paul and Amy back to our office in a nice warm vehicle – saving them even more time than waiting for our van to arrive.

Within 15 minutes of the crash Amy and Paul were drinking tea and warming up next to the woodstove in our office – shaken, but in tremendous spirits considering the close call they just experienced. After making sure Amy was in fact ok and didn't need medical attention, they surprisingly started talking about returning the next day to do another snowmobile tour (they had actually already booked 3 tours for the week online prior to arriving in NH). We of course told them they were under no obligation to complete the other tours and to go back to their hotel and rest for a while before deciding if they really wanted to do this again. We asked them to give us a call later for an update on how they

were feeling and said they could let us know at that time if they still wanted another tour. Later that evening we received a call from Amy saying “we’ll be there tomorrow...a few bumps and bruises aren’t going to keep me down – I’m tougher than that”!

The next day, amidst a cheer from our staff upon entering the office, they showed up and went on another snowmobile tour; this one, thankfully, was without incident. 2 days later, Paul and Amy went on our zipline tour to complete their adventure getaway before heading back to Maryland, with a couple of bumps and bruises and quite a story to tell.

So, why do we want you to know about a crash and potentially awful situation that luckily turned out not so awful? Because snowmobiling can be dangerous, and we want our customers and potential customers to know that accidents can happen. Luckily they are very few and far between and the vast majority would be considered “fender benders”. These are, however powerful machines which is why we have professionally trained, experienced guides that go out on all of our tours who are CPR/First Aid certified. They know the trails inside and out and are there to keep our customers safe. We have no doubt that our guides greatly minimize the risk of serious accidents on every tour they are on, but each customer is in control of their own snowmobile on the tour and it is extremely important to listen and pay attention to instructions from the guides, before and during the tour – once the machine is moving your safety and the safety on any passenger is ultimately in your hands!

[Click here to read a letter from Paul and Amy Malla](#)

We are experts in fun and adventure and that’s what we’re good at, but we are just as focused on safety. While our guides are very well trained to respond to emergency situations – we hope we never have to use these skills.