

Zac's wish to see snow!

Four-year-old Zac was diagnosed with brain cancer in December of 2014. While most kids were spending their days preparing for Christmas, Zac underwent surgeries to remove two tumors from his brain. He spent Christmas in the hospital, and received further chemotherapy, radiation treatments, and surgery over the next two years.

Spending so much time in hospitals was especially difficult for Zac, who loves going outside. Zac's grandmother, called "Honey" by Zac, said that the hardest part of the treatments was "watching him struggle through chemo and seeing him sit at the window, wanting and aching to go outside."

Zac especially loves going outdoors in winter; and when Make-A-Wish asked him what his one true wish was, Zac wished to see snow. His wish came true in January 2017.

On January 9th, Zac and his family packed their bags and traveled to Gatlinburg, Tennessee. After settling into their cabin at Gatlinburg Falls, they started their week of fun-filled adventures in the city.



These adventures brought the family to the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, where Zac had the honor of becoming a Junior Park Ranger. They also led the family to The Island in Pigeon Forge, where they were able to see a light and water show. Zac's grandmother "Honey" said that Zac "watched in amazement" as the lights, the water, and The Great Smoky Mountain Wheel moved in sync.

Zac and his family also had the opportunity to visit various Ripley's Believe It or Not attractions, including the Ripley's Aquarium of the Smokies. While at the aquarium, Zac got to interact with many different aquatic creatures, including a jellyfish and a crab. According to "Honey," before Zac touched the jellyfish, he asked the employee if "it was the good kind or the bad kind!"

But the main attraction of the trip came when Zac and his family went to the Ober, Gatlinburg Ski Area and Amusement Park.

While there, Zac was able to build his first snowman, make snow angels, and ride a tram for the first time. The Ski Patrol also taught Zac how to ski and how to have snowball fights. Zac and his family went snow tubing and took a walk by a snow-covered river. They also enjoyed going to the falls, which "Honey" said had "beautiful ice crystals." Zac even learned a little history when they "visited an old log cabin built in the 1800s" where "Honey" said "Zac got to see how people lived in the mountains during that time period."

During his visit, the Ober Gatlinburg Ski School also surprised Zac with a party on the mountain. This party and his many other exciting adventures in Gatlinburg, Tennessee allowed Zac and his family to forget about his medical troubles for a while. Instead of worrying about his medical treatments, Zac and his family were able to enjoy their time playing in the snow.

Zac will carry the memories of this trip with him for the rest of his life. Instead of focusing on the trials and treatments that cancer has presented him, he will now be able to remember all the joy from when his snowy wish came true.